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INCONGRUENT BRAND EXTENSIONS – RISK OR OPPORTUNITY?

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE POTENTIAL OF INCONGRUENT BRAND EXTENSIONS

AS A STRATEGY TO KEEP AND ATTRACT CUSTOMERS.

Mature brands risk to be regarded as predictable and disinteresting. Brand extensions has previously been a conventional strategy to leverage on a strong brand. Consumers keep increasing their expectations on brands, and therefore brands need to meet and exceed those expectations in order to keep customers and attract new ones. The conventional view of brand communication has been that all communication should stay cohesive. This study, that takes a deductive approach and is based on an experimental study with 360 participants, proposes that a moderate level of incongruity can in fact be an attractive strategy. The results indicate that incongruity within a brand extension can help revitalize established brands. Currently loyal consumers will not be affected negatively by the incongruent extension to a high extent. Rather, the incongruity will signal that the brand is willing to think in new dimensions which will be interpreted as something positive. Non-current customers will also be increasingly attracted to the brand as a result of the incongruity as they will increase their attitudes as well as purchasing intentions towards the parent brand launching the incongruent extension. The study further investigates how the marketing communication effects are affected by the use of a social media vehicle in comparison to the use of a traditional media vehicle when launching an incongruent brand extension. No significant differences could however be revealed, which suggest that other parameters should be taken into consideration when making media choices when introducing incongruent brand extensions.

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1 INTRODUCTION

One main objective for brand owners is to successfully manage to build a strong brand in the minds of their consumers. However, solely achieving a strong brand might not be enough in the long term. According to Machleit, Allen and Madden (1993), a boredom factor can arise for mature brands even though attitude is positive and the brand provides satisfaction. A major concern for brand owners is thus how to mitigate the risk of a decreasing brand interest.

Launching a brand extension is an established strategy used by companies to leverage their existing brands (Aaker and Keller, 1990). The employment of the strategy has increased rapidly during the past years, the number of brand extensions constituting new product launches increase with 40% between 1984 and 2004 (Marketing Science Institute, 2011). The common view of brand extensions is in line with the view of all forms of brand communications; a brand should stay cohesive in all parts of its communication, including brand extensions, not to risk diluting the brand (Aaker and Keller, 1990). The importance of cohesiveness in the context of brand communications has however in recent years been questioned, and several scholars have investigated how far a brand can diverge from its anticipated path. Machleit, Allen and Madden (1993) argue that an affect evoking piece of communication, whether it is an ad or an extension, for a mature brand can make consumers "think twice" about a brand, and this could lead to a re-evaluation of a brand and thus increase the interest in the brand.

A new strategic direction of the brand might help to broaden the target group, but the most important followers of the brand cannot be let down if the brand changes drastically (Fournier, 1998). To be successful in the long run, a brand must manage to align the needs and expectations among different groups of consumers into one winning strategy (Sjödin, 2008). If a brand decides to communicate bravely by challenging existing brand associations, it must be determined in which media channel to convey the message. Brands are faced with a more multifaceted, complex and faster changing media environment than ever before (Percy and Elliott, 2009). The alternatives and decisions become even more important when the message communicated can cause ambiguity and evoke strong feelings among the recipients.

This study will try to increase the attention given to brand extensions in the light of an increasingly demanding customer base and the need to attract new customers. It will also address the impact of the media in which messages to current and prospective customers are exposed to marketing communications from the brand.

1.1 PROBLEM FORMULATION

A constant challenge for brands is to stay relevant and interesting. The need for brands to reinvent themselves is more important than ever as today's market is cluttered with different messages (Speck and Elliot, 1998). As a counter reaction to the clutter, consumers have become good at sorting out uninteresting messages (Blackwell et al. 2006; Friestad and Wright 1994). As a result of this development, brand owners have an increasingly difficult task in persuading consumers and reaching through the clutter (Weilbacher, 2003). To impede the risk of consumer disinterest, brands must find new ways to capture the interest of consumers (Reid, 2005).

One tool available for brand managers to achieve those objectives is by using incongruity to challenge consumers' expectations of the brand, and thereby revitalize the brand. Incongruity could be defined as an inconsistency, challenging existing beliefs and associations one holds towards a certain object (Törn, 2009). The concept of incongruity does however, not go in line with the well-established perception that successful brand management relies on the notion that brands must maintain a consistent and cohesive image supported by congruent communication (Sjödin and Törn, 2006).

Intentional use of incongruity has been acknowledged as a strategy to revive interest in mature brands, via for instance communicating the brand in an inconsistent manner (Meyers-Levy et al, 1994). In the context of brand extensions, incongruity could take expression in the form of an extension into a new category that share few associations with the brand's current category and offering. Perceived fit is a central aspect when consumers evaluate brand extensions, and the perceived fit is based on the associations shared by the parent brand and the extension (Czellar, 2003). The lower perceived fit tied to incongruity will pose both challenges and opportunities for brands which employ this strategy.

In the pursuit to expand a brand into new categories to revive the brand and possibly reach new target groups, a potential conflict might arise between the urge to grow the brand yet at the same time maintain a healthy relationship with the existing customer base. Loyal consumers are important judges of brand extensions, however, their judgment of the extension might not always bear the outcome desired by the company behind the extension (Aaker and Keller, 1990). Instead, the novelty associated with the brand could rather act as a potential threat to the consumer-brand relationship (Fournier, 1998), which could act as a catalyst for a negative evaluation of the extension.

Marketers faced with the challenge to revive a brand via pursuing the strategy to launch an incongruent extension will be measuring how the traditional marketing communication effects resulting from the incongruity, such as the effect on attitude and intentions, will be affected by the launch. These effects will affect both current and potential customers. As the notion of brand extensions implies that an established brand is used as the parent brand, consumers will already hold existing attitudes and intentions towards the brand (Aaker and Keller, 1990). Based on current attitudes and beliefs about the brand, a new piece of marketing communication such as an incongruent brand extension will evoke different responses among different consumers (Bousch and Loken, 1991). A major challenge for marketers is to anticipate what effects the incongruity will have on different consumer groups and how to successfully achieve a positive outcome of the incongruity in terms of communication and branding effects.

When making the decision to communicate a brand extension, marketers these days are faced with a more complex and more multifaceted media landscape than ever. Media channels that allow for interaction between the company and its customers today represent an integral part of many brands' marketing communication. (Ramani and Kuvar, 2008) Social media is praised and has become almost a must for established brands. However, there is limited research investigating when social media is an appropriate media channel and when other less complex medias can serve the same purpose. The media chosen to communicate an incongruent extension will impact the degree of resolution among the recipients of the communication (Daft and Lengel, 1986), and hence the evaluation of the extension and thereby the effects of the strategy. A marketer might make a brave decision to launch an

incongruent brand extension, but is it possible that the media channel choice will be the force behind the determination of the success of the new brand extension?

The contradicting views on incongruity among marketers, along with the unknown reactions from currently loyal customers leave marketers with few answers when considering the strategy to launch incongruent brand extensions. By exploring the research questions presented below, this study aims to contribute to increase the understanding of the presented central concepts.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to uncover new areas of incongruity in the light of customer loyalty and media choice, three research questions were formulated. Combined, the questions will facilitate the exploration of the purpose of the study.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

How are traditional marketing communications effects, measured on consumer groups that are loyal as well as not loyal to the brand, affected by an introduction of an incongruent brand extension in comparison to an introduction of a congruent brand extension of an established brand?

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

How are marketing signal effects, measured on currently loyal consumers, affected by a launch of an incongruent brand extension in comparison to a launch of a congruent brand extension by an established brand?

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

How are traditional marketing measures and marketing signals affected if a launch of an incongruent extension is made through a social media vehicle in comparison to if a launch is made through a traditional media vehicle?

1.3 PURPOSE

The purpose of the study is to deepen and broaden the academic knowledge within the area of incongruity in a marketing setting, more specifically incongruity in the context of brand extensions. This purpose will be fulfilled by examining incongruent brand extensions and investigating the concept in the light of customer loyalty and media channel choice.

1.4 EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION

By linking together concepts of incongruity, brand extensions, customer connection and social media, this thesis should be able to explore previously unexplored knowledge areas within marketing. The aim of the thesis is to provide practical implications for marketers on how to work with incongruence in the context of brand extensions. A further ambition of the thesis is to provide propositions on how to best facilitate the acceptance of the incongruity when launching an incongruent brand extension. Finally, the thesis will provide insights into how different groups of consumers will react to the incongruity, and suggest strategies on which strategies that should be used when communicating to the different consumers. All in all, the study will combine a number of academic fields that previously have not been explored within the same study to contribute with new knowledge.

The study will contribute to identify whether incongruent brand extensions is an attractive strategy for established brands. The aim is not only to contribute to the academic society but also to practitioners by tying together the identified concepts that will be focused on.

1.5 DELIMITATIONS

Both practical and theoretical delimitations had to be made in order to fulfill the purpose of the thesis within the resources at hand.

In order to explore incongruity, two brands were selected. These were both well-known and international brands offering products to end-consumers. To explore the dimension of media channel choice, delimitations were made to include traditional media in the form of a magazine ad and as social media in the form of a brand's Facebook page. Different media vehicles, whether they can be found within traditional or social media, differs in characteristics and effectiveness which has to be taken into account when analyzing results and drawing conclusions from the study. The designs of the ads were made to communicate a clear and easy-to-understand message not to make the message more complex than the

message of incongruity alone. Therefore, the ads can be said to be more informative rather than transformative in the way they seek to communicate with the viewer.

Furthermore, as the study included an investigation of the facets of customer loyalty and satisfaction, the study had to segment respondents into clusters of less and more loyal consumers. To facilitate this segmentation, an established framework was used[1] classifying individual consumers based on the dimensions of loyalty and satisfaction. It is however necessary to denote that other frameworks can be used to classify consumers. Careful consideration has to be made when applying this particular study's reasoning to other circumstances.

The study was delimited to include specific measures in order to facilitate the answering of the research questions. In terms of traditional marketing communications goals, attitudes and intentions were included to be investigated. Moreover, creativity, brand interest and brand ability was identified and captured under the umbrella concept marketing signals.

With the delimitations in both scale and scope, the results and implications from the result should mainly be assumed to be applicable to circumstances with similar prerequisites.

1.6 OUTLINE

The thesis is divided into five main chapters to guide the reader. The thesis starts off by presenting an introduction to the topic and specific problem area that will be examined throughout the thesis. This chapter also includes research questions and purpose of the study. Moreover, expected contribution as well as delimitations of the study to keep in mind in the processing of results and implications is presented. Next, theory and previous research within the academic areas that are of interest of the study will be presented. In the following chapter, the method that has guided the study process will be presented. The knowledge base from the theory chapter will thereafter be elaborated upon in the next chapter that will formulate the hypotheses that will be explored in the study. After that, results from the quantitative analysis will be presented. The thesis will end up with chapters that include discussion, conclusion, implications and a discussion of the limitations of the study at hand.

[1] The loyalty apostle model by Sasser and Jones, please see further explanation in chapter 4.
[2] This was later confirmed by the analysis that showed awareness means of 5,92 and 5,28 for the two brands used.

2 THEORY

In this section, the theoretical frameworks of the study are presented. In specific, the chapter will provide an overview of theories concerning schema theory and incongruity, brand extensions, customer commitment, social media, word-of-mouth and explanatory links. Further, three central concepts that will guide the structure and hypothesis generation will be elaborated upon.

2.1 SCHEMA THEORY

In order to make sense of the reality, people have to organize information in memory. Many diverging theories about the organization of information in the human mind exist, however, regarding the schema theory researchers agree to a high extent. (Törn, 2009)

"A schema is a cognitive structure that comprises information about a given domain" This is how Areni and Cox (1994) define the concept of schemas.

Past impressions form a structure of knowledge in the mind, which we try to organize memories around. The structure is formed by concepts and links that associate to the concepts. Derived from the knowledge structure, we form beliefs and opinions. This knowledge structure, schema, holds expectations that guide the processing of new information. For example, based on past experience and impressions, a girl can believe that the brand Chanel (concept) is glamorous (link). This knowledge structure is called a schema.

Schemas determine how people think and what kind of opinions people form exist at different levels. The mental pictures, schemas, that are developed and formed in the human mind can apply to a specific product category, but can also be formed around a specific brand (Fiske and Taylor, 2001; Törn, 2009). Brands are in fact more likely to be the concept that people organize knowledge around, rather than product categories. This derives to the fact that people are exposed to information regarding brands to a higher extent than specific product categories as the majority of advertising concerns brands, not product categories (Russo and Johnson 1980).

People try to find the most relevant schema and try to match the current structure as they come across new information. This new input or information does in turn affect the existing schema that will adjust to the new input the person have at hand. Schemas are thus not static,

but interact with information that people are exposed to in a continuous process (Mandler 1982). Information such as advertising and media exposure regarding familiar concepts will most likely often be similar to the existing associations. In that case there is a fit between the existing associations and the new information, in which case the schema is confirmed.

2.1.1 INCONGRUITY THEORY

One can say that something is incongruent when it lacks congruity: Lacking congruity can further be defined as "a lack of harmony, consistency or compatibility with one another" (Websters third new international dictionary, 1993). We are continuously encountered with new incoming information. In order to process this new information, the schema that we see fit is activated and processing begins.

Information is said to be schema congruent if the new input fits the existing associations one holds towards a certain object (Areni and Cox, 1994). Information that somehow contradicts the current associations results in a discrepancy. A contradiction, incongruity, between the established image and the new input appears. In that case, the perception does not fit with the expectations and the information is said to be schema incongruent (Törn, 2009).

Incongruity can appear in the relationship between almost anything. In a marketing setting, incongruity often applies to communication contradicting common expectations on the product or the brand. As incongruity appear between the established knowledge structure, the schema, and new information, schema incongruity emerge (Törn, 2009). If this occurs, the human mind will be uncomfortable with the mismatch and disaffirmed beliefs. In order to approach the mismatch, the mind will search for a solution, an explanation, by searching for alternative ways of making sense of the information. This search for an explanation demands more thoughts and result in a more thorough processing of the information at hand, than if the information would fit with the expectations (Mandler, 1982). The greater elaboration on the information, creates a larger number of associative links in the memory, which increases the likelihood of that the incongruity will be understood and resolved (Areni and Cox, 1994). The understanding of the incongruity leads to satisfaction in the human mind, which would not emerge if the information fitted perfectly with expectations. This leads to that incongruity can be more favorably evaluated than perfect congruity. Extreme incongruity does not evoke these positive outcomes as the contradiction becomes too evident not to be solved and evoke a

feeling of satisfaction. Hence, only moderately incongruent information is evaluated more favorably than congruity. (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989)

Incongruity within the field of marketing has been studied from different angles such as advertising and publicity (Sjödin, Törn, 2006). Sjödin and Törn (2006) capture all these angles under the concept brand image incongruity, which corresponds to a mismatch between a brand communication and existing brand associations. Brand communication in this context refers to any communication that impacts brand associations, e.g. advertising or public relations

Brand extensions have also been highlighted in the light of incongruity. Early research within the field has emphasized the importance of fit between the brand and the extension (e.g. Aaker and Keller 1990) However, later research on incongruity has pointed out the positive effects that brand image incongruity may have. Meyers-Levy et al (1994) found a positive relationship between incongruity and evaluations of brand extensions. The authors state that when a brand extension is moderately incongruent, people spend more time processing the incongruity and experience a satisfaction when the ambiguity that is a result of the incongruity is solved. This sense of satisfaction has a positive impact on the evaluation of the incongruent brand extension.

2.2 BRAND EXTENSIONS THEORY

In increasingly competitive markets, the costs of launching a new brand have increased substantially in the past decades. As a result, firms are using already established brands to facilitate the process of entering new markets. (Sjödin, 2008) One approach is to make a line extension, where a current brand name is used to enter a new market segment in the current brand's product class (Aaker and Keller, 1990). A brand extension is another approach, meaning that an existing brand is used to enter a completely new product category (Aaker and Keller, 1990), e.g. the brand Dove entering the hair care category. According to statistics, among all the new product launches in 2004, 80 % were brand extensions (www.msi.org). This number can be compared to the relative share of brand extensions in new product launches in the years of 1977-1984, where 40 % of all new product launches were brand extensions (Aaker and Keller, 1990). Brand extensions have thus become an increasingly attractive strategy to enter new categories.

The leverage of a strong brand name can impede the risks of product failure by leveraging the familiarity and knowledge about an existing brand (Aaker and Keller, 1990). Additionally, brand extensions can decrease the costs of gaining distribution, and can also benefit from economies of scale in terms of promotional and advertising expenditures (Morein, 1975).

Successful brand extensions often rely on several assumptions. One common assumption of brand extensions is that the consumer holds a positive attitude and beliefs towards the original brand. Further, the existing positive attitudes and beliefs about the parent brand facilitate the formation of positive attitudes towards the brand extension. Another common assumption is that negative associations are neither transferred to nor created by the brand extension (Aaker and Keller 1990) The risk of brand equity damage as a result of brand extensions has been tested empirically, and these studies indicate that brands are quite resistant to change and that dilution of brand equity is only a risk under certain circumstances (Sjödin, 2008). According to Keller and Sood (2003), extensions need to be salient, unambiguous, diagnostic and inconsistent in order to cause a dilution or damage to the parent brand equity. This poses a special threat to strategies involving incongruity within the brand extension.

The notion that negative associations cannot be transferred between the extension and the parent brand seems to be an effect only visible when it comes to brand extensions. For changes to other brand elements, such as change of a logo, attitude changes derived from changing a brand element seem to affect the general brand attitude (Walsh et al., 2010).

2.2.1 CONSUMER EVALUATIONS OF BRAND EXTENSIONS

According to Bousch and Loken (1991), brand extensions will be evaluated on the basis of the attitudes towards the parent brand and whether the brand extension is representative of or similar to the brand's current other products. If a consumer has knowledge about both the extension category and the parent brand, another effect arises: The perception of fit between the parent brand and the extension category. (Bousch and Loken, 1991) Previous research has shown several implications on attitudes arising from the perception of fit. The brand extension can facilitate the transfer of attitudes from the parent brand and extension category to the new extension. Further, it can moderate the relative influence of brand and category attitude on extension attitude. (Czellar, 2003)

The core idea of the concept of perceived fit that is central in the literature about brand extensions concerns the idea that consumers judge how similar the new product is to the brand and its existing products. The perceived fit for a brand extension should thus be high when the parent brand and the extension are similar and share many associations. In contrast, the extension could be regarded as of low perceived fit by consumer if the parent brand and the extension share few associations. (Sjödin, 2008) The general consensus from previous studies concerning perceived fit is that the higher the perceived fit is, the more positive is also the consumer's attitude towards the extension (Czellar, 2003; Grime et al. 2002). The major argument behind this conclusion is that the transfer of quality perceptions will be enhanced when the original category of the parent brand and the new category fits together (Aaker and Keller, 1990).

However, the consumer does not only evaluate the brand in relation to the parent brand, but also in relation to the new category. Smith, Shoben and Rips (1974) developed a two-step model for consumer judgments regarding category membership. In the first step, a rapid evaluation is made where the consumer tries to match the features of the object with the features of the category. If there is a clear match or a clear mismatch, the evaluation process is complete. However, in cases where some features match between the category and the extension but some do not, a slower processing is necessary. During this stage, a more thorough comparison of significant features of the category is made to determine whether category membership is present or not. This framework indicates that when there is a clear discrepancy between the category and the brand extension, a rapid evaluation may occur to determine the mismatch. This allows for further processing likely to occur when consumers are exposed to a piece of incongruent communication. In contrast, when there is no obvious match or mismatch, the evaluation will be processed for a longer time. When neither category membership nor category non-membership is evident the consumer will judge whether the attributes associated with the current brand can be used to develop the potential extension. (Bousch and Loken 1991)

Worth mentioning is that the concept of perceived fit has allowed for broader views on the concept as well. Sjödin (2006) interprets the concept broader to include not only fit between the brand and extension but also to the fit between the deeper meaning of the brand in consumers' lives and within the frame in which the new product is introduced.

2.2.2 EXPLANATORY LINKS

According to Bridges, Keller and Sood (2000), high perceived fit between the extension and the original brand occurs when consumers identify explanatory links that makes the brand category remain cohesive when an extension is introduced. These links should relate to the schema and provide cues in order to be able to adjust the consumer's existing schema to also fit in with the new piece of information at hand. Cohesive brand categories can be maintained in the consumer's mind if the consumer can find explanatory links that connect the parent brand with the extension. (Bridges et al., 2000) IKEA, for example, could successfully expand into new categories if the extension would allow consumers to unite the products within different categories with the link "a better everyday life at home". Explanatory links broaden the concept of perceived fit to include brand associations, of which product category associations are merely one type of brand association. Brand associations could entail any association linked to the brand, including attributes, benefits, packaging etc. (Keller, 1993) The relationship between the parent brand and the extension category will influence whether the salient parent brand associations will be considered as relevant in the extension category. Relevant associations can provide the basis for explanatory links that contribute to increase the perceived fit for the extension. Thus, establishing explanatory links in the consumer's minds should give a clear advantage when expanding the brand into new categories. (Bridges, et al., 2000) Consumers with a strong relationship to the brand are likely to have a more multifaceted and complete upset of salient associations to the brand (Törn, 2009). Therefore, they are more likely to identify such links. On the other hand, consumers not having a current relationship with the brand will likely have fewer salient associations to the brand that could help facilitating the resolution of incongruity. This area of knowledge fit in the structure and helps facilitating the research question as they may have an effect on the marketing communication measures that are intended to be measured.

2.3 CUSTOMER CONNECTION THEORY

Increasing the share of loyal customers is a common objective of many companies, as the assumed result of customer loyalty is a high profitability (Söderlund, 2001). A further assumption of many companies is that it is less costly to retain existing customers than to recruit new ones (Reicheld and Sasser, 1990).

To develop a strong consumer-brand relationship, it is crucial that the level of customer engagement should go beyond mere approval and rather towards a close relationship. In order to achieve close relationships, it is central that the brand manages to elicit favorable positive feelings and a personal attachment, rather than simply a favorable judgment about the functional dimensions of the brand (Keller, 2008). Based on this rationale, it is possible for consumers that hold positive emotions towards a particular brand to develop an emotional attachment towards the brand (Sjödin, 2008). The term brand connection, presented by Moorman and Zaltman (1992) summarizes the phenomena; brand connection can be viewed as an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship (Moormanand and Zaltman, 1992). Moreover, brand connection develops over time and is thus not a static concept (Keller, 2005). A study done by Walsh et al. (2010) investigated the effects on brand logo change on strongly connected and less connected consumers, and found that changes to brand elements affect different customer groups in different directions. New information that is inconsistent with the original brand-self-concept motivates highly connected customers to defend their strong relationship with the brand by evaluating the new information negatively. In contrast, consumers that do not perceive a strong brand connection are not impacted by changes in the brand to the same extent. Consumers with a low degree of brand connection are unlikely to regard the brand as an integral part of their persona, and should thus have a very limited personal relationship to the brand. (Walsh et al, 2010) When changes are made to the brand, the non-consumers are likely to perceive the change as novel, which could result in a more positive evaluation of the change and also the parent brand (Kohlia and Suri, 2002).

As concluded above, it is desirable to establish strong, lasting relationships with consumers. However, the notion of a relationship with customers also implies that the involved parties must nurture the relationship. According to Fournier (1998), there are different kinds of stress that can threaten a strong consumer-brand relationship. One type of relationship stress can occur when there is a breach of trust, failure to keep a promise or a perception of neglect on

behalf of one of the relationship partners. Fournier's argument is in line with the reasoning of Ahluwalia et al (2000), who state that changes to the brand can be perceived by the consumer as a threat to the relationship with the brand. (Ahluwalia et al., 2000). Further, consumers with a strong brand connection could even perceive changes in the brand and its associations as a threat to their self-brand connection (Escalas and Bettman, 2003). Because of the importance of the brand to the identity of connected consumers, both marketing decisions and behavior of the brand is of great importance to this group (Sjödin, 2008).

2.4 WORD-OF-MOUTH

2.4.1 POSITIVE WORD-OF-MOUTH

Word-of-mouth, further on denoted WOM, is often seen as a central indicator of customer loyalty. However, previous studies have failed to recognize a strong empirical relationship between customer loyalty and WOM. (Söderlund, 2001) Also, the order of the hierarchy of effects (please see chapter below) will impact the intentions of WOM. Intentions can be found in the hierarchy of effects after attitude, and thus attitude impacts the possibility of WOM. WOM has further been identified as the key in the vast majority of purchase decisions (Dichter, 1966).

The willingness to engage in positive WOM depends on several motivations. One main motivation in the light of incongruity is that consumers experience a feeling of being a pioneer when presented to an innovative product, which in turn encourages the consumer to talk about the product. (Dichter, 1966) In addition, the media channel choice has been proven to impact WOM intentions. Creative media choices are likely to increase the WOM intentions (Modig and Lethagen, 2008). Based on these motivations, there are several strategies for companies to successfully stimulate WOM. One strategy is to use the shock of difference, which means that incongruity could be used in marketing in order to make people stop and reflect upon the unusual angle of the brand. The shock of difference is likely to produce a tension which can be used a talk outlet, and thus produce WOM. Further, people also like to show their alertness to the difference by engaging in WOM. However, when employing the strategy shock of difference, it is central that the consumer is left with a sense of understanding and accepting the novelty and difference of the new product. (Dichter, 1966) In light of incongruity, it is thus important that the incongruity is accepted in order to be evaluated favorably.

2.4.2 NEGATIVE WORD-OF-MOUTH

The effect of dissatisfaction on WOM intentions has not been observed as closely as positive WOM. However, Sjödin (2007) unveiled a relationship between connected consumers and negative WOM. Consumers that are very committed to the brand are more likely to spread negative WOM if, for instance, a brand extension does not appeal to them (Sjödin, 2007).

According to Sjödin (2007), connected consumers that experience a higher degree of anger are more inclined to engage in negative WOM. There are various antecedents to the feeling of anger that could arise from a brand extension, but one of the primary antecedents to anger is the perceived fit. A key characteristic of anger is that it is often experienced when expectations are violated. More specifically, in the context of brand extensions, a low perceived fit could be a source of anger, as the ill-fit violates the expectations that consumers have on the brand.

2.5 SOCIAL MEDIA AND MEDIA RICHNESS THEORY

The phenomena of social media has gained increased interest from companies as a potential marketing channel in recent years (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009). Social media is defined by Mangold and Faulds (2009) as "consumer generated media".

The term of social media can be further characterized and defined with the aid of social presence theory and media richness theory (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009). According Short, Williams and Christie (1976), different types of media vary in the degree of social presence. Social presence can be defined as the visual and physical contact that can be achieved by two communication partners. Two factors influence the social presence are the level of intimacy (ranging from inter-personal to mediated) and immediacy (can be either synchronous or asynchronous). The social presence can be expected to be lower for mediated communication, e.g. phone conversation than interpersonal face-to- face communication. Further, asynchronous communication, such as e-mail is expected to lead to lower social presence than synchronous communication like online chat. The higher the social presence in the communication context, the larger the social influence the involved parties have on each other's behavior (Short, Williams and Christie, 1976). Another concept relating to social media is that of media richness, introduced by Daft and Lengel 1986. Daft and Lengel (1986) define media richness as "the ability of information to change understanding within a time interval" The concept of media richness is based on the assumption that the aim of any

communication is the resolution of ambiguity and reduction of uncertainty. According to the theory, different media varies in the degree of richness it possesses. Medias that possess a high degree of richness should be more effective than others in resolving ambiguity and uncertainty. (Daft and Lengel, 1986) The types of social media that score highest in the aforementioned dimensions are those that offer a two-way interaction in real-time, such as communities, virtual social worlds and virtual game worlds (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009).

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2009), the majority of social media could be classified as mid-to-high both in terms of information richness and social presence. Hence, social media contains both the characteristics that resolute ambiguity and reduction of uncertainty, as well as characteristics that increase the influence the communication has.

Marshall Macluan stated a famous quoute in 1960, "the medium is the message". This means that the media influences the impression of the communicated brand and can enhance stronger positive associations to the brand (Dahlén, 2005). Other studies have found empirical evidence for Macluans quote, demonstrating that the media choice will impact consumers' perception of the brand. (Assmus 1978; Dahlén, 2003; Dahlén 2005; Dahlén et al 2009; Fuchs 1964).

2.5.1 PARA-SOCIAL INTERACTION

The term para-social interaction was introduced by Horton and Wohl (1956), and refers to the apparent face-to-face interaction between media characters and audience members. In a para-social relationship, the user behaves as in a typical social relationship.

The concept of para-social interaction can provide valuable insights about the audience-media relationship (Auter and Palmgreen, 2000). Previous studies have shown that relationships develop between television characters and viewers. Loyal viewers of television series can become actively involved in the character's lives, and sometimes begin to interact with them as if they were real. (Russel and Stern, 2006) A number of factors can be attributed to the audience-media relationship, including identification with a person, interest in a person and a feeling of group interaction (Nordlund, 1978; Rosengren and Windahl, 1972). In the context of social media, previous studies have shown that para-social interaction is generated via the comment function in blogs and social networks (Ballentine and Marten 2005).

When the para-social attachment is high between the audience and the character, the degree of influence from the character on the audience is expected to increase (Russel and Stern, 2006). A higher para-social interaction can enhance both attitudes and intentions (Colliander and Dahlén, 2011). In the light of incongruity, para-social interaction can also contribute to a reduction of uncertainty towards a message conveyed.

2.6 CENTRAL CONCEPTS

The following chapter will give an introduction to the three central concepts – the hierarchy of effects, marketing signals and the loyalty apostle – that will provide the basis for the structuring of hypotheses and analysis of the research questions.

2.6.1 HIERARCHY OF EFFECTS

In marketing communication, the hierarchy of effects is a concept describing different stages that are predetermine a favorable outcome in the minds of the consumers. The hierarchy of effects describes the order of different communication goals. The first step is an interest in the category. Further, a sufficiently high brand awareness has to be in place in order for a brand attitude to be formed. The final step is achieved as the favorable brand attitude result in intentions to buy the brand. Purchase intention is what marketing communication should, in general terms, result in, (Dahlén and Lange, 2009), or more precise actual behavior. The common approach is to use behavioral intentions as proxies for actual behavior, based on reasonable strong relationships between intentions and behavior across many different issues (Sjödin, 2007). However, it should be noted that intentions is not equivalent to an actual behavior (Söderlund, 2011). This study takes a broader approach on intentions than not only purchasing intentions. Recommendations by consumers are an essential ingredient for a successful brand as the brand gets free brand ambassadors that help market the brand to fellow consumers at a higher effectiveness than what the brand can accomplish on its own (Söderlund, 2001). Moreover, this feature increases in importance as more consumer generated media is used and as communication across the world is boosted by the globalization and new information technology. With this background, word-of-mouth intention has been identified to be a key measure for brands and should be included as a part of the hierarchy of effects. The order of the hierarchy of effects has implications for how theories within different areas can be applied. As purchase intentions are preceded by attitude, theories suggesting implications on brand attitude can also be applied to intentions.

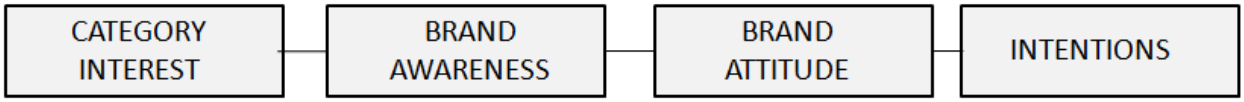


Figure 1: Hierarchy of Effects

In this study, only the two last steps in the hierarchy of effects will be addressed. Firstly, category interest is not applicable in the context of brand extensions as the different extensions per se comes from different product categories. Moreover, as the study is done on two well-known brands, brand awareness is predicted to be sufficiently high in both cases.[2]

2.6.2 MARKETING SIGNALS

The hierarchy of effects might be a narrow perspective on the goals of advertising and other marketing communications. Other effects than liking of the message and intentions might occur as a result of communication, which might still have positive effects on the brand. These other effects will be addressed under the umbrella concept signal effects.

Brand extension is a concept relating foremost to established brands that want to widen their scope of offerings to new or existing customers that otherwise risk to perceive the brand as boring or stagnating. In this setting, perceived creativity is a very relevant concept limiting the risk of boredom being connected to the established brand's image.

CREATIVITY

Creativity is a marketing signal that can both be regarded as a signal effect itself, but creativity also has an impact on other marketing signals like brand ability (Dahlén et al,, 2008). Creativity has also been identified to be the main mission of all advertising (Koslow et al., 2003), which is another view than that posted by Dahlén and Lange (2009). By including both the traditional view of that purchase intentions is what marketing communications should result in, and this more image focused, the study aim to capture several of the most important measures of marketing communication effectiveness.

Developing a creative concept demands more effort than developing standard solutions. In the light of brand extensions, the effort put in the product development process will thus likely be higher for incongruent extensions. (Dahlén et al., 2008) In prior studies, creativity has mainly

[2] This was later confirmed by the analysis that showed awareness means of 5,92 and 5,28 for the two brands used.

been studied in the context of advertising. In this study, the notion of creativity will be applied on a broader scale to include marketing communications in general, including brand extensions.

BRAND INTEREST

One central signal effect is brand interest. Brand interest is defined as a customer's openness and curiosity towards a brand. The concept of brand interest involves dimensions of both a motivational tendency and an action tendency. According to Machleict, Allen and Madden (1993), a boredom factor can arise for mature brands even though attitude is positive and the brand provides adequate satisfaction. The authors argue that an affect evoking piece of communication, whether it is an ad or an extension, for a mature brand can make consumers "think twice" about a brand, and this could lead to a re-evaluation of a brand. (Machleit, Allen and Madden, 1993) A brand incongruent information in general has shown to enhance brand interest. (Törn, 2009)

BRAND ABILITY

Brand ability is an antecedent to corporate ability, which refers to consumers' beliefs that the company has the ability to improve current products as well as develop new, innovative products. (Luo and Bhattacharya, 2006). Prior studies have uncovered a positive relationship between the success of new product introductions and corporate ability (Brown and Dacin, 1997). According to Dahlén, Rosengren and Törn (2008), brands demonstrating the ability to "think outside the box" by acting different from competition or that dare diverge from their historical path will signal a higher brand ability.

2.6.3 THE LOYALTY APOSTLE

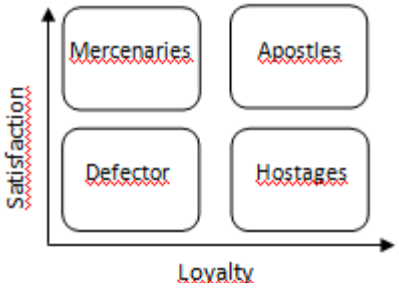


Figure 1: The loyalty apostle

The loyalty apostle is an established framework for categorizing customers into different clusters depending on their degree of loyalty towards a company or brand. The apostle model accounts for two dimensions as part of customer loyalty, satisfaction and loyalty. The four categories that can be distinguished by using the loyalty apostle model are apostles, defectors, mercenaries and hostages. (Sasser and Jones, 1995) For

the hypothesis generation section of this thesis, consumers will be classified into two groups depending on their responses in the loyalty questions covering the dimensions from the loyalty apostle. Consumers that rate high on both will be classified as connected consumers and consumers that rate low will be classified as disconnected consumers. In order to classify into the connected consumer cluster, the respondents had to score at least 6 in each of the two dimensions on the ten point Likert scale used in the question. The aim with the naming of the consumer clusters was to illustrate the consumers' relationship, connection, to the brand that they were asked about; Connected illustrating a mental bond between the consumer and the brand as well as a history of doing business together, and disconnected to demonstrate the lack of such bonds. We will compare the two different groups' reactions towards the proposed brand extensions.

2.7 STRUCTURE GUIDING THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS

We have chosen the two major concepts, hierarchy of effects and signal effects, to guide the following hypotheses generation. We regard this an adequate structure, as hierarchy of effects covers the traditional goals with marketing communications and captures a chain of effects applicable in all marketing communication settings while marketing signals covers more contemporary communication goals. Brand extension is a concept that is related to established brands per se, which may suffer from boredom (Sjödin and Törn, 2006). Therefore, in this context, the notion of creativity, brand ability and brand interest gets even more important. Combined, the two chosen frameworks captures both traditional marketing goals directly linked to purchase, as well as a more current view on marketing goals that addresses communication effects in brand image building.

The hypothesis generation will have a clear link to the theory of customer connection. To segment the consumers into clusters, the level of connection towards the brand, addressed by the loyalty apostle model, has been used as the basis for segmentation. Consumers ending up in the apostle area (scoring higher than 7 on a 10 point Likert scale both in satisfaction and loyalty), will further on be addressed as connected consumers, whereas consumers ending up in the other areas will be addressed as disconnected consumers. The aim is to capture and highlight the tie, both in terms of emotions and actions that the consumer feels towards the brand.

3 HYPOTHESES GENERATION

In the following section, hypothesis will be generated based on the theories presented in the previous section. The hypotheses are generated on three different levels, attitude, intentions and marketing signals.

3.1 ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCONGRUENT BRAND EXTENSIONS

When evaluating an incongruent brand extension, consumers' evaluations will differ depending on their existing knowledge about the extension category and the parent brand.

According to previous studies, a moderate level of incongruity in the context of brand extensions could have a positive impact on the extension evaluation, as the consumer can experience satisfaction when he manages to solve the ambiguity surrounding the incongruent extension. However, as the literature highlights, the evaluation of a brand extension and the resulting attitude might differ depending on the level of connection and the emotional attachment the consumer feels towards the brand. When introducing an inconsistent change to the brand, connected consumers are prone to evaluate the brand in a negative light, as the change might impact and pose as a threat to their current relationship with the brand. According to Walsh's (2010) theory, a change to a brand element will be evaluated negatively by connected consumers. A brand extension could in line with a brand element, be considered as a form of marketing communication. This theory of how brand element changes are thought to impact connected consumers it thus thought to hold true for brand extensions as well. Connected consumers are therefore predicted to have a lower extension attitude towards an incongruent brand extension compared to the attitude towards a congruent extension.

H1a: Connected consumers will hold a more unfavorable attitude towards incongruent brand extensions than towards congruent brand extensions.

Brand extensions theory of Aaker and Keller (1990) suggests that negative associations will not be transferred between a brand extension and the parent brand. Therefore, any possible negative impact that an incongruent extension might have is predicted not to have a negative impact on the parent brand attitude of connected consumers. No difference in parent brand attitude is hence expected emerge between the connected consumers exposed to the incongruent and the connected consumers exposed to the congruent extension.

Brand extensions are identified as a piece of brand communication that in line with Walsh's (2010) theory would not reflect back negatively on the parent brand if the extension is evaluated negatively. However, other types of marketing signals arising from modifications to brand elements have been claimed to reflect back negatively to the parent brand. As this specific angle can be tested in this context, the hypothesis is argued to be relevant even though it not directed and hence suggest a lack of effect on the specific measure.

H1b: Connected consumers' parent brand attitude will be equally positive towards brands launching incongruent brand extensions as for brands launching congruent brand extensions.

Less connected consumers often hold a more neutral opinion of the brand, which will in turn impact their evaluations of incongruent brand extensions. Since there is no strong bond between the consumer and the brand, less connected consumers will not be threatened by changes to the brand to the same extent as more connected consumers. As there is a reason for the consumer currently not being classified as a connected consumer, a change would rather be evaluated positively. A new, surprising change to the brand associations like an incongruent extension could act as a catalyst for a positive evaluation as the brand has something new to offer.

H1c: Disconnected consumers will hold a more favorable attitude towards incongruent brand extensions than towards congruent extensions.

The theory of Walsh (2010) and Kohlia and Suri (2002) auspicate that attitude changes derived from changes to brand elements, affect the attitude towards the parent brand. In the case of brand extensions, no negative effects are predicted that could contradict this reasoning based on the consensus that negative attitudes are not transferred between a brand extension and a parent brand. Hence, the effect on extension attitude in a positive direction is also expected to show an effect in a positive direction on the parent brand attitude among disconnected consumers.

H1d: Disconnected consumers' parent brand attitude will be more positive towards brands launching incongruent brand extensions than towards brands launching congruent brand extensions.

The media chosen to communicate the brand extension should have an impact on the perceived fit of the brand extension, as different media vehicles vary in their effectiveness in terms of solving the recipient's degree of ambiguity and uncertainty. As perceived fit is an antecedent to brand attitude, the media choice should also affect the extension attitude. The degree of media richness of the communication channel will have a central role in how a message is perceived by the recipient. Media vehicles that possess a high degree of richness should be more appropriate to present more inconsistent messages, as the recipient should have an easier time finding resolution to contradictory messages in media rich medias. Hence, a media scoring high in richness, like social media, should be a more appropriate channel to convey more complex messages that will make the recipient experience ambiguity and confusion, as the media vehicle will increase the opportunity for resolution of the communicated message. Those media that are particularly high in terms of media richness are those that allow for two-way interaction in real-time, like communities. Communities that fulfill these criteria should thus be a more appropriate communication channel for a message that will evoke ambiguity, like the communication of an incongruent extension.

Para-social interaction, the level of experienced attachment between an audience and a character, is an additional factor that can help reduce uncertainty, in this case connected to an incongruent extension. A high degree of para-social interaction can also enhance attitudes, which should result in a higher attitude towards incongruent extensions communicated through social media compared to incongruent extensions communicated through traditional media.

H1e: Consumers will hold more positive attitudes towards incongruent brand extensions launched through social media vehicles than incongruent brand extensions launched through traditional media vehicles.

One strategy to enhance the perceived fit of brand extensions is to establish explanatory links that can help the consumer to connect the brand extension to the parent brand. The strategy to emphasize salient associations of the parent brand should be particularly beneficial when introducing an extension that can be perceived to be of low fit, as it can help facilitate the consumers' processing of the incongruity, and thus result in more positive attitudes.

Even though both connected and disconnected consumers are able to detect incongruity, it is likely that connected consumers that are more familiar with a brand are faster to notice and classify a low fit as an interference with their expectations on the brand. A slower classification for disconnected consumers is likely to result in that the consumers make use of both steps in the model for consumer judgment presented by Smith, Shoben and Rips (1974) as nor a complete match or a complete mismatch can be detected in the first step of evaluation. The inclusion of an explanatory link in the incongruent communication is likely to increase elaboration in the second step of the evaluation process. An increased elaboration and thus an increased chance of resolution of the incongruity has been proven to positively affect the outcome. Therefore, incongruent extensions communicated together with an explanatory link should result in a more favorable evaluation of the incongruent extension for disconnected consumers compared to the evaluation of an incongruent extension without such link.

H1f: Disconnected consumers will hold a more favorable extension attitude towards incongruent brand extensions communicated with an explanatory link than towards incongruent brand extensions communicated without an explanatory link.

3.2 INTENTIONS TOWARDS INCONGRUENT BRAND EXTENSIONS

Intentions, as the last step in the hierarchy of effects, are preceded by attitudes. The attitude that a consumer holds towards an extension should therefore have a positive relationship to the intentions that arise in the mind of that same consumer, both in terms of purchase intentions and WOM. Consumers that are connected to the brand also have an emotional attachment to the brand. The emotional attachment will have effects on the intentions related to the brand extension, especially in terms of WOM.

Newness and innovation are two important motivators for consumers to engage in positive WOM about a product or brand. This implies that incongruity could be a cue that encourages WOM, as the innovativeness and shock of difference can make the consumer stop and reflect about the message. The satisfaction the consumer experiences when understanding the incongruity will encourage him or her to spread positive WOM. However, for the shock of difference strategy to be successful, a prerequisite is that the consumer understands and accepts the novelty. For connected consumers, the newness is expected not to be evaluated as

novel, rather as a threat towards the consumer-brand relationship. Therefore, connected consumers are expected to have a lower tendency to engage in positive WOM when exposed to an incongruent extension.

H2a: Connected consumers will have lower intentions to spread positive WOM when exposed to incongruent brand extensions than when exposed to congruent brand extensions.

The intentions by connected consumers derived from the brand extensions deserve extra attention as the strong emotions can pose a threat to the company. Anger is a major catalyst of negative WOM, and in the context of brand extensions, anger could arise when there is a lack of perceived fit between the brand extension and the parent brand. Sjödin's (2007) teory has outlined that consumers that experience a high connection towards the brand and know the brand well are more inclined to spread negative word-of-moth in case of changes to the brand that they do not approve of. Therefore, due to the predicted negative evaluation of incongruent extension, it is predicted that connected consumers will be more prone to engage in negative WOM when exposed to an incongruent extension than when exposed to a congruent extension.

H2b: Connected consumers will have higher intentions to spread negative WOM when exposed to incongruent brand extensions than when exposed to congruent brand extensions.

According to theory by Ahluwalia et al (2000), anger should not arise and evoke negative WOM among disconnected consumers, since the lack of perceived fit should not present an apparent concern to those that do not have a strong relationship with the brand to defend. As the theory by Kohlia and Suri (2002) emphasizes, less connected consumers could perceive a change to the brand as novel, which will lead to an increasingly positive attitude, spurring positive WOM.

H2c: Disconnected consumers will have higher intentions to spread positive WOM when exposed to incongruent brand extensions than when exposed to congruent brand extensions.

Less connected consumers' brand extension purchase intentions are dependent on the specific extension category and related category interest, as the category interest comes first in the hierarchy of effects. Therefore, the brand extension purchasing intention is not as relevant to analyze as parent brand purchasing intention for less connected consumers – does the positive

reactions towards the extension help the parent brand? The hierarchy of effects has outlined a positive relationship between attitude and intentions. As less connected consumers are thought to have a higher parent brand attitude when exposed to incongruent extensions compared to congruent extensions, the positive effect is also expected to be transferred to the purchasing intentions of the parent brand.

H2d: Disconnected consumers will have higher parent brand purchase intentions when exposed to incongruent brand extensions than when exposed to congruent brand extensions.

Social media allows for two-way communication (e.g. comments), which has proven to generate para-social interaction between the recipient and the sender of the message. A high degree of experienced para-social interaction has shown to enhance attitudes and intentions. Further, previous studies have shown that para-social interaction can have a positive impact on the purchase intentions and that the influence of the sender of the message is stronger when the recipient experiences a higher para-social interaction. In line with this reasoning social media should, as a result of a higher experienced para-social interaction among its users and a reduction of uncertainty, have greater impact on the purchase intentions of the recipients of the message than traditional media. Additionally, as disconnected consumers are thought to evaluate the incongruent extension favorably, this positive effect is also thought to affect the purchasing intentions.

H2e: Consumers will have higher purchase intentions towards incongruent brand extensions launched through social media vehicles than towards incongruent brand extensions launched through traditional media vehicles.

3.3 MARKETING SIGNALS

Signal affects can be derived from marketing communications, which makes the analysis of connected consumers' changes in perceived signal effects deriving from incongruity of great interest. The boredom risk factor of mature brands should be more evident for consumers that have a strong relationship and already hold a positive attitude towards the brand. Connected consumers that currently have a strong relationship with the brand should be more prone to define the magnitude of the difference as an incongruent extension is launched compared to congruent extension.

3.3.1 CREATIVITY

According to Machleit, Allen and Madden (1993), two major threats to established brands are predictability and disinterest from the consumers. According to Dahlén, Rosengren and Törn (2008) , one strategy to revitalize brands is for them to reinvent themselves via creative advertising. Creative advertising signals that the brand has something interesting to offer, and could help brands to stay in touch with consumers. The concept of creativity need not be limited to advertising, but could also be analyzed beyond the scope of advertising. Brand extensions are one source of brand-related communication from which brand associations can origin. Reinventing and revitalizing the brand's offering by launching an incongruent brand extension clearly different from the brand's current offering should decrease the predictability associated with the brand's current image. The piece of communication transferring the message of the incongruent brand extension is therefore expected to lead to an increased perceived creativity in the minds of the connected consumers.

H3a: Connected consumers will perceive a higher degree of creativity related to incongruent brand extensions than related to congruent brand extensions.

The perceived creativity for a brand launching an extension should also be affected by the media channel choice. Communication of complex and ambiguous messages is better presented in environments that are characterized by a high level of media richness and para-social interaction. The presentation of an incongruent brand extension does not only include the incongruent extension itself, but also the marketing signals tied to the marketing communications, in this case new ways of thinking and creativity. In settings with high para-social interaction, the message of the marketing communication should be enhanced. Therefore, the marketing signal creativity should be perceived higher in social media vehicles compared to traditional media vehicles.

H3b: Consumers will perceive a higher degree of creativity related to incongruent brand extensions launched through social media vehicles than to incongruent brand extensions launched through traditional media vehicles.

3.3.2 BRAND INTEREST

Creative communication signals that the brand has something interesting to offer, and could help brands to stay in touch with connected consumers that otherwise risk to decrease their interest in the brand and perceive it as predictable. The unconventional path and the new strategic direction associated with the incongruent extension should therefore increase the brand interest that the connected consumers experience towards the brand launching the incongruent extension.

H4a: Connected consumers will perceive a higher degree of brand interest in brands that launch incongruent brand extensions than in brands that launch congruent brand extensions.

The communication effect, in this case signal effects and related brand interest, of complex messages should be affected in positive direction when communicated through social media scoring high in media richness and para-social interaction. Therefore, a brand launching incongruent extensions is expected to be considered as more interesting when presenting the message in a social media setting compared to a traditional media setting.

H4b: Consumers will perceive a higher degree of brand interest in brands that launch incongruent brand extensions through social media vehicles than in brands that launch incongruent brand extensions through traditional media vehicles.

3.3.3 BRAND ABILITY

Brand ability is a signal effect anteceding from corporate ability. Brands that do something different signals a willingness to step outside the box, and this gives an indication that the brand will be able to develop interesting offers in the future. In order to develop an incongruent brand extension, one has to put in more effort than merely applying a standard solution. This signals that the brand has the capacity to stay relevant in the future by staying innovative through developing new products. It is predicted that connected consumers that have genuine interest in the decisions and actions concerning their brand acknowledge this increased effort.

H5a: Connected consumers will perceive a higher brand ability towards brands that launch incongruent brand extensions than towards brands that launch congruent brand extensions.

The ability to stay relevant in the future can also be perceived as the ability to adapt to changes in the market and therefore be prepared for the future - doing something different than doing things the way they have always been done. This reasoning is not only applicable to what products to market, but also how to market the products. A brand that communicates through social media should signal a willingness to adapt to the current media landscape and thus be better equipped to conquer challenges and changes in the future. Therefore, a brand communicating a brand extension through a relatively new media channel, social media, should evoke higher perceived brand ability than a brand communicating a brand extension through a traditional media vehicle.

H5c: Consumers will perceive a higher brand ability for brands that launch incongruent brand extensions through social media vehicles than for brands that launch incongruent brand extensions through traditional media vehicles.

3.4 Illustration of Hypothesis and Research Questions

To illustrate how all hypothesis fit in the structure of the thesis and, and how they in combination assists the answering to the three research questions, the following two figures are introduced.

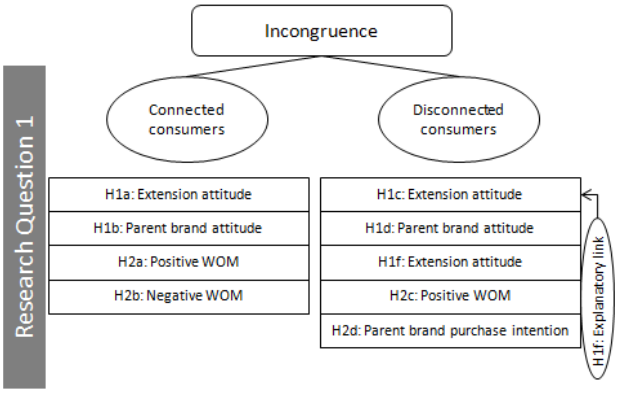


Figure 3: Illustrating Research Question 2 & 3

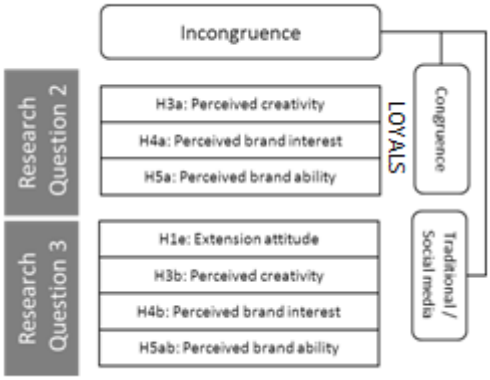


Figure 2: Illustrating Research Question 1

4 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the strategies that have been deemed appropriate to assess the phenomenon will be outlined. The chapter will start off with a description of the topic and initial research, followed by research approach, experimental design, pre-test design and an in-depth description of the main study. Finally, research quality and analysis tool will be discussed.

4.1 TOPIC AND INITIAL RESEARCH

Before settling a specific topic and research question, an initial screening on the main areas and concepts was conducted. Three main areas of interest were identified to constitute the main topics of the study; incongruity, brand extensions and social media. Connecting to the area social media, the loyalty dimension can be found. Social media such as twitter and facebook constitute specific settings for marketers which need to be taken into account in order to apply the findings in practice; Threads on twitter as well as "pages" on facebook are mainly directed to consumers that have a positive attitude towards the brand – consumers that like the brand – and are therefore more likely to be brand loyals. Traditional media, on the other hand, will be exposed to consumers regardless of their personal attitude and relationship with the brand. Therefore, loyalty was identified to be a key concept in the study to fully grasp the differences in settings between a traditional and a social media setting. A last concept to be included, also especially relevant in the choice of media and incongruity setting, was the concept of explanatory links. The motivation was to analyze whether explanatory links could help facilitate extension attitudes among disconnected consumers, who could be in the need of aid to build the connection between the extension and the parent brand.

4.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study takes its starting point in established knowledge about the central concepts in the study. This theoretical basis will deduce hypotheses that will be scrutinized through an empirical study and later be supported or not supported. As it is an academic study, the aim is moreover to contribute to the academic community and suggest new angles of incidents to the established theory. This study will hence take a deductive approach together with some facets of inductive elements. (Bryman and Bell, 2007)

The study intends to establish a causal relationship between ad exposure and attained communication effect. Furthermore, the study is of a quantitative nature where we used statistic design, which enables statistical analysis and testing of dependent variables (Malholtra, 2010).

With the aim of finding conclusions that can be generalized, we used a quantitative approach. The study was conducted as an experiment where participants were exposed to a piece of advertisement followed by a survey.

4.3 EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

With the aim of coming as close as possible to a real life situation with our experiment, the study was decided to take place on the internet. We considered the special characteristics of our study, the comparison between traditional media and social media (internet based per definition[3]), in the choice. We concluded that less disadvantages are present in the traditional media-online setting compared to the social media-offline setting. The experiment was conducted through the use of an URL that linked the respondent to the survey. The survey first exposed the respondent to an ad or a social media web page, both featuring one of the experimental scenarios, whereupon the respondent answered the survey.

4.3.1 MANIPULATION OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

The manipulation of independent variables was achieved by exposing groups of respondents to a message that consisted of a brand introducing a brand extension. The independent variables in the experiment are levels of incongruity, media channel choice and the use of explanatory links.

The experimental design consisted of 8 manipulation groups and 4 control groups, both

	Brand 1 TM	Brand 2 TM	Brand 1 SM	Brand 2 SM
Congruent BE	Duracell Batteries	NF Socks	Duracell Batteries	NF Socks
Incongruent BE	Duracell Light bulbs	NF Skin Care	Duracell Light bulbs	NF Skin Care
Incongruent BE with E.L	Duracell Light bulbs w. text	NF Skin Care w. text	Duracell Light bulbs w. text	NF Skin Care w. text

[3] Kaplan and Haenlein (2009) defines social media as follows: Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.

divided equally between two different brands and between the traditional media setting and the social media setting.

Table 1: Survey versions

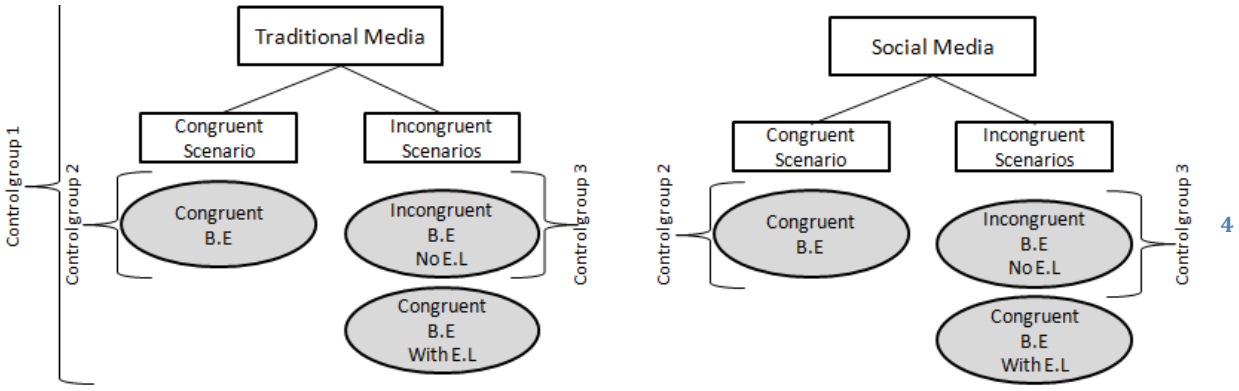


Figure 4: Groups and control groups - Main study

4.4 PRE-TEST

4.4.1 PRE-TEST DESIGN AND CHOICE OF BRANDS AND EXTENSIONS

In order to identify the more appropriate incongruent brand extensions for the main study, a pre-test was conducted. The brands selected for the pre-test were chosen in accordance with Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale. According to Aaker's brand personality dimensions, there are 5 different personalities of brands; sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. According to the scale, each of the brand personalities has 2-4 personality traits (Aaker, 1997). The framework distinguishes between brand personalities that humans can have, and those personality types that only brand can possess. Sincerity, excitement and competence are personality types that humans can possess, whereas sophistication and ruggedness are only applicable to, in this case, brands.

It came naturally that ten well-known brands were chosen for the pre-study. Firstly, well known brands have established brand associations tied to it, which increases the relevance of the whole concept brand incongruent information (Törn, 2009). Secondly, the majority of

[4] B.E = Brand Extension, E.L. = Explanatory Link

advertising in media is for well-known brands. Thirdly, the perceptions that consumers have about an established brand are harder to influence than perceptions for an unfamiliar brand, which in turn increases the robustness of the result of the study (Dahlén et al., 2008).

Ten brands in total were selected according to the brand personality traits, two for every personality dimension. A prerequisite was that each of the brands were well known, as established associations to the brand are essential to have in order for consumers to grasp the incongruity (Törn, 2008). A brainstorming session was conducted to come up with incongruent brand extensions for each of the ten brands. For the full list of brands and proposed extensions, see appendix 1. The incongruent brand extensions were presented and followed by five questions, all measured on seven-point Likert scales. There is no defined scale or established framework for identifying different levels of incongruity (Sjödin and Törn, 2006), therefore four questions regarding incongruity were included. Firstly, the two dimensions of incongruity; relevancy and expectancy, defined by Heckler and Childers (1992), were tested together with the perception of fit. These dimensions have also been noted to affect incongruity by for example Areni and Cox (1994). Furthermore, the attitude towards the extensions was measured. Secondly, respondents were asked how well the brand and the extension fitted together as well as how typical the extension was regarded to be. Lastly, respondents' attitudes towards the extension were measured by asking

4.4.2 PRE-TEST EXECUTION

The pre-test was conducted through the online survey tool Qualtrics. The respondents were recruited using a convenience sample, where the survey link was passed on to family and friends. A convenience sample was used due to its accessibility. In total, 24 respondents completed the survey. The average age on the respondents was 25.

4.4.3 RESULTS FROM PRE-TEST

The pre-test aimed at identifying two brand extensions suitable to be included in the main study. One criteria of the selection was that the two brands chosen for the main study needed to belong to different personality dimensions according to Aaker's personality scale. The selection of more than one brand for the study decreased the risk that brand specific settings would affect the result. The reasoning was that a clear differentiator between the brands, like personality, would ensure that attitudes arising towards the extensions tested depended on the incongruity/media choice rather than the brand itself.

The selection of brands between the different personality groups was based on the following criteria; a) an expectancy level that could be considered moderate, b) a high perceived relevance and c) a favorable attitude. The first criteria was based on previous theoretical findings that point out that moderate incongruity has the most positive communication effects compared to both extreme incongruity as well as congruency (Sjödin and Törn, 2008). The second criteria derive from Areni and Cox (1994) and Heckler and Childers (1992) conclusion that incongruent and unexpected messages were evaluated more favorable if the relevance was high rather than low.[5]

The most promising extensions according to the presented criteria were Duracell light bulbs and the North Face skin care. According to the brand personality scale, these brands have two different personalities. Duracell could be considered to belong to the personality dimension of competency, since if fulfills the main criteria which are reliable, intelligent and successful. In contrast, the North Face could be considered to classify to the ruggedness criteria, which includes the personality traits outdoorsy and tough. These two personality types differ in that competence can be a trait of a human personality, whereas ruggedness is not applicable to humans (Aaker, 1997).

4.5 MAIN STUDY

4.5.1 EXECUTION

The main study was conducted using the online survey tool Qualtrics. A questionnaire was developed and distributed online. The survey was open 20 days, from 2012-02-14 to 2012-03-04. In total, 360 respondents completed the survey. The link was passed on to 1200 persons, which corresponds to a completion rate of 30%.

4.5.2 SAMPLE

As for the pre-test, a convenience sample was used in the recruitment of respondents in the main study. The limitations with a convenience sample was taken into consideration, but was however identified as the most efficient and effective way of collecting the data due to its

[5] The results of the study showed a relevancy level of 3,67 for North face (4,14 in pre-study) and 4,48 for Duracell (4,70 in pre-study). The unexpectancy for North face was 4,43 (5,05 in pre-study) and 3,49 for Duracell (4,20 in pre-study).

accessibility. What should be noted is regardless of the fact that a convenience sample pose some limitations to the study, the methods is more widely used than one can think (Bryman and Bell, 2007). This is advantageous for our study, as the results will be more accurately compared to other studies that used a convenience sample as well. The age distribution of the sample was widespread, as respondents were aged between 20-68. In terms of gender, the distribution was 54% female and 46% male. Thus, the sample used for the main study was heterogeneous.

The survey link was distributed via facebook and e-mail. We considered the vast majority that was exposed to the link to the survey to be experienced adopters of the phenomenon social media. This due to the fact that the link partly was distributed through social media (facebook) as well as the fact that it was sent out to a young population (mainly students) where almost everyone, 96%, uses social media (Socialwebb, 2011). Hence, the sample was in line with the recommendation by Gallagher, Parson and Foster (2010) to use experienced adopters when studying phenomenon not familiar to the whole population.

4.5.3 DESIGN OF ADVERTISEMENTS

According to Rossiter and Percy (1997) and the famous Rossiter and Percy grid, the nature of the motivations behind purchase of the product will have implications on what type of advertising that is most effective. This study involves four different brands and relating incongruent and congruent extensions; rechargeable batteries, light bulbs, socks and skincare from the brands Duracell and The North Face. According to the Rossiter-Percy grid, these products could be classified as having informational motives behind purchase that can be satisfied by providing information about the product or brand. In the case of this study, the informative purchase motivation could be classified as that Percy and Rossiter labels “normal depletion”, which starts with a state of mild annoyance and achieves a sense of convenience after the product has been purchased. Further, all the products could be classified to be of low involvement. According to the Rossiter-Percy grid, for low involvement/informational brands, the most efficient advertising strategy is one that emphasizes few benefits and that has a simple format. (Donovan et al., 1991) The framework of Rossiter and Percy guided the process of developing the ads. However, as different brands and products were displayed in the ads, the usage of stated benefits in the ads was avoided, in order to make the results comparable and not dependent on various claims. Rather, instead of using benefits, the usage

of two well-known brands could in this case be regarded as the "benefit" of the ad. The same wording was used in all the ads "X proudly introduces Y", in order to make the results comparable.

Previous studies have shown a correlation between the size of the ad and learning. Larger ads produce better learning. (Kosslyn and Alper, 1977; Kosslyn, 1980) In order not to corrupt the results between the social media and traditional media, the ads placed in both mediums had the same size and proportions. Further, another factor that was taken into account when developing the ad was the order of the picture and text. A study conducted by Brainerd, Desrochers and Howe (1981) uncovered that learning is enhanced when the order of the ad content is picture-word rather than the opposite why this design was employed in the study. Examples of the advertisements used in the study can be found in appendix 2.

4.6 MEASURES

ATTITUDES: Brand attitude, ad attitude and extension attitude were measured in the survey. The brand attitude as well as the extension attitude was measured on a seven-point Semantic Differential Scale consisting of three items: good/bad, negative/positive, satisfactory/unsatisfactory. The measure is used previously by for example Loken and Ward (1990), Simonin and Ruth (1998) and Dahlén, Lange, Sjödin and Törn (2005). Based on measures used by MacKenzie and Lutz (1989), ad attitude was measured with three items on a seven-point semantic differential scale; good/bad, pleasant/unpleasant, favorable/unfavorable. All attitude questions could be calculated into indexes as Cronbach's alpha was 0,910 for brand attitude, 0,934 for ad attitude and 0,953 for extension attitude.

LOYALTY: In order to determine the degree of loyalty the respondent felt towards the brand tested, the Apostle Model of Jones and Sasser (1995), was used as the basis for formulating questions. The purpose of testing the loyalty towards the brand tested was to ensure that certain attitudes towards the proposed extension of each brand did not derive from dissatisfaction of the brand in question or from an disinterest in purchasing products from the particular brand. Also, the degree of loyalty was used as the basis for segmenting the respondents in the analysis of the results. The two questions that make up the The Apostle Model were used in the study; "I'm satisfied with x" and "it is likely that I would buy something from brand y". Answers were recorded on a ten-point Likert scale, ranging from 1

(Completely disagree) to 10 (Completely agree). The two questions concerning loyalty could be indexed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0,767.

PERCEIVED FIT: To measure perceived fit, the respondents were asked to what extent they thought that the brand and the new brand extension match. This question has previously been used by Lange et al. (2003) and Sjödin (2008). The question was rated on a seven point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Does not match at all) to 7 (Matches very well).

PURCHASING INTENTIONS: Purchasing intention was measured based on the question " I would like to buy a product from brand X". We also asked explicitly for the purchasing intention for the brand extension with the question " I would like to buy the Y (brand extension)". The measures were recorded on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Completely Disagree) to 7 (Completely Agree). As we aimed to measure both the purchasing intention for the brand, as well as the purchasing intention for the brand extension, we adjusted the question initially used buy Colliander and Dahlén (2011) "I would like to buy something from brand X". By the adjusted wording, we hope to have made a more distinctive difference between *something* from the brand, and the brand extension.

WOM INTENTION: In order to investigate both the word of mouth intentions for positive as well as negative word of mouth, two questions were used. The respondents' intentions to positive word of mouth were measured as intentions-as-expectations with the questions "Is it likely that you would recommend the product?" This question corresponds to intentions-as-expectations explained by Reicheld (2003). However, we prioritized to include negative word of mouth in the main study, instead of an item measuring intentions-as-wants. This despite the fact that Reicheld (2003), suggests using the two dimensions together. To measure negative word of mouth, or the tendency to criticize the brand, respondents were asked "If someone asked you to review the product, would you criticize it? This question is taken from Sjödin, 2008. Previous research suggests that prompted word of mouth is by far the most common, which furthers supports the design of the question. The two questions on word of mouth were both measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Unlikely) to 7 (Very likely).

RELEVANCY AND EXPECTANCY: In previous studies in incongruity (e.g. Heckler and Childers, 1992), evaluation, relevancy and expectancy have been defined as important dimensions of incongruity. The two concepts relevancy and expectancy served as determinants for choosing brands and extensions to the study. In order to be able to check that the measures in the main study do not deviate from the outcomes in the pre-test, the questions were included.[6] The respondents were asked "How relevant do you consider X to be?" and "To what extent do you think that X is expected?" and were measured on a seven-point Likert scale. The questions were inspired by Heckler and Childers, 1992. However, as we did not expect an extreme variance, we decided not to use their measure that rated from extremely unexpected/irrelevant, to extremely expected/relevant but instead use the question on the scale unexpected/irrelevant to expected/relevant.

SIGNAL EFFECTS: Previous research (e.g. Dahlén et al. (2008) on signal effects have investigated a number of areas within the concept. This study prioritized some of the areas that the authors in discussion with the tutor found most relevant in the specific setting. Therefore, perceived brand ability, brand interest and perceived brand quality were areas that were included in the main study. *Perceived brand ability* was measured with two items where respondents were exposed to two statements; "(Brand) is smart" and "(Brand) is likely to develop valuable products in the future". *Brand interest* was measured with two items with the following statements; "I find (brand) interesting" and "I would like to buy the brand". All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (Completely disagree) to 7 (Completely agree). All the above mentioned measures within the area signal effects are taken from Dahlén et al. (2008). The two items concerning perceived brand ability were indexed as they had a Cronbach's alpha of 0,742. The brand interest items could also be indexed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0,771.

CREATIVITY: Perceived advertising creativity is included as an area of interest in the investigation of signal effects in the study by Dahlén et al. (2008). However, due to the focus of this study, the perceived creativity of the brand was identified to be a more interesting area to study. Therefore, the respondents were asked the question "To what extent do you think

[6] The results of the study showed a relevancy level of 3,67 for North face (4,14 in pre-study) and 4,48 for Duracell (4,70 in pre-study). The unexpectancy for North face was 4,43 (5,05 in pre-study) and 3,49 for Duracell (4,20 in pre-study).

that the brand you just saw is creative?" The question was measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Vey much). The question is taken from Dahlén et al. (2008) with the slight alteration described.

PARA-SOCIAL INTERACTION (PSI): PSI was measured with three items recorded on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Completely disagree) to 7 (Completely Agree). The items were as follows; "When I see the picture, I feel as a part of the group", "The people behind the ad seems to understand things that I want to know" and "I would like to meet the people behind the ad". These items are taken from Russel and Stern (2006) and have previously been used by Colliander and Dahlén (2011), among others. Worth emphasizing is that the wording have been somewhat adjusted compared to the initial statements. The initial items use "writer" instead of "people behind the ad" and "on the website" instead of "see the picture". This has been done to get a better fit between the statements and the design of this particular study. The three PSI dimensions could be indexed as the Cronbach's alpha was 0,782.

4.7 DATA QUALITY

4.7.1 RELIABILITY

A high reliability of studies is an essential feature in order to ensure that the study results in trustworthy conclusions (Söderlund, 2005). A high reliability is achieved if the study can be repeated and still show the same result. To ensure a high reliability in this study, many questions included multiple-indicator measures, which relates to internal reliability. (Bryman and Bell, 2007) Moreover, these multiple-indicators were tested and were transformed into indexes in the case of that Cronbach's alpha was over 0,7, which is in line with the level of Cronbach's alpha that Söderlund (2005) recommends to guarantee a high reliability. Cronbach's alpha can be found under each measure containing multiple items in the measure chapter. Moreover, to as high extent as possible, only measures previously used by recognized scholars that have a satisfactory level of reliability were included in the main study. As these actions were taken to ensure reliability, the demand of a high reliability is argued to be met.

4.7.2 VALIDITY

Validity corresponds to the degree of match between what the measurement intends to measure, and what it actually measures. In other words, the independent variables in the study should have an effect on the dependent variables to achieve a high internal validity. The

effects that external variables have, circumstances that have not been planned to be included as a part of the survey, should be minimized. (Malholtra, 2010) To minimize the risk for external factors affecting the different groups of respondents, all respondents were approached in a similar manner. Moreover, they all completed the survey online through the same online survey tool and the respondents were randomly assigned to one of the twelve versions of the survey. A disadvantage with an online survey is that one cannot control the environment around the respondent completing the survey. However, with a high number of respondents, differences would likely even out. With this taken into consideration, the internal validity of the study is sufficiently high.

The design of the study was made with consideration to validity in that all groups of respondents should be approached with similar surveys only differing in the set-up of the piece of marketing communication, reflecting the independent variables, they were exposed to. Instructions and questions were all the same, whereas the ad/online page differed. Moreover, the ads for the congruent and incongruent brand extensions were consciously designed very similar with except of the actual product and text. Worth noting is that a sentence below the picture was included that highlighted that it was an ad or an online webpage. Even if this can affect the internal validity negatively, it was included to highlight the traditional media setting. After discussion with the tutor, we came to the conclusion that the benefits of stressing the traditional media setting (as respondents were online), were greater than the disadvantages of risking to priming the respondents for doing the same. Overall, with this set-up of the study, we argue that a high internal validity is reached within the design of the study.

In order to ensure that the measures included in the survey measured what they were intended to measure, the vast majority of questions were based on established multiple-item questions. The number of questions as well as the number of questions that included multiple items aimed to balance with the length of the survey. It is important not to include too many questions in order not to risk that the answers have a tendency to go towards the middle (Söderlund, 2005). The survey was open 20 days, which has implications on the validity; On one hand, respondents were likely to be exposed to similar information in their environment during those days, but on the other hand much can happen during 20 days. However, as no special event or news during that time period highlighted any of the brands included, the

effect of such variances in context is likely to be minimal. Even considering the fairly long time the survey was open, a sufficiently high validity within the survey should be achieved.

4.8 ANALYSIS TOOL

The online survey tool Qualtrics was used for the online questionnaire. From Qualtrics, the recorded responses could be exported directly to IBM SPSS Statistics 20. As the study was made up by 12 different groups, group variables were created to denote the different experiment groups. Before analyzing the data, the file was edited and coded where independent variables were classified and formed groups that were used in the analysis. Mainly, the analysis function used was the independent variable t-test which provided means as well as significance levels.

As explained earlier, the reliability of each scale was tested using Cronbach's alpha. The vast majority of the multiple-item questions fulfilled the demand of a Cronbach's alpha >0,7 , which resulted in the items put together as indexes. After the initial procedures, the hypotheses could be tested using independent samples t-tests.

5 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the results of the statistical tests conducted in SPSS will be scrutinized. The analysis of the results will be structured according to the hypotheses structure, starting with attitudes and intentions, followed by marketing signals.

[7] Please see footnote for explanations

	LEVEL OF INCONGRUITY								MEDIA CHOICE			
Dependent Variable	Connected consumers				Disconnected consumers				Incongruent BE			
	Incongruent BE	Congruent BE	Dif.	Sig.	Incongruent BE	Congruent BE	Dif.	Sig.	Social media	Traditional media	Dif.	Sig.
EXTENSION ATT.	4,47	4,97	-0,51	,001	4,04 (E.L 4,30)	4,38	-0,34 (E.L 0,76)	0,133 (E.L 0,009)	4,41	4,30	0,11	,477
BRAND ATT.	5,69	5,70	-0,01	,899	4,60	4,17	0,43	0,026	5,37	5,41	-0,04	,720
NEGATIVE WOM	3,57	2,83	0,75	,000	3,51	3,43	0,08	0,793	3,47	3,64	-0,18	,317
POSITIVE WOM	3,89	4,36	-0,47	,011	3,34	3,36	-0,02	0,948	3,77	3,72	0,05	,779
BRAND PURCHASE INT.	5,11	4,90	0,21	,165	3,71	3,00	0,71	0,016	4,69	4,77	-0,08	,663
EXTENSION PURCHASE INT.	3,59	4,08	-0,49	,013	3,02	2,71	0,30	0,290	3,50	3,37	0,13	,485
CREATIVITY	4,51	4,14	0,37	,034	3,51	3,02	0,49	0,064	4,40	4,34	0,06	,724
BRAND INTEREST	4,69	4,40	0,29	,056	3,48	3,64	-0,17	0,611	4,29	4,18	0,12	,534
BRAND ABILITY	5,03	4,78	0,26	,038	3,91	3,82	0,09	0,753	4,81	4,73	0,08	,541

Table 2: Summary of results

5.1 MANIPULATION CHECK

In order to secure that the congruent and incongruent extension were perceived as different in terms of congruency level. Two control questions were included that measured relevancy and unexpectancy. The result showed that the incongruent extensions was perceived as more unexpected (mean=4,63) than the congruent extensions (mean=2,62) on a 0,000 significance level. The incongruent extensions were also perceived as less relevant (mean=3,86) than the congruent extensions (mean=4,50) on a 0,003 significance level. Moreover, the incongruent extensions resulted in a lower match between the brand and product category (4,63) than the congruent extensions (5,28) on a 0,002 significance level.

The results of the two brands were merged in order to decrease the risk of a brand-specific outcome. When relationships between the independent and dependent variables were revealed on the higher level (the two brands combined), the result is more likely to be able to be generalized compared to if only one brand was used. When looking at a brand specific level, only minor variances occurred between the two brands.

[7] B.E= Brand Extension, E.L= Explanatory Link, Dif.=mean difference, Sig.=significance level. 267 respondents classified as connected consumers, 93 consumers classified as disconnected consumers.

5.2 ATTITUDES

Hypothesis 1 tests different attitudes towards incongruent brand extensions depending on the degree of loyalty towards the brand and the media channel choice.

Hypothesis H1a suggests that the extension attitude of connected consumers will be lower for incongruent extensions than for congruent extensions. The analysis shows a significant difference in extension attitudes of connected consumers towards a congruent brand extension (mean= 4,98) and towards an incongruent brand extension (mean= 4,47) with a mean difference of 0,51. Consequently, hypothesis H1a is supported on a 0,001 significance level.

H1a: Connected consumers will hold a more unfavorable attitude towards incongruent brand extensions than towards congruent brand extensions.

SUPPORTED

Hypothesis H1b suggests that the negative evaluation of the brand extension from connected consumers should be isolated to the extension, and hence not result in a decreased parent brand attitude for that same consumer group. The result show that no significant difference (sig.= 0,8999) between the parent brand attitude for connected consumers can be identified between the group that was exposed to a congruent brand extension (mean= 5,67) compared to the group that was exposed to an incongruent extension (mean= 5,69). Hypothesis H1b is thus supported.

H1b: Connected consumers' parent brand attitude will be equally positive towards brands launching incongruent brand extensions as for brands launching congruent brand extensions.

SUPPORTED

With regards to the attitude of disconnected consumers towards the incongruent extension in comparison to the attitude towards the congruent brand extension, hypothesis H1c predicts that disconnected consumers will have a higher attitude towards the incongruent extension than towards the congruent extension. However, result show that the attitudes towards the incongruent extension (mean= 4,04) and the congruent extension (mean= 4,38) do not differ significantly (Sig.= 0,133). Therefore, hypothesis H1c is not supported.

H1c: Disconnected consumers will hold a more favorable attitude towards incongruent brand extensions than towards congruent extensions.

NOT SUPPORTED

Hypothesis 1d suggests that the parent brand attitude of disconnected consumers should be positively affected by incongruent extensions. The results indicate that disconnected consumers in control group 1, exposed to a congruent extension hold a less favorable attitude towards the parent brand (mean= 4,17) than disconnected consumers exposed to an incongruent extension (mean= 4,60) with a mean difference of 0,43. Hypothesis H1d is supported on a 0,026 significance level.

H1d: Disconnected consumers' parent brand attitude will be more positive towards brands launching incongruent brand extensions than towards brands launching congruent brand extensions.

SUPPORTED

The proposition of hypothesis H1e is that social media will facilitate the consumer acceptance of an incongruent brand extension, and will thus lead to more positive attitude towards the incongruent extension. Although the result shows that consumers exposed to an incongruent extension in social media have a slightly more positive attitude (mean= 4,41) than consumers exposed to an incongruent extension in traditional media (mean= 4,30) with a mean difference of 0,11, the result is not significant (sig= 0,477). The results thus indicate that the choice of media channel for communicating the incongruent brand extensions does not impact attitudes towards the extension and hypothesis H1e is thus not supported.

As the hypothesis could not be supported, para-social interaction became an important variable to study in order to uncover any relationship between loyalty and para-social interaction that could in turn have implications for the media choice. Looking at the perceived degree of para-social interaction among connected consumers, the results show that this group experience a significantly higher degree of para-social interaction (sig= 0,017) when exposed to an incongruent extension in a social media vehicle (mean= 3,45) compared to when exposed to an incongruent extension in a traditional media vehicle (mean= 2,95).

H1e: Consumers will hold more positive attitudes towards incongruent brand extensions launched through social media vehicles than incongruent brand extensions launched through traditional media vehicles.

NOT SUPPORTED

The effect of including explanatory links in the communication of an incongruent extension to a disconnected consumer audience was studied in hypothesis H1f. The results reveal that the group of disconnected consumers exposed to an incongruent extension with an associated explanatory link had a more positive attitude (mean= 4,30) than the group exposed to an incongruent extension communicated without an explanatory link (mean= 3,57) with a mean difference of 0,73 and a significance level of 0,009. The perceived fit also increased with the usage of an explanatory link in the communication to disconnected consumers; incongruent extensions communicated with an explanatory link were seen as of higher match (mean=

4,43) than incongruent extensions communicated without an explanatory link (mean= 3,56). The result is supported on a 0,030 significance level.

One interesting notion is that for connected consumers, the ad was regarded as less exciting when communicated with an explanatory link (mean= 3,58) than when communicated without an explanatory link (mean= 4,04). The finding is supported on a 0,039 significance level.

H1f: Disconnected consumers will hold a more favorable extension attitude towards incongruent brand extensions communicated with an explanatory link than towards incongruent brand extensions communicated without an explanatory link.

SUPPORTED

5.3 INTENTIONS

Hypothesis 2 concerns the intentions of connected and disconnected consumers in the context of incongruent extensions. The first hypothesis, H2a aims to test the intentions among connected consumers to spread positive WOM about an incongruent extension versus a congruent extension. The results indicate that connected consumers have lower intentions of spreading positive WOM about an incongruent extension (mean= 3,89) than about a congruent extension (mean= 4,36) with a mean difference of 0,47.The result is supported on a 0,011 significance level.

H2a: Connected consumers will have lower intentions to spread positive WOM when exposed to incongruent brand extensions than when exposed to congruent brand extensions.

SUPPORTED

Hypothesis H2b suggests that connected consumers are more inclined to spread negative WOM about an incongruent extension than about congruent extension due to the threat the incongruity poses to the connected consumers current relationship with the brand. The

inclination for connected consumers to criticize an incongruent extension was shown to be higher (mean = 3,57) than their intention to criticize a congruent extension (mean = 2,83), with a mean difference of 0,74. The hypothesis is supported on a significance level of 0,000.

H2b: Connected consumers will have higher intentions to spread negative WOM when exposed to incongruent brand extensions than when exposed to congruent brand extensions.

SUPPORTED

Hypothesis H2c proposes that disconnected consumers are more likely to spread positive WOM about an incongruent extension following their positive evaluation. However, the results show that disconnected consumers do not show a higher tendency to spread positive word-of-moth about an incongruent brand extension (mean= 3,34) than about a congruent extension (mean= 3,36). With a reverse mean difference of 0,02 and sig.= 0,948, no conclusions can be made. Therefore, no support has been found for hypothesis H2c.

H2c: Disconnected consumers will have higher intentions to spread positive WOM when exposed to incongruent brand extensions than when exposed to congruent brand extensions.

NOT SUPPORTED

Hypothesis H2d addresses the impact that a launch of an incongruent brand extension has on disconnected consumers' parent brand purchasing intentions. A significant difference between the parent brand purchasing intention for disconnected consumers that were exposed to an incongruent brand extension (mean= 3,71) and disconnected consumers that were exposed to a congruent brand extension (mean= 3,00) with a mean difference of 0,71 is revealed in the study. The hypothesis is supported on a 0,016 significance level.

H2d: Disconnected consumers will have higher parent brand purchase intention when exposed to incongruent brand extensions than when exposed to congruent brand extensions.

SUPPORTED

Hypothesis H2e investigates how extension purchase intentions are affected by introducing an incongruent brand extension in social versus traditional media setting. The result shows that the intensions slightly differ between the group that is exposed to the incongruent extension in a social media setting (mean= 3,50) compared to group that exposed to the incongruent extension in a traditional media setting (mean= 3,37) with a mean difference of 0,13. However, the results are not significant (Sig.= 0,485). Thus, hypothesis 2e is not supported.

H2e: Consumers will have higher purchase intentions towards incongruent brand extensions launched through social media vehicles than towards incongruent brand extensions launched through traditional media vehicles.

NOT SUPPORTED

5.4 MARKETING SIGNALS

The second set of hypotheses intends to test the effects that incongruent extensions have on the perceived creativity, brand ability and brand interest.

5.4.1 CREATIVITY

Hypothesis H3a suggests that the perceived creativity will be affected positively when introducing an incongruent extension compared to a congruent extension following less predictable offering for connected consumers. The findings of H3a supports this notion, as the perceived creativity is higher for connected consumers exposed to a incongruent extension (mean= 4,51) than for connected consumers exposed to a congruent extension (mean= 4,14). The result shows a mean difference of 0,37 and is supported by a significance level of 0,034.

H3a: Connected consumers will perceive a higher degree of creativity related to incongruent brand extensions than related to congruent brand extensions.

SUPPORTED

H3b addresses the impact on perceived creativity that the media choice of the communication of a launch of a brand extension has. The perceived creativity is thought to be higher if the communication is done through a social media vehicle in comparison through a traditional media vehicle. The results shows that there is only a minor difference between the group that is exposed to social media (mean= 4,29) compared to the group that is exposed to traditional media (mean= 4,18) with a mean difference of 0,11 (Sig.=0,534). Hypothesis H3b is thus not supported.

H3b: Consumers will perceive a higher degree of creativity related to incongruent brand extensions launched through social media vehicles than to incongruent brand extensions launched through traditional media vehicles.

NOT SUPPORTED

5.4.2 BRAND INTEREST

Hypothesis H4a suggests that the perceived brand interest should be higher as a result of an incongruent extension. The results show that an incongruent extension produces a higher brand interest (mean= 4,69) than a congruent brand extension (mean= 4,40) and demonstrate a mean difference of 0,29. The hypothesis is supported with a significance level of 0,056. This significance is slightly higher than normally accepted, but this difference is argued to be trivial. Hence, incongruent extensions increase the brand interest of the parent brand.

H4a: Connected consumers will perceive a higher degree of brand interest in brands that launch incongruent brand extensions than in brands that launch congruent brand extensions.

SUPPORTED

Hypothesis H4b suggests that the level of brand interest is dependent on the media in which the brand extension is communicated. The results indicate that consumers perceive a slightly higher brand interest if they are exposed to an incongruent brand extension through social media (mean= 4,40) than if they are exposed to an incongruent extension through traditional media (mean= 4,34) with a mean difference of 0,06. However, the significance level of 0,724 leads to hypothesis 4b not being supported.

H4b: Consumers will perceive a higher degree of brand interest in brands that launch incongruent brand extensions through social media vehicles than in brands that launch incongruent brand extensions through traditional media vehicles.

NOT SUPPORTED

5.4.3 BRAND ABILITY

Hypothesis H5a predicts that incongruent extensions will enhance the perceived brand ability among connected consumers. The results of hypothesis H5a reveal that the perceived brand ability is higher for connected consumers exposed to incongruent extensions (mean= 5,03) than for connected consumers exposed to congruent extensions (mean= 4,78) with a mean difference of 0,25. The finding is supported on a 0,038 significance level.

H5a: Connected consumers will perceive a higher brand ability towards brands that launch incongruent brand extensions than towards brands that launch congruent brand extensions.

SUPPORTED

The final hypothesis looks at the perceived brand ability and if there is any difference between in the perceived brand ability if an incongruent brand extension is launched through social media compared to through traditional media. The results indicate that the perceived brand ability is slightly higher for the group exposed to the incongruent extension in social media (mean= 4,81) than the group exposed to the incongruent extension in traditional media (mean= 4,73). However, as the significance level 0,541, no relevant conclusions can be drawn, and hypothesis H5c is thus not supported.

H5c: Consumers will perceive higher brand ability for brands that launch incongruent brand extensions through social media vehicles than for brands that launch incongruent brand extensions through traditional media vehicles.

NOT SUPPORTED

5.5 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

HYPOTHESIS NUMBER	HYPOTHESIS	RESULT
H1a	Connected consumers will hold a more unfavorable attitude towards incongruent brand extensions than towards congruent brand extensions.	SUPPORTED
H1b	Connected consumers' parent brand attitude will be equally positive towards brands launching incongruent brand extensions as for brands launching congruent brand extensions.	SUPPORTED
H1c	Disconnected consumers will hold a more favorable attitude towards incongruent brand extensions than towards congruent extensions.	NOT SUPPORTED
H1d	Disconnected consumers' parent brand attitude will be more positive towards brands launching incongruent brand extensions than towards brands launching congruent brand extensions.	SUPPORTED
H1e	Consumers will hold more positive attitudes towards incongruent brand extensions launched through social media vehicles than incongruent brand extensions launched through traditional media vehicles.	NOT SUPPORTED
H1f	Disconnected consumers will hold a more favorable extension attitude towards incongruent brand extensions communicated with an explanatory link than towards incongruent brand extensions communicated without an explanatory link.	SUPPORTED
H2a	Connected consumers will have lower intentions to spread positive WOM when exposed to incongruent brand extensions than when exposed to congruent brand extensions.	SUPPORTED
H2b	Connected consumers will have higher intentions to spread negative WOM when exposed to incongruent brand extensions than when exposed to congruent brand extensions.	SUPPORTED
H2c	Disconnected consumers will have higher intentions to spread positive WOM when exposed to incongruent brand extensions than when exposed to congruent brand extensions.	SUPPORTED
H2d	Disconnected consumers will have higher parent brand purchase intentions when exposed to incongruent brand extensions than when exposed to congruent brand extensions.	SUPPORTED
H2e	Consumers will have higher purchase intentions towards incongruent brand extensions launched through social media vehicles than towards incongruent brand extensions launched through traditional media vehicles.	NOT SUPPORTED
H3a	Connected consumers will perceive a higher degree of creativity related to incongruent brand extensions than related to congruent brand extensions.	SUPPORTED
H3b	Consumers will perceive a higher degree of creativity related to incongruent brand extensions launched through social media vehicles than to incongruent brand extensions launched through traditional media vehicles.	NOT SUPPORTED
H4a	Connected consumers will perceive a higher degree of brand interest in brands that launch incongruent brand extensions than in brands that launch congruent brand extensions.	SUPPORTED
H4b	Consumers will perceive a higher degree of brand interest in brands that launch incongruent brand extensions through social media vehicles than in brands that launch incongruent brand extensions through traditional media vehicles.	NOT SUPPORTED
H5a	Connected consumers will perceive a higher brand ability towards brands that launch incongruent brand extensions than towards brands that launch congruent brand extensions.	SUPPORTED
H5b	Consumers will perceive higher brand ability for brands that launch incongruent brand extensions through social media vehicles than for brands that launch incongruent brand extensions through traditional media vehicles.	NOT SUPPORTED

Table 3: Summary of hypothesis

6 DISCUSSION

The following chapter will connect the results of the study to the theories proposed. The discussion will be structured in line with the hypotheses generation and result chapters, starting with attitudes, followed by intentions and marketing signals.

6.1 ATTITUDE EFFECTS OF INCONGRUENT EXTENSIONS

EFFECTS OF INCONGRUITY ON CONNECTED CONSUMERS' EVALUATION OF BRAND EXTENSIONS

The results of the study show evident differences in terms of attitudes towards incongruent extensions in the group of connected consumers versus disconnected consumers. Connected customers react negatively towards incongruent extensions, and are more likely to evaluate them unfavorably. One underlying reason behind the negative evaluation could, in line with the reasoning of Ahluwalia et al (2000), be that the incongruent brand extension poses as a threat to the current relationship the connected consumer has to the brand. A new and unexpected modification to the brand via an incongruent extension could be considered as a change of the strategic direction of the brand, which could have implications on the connected consumers' consumer-brand relationship. One could even go as far to state that an incongruent extension could be regarded a breach of trust by connected consumers, as the incongruent extension does not live up to the expectations that connected consumers hold towards their brand. Such a breach of trust is an example of a type of relational stress that according to Fournier (1998) can put pressure on a strong consumer-brand relationship. One important notion is that the even though the attitude towards the incongruent extension is lower than that for the congruent brand extension among connected consumers, the attitude is still on a high level.

The result is in line with what the theory predicted in general. In specific, Walsh et al.'s (2010) reasoning addressing brand element change and how it is perceived by loyal and non-loyal customer was confirmed to be applicable to connected consumers' evaluations of brand extensions as the as the same pattern of evaluations was found in this study.

EFFECTS OF INCONGRUITY ON CONNECTED CONSUMERS' PARENT BRAND ATTITUDE

The negative change in extension attitude for connected consumers does not, however, affect the parent brand attitude. In line with our expectations based on theory by Aaker and Keller (1990), the results demonstrate that the negative change in attitude will be isolated to the extension and will not affect the parent brand attitude. This finding is also in line with Keller and Sood's (2003) theory demonstrating that brand extensions need to fulfill a number of criteria such as being unambiguous and inconsistent in order to cause damage to the parent brand. Although the incongruity may fulfill the criteria of inconsistency, it could be argued that moderately incongruent extensions like those used in the study leaves room for interpretation and could thus not be considered completely unambiguous.

EFFECTS OF INCONGRUITY ON DISCONNECTED CONSUMERS' EVALUATION OF BRAND EXTENSIONS

In contrast to connected consumers, disconnected consumers have a more neutral starting point of their extension evaluation, since this group does not regard the brand an integral part of their identity. The major difference in the case of connected and disconnected consumers is that the results of the brand extension in the context of attitudes have different implications. In the case of disconnected consumers, the results show that there are no significant differences between the extension attitudes in congruent versus incongruent cases. This finding goes against the outlined reasoning by Walsh et al. (2010) that predicts that disconnected consumers will evaluate a change in a brand element as novel. One possible explanation could be that the broader perspective on change to brand elements was applied in the hypothesis to include changes in any marketing signals from the brand, and therefore also included marketing signals from brand extensions. Another possible explanation could be that the novelty effect of the extension may not be evident in relation to the extension itself, but will rather have spillover effects on other parameters, which will be discussed below.

EFFECTS OF INCONGRUITY ON DISCONNECTED CONSUMERS' PARENT BRAND ATTITUDE

The results reveal that the parent brand attitude of disconnected consumers is positively impacted by the change in the brand derived from the incongruent extension. The finding is in line with the predicted pattern of Kohlia and Suri (2002) and Walsh et al. (2010) that

disconnected consumers' will evaluate a change positively. What has not been confirmed by the study is the relationship between the evaluation of the brand extension and the evaluation of the parent brand. The theory of Kohlia and Suri (2002) predicts that if the extension would be evaluated positively, the evaluation of the parent brand would be affected in the same direction. This is however not the case in this study, where the positive change in parent brand attitude arise without a corresponding change in brand extension attitude. A possible explanation might be that the incongruent extension is seen as a marketing signal and not only a product that can be bought. The product per say may not be as interesting as the actual message that the incongruent extension sends.

EFFECTS ON CONSUMERS' EXTENSION ATTITUDES DEPENDING ON THE USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA OR TRADITIONAL MEDIA WHEN COMMUNICATING INCONGRUENT BRAND EXTENSIONS

The results of the media choice hypothesis showed no significant impact in the context of attitudes towards incongruent extensions. The finding does not support Daft and Lengel's (1986) theory of media richness and its positive impact on the resolution of communication of ambiguous messages in this context. Relating to media richness, the concept social presence consists of intimacy and immediacy. A possible explanation for the result not supporting the previous theories might be that one or both of the two facets does not contribute to increase social presence in social media. Is facebook, used as proxy for social media in this study, really considered to be intimate these days? And immediacy might not be the main feature of a piece of communication communicating the introduction of an incongruent extension in an ad format. Combined, these aspects could have affected the outcome.

In this study, the results point at no effects deriving from immediacy and intimacy occur. Nor do the result indicate a clear link between a high degree of experienced para-social interaction and an increase in extension attitude. Para-social interaction was not perceived to be higher in social media than in traditional media for incongruent extensions if analyzing both connected and disconnected consumers. However, for connected consumers, the perceived para-social interaction was significantly higher on social media compared to traditional media. Theory predicts that this would increase the influence of the message, but no change in attitude towards the incongruent extension emerged nonetheless. In this context, the transfer of the message was enabled by an ad introducing an incongruent extension in a straightforward

manner. The nature of the communication could rather in this sense be considered informative than transformative as the ad only clearly stated that it was introducing a new product, based on the motivation presented in the method section. An ad appealing to emotions to higher extent, communicating a message of a specific brand image with a stronger connection to brand attitude, might have been able to increase influence and thereby affect extension attitude.

EFFECTS ON DISCONNECTED CONSUMERS' EXTENSIONS ATTITUDES DEPENDING ON THE USAGE OF EXPLANATORY LINKS WHEN COMMUNICATING INCONGRUENT BRAND EXTENSIONS

As indicated by the results, disconnected consumers hold more positive attitudes towards incongruent extensions that are communicated together with an explanatory link. The finding supports the notion that communication strategies enhancing salient associations of the brand help improve the perceived fit, (Bridges et al, 2000) which is an antecedent to attitude. Worth noting is that both the perceived fit *and* the extension attitude increased as disconnected consumers were exposed to an incongruent extension also including an explanatory link.

However, for connected consumers, no positive effect resulting from an inclusion of an explanatory link connected to the incongruent extension can be identified. On the contrary, connected consumers considered the ad less exiting when the link was included.

Bridges, Keller and Sood (2000) stress that a higher perceived fit is enabled when consumers identify explanatory links that bridges associations from the parent brand to the extension. Disconnected consumers seems to be more in need of a facilitator in the shape of a cue in order to build this bridge, while connected consumers with a stronger emotional attachment and stronger associations manage to identify facilitating links on their own. This also supports the reasoning of Bridges, Keller and Sood (2000) that dominant parent brand associations provide the basis for the foundation of explanatory links in consumers' minds. Connected consumers are likely to have stronger parent brand associations, and thus employ these in the formation of explanatory links. The result shows that connected consumers seem to enjoy creating these links on their own, as explanatory links made the ad less exciting for this group.

6.2 EFFECTS ON INTENTIONS OF INCONGRUENT EXTENSIONS

EFFECTS OF INCONGRUITY ON CONNECTED CONSUMERS' INTENTIONS TO WOM

The results demonstrate that the WOM intentions of connected consumers are affected negatively when they are exposed to an incongruent extension. This chain of effects holds true for the argumentation presented by Dichter (1966). Dichter (1966) proposes several different strategies to stimulate positive WOM, and the shock of difference is the strategy most applicable in the setting of incongruity. The result of the study provide supports the notion of Dichter that for the shock of difference strategy to be successful, the consumer must gain an understanding and accept the difference as a change in the positive direction. In this context, it is most likely that the lower intention to engage in positive WOM about an incongruent extension can be derived to the connected consumer not evaluating the incongruity as novel. The result seems to fit the expected outcome from the hierarchy of effects.

In the context of negative WOM, the findings of the study are aligned with the expected results. The major reason behind connected consumers' motivation to engage in negative WOM could be derived to a sense of lacking fit of the incongruent extension. According to Sjödin (2007), anger is a major driver of negative WOM, and the feeling of anger can arise as a result of the lacking perceived fit.

Conclusively and worth stressing is that the inclination to spread positive WOM is still higher than the inclination to spread negative WOM about an incongruent brand extension for connected consumers. The higher intention of positive WOM might be due to the fact that both positive and negative WOM could address both the extension *and*/*or* the brand. This relates to the finding that WOM engaging the brand and the product has demonstrated to be affected differently due to the incongruity in this study.

EFFECTS OF INCONGRUITY ON DISCONNECTED CONSUMERS' INTENTIONS TO SPREAD POSITIVE WOM

In the context of non-connected consumers, the results showed no significance in terms of positive WOM. According to Dichter (1966) positive WOM is motivated by psychological needs, often relating to the desire to belong to a group. For disconnected consumers, the lacking interest in the brand could impede the willingness to engage in positive WOM about

the extension. The reason that disconnected consumers are not more likely to engage in positive WOM about an incongruent extension probably has more to do with the brand connection rather than the incongruity. The findings are in line with the hierarchy of effects and that it is a positive relationship between attitudes and intentions; as the extension attitude towards the incongruent extension was not higher than for the congruent, it is reasonable that the WOM intentions did not change in another direction.

EFFECTS OF INCONGRUITY ON DISCONNECTED CONSUMERS' PARENT BRAND PURCHASE INTENTIONS

The study reveals that the parent brand purchase intentions of disconnected consumers are, like parent brand attitude, positively impacted by incongruent extensions. This finding is aligned with the hierarchy of effects, as the disconnected consumers' parent brand attitude was positively impacted by the incongruity, so should the purchase intentions. This further confirms the reasoning that the effects resulting from the incongruity serve as a spillover effect benefitting the parent brand rather than an effect merely isolated to the extension.

EFFECTS ON CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTIONS DEPENDING ON THE USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA OR TRADITIONAL MEDIA WHEN COMMUNICATING INCONGRUENT BRAND EXTENSIONS

In the context of social media versus traditional media affecting purchase intentions, the result shows that the purchase intentions were not positively impacted by the usage of social media. This further confirms the corresponding relationship between attitudes and intentions as no positive effects relating to the media used could be identified in any of the other measures.

6.3 MARKETING SIGNALS ARISING FROM INCONGRUENT EXTENSIONS

EFFECTS OF INCONGRUENT BRAND EXTENSIONS ON CONNECTED CONSUMERS' PERCEIVED CREATIVITY, BRAND INTEREST AND BRAND ABILTIY

The following analysis pinpoints the effects that incongruity has on the perceived marketing signals by connected consumers. A significant difference between the perceived creativity relating to an incongruent extension in comparison to a congruent extension of connected consumers was revealed. This points at that the concept of creativity as a marketing signal is not limited to advertising, but could also be applied in a broader sense to include other pieces of marketing communication, like brand extensions. Demonstrated in this study, a decrease in the predictability of the brand resulting from the incongruity actually resulted in an increase of perceived creativity of the brand.

Furthermore, the study confirmed that connected consumers experience a higher brand interest towards incongruent extensions in relation to congruent extensions. According to the reasoning of Machleit, Allen and Madden (1993), brand interest could help mitigate the boredom risk associated with mature brands. The disruption in the evaluation process caused by the incongruity seems to have evoked a more thorough elaboration in line with the process proposed by Smith, Shoeben and Rips (1974), also resulting in an increased curiosity and interest in the activities of the brand. As the extension is evaluated disfavorably in terms of attitude compared to a congruent extension, but favorably in terms of brand interest, the case might be that connected consumers follows the actions of the brand with interest, rather than experiencing an increased and uncritical interest derived from the incongruity.

Dahlén, Rosengren and Törn's (2008) theory indicates that perceived brand ability should be higher for incongruent extensions compared to congruent extensions, following the innovative facet of the new product as a proxy for future success and ability to stay relevant in the future. Even though connected consumers do not evaluate the incongruent extension favorably, they seem to approve of the actions of the brand to prepare for the future; Connected consumers might have a personal gain from the fact that their brand expands beyond their current target group to new target groups to find new sources of income as this would secure a future survival of the brand.

EFFECTS ON CONSUMERS' PERCEIVED MARKETING SIGNALS DEPENDING ON THE USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA OR TRADITIONAL MEDIA WHEN COMMUNICATING INCONGRUENT BRAND EXTENSIONS

Theory predicted that the message, if presented in a social media setting, should be leveraged by the characteristics of the media. However, this did not prove true in the study, which indicates that the media does not affect nor enhance the marketing signals. This finding also talks against the notion by Short, Williams and Christie (1976) that the higher social presence should boost the influence of the communication. One possible explanation of the lack of confirmative results could be that social media might already be seen as an established channel for brand communications, limiting the positive effect that is thought to appear in newer and more innovative medias.

The use of social media has been proved by the study not to contribute to the perception that the brand is able to develop and adapt to new settings; this time the new media landscape. It might be that social media and especially facebook used in the study is perceived to be similar to a hygiene factor for brands these days; established brands *should* use social media to communicate with current and potential customers in order not to be perceived as an "old fashioned" and retrogressive company. Macluan's (1966) statement that "the medium is the message" seems thus not to hold true in this setting. The findings of this study points at that is likely to be more successful to base the decision between communicating an incongruent extension through social or traditional media rather on the basis of where the target audience is likely to be present, rather than the media per se.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, conclusions will be drawn from the results and discussion presented above. The conclusions will be structured around the research questions introduced in the first chapter. Further, managerial implications of the study will be presented. Finally, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research will be presented.

7.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 1

How are traditional marketing communications effects, measured on consumer groups that are loyal as well as not loyal to the brand, affected by an introduction of an incongruent brand extension in comparison to an introduction of a congruent brand extension of an established brand?

The study managed to provide empirical support to the postulation that consumers' response towards incongruent modifications to the brand will vary depending on the depth of the consumer-brand relationship. In terms of attitudes, connected consumers evaluate an incongruent extension less favorable than a congruent extension. The negative evaluation does not however mirror back on the attitude towards the parent brand. The study demonstrates that intentions to engage in positive WOM is moderated by the incongruity, as the connected consumers experience a tension and do not feel the same closeness to the new type of product. The inclination to criticize the extension via negative WOM is higher for incongruent extensions than for congruent extensions. Nevertheless, the inclination to spread positive WOM about the incongruent extension is still higher than the inclination to spread negative WOM.

The unfavorable evaluation of the incongruent extension by connected consumers was also revealed to be present among disconnected consumers. Like for the connected consumers, the effect of the default favorable evaluation does not mirror back on parent brand attitude for the disconnected consumers. In fact, the parent brand launching an incongruent extension is evaluated more favorable than the parent brand launching a congruent extension. In order to achieve a positive evaluation of an incongruent extension, the study showed that explanatory links is an appropriate communication strategy that will facilitate the acceptance and positive

attitude among disconnected consumers. An introduction of an incongruent extension did not show any implications for the tendency of positive nor negative WOM for disconnected consumers. However, the parent brand purchase intention was positively affected by the incongruent launch for the disconnected consumers. This point at that the parent brand will benefit from the incongruent extension among disconnected consumers.

7.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 2

How are marketing signals, measured on currently loyal consumers, affected by a launch of an incongruent brand extension in comparison to a launch of a congruent brand extension by an established brand?

Incongruity resulting in a lower perceived predictability of the brand, fueled by the perception of the brand thinking "outside-the-box" by connected consumers, had positive effects on all measured marketing signals. Firstly, connected consumers perceive a brand launching an incongruent extension as more creative. Secondly, the brand interest was enhanced by the incongruent launch, which could help mitigate the risk of boredom associated with mature brands. Thirdly, an incongruent launch facilitated the perception that the brand was innovative and therefore better equipped to conquer future challenges, demonstrated by a higher perceived brand ability. All in all, these findings show that incongruent extensions constitute a useful strategy to revitalize a brand in the minds of connected consumers.

7.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 3

How are traditional marketing measures and signal effects affected if a launch of an incongruent extension is made through a social media vehicle in comparison to if a launch is made through a traditional media vehicle?

Although a launch of an incongruent extension through social media was predicted to have an impact on the attitudes, intentions and marketing signals, no empirical relationship could be confirmed.

To sum up, connected consumers will not be affected negatively by the incongruent extension to a high extent. Rather, the incongruity will signal that the brand is willing to think in new dimensions which will be interpreted as something positive. Disconnected consumers will also be increasingly attracted to the brand as a result of the incongruity as they will increase their attitudes as well as intentions towards the parent brand.

7.4 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this thesis offer several implications for marketing practitioners within the field of brand management.

The findings of the study support the notion that different strategies should be used depending on the target of communication. For current customers of the brand, an incongruent extension does not have a major impact on traditional marketing measures as attitudes and intentions. Even though some negative effects arising from the incongruity could follow an introduction, marketers should not be concerned to dilute the parent brand, as for current customers no negative effects will transfer from the extension to the parent brand. Rather, the strategy to launch an incongruent extension represent a possibility to acquire new customers, as the parent brand attitude and purchase intentions of non-customers will be elevated by the new angle the brand offers. However, it is not very likely that these new prospective customers will act as brand ambassadors as their inclination to recommend the product is still lower than the inclination of current customers. In order to enhance favorable evaluations of the incongruity among prospective customers, it is advantageous to include cues that help the consumers connect the extension category and the parent brand.

A strong motivator for brands to launch incongruent brand extensions is the change in perception of the brand in the minds of current customers. Via the incongruity, the brand demonstrates a willingness to exceed expectations and gives a promise of future success. Perceived creativity of the brand is enhanced among current customers, as well as the curiosity and interest in the brand's actions. Moreover, current customers put a stronger faith in the ability of the brand to deliver innovative solutions and therefore be sustainable in the long-term. In general, current customers are prone to acknowledge changes to the brand and consider the resulting implications.

The practical implications of how to launch an incongruent extension in terms of the choice between social media and traditional media did not prove to be of great importance. However, one evident implication connecting to the cues helping the non-customers to link the brand to the extension category is the different characteristics of social media; Social media is mainly targeting current customers that are not in need of cues, and perceive these as boring. On the other hand, non-customers are in need of cues to make the connection and cannot be reached

in social media. Therefore, two different strategies are needed to communicate with these two groups. The suggestion is therefore to employ explanatory links in traditional media, targeting a broader audience, and to exclude explanatory links when the communication about the incongruent extension is done through social media targeting loyal customers.

To conclude, marketers should not be impeded by the traditional view that all marketing communication must be cohesive. Rather, including interesting and surprising facets could help revitalize the relationship with current customers as well as aid in recruiting new ones, while strengthening the brand for the future.

7.5 LIMITATIONS

Critique could be directed towards the study concerning several aspects as sample, execution of the study and manipulations.

The first limitation that should be addressed is the difference in perceived relevancy and expectancy measures between the pre-test and main study. Both brands were perceived to be more relevant as well as less expected when the respondents were asked during the pre-test in comparison to the answers recorded when making the main study. This might be due to the fact that many more, and some of them more extreme, incongruent extensions were asked about during the pre-test. The chosen extension might have been considered to be relevant and less expected when presented together with other suggestions of brand extensions than just on its own. This might have had implications on the result in that the incongruency did not seem as prevalent and relevant as it should be. The lack of support to all hypothesis might have been due to this fact.

One important limitation is that the vast majority of the sample consisted of students. According to Cunningham, Anderson and Murphy (1974), a sample made up by students may give a different view as their responses usually do not reflect those of the average population. In this study, students were considered an appropriate sample, as they are savvy users when it comes to social media.

A further limitation of the study was that the study did not account for possible effects of the advertisement aesthetics on the results. Due to the limited resources available to execute the study, the advertisements could not be designed by an advertising professional. Although

some general recommendations guided the design of the advertisements, it is possible that the look of the advertisements may have impacted the results, especially attitude, since ad attitude is an antecedent to brand attitude (Brown and Stayman, 1992). However, as the main purpose of the thesis was to test the differences between the groups, and the groups were all exposed to advertisements of a consistent quality level, the results should not have been impacted considerably.

The same reasoning implies a limitation concerning the media dimension of the study. Due to time restraints, we chose to display the social media setting within the quantitative survey rather than conducting it live at facebook. Naturally, this could have impacted the results, as the dynamic and interactional nature of facebook as a medium might not have come across in the study to the same extent had it been executed in a "real" facebook setting. An experiment in an existing environment might have increased the external validity and hence the generalizability of the study (Malholtra, 2007). The respondents were asked to imagine that they saw the page on facebook or the ad in a magazine, as opposed to a real world situation testing actual behavior. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), observational studies could provide a more accurate indication of how consumers would actually behave.

Critique could also be put forth concerning the response rate of 30%. According to Bean and Roszkowski (1995) , low response rates could lead to biased results, as respondents' answers may differ from potential answers of non-respondents. However, Bryman and Bell (2007) argue that many published research articles have a response rate in the range of 18-25%, why the 30% response rate for this particular study could be considered sufficient.

7.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The aim with this study was to contribute to the academic society. The admired outcome is naturally also to inspire to studies that further investigates the central concepts addressed in this study. Moreover, we hope that new flourishing and groundbreaking ideas for future academic studies are encouraged by this study's argumentation and findings.

Firstly, it would be very interesting to further dig into the area incongruity by investigating different types of incongruity and its effect on currently loyal and satisfied customers. This study revealed that loyal consumers mainly evaluate incongruent brand extensions unfavorably in terms if the focus is on traditional marketing measures, whereas incongruity

had positive effects on the same consumer group in terms of signal effects. Is this relationship the same if one focus on incongruity within an advertisement? And is there a magic line that cannot be crossed in terms of level of incongruity or type of incongruity that do not reach these positive outcomes?

Secondly, the question of incongruity within social media can be stretched further. A future research topic that might be relevant is to study different types of incongruent communication within social media and its effect on loyal consumers. As it is mainly loyal consumers that "follow" brands in these settings, we see that it is crucial to also adopt the differentiation between loyal and not loyal consumers in this setting as well.

Thirdly, this study looked closer at advertisements and social media pages that presented a brand and extension in an informative manner. The products used in the study moreover falls into the informative category of products based on Rossiter and Percy's model the Rossiter Percy Grid (Rossiter and Percy, 1997). A further idea to future studies is to take a closer look at the differences between how informative and transformative product categories react to incongruity, and especially in connection to their loyal consumers. An alteration to that idea would be to study in which manner the advertisement and marketing communication is done and analyze differences between a communication being informative and a communication focusing on enhancing feeling and have a more diffuse message about the brand an incongruent product.

With these examples, we hope to have laid a foundation for further elaboration on the concepts and new ideas in what areas to conduct future research.

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APPENDIX 1: Pre-test questionnaire and results

Questionarie Pre-Test

1. Polarn O. Pyret proudly introduces Polarn O. Pyret Kindergarten

To what extent do you think that Polarn O. Pyret and kindergarten fit?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How typical do you consider the Plarn O.Pyret kindergarten to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

To what extent do you think that Plarn O.Pyret kindergarten is expected?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How relevant do you consider Polarn O. Pyret kindergarten to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

What is your attitude towards Polarn O. Pyret Kindergarten?

Negative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Positive*

---

2. Wasa proudly introduces Wasa Apple Juice

To what extent do you think that Wasa and Apple Juice fit?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How typical do you consider the Wasa Apple Juice to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

To what extent do you think that Wasa Apple Juice is expected?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How relevant do you consider Wasa Apple Juice to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

What is your attitude towards Wasa Apple Juice?

Negative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Positive*

---

3. Red Bull proudly introduces Red Bull Herbal Tea

To what extent do you think that Red Bull and herbal tea fit?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How typical do you consider the Red Bull Herbal Tea to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

To what extent do you think that Red Bull Herbal Tea is expected?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How relevant do you consider Red Bull Herbal Tea to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

What is your attitude towards Red Bull Herbal Tea?

Negative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Positive*

---

4. Abercrombie & Fitch proudly introduces Abercrombie & Fitch BBQ Restaurant

To what extent do you think that Abercrombie & Fitch and BBQ Restaurant fit?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How typical do you consider the Abercrombie & Fitch BBQ Restaurant to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

To what extent do you think that Abercrombie & Fitch BBQ Restaurant is expected?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How relevant do you consider Abercrombie & Fitch BBQ Restaurant to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

What is your attitude towards Abercrombie & Fitch BBQ Restaurant?

Negative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Positive*

---

5. Bang & Olufsen proudly introduces Bang & Olufsen Toaster

To what extent do you think that Bang & Olufsen and toaster fit?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

To what extent do you think that Bang & Olufsen Toaster is expected?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How relevant do you consider Bang & Olufsen toaster to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

What is your attitude towards Bang & Olufsen toaster?

Negative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Positive*

---

6. Duracell proudly introduces Duracell Light bulbs

To what extent do you think that Duracell and light bulbs fit?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How typical do you consider Duracell Light Bulbs to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

To what extent do you think that Duracell Light Bulb is expected?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How relevant do you consider Duracell Light Bulb to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

What is your attitude towards Duracell Light Bulb?

Negative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Positive*

---

7. Chanel proudly introduces the Chanel Travel Agency

To what extent do you think that Chanel and travel agency fit?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How typical do you consider the Chanel Travel Agency to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

To what extent do you think that Chanel Travel Agency is expected?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How relevant do you consider Chanel Travel Agency to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

What is your attitude towards Chanel Travel Agency?

Negative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Positive*

---

8. BMW proudly introduces the BMW bicycle helmet

To what extent do you think that BMW and bicycle helmet fit?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How typical do you consider the BMW Bicycle Helmets to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

To what extent do you think that the BMW bicycle helmet is expected?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How relevant do you consider BMW bicycle helmet to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

What is your attitude towards BMW bicycle helmet?

Negative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Positive*

---

9. The North Face proudly introduces the The North Face Skin Care

To what extent do you think that the Northe Face and skin care fit?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How typical do you consider the North Face Skin Care to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

To what extent do you think that the North Face Skin Care is expected?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How relevant do you consider the North Face Skin Care to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

What is your attitude towards the North Face Skin Care?

Negative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Positive*

---

10. Fjällräven proudly introduces Fjällräven Power Smoothie

To what extent do you think that the Fjällräven Power Smoothie fit?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How typical do you consider the Fjällräven Power Smmothie to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

To what extent do you think that the Fjällräven Power Smoothie is expected?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

How relevant do you consider the Fjällräven Power Smoothie to be?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Very much*

What is your attitude towards the Fjällräven Power Smoothie?

Negative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Positive*

Results Pre-test

n= 24	Expectancy	Relevancy	Attitude
Polarn	2,75	4	4,3
Wasa	3,05	3,05	3,47
Red Bull	2,1	2,3	2,47
Abercrombie	2,15	3,05	3,68
B&O	2,9	3,3	4,37
Duracell	3,8	4,7	4,45
Chanel	2,4	2,85	3,1
BMW	3,05	3,9	4,32
North Face	2,95	4,15	4,3
Fjällräven	2,3	2,8	3,1

APPENDIX 2: Types of advertisements used in mainstudy

Appendix 2.1 Duracell congruent extension traditional media



Appendix 2.2 Duracell incongruent extension with explanatory link traditional media

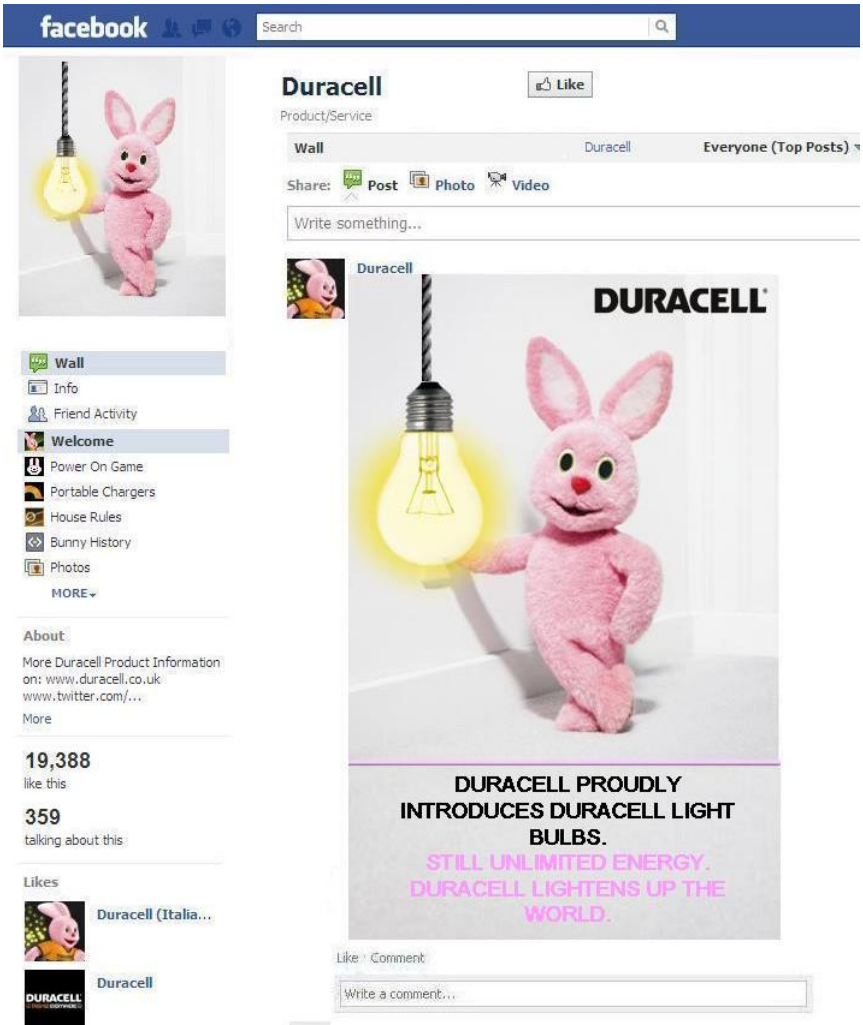




Appendix 2.3 North face congruent extension traditional media

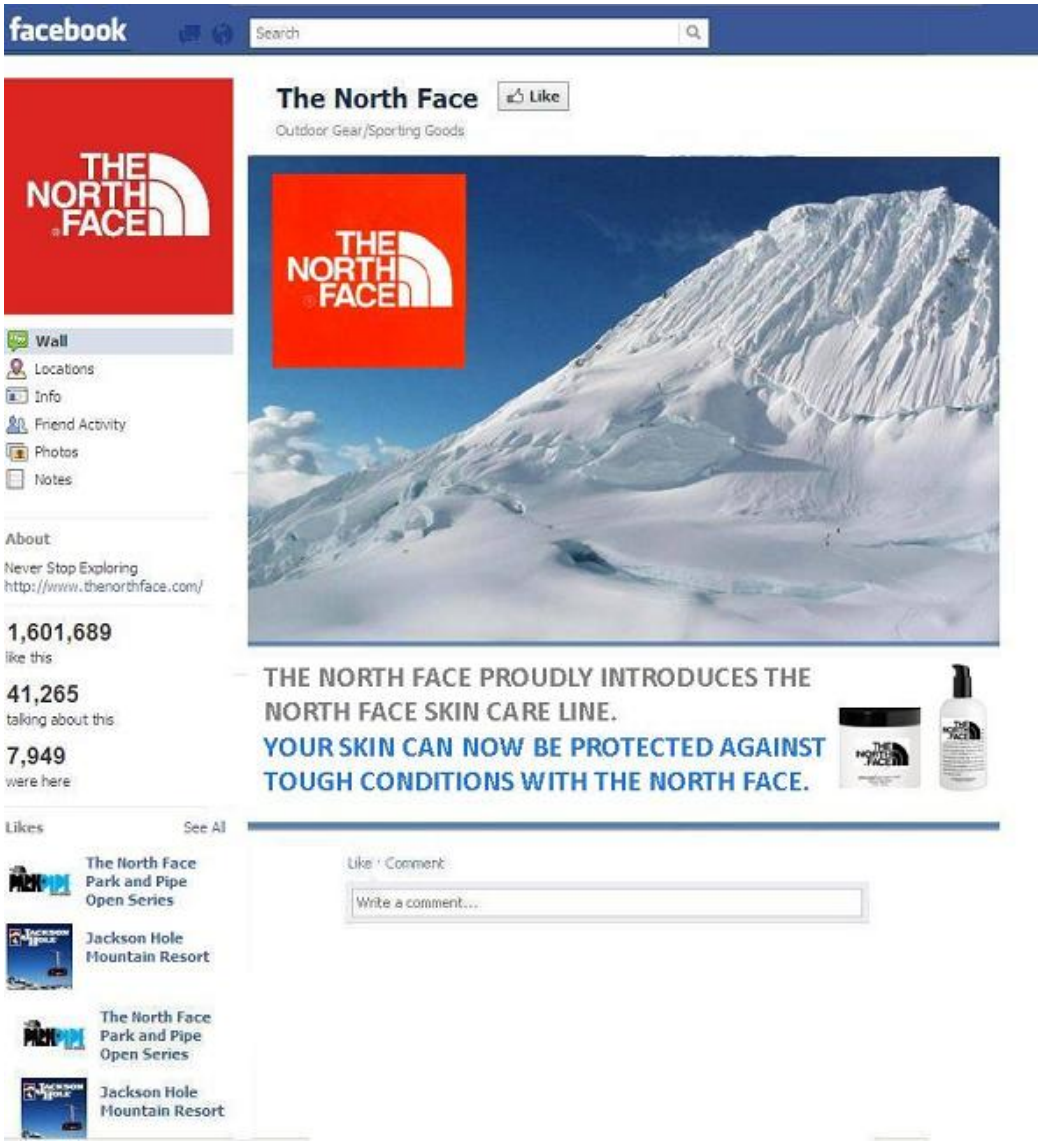
Appendix 2.4 North face incongruent extension with explanatory link traditional media





Appendix 2.5 Duracell incongruent extension with explanatory link social media

Appendix 2.6 North face incongruent extension with explanatory link social media



APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE MAIN STUDY

Q24

Hi,

We are two MSc. students from the Stockholm School of Economics / Handelshögskolan doing this survey for our master thesis.

We would very much appreciate if you would answer our survey! It takes approximately 3 minutes, and you have the opportunity to win tickets to the movies! Your answers will be anonymous.

Thank you!

Q1

Imagine that you saw this page online:



Q2 *

For how many seconds did you observe the previous ad?

Q3 *

How familiar are you with the above mentioned brand?

Never heard of it						Know it very well
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q5 *

What attitude do you hold towards the above mentioned brand?

Bad	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Good
Negative	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Positive
Unsatisfactory	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Satisfactory

Q6

Please state to what extent you agree with the following statements:

	Completely disagree 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Completely agree 10
I'm satisfied with the brand the North Face	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is likely that I would buy something from the North Face brand	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q7

What are your feelings towards this type of product?

Unimportant	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Important
Not needed	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Needed
Uninterested	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Interested

Q8

What attitude do you hold towards the above ad?

Bad	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Good
Negative	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Positive
Non-appealing	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Appealing

Q9

What do you think of the North Face skin care?

Bad	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Good
Negative	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Positive
Unsatisfactory	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Satisfactory

Q10

To what extent do you think that the North Face and the new product the North Face skin care match?

Does not match at all 1	2	3	4	5	6	Matches very well 7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q11

How relevant do you consider the North Face skin care to be?

Not relevant at all						Very relevant
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q12

To what extent do you think that the North Face skin care is unexpected?

Not unexpected						Highly unexpected
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q13

Please rate your likely response to the following statements:

	Very unlikely 1	2	3	4	5	6	Very likely 7
If someone asked you to review the product, would you criticize it?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is likely that you would recommend the product?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q14

To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

	1 Completely Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Completely agree
I would like to buy a product from the North Face	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would like to buy the North Face skin care	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q15

To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

	1 Completely Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Completely Agree
The North Face is smart	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The North Face is likely to develop valuable products in the future	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I find the North Face interesting	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would like to buy the brand	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q16

What is the general quality level of the brand?

Very Bad 1	2	3	4	5	6	Very good 7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q17

To what extent do you think that the brand you just saw is creative?

Not at all 1	2	3	4	5	6	Very much 7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q18

How well does the following statements describe your emotions towards the ad?

Uninvolved	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Involved
Means nothing	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Means a lot to me
Mundane	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Fascinating
Unexciting	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Exciting
Irrelevant	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Relevant

Q19

Do you agree with the following statements:

	Completely disagree 1	2	3	4	5	6	Completely agree 7
When I see the picture, I feel as a part of the group	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The people behind the ad seems to understand things that I want to know	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would like to meet the people behind the ad	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am reliable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am successful	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am intelligent	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I enjoy being outdoor	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am tough	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am intellectual	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I enjoy tasks where I need to find solutions to problems	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have an easy time thinking in new and unfamiliar situations	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q20

Please write your age in numbers:

Q23

Please select your gender

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

APPENDIX 4: Overview of mean values between the different dependent variables

4.1 Table 1: Connected consumers, congruent versus incongruent brand extensions

Connected consumers	Congruent BE (n= 92)	Incongruent BE (n=175)	Mean difference	Significance level
EXTENSION ATTITUDE	4,9746	4,4686	0,5061	,001
BRAND ATTITUDE	5,6993	5,6857	0,0136	,899
MATCH	5,3913	4,5029	0,8884	,000
NEGATIVE WOM	2,8261	3,5714	0,7453	,000
POSITIVE WOM	4,3587	3,8914	0,4673	,011
PARENT BRAND PURCHASE INT.	4,9022	5,1086	0,2064	,165
EXTENSION PURCHASE INT.	4,0761	3,5886	0,4875	,013
CREATIVITY	4,1413	4,5143	0,3730	,034
BRAND INTEREST	4,4022	4,6914	0,2893	,056
BRAND ABILITY	4,7752	5,0314	0,2562	,038

4.2 Table 2: Disconnected consumers , co ngruent versus incongruent brand extensions

Disconnected consumers	Congruent BE (n=65)	Incongruent BE (n=28)	Mean difference	Significance level
EXTENSION ATTITUDE	4,3810	4,0410	0,3399	0,133
BRAND ATTITUDE	4,1667	4,6000	0,4333	0,026
NEGATIVE WOM	3,4286	3,5077	0,0791	0,793
POSITIVE WOM	3,3571	3,3385	0,0187	0,948
PARENT BRAND PURCHASE INT.	3,0000	3,7077	0,7077	0,016
EXTENSION PURCHASE INT.	2,7143	3,0154	0,3011	0,290
BRAND INTEREST	3,0179	3,5077	0,4898	0,064
CREATIVITY	3,6429	3,4769	0,1659	0,611
BRAND ABILITY	3,8214	3,9077	0,0863	0,753

4.3 Table 3: Incongruent extensions, social versus traditional media

All consumers	Traditional media (n=120)	Social media (n=120)	Mean difference	Significance level
EXTENSION ATTITUDE	4,3000	4,4056	0,1056	,477
BRAND ATTITUDE	5,4139	5,3694	0,0444	,720
NEGATIVE WOM	3,6417	3,4667	0,1750	,317
POSITIVE WOM	3,7167	3,7667	0,0500	,779
PARENT BRAND PURCHASE INT.	4,7667	4,6917	0,0750	,663
EXTENSION PURCHASE INT.	3,3667	3,5000	0,1333	,485
BRAND INTEREST	4,3417	4,4000	0,0583	,724
CREATIVITY	4,1750	4,2917	0,1167	,534
BRAND ABILITY	4,7311	4,8125	0,0814	,541
PSI	2,8750	3,1333	0,2583	,155

4.4 Table 4: Incongruent extensions, no explanatory link versus explanatory link

Disconnected consumers	No explanatory link (n=25)	Explanatory link (n=40)	Mean difference	Significance level
EXTENSION ATTITUDE	3,5733	4,3333	0,7600	,004
BRAND ATTITUDE	4,4800	4,6750	0,1950	,401
MATCH	3,5600	4,4250	0,8650	,030
NEGATIVE WOM	3,8800	3,2750	0,6050	,089
POSITIVE WOM	3,2400	3,4000	0,1600	,627
PARENT BRAND PURCHASE INT.	3,4800	3,8500	0,3700	,252
EXTENSION PURCHASE INT.	2,9200	3,0750	0,1550	,642
BRAND INTEREST	3,1800	3,7125	0,5325	,071
CREATIVITY	3,4000	3,5250	0,1250	,730
BRAND ABILITY	3,4400	4,2000	0,7600	,072