

The Influence of Parent Brand Image on Extended Brands: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

Brand extensions, the strategic expansion of established brands into new product categories, have become a prevalent marketing strategy in today's competitive marketplace. This conceptual study presents a comprehensive framework that elucidates the dynamics of the influence of parent brand's image. Our framework encompasses central elements such as brand strength, associations, and consistency, collectively shaping consumer perceptions of brand extensions. These factors are essential for brand managers and researchers examining the intricacies of brand extensions and their reception in diverse market contexts. Moreover, our framework highlights two vital aspects of parent brand image influence: a positive parent brand image, characterized by reputation, awareness, and perceived quality, and a consistent brand image. These aspects significantly impact perceived fit, consumer trust, and consumer perceptions, thus determining the success of brand extensions. Furthermore, our study delves into mediating factors, emphasizing the pivotal role of consumer trust and emotional branding. These factors act as bridges, translating parent brand image into perceived fit and consumer perceptions, ultimately influencing brand extension success. Finally, we consider moderating factors like product category and brand history, which introduce context-specific complexity into our framework. This conceptual study provides a solid foundation for empirical research in the field of marketing and brand management, offering valuable insights for brand strategists aiming to optimize brand portfolios and enhance brand extension acceptance in today's dynamic market environment.

Keywords: *Extended Brand, Core Brand, Parent Brand, Conceptual Framework, Brand Extension.*

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INTRODUCTION

The extension of established brand names to new product categories, known as brand extensions, has become a common strategy in the modern marketplace (Keller, 2003). This strategic approach leverages the equity built by the parent brand to introduce new offerings, creating a promising opportunity for brand managers. The success of brand extensions is of paramount interest to businesses seeking to optimize their brand portfolios while mitigating the risks associated with launching entirely new brands (Aaker, 1990). In this context, the role of the parent brand's image takes center stage. A strong and positive parent brand image can significantly impact the way consumers perceive and accept brand extensions (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). The parent brand's image serves as a foundation upon which brand extensions are built, influencing consumer attitudes, preferences, and purchase intentions (Keller, 1998). Research by Aaker and Keller (1990) suggests that the fit between the brand and its extended form is critical for consumers' acceptance and the success of brand extensions. While the literature has explored various aspects of brand extensions, the relationship between core brand image and the acceptance of extensions remains a focal point of inquiry (Aaker & Keller, 1990). The significance of this relationship is underscored by empirical studies. For example, a study by Chattopadhyay and Alba (1988) found that a positive parent brand image positively influences perceived fit, resulting in a more favorable attitude toward brand extensions. Moreover, this positive influence has been observed in various product categories, including technology, fashion, and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) (Rangaswamy & Van Bruggen, 2005). This conceptual research paper delves into the intricate dynamics of how the parent brand image influences the reception and success of brand extensions. It is guided by the premise that a strong and favorable parent brand image positively impacts consumers' perceived fit and perception of brand extensions, consequently contributing to their success (Chattopadhyay & Alba, 1988). Moreover,

this paper will explore mediating and moderating factors that further refine the relationship between core brand image and its extension's acceptance/success, emphasizing the critical role of consumer trust and emotional branding (Keller, 2013). In the following sections, we will present a comprehensive framework that integrates central elements, the influence of parent brand image, mediating factors, and moderating factors, offering a holistic perspective on the impact of parent brand image on brand extensions. This framework, founded on a review of existing literature and theoretical insights, aims to provide a foundation for future empirical research in the domain of marketing and brand extensions. Understanding the mechanisms underlying this relationship is instrumental for businesses seeking to optimize their brand strategies and enhance the acceptance of brand extensions in a competitive marketplace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand extension, characterized by the introduction of new products or services under an established brand name, represents a strategic approach through which firms leverage their primary brand equity (Aaker, 1990). A key determinant of the success of this extension is the parent brand's image. This image includes consumer perception and association with the brand (Keller, 1993). Perceived fit, a crucial concept in brand extension literature, emphasizes the importance of aligning the image of the parent brand with the extended product (Keller, 2003). Consumers tend to embrace extensions when they perceive a strong alignment (Park et al., 1991). This is particularly evident when the parent brand has a favorable reputation because a positive brand image shapes consumers' outlook on the extension, resulting in favorable attitudes (Loken & John, 1993). In mediating the connection between the parent brand's image and the perceived alignment of extensions, consumer trust emerges as a pivotal factor (Keller, 1998). A positive parent brand image fosters consumer trust, leading to increased acceptance of the extensions (Aaker & Keller, 1990).

Additionally, emotional branding, which involves creating emotional connections with consumers, mediates the influence of the parent brand's image on consumer perceptions of extensions (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). These emotional connections, such as brand attachment and resonance, have been observed to influence consumers' emotional responses to brand extensions and their overall brand experience. However, the impact of the parent brand's image is not consistent across all product categories. The nature of the product category moderates the link between the parent brand's image and perceived alignment, as it influences consumer expectations and industry-specific norms (Keller, 2008). Furthermore, a brand's historical experiences with extensions can moderate the effect of the parent brand's image on consumer perceptions of new extensions. A history of successful extensions can positively influence consumer acceptance, while past setbacks may generate skepticism among consumers (Aaker, 1997).

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

The materials and techniques employed in this conceptual study, which focuses on "The Influence of Parent Brand Image on Brand Extensions," are primarily based on the use of secondary data. We have sourced this secondary data from a wide array of pertinent literature, including academic research papers, journal articles, textbooks, and industry reports. These materials are essential for establishing the groundwork for constructing the conceptual framework and developing a comprehensive literature review. The selection of secondary data sources is meticulously curated to ensure their direct relevance to the research topic. Our primary criteria for inclusion are the thematic focus on parent brand

image, brand extensions, perceived fit, consumer trust, emotional branding, the impact of product category, and the historical track record of brand extensions. The process of data extraction involves systematically identifying, collecting, and categorizing information gleaned from these secondary data sources. We extract key concepts, constructs, and empirical findings that relate to the central theme of the influence of parent brand image on brand extensions. These extracted insights are then synthesized and integrated, serving as the foundational building blocks for the conceptual framework, the literature review, and the theoretical underpinning of this study. Data analysis and integration techniques, particularly thematic and content analyses, are applied to the secondary data. These methodologies allow us to identify common themes, patterns, and relationships among the selected constructs, thereby contributing to the development of a coherent and comprehensive conceptual framework that accurately encapsulates the complex dynamics of parent brand image in relation to brand extensions. It is important to note that the use of secondary data does come with inherent limitations. These include potential biases in the selection of data sources, reliance on existing research methodologies and definitions, and the lack of the ability to perform new empirical analyses. As this study is conceptual in nature, the findings and framework generated are rooted in existing literature and theoretical constructs.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This is the conceptual model as well as various constructs that defines the influence of parent brand image on brand extensions. The various constructs as well as their relationship is defined below:

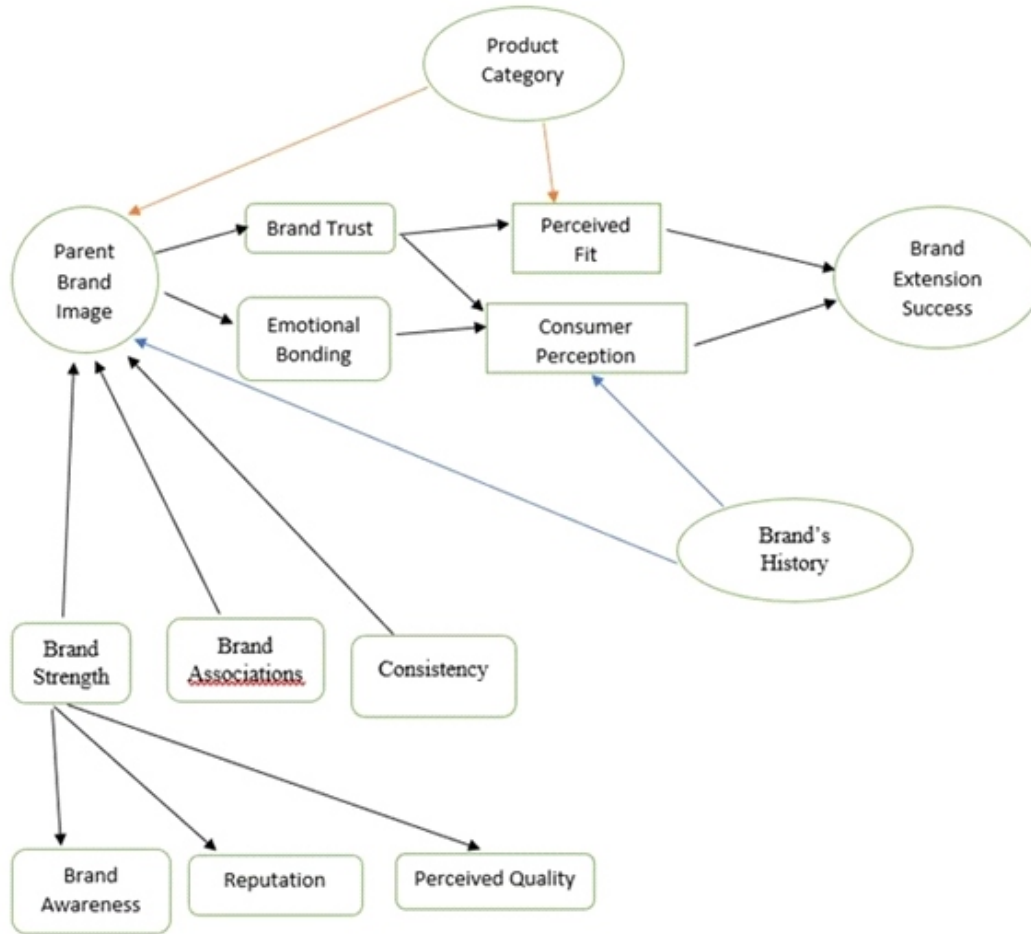


Figure 1 : Conceptual Model of Influence of Parent Brand Image on Brand Extensions

I. Central Elements

The various central elements of the conceptual model are defined below:

A. Parent Brand Image

1) **Brand Strength:** Brand strength, as a central element in this conceptual framework, encompasses the overall robustness and resilience of a parent brand's image. It includes multiple dimensions such as brand awareness, reputation, and perceived quality. Brand awareness represents the extent to which consumers are cognizant of and recognize the parent brand. A strong parent brand typically enjoys high levels of brand recognition, making it more likely for consumers to consider its

extensions. Reputation is another dimension of brand strength, reflecting the collective perception of a brand's integrity, trustworthiness, and reliability. Consumers tend to trust brands with a positive reputation more, enhancing their willingness to engage with extensions. Perceived quality signifies the consumer's judgment of the parent brand's overall product and service quality. A parent brand with a positive perceived quality often extends this perception to its brand extensions, making them more attractive to consumers.

2) **Brand Associations:** Brand associations refer to the specific attributes, values, and emotional connections that consumers link to the parent brand. These associations are the result of various factors, including branding efforts,

consumer experiences, and communications. They can be both positive and negative, and their nature significantly influences how consumers perceive brand extensions. Positive brand associations, such as trustworthiness, innovation, and quality, can enhance the desirability of extensions. Negative associations, on the other hand, may deter consumers from accepting brand extensions. Understanding and managing these associations is pivotal for brand managers in ensuring that extensions align with the intended brand image.

- 3) **Consistency:** The uniformity of a parent brand's image represents the extent to which the core identity and image of the brand remain consistent across different products or services under the same brand umbrella. An unvarying brand image indicates that consumers can reliably anticipate what a product extension will deliver. This expectation arises from their familiarity with the parent brand's characteristics, values, and commitments. A high level of uniformity nurtures consumer trust, as it leads consumers to believe that the extension will align with the parent brand's reputation. It also contributes to the perception of perceived alignment between the parent brand and its extensions. Inconsistent brand images can create perplexity and doubt, making it more challenging for consumers to embrace brand extensions. Therefore, maintaining a uniform brand image is crucial to ensuring that extensions harmonize with consumer expectations and adhere to the established brand's identity.

These concepts collectively form the core of the framework, outlining the elements that affect consumer perceptions and approval of brand extensions based on the parent brand's image. Grasping these concepts is essential for brand managers and researchers interested in exploring the dynamics of brand extensions and their performance in diverse market contexts.

B. Brand Extension

B. Brand extensions constitute a fundamental element of this theoretical framework, representing the progeny of an established parent brand. These extensions encompass a wide range of products or services introduced under the same brand umbrella. Within this context, three primary constructs play a pivotal role in understanding the relationship between the parent brand image and the triumph of these extensions:

1. **Perceived Fit:** Perceived fit is the subjective alignment recognized by consumers between the parent brand's image and the extended product or service. It reflects how well consumers perceive the new offering as complementing and harmonizing with the existing brand identity. When perceived fit is high, consumers are more likely to view the extension as a natural and coherent addition to the brand's portfolio. Conversely, low perceived fit may result in skepticism and reservations regarding the extension's compatibility with the parent brand. This construct is fundamental, as it influences consumer attitudes and endorsement of brand extensions.
2. **Consumer Perception:** Consumer perception is a multifaceted concept encompassing how individuals interpret and evaluate the extended product or service in relation to the parent brand's image. It considers not only the tangible attributes of the extension but also the emotional and symbolic aspects that consumers associate with the brand. Consumer perception of the extension can be positive or negative, influenced by factors such as brand connections, perceived excellence, and emotional resonance with the parent brand. Understanding how consumer perception is molded and how it affects the extension's reception is crucial in assessing the potential for success of brand extensions.

Extension Success: Extension success is the ultimate metric that determines whether the brand extension flourishes or falters in the market. Measures of success encompass various indicators, including sales figures, market performance, and the level of consumer acceptance. A thriving extension demonstrates that it has effectively resonated with its target audience, leading to increased sales and market share. In contrast, an unsuccessful extension may encounter consumer resistance, sluggish sales, and a lack of impact in the market. This construct serves as the ultimate benchmark for evaluating the efficacy of a brand extension.

These constructs together offer a comprehensive framework for evaluating the impact of parent brand image on brand extensions. Perceived fit and consumer perception act as crucial intermediaries between parent brand image and extension success, as they shape consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. Analyzing the interplay of these constructs provides insights into how the alignment between the parent brand and its extensions influences consumer perceptions and, subsequently, determines the success or failure of brand extensions in the marketplace.

II. Influence of Parent Brand Image: The theoretical framework provides insights into how the parent brand's image can exert substantial influence over the success of brand extensions. Within this context, two vital aspects come to the forefront:

1. Positive Parent Brand Image: A favorable perception of the parent brand, characterized by a strong reputation, extensive brand recognition, and a perceived commitment to quality, has a positive effect on the alignment and acceptance of brand extensions. When consumers hold the parent brand in high regard, they are more likely to perceive a natural concordance between the parent brand's image and the extension,

resulting in a more favorable attitude towards the brand extension. A robust parent brand image fosters trust and trust among consumers, making them more receptive to embracing and engaging with extensions, ultimately enhancing the extension's prospects for success.

2. Consistent Brand Image: The unwavering nature of brand image across both the parent brand and its extensions plays a pivotal role in enhancing perceived fit and consumer trust in the extension. When consumers identify an unwavering brand image that remains consistent across different products or services under the same brand umbrella, it strengthens their perception of fit and aligns expectations. An unchanging brand image reassures consumers, reinforcing their trust in the extension and their willingness to accept it. This uniformity is instrumental in positively shaping consumer perceptions, which, in turn, can influence the success of brand extensions in the market.

III. Mediating factors: Intermediating factors within the theoretical framework play a crucial role in elucidating the intricate connections between parent brand image and its impact on perceived fit and consumer perception of brand extensions. These intermediating factors shed light on the underlying mechanisms that influence these connections:

A. Consumer Trust: Consumer trust, a cornerstone of effective brand management, is a central intermediary within the framework. It serves as a bridge between the parent brand image and both perceived fit and consumer perception of brand extensions. Here's how it operates:

Intermediation of Parent Brand Image and Perceived Fit: Consumer trust acts as the intermediary in the link between the parent brand image and perceived fit. A strong and positively perceived parent brand image fosters trust among consumers. When consumers place

trust in the parent brand, they are more inclined to perceive a natural alignment between the parent brand's image and the extension. This trust bolsters their trust in the extension's quality and fit with the parent brand, thus positively impacting the perceived fit.

Intermediation between Parent/Main Brand Image and Consumer Perception of Extensions:

Consumer trust also mediates the impact of parent brand image on consumer perception of brand extensions. A favorable parent brand image cultivates trust, which subsequently shapes consumer perception. When consumers trust the parent brand, they are more likely to hold positive perceptions of brand extensions, including perceived quality and compatibility with the brand. Trust enhances the credibility and reliability of the extension in the eyes of consumers.

- B. Emotional Branding:** Emotional connections between consumers and the parent brand serve as another intermediary factor in the theoretical framework. These emotional bonds can significantly influence how parent brand image impacts consumer perceptions of brand extensions:

Mediation of Emotional Branding on Consumer Perceptions: Emotional bonding mediates the impact of parent brand image on consumer perceptions of brand extensions. When consumers have emotional connections with the parent brand, these emotions shape their perceptions of extensions. A positive parent brand image, rich in emotional resonance, can lead to more positive perceptions of brand extensions. Emotional branding enhances the overall brand experience and can amplify the emotional appeal of extensions. These intermediary factors reveal that consumer trust and emotional branding play pivotal roles in translating the influence of parent brand image into perceived fit and consumer perception of

brand extensions. The interplay of these intermediary factors underscores the importance of fostering trust and emotional connections to enhance the reception and success of brand extensions.

IV: Moderating Factors: The theoretical framework incorporates moderating factors essential for acknowledging the subtleties and contextual variations affecting the relationship between parent brand image and its impact on perceived fit and consumer perception of brand extensions. These moderating factors introduce an additional layer of complexity to the framework:

- A. Product Category:** The product category plays a pivotal role as a moderating factor within the framework, accounting for the distinct characteristics and consumer expectations associated with various product types. This factor affects how the parent brand image can influence perceived fit. Here's how it functions:

Moderation of the Relationship Between Parent Brand Image and Perceived Fit:

The nature of the product category, whether it belongs to the luxury segment, consumer goods, technology, or any other category, can moderate the connection between the parent brand image and perceived fit. Different product categories carry specific consumer expectations, industry standards, and competitive dynamics. For instance, consumers within the luxury segment might hold higher expectations for alignment with the parent brand's image, while technology products may prioritize innovation. Consequently, the intensity and character of the relationship between the parent brand image and perceived fit can fluctuate based on the product category.

- B. Brand History:**

A brand's historical context, especially its past experiences with brand extensions, constitutes a

crucial moderating factor in the framework, influencing how consumers perceive new extensions. Here's how it operates:

Moderation of the Influence of Parent Brand Image on Consumer Perceptions: A brand's history, including its track record with previous brand extensions, can moderate the impact of parent brand image on consumer perceptions of new extensions. When a brand has a successful history of introducing extensions that align with the parent brand image, consumers may be more open to accepting new ones. In contrast, if a brand has experienced failures or misalignment with extensions in the past, it may generate skepticism among consumers. Thus, the brand's past experiences shape the extent to which parent brand image influences consumer perceptions of new extensions. These moderating factors highlight the significance of considering the product category and brand history when assessing the relationship between parent brand image and brand extensions. Different product categories and a brand's historical track record can significantly impact the reception and acceptance of brand extensions, adding a layer of context-specific complexity to the overall framework.

DISCUSSION

The theoretical framework presented in this study delves into the complex dynamics governing the relationship between parent brand image and the success of brand extensions. Within this framework, central elements encompass the critical aspects of the parent brand's strength, brand associations, and the consistency of its image. These elements form the foundation upon which the success of brand extensions is built. A robust parent brand, characterized by high brand awareness, a positive reputation, and perceived quality, significantly impacts consumers' willingness to accept extensions. Managing brand associations is pivotal, as positive associations enhance the desirability of extensions

while negative ones can deter consumers. Maintaining a consistent brand image across different products under the same brand umbrella reinforces consumer trust and contributes to the perceived alignment between the parent brand and its extensions. Brand extensions, in turn, are characterized by perceived fit, consumer perception, and ultimate extension success. Perceived fit reflects consumers' alignment perceptions between the parent brand's image and the extended product, influencing their attitudes and acceptance. Consumer perception encompasses how individuals interpret and assess extended products in relation to the parent brand, considering both tangible and emotional attributes. Extension success serves as the ultimate benchmark, encompassing sales, market performance, and consumer acceptance. The influence of parent brand image highlights the favorable impact of a positive parent brand image and a consistent brand image, both contributing to the perceived alignment between the parent brand and its extensions, leading to enhanced consumer acceptance. Intermediating factors, such as consumer trust and emotional branding, play a pivotal role in translating the influence of parent brand image into perceived fit and consumer perception of brand extensions. Moreover, moderating factors like product category and brand history acknowledge the contextual variations that can influence the relationship between parent brand image and acceptance. Different product categories and brand historical contexts introduce a layer of complexity and shape consumers' perceptions of new extensions. In summary, this theoretical framework provides a comprehensive foundation for understanding and exploring the multifaceted relationships between parent brand image and the success of brand extensions. It offers valuable insights for brand managers and researchers, enabling them to navigate the intricacies of brand management in a competitive marketplace.

CONCLUSION

The theoretical framework provides a

comprehensive structure for investigating the intricate dynamics of parent brand image and its influence on brand extensions. It offers insights into the role of consumer trust, emotional branding, product category, and brand history, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the complex relationships that drive the success of brand extensions. In conclusion, this theoretical framework sets the stage for future empirical research in the field of marketing and brand management, offering a foundation for businesses and brand managers to optimize their brand strategies and enhance the acceptance of brand extensions in a competitive marketplace. Understanding the mechanisms underlying the relationship between parent brand image and brand extensions is instrumental in navigating the complex landscape of modern branding.

1. Practical implications

The conceptual framework outlined in this paper offers valuable practical implications for brand managers and businesses aiming to maximize their brand strategies and the acceptance of brand extensions. Key takeaways for real-world application include the need to invest in nurturing a robust parent brand image through heightened brand awareness, reputation management, and perceived quality. Managing and fine-tuning brand associations is crucial to ensure that consumers hold positive perceptions of the parent brand, thus facilitating the acceptance of extensions. Maintaining consistency in the brand image across products and services under the same brand umbrella is essential for enhancing consumer trust and perceived fit. Fostering trust directly with consumers and capitalizing on emotional branding can further influence their perceptions of brand extensions. Moreover, recognizing the unique characteristics and consumer expectations within different product categories will guide tailored extension strategies, ensuring alignment with specific category norms. Finally,

brand managers should consider the historical track record of extensions, leveraging past successes and addressing failures to positively impact consumer acceptance of new extensions. By incorporating these practical insights, brand managers can better navigate the complex landscape of brand extensions, thereby increasing their chances of success in today's competitive marketplace.

2. Limitations

Despite the comprehensive nature of our conceptual framework, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations inherent in our study. Firstly, the absence of empirical data constrains the immediate practical applicability of our framework. While it provides a robust theoretical foundation, empirical research is needed to validate and refine our model for practical use in different industry and market contexts. Additionally, our framework simplifies the multifaceted nature of brand extensions, which can vary significantly across industries and consumer segments. The moderating factors of product category and brand history, while integral to our framework, may not universally apply, necessitating empirical testing and validation. Maintaining a consistent brand image can be challenging in today's rapidly evolving market landscape, where adaptability is often essential. Lastly, consumer preferences and socio-cultural influences are continually evolving, adding a temporal dimension to brand management, further emphasizing the need for empirical research to adapt and refine our framework over time.

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