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Cross-gender Brand Extensions: How will gender of brand, gender of consumer and extension category influence the evaluation of a cross-gender brand extension?

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“This thesis is a part of the MSc programme at BI Norwegian Business School. The school takes no responsibility for the methods used, results found, and conclusions drawn.”

Summary

Cross-gender brand extension has become a valuable strategy in recent years and grown to be an important component of strategic marketing communication. Previous research has touched upon the topic, however, as far we could see few studies have focused on the cross-gender brand extension on selected masculine and feminine brand. In this thesis, we investigate how strong-gendered feminine and masculine brands will respond to a cross-gender brand extension. To do so, we conducted a 2 (strong gendered brands: Victoria's Secret (feminine) vs Comfyballs (masculine)) x 2 (extension strategy: brand extension vs cross-gender brand extension) factorial between- subjects experiment. The results show that launching a cross-gender brand extension will significantly reduce the overall brand attitude of a strong-gendered brand.

Acknowledgement

As a final part of our two-year master's degree program in “Strategic Marketing Management” at BI Norwegian Business School in Oslo, we have elaborated on the topic cross-gender brand extension. The scope of this thesis has resulted in us acquiring new knowledge about the cross-gender brand extension, brand extension, and gender of brands. Besides, we have experienced and learned a lot about cooperation and how we can use each other's strengths. Sharing knowledge and opinions has been a central part of this task, where collaboration has been our strength. Nevertheless, at times, it has been a time-consuming and challenging process, but at the same time exciting and educational.

We want to thank our supervisor, Professor Lars E. Olsen, for his great support. He has been a prominent advisor who has given us constructive feedback, professional input, supportive words, and helped us to keep the mood up in challenging times.

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Good reading!

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1.0 Introduction

Companies are increasingly seeing the need to explore and utilize new ways to advance and leverage themselves. Creating a new brand is a strategy that many companies have used to reach out to new customers. However, creating a new brand requires substantial financial investment and firms do not always have the capital necessary to invest (Aaker & Keller, 1990). Therefore, many companies have begun to turn to brand extensions as their solution (Doust & Esfahlan, 2012). In fact, close to 82 % of all new products that are introduced to the market each year are brand extensions (Simms, 2005). In addition to the increasing trend to use a brand extension, recent studies encourage a brand to reach out to the opposite gender using the same brand name (Sandhu, 2017). An example could be a masculine brand reaching out to women. According to a Monllos (2016), the purchasing power of women is estimated at anywhere from \$5 trillion to \$15 trillion annually per year. Moreover, she states that “the ability to reach the female market in what has traditionally been a predominantly male market represents probably the biggest growth opportunity ever for most products” (Monllos, 2016, p. 3).

Porsche and Harley Davidson are brands that, for a long time, were perceived as masculine brands (Bloomberg, 2011). Harley Davidson has started to target the growing group of female riders. However, their strategy was not to reduce the masculinity to gain women's interest but instead reduce the barriers to ride a Harley by arranging riding courses and “garage parties” where women were gathered to learn motorcycle skills (Roodhof, 2019). Porsche, on the other hand, was traditionally associated with small sports cars, but in 2002 they introduced a Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV) (Bloomberg 2011). They named it Porsche Cayenne, and it was a new product which differentiated them from the traditional sport car brands. This car is more appealing for the female driver and was an instant success for wives, while at the same time being attractive for men. The Cayenne is now Porsche’s best-selling car and has nearly doubled its sales by adding this model to its fleet of sports cars (Bloomberg, 2011).

Gender marketing has become an effective strategy for creating a brand personality. Moreover, societal changes have encouraged many marketers to engage in brand gender-bending by deconstructing the gender exclusivity of brands (Veg-Sala, 2017). For example, housewives in the 1950s were content to be viewed only as someone who focused on the family and put their children's and husband's needs above their own. In fact, traditionally it was believed that men made the buying decisions while women simply went out to pick up the goods (Moore, 2008). Nevertheless, in today's society, it is essential for companies to not stereotype all women as traditional housewives. Marketers are now concerned with continually expanding the gender exclusivity of brands by bringing women into the male-skewed customer base of male-gendered products and vice versa. However, many managers struggle to maximize their sales for both genders, especially in the case of brands with a strong gendered image (Azar, Aimé & Ulrich, 2018). There is a history of masculine brands launching an extension to reach out to a woman in the domain of traditional male products. Such as Levi's and Gillette targeting women. However, recent trends also show that companies are extending their feminine brands to target men (Jung & Lee, 2006). For instance, Triumph attempted to launch an international extension into male swimwear from its original female swimwear offering. Moreover, Dove launched hygiene products for men from its original female hygiene products (Jung & Lee, 2006).

There are many studies that have researched the effect of gender marketing. However, as far as we could see there are few studies that have focused on the cross-gender brand extension on selected masculine and feminine brands. Therefore, we will in this master thesis investigate how strong-gendered masculine and feminine brands respond to cross-gender brand extensions. Introducing a new brand to the market can be a resource- and cost-demanding process for companies, thus, we want to contribute to the field by examining how a cross-gender brand extension will be received by consumers. Based on this, our research question is as follows:

“How will strong-gendered brands respond to a cross-gender brand extension?”

This thesis consists of a literature review where we enlighten relevant theory for the topic. Building on the literature review, we explain and outline our research hypotheses. Moreover, in the methodology section, we describe the research design and further explain the process of the study. Further, results from the study, with rejection or support of hypotheses will be presented, followed by a discussion. Lastly, we will outline study limitations and suggestions for future research, as well as presenting the conclusion.

2.0 Literature review

In this section of the thesis, we will cover the theories and concepts that are relevant to the research question. We start by presenting brand extension and evaluation of brand extensions. Furthermore, we will review the theory concerning gendered brands and gendered consumption. Finally, we will present existing literature concerning cross-gender extensions and cross-gender brand extensions.

2.1 *Brand Extensions*

The costs associated with introducing a new brand is substantial. Estimations reveal that it could range from \$10 million to \$200 million (Aaker, 1990; Kotler & Armstrong, 2004). In addition to the new brand strategy, there are several other strategies to develop a brand, whereas two of them are line extensions and brand extensions. A line extension is when a company extends its current brand name into an existing product category, with some adjustments. Some examples of a line extension could be to give the product new colors, sizes, ingredients or flavors.

A brand extension is when the company chooses to extend its existing brand name into a new product category (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). In consonance with Kotler and Armstrong, Aaker and Keller (1990) state that a brand extension often means placing the brand into a new product category, using the existing brand name. Moreover, by introducing a strong, established brand into a new market, it can generate the needed familiarity and knowledge that consumers must have for the extension to succeed (Aaker & Keller, 1990). However, even though the brand is strongly established, the risk of the extension to fail is present. At worst, the wrong brand extension can constitute negative consumer attitudes, also to the master brand. This could prove to be very costly, both in terms of time and money for the company (Aaker & Keller, 1990).

2.2 Evaluation of brand extensions

Czellar (2003) developed a model for the extension evaluation process. The model is process-based, and includes the following four key evaluation processes: “(1) the perception of fit, (2) the formation of primary attitudes toward the extension, (3) the link between extension attitude and marketplace behavior and (4) the reciprocal effect of brand extension attitude on parent brand/extension category attitude” (Czellar, 2003, p. 97).

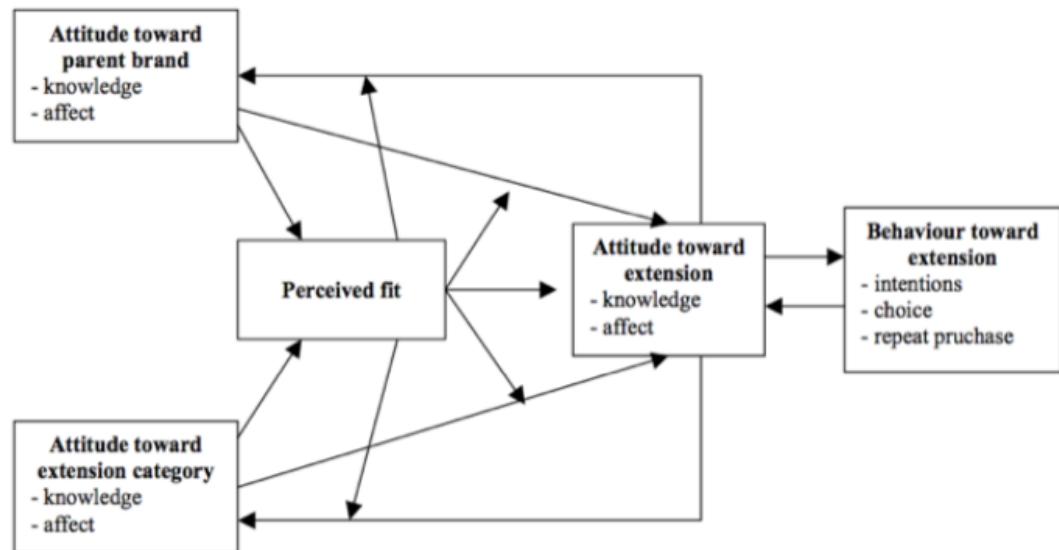


Figure 1: *Basic Model of the Extension Evaluation Process (Czellar, 2003)*

Czellar’s (2003) model is characterized by the processes of transferring effect and knowledge. Before extending a brand into a new product category, consumers typically have formed attitudes towards the targeted extension category and the parent brand. These attitudes that consumers have established consists of both affective (feelings) and cognitive (knowledge) dimensions (Fishbein & Middlestadt, 1995). The cognitive dimension comes from the brand- and category knowledge, which is stored in consumers’ long-term memories. While the affective dimension concerns consumers’ feelings towards a brand name or a given product category (Czellar, 2003). Furthermore, when the brand extension is launched, it will be evaluated based on the attitudes toward the parent brand and the extension category. Moreover, a third effect in the evaluation process will arise if the consumer is familiar with the parent brand and the extension category. Namely, the perception of fit between the brand and the extension. According to

Czellar (2003), this perceived fit can both mediate and moderate the effect on extension attitude. Perceived fit “can mediate the transfer of attitude components from the parent brand and extension category to the new extension” (Czellar, 2003, p. 99), while it “can moderate the relative influence of brand and category attitude on extension attitude” (Czellar, 2003, p. 99). In short, the model shows that attitude towards parent brand and extension category and perceived fit influences attitude toward an extension. Also, the attitude towards the extension will constitute consumer behavior (i.e. purchase intentions, choice, and repeat purchase) toward the extension.

There are different theories that address the evaluation of brand extensions, where academics’ focus has mainly been on categorization theory and associative network theory. Categorization theory “suggests that when consumers first encounter a brand extension, they think of ways in which the extension fits with their idea of the parent brand ‘category’” (Doust & Esfahlan, 2012, p. 4236). According to Bao, Sheng and Nkwocha (2010), this theory suggests that a more considerable overlap of product features increases the likelihood that consumers will base their evaluations of the extensions on present attitudes toward the parent brand. Moreover, if a brand’s core associations are concrete and specific, it can restrict the brand’s extension possibilities (Samuelsen, Peretz & Olsen, 2017). Hence, extension fit is essential for the consumers’ perceptions, both towards the extension as well as for the parent brand. Furthermore, Völckner and Sattler (2006) studied drivers of brand extension success and found that fit between the parent brand and the extension is the most important one for determining success of a brand extension. Moreover, Aaker and Keller (1990) states that fit is important because characteristics, such as perceived quality, will be transferred from the parent brand to the extension if the fit is high. A high fit between the parent brand and the extension means that consumers’ perceptions towards the parent brand will be transferred to the extension. Therefore, if these perceptions are positive, they will increase the chance of success for the extension. On the other hand, if the fit is low between the parent brand and the extension, the perceptions will not be transferred that easily, and marketers must develop new perceptions for the extension itself (Aaker & Keller, 1990).

The associative network theory proposes a network of concepts, called nodes, that are interconnected through links. The nodes represent concepts of stored information, and the links represent how strong the association between the nodes are (Doust & Esfahlan, 2012). When a consumer is exposed to a new product, they associate it with brands. Moreover, the cognitive structure of the consumers will be assimilated to fit the associations between the new product and the brand. An example of how this theory works can be explained by McDonalds and hamburgers. These two nodes are often strongly linked in consumers' associative network. Hence, when consumers think about hamburger, the effect of the network will evoke thoughts about McDonalds as well. In terms of brand extensions where the extension differs from the original brand, the network (and cognitive structure) will change and adapt to the new associations introduced.

Aaker and Keller (1990) specify three assumptions that should hold for an extension to be successful, i.e. 1) consumers should hold positive associations toward the original brand, 2) these associations should be transferred to the extension, and that 3) negative associations should not be transferred or created by the brand extension. Furthermore, they found that potential “negative associations can be neutralized more effectively by elaborating on the attributes of the brand extension than by reminding consumers of the positive associations with the original brand” (Aaker & Keller, 1990, p. 27). This implies that a company planning to do a brand extension should focus on elaborating on the extension attributes rather than emphasizing positive associations they may have toward the original brand. This will be especially important for brand extensions that are “far off” because consumers may find it hard to associate the extension to the original brand in the first place.

2.3 *Brand personality and Gendered brands*

Aaker (1997, p. 347) defines brand personality as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand.” As an example, Aaker (1997, p. 347) uses the brand Absolut vodka, which tended “to be described as a cool, hip, contemporary 25-year old”. By looking at this example, one can see that Absolut wanted to have a brand personality that could relate to their desired target group. Additionally, Keller (1993) stated that brands could utilize their brand personalities to serve as self-expressive or symbolic functions for their consumers.

In line with Aaker’s definition, Fournier (1998) states that consumers can relate to brands on the same level as people relates to partners or friends. As a consequence, consumers are likely to associate human personality traits with brands, for instance, traits such as masculinity and femininity. By emphasizing brand personality with marketing techniques, the personality traits tend to be relatively enduring, and they can provide necessary distinction from competitors (Aaker, 1997). Nevertheless, Aaker’s (1997) study results concerning brand personality versus human personality (Big Five/five-factor model), indicate that that the structure of brand- and human personality are asymmetric. Supporting Aaker’s results, Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Guido (2001, p. 377) showed that the human “five-factor structure is not replicated when describing brands”.

Grohmann (2009) developed a scale to measure masculine and feminine brand personality. Her contribution to branding theory with the two-dimensional scale was of significance, as this scale “is discriminant concerning existing brand personality dimensions and scales measuring masculinity and femininity as human personality traits” (Grohmann, 2009, p. 105). The two dimensions on Grohmann’s (2009) scale is the masculine brand personality (MBP) and feminine brand personality (FBP). In contrast to the previous two brand genders, masculine and feminine, Grohmann’s (2009) approach allowed for four brand genders: masculine, feminine, undifferentiated, and androgynous (see Figure 2). The masculine brand gender scores high on masculinity and low on femininity. In contrast, the feminine brand gender is a brand that scores low on masculinity and high on femininity. An undifferentiated brand is low on both scales, while the androgynous brands are perceived as high-masculine and high-feminine.

		Masculine brand personality (MBP)	
		Low	High
Feminine Brand Personality (FBP)	Low	Undifferentiated	Masculine
	High	Feminine	Androgynous

Figure 2: Grohmann’s four brand genders (2009)

Avery (2012, p. 323) defines gendered brands as brands that “contain either masculine or feminine identity meanings that are socially shared among the members of a culture.” In other words, consumers should have shared masculine- or feminine identity meanings about the brand within consumer culture. Furthermore, Grohmann (2009, p. 106) defined brand gender as “the set of human personality traits associated with masculinity and femininity applicable and relevant to brands” (Grohmann, 2009 p. 106). While Avery’s definition emphasizes socially shared identity meanings, Grohmann’s definition is characterized by masculine and feminine human personality traits, not necessarily shared among a consumer culture. An example of Avery’s definition would be Harley Davidson, where the consumers share and reinforce their masculinity within social consumer culture. While an example of Grohmann’s definition could be Libresse which is a feminine brand (pretest 1), however, it would not be “necessary” for their consumers to share the femininity of the brand within consumer culture.

Moreover, one should not confuse the two terms of brand gender and brand sex. Brand sex is defined as “the human sex associated with a brand” (Azar, 2015 p. 49). In other words, this means that the brand should be specially designed for a given sex. Conversely, brand gender is something that is formed by consumers’ perceptions, and often, these perceptions are established and formed by marketers. A brand that has brand sex could, for instance, be Libresse. Libresse makes tampons which are specially designed for women and would not be applicable for men. On the other hand, an example of a brand with a brand gender is Harley Davidson, that previously claimed to make “big toys for big boys” (Avery, 2012). While Harley Davidson is a masculine brand, it can be used by both genders. In contrast, Libresse is a feminine brand that only can serve its purpose for women.

For companies and their brands, brand gender appears to be of importance both theoretically and managerially. According to Grohmann (2009), brand gender influences consumers’ purchase intentions, brand attitude and loyalty, and word-of-mouth communication. Thus, several brands have clear gender identities in the marketplace. In consonance with Grohmann’s statements, Lieven, Grohmann, Herrmann, Landwehr and van Tilburg (2014, p. 371) found that brands with “high levels of brand masculinity and femininity relate positively to brand equity”.

Additionally, Sandhu and Singh (2017) express that gendered brands appeal to consumers' gender and therefore appeal to either men or women, more or less exclusively. Nevertheless, many companies and brands have started looking toward cross-gender brand extensions because they want to extend their target segments, which are specifically targeted to one gender (Jung & Lee, 2006).

2.4 Gendered consumption

For several years, researchers have investigated areas around brand gender. Among these areas is gendered consumption. As mentioned, some researchers believe gender is not biologically determined like sex is. Avery (2012) argues that gender is an ongoing project where people construct their gender by social behavior. An example of such gender-constructing behavior can be that consumers adorn their gender displays by using brands as tangible markers, where gendered brands help to materialize their gender; "men and women generally prefer and choose brands, possessions, and activities that reflect their gender identity" (Avery, 2012, p. 323). Among the many studies on the gendered consumption and brand gender topic, most of them end up emphasizing on men, as men tend to be more "extreme" in their attitudes and behaviors compared to women (Alreck et al., 1982; Avery, 2012; Jung & Lee, 2006). Alreck, Settle and Belch (1982, p. 31) found that "men tend to find more often their sexual identity in the material goods they buy and use or more consistently define their sexual identity in terms of external possessions than do women". Further, Alreck et al. (1982) also found that women tend to be more accepting toward brands targeting the opposite gender than men are. So, not only do men utilize brands to express their gender, but they are also less accepting towards opposite-gender brands than women are. There may be several reasons for men to behave in such a manner in contrast to women. However, Avery (2012) believes political nature of gender is one of the reasons, which is supported by Bem (as cited in Dahlmann, 1994, p. 1939) who pointed "out that men are held to a nearly unattainable goal of becoming real men" and furthermore, to approach this goal, Bem argues that men must dominate women to feel masculine. As early as in the 1970s, Stueville (1971) suggested that men that act like women were labeled as sissy boys, while women acting like men were labeled as tomboys by society. Further, Stueville (1971) argues that it was much easier for women to accept being labeled a tomboy than a man being stamped as a sissy. This issue goes far back, to a time where

masculinity was valued higher than femininity. Nevertheless, it still exists in different forms in some cultures. However, despite men being more resistant to using feminine brands (in the past), Tuncay and Otnes (2008) state that usage of traditionally coded “feminine” products like fashion and beauty products is predicted to increase at a healthy rate amongst men.

Moreover, Avery (2012) names a phenomenon that can occur by gendered consumption, namely gender contamination, which can have a negative impact on gendered brands. Gender contamination of brands can be defined as when consumers that are not traditionally part of a gendered brand community “infiltrates” the community. Gender contamination started with first and second wave feminists adopting short haircuts and masculine fashion styles. Another example was that women infiltrated the Harley Davidson brand community, which was dominated by masculine men, through consumption to create alternative femininities (Avery, 2012). As mentioned, gender contamination can have a negative impact on gendered brands. As it can lead to a shared brand’s identity, the meaning is threatened, and consumers may find it challenging to create and express their identity through brand consumption. Even though the community has evolved, Avery (2012, p. 333) stated that “female gender contamination, initially recorded in ancient civilizations, is as potent today as it was in the past”. Avery (2012) also argues that women’s consumption of masculine brands is more “dangerous” for men than the opposite.

2.5 Cross-gender extensions and cross-gender brand extensions

Gender has become an important part of brand research, and cross-gender extensions have been the focus of many studies (Azar, Aime, and Ulrich, 2018; Sandhu, 2017; Ulrich, 2013). However, the literature on cross-gender brand extensions is still scarce. First, we will outline the most relevant and interesting literature in regard to cross-gender extensions, and then focus on what is found on cross-gender brand extensions.

2.5.1 Cross-gender extension

Unisex has been trending in consumer goods, and as a result, brands have turned to cross-gender extensions. According to Jung and Lee (2006), a cross-gender extension is to extend a brand to target the opposite sex, using the same brand name. Similarly, Ulrich (2013, p. 794) define it as “masculine or feminine master

brands that extend to target the opposite biological gender”. It is not a new phenomenon, where one can find several examples, some stretching far back, like Levi’s (initially a masculine brand). Levi’s carried out a cross-gender extension to target women as well as men with their jeans (Jung & Lee, 2006). Other cross-gender extensions are more recent, for example, Porsche (masculine brand personality) who launched their Porsche Cayenne SUV, which became a success for female consumers (Avery, 2012). In general, masculine to feminine extensions is most common. However, an example of a company doing an extension in the opposite direction is Dove. In 2010, Dove (initially a feminine brand) launched a product line for men called “Dove Men+Care” (Miziolek, 2012), which has been a success in the following years. That said, this is a cross-gender extension, not a cross-gender brand extension.

Furthermore, Jung and Lee (2006) investigated how a cross-gender extension can be successful in terms of different conditions. They found that the brand gender, consumer gender, and type of product is important factors that influence the success/failure of the extension. Interestingly, they also found that women are “more receptive towards cross-gender extensions than men” (Jung & Lee, 2006, p. 72). In parallel, Jung and Lee (2006) also found masculine brands extending to target female consumers to have higher consumer acceptance than the opposite case. However, their study has come under criticism due to their use of unidimensional semantic differential scales to measure brand gender. This type of measurement opposes masculinity to femininity, which contradicts Grohmann’s (2009) brand gender conceptualization. In spite of the critic, the findings of Jung and Lee (2006) are harmonious with other research saying women tend to more accepting toward cross-gender extensions than men, and that consumers are overall more positive to male-to-female extensions (Alreck et al., 1982; Avery, 2012). In contrast, Veg-Sala (2017, p. 2) surprisingly found that the perceived fit between the cross-gender extension and the brand was more positive “when the brand extends from the female to the male market”. According to Veg-Sala (2017), this finding can be explained by the evolution of society and its feminization. Further, she argues that instead of women trying “to enter the world of men, now the opposite begins to appear” (Veg-Sala, 2017, p. 27).

2.5.2 *Cross-gender brand extension*

In contrast to a cross-gender extension, a cross-gender brand extension can be defined as a gendered brand that extends into a new product category and targeting the opposite gender with the extension. Jung and Lee's (2006) study had some interesting findings. However, it did not include brands launching extensions into a new product category. Instead, they did what we would characterize as a cross-gender extension. Also, in contrast to Jung and Lee's (2006) results, Ulrich (2013) found no significant effect of biological gender on the acceptance of cross-gender brand extensions. However, this may come as a result that Jung and Lee (2006) did their research in Asia (Korea and Singapore), while Ulrich (2013) conducted her study in France, a country with a moderate degree of masculinity/femininity. Nevertheless, Ulrich (2013, p. 805) showed that Jung and Lee's (2006) results could not be generalized "in western cultures with other product categories of different gender image." Since the literature on cross-gender brand extension is deficient, it seems pertinent to use existing literature on cross-gender extensions when forming hypotheses in this thesis.

3.0 Research hypotheses

We developed four hypotheses to investigate the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables. Hypotheses refer to something that is supposed and preliminary, and which in all probability is a reasonable explanation for a phenomenon (Johannesen, Tufte & Christoffersen, 2016). The purpose of the hypotheses was to form a picture of what effect the different variables would have on the dependent variables, based on previous literature. In the section “discussion,” we will support (verify) or reject (falsify) the hypotheses based on the results we get from the experiment.

An increasingly trend shows that more and more companies utilize cross-gender brand extension to grow their market share (Avery, 2012). We see that both masculine and feminine brands are attempting to reach out to the opposite gender. However, women and men tend to react differently when they encounter cross-gender brand extensions (Avery, 2012). One reason for this is due to brand personalities, men tend to perceive a masculine brand to be more masculine and a feminine brand to be more feminine. In addition, men often find their gender identity in the product they buy while women are more likely to be less sensitive to gender identity (Alreck et al., 1982).

In the evaluation of a cross-gender brand extension, we assume that women are more receptive for the cross-gender brand extension than men because they are more open-minded towards the description of the gender role. It would, therefore, be more difficult for men to accept that a masculine brand does a female brand extension than for women and feminine brand doing a masculine brand extension. Based on this reasoning it is expected that male respondents would evaluate cross-gender brand extensions worse than female respondents.

H1: Women will be more receptive to cross-gender brand extensions than men.

Previous studies suggest that masculine brands performing cross-gender extensions are more common than feminine brands doing the same (Avery, 2012; Jung & Lee, 2006). Moreover, Jung and Lee (2006) found masculine brands extending to target female customers to have higher consumer acceptance than in the case of a feminine brand performing a cross-extension. Czellar (2003) suggests in his model that perceived fit, attitude towards extension, attitude towards the overall brand, and behavior towards the extension are factors that influence consumers' evaluation of an extension. Based on Jung & Lee's (2006) findings and Czellar's (2003) model and that masculine brands performing a cross-extension tends to be better perceived than in the case of a feminine brand (Jung & Lee, 2006), the following set of hypotheses were developed:

H2a: In an evaluation of a cross-gender brand extension, compared to a strong-gendered feminine brand, a strong-gendered masculine brand will have a perceived greater fit.

H2b: In an evaluation of a cross-gender brand extension, compared to a strong-gendered feminine brand, a strong-gendered masculine brand will have a more positive attitude towards the extension.

H2c: In an evaluation of a cross-gender brand extension, compared to a strong-gendered feminine brand, a strong-gendered masculine brand will have a more positive attitude toward the overall brand.

H2d: In an evaluation of a cross-gender brand extension, compared to a strong-gendered feminine brand, a strong-gendered masculine brand will have stronger purchase intentions.

As mentioned earlier, fit is an important factor when it comes to the cross-gender brand extension. The higher the perception of fit between the parent brand and the extension, the easier it is for consumers to transfer associations from the parent brand to the extension (Aaker & Keller, 1990). Additionally, this spillover effect does also go in the opposite direction, i.e., from the extension onto the parent brand. Therefore, if consumers somehow dislike the extension or believe it contradicts the original brand values, we would presume a weakened overall brand attitude after exposure to the cross-gender brand extension.

H3: When a strong gendered brand does a cross-gender brand extension, it will reduce its overall brand attitude.

Fit is an important factor when it comes to cross-gender brand extensions between the parent brand and the extended product category (Aaker & Keller 1990). The higher the perception of fit between these two, the easier than it is to transfer association from the parent brand and the extension - spillover effect (Aaker & Keller 1990). The greater fit will have a positive impact on consumers' evaluation of the extension (Aaker & Keller 1990). In addition to their attitude towards the parent brand. However, we assume that it is more challenging to transfer consumers associations in a cross-gender brand extension than a regular brand extension.

H4: Consumers have more positive attitudes toward the brand extension than the cross-gender brand extension.

4.0 Methodology

In this section of our thesis, the purpose is to describe how we have proceeded to answer our research problem. The description will contain, choice of methodology, experimental design, selection and population, scale use, pretest, main study, validity and reliability.

4.1 *Quantitative method*

Quantitative method is often referred to as "the speech of the number" and has many elements derived from the natural science method (Johannesen et al., 2016). It is often extensive, but relatively closed (Jacobsen, 2015). By this is meant that it deals with many devices and that the information collected is predefined by the researcher.

The purpose of this approach is to collect information that can be easily systematized and entered into computers so that we can analyze many devices simultaneously. The logic behind this is that the researcher wants to standardize the information and thus "force" the data into predefined categories (Jacobsen, 2015). This allows us to make a useful statistical analysis. In essence, we can say that the quantitative method is a survey that analyzes a large number of units. The purpose of the method is to test whether a hypothesis matches the data collected.

4.2 *Experimental design*

We used an experimental design in this study, and this method was chosen because it is considered the best for a causal relationship. Moreover, the primary purpose is to conclude the causal variable in the most secure way. This means that no confounding variable should threaten our conclusions (Ringdal, 2013)

In our thesis, we employ a 2 x 2 factorial design experiment to conduct our research and test our hypotheses. This design consists of two independent variables, with two levels each, gendered brands (masculine brand Comfyballs and feminine brand Victoria's Secret), and type of brand extension (brand

extension and cross-gender brand extension). The experiment allows us to investigate the effect of each factor (condition) on the response variable, as well as the interaction between factors and the response variable (Mitchell & Jolley, 2012). Furthermore, to test effects of the cross-gender strategy on the two brands, we used four dependent variables; Perceived fit, Attitude towards extension, Attitude towards brand and purchase intention (Czellar, 2003).

	Brand extension	Cross-gender Brand extension
Comfyballs	n = 40	n = 36
Victoria's Secret	n = 35	n = 42

Figure 3: 2x2 factorial design

The 2 (strong gendered brands: Victoria's Secret (feminine) vs Comfyballs (masculine)) x 2 (extension strategy: brand extension vs cross-gender brand extension) factorial between-subjects experiment means that each participant will be exposed to one of the four conditions. Furthermore, a 2x2 factorial experiment will enable us to study the effects of several independent variables or causal factors simultaneously (Ringdal, 2013). The participants were randomly placed into one of the conditions of brands extension strategy. Each condition featured either Victoria's Secret or Comfyballs accompanied with either a brand extension or a cross-gender brand extension. As shown in the figure 3 above, 40 participants were exposed to Comfyballs brand extension, 36 was exposed to Comfyballs cross-gender brand extensions, 35 were exposed to Victoria's Secret brand extension, and 42 were exposed to Victoria's Secret cross-gender brand extension condition.

4.3 *Population and selection*

When conducting an experiment, the determination of the population is important. A population is, in short, all those we want to comment on (Jacobsen, 2015). The population associated with our task was Norwegian men and women aged 17-30. Ideally, we wanted the results from the survey to be generalized for the population in question. Nevertheless, we saw ourselves limited by the scope of the task, our resources, and available time, so we considered it necessary to choose a non-probability sampling method. One challenge with this selection is that one ends up with a systematically skewed selection. This means that the sample is not representative and thus cannot be generalized.

The selection form we chose to use is called self-selection. This form is characterized by the fact that the participants largely determine whether or not they will participate in the study (Jacobsen, 2015). The way we used self-selection was to distribute the experiment on the social media platforms "Facebook" and "LinkedIn" using an online questionnaire through Qualtrics to gather responses. The respondents could choose whether or not to participate. A challenge with this form of an experiment is that one does not have control over who participates and who does not participate in the experiment.

In total, a sample of 153 Norwegian respondents (n=153) took part in the main study. The gender split was 49% females and 51% of males (see Table 1).

What is your gender?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Male	79	51,6	51,6	51,6
	Female	74	48,4	48,4	100,0
	Total	153	100,0	100,0	

Table 1: Participants gender

4.4 *Scale use*

We can, in principle, operate with three different types of response alternatives, but we will only explain two of them as these were used in the study. The first type is called nominal, and it means that we group the answers into different categories (Jacobsen, 2015). The purpose of this form of response alternative is to

separate the respondents into different categories. These categories are absolute, which means that one can only belong to one category. An example of usage is to group respondents into the categories of male, female or genderqueer in our main study.

The other form of response options that we take is called ordinal. The variables are ordinary when the answer options represent categories that can be placed on a predefined scale. Thus, one attempts to create response alternatives that not only intend to measure whether the respondent is positive or negative to something, but also the degree of positivity or negativity (Jacobsen, 2015). What characterizes the values of the ordinal variables is that they have a logical rank. This means that the answer options have a specific order. The values express degrees, quality or position in a series, such as: to a small extent, neutral, to a large extent (Johannesen et al., 2016).

Two things are central when designing ordinary answer alternatives. The first is that the answers must be complementary, which means that all relevant answer alternatives must be mentioned. In our case, we measured the respondents' expectations as well as the extent to which they were met or not. If the respondents did not understand/wanted to comment on the question, we made a neutral alternative. The purpose of this was to make sure that the respondent had an option, even if they were uncertain. The last for ordinary answer alternatives is that they must be mutually excluded - the answer alternatives must not be interpreted (Jacobsen, 2015).

In the main study, we mainly utilized 5-point scales, since we thought it would give us sufficient nuances between the answer alternatives. The scales are adopted from previous studies by Anees-ur-Rehman (2012), Frieden (2013) and Hariri and Vazifehdust's (2011). By using a 5-point Likert scale, we could have one neutral answer option in the middle of the scale. In this way, we had two negative and two positive response options on each end of the scale. Additionally, for some questions, semantic differential scales were utilized to measure attitudes towards brands and extensions. However, the masculinity and femininity test that was used in pretest 1 and included in the main study used a 7-point Likert scale. We did this

to get broader nuances between the perceptions of femininity and masculinity of the brands.

4.5 *Pretests*

We conducted three pretests before we published our main study. The pretests helped us with the selection of gendered brands, selection of product category in which the chosen brands would do an extension into, and finally, test the manipulation text where we provide a scenario announcing a cross-gender brand extension.

4.5.1 Pretest 1: Choice of brands

Pretest 1 was utilized to find which brands should be used in the main study. The survey was distributed through Facebook in early May, and we got 75 responses, with 50% males and 50% females, most of them (91%) were from 17 to 30 years old. We wanted to see which brand the respondents found most masculine and most feminine. When we developed the pretest, we found a study that tested masculinity and femininity of different brands (Lieven, et al., 2014). We used this as inspiration and included brands from this study, as well as including other well-known brands. We included 11 masculine and 11 feminine brands in the pretest. Furthermore, we made sure that each brand had a gendered counterpart brand in a similar product category. We wanted to compare two brands in a similar product category because that would eliminate some alternative explanations. For example, Harley Davidson (Masculine) and Vespa (Feminine). The respondents were asked to answer on a 7-point Likert scale from “Extremely feminine” to “Extremely masculine.” As mentioned in “Scale use” we used a 7-point Likert scale to get more nuances between the answers. A decision was made based on the responses and that we wanted two gendered contrasting brands in the same product category. Consequently, the pretest showed us that Comfyballs ($M=5.97$) and Victoria’s Secret ($M=1.27$) were the best-suited brands in our further research, in terms of masculine and feminine perceptions. Here is a summary with the five most feminine and five most masculine brands retrieved from Pretest 1 (value 1=extremely feminine, value 7=extremely masculine):

Descriptive Statistics		
	N	Mean
Victoria's Secret (Underwear)	75	1,27
Libresse (Intimate care)	75	1,41
Chanel (Fashion)	74	1,89
Johaug (Sportswear)	75	2,07
Dior (Fashion)	75	2,32
BMW (Car)	75	5,49
Dobbel Dusch (Body care)	75	5,57
Jack Daniels (Alcoholic beverage)	75	5,87
Comfyballs (Underwear)	75	5,97
Harley Davidson (Motorcycles)	75	6,17

Table 2: *Pretest 1: Feminine VS. Masculine* (For complete list see Appendix 1).

4.5.2 *Pretest 2: Choice of extension product category*

Pretest 2 was conducted to investigate which product category the brands selected (Comfyballs and Victoria's Secret) should be extended into. The survey was distributed through Facebook in mid-May, and we got 49 responses, with 28 males and 21 females, most of them (92%) were from 17 to 30 years old. The choice of extension category was based on the respondent's perception regarding fit. Moreover, the choice of product categories that were included in the questionnaire were based on our beliefs as well as discussions with fellow students. This resulted in the following five product categories: shoes, watches, sunglasses, energy drinks, and headsets. The respondents were given three questions measuring fit, and the results showed that sunglasses would have the greater fit, for both brands included, compared to the mentioned categories (adopted from Hariri & Vazifehdust, 2011). However, one can see from the mean values that none of the extension categories seems to have a strong fit. Anyways, we wanted to have brand extensions that were somewhat far away from the original product category of the brands. We wanted to see if extensions that stretched further from the parent brand would get the same answers, as in the previous cases where the extensions proposed have been closer. Therefore, based on Pretest 2, sunglasses were the extension category we chose to proceed with further in our study. See the result in table 2 below where Victoria's Secret and Comfyballs had the highest compared mean on sunglasses.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean
vic shoes merged	53	3,283
vic watch merged	53	2,541
vic sunglass merged	53	3,522
vic energy merged	53	1,597
vic heads merged	53	2,013
COM shoes merged	50	2,413
COM watch merged	49	2,102
COM sunglass merged	49	2,578
COM energy merged	50	2,047
COM headset merged	50	2,213

Table 3: *Pretest 2: Product extension (Summary of the three fit questions from each extension category).*

4.5.3 Pretest 3: Verifying manipulation text

The final pretest, Pretest 3, was carried out to check the manipulation text. The survey was distributed through Facebook at the end of May, and we got 31 responses, with 14 males and 17 females, most of them (93%) were from 17 to 30 years old. We wanted to see if the respondents were able to see the difference between the cross-gender brand extension and a regular brand extension, by exposing the respondents to the manipulation text. The manipulation text for Victoria's Secret (Comfyballs) was as follows:

“Victoria’s Secret (Comfyballs) is a women’s (men’s) underwear brand in the fashion category. With the success of its women (men) fashion line, the top management decides that it is time to take further advantage of this success. Therefore, they decide to launch a new product, within the “sunglasses” category, where Victoria’s Secret (Comfyballs) will target male (female) customers (Victoria’s Secret - Men) (Comfyballs - Women).”

The manipulation was followed up with statements regarding identity, equality and similarity, which was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (value 1=strongly disagree to value 5=strongly agree). Here are the questions/statements we used to

check Victoria's Secret (similar questions were used for Comfyballs). Adopted from Frieden (2013):

1. How do you disagree or agree to the following statement: "Victoria's Secret is equal to the extension Victoria's Secret - Men"
2. How do you disagree or agree to the following statement: "Victoria's Secret is identical to the extension Victoria's Secret - Men"
3. How do you disagree or agree to the following statement: "Victoria's Secret is similar to the extension Victoria's Secret - Men"

Moreover, Cronbach's alpha was utilized to test the reliability of the three questions presented above, and they yielded high internal consistency: with alphas of $\alpha=0.806$ for the questions associated to Victoria's Secret, and $\alpha=0.945$ for the questions associated to Comfyballs. Based on these results, we merged the three questions in SPSS to easier handle the data collected. We computed the three variables for each brand into one new variable that we used further in our analysis. Ideally, to understand the difference between the original brand and its cross-gender brand extension, respondents should (strongly) disagree with the statements presented. Furthermore, the average ratings across the three questions show us that the respondents perceive the extension as something different from the original brand. For Victoria's Secret, the average value across the three questions was $M=2.073$ (value 2=disagree), while for Comfyballs, the corresponding average was $M=1.914$. Additionally, when running a one-sample t-test between the two means, we found that they are not significantly different from each other, with $p=0.210$. Hence, the manipulation text seemed to work out, and we persist with this text in our main study.

To conclude the three pretests, the first pretest showed that Victoria's Secret and Comfyballs was the best-suited brands for the main study. Furthermore, pretest 2 provided sunglasses as the category for brand extension, as sunglasses had the greatest fit of the categories included. Finally, pretest 3 showed us that the manipulation text developed is acceptable to use in our main study.

4.6 Main study

In this section, we will present operationalization, independent variables, dependent variables, and procedure.

Operationalization means that one classifies phenomena or events in clear categories. It is in this process that one transforms the general into the concrete. It is about how to process the questions to best answer the problem. One starts by delimiting a focus area that the researcher has. Then one tells which measures must be taken to be able to record theoretical (general) phenomena as data. In addition, operationalization has the task of telling how general ideas can be made operative (Johannessen et al., 2015).

To prepare the questionnaire, we started by categorizing the questions according to the independent variables (Victoria's secret, Comfyballs, brand extension, and cross-gender brand extension) that could have an impact on the dependent variables; Perceived fit, Attitude towards extension, Attitude towards brand and purchase intention. We gave each variable three questions which we know would give us enough data to assess the respondents' perception of the independent variables (Victoria's Secret and Comfyballs).

4.6.1 Independent variables

As mentioned, the main study will include two independent variables (gendered brands and type of brand extension) with two levels each. Gendered brands include two gender-contrasting brands, Victoria's Secret and Comfyballs. The two levels of brand extension type are a "normal" brand extension and a cross-gender brand extension. The two gendered brands were manipulated by exposing the respondents to a brand extension or a cross-gender brand extension. Specifically, the two brands were to do an extension into the product category sunglasses. Originally, both Victoria's Secret and Comfyballs belong to the underwear category. We wanted both brands to be in the same product category, to get results that can be compared without concerning about several factors around product categories. Additionally, underwear is used by both male and female consumers, which argues that underwear is a relatively gender-neutral product category.

The choice of sunglasses as the extension category was based on pretest 2. Moreover, we wanted to investigate if brands extending into a category that is quite unconnected (association-wise), like sunglasses is for both brands, would provide positive or negative results for the gendered brands. Similar to underwear, sunglasses is a category that is widely used by both genders. Furthermore, sunglasses can evoke associations to both Victoria's Secret and Comfyballs. However, type (fashion, casual or sporty) of sunglasses is not specified, as we wanted respondents to make up their own interpretations of which type the brands would launch. The manipulation gave us four experimental conditions, where each respondent was randomly assigned to one of the following conditions:

1. Victoria's Secret brand extension: *"Victoria's Secret is a women's underwear brand in the fashion category. With the success of its women's fashion line, the top management decides that it is time to take further advantage of this success. Therefore, they decide to launch a new product, within the "sunglasses" category"*.
2. Victoria's Secret cross-gender brand extension: *"Victoria's Secret is a women's underwear brand in the fashion category. With the success of its women's fashion line, the top management decides that it is time to take further advantage of this success. Therefore, they decide to launch a new product, within the "sunglasses" category, where Victoria's Secret will target male customers (Victoria's Secret - Men)"*.
3. Comfyballs brand extension: *"Comfyballs is a mens underwear brand in the fashion category. With the success of its mens fashion line, the top management decides that it is time to take further advantage of this success. Therefore, they decide to launch a new product, within the "sunglasses" category"*.
4. Comfyballs cross-gender brand extension: *"Comfyballs is a men's underwear brand in the fashion category. With the success of its men's fashion line, the top management decides that it is time to take further advantage of this success. Therefore, they decide to launch a new product, within the "sunglasses" category, where Comfyballs will target female customers (Comfyballs - Women)"*.

4.6.2 *Dependent variables*

The studies dependent variables were selected based on Czellar's (2003) model about characterizing the processes of transferring effect and knowledge. As mentioned in the literature review, we believe these variables are suitable for answering our research question. We used three questions on each variable as we think this is sufficient to measure each variable. The dependent variables chosen are:

Attitude towards extension:

Following the statement example: "*How do you find (Victoria's Secret's/Comfyballs) extension into the product category sunglasses?*", the variable was measured by three 5-point semantic differential scale items. The anchors for the items was: 1=unfavorable to 5=favorable, 1=bad to 5=good, and 1=unlikeable to 5=likeable. These questions were adopted from Frieden (2013).

Attitude towards the overall brand:

Following the statement example: "*With the extension into sunglasses, how do you now find the brand (Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs?)*", the variable was measured by three 5-point semantic differential scale items. The anchors for the items was: 1=unfavorable to 5=favorable, 1=bad to 5=good, and 1=unlikeable to 5=likeable. These questions were adopted from Frieden (2013).

Purchase intentions:

Purchase intentions for the extension was measured by three 5-point Likert scale items, where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. Following the statement example: "*How do you disagree or agree to the following statements, when Victoria's Secret decides to launch sunglasses?*", the questions adopted from Anees-ur-Rehman (2012) was:

1. I would like to try the Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs brand
2. I would like to buy the Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs brand
3. I would actively seek out the Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs brand

Perceived fit:

Perceived fit for the extension was measured by three 5-point Likert scale items, where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. Following the statement example: “*How do you disagree or agree to the following statements, when Victoria's Secret decides to launch sunglasses?*”, the questions adopted from Hariri and Vazifehdust’s (2011) was:

1. The product extension fits with the brand image
2. Launching the extension is logical for the company
3. Launching the extension is appropriate for the company

4.6.3 Procedure

The study took place online, where we gathered data for the experiment through distribution on different social media platforms, such as Facebook and LinkedIn. As mentioned, each participant was randomly assigned to one of the four different conditions, using the randomizing function in Qualtrics. Furthermore, we denoted the four conditions into groups, to make way for an orderly analysis process. We called the four different conditions 1, 2, 3 and 4, where 1 is Victoria’s Secret brand extension, 2 is Victoria’s Secret cross-gender brand extension, 3 is Comfyballs brand extension and 4 is Comfyballs cross-gender brand extension. The consent form informed the respondent that the survey is anonymous, and all data will be treated confidentially. Furthermore, we informed the respondents that there are no right or wrong answers and that we were merely interested in the respondent’s honest opinions. While emphasizing that participating in this study is voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time.

Even though we used four different conditions in the experiment, there were questions that were included regardless of the conditions. We wanted to keep the whole study equal, except for the different conditions. The questions included in all conditions was respondents’ attitude towards the brand (Victoria’s secret/ Comfyballs) and purchase intention towards each brand. We did this so we could compare their attitude towards the brand and purchase intention before and after the respondents were exposed to the conditions. Furthermore, we presented the manipulation text where respondents were exposed to one of the four scenarios: a brand extension or cross-gender brand extension for Victoria’s Secret or

Comfyballs. Then, concerning the order of the questions, we asked the four questions presented in 4.6.2 Dependent variables. Moreover, we used the same manipulation test that was used in pretest 3 to make sure that the respondents understood the difference between brand extension and the cross-gender brand extension. We also included another femininity vs. masculinity test - same as in pretest 1. This was done to make sure that the respondent had the same perception about the femininity and masculinity for the given brands. These test questions were at the end of the survey, right before the demographic questions were presented. We placed these questions in the end because if respondents would answer for example, how masculine or feminine Comfyballs is before they got a condition, their answers could be biased (for the full questionnaire, see Appendix 3).

4.7 *Validity and reliability*

In a study, one would like to know how valid and how reliable a survey is (Jacobsen, 2015). The reason for this is that high validity and reliability indicate that an investigation is representative. In terms of our sample, we could say that the sample will not be representative for the whole population as we want to investigate (i.e. Norwegian men and women aged 17-30 years), due to our convenience sampling method.

We divide validity into two types - internal validity and external validity. Internal validity is linked to the measuring devices - in our case the experiment - and involves whether we examine what we want to answer. An example would be that the questions asked in our experiment are not answering what we want to investigate or comment on. External validity is related to the extent to which the findings in the study can be generalized to the entire population (Jacobsen, 2015).

Reliability, on the other hand, tells us to what extent the results are reliable (Johannessen et al., 2015). This means to what extent the results will be the same if one performs the study again with the same assumptions. We can say that an experiment has strong reliability if there are a small margin of error in its design. Concerning the design of our experiment, it should be able to be replicated, and provide similar answers. However, our sample would be hard to replicate because the respondents included are mainly fellow students and friends that we were able

to reach through our network on social media platforms. Hence, it could prove difficult to achieve similar results, if the study was to be replicated.

5.0 Results

In this section, results from the study will be presented with emphasis on hypothesis-testing. The statistical software program IBM SPSS statistics, version 25 was used for all analysis.

5.1 Data preparation

Before we started analyzing the data, we did some adjustments in order to assess the data in a more appropriate manner. We started by deleting unnecessary values. Next, we deleted respondents who did not finish (lines 154-202).

As mentioned earlier, the population in this research are all Norwegian women and men aged 17-30. The collected data showed that respondents in the age groups older than 30 years were underrepresented, and additionally being outside the population that we want to comment on. Therefore, we chose to remove the respondents that were not in our target sample (age 17-30). By removing respondents outside our sample, the results have a greater chance to be generalized, and hence a stronger external validity. Consequently, our final selection was 153 respondents where 79 were male and 74 females, all aged between 17 and 30 as shown in Table 1 (see 4.3 *Population and selection*).

Since we have three items measuring the same dependent variable, we combined these in order to reduce the data set and make analysis more convenient. Prior to the combination, we conducted a reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) to see the items' interrelatedness. To accept a merging of the questions into one variable, the Cronbach's alpha (α) value should be greater than 0.80, which indicates a high interrelation. The results from Cronbach's alpha testing ranges from 0.843 to 0.982 which suggests high interrelatedness between the items (see Appendix 2 for more details and new variable names). Additionally, before conducting an ANOVA analysis, we had to combine the dependent variables measuring the same thing into one new variable. This meant that we had four conditions to measure the four dependent variables (described in the methodology, 2x2 factorial experiment).

Furthermore, in the main study, we did another manipulation check (similar to the one carried out in pretest 3) to see if the respondents understood the difference

between a brand extension and a cross-gender brand extension. We asked the respondents if they find brand extension identical, equal and similar to a cross-gender brand extension. To approve the manipulation check, we wanted the respondents to answer as close to “1=strongly disagree” or “2=disagree” as possible. Results from the main study manipulation check show that respondents who got Victoria’s Secret (Condition 1 or 2) had a value of $M=1.970$ which indicate that they answered close to “2=disagree”. On Comfyballs (Condition 3 or 4), respondents had a value of $M=2.094$. This means that they disagree with the brand extension being identical, equal and similar to a cross-gender brand extension. In other words, by exposure to the manipulation text, the consumers indeed understand the difference between the type of extensions. The results from the main study are almost similar to the results from pretest 3 showing Victoria’s Secret respondents $M=2.073$ and Comfyballs $M=1.914$. We can, therefore, be sure that our respondents understood the difference between a brand extension and a cross-gender brand extension.

In addition, we also included another feminine vs. masculine check in our main study. The result from a 7-point Likert scale (1=extremely feminine, 7=extremely masculine) shows that Victoria’s Secret $M=1.35$ and Comfyballs $M=5.66$. Compared to pretest 1, where Victoria’s Secret mean was $M=1.27$ and Comfyballs’ was $M=5.97$. We can, therefore, be sure that our respondent still thinks of Victoria’s Secret and Comfyballs as highly feminine and masculine brands.

5.2 Hypothesis testing results

In this section, we will reject or support each hypothesis based on the result from different analyzes in SPSS.

5.2.1 Hypothesis 1

H1: Women will be more receptive to cross-gender brand extensions than men.

To test this, an independent sample t-test was conducted to compare attitude towards a cross-gender extension for Comfyballs and Victoria’s Secret between male respondents and female respondents (see Table 4 below). Firstly, the test with Comfyballs showed that it was not a significant difference in the scores for

male respondents (M=2.667, SD=0.802) and female respondents (M=2.667, SD=1.155); $t(34)=0.000$, $p=1$. The means for the two groups, the t-value, and the p-value indicates that male respondents and female respondents had identical values. This result suggests that gender does not influence how consumers evaluate cross-gender brand extensions, in the case of a strong-gendered masculine brand (Comfyballs). Specifically, our result suggests that women are not more receptive to a cross-gender brand extension than men in terms of a male-to-female extension.

Secondly, the independent sample t-test with Victoria’s Secret, similarly showed that it was not a significant difference in the scores for male respondents (M=2.632, SD=1.024) and female respondents (M=2.261, SD=0.893); $t(40)=1.253$, $p=0.217$. In line with the test performed with Comfyballs, this result suggests that gender does not influence how consumers evaluate cross-gender brand extensions, in the case of a strong-gendered feminine brand (Victoria’s Secret). In other words, women are not more receptive to a cross-gender brand extension than men in the case of a female-to-male extension.

Based on the results presented above, H1 cannot be supported statistically, as the results showed are not significant. Therefore, H1 is rejected.

Independent Samples Test						
		t-test for Equality of Means			Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Combined_X_att_ext_com	Equal variances assumed	0,000	34	1,000	0,00000	0,32652
Combined_X_att_ext_vic	Equal variances assumed	1,253	40	0,217	0,37071	0,29578

Table 4: *Independent samples t-test, reduced output.*

5.2.2 Hypothesis 2

To answer the set of hypothesis 2a-d, we conducted one-way ANOVA analyses. The ANOVA is used to determine whether a statistically significant relationship between the dependent variable and the combination of independent variables- that is if the correlation between the combination of the dependent and

independent variables differ from the zero (zero indicates no linear association) (Hae-Young, 2014)

H2a: *In an evaluation of a cross-gender brand extension, compared to a strong-gendered feminine brand, a strong-gendered masculine brand will have a perceived greater fit.*

This hypothesis states that the Comfyballs' cross-gender brand extension should have a greater perceived fit than of Victoria's Secret's. To test if this hypothesis holds, a one-way between subject's ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of conditions on perceived fit in Comyballs' cross-gender brand extension, and Victoria's Secret cross-gender brand extension conditions. The test showed that it was not a significant effect of the conditions on the perceived fit at the $\alpha=0.05$ level for the two conditions (Condition 2: Victoria's Secret cross-extension $M=2.238$, $SD=0.899$ vs. Condition 4: Comfyballs cross-extension $M=2.148$, $SD=0.910$) with $p=1.000$ from the Bonferroni post hoc test. This result suggests that a strong-gendered masculine brand doing a cross-gender brand extension does not provide a greater perceived fit than if a strong-gendered feminine brand performs a similar extension. Based on the results from the ANOVA analysis, hypothesis 2a cannot be supported.

Moreover, one can see by the means that the perceived fit was, in fact, higher for Victoria' Secret compared to Comfyballs, with a difference of 0.08995 (measured on a 5-point Likert scale). This contradicts previous literature on the topic but as the result was insignificant and the mean difference very small, we do not have statistical evidence to support this.

H2b: *In an evaluation of a cross-gender brand extension, compared to a strong-gendered feminine brand, a strong-gendered masculine brand will have a more positive attitude towards the extension.*

Hypothesis 2b claims that respondents should have a higher perceived attitude towards Comfyballs' cross-extension than Victoria's Secrets. To test whether this hypothesis holds, we conducted a one-way between-subjects ANOVA to compare the effect of conditions on attitude towards the extension in Comfyball's cross-

gender brand extension, and Victoria's Secret cross-gender brand extension conditions. The results showed that it was not a significant effect of the conditions on attitude towards the extension at the $\alpha=0.05$ level for the two conditions (Condition 2: Victoria's Secret cross-extension $M=2.429$, $SD=0.961$ vs. Condition 4: Comfyballs cross-extension $M=2.667$, $SD=0.960$) with $p=1.000$ from the Bonferroni post hoc test. This indicates that a strong-gendered masculine brand's cross-gender brand extension does not provide a more positive attitude towards the extension itself, compared to a strong-gendered feminine brands' cross-extension. Based on this, the analysis does not support hypothesis 2b.

H2c: *In an evaluation of a cross-gender brand extension, compared to a strong-gendered feminine brand, a strong-gendered masculine brand will have a more positive attitude toward the overall brand.*

This hypothesis states that Comfyballs should get more positive attitudes towards the overall brand, after respondents have been exposed to the cross-gender brand extension scenario, than the attitude towards Victoria's Secret. To test if this hypothesis holds, a one-way between subject's ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of conditions on attitude towards the overall brand in Comfyball's cross-gender brand extension, and Victoria's Secret cross-gender brand extension conditions. The results showed no significant effect of the conditions on attitude towards overall brand at the $\alpha=0.05$ level for the two conditions (Condition 2: Victoria's Secret cross-extension $M=2.833$, $SD=0.941$ vs. Condition 4: Comfyballs cross-extension $M=2.732$, $SD=0.982$) with $p=1.000$ from the Bonferroni post hoc test. This suggests that the effect of brand gender (whether it is strongly masculine or strongly feminine) does not influence how consumers evaluate their attitude towards overall brand following a cross-gender brand extension. Based on this, we could not find support for H2c.

H2d: *In an evaluation of a cross-gender brand extension, compared to a strong-gendered feminine brand, a strong-gendered masculine brand will have stronger purchase intentions.*

This hypothesis states that the purchase intentions should be higher for Comfyballs' cross-gender brand extension than of Victoria's Secret's. To test if

this can be supported statistically, a one-way between subject's ANOVA was conducted where we compared the effect of conditions on purchase intentions in Comfyball's cross-gender brand extension, and Victoria's Secret's cross-gender brand extension conditions. The test showed no significant effect of the two conditions (Condition 2: Victoria's Secret cross-extension $M=2.421$, $SD=0.905$ vs. Condition 4: Comfyballs cross-extension $M=2.370$, $SD=0.918$) on the purchase intentions at the $\alpha=0.05$ level, with $p=1.000$ from the Bonferroni post hoc test. This suggests that a strong-gendered masculine brand will not have stronger purchase intentions compared to a strong-gendered feminine brand when consumers evaluate a cross-gender brand extension. Hence, hypothesis 2d is not supported by our analysis.

5.4.3 Hypothesis 3

H3: *When a strong gendered brand does a cross-gender brand extension, it will reduce its overall brand attitude.*

Hypothesis three states that a cross-gender brand extension will reduce the overall brand attitude towards strong-gendered brands. To test whether this hypothesis holds, we conducted two one-sample t-tests. The first one, for Comfyballs, the strong-gendered masculine brand, was tested against the test value= 3.5307 , which is the mean of respondents' attitude towards Comfyballs before respondents were exposed to the manipulation ($M=3.531$, $SD=0.826$). The test showed a p-value lower than $\alpha=0.05$, which means that the difference between the two variables is statistically significant. Moreover, the result shows that the overall attitude towards the brand was significantly lower after the respondents were exposed to the cross-gender brand extension (where $M=2.732$, $SD=0.982$); $t(35)=-4.884$, $p=0.000$.

The second test, for Victoria's Secret, was done similar, plotting the mean of respondent's attitude towards Victoria's Secret before any manipulation ($M=3.788$, $SD=1.006$) as the test value. The result showed a p-value of $p=0.000$ which is less than 0.05 . This means that the means are significantly different. Like the case of Comfyballs above, the result shows that the overall attitude towards the brand was significantly lower after exposure to the cross-gender brand

extension (where $M=2.833$, $SD=0.941$); $t(41)=-6.577$, $p=0.000$ (illustrated in Figure 4).

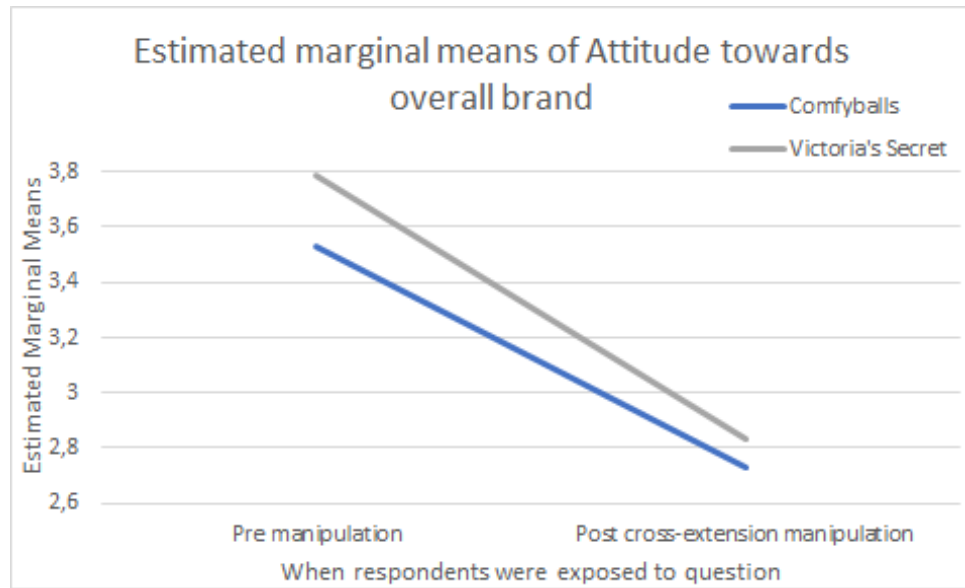


Figure 4: Main effects, attitude towards overall brand

Based on both tests discussed above, we have statistical evidence to support hypothesis 3, with p-values of $p=0.000$ in both cases.

5.4.4 Hypothesis 4

H4: Consumers have more positive attitudes toward the brand extension than the cross-gender brand extension.

This hypothesis states that consumers will have more positive attitudes toward a brand extension (itself) compared to a cross-gender brand extension. This means that the mean of the brand extension should be significantly higher than of the cross-gender brand extension. We conducted two one-sample t-tests, one for each brand, to check if this was the case.

The first test was with the feminine brand Victoria's Secret's extensions. We tested the attitude towards the brand extension ($M=3.276$, $SD=1.361$) against the test value= 2.4286 (which is the mean for attitude towards the cross-gender brand extension of Victoria's Secret: $M=2.429$, $SD=0.961$). This one-sample t-test showed that it was a significant difference between the scores for attitudes toward the brand extension and the cross-gender brand extension; $t(34)= 3.684$, $p=0.001$.

Moreover, one can see that the value is lower in the case of a cross-gender brand extension than what is the case for a brand extension. Hence, in the case of Victoria's Secret, we have statistical evidence to support H4.

The second test conducted with the masculine brand Comfyballs' extensions was done in a similar manner. We tested the attitude towards the brand extension ($M=2.367$, $SD=1.080$) against the test value= 2.6667 (which is the mean for attitude towards the cross-gender brand extension of Comfyballs: $M=2.667$, $SD=0.960$). The results from the t-test showed that it was not a significant difference between the scores for attitudes toward the brand extension and the cross-gender brand extension at the $\alpha=0.05$ level; $t(39)=-1.757$, $p=0.087$. However, at a lower confidence level, 0.9 which gives a $\alpha=0.1$, the result is significant ($\alpha=0.05 < p=0.087 < \alpha=0.1$). Nevertheless, with the use of a "standard" confidence level of 0.95, $\alpha=0.05$, the difference is not significant. Interestingly, we can also see by Figure 5 that the respondents actually have a higher attitude towards the cross-gender brand extension than the normal brand extension. Either way, in the case of Comfyballs, the H4 cannot be supported.

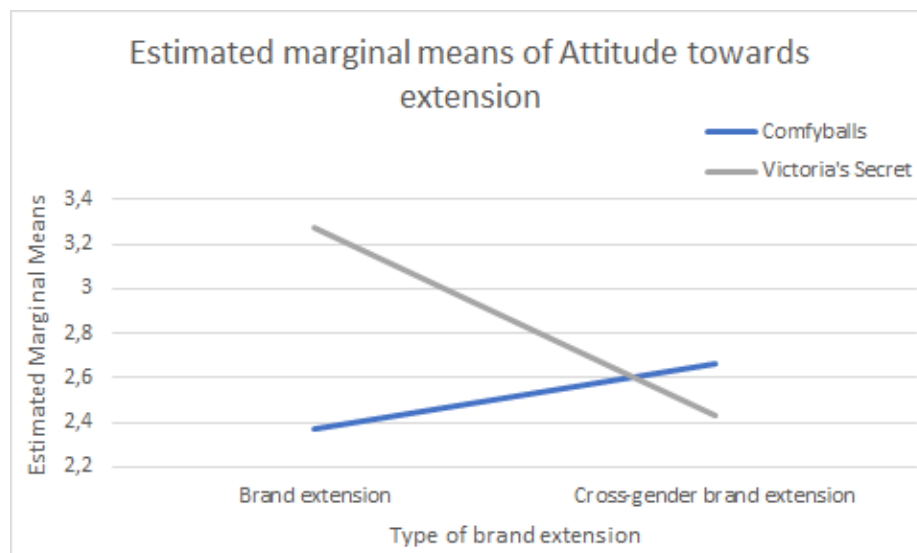


Figure 5: Interaction effect, attitude towards extension

To conclude this hypothesis, we found support in one of the two cases. Therefore, H4 is partially supported by the analysis.

6.0 Discussion

In this section, we will discuss our analysis and findings with theory. The section will be organized by hypotheses from 1 to 4.

As mentioned in the research hypothesis section in the paper, Avery (2012) states that women and men tend to react differently when they encounter cross-gender brand extension. Furthermore, men often find their gender identity in the product they buy, such as Harley Davidson, while women are less sensitive to gender identity. Moreover, they are also more open-minded towards the description of the gender role. Based on this, we tested our first hypothesis: Women will be more receptive to cross-gender brand extensions than men. Interestingly, both male and female respondents had the exact same value when measuring attitude towards cross-gender brand extensions for Comfyballs. In other words, this indicates that both males and females have the same receptiveness to a cross-gender brand extension from a strong-gendered brand, such as Comfyballs. However, when performing the same test with Victoria's Secret's cross-gender brand extension, a small difference between the genders was identified, where men actually had a higher score than women. This indicates that men are more receptive to cross-gender brand extensions compared to females. However, as this result was not significant, we do not have statistical evidence to support it, and it is likely that the result was a coincidence. A reason for this finding could be the demographics of our respondents. The respondents were Norwegian men and women aged 17-30 years, which may carry more equated values than the respondents from Avery's (2012) or Jung and Lee's (2006) studies that were conducted in the USA and eastern Asia respectively.

Furthermore, we can speculate that the result could have been different if our population was aged 50-70. This age group grew up with less emphasis on gender equality, and men in that time did not want to be identified with female brands or products. To emphasize this point, Veg-Sala (2017, pp. 26-27) states that "while some time ago, women sought to enter the world of men, now the opposite begins to appear. Many men are more and more attracted to the values and behaviors of women in everyday life and support the trend associated with the feminization of society". This could mean that if an older group of respondents were to be used in

replication of our study, it could be more likely that the hypothesis would be supported.

The second hypothesis is a set consisting of four hypotheses (H2a-2d). This set of hypotheses suggests, in general, that a male-to-female cross-gender brand extension is better for the brand- and the extension than in the case of a female-to-male cross-extension. H2a-2d suggested that, compared to female-to-male brand extensions, male-to-female cross-gender brand extensions will have a greater perceived extension fit, generate stronger purchase intentions, and create more positive attitudes towards the extension as well as the overall brand. Even though these hypotheses had support from previous studies (e.g. Jung & Lee, 2006), our analysis showed no support in any of the hypotheses in the set. The differences between a male-to-female and a female-to-male were minor, with all hypotheses H2a-2d providing insignificant results.

While hypothesis 2a-2d has support from theory, our data and analysis show no signs of support for the hypotheses. Why is that? It may be explained by several factors. First, we believe that cultural differences may be of importance- especially in terms of gender equality. The present study was conducted in Norway, with Norwegian participants. Norway is considered as one of the countries in the world that are most influenced by egalitarian values (Teigen & Wängnerud, 2009), which suggests that it is a country with high equality. Compared to e.g. Jung and Lee's (2006) study, which was performed in eastern Asia (Korea and Singapore), this may be a reason why our study could not support their findings, as gender equality is not as strong as in Norway. Second, Jung and Lee (2006) conducted their study in 2006 or earlier, which is at least 13 years ago, and with a rapidly changing society, with focus on gender equality worldwide, this could be an alternative explanation for our result being insignificant. Further, Veg-Sala (2017) supports the claim that society changes by stating that nowadays, men are more attracted to women's values and behaviors compared to earlier.

Hypothesis 3 stated that a strong-gendered brand's cross-gender brand extension will reduce the overall brand attitude. Introducing a strong, established brand into a new market such as Victoria's Secret and Comfyballs can generate the needed familiarity and knowledge that consumers must have for the extension to succeed

(Aaker & Keller, 1990). However, even though the brand is established in the market as a strong brand the risk of the extension to fail is present. If the brand extension is not suitable it can constitute a negative consumer attitude, and also to the master brand (Aaker & Keller, 1990). Based on this, we saw the potential risk of damaging the master brands by launching cross-gender brand extensions.

To test this, we conducted two independent sample T-tests. The first test, for Comfyballs, we tested respondents' attitude before and after the manipulation of a cross-gender brand extension. Consumers attitude to the brand before gave us an $M=3.5307$ and after the cross-gender extension, the result was reduced to $M=2.732$ with a p-value of 0.000. This confirms our hypothesis that consumers attitude towards the brand will be reduced after a cross-gender brand extension. However, a cross-gender brand extension can also increase consumers attitude towards the master brand. Aaker and Keller (1990) specify three assumptions that should hold for an extension to be successful, i.e. 1) consumers should hold positive associations toward the original brand, 2) these associations should be transferred to the extension, and that 3) negative associations should not be transferred or created by the brand extension. These assumptions are difficult to implement, and especially when we only can explain the cross-gender brand extension with a manipulation text. If the extension was real, marketers would have the opportunity to strategically create commercial and campaigns that could increase the likelihood that consumers would perceive the extension as a good fit and potentially increase the overall brand attitude rather than decrease it. In addition, a cross-gender brand extension is an extreme change for the brand and sometimes consumers need time in order to transfer their attitude from the master brand and over to the extension. Strategic marketing over time would also increase the likelihood of the extension to be successful. However, that been said some brand and extension will never be successful no matter how much the brand used on marketing. Based on our result it looks like both Comfyballs would have a negative brand attitude if they did proceed with this cross-gender brand extension.

The second test, for Victoria's Secret, was done similarly, plotting the mean of respondent's attitude towards Victoria's Secret before any manipulation ($M=3.7879$) as the test value. After the cross-gender brand extension, the overall

brand attitude was reduced to $M=2.883$. This test was also significant with a p -value of 0.000. In this case, the overall brand attitude was reduced even more than Comfyballs. There are many factors that can explain this. When we look into the result, we can see that there were more females (23 against 19) that was exposed to the cross-gender brand extension Victoria's Secret (Condition 2). We can, therefore, assume that the reason why the feminine brand got lower overall brand attitude after the extension was because more women responded to this. However, why would the overall brand attitude be reduced if the feminine brand started making sunglasses for men? We can assume that they did not like the new product category or that they did not see the connection between the master brand and the extension as good as on Comfyballs. One way to reduce these negative associations are "by elaborating on the attributes of the brand extension than by reminding consumers of the positive associations with the original brand" (Aaker & Keller, 1990, p. 27). This can imply that the company plans to do a brand extension should focus on elaborating on the extension attributes rather than emphasizing positive associations they may have toward the original brand. This will be especially important for brand extensions that are "far off" because consumers may find it hard to associate the extension to the original brand in the first place.

The last hypothesis, H4, gave us some interesting findings. The hypothesis suggested that a "normal" brand extension would provide more positive attitudes towards the extension itself than in the case of a cross-gender brand extension. This is mainly based on the perception of fit, as a brand extension naturally would have a better fit to the parent brand compared to a cross-gender brand extension will, because it makes more sense to consumers. One can see in Figure 5 (5.4.4 *Hypothesis 4*) that this hypothesis provided an interaction effect between the two types of brand extension and the two brands studied. The effect we see on Victoria's Secret's extensions is in line with previous studies, and what we expected to find. However, Comfyballs gave us the opposite of what we expected and was suggested by the literature.

While this hypothesis was supported in the case of Victoria's Secret with significant value ($p=0.001$), we found the opposite to be the case for Comfyballs. However, these results were not significant with an alpha of $\alpha=0.05$. On the other

hand, it was significant with an alpha of $\alpha=0.1$ ($\alpha=0.05 < p=0.087 < \alpha=0.1$). While theory suggests that a cross-gender brand extension would provide less positive attitudes, our empirics say that in the case of a strong-gendered masculine brand (Comfyballs), the cross-extension actually has more positive attitudes than in the case of a brand extension. To find explanations, we ran a descriptive analysis, cross-tabulation, to check if the respondents in the conditions had an uneven distribution of gender. The natural explanation would be that there were more females that should rate the brand extension and that more males should rate the cross-extension because then the extension would not be targeted for them. However, the distribution of gender for the “normal” brand extension was 60% male and 40% female respondents, while the distribution for cross-extension was 56% male and 44% female. This means that in the normal extension scenario, 60% (males) of the respondents would get the extension targeted towards themselves, while in the cross-extension scenario, 44% (females) would be targeted by this extension. This suggests that the uneven gender split does not explain the findings in the case of Comfyballs. Since the majority would get the brand extension targeted towards them, while the minority would get the cross-extension targeted towards them, the explanation could be that the respondents simply do not like the extension, or that there are other alternative explanations not covered by our data or analysis. Along with methodology flaws, the choice of the extension product category could play a part in the result. While we could not find any significant differences between how consumers perceive fit, the fit was still low towards the extension category (sunglasses). With a low fit, the results we got include low differences and values on the lower end of the scales, and the findings could be a coincidence.

7.0 Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

Admittedly, concerning the research limitations, our findings should not be generalized. Even though our study has some noteworthy results, there are evident limitations. We made efforts to ensure the study was valid, but there are flaws. Firstly, our sample is not representative of the whole population. Because of time and resource limitations, the study consists of 153 respondents aged between 17 and 40, the majority ranging between 23 and 30. Also, most of them are students or young professionals, because this is the group we could reach with our distribution of the experiment. Moreover, the relatively small sample size, and the convenience sampling method utilized may have influenced the results. Hence, for future research, we suggest that the study should be replicated with a larger and more representative sample size.

Second, in terms of the geographic location of the study, it should be replicated or extended into a different part of the world, or even across countries with cultural differences. As mentioned, Norway is a country that has come far in its development of gender equality. Therefore, for future studies it would be necessary to look at the topic in other countries where gender equality is not as developed. Additionally, to check whether our results can be replicated, a similar study in Norway could also be of interest.

Third, our study utilizes a relatively gender-neutral product extension, sunglasses. This product category was, to a great extent, chosen by the respondents in pretest two, where we suggested five different gender-neutral product extension categories the respondents should rate in terms of fit towards the two parent brands. For future research, we suggest that both the gendered brands and the product extension (category) should be manipulated by the researchers. In that way, the cross-gender brand extension could have a more appropriate fit for both brands. This should be done because it can be challenging for respondents to see which product category fits each brand in the context of pretests. Moreover, seen in hindsight, the extension categories suggested was maybe too far off for the respondents to see the links between the parent brands and the extension. A solution for this would be to give reasons for why the brand would do the brand extension. That is, future researchers should implement a more detailed

explanation of how and why the extension makes sense, compared to the rather thin explanation we included in our study.

Fourth, both brands in the present study are brands that preexisted, where Victoria's Secret was formed in 1977 (Schlossberg, 2015), while Comfyballs started their product development in 2012 (Comfyballs, 2019). Since Victoria's Secret has existed in a long time and probably is more famous than Comfyballs is, the responses may have been influenced by the consumer's prior experience with the brands. In subsequent studies, brand attitudes and familiarity should be tested toward the parent brands beforehand, preferably in a pretest. Also, to avoid such factors influencing the respondents, applying fictive brands could be an idea for future studies. With fictive brands, one could achieve more accurate measurements in terms of cross-gender brand extensions, without consumers having infant opinions.

Fifth, regarding the sunglass's extension, consumers could have a hard time imagining how these would look like and which type they would be. Moreover, even though Victoria's Secret and Comfyballs operates in the same product category (underwear), they have different core attributes, where Victoria's Secret focus on fashion and appearance, while Comfyballs has specialized in comfort and user-friendliness. Therefore, the perceptions of how the sunglasses would appear will be based on each respondent's perception and fantasy. Subsequent studies should strive to make an example or a prototype so consumers could see what it is exactly the brands are proposing. In this way, individual perceptions would be blurred to the minimum.

Sixth, concerning data and the analyses conducted, one should have data more applicable to the desired analyses. Before an ANOVA, one should carry out an assessment for normality of the data. This is important because many studies, including ANOVA, prerequisite normal data as an underlying assumption. We conducted such an analysis in SPSS, where the results from a Shapiro-Wilk test (well-known test of normality) unfortunately indicated that our data significantly deviated from a normal distribution (all four conditions had Sig. values lower than the desired 0.05 target) (Laerd, 2019). That being said, the ANOVA analysis only concerns hypothesis set 2a-d. Meaning that with normally distributed data, the

findings from this hypothesis could have had a different outcome. Moreover, we also tried other analyses, such as t-tests to check if we could achieve any significant findings. However, similarly to the ANOVA's presented, these tests also presented insignificant results. Suggestions for future researchers would be to use data that is normally distributed, to get as precise findings as possible.

Lastly, in terms of scale used to measure brand gender, we had the same approach as Jung and Lee (2006), where brand gender was measured by use of a unidimensional semantic differential scale. Their study came under criticism because of using this measurement. According to Grohmann's (2009) research, this type of measurement opposes masculinity to femininity, and we cannot assess the four different brand genders that she developed by rather using MBP and FBP scales (see 2.5.1 *Cross-gender extension*). Anyhow, because Jung and Lee's (2006) results were harmonious with previous literature, and their findings significant, we chose to apply this method to see if we could replicate their findings using a similar method. For future research, we suggest using Grohmann's (2009) scale when measuring brand gender. This scale is more comprehensive and precise in determining brand genders.

8.0 Conclusion

Brand extension and cross-gender strategy have in the last few decades become a widely used strategy by several companies in order to launch new products. However, the strategy does not guarantee success and can be quite risky to implement. Several success factors of cross-gender brand extensions and brand extensions make the topic interesting for companies to consider the use of the strategy. The overall goal of the study was to integrate theories and research on cross-gender brand extension and to provide more information on how the gender of a brand, gender of consumer and extension category will influence the evaluation of a cross-gender brand extension. Especially, we investigated how a strong-gendered brand will respond to a cross-gender brand extension. The hypotheses in this study were formed based on previous research on the field, and since cross-gender brand extension literature is limited, the hypotheses were largely based on cross-gender extension literature.

The main finding from the current experiment is that when a strong-gendered brand performs a cross-gender brand extension, it will reduce the overall brand attitude significantly. This finding supports previous literature and is not groundbreaking per sé. However, we have shown that strong-gendered brands should be careful with performing cross-gender brand extensions, as it can damage the parent brand as well as being an extension failure itself. The spillover effects associated with a cross-gender brand extension must be handled by caution, and companies should discuss whether the potential upside is worth the risk. The upside can potentially be great if a cross-gender brand extension is successful, based on the possibility of doubling the market size, as there are almost an equal amount of men and women in the world. A possibility for companies planning to extend their products to target the opposite gender could be to perform a cross-gender extension (not a cross-gender brand extension). Generally, this is more common, as there are several examples of successful examples (e.g. Dove, Levi's and Gillette). This strategy impairs some of the downsides of a cross-gender brand extension, as it probably will be perceived with a higher fit, and hence has a lower risk. However, if a company wants to extend its brand into new product categories and target the opposite gender, companies could do this in two steps. First, perform a brand extension into the desired

category, and consequently extend it to the opposite gender. Moreover, we can see by Comfyballs website that they now have launched underwear for women. This is an example of a cross-gender extension, and they have emphasized in their marketing that their underwear is comfortable. Furthermore, Comfyballs used the same name for the extension, that can be interpreted as highly masculine. Time will show whether or not it will be successful.

Marketers should be especially cautious with extensions if the extension fit is low, or if the company struggles to justify the extension. Even though our study did not investigate if the fit is an important factor when evaluating an extension, previous literature suggests that fit is the most important factor for extension's success (e.g. Czellar, 2003; Doust & Esfahlan, 2012; Völckner & Sattler, 2006). Therefore, marketers that evaluate whether to do a cross-gender brand extension should be confident that the fit will be perceived as high between the parent brand and the extension.

Additionally, our results show that respondents are more receptive to a brand extension compared to a cross-gender brand extension, which is in line with previous studies. However, this appears to be the case only for the strong-gendered feminine brand, Victoria's Secret. On the other hand, we found the opposite of the strong-gendered masculine brand, Comfyballs. However, this result was only significant with a confidence interval of 0.90 ($\alpha=0.1$), which is higher than the acceptable p-value of 0.05. We can therefore not comment on this result due to its insignificance. Moreover, people generally don't like changes and the bigger change it is (i.e. higher extension length), the more skeptical people become. So, in this case, it is not surprising that a regular brand extension was more preferable than a cross-gender brand extension. Making a new product for the opposite sex can seem extreme when you are exposed to it in an experiment. That said, strategic marketing communication over time might convince consumers that a cross-gender brand extension could be as successful as a regular brand extension.

Consequently, our results show that a cross-gender brand extension will not be advantageous for strong-gendered brands, because it will reduce the overall brand attitude. If a gendered brand wants to extend their target market to the opposite

gender, marketers should consider launching a cross-gender extension instead of a cross-gender brand extension as it has a lower risk of failing. That being said, with the right strategic marketing activities, the cross-gender brand extension could prove to be profitable over time.

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Appendix 1: Feminine vs. Masculine

Pretest:

Descriptive Statistics		
	N	Mean
Victoria's Secret (Underwear)	75	1,27
Libresse (Intimate care)	75	1,41
Chanel (Fashion)	74	1,89
Johaug (Sportswear)	75	2,07
Dior (Fashion)	75	2,32
Dr.Greve (Body care)	75	2,75
Sommersby (Alcoholic beverage)	75	2,81
Mini (Car)	75	3,03
Asan (Body care)	75	3,28
Vespa (Motorcycles)	75	3,33
Baileys (Alcoholic beverage)	74	3,43
Ulvang (Woolen clothes)	75	4,39
Lacoste (Fashion)	75	4,57
Head & Shoulders (Body care)	75	4,61
Profil (Condoms)	75	4,95
Armani (Fashion)	74	5,03
Heineken (Alcoholic beverage)	75	5,15
BMW (Car)	75	5,49
Dobbel Dusch (Body care)	75	5,57
Jack Daniels (Alcoholic beverage)	75	5,87
Comfyballs (Underwear)	75	5,97
Harley Davidson (Motorcycles)	75	6,17

Appendix 2: Reliability statistics

Reliability statistics		
New variable name	Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
Combined_pre_att_vic	0.942	3
Combined_pre_purch_vic	0.919	3
Combined_att_ext_vic	0.975	3
Combined_att_vic	0.982	3
Combined_purch_vic	0.941	3
Combined_fit_vic	0.957	3
Combined_mancheck_vic	0.843	3
Combined_X_att_ext_vic	0.902	3
Combined_X_att_vic	0.971	3
Combined_X_purch_vic	0.912	3
Combined_X_fit_vic	0.874	3
Combined_pre_att_com	0.942	3
Combined_pre_purch_com	0.893	3
Combined_att_ext_com	0.959	3
Combined_att_com	0.976	3
Combined_purch_com	0.941	3
Combined_fit_com	0.911	3
Combined_mancheck_com	0.916	3
Combined_X_att_ext_com	0.949	3
Combined_X_att_com	0.952	3
Combined_X_purch_com	0.951	3
Combined_X_fit_com	0.915	3

Appendix 3 (Questionnaire)

This appendix will consist of the four different conditions the respondent could get in our experiment. In order not make it too long we have merged condition 1 and condition 2 together, and condition 3 and 4 together.

Condition 1/Condition 3(Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs brand extension):

Intro:

Dear respondent, thank you for participating in this study.

The study aims to investigate respondents' attitudes towards brands and their extensions, and will take approximately 3-5 minutes.

The survey is anonymous, and all data will be treated confidentially.

There are no right or wrong answers, we are merely interested in your honest opinions.

Participating in this study is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time.

Kind regards,

Christian and Emil

MSc students at BI Norwegian Business School, Oslo.

Text:(Victoria's Secret): In this section, we are interested in your opinions about the Victoria's Secret brand. Victoria's Secret is an American company that produces and markets underwear, bikinis, nightdresses, and beauty products for women.



Text: (Comfyballs) In this section, we are interested in your opinions about the Comfyballs brand. Comfyballs is a Norwegian company that produces and markets underwear for men.



Q1: Do you find the brand Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs:

- | | | |
|----------------|-------|-----------|
| 1. Unfavorable | ----- | Favorable |
| 2. Bad | ----- | Good |
| 3. Unlikeable | ----- | Likeable |

Q2: How do you disagree or agree to the following statements about Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs?

1. I would like to try the Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs brand
2. I would like to buy the Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs brand
3. I would actively seek out the Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs brand

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Manipulation text(Vic): Victoria's Secret is a womens underwear brand in the fashion category. With the success of its womens fashion line, the top management decides that it is time to take further advantage of this success. Therefore, they decide to launch a new product, within the "sunglasses" category.

Manipulation text(Comfy)

Comfyballs is a mens underwear brand in the fashion category. With the success of its mens fashion line, the top management decides that it is time to take further advantage of this success. Therefore, they decide to launch a new product, within the "sunglasses" category.

Q3:How do you find Victoria's Secret's/Comfyballs extension into the product category sunglasses?

- 1. Unfavorable - - - - - Favorable
- 2. Bad - - - - - Good
- 3. Unlikeable - - - - - Likeable

Q4: With the extension into sunglasses, how do you now find the brand Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs?

- 1. Unfavorable - - - - - Favorable
- 2. Bad - - - - - Good
- 3. Unlikeable - - - - - Likeable

Q5: How do you disagree or agree to the following statements, when Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs decides to launch sunglasses?

- 1. I would like to try the Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs sunglasses
- 2. I would like to try the Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs sunglasses
- 3. I would actively seek out the Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs sunglasses

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Q6: How do you disagree or agree to the following statements, when Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs decides to launch sunglasses?

- 1. The product extension fits with the brand image
- 2. Launching the extension is logical for the company
- 3. Launching the extension is appropriate for the company

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Text: (Feminine VS masculine check): Victoria's Secret is an American company that produces and markets underwear, bikinis, nightdresses, and beauty products for women.

Text: (Feminine VS masculine check): Comfyballs is a Norwegian company that produces and markets underwear for men.

Q7: How Feminine or Masculine do you perceive Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs?

Extremely feminine, Very feminine, Somewhat feminine, Neither, Somewhat masculine, Very masculine, Extremely masculine

Manipulation check Comfyballs:

Please read this carefully.

Comfyballs is a mens underwear brand in the fashion category. With the success of its mens fashion line, the top management decides that it is time to take further advantage of this success. Therefore, they decide to launch a new product, within the "sunglasses" category, where Comfyballs will target female customers (Comfyballs - Women).

Manipulation check Victoria's Secret:

Please read this carefully.

Victoria's Secret is a womens underwear brand in the fashion category. With the success of its womens fashion line, the top management decides that it is time to take further advantage of this success. Therefore, they decide to launch a new product, within the "sunglasses" category, where Victoria's Secret will target male customers (Victoria's Secret - Men).

Q8: How do you disagree or agree to the following statements:

1. "Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs is identical to the extension Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs - Men/Women"
2. "Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs is equal to the extension Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs - Men/Women"
3. "Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs is similar to the extension Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs - Men/Women"

Q9: What is your gender?

Male Female Genderqueer

Q10: What is your age?

0-16 17-22 23-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61+

Condition 2/Condition 4 (Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs cross-gender brand extension):

Intro:

Dear respondent, thank you for participating in this study.

The study aims to investigate respondents' attitudes towards brands and their extensions, and will take approximately 3-5 minutes.

The survey is anonymous, and all data will be treated confidentially.

There are no right or wrong answers, we are merely interested in your honest opinions.

Participating in this study is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time.

Kind regards,

Christian and Emil

MSc students at BI Norwegian Business School, Oslo.

Text:(Victoria's Secret): In this section, we are interested in your opinions about the Victoria's Secret brand. Victoria's Secret is an American company that produces and markets underwear, bikinis, nightdresses, and beauty products for women.



Text: (Comfyballs) In this section, we are interested in your opinions about the Comfyballs brand. Comfyballs is a Norwegian company that produces and markets underwear for men.



Q1: Do you find the brand Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs:

- | | | |
|----------------|-------|-----------|
| 1. Unfavorable | ----- | Favorable |
| 2. Bad | ----- | Good |
| 3. Unlikeable | ----- | Likeable |

Q2: How do you disagree or agree to the following statements about Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs?

1. I would like to try the Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs brand
2. I would like to buy the Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs brand
3. I would actively seek out the Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs brand

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Manipulation text (Comfyballs):

Please read this carefully.

Comfyballs is a mens underwear brand in the fashion category. With the success of its mens fashion line, the top management decides that it is time to take further advantage of this success. Therefore, they decide to launch a new product, within the "sunglasses" category, where Comfyballs will target female customers (Comfyballs - Women).

Manipulation text (Victoria’s Secret):

Victoria’s Secret is a womens underwear brand in the fashion category. With the success of its mens fashion line, the top management decides that it is time to take further advantage of this success. Therefore, they decide to launch a new product, within the "sunglasses" category, where Victoria’s Secret will target male customers (Victoria’s Secret - Men).

Q3: How do you find Victoria’s Secret/Comfyballs' extension into the product category sunglasses, targeting Male/female customers?

- 1. Unfavorable - - - - - Favorable
- 2. Bad - - - - - Good
- 3. Unlikeable - - - - - Likeable

Q4: With the extension into sunglasses, targeting male/female customers, how do you find the brand Victoria’s Secret/Comfyballs?

- 1. Unfavorable - - - - - Favorable
- 2. Bad - - - - - Good
- 3. Unlikeable - - - - - Likeable

Q5: How do you disagree or agree to the following statements, when Victoria’s Secret/Comfyballs decides to launch sunglasses, targeting male/female customers?

1. I would like to try the Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs sunglasses
2. I would like to buy the Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs sunglasses
3. I would actively seek out the Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs sunglasses

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Q6: How do you disagree or agree to the following statements, when Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs decides to launch sunglasses, targeting male/female customers?

1. The product extension fits with the brand image
2. The product extension fits with the brand image
3. Launching the extension is appropriate for the company

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Text: (Feminine VS masculine check): Victoria's Secret is an American company that produces and markets underwear, bikinis, nightdresses, and beauty products for women.

Text: (Feminine VS masculine check): Comfyballs is a Norwegian company that produces and markets underwear for men.

Q7: How Feminine or Masculine do you perceive Victoria's Secret/Comfyballs?

Extremely feminine, Very feminine, Somewhat feminine, Neither, Somewhat masculine, Very masculine, Extremely masculine

Manipulation check Comfyballs:

Please read this carefully.

Comfyballs is a mens underwear brand in the fashion category. With the success of its mens fashion line, the top management decides that it is time to take further

advantage of this success. Therefore, they decide to launch a new product, within the "sunglasses" category, where Comfyballs will target female customers (Comfyballs - Women)

Manipulation check Victoria´s Secret:

Please read this carefully.

Victoria´s Secret is a womens underwear brand in the fashion category. With the success of its womens fashion line, the top management decides that it is time to take further advantage of this success. Therefore, they decide to launch a new product, within the "sunglasses" category, where Victoria´s Secret will target male customers (Victoria´s Secret - Men).

Q8: How do you disagree or agree to the following statements:

- 4. “Victoria´s Secret/Comfyballs is identical to the extension Victoria´s Secret/Comfyballs - Men/Women”
- 5. “Victoria´s Secret/Comfyballs is equal to the extension Victoria´s Secret/Comfyballs - Men/Women”
- 6. “Victoria´s Secret/Comfyballs is similar to the extension Victoria´s Secret/Comfyballs - Men/Women”

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Q9: What is your gender?

Male Female Genderqueer

Q10: What is your age?

0-16 17-22 23-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61+

