

# Benefit of Doing Business with Someone (Un)like You: Positive Effect of Brand Personality Incongruence on Brand Collaborations

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**Abstract:** In today's market, brands partner up with each other with new collaborations and products that carry the parent brands' unique personalities identities. Many of these cross-brand collaborations turn out to be huge successes. However, how would the collaborating brands' distinct personalities affect the collaboration? In particular, what if the collaborating brands have similar brand personalities to each other (congruent brands) vs. different brand personalities (incongruent brands)? In this research, we examined consumers' views on various brand collaborations. Specifically, we explored the effect of congruent vs. incongruent brand collaborations on consumer's preferences, purchase intentions and recommendation intentions. In three studies, we found that congruent brand collaborations significantly increased consumers' likings towards the parent brands. In addition, we found a significant positive impact of incongruent brand collaborations on consumers' purchase intentions and word of mouth (WOM) towards the new collaborated products. Our findings shed light on the new trend of brand collaborations, especially how brands' personalities could play a role in the collaboration. We offered not only theoretical contributions to the research of brand collaborations, but also implicational insights for marketers on brand collaboration decisions.

## 1. Introduction

Have you ever felt excited when seeing a partnership between two brands you love? There is no limit on brands from different industries coming together to create. Some of the most iconic brand collaborations have come from seemingly unlike partnerships.

As an extension strategy in which two or more brands are presented simultaneously to consumers in joint marketing activity (Simonin and Ruth, 1998), brand collaborations have become increasingly popular among commercial companies since the 1990s. Examples range from KFC partnering with Cheetos for an extra cheesy chicken sandwich, to apparel brand Tommy Hilfiger that might team up with Coca-Cola for a capsule collection.

This up-and-coming strategy is also attractive to researchers. Past research has investigated determinants of consumer evaluations toward brand collaborations, such as familiarity of partner brands (Simonin and Ruth, 1998; Baumgarth, 2004), pre-attitude towards partner brands (Aaker, 1991; Gaeth, 1991; Simonin and Ruth, 1998), consumers' level of product involvement (Hillyer and Tikoo, 1995; Gammoh et al, 2006), and consumers experience (Janiszewski and Osselaer, 2001; Bengtsson, 2002; Washburn et al, 2000). Particularly, the congruence between partner brands is the most significant factor influencing consumers' perception of brand collaborations. Each brand builds up its personality and character through communicating, which brand personality could be either congruent or incongruent. Based on Aker's (1995) finding that brand personality is mainly described by 5 personality traits, namely, sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness, we hereby define congruent brand collaboration as collaborations between brands that have similar brand personality traits, while incongruent brand collaborations as collaborations between brands that have different personality traits. Extended research has found that congruence between partner brands has a positive impact on customers' perception and recall of brand collaboration. However, some also argue that moderate incongruence could lead to favourable evaluation. In this research, we aim to

investigate whether the congruence between collaborating brands' personalities could affect consumers' views on the new collaboration product, as well as on the two collaborating brands.

As brand collaborations potentially represent new evaluations and associations for both brands (Simonin and Ruth, 1995), customer perceived brand image is altered via collaboration as well. For example, Gucci, an Italian brand consistently delivered its image of luxury, stylish and heritage collaborated with Disney, whose personality is seen as fun, imaginary and childish, to launch a new product series in 2020. To many, Gucci and Disney have incongruent brand personalities and brand images. However, does this incongruence carry a negative impact on the new collaboration and on both brands? Do consumers frown upon this collaboration because the two brands are so dissimilar? Not necessarily. In fact, there is a possibility that this incongruent collaboration adds new elements into Gucci's brand image, which leads to previous customer base extension and prior customer upgrading simultaneously (Wang and John, 2018).

### **1.1 Brand Alliance and Collaborative Congruence in Brand Collaborations**

Various researchers defined brand alliance from their distinct respective research perspectives. For instance, Rao and Rueckert (1994) defined brand alliance as a short-term or long-term combination of two or more individual brands, products or other proprietary assets. Grossman (1997)'s generalised brand alliance with any market behaviour that binds two or more brands together can be called brand alliance and includes advertisement, product, product placements and distributions. In our research, we adopt the definition of brand collaboration as two individual brands collaborating with each other to launch a new product or a new product series.

As brand collaboration become increasingly popular in business market, researchers proved that brand collaboration has influence on the consumer perception of parent brands (Park et al., 1995; Simonin and Ruth, 1998; Rao et al., 1999; Washburn, 2000; Desai and Keller, 2002; Li and He, 2013) and financial performance of participating brands (Cao and Yan, 2017). Given that combining two distinct brands into one brand could be risky because perceived difference between two brands confuses consumers (Lukovitz, 2009), researchers mainly focus on investigating relationships between parent brands. For example, Simonin and Ruth (1998) proposed two dimensions of congruence concept in the brand collaboration field: product congruence and brand congruence. Product congruence refers to the extent of consumers' perceived relatedness of product categories implied by the brand collaboration; whereas brand congruence means perceived consistency between participating brands' images. Moreover, this study further concluded that both brand congruence and product congruence lead to positive attitudes towards brand collaborations. In a similar vein, the positive effect of congruence has also been found by other researchers (Park et al. 1996; Lafferty, 2005; Washburn, 2000; Hao, 2013). However, the exact meaning of "congruence" varied in different comparing attributes of parent brands since there are different types of relationships between brands. To be specific, congruence can be identified as complementarity (i.e. parent brands' product categories can be seen as complements, Yang et al. 2009), substitutability (i.e. parent brands' product classes can substitute each other, Aker and Keller, 1990), similarity (i.e. taxonomic feature-based similarity and thematic relation-based similarity, Estes et al., 2012) and transferability (i.e. consumer perceived ability of brands operate in the first product class to make a product in the second class) (Aker and Keller, 1990). In our study, congruence is more relevant to brand congruence dimension and mainly compares the similarity between two-parent brands.

### **1.2 Benefit of Incongruence between Brands' Personalities**

However, could incongruent brand collaborations bring some competitive advantages? Previous research suggested that there could be hidden benefits of brands collaborating with others that are distinct from themselves for various reasons. In this research, we hope to examine whether a moderate incongruence between brands could bring potential benefits to the brand collaboration.

First support for this account is based on the new customer acquisition benefit of collaborating with incongruent brands from different industries. Customer expansion is widely regarded as a strategy to increase customer value and business profits (Verhoef et. al, 2007; Alhawari, 2012;

Verhoef and Lemon, 2013; Beckers et. al., 2014; Harmeling et. al, 2017). When narrowing down customer expansion strategy into brand collaboration context, Elyas (2013) proposed that brand collaboration is beneficial to expand customer base by gaining other categories of consumers, and to enter a new market by exposing new products. Hence, this study believes that brand collaboration is one of the strategies to achieve customer expansion. Particularly, if one brand collaboration happened between two incongruence brands (which means that the two-parent brands are quite different in their personalities, domain industries and original customer bases) then, this collaboration will probably bring a great number of new customers for both parent brands because customers from the other collaborated brand are likely to purchase the new collaborated product and thus, become new customers.

Additionally, innovation is also seen as another important way for growth and profit. Aker (2007) proposed that brand innovation has three main benefits: 1) creates or improves offerings to make it more attractive and differentiated 2) gains respect for the brand by adding innovativeness to brand perceptions, and 3) creates a new subcategory to provide more choices for customers. Moreover, Gözükkara and Çolakoğlu (2016) proved that brand innovation positively influences consumer perceived brand trust and brand loyalty. Further, Yao, Huang and Li (2019) believes that both technical and non-technical innovation have a positive impact on brand equity. Based on the above, this study proposed that incongruence brand collaboration is one way of non-technical brand innovation. In the collaboration process, two dissimilar brands create new product offerings together or even create a new product category beyond their original domains, which are different from existing in-market products of both brands. We proposed that incongruence brand collaboration will refresh the brand image and add an innovative impression.

To explore the role of congruence versus incongruence on the brand collaboration, we compared the differences between congruence brand collaboration and incongruence collaboration on parent brands impression changes, purchase intention and word of mouth (WOM) towards the new collaborated product.

Research found that congruence brand collaboration promises a consistency of brand image (Simonin and Ruth, 1998) and brand concept consistency are proven to have a positive influence on consumers' evaluation of brands (Park, et. al., 1991). In other words, congruence brand collaboration has a positive impact on brand impressions. Therefore, we hypothesise that congruent brand collaboration will lead to an increase of consumers' liking towards the brands.

### **H1: Congruent brand collaboration positively influences consumers' liking of the brands**

Based on the potential benefits of incongruence in brand collaboration explained in the previous section, Park and Han (2013) stated that increasing product category diversity improves consumers' purchase retention rates and long-term profitability, suggesting that the positive influence of incongruence brand collaboration mainly appeared on the behavioural level, including purchase intention and WOM. Therefore, we hypothesise that incongruent brand collaboration will lead to an increase of consumers' purchase intention and WOM.

### **H2a: Incongruent brand collaboration positively influences consumers' purchase intention towards the new collaborated product**

### **H2b: Incongruent brand collaboration positively influences consumers' WOM towards the new collaborated product**

## **1.3 Overview of Studies**

We tested our hypotheses in three studies. The pretest established valid examples of congruent and incongruent brand collaboration. Study 1 adopted two brand collaboration examples from the pretest to explore the effect of congruence versus incongruence on brand impression changes, purchase intention and WOM. To clear the noises from comparing different brand collaborations, Study 2 replicated this robust main effect from Study 1 by using the same brand collaboration primed as either

congruent or incongruent. In Studies 1 and 2, participants assessed their purchase intentions and WOM towards the collaborated product, as well as their liking for the parent brands after seeing the new collaboration.

## 2. Pretest

### 2.1 Method

*Participants.* In order to select congruent and incongruent brand collaboration examples for our study, we conducted a pretest consisting of 6 different brand collaborations. In the pretest, 60 participants were recruited on Amazon's Mechanical Turk and were randomly assigned to rate two brand collaboration examples ( $M_{\text{age}}=35.27$ , 70% Female).

*Brand Personality Measures.* Adopting Aaker et al. (1991)'s classic measurement of 5 dimensions for brand personalities, we asked participants to rate each brand on these 5 personality dimensions: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, ruggedness. In addition, we measured a fitting score between the two brands that are collaborating, for which we used an overlap diagram that was adapted from the self-other overlap measure (Aron et al., 1992).

### 2.2 Result

*Incongruence Condition in Study 1.* Supreme x Oreo represented itself as an incongruent collaboration ( $M_{\text{fitting score}} = 3.85$ ,  $SD=2.30$ ). We ran a correlation between the 5 brand personality dimensions and found that excitement and ruggedness have the lowest correlation ( $r=0.38$ ), which indicates that these two brand personalities are the most incongruent ones among the five dimensions. Supreme scored the highest on ruggedness rating ( $M=5.50$ ,  $SD=1.32$ ), while Oreo scored the highest on excitement rating ( $M=5.50$ ,  $SD=1.20$ ), suggesting that these two brands are highly dissimilar on these two brand personalities. Therefore, we chose this collaboration as the incongruent collaboration for Study 1.

*Congruence Condition in Study 1.* RIMOWA x Dior represented itself as a congruent collaboration ( $M_{\text{fitting score}} = 4.05$ ,  $SD=1.57$ ). We ran a correlation between the 5 brand personality dimensions and found that competence and sophistication have the highest correlation ( $r=0.59$ ), which indicates that these two brand personalities are the most congruent ones among the five dimensions. Rimowa and Dior have the lowest difference in both their competence ratings ( $M_{\text{Dior}}=5.95$ ,  $M_{\text{Rimowa}}=5.80$ ) and sophistication ratings ( $M_{\text{Dior}}=6.00$ ,  $M_{\text{Rimowa}}=5.70$ ), indicating that these two brands are highly similar on these two personalities. Therefore, we chose this collaboration as the congruent collaboration for Study 1.

*Moderate Congruence Condition in Study 2.* Spalding x Tiffany represented itself as a moderately congruent collaboration, which has a lower fitting score but the highest standard deviation among all the collaborations ( $M_{\text{fitting score}} = 3.60$ ,  $SD=2.30$ ). We ran a correlation between the 5 brand personality dimensions and found that the highest correlation appeared in both brands' excitement dimension ( $r=0.79$ ), indicating that the two brands could be both primed as congruent in excitement personality. Moreover, a significant correlation was found between Tiffany's sophistication dimension and Spalding's ruggedness dimension ( $r=0.84$ ), and the two brands showed an insignificant correlation in ruggedness dimension ( $r=0.39$ ), demonstrating that Tiffany and Spalding could be primed as incongruent respectively in sophistication dimension and ruggedness dimension. Therefore, we chose this collaboration for Study 2, which is suitable to be primed as a congruent brand collaboration in excitement dimension or an incongruent brand collaboration in sophistication and ruggedness dimensions.

### 2.3 Discussion

Pretest provided experimental evidence for following studies to design the manipulated congruence or incongruence condition; Oreo x Supreme is perceived as an incongruent brand collaboration while Rimowa x Dior is seen as a congruent brand collaboration. Additionally, Spalding

x Tiffany is regarded as a moderate incongruent collaboration example and suitable to be the stimuli in Study 2 for either congruent or incongruent primes.

### 3. Study 1

In Study 1, we hypothesised an improved impression towards parent brands after a congruent brand collaboration (vs. incongruent brand collaboration), and also hypothesised that incongruent brand collaboration (vs. congruent brand collaboration) will increase product purchase intention and WOM towards the new collaborated product.

#### 3.1 Method

*Participants.* We recruited 97 participants from Amazon's Mechanical Turk website ( $M_{age}=35.15$ ,  $SD=9.18$ , 60.8% males). All participants were randomly assigned to congruence or incongruence conditions and the stimuli used in the two conditions are both derived from real brand collaborations which have been discussed in the Pretest Section.

*Procedure.* We selected the collaboration examples from Pretest, and Rimowa x Dior collaboration was used in the congruence condition, whereas Oreo x Supreme was used in the incongruence condition. Then, after being exposed to congruence or incongruence brand collaboration stimulus, participants completed a questionnaire that mainly measured their brand impressions on parent brands as well as purchase intentions and WOM towards the new collaborated products depending on the congruence or incongruence brand collaboration.

We measured brand impression changes by comparing consumers' liking rating towards parent brands before and after being exposed to the new brand collaboration stimulus. Liking rating questions with fields ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much), sought to find out how much participants liked the brand.

We measured purchase intention with a scale consisting of two items: "How much do you want to own this collaborated product?" (1=not at all, 7= very much) (Bruner and Kumar, 2007); "Do you have a strong desire for this collaborated product?" (1=not at all, 7= very much) (Böttger et al., 2017). We also measured WOM with a two-item scale: "How inclined are you to tell your friends about this collaborated product?" (1=not inclined to share, 7=very inclined to share); "How likely are you to recommend this collaborated product to your friends?" (1=not at all, 7= very much) (Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002a, 2002b, 2003).

*Control Variables.* We measured the price of the new collaborated product by asking participants "How much do you think this new collaboration is worth? (1=very basic/cheap, 7=very luxurious/expensive)"; we also measured the prices of both parent brands by asking "Which expense category do you think the brand falls into? (1=basic brand, 7=luxury brand)".

#### 3.2 Result

*Effect of Brand Collaboration Congruence on Brand Impression Changes.* We conducted a paired mean T test to investigate the relationship between brand collaboration and consumers' brand impression changes of parent brands. In the congruence condition (Rimowa x Dior), we found that consumers' liking towards brand Rimowa significantly increased, and we also found a marginal significant liking increase for brand Dior ( $M_{pre-existing\ liking-Rimowa} = 5.09$ ,  $M_{post\ liking-Rimowa} = 5.37$ ,  $p = .022$ ;  $M_{pre-existing\ liking-Dior} = 5.44$ ,  $M_{post\ liking-Dior} = 5.70$ ,  $p = .070$ ). However, in the incongruence condition (Oreo x Supreme), we did not find a significant brand impression change ( $M_{pre-existing\ liking-Oreo} = 5.77$ ,  $M_{post\ liking-Oreo} = 5.71$ ,  $p = .583$ ;  $M_{pre-existing\ liking-Supreme} = 5.35$ ,  $M_{post\ liking-Supreme} = 5.45$ ,  $p = .374$ ).

*Effect of Brand Collaboration Incongruence on Product Purchase Intention and WOM.* We averaged the two items measuring purchase intention since the two items were highly correlated ( $\alpha=0.89$ ). In a one way ANOVA shown in Figure 1, we found a significant increase of purchase intention in the incongruent collaboration when holding the price of parent brands and new collaborated product as control variables ( $F(1,96) = 4.021$ ,  $p = .048$ ,  $M_{congruence} = 4.95$ ,  $M_{incongruence} = 5.51$ ). Similarly, we averaged the two items measuring WOM since the two items were highly

correlated ( $\alpha=0.82$ ). In a one way ANOVA shown in Figure 2, we found a significant increase of WOM in the incongruent brand collaboration when holding the above control variables ( $F(1,96) = 9.647, p = .003, M_{\text{congruence}} = 4.90, M_{\text{incongruence}} = 5.71$ ).

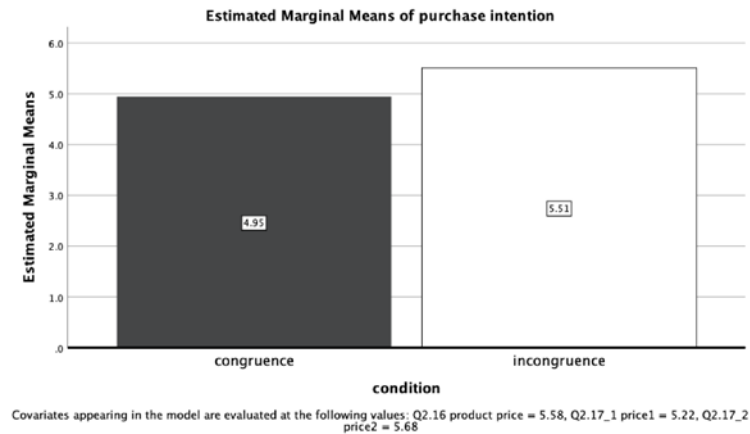


Figure 1 Effect of brand collaboration incongruence on purchase intention

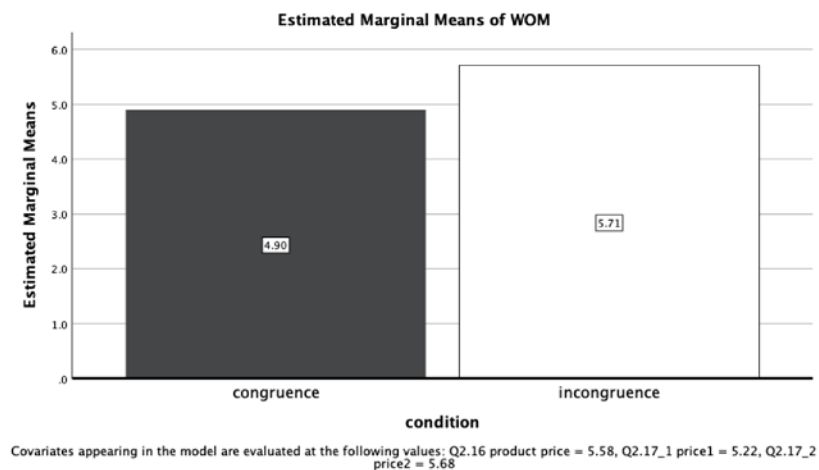


Figure 2 Effect of brand collaboration incongruence on WOM

### 3.3 Discussion

Based on the above findings in Study 1, we proved that congruence brand collaboration significantly increased consumers' impression towards parent brands (H1), while incongruence brand collaboration led to an increase in consumers' purchase intention and WOM (H2a; H2b).

## 4. Study 2

Although the same hypotheses in Study 1 were replicated, Study 2 selected one brand collaboration example with congruent or incongruent primes instead of directly using two brand collaboration examples from pretest in order to clear the noises from comparing different brand collaborations.

### 4.1 Method

*Participants.* We recruited 103 participants from Amazon's Mechanical Turk website ( $M_{\text{age}} = 32.71, SD = 8.94, 57.3\%$  males).

*Procedures.* All participants were randomly assigned to a congruence or incongruence condition; Tiffany x Spalding collaboration was the stimuli used in both conditions. Specifically, in the congruence condition, Tiffany and Spalding were primed as exciting brands, whereas in the incongruence condition Tiffany was primed as a sophisticated brand and Spalding was primed as a rugged brand. After being exposed to congruent or incongruent stimulus, participants completed a questionnaire. Similar to Study 1, this questionnaire measured brand impression changes, purchase intention and WOM with the same scales of Study 1.

*Control Variables.* We measured familiarity of the new collaborated product by asking participants to rate their familiarity with new collaboration (1=not familiar at all, 7=extremely familiar).

*Manipulation Check.* In addition, Study 2 also set manipulation questions to check the manipulated conditions. The manipulation check questions asked participants to rate the congruence between two brands' personality presented with several overlapped cycles (Aron et al., 1992).

## 4.2 Result

*Manipulation check.* Manipulation check was successful, wherein we found that participants reported higher brand personality congruence in the congruent condition than in the incongruent condition while holding the familiarity of the new collaborated product constant ( $F(1,102) = 3.930$ ,  $p = .050$ ,  $M_{\text{congruence}} = 3.45$ ,  $M_{\text{incongruence}} = 3.13$ ).

*Effect of Brand Collaboration Congruence on Brand Impression Changes.* As Study1, we conducted a paired sample T test to investigate the relationship between brand collaboration congruence and brand impression changes. In the congruence condition, we found a mixed effect on brand impression changes. For the parent brand Tiffany, we found a marginal positive effect of congruent brand collaboration on brand liking, where participants reported to like Tiffany more after viewing the collaboration campaign ( $M_{\text{pre-existing liking-Tiffany}} = 4.69$ ,  $M_{\text{post liking-Tiffany}} = 4.96$ ,  $p = .055$ ). However, we didn't find such effect for parent brand Spalding, even though it went in the same direction as we hypothesised, where participants reported liking Spalding slightly more than before after viewing the collaboration ( $M_{\text{pre-existing liking-Spalding}} = 4.86$ ,  $M_{\text{post liking-Spalding}} = 5.08$ ,  $p = .247$ ). However, in the incongruence condition, we did not find a significance in the brand impression change for parent brands ( $M_{\text{pre-existing liking-Tiffany}} = 4.85$ ,  $M_{\text{post liking-Tiffany}} = 4.78$ ,  $p = .646$ ;  $M_{\text{pre-existing liking-Spalding}} = 4.75$ ,  $M_{\text{post liking-Spalding}} = 4.67$ ,  $p = .610$ ).

*Effect of Brand Collaboration Incongruence on Product Purchase Intention and WOM.* We averaged the two items measuring purchase intention since the two items were highly correlated ( $\alpha=0.94$ ). In a one way ANOVA shown in Figure 3, we found that brand congruence has an insignificant impact on purchase intention ( $F(1,102) = 0.002$ ,  $p = .961$ ,  $M_{\text{congruence}} = 3.98$ ,  $M_{\text{incongruence}} = 4.00$ ). We averaged the two items measuring WOM since the two items were highly correlated ( $\alpha=0.87$ ). In a one way ANOVA shown in Figure 4, we found that brand collaboration congruence does not have a significant impact on WOM ( $F(1,102) = 0.021$ ,  $p = .886$ ,  $M_{\text{congruence}}=4.38$ ,  $M_{\text{incongruence}}=4.33$ ).

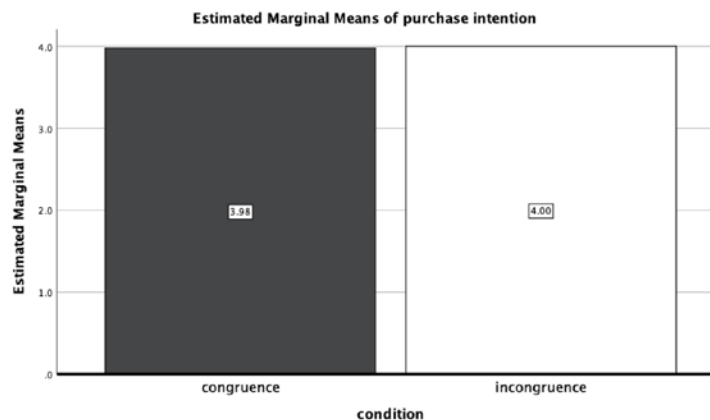


Figure 3 Effect of brand collaboration incongruence on purchase intention

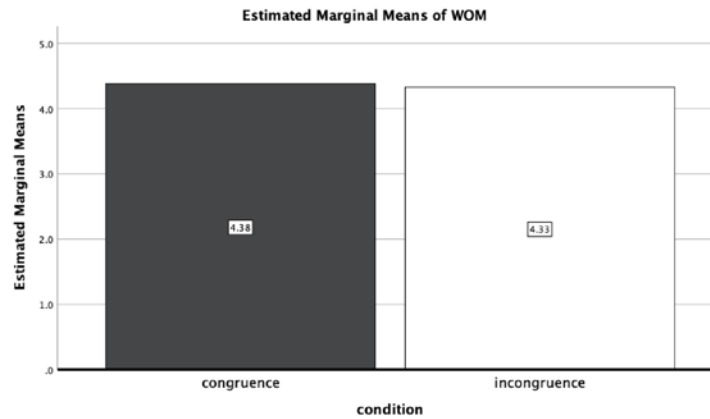


Figure 4 Effect of brand collaboration incongruence on WOM

### 4.3 Discussion

In Study 2, we replicated findings from the previous study and corroborated that brand congruence collaboration significantly increased consumers' brand impression towards the parent brands (H1). However, in comparison to Study 1, Study 2 showed that the difference between congruent and incongruent brand collaboration was insignificant on purchase intention and WOM (H2a and H2b were not supported).

There are several possible reasons for the insignificant effect in Study 2. One possibility is that the new collaborated product in Study 2 (Tiffany x Spalding basketball) has a smaller target consumer than that in Study 1 (Oreo x Supreme cookie and Rimowa x Dior handbag). Tiffany x Spalding basketball, which is a type of sport equipment, is likely to attract only those consumers who are interested in basketball sport activity, thus participants' responses to the purchase intention and WOM in Study 2 might be affected by their interests towards basketball. While the products in Study 1 are closer to daily necessities compared to sport equipment, consumers' purchase intention and WOM towards daily necessities usually varies less across the consumer group. Moreover, the mean values of purchase intention and WOM in both conditions in Study 1 is higher than that in Study 2, which is in support of this explanation.

Another alternative explanation is that although participants in Study 2 are exposed to congruent or incongruent conditions, the new collaborated product is exactly the same between two conditions. In other words, product-related factors including price and non-price product information which have impacts on purchase intention and word of mouth (Chang and Wildt, 1994) are exactly the same between the two participants groups. Thus, the responses of purchase intention and WOM between congruence condition and incongruence condition are probably quite close. This explains the insignificant effect of congruent brand collaboration on purchase intention and WOM in Study 2.

Finally yet importantly, data collection in this study was carried out using the MTurk website, which leans towards lower samples. One reflection is that we might not have selected an appropriate product (i.e. a luxury brand collaboration which is targeted towards higher-income populations) to be tested in this study. In future studies, we aim to replicate such effect with a more representative product and more brand collaborations.

## 5. General Discussion

### 5.1 Theoretical Contributions

In corroboration with the previous research of examining the positive effect of brand fit (Simonin and Ruth, 1998; Lafferty, 2005; Washburn, 2000; Hao, 2013), this research adapts the brand personality theory (Aker et.al, 1991) to experimental designs and extends the benefits of brand personality congruence on brand collaboration. Further, this research brings an important contribution in specifying the positive effect of congruence brand collaboration on brand impression-level; Study 1 and Study 2 both provide insights that consumers' liking towards parent brands significantly



increased when collaborated brands showed congruent brand personalities. While two brands with incongruent brand personalities collaborated with each other, consumers' brand impression towards the two brands did not significantly change after the collaboration.

However, we also highlighted the benefits of incongruent brand collaboration on consumer's purchase intentions and WOM. Study 1 demonstrated that consumers' purchase intention and WOM are both significantly increased in the new collaborated product and more in the incongruent brand collaboration than in the congruent brand collaboration. However, we did not find strong support of this effect in Study 2, which revealed that consumers' purchase intention in incongruence brand collaboration is just slightly higher than that incongruence brand collaboration, while consumers' WOM towards the collaborated product in the congruence collaboration gets a smaller boost than that in the incongruence collaboration. Even though our results from Study 2 didn't fully corroborate with Study 1, we found a directional support for our hypothesis. We discussed the possible reasons for this effect and concluded that the consumer pool was more restricted for the products in Study 2, besides the fact that the sample size could be considered insignificant for demonstrating the WOM effect because our participant sample might not be representative to review products like high-end luxurious products.

## **5.2 Implications for Marketers and Managers**

From a marketing standpoint, our findings provide experimental evidence for collaborative brand selecting. Since congruent brand collaboration and incongruent brand collaboration both have potential benefits, whether to choose a congruent brand or an incongruent brand for a collaboration depends on the managerial objective. Specifically, if a brand aims at increasing consumers' liking or improving brand impression through a brand collaboration strategy, collaborating with another brand that has a congruent brand personality probably could be the right way to go. However, if a brand wants to achieve sales growth and word-of-mouth growth through a brand collaboration, it is more helpful to collaborate with a brand with an incongruent brand personality. In conclusion, the benefit of congruent brand collaboration mainly impacts brand impression management, whilst the incongruent brand collaboration is beneficial for their sales performances and for creating a buzz.

## **5.3 Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

The findings should be considered in light of some limitations. One limitation of this research was the use of a sample population from Mturk websites, which might have limited its generalisability and can be accused of external validity. If future studies adopt a probability sampling technique with randomisation, such as simple random sampling, they are likely to get a more representative sample.

Secondly, there might be some more hidden factors that influenced the relationships investigated in this article. For example, product category familiarity and product category preference (Coupey, Irwin and Payne, 1998) are considered to have an influence on consumers' purchase intention. Therefore, it is recommended that future research takes more potential covariates into account as this would bring an accurate data analysis result.

In addition, this research only explored the positive effect of congruence and incongruence brand collaborations but did not extend further into exploring the mechanism of these effects. Thus, future research could provide additional insight on possible mechanisms and potential boundary conditions, and especially shed light on how brands should select another brand to partner up with for a win-win situation.

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