Using brand alliances with artists to expand retail brand personality ☆

Pielah Kim[a],*, Rajiv Vaidyanathan[b], Hua Chang[c], Leslie Stoel[d]

[a] School of Business Administration, Jefferson [Philadelphia University + Thomas Jefferson University], 4201 Henry Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19144, United States
[b] Labovitz School of Business & Economics, University of Minnesota Duluth, 335A LSBE, 1318 Kirby Drive, Duluth, MN 55812, United States
[c] College of Business & Economics, Towson University, 8000 York Road, Towson, MD 21252, United States
[d] Farmer School of Business, Miami University, 3042 FSB/MSC 1080, 800 E. High St., Oxford, OH 45056, United States

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Fashion retailers are increasingly entering into brand alliances with visual artists, but the conditions under which such alliances are most effective are not clear. Drawing on brand personality and implicit personality theory, we used two experimental studies to show both negative (dilution of retailer's original personality) and positive (expansion of personality) effects. Study 1 demonstrated that retail brand personality was diluted when the visual artist had a strongly incongruent personality, while it was expanded when the artist had a personality moderately incongruent to the retailer's brand, but only for consumers who hold an incremental theorist view of personality. Study 2 showed that consumers' implicit theory beliefs can be primed to design the intended personality of retail brands through artist partnerships. Our findings suggest visual artists are an untapped source of value that retailers can exploit to create differentiated brand personalities as a way to gain a greater market appeal.

1. Introduction

Since the 1930s, when Italian fashion designer Elsa Schiparelli collaborated with Salvador Dali to design a gown, there have been collaborations between visual artists and fashion designers. As artists have emerged as brands themselves, they have collaborated with fashion designers in ways that have expanded the reach of the artists while enhancing the personalities of the fashion brands they work with (Gregory, 2014). These collaborations hold immense promise for both parties as they may help reshape consumers' views of their brands, but they are also fraught with dangers as both fashion retailers and visual artists have small fortunes invested in their brands. On one hand, Takashi Murakami's collaboration with Louis Vuitton is credited with significantly building his reputation. On the other hand, such a collaboration may "make the artist feel her work is compromised and sometimes, the retailer is afraid that its core users won't 'get' an artistic endeavor or that the work might be controversial (Riahi, 2014, para 1)."

Consumers view retail brands as having distinct personalities such as excitement and sincerity (Zentes, Morschett, & Schramm-Klein, 2008) that are similar to the set of human personality characteristics (Ailawadi & Keller, 2004). Similarly, the success of visual artists is dependent on their creation of a well-developed unique style and personality (Holmes, 2007;

Thomson, 2006). This is an untapped source of value that retailers can draw on to create distinct and differentiated personalities in the minds of consumers as a clearly defined retail brand personality has a positive effect on store loyalty (Das, 2014). Exactly how merging these personalities can affect consumer perceptions of retailers has not been widely examined in the literature (Das, 2015). Store ambiance, environment, and design are the most important antecedents to retail brand personality perceptions (Brengman & Willems, 2009) and this fact suggests that the potential impact of integrating the styles of unique visual artists on retail brand personality is significant.

The vast literature on brand personality has focused on product brands even though some research has shown that retail brands are different from product brands because of their multi-sensory nature (Ailawadi & Keller, 2004). When a visual artist has a personality that differs from the fashion retailer's personality, it is not always clear how successful the partnership will be when consumers experience the alliance. For example, Takashi Murakami, an iconic artist who represents excitement with his bright, bold, and fun artwork, was involved in creating a marketing mix for Louis Vuitton who historically has represented the personality trait of sophistication (Smith, 2008). By incorporating Murakami's exciting personality, Louis Vuitton was able to attract young consumers who otherwise might have a low attachment to the retailer's original sophisticated trait. Yet, it is possible that

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.10.020

collaborations with "pop artists" like Murakami and Yayoi Kusama could have alienated Louis Vuitton's core consumers and diluted their "sophisticated" personality to cause long run damage to the brand. Even a more benign consumer reaction where the alliance fails to change consumers' perceptions of the Louis Vuitton brand could be regarded as an expensive failure. Not all consumers may be willing to accept an alteration to the personality profiles of their favorite retail brands and understanding how consumers react to changing personalities is important to ensure artist-retailer alliances are effective. Despite some evidence that retailers can use personality perceptions effectively to create a unique selling proposition (Willems et al., 2012), limited research has examined how consumers respond to alliances between artists and retail brands.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the emerging industry phenomenon in which visual artists engage in brand alliances with fashion retailers to take advantage of existing positive associations with each of the brands. The study focuses on two research questions designed to advance our understanding of artist-retailer brand alliances. First, we examine the conditions under which such alliances expand or dilute the personality of the retailer brand. Second, we examine a mechanism by which retailers can prime consumers to be more accepting of such alliances to expand their brand personalities most effectively.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Brand personality integration and schema (in)congruence

Brand personality refers to the set of human traits that consumers associate with a brand (Aaker, 1997). Brand personality has generally been studied in terms of five dimensions: sincerity, competence, excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness. When consumers perceive brands as having a distinct personality, they benefit from being able to use the brand for self-expression (Belk, 1988). The retailer benefits through improved brand equity (Keller, 2007) and store loyalty (Das, 2014). Therefore, when brands partner, the broad goal is to integrate the personality dimensions of brands in the alliance (James, Lyman, & Foreman, 2006; Simonin & Ruth, 1998). The brand alliance operates via a spill-over mechanism, transferring a personality trait of the partnering brand onto the host brand to re-conceptualize its personality representation (Desai & Keller, 2002).

Brand schemata refers to the cognitive structures that represent one's current perception of or expectations about a given product or brand (Bettman, 1979). Brand schema (in)congruence in the context of a brand alliance can be referred to as the extent of discrepancy between a newly-created brand schema and the prior established schema (Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989). It indicates the extent of structural correspondence achieved between the newly projected perception impacted by the partnering brand's attributes compared to existing perceptions of the host brand. The extent of schema (in)congruity can be categorized as follows: 1) congruous—where the brand personalities of the partners are similar to each other so there is a predictable conformation to the expectation that causes no changes in current knowledge structure; 2) moderate incongruity—where there is some deviation from expectation between the perceptions of the two brands, yet within the boundaries in which the incongruity can be understood and resolved; and 3) strong incongruity—where the partnership results in a drastic deviation from consumers expectations, in which incongruity cannot be resolved without fundamental cognitive restructuring (Mandler, 1982).

Brand personality is one key construct constituting brand schema and different levels of (in)congruence in personality attributes among allying brands trigger different cognitive processing, and subsequently result in different brand knowledge restructuring. Brand alliances where the two allying brands own congruent personality traits, impose no structural changes in a current host brand schema. In this case,

congruency does not conflict with the existing host brand schema, thus does not require any changes in processing. However, processing of moderately incongruent attributes of the allying brand results in consumers assimilating the new attributes into the host brand schema (Desai & Keller, 2002). The existing memory representation first integrates that portion of the attributes that are consistent with the schemata, and then assimilates the residual incongruent information through the formation of a unique tag (Sujan & Bettman, 1989). A consumer's perceptions of a brand's personality consist of a series of objects connected in a causal network and some of these objects that make up the brand's personality "essence" are more important than others. Changing a central feature that defines a brand's personality will have a larger effect on consumer perceptions than a secondary feature (Van Rekom, Jacobs, & Verlegh, 2006). Thus, when the partnering brand does not conflict with the core essence of the host brand, the moderately incongruent information does not completely transform the prior knowledge structure (Sjödin & Törn, 2006), but instead functions to expand the characterization of the brand, without compromising the existing brand personality.

The processing of strongly incongruent attributes of an allying brand, on the other hand, first initiates deeper cognitive elaboration on the part of consumers as they attempt to resolve the discrepancy. However, conflict in resolving the inconsistency results in the need to create a new knowledge structure (Desai & Keller, 2002; Sujan & Bettman, 1989). Often, the attempt to resolve the strong discrepancy induces a sense of overwhelming helplessness (Mandler, 1982), in which case, a stress and subsequent failure in cognitive elaboration only distorts the current knowledge structure. The result is that the host brand's core personality is diluted without the partnering brand's personality being integrated into the schema.

2.2. Implicit theories of personality

The self serves as a lens through which the consumer interprets the personality of other individuals or brands. Our perceptions of brands are affected by the similarities between our own personalities and those of the brand (Wolter, Brach, Cronin, & Bonn, 2016). A consumer may view the self to be complex and multifaceted, and when this lens is activated, he/she tends to prefer cobrands with dual (versus single) personalities (Monga & Lau-Gesk, 2007) to be consistent with the self. Individuals also generally have implicit theories about the malleability of personality traits (Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995; Dweck & Leggett, 1988), and either are *entity theorists*, who perceive personality traits as fixed and dispositional, or *incremental theorists*, who see personality traits as dynamic, malleable and context dependent (Dweck et al., 1995). Not only do these implicit theories affect how we see others' personalities, but marketing messages can also prime an entity or incremental mindset. Research has shown that consumers are much more likely to accept a brand extension that departed moderately from the parent brand's personality if they were incremental, rather than entity theorists (Yorkston, Nunes, & Matta, 2010). However, even among incremental theorists, priming did not promote the acceptance of a brand extension that involved an extreme departure from the parent brand's personality, due to violation of the latitude of acceptability. It is clear, therefore, that consumers' perceptions of the personalities of complex brand alliances are evaluated in terms of their own naïve views of personality.

2.3. The special case of visual artist-retailer alliances

Given visual artists represent a unique human brand that vividly signal distinct persona through artwork (Holmes, 2007; Thomson, 2006), integrating their style into a fashion retail environment is intended to benefit from the spill-over of the artist's persona onto the symbolic properties of the retail brand. While most of the research on brand personality focuses on brands with a single dominant personality,

Table A
Conceptual model explaining brand dilution and expansion mechanism.

Implicit theory	Level of incongruence between retail brand and artist BP's		
	Congruent	Moderately incongruent	Strongly incongruent
Entity theorist	No Changes	**Brand personality dilution** a. Diluting fashion retailer's existing BP b. No brand personality expansion	**Brand personality dilution** a. Diluting fashion retailer's existing BP b. No brand personality expansion
Incremental theorist	No Changes	**Brand personality expansion without dilution** a. Maintaining fashion retailer's existing BP b. Brand personality expansion: successfully integrating artist trait onto fashion retailer's BP Dual traits representing fashion retailer's BP	**Brand personality dilution** a. Diluting fashion retailer's existing BP b. No brand personality expansion

very little work has examined complex brand personalities that span multiple dimensions (Monga & Lau-Gesk, 2007). With visual artist-retailer alliances, the focus of the retailer is to use the personality of the artist to expand the retail personality into multiple dimensions without diluting the core personality of the retailer. As discussed earlier, the interaction between personality congruity (between the visual artist and the retailer) and consumers' implicit theory of personality results in the operation of different dynamics when consumers integrate the artist's personality into their retailer personality perceptions.

2.3.1. Dilution of retailer brand personality

Given the time and effort it takes to build a coherent brand personality and the risk of expanding a brand personality in a way that affects consumer perceptions negatively (Wolter et al., 2016), it is important to ensure that any efforts to expand a brand's personality by introducing new dimensions do not dilute the original brand personality. When fashion retailers partner with a visual artist, the goal is to expand consumers' views of the retailer brand, not replace it. As explained earlier, incremental theorists generally accept variability and flexibility in personality over time (Dweck et al., 1995), suggesting that they would be more willing to expand their brand schema to integrate the new, moderately incongruent personality trait while maintaining their view of the retailer's current personality. Therefore, when a visual artist represents a moderately incongruent personality from a fashion retailer, an incremental theorist's belief in the malleability of brand personality prevents dilution of the retailer's original personality. Even for entity theorists, encountering a moderately incongruent trait of a visual artist initially triggers cognitive processing in an attempt to assimilate the new personality dimension. However, their rejection of malleability in brand personality disrupts cognitive processing and generates instability in cognition. Further, the vividness of the artist's personality presented in the current retail space of the fashion retailer makes it more accessible and can cause distraction in the brand schema of the retail brand, resulting in a dilution of the original personality of the retail brand. Regardless of a person's implicit theories of self, processing a strongly incongruent personality of a partnering visual artist will only result in distortion in the current brand schema of the retail brand. Extreme departure from the latitude of acceptance, accommodating a strongly incongruent personality of the visual artist in this case, causes a contrast effect (Loken, 2006) and induces a sense of overwhelming helplessness (Mandler, 1982). This feeling tends to blur the current knowledge structure and serves to dilute the original personality of the retailer. This leads to our first hypothesis:

H1a. *For incremental (entity) theorists, the integration of a visual artist with a moderately incongruent personality will not dilute (will dilute) the fashion brand's core personality.*

H1b. *Regardless of a consumer's implicit theory of personality, the integration of a visual artist with a strongly incongruent personality will dilute the fashion brand's core personality.*

2.3.2. Expansion of retailer brand personality

When consumers encounter a moderately incongruent personality trait of a partnering visual artist in the retail environment, they attempt to assimilate that trait into their current schema structure (Sujan & Bettman, 1989). When viewed through the incremental theorists' self-lens, which allows for malleable and complex personalities, they easily accept the dual associations representing brand personality (Monga & Lau-Gesk, 2007) and expand their view of the retailer's personality to capture both the retail brand's original and visual artist's personality traits. Through the lens of entity theorists, who view personality as fixed and stable, the newly introduced personality of the visual artist is rejected and perceptions of the retailer's personality are consequently not expanded to include the traits of the visual artist. In the case of an extreme discrepancy between the personality of the visual artist and the retailer, the tension induced by processing the alliance results in consumers taking a heuristic approach to avoid the cognitive conflict (Lee & Schumann, 2004). As predicted when discussing brand dilution, consumers deal with the conflict by removing the original retailer brand personality from their schema. This personality updating mechanism (Johar, Sengupta, & Aaker, 2005) is expected to occur regardless of a person's stance on implicit theories of self, because the latitude of acceptability is equally violated for both theorists. Thus, both entity and incremental theorists fail to expand the brand personality of the retailer to a dual-dimensional construct. As a result, we hypothesize that:

H2a. *For incremental (entity) theorists, the integration of a visual artist with a moderately incongruent personality will expand (not expand) the fashion brand's personality.*

H2b. *Regardless of a consumer's implicit theory of personality, the integration of a visual artist with a strongly incongruent personality will not expand the fashion brand's personality.*

The conceptual model underlying our hypotheses on brand personality dilution and expansion are summarized in Table A.

3. Experimental studies

We used the experimental approach in all studies with an aim of blending the advantages this approach can offer. Experimental study permits a controlled context in which to manipulate constructs of interest (Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004). Thus we were able to manipulate levels of personality congruency between visual artists and retail brands. Moreover, this approach best ensures internal validity by isolating the experimental stimuli's specific influence on external factors while controlling other causes (Hartmann, Apaolaza Ibáñez, & Forcada Sainz, 2005). It allows for identifying the effect of a visual artist alliance on perceptions of a retailer's brand. Lastly, experimental studies permit successful priming manipulations (Herr, 1989) and thereby we were able to prime participants as either entity or incremental theorists.

3.1. Pretest

A pretest was conducted to identify the level of brand personality (in)congruence between pre-selected artists and retail brands. All experiments reported in this paper were computer-mediated. We recruited participants through Amazon Mechanical Turk, and they received monetary compensation in exchange for their participation. 126 participants in the Prestudy (46% male, 18–70 years) were assigned randomly to evaluate the personalities of one visual artist (Keith Haring, Georgia O'Keeffe, Jean Michelle Basquiat, or Norman Rockwell) and one retail brand (Burberry or Old Navy). Participants first viewed a photo of a visual artist and one of his/her representative works. Afterwards, they were asked to indicate their perceptions of the visual artist, then the retail brand personalities using a subset of traits from four dimensions of the brand personality scale (referred to hereafter as BPS, Aaker, 1997): exciting (daring, exciting, imaginative, and young); sophisticated (glamorous, charming, feminine, and smooth); sincere (family-oriented, sincere, and wholesome), and rugged (masculine, rugged, western, and tough): 1 = not at all descriptive, 5 = extremely descriptive. We also assessed participants' liking of the artists and their artwork using two nine-point Likert scales.

The difference in liking across the four artists ($t_{122} = 0.78$, $p = 0.51$) was not statistically significant. For the retailer brand personality, Burberry scored the highest on the sophisticated dimension ($M_{Burberry} = 3.56$). For visual artists, O'Keeffe scored highest in sophistication ($M_{O'Keeffe} = 3.40$), followed by Rockwell ($M_{Rockwell} = 2.62$) and Basquiat ($M_{Basquiat} = 2.07$). Rockwell scored highest on the sincerity dimension and Basquiat scored highest on the ruggedness dimensions. Pairwise comparisons were conducted to determine three levels of (in)congruence between the artists and Burberry. On sophistication, Burberry and O'Keeffe both had high means that did not differ significantly ($t_{122} = -1.05$, $p = 0.30$). Because the study focused on the relative levels of sophistication, O'Keeffe was used as the benchmark, and a significant difference between O'Keeffe and Rockwell on the sophisticated score allowed us to use Rockwell as our moderately incongruent fit with Burberry ($t_{122} = -4.66$, $p < 0.01$). Basquiat's rating on sophistication was significantly lower than that of Rockwell ($t_{122} = -3.12$, $p < 0.01$), and thus, we used Basquiat as our strongly incongruent stimulus (See Table B). Therefore, in Study 1, we used Burberry (retail brand), O'Keeffe (congruent), Rockwell (moderately incongruent), and Basquiat (strongly incongruent) as our manipulations.

Similarly, Old Navy scored the highest in sincerity ($M_{Old Navy} = 3.98$) compared to other dimensions. For the visual artists, Rockwell scored higher ($M_{Rockwell} = 4.21$) than did Haring ($M_{Haring} = 2.69$) on that dimension of personality. Sincerity perceptions between Old Navy and Rockwell did not differ significantly and thus, these brands were deemed congruent on that dimension

Table C
Personality trait and BP scores of artists and fashion retailer in Study 2.

	Brand	Sincere BP score	Exciting BP score	Match to retail brand
Fashion retailer	Old Navy (Salient dimension: Sincere)	**3.98**	2.50	–
Visual artists	Norman Rockwell (Salient dimension: Sincere)	**4.21**[†]	3.04	Congruent
	Keith Haring (Salient dimension: Exciting)	2.69**	**3.80**	Moderately incongruent

1. Visual artists' salient BP dimension was determined relatively, based on the highest score received in an individual BP dimension.
2. Level of (in)congruency was determined based on the comparison of BP scores between fashion retailer and each visual artist.
* Significant at the 0.05 probability level.
** Significant at the 0.01 probability level.
*** Significant at the 0.001 probability level.
[†] ns, non-significant at the 0.05 probability level.

($t_{148} = 1.21$, $p = 0.23$). Using Rockwell as the benchmark, a significant difference between Rockwell and Haring suggested that Haring was moderately incongruent to Old Navy ($t_{148} = -7.89$, $p < 0.01$, see Table C). Based on these analyses, Old Navy was used as the fashion retailer brand in Study 2, with visual artists Rockwell (congruent) and Haring (moderately incongruent).

3.2. Study 1

3.2.1. Participants, design, and procedure

244 participants (59% male; 18–74 years) were involved in a 3 (artist-retailer personality match: congruent, moderately incongruent, vs. strongly incongruent) × 2 (implicit theory: entity vs. incremental) between-subjects design. At the beginning of the study, participants were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions and were told that Burberry was promoting a special campaign with a visual artist named Georgia O'Keeffe (congruent match), Norman Rockwell (moderately incongruent match), or Jean Michelle Basquiat (strongly incongruent match). Next, we asked the participants to imagine themselves inside a Burberry store. We then exposed the participants to images of a gender-neutral scarf and store décor that incorporated the paintings of O'Keeffe, Rockwell, or Basquiat (See Appendix A.1). Thereafter, participants indicated their perceptions of Burberry's personality. Finally, participants answered a series of questions that assessed perceived brand fit between Burberry and the visual artist, implicit theories of self, and demographics, respectively.

Table B
Personality trait and BP scores of artist and fashion retailer in Study 1.

	Brand	Sophisticated BP score	Sincere BP score	Rugged BP score	Match to retail brand
Fashion retailer	Burberry (Salient dimension: Sophisticated)	**3.56**	2.79	2.12	–
Visual Artists	Georgia O'Keeffe (Salient dimension: Sophisticated)	**3.40**[†]	3.65	1.96	Congruent
	Norman Rockwell (Salient dimension: Sincere)	2.62**	**4.21**	2.23	Moderately incongruent
	Jean Michelle Basquiat (Salient dimension: Rugged)	2.07**	2.97	**3.25**	Strongly incongruent

1. Visual artists' salient BP dimension was determined relatively, based on the highest score received in an individual BP dimension.
2. Level of (in)congruency was determined based on the comparison of BP scores between fashion retailer and each visual artist.
* Significant at the 0.05 probability level.
** Significant at the 0.01 probability level.
*** Significant at the 0.001 probability level.
[†] ns, non-significant at the 0.05 probability level.

3.2.2. Measures

To measure participants' perceptions of Burberry's personality, the same BPS scale was adopted to measure sophistication (α = 0.68), sincerity (α = 0.78), and ruggedness (α = 0.75). Participants also rated the perceived fit between Burberry and the visual artist on a nine-point, 3-item fit scale (inconsistent/consistent, very irrelevant/very relevant, and does not match/matches very well, Simonin & Ruth, 1998). The three items were averaged to create a perceived fit scale (α = 0.95). Finally, we assessed the participants' belief in the entity vs. incremental theories of personality using the implicit personality theory measure (Levy, Stroessner, & Dweck, 1998; Park & John, 2010). Participants indicated their agreement with eight statements, four of which were representative of the entity theory (reverse coded in computing the index of implicit theory) and four of which were representative of incremental theory, on seven-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, and 7 = strongly agree). The responses to these eight items were averaged to create an implicit personality theory scale for each participant (α = 0.89). As suggested by Malhotra (2004), based on participants' scores on the implicit theory scale, we split them into two groups (entity and incremental theorists) using a median split. Higher scores indicated a stronger belief in the malleability of personality.

3.2.3. Results

3.2.3.1. Manipulation checks.
An ANOVA with pairwise comparisons was performed to assess the success of the manipulation. The results showed a significant effect of the manipulated variable—perceived fit: participants perceived a higher degree of fit between Burberry and O'Keefe than Rockwell ($M_{Rockwell}$ = 5.51, $M_{O'Keeffe}$ = 6.10; t_{241} = 1.69, p = 0.09). Participants perceived a higher degree of fit between Burberry and Rockwell than Basquiat ($M_{Basquiat}$ = 4.90; t_{241} = 1.86, p = 0.06). The results demonstrated the success of the intended manipulation.

3.2.3.2. Brand personality dilution.
A 3 (artist-retailer personality match: congruent, moderately incongruent, vs. strongly incongruent) × 2 (implicit theory: entity vs. incremental) between-subjects ANOVA was performed on the change in the fashion brand's personality. The results revealed a significant interaction between artist-retailer match and implicit theory ($F_{2, 238}$ = 6.07, p < 0.01). In the moderately incongruent matches, we performed follow-up planned contrasts.

The results showed that, compared to the congruent condition, the original sophisticated personality of Burberry was diluted significantly for entity theorists (M_{cong_entity} = 3.69, $M_{mod\ incong\_entity}$ = 3.34; t_{238} = −2.35, p < 0.05, see Fig. A.1); however, the personality was maintained for incremental theorists ($M_{cong\_incremental}$ = 3.70, $M_{mod\ incong\_incremental}$ = 3.66; t_{238} = −0.20, p = 0.84). In the strongly incongruent condition, the same analysis revealed that, compared to the congruent condition, the original sophisticated personality of Burberry was diluted significantly both for entity theorists (M_{cong_entity} = 3.69, $M_{str\ incong\_entity}$ = 3.26; t_{238} = −2.89, p < 0.01) and incremental theorists ($M_{cong\_incremental}$ = 3.70, $M_{str\ incong\_incremental}$ = 2.83; t_{238} = −5.24, p < 0.01, See Fig. A.1). These results supported H1a and H1b.

3.2.3.3. Brand personality expansion.
As shown in the pretests, the paintings of Rockwell (moderately incongruent match) and Basquiat (strongly incongruent match) were perceived to represent a high level of sincerity and ruggedness, respectively. The results showed that in the moderately incongruent match condition, incremental theorists perceived that Burberry was significantly more sincere, after being exposed to the Rockwell alliance ($M_{cong\_incremental}$ = 2.97, $M_{mod\ incong\_incremental}$ = 3.38; t_{238} = 2.01, p < 0.05, see Fig. A.2). However, the relationship was not statistically significant for entity theorists (M_{cong_entity} = 3.05, $M_{mod\ incong\_entity}$ = 3.26; t_{238} = 1.18, p = 0.24). Results from additional analyses for incremental theorists

conditions showed that Burberry's sincerity score was not significantly different than its sophisticated score ($M_{sincerity}$ = 3.38, $M_{sophisticated}$ = 3.66; t_{34} = 1.65, p = 0.11), which demonstrated that in subjects' perceptions, Burberry's brand personality was expanded to include the sincerity dimension and was perceived as both sophisticated (original personality trait) and sincere.

In strongly incongruent matches, regardless of whether subjects were entity or incremental theorists, participants indicated that Burberry had a significantly higher level of ruggedness than did those in the congruent match conditions ($F_{1, 160}$ = 20.09, p < 0.001, see Fig. A.3). However, results from additional analyses after collapsing the two theorists scores showed that Burberry's score for ruggedness was significantly lower than its score for sophisticated ($M_{ruggedness}$ = 2.63, $M_{sophisticated}$ = 3.04; t_{89} = 4.12, p < 0.001), which demonstrated that Burberry is still perceived primarily to have a sophisticated rather than a rugged personality. These results supported H2a and H2b.

3.2.4. Discussion

Study 1 demonstrated that when a retail brand allies with a visual artist who represents a moderately incongruent personality, those holding an incremental view expand their view of the retail brand's personality, integrating the personality dimension signaled by the visual artist, while preserving the fashion retailer's original dimension. Thus, the brand alliance resulted in an expansion of the retail brand's personality to dual dimensions. For entity theorists, the integration of a visual artist with moderately incongruent personality only diluted the original brand personality of the retailer. This also held when a personality match was strongly incongruent, regardless of the person's implicit theory beliefs. These findings suggest that a person's implicit theory beliefs affect how s/he perceives changes in brand personality only in brand alliances involving a moderately incongruent match. However, Study 1 did not address the question of whether this expansion of a fashion retailer's brand positively influences consumers' attitudes towards the brand, which is critical from a marketing standpoint. We attempt to address this question in Study 2. We focused Study 2 on brand alliances between retail brands and visual artists with congruent and moderately incongruent personalities, as strongly incongruent matches only dilute the retail brand personality.

3.3. Study 2

#### 3.3.1. Visual artist - fashion retailer alliances and consumer brand attitude

A recent study demonstrates that the effectiveness of brand alliances between complementary vs. similar brand partners depends on the cognitive process consumers used to evaluate the co-brand (Swaminathan, Gürhan-Canli, Kubat, & Hayran, 2015). When the visual artist personality and the fashion retailer personality are completely congruent, the alliance adds nothing new and consumers have no reason to evaluate the alliance positively. However, individuals do experience a feeling of achievement from a cognitive process that resolves meaningful moderate incongruence (Mandler, 1982). Satisfaction aroused from achievement induces positive feeling and spills onto a more favorable evaluation of the brand. This leads to the following hypothesis.

H3. *Brand personality expansion results in more favorable attitudes towards the retail brand.*

Study 2 had several related objectives. First, we wanted to replicate the findings of Study 1 with different artists and brands to demonstrate the robustness of our results. Second, to demonstrate the practical significance of this research, Study 2 aimed to demonstrate that retailers can prime consumers' implicit theory beliefs with their marketing messages. Past research has shown that consumers' experiences in a retail environment can prime subjects' perceptions of a retailer's personality (Möller & Herm, 2013). Similarly, exposure to marketing messages that prime a particular implicit theory can manipulate

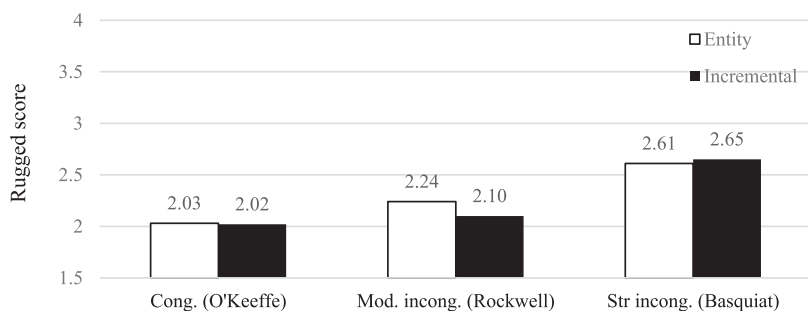**A.1 Brand Personality Dilution in Sophisticated Dimension**
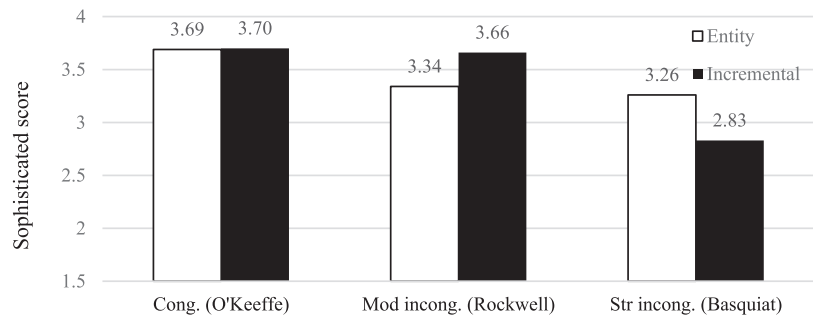
A.2 Brand Personality Expansion in Sincere Dimension
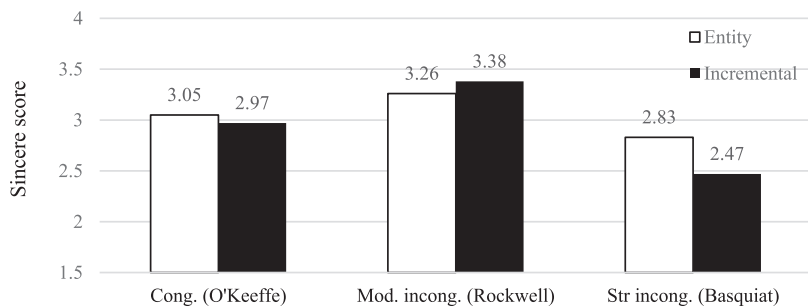
A.3 Brand Personality Expansion in Rugged Dimension

individuals' beliefs in entity or incremental theory (Yorkston et al., 2010). Thus, Study 2 re-examines the brand personality dilution (H1) and expansion (H2) hypotheses proposed using a manipulation that marketers can control.

3.3.2. Participants, design, and procedure

249 participants (47% male, 19–74 years) were involved in a 2 (artist-retailer personality match: congruent vs. moderately incongruent) × 2 (implicit theory prime: entity vs. incremental) between-subjects design. Old Navy advertisements were designed to prime different implicit theories (entity vs. incremental). Recall that pretest results showed sincerity to be the primary brand personality of Old Navy. The incremental theory prime ad stated,

At Old Navy, our brand image is constantly evolving. Our brand is not just an apparel brand, but is down-to-earth and like a close friend. We ask ourselves how we can adapt to fit your lifestyle. We always make our brand different to match your dynamic personality. You change and Old Navy changes with you. We try to be chic or even spontaneous. We introduce our new collection, which we created in collaboration with a visual artist to meet your dynamic lifestyle further.

The entity theory prime ad stated,

At Old Navy, our brand image is always consistent. Our brand is all about remaining down-to-earth like a close friend. Ask yourself how our enduring genuineness can fit with your lifestyle. Your personality and ideals stay the same and Old Navy stays there with you. We introduce our new collection, in which we work with a visual artist to meet your lifestyle.

Participants were first exposed to either the entity or incremental priming advertisement. We then told the participants that Old Navy was promoting a special campaign with the visual artist Norman Rockwell (congruent match) or Keith Haring (moderately incongruent match), and asked them to imagine that they were in an Old Navy store; then, they viewed images of gender-matching T-shirts and store décor that incorporated Rockwell's or Haring's paintings (See Appendix A.2). Subjects were asked to indicate their perceptions of Old Navy's brand personality, followed by their attitudes towards Old Navy. Finally, participants answered questions that served as manipulation checks, as well as demographic questions.

3.3.3. Measures

Brand personality was measured using the same BPS as in the pretest (Aaker, 1997), with scales that measured sincerity (α = 0.78)

and excitement (α = 0.75). Attitude towards the brand was measured with two, 9-point scale items (bad/good, dislike/like; Desai & Keller, 2002) and averaged to create a single index of brand attitude (α = 0.92). To confirm the fit of the manipulation explicitly, perceived fit was measured using the same scale as in Study 1 (α = 0.95).

3.3.4. Results
3.3.4.1. *Manipulation checks.* We performed an ANOVA to assess the success of the manipulation. As expected, the results showed a significant effect of the variable manipulated—perceived fit: participants perceived a higher degree of fit between Old Navy and Rockwell compared to Haring (M_{Haring} = 5.21, $M_{Rockwell}$ = 5.66; t_{247} = 1.72, p = 0.09).

3.3.4.2. *Brand personality dilution.* We performed a 2 (artist-retailer match: congruent vs. moderately incongruent) × 2 (implicit theory prime: entity vs. incremental) between-subjects ANOVA on the difference in brand personality. The results revealed a marginally significant interaction between artist-retailer match and implicit theory ($F_{1,\,245}$ = 2.87, p = 0.09).

Additional planned contrasts showed that, for participants in the entity theory primed condition, the sincerity of Old Navy was diluted (M_{cong_entity} = 3.83, $M_{mod\,incong\_entity}$ = 3.62; t_{139} = − 1.76, p = 0.08), but it was not diluted for those in the incremental theory primed conditions (M_{cong_increm} = 3.75, $M_{mod\ incong\_increm}$ = 3.87; t_{106} = 0.75, p = 0.46, See Fig. B.1). These results replicated the support for H1a found in Study 1.

3.3.4.3. *Brand personality expansion.* Haring's painting was perceived as representing a highly exciting personality. Results from an ANOVA demonstrated only a significant main effect of artist-retailer match on the exciting scale ($F_{1,\,245}$ = 8.93, p < 0.01). Planned comparisons showed that Old Navy gained the exciting personality dimension among both the entity theory primed (M_{cong_entity} = 2.90, $M_{mod\ incong\_entity}$ = 3.22; t_{139} = 2.11, p < 0.05) and incremental theory primed subjects (M_{cong_increm} = 3.06, $M_{mod\ incong\_increm}$ = 3.41; t_{106} = 2.15, p < 0.05, See Fig. B.2). However, as reported above, subjects in the entity primed condition reported a decrease in the sincerity score of Old Navy. Although the retailer's personality was unexpectedly expanded in the entity theory prime condition, it came at the expense of diluting its original personality. Still, the results provided additional support for H2a.

3.3.4.4. *Brand attitude.* The interaction between artist-retailer match and implicit theory priming on brand attitude was significant ($F_{1,\,245}$ = 4.16, p < 0.05). Specifically, in the incremental theory primed condition, subjects experiencing a moderately incongruent personality match between the retailer and the visual artist showed a more positive attitude towards Old Navy than did those in the congruent match condition (M_{cong_increm} = 6.51, $M_{mod\ incong\_increm}$ = 7.05; t_{106} = 1.78, p = 0.07, See Fig. B.3). This was not true in the entity theory primed condition (M_{cong_entity} = 6.36, $M_{mod\ incong\_entity}$ = 6.08; t_{139} = − 1.06, p = 0.29). Thus, H3 was supported.
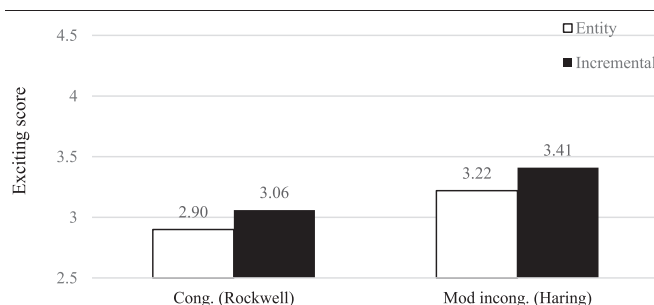
3.3.5. Discussion
The results of Study 2 demonstrate that using implicit theory primed advertising contextually affected consumers' acceptance of alliances between visual artists and retailers with moderately incongruent brand personalities. Compared to participants primed to assume an entity theory orientation, those primed to assume an incremental theorist belief accommodated the retailer's brand personality expansion by maintaining the original personality and integrating the moderately incongruent personality of a visual artist. In addition, the results also reveal that such an expansion of the retail brand's personality led to a more positive attitude towards the retail brand. Study 2 adds external validity to the findings of Study 1 by replicating the effects identified using a different brand personality dimension. In addition, Study 2 has significant practical implications for marketing managers, in that it demonstrates the effectiveness of promotional advertising in priming consumers cognitively such that they are more accepting of the idea that a brand's personality is malleable.

B.1 Brand Personality Dilution in Sincere Dimension
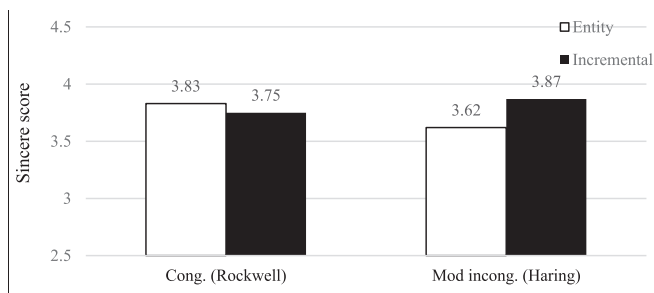
B.2 Brand Personality Expansion in Exciting Dimension
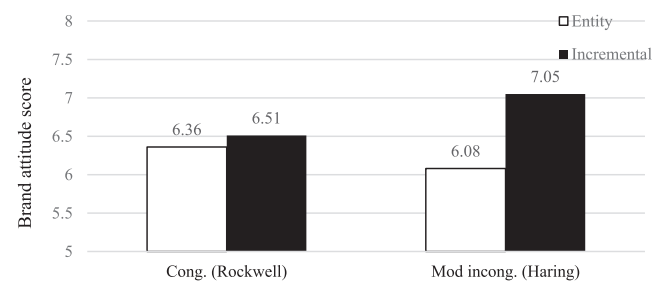
B.3 Attitude towards Brand

Fig. B. Study 2 results.

4. General discussion

This research offers a new perspective on how businesses can exploit the brand value inherent in visual art, because the unique style of artwork that represents an artist's personality is captured through a brand alliance to expand a retail brand personality. Study 1 reveals specific factors that promote brand personality expansion: (1) a brand alliance with an artist whose work represents a personality moderately incongruent with the retail brand, and (2) retail consumers who hold an incremental theorist's view of personality changes. Specifically, having an incremental theory belief of personality reduces the conflict posed by a moderately discrepant personality, thereby preserving the fashion brand's original personality while accommodating the new personality signaled by the art. However, the incremental view is ineffective when the fashion brand attempts to integrate a visual artist who represents a strongly incongruent personality. Study 2 demonstrated a managerial application of the findings. An incremental theorist's belief can be primed through a marketing message, thereby allowing retail marketers to develop expanded dual personalities for their brands without diluting the brand's original personality. In sum, these two studies provided compelling evidence of when and how the uni-dimensional personality of a retail brand can be expanded to dual dimensions using the personalities of artists embedded in visual art.

Previous research has investigated the function of art presented on products as a heuristic cue that increases product value (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008). This study frames visual artists as compelling human brands

(Thomson, 2006) that retailers can integrate with their brands. Monga and Lau-Gesk (2007) focus on identifying the traits of consumers who manifest favorable responses towards co-branded products that capture dual personalities. However, to complement their study, it is critical to examine whether brand alliances involving brands with discrepant personalities always result in personality expansion. To account for existing brand schema, which control processing of incoming information (Sujan & Bettman, 1989), this research identifies two critical variables, a moderate level of incongruence in brand personality match and an incremental theory of personality perspective, which affects the way in which individuals process information to expand brand personality.

5. Managerial contributions

The findings of this research have several implications for marketers. First, a rapidly evolving marketing landscape requires changes in brand personality to appeal to new consumer demographics or geographical markets. The integration of visual artist brands into fashion retailer brands is a growing trend (Gregory, 2014; Riahi, 2014) and the risks of such alliances demand a better understanding of the mechanisms that govern how consumers react to such alliances. Brands often need to broaden their personality dimensions to increase the number of consumers that identify with the brand. Yet, despite the need to reorient brand personality, preserving the brand's primary asset—its original brand personality—is critical to avoid alienating existing consumers. This research provides practical ways in which brands can use a visual artist who portrays a compelling personality in his/her artwork to acquire the additional personality dimension desired, while also preserving its original trait. In this regard, the current study offers an alternative way in which retailers can think about the consumer's perception of fit in brand alliances. By manipulating the degree of personality incongruence between a visual artist and fashion retailer moderately, they can stimulate consumers to integrate the artist's personality with the existing brand. This research focused on two moderately incongruent personality relationships: sophisticated and sincere (Study 1) and sincere and exciting (Study 2). Managers of retail brands exhibiting these three traits can use these results to identify visual artists whose personality is moderately incongruent to their core retail brand personality. This can be done using brand personality identification tools (e.g. celebrity analogy and adjective selections), that are widely used in the marketplace (Pilcher, 2010). Next and more importantly, this study provides an effective marketing strategy that influences an incremental belief in personality to prevent dilution of the brand's inherent personality when processing a moderately incongruent trait signaled by an art partner. As we show, retailers looking to use a partnership with a visual artist to expand their core brand personality should ensure consumers adopt an incremental theorist view of personality by including this in their marketing message. Our study shows that the form of this communication can be as subtle and simple as stating the belief that the personality of the brand and its customers is evolving and dynamic. Practitioners can insert this into advertisement content, mission statements, and even postings on social media platforms. Lastly, this research demonstrates that marketers can control the expansion of brand personality. The consumer's cognitive propensity to either maintain or update the original brand personality can be manipulated using advertising message primes.
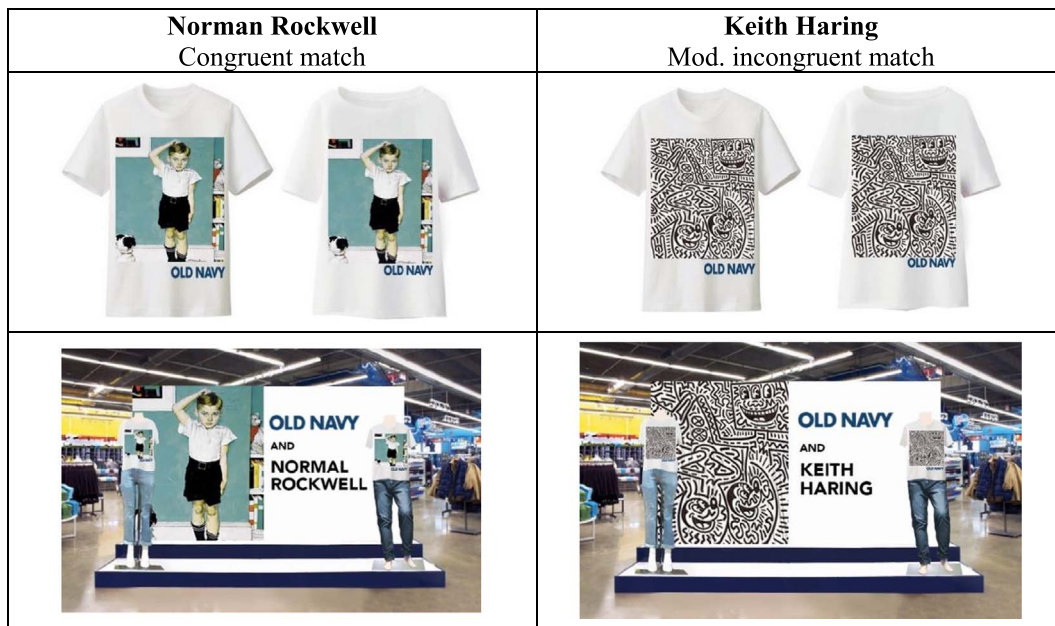
6. Future research

These findings suggest important paths for future research. The current study assessed the influence of the artist-retailer brand personality match on attitude towards the brand. Research has shown that different brand personality dimensions affect performance measures differently (Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013). It would be logical to consider future research that assesses whether different combinations of brand personality dimensions have differential impacts on attitude towards the extended brand. Moreover, future studies should examine the relationship between the personality of consumers and the extended personalities of retail brands. Consumers seek brands that capture their own personalities and utilize brands as ways of expressing their self-concept. Investigating whether expanding brand personality into dual dimensions fosters an increase in brand loyalty from broader consumer segments who match a retailer's original and newly acquired personalities will provide valuable implications for practitioners.

Appendix A

A.1. Study 1 stimuli: Burberry product and store décor infusing the paintings of three artists

Georgia O'Keeffe Congruent match	Norman Rockwell Mod. incongruent match	Jean Michel Basquiat Str. incongruent match

A.2. Study 2 stimuli: Old Navy product and store décor infusing the paintings of two artists

Norman Rockwell Congruent match	**Keith Haring** Mod. incongruent match

References

Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research, 34*(3), 347–356.

Aaker, J., Fournier, S., & Brasel, S. A. (2004). When good brands do bad. *Journal of Consumer Research, 31*(1), 1–16.

Ailawadi, K. L., & Keller, K. L. (2004). Understanding retail branding: Conceptual insights and research priorities. *Journal of Retailing, 80*(4), 331–342.

Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of Consumer Research, 15*(2), 139–168.

Bettman, J. R. (1979). *An information processing theory of consumer choice.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Brengman, M., & Willems, K. (2009). Determinants of fashion store personality: A consumer perspective. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 18*(5), 346–355.

Das, G. (2014). Impacts of retail brand personality and self-congruity on store loyalty: The moderating role of gender. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 21*(2), 130–138.

Das, G. (2015). Does brand personality vary across retail brands and gender? An empirical check. *Journal of Strategic Marketing, 23*(1), 19–32.

Desai, K. K., & Keller, K. L. (2002). The effects of ingredient branding strategies on host brand extendibility. *Journal of Marketing, 66*(1), 73–93.

Dweck, C. S., Chiu, C., & Hong, Y. (1995). Implicit theories and their role in judgments and reactions: A word from two perspectives. *Psychological Inquiry, 6*(4), 267–285.

Dweck, C. S., & Leggett, E. L. (1988). A social-cognitive approach to motivation and personality. *Psychological Review, 95*(2), 256–273.

Eisend, M., & Stokburger-Sauer, N. E. (2013). Brand personality: A meta-analytic review of antecedents and consequences. *Marketing Letters, 24*(3), 205–216.

Gregory, A. (2014, March 28). Art and fashion: The mutual appreciation society. *Wall Street Journal.* from http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702303725404579459503054211692, Accessed date: 1 November 2016.

Hagtvedt, H., & Patrick, V. M. (2008). Art infusion: The influence of visual art on the perception and evaluation of consumer products. *Journal of Marketing Research, 45*(3), 379–389.

Hartmann, P., Apaolaza Ibáñez, V., & Forcada Sainz, F. J. (2005). Green branding effects on attitude: Functional versus emotional positioning strategies. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 23*(1), 9–29.

Herr, P. M. (1989). Priming price: Prior knowledge and context effects. *Journal of Consumer Research, 16*(1), 67–75.

Holmes, P. (2007, October 1). *The branding of Damien Hirst.* Art News. from http://www.artnews.com/2007/10/01/the-branding-of-damien-hirst/, Accessed date: 13 January 2016.

James, D. O., Lyman, M., & Foreman, S. K. (2006). Does the tail wag the dog? Brand personality in brand alliance evaluation. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 15*(3), 173–183.

Johar, G. V., Sengupta, J., & Aaker, J. L. (2005). Two roads to updating brand personality impressions: Trait versus evaluative inferencing. *Journal of Marketing Research, 42*(4), 458–469.

Keller, K. L. (2007). Advertising and brand equity. In G. J. Tellis, & T. Ambler (Eds.). *Handbook of advertising* (pp. 54–70). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Lee, E. J., & Schumann, D. W. (2004). Explaining the special case of incongruity in advertising: Combining classic theoretical approaches. *Marketing Theory, 4*(1–2), 59–90.

Levy, S. R., Stroessner, S. J., & Dweck, C. S. (1998). Stereotype formation and endorsement: The role of implicit theories. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74*(6), 1421–1436.

Loken, B. (2006). Consumer psychology: Categorization, inferences, affect, and persuasion. *Annual Review of Psychology, 57*, 453–485.

Malhotra, N. (2004). *Marketing research: An applied orientation* (4th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Mandler, G. (1982). The structure of value: Accounting for taste. *Affect and cognition: 17th annual Carnegie Mellon symposium on cognition. Carnegie Mellon symposia on cognition series.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Meyers-Levy, J., & Tybout, A. M. (1989). Schema congruity as a basis for product evaluation. *Journal of Consumer Research, 16*(1), 39–54.

Möller, J., & Herm, S. (2013). Shaping retail brand personality perceptions by bodily experiences. *Journal of Retailing, 89*(4), 438–446.

Monga, A. B., & Lau-Gesk, L. (2007). Blending cobrand personalities: An examination of the complex self. *Journal of Marketing Research, 44*(3), 389–400.

Park, J. K., & John, D. R. (2010). Got to get you into my life: Do brand personalities rub off on consumers? *Journal of Consumer Research, 37*(4), 655–669.

Pilcher, J. (2010, October, 19). *7 tips to find your brand's personality.* The Financial Brand. from https://thefinancialbrand.com/14053/bank-credit-union-branding-personality-attributes/, Accessed date: 14 April 2017.

Riahi, N. (2014, November 10). *Brand × artist the Miranda July and Miu Miu collaboration.* The Huffington Post. from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/naz-riahi/brand-x-artist-the-mirand_b_5794194.html, Accessed date: 1 November 2016.

Simonin, B. L., & Ruth, J. A. (1998). Is a company known by the company it keeps? Assessing the spillover effects of brand alliances on consumer brand attitudes. *Journal of Marketing Research, 35*(1), 30–42.

Sjödin, H., & Törn, F. (2006). When communication challenges brand associations: A framework for understanding consumer responses to brand image incongruity. *Journal of Consumer Behavior, 5*(1), 32–42.

Smith, R. (2008, April 4). Art with baggage in tow. *The New York Times.* accessed January 13, 2015 from http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/04/arts/design/04mura.html?_r=0.

Sujan, M., & Bettman, J. R. (1989). The effects of brand positioning strategies on consumers' brand and category perceptions: Some insights from schema research. *Journal of Marketing Research, 26*(4), 454–467.

Swaminathan, V., Gürhan-Canli, Z., Kubat, U., & Hayran, C. (2015). How, when, and why do attribute-complementary versus attribute-similar co-brands affect brand evaluations: A concept combination perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research, 42*(1), 45–58.

Thomson, M. (2006). Human brands: Investigating antecedents to consumers' strong attachments to celebrities. *Journal of Marketing, 70*(3), 104–119.

Van Rekom, J., Jacobs, G., & Verlegh, P. W. (2006). Measuring and managing the essence of a brand personality. *Marketing Letters, 17*(3), 181–192.

Willems, K., Janssens, W., Swinnen, G., Brengman, M., Streukens, S., & Vancauteren, M. (2012). From Armani to Zara: Impression formation based on fashion store

patronage. *Journal of Business Research, 65*(10), 1487–1494.

Wolter, J. S., Brach, S., Cronin, J. J., & Bonn, M. (2016). Symbolic drivers of consumer–brand identification and disidentification. *Journal of Business Research, 69*(2), 785–793.

Yorkston, E. A., Nunes, J. C., & Matta, S. (2010). The malleable brand: The role of implicit theories in evaluating brand extensions. *Journal of Marketing, 74*(1), 80–93.

Zentes, J., Morschett, D., & Schramm-Klein, H. (2008). Brand personality of retailers–an analysis of its applicability and its effect on store loyalty. *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research, 18*(2), 167–184.

Pielah Kim (Ph.D. in fashion and retail studies from the Ohio State University) is an Assistant Professor of Fashion Merchandising and Management in the School of Business Administration at Jefferson University. Her research interests include the analysis of art commercialization phenomenon, branding of visual artist, and consumer responses to retail atmospherics. Her research has been presented in the proceedings of number of international marketing, fashion, and retail conferences. Her research is accepted to *Journal of Business Research*, *International Review of Retail Distribution & Consumer Research*.

Rajiv Vaidyanathan (Ph.D. in marketing from Washington State University) is a Professor of Marketing at the University of Minnesota Duluth. He also serves as the executive director for the Association for Consumer Research. His research interests include the examination of how consumers perceive prices, process information for decision making, and react to brand information. He also has published on the marketing implications of e-commerce. His research has been published in several journals, including *Journal of Retailing, Journal of Marketing Communications*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Marketing Education, Journal of Product and Brand Management*, among others, and in the proceedings of several national and international marketing conferences.

Hua Chang (Ph.D. in marketing from Drexel University) is an Assistant Professor of Marketing at Towson University. His research interests include strategic brand management, advertising effects and marketing communications, and consumer behavior. His research has been published in several journals, including *International Journal of Advertising, Journal of Health Communication*, and *Mass Communication and Society*, and in the proceedings of several national and international marketing conferences.

Leslie Stoel is a Professor in Marketing in the Farmer School of Business at Miami University, with a joint appointment in Fashion in the College of Creative Arts. Her research focuses on consumer responses to retail environments in all channels and retail strategies/tactics, as well as the operations of small, rural retailers. Her research has appeared in various journals, including *Information and Management, International Journal of Consumer Studies, International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Product and Brand Management, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, Journal of Service Management, Journal of Small Business Management, Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, and *The Service Industries Journal*.