The Impact of Stereotyped and Non-Stereotyped Brand Genders on Cross-Gender Extension Evaluations

Nathalie Veg-Sala[1]

Abstract

This research proposes to introduce the concept of stereotype to definebrand gender and to make a new contribution on the analysis of cross-gender extension evaluation. The results of an experiment, made on two product categories and considering the two possible directions of these extensions – from men to women and from women to men – reveal that the perceived fit between the cross-gender extension and the brand is more positive when the brand gender is non-stereotyped and, surprisingly, when the brand extends from the female to the male market. The interaction effect suggests also that the impact of the cross-gender extension direction is more important in the case of a brand with a non-stereotyped gender. Those results challenge previous research. A concluding discussion lays out recommendations for business.

Keywords: Cross-gender extension, perceived fit, direction of cross-gender extension, gender, stereotypes

1. Introduction

Facing the challengeof generating more profit, brands often use strategies of brand extensions, i.e. extensions into new product categories (Aaker and Keller, 1990) or horizontal / vertical line extensions, i.e. extension in same product categories (Magnoni and Roux, 2012). In addition, a new trend has been observed over the last two decades: the cross-gender extensions, when brands for women or men target the opposite sex (Ulrich, 2013).

Although cross-gender extensions are increasingly prevalent, they are more or less visible because several brand name strategies can be used: the use of a single brand (the same name to target the segments of men and women), the creation of a second brand (two distinct brand names to target men and women), and the use of sub-brands (adding a term or word to the original brand name) (table 1). In this research, we focus on the brands that use a single name when implementing cross-gender extensions and not on the strategies of brand naming that can help brands when they are encountering difficulties developinga brand from one segment to another. The purpose is to bring about a better understanding of the intrinsic reasons of the success or the failure of those strategies, i.e. the reasons directly linked to the brands and their identity. Furthermore, using the same brand name has the advantage of promoting the development of brand awareness and its equity.However when brands use the same brand name to target the opposite segment (men or women), their cross-gender extensions are not always successful. On the contrary, failures are often numerousand the consequences on the cross-gender extension and on the brand itself can be verydetrimental. For example, in 2003, Aubade launched its first collection of lingerie for men. Two years later, having achieved poor results, the brand decided to turn its focus back to women. But Aubade did not settle for failure and again tried its luck on the men's market in 2013.

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[1]Assistant Professor in marketing, Paris Nanterre University - France ,CEROS – MIL, Paris Nanterre University, Chair Brands and Values, IAE of Paris, nathalie.veg.sala@gmail.com, nathalie.veg-sala@parisnanterre.fr, +33 6 67 23 61 00

Audemars Piguet, a luxury brand of watches, has been trying to penetrate women's market for more than 10 years, although sales remain marginal. In the same way, despite many efforts to seduce women's market, Hugo Boss struggles to sell its products to women. The Bic brand also wanted to make cross-gender extensions and launched a specific stabilo for women. But, because of poor sales and many criticisms on the brand itself, only few months after its launch, the brand decided to withdraw the new product. Those brief examples illustrate this trend of development (from one segment to another) but also reveal that such extensions are not always successful. It is therefore essential to understand the reasons behind their success or failure.

Table 1: Different brand name strategies to make cross-gender extension

Single brand name	Two distinct brand names	Brand and Sub-brand
Lacoste, Hugo Boss Zara, Coach, Berluti Le slip Français, Louboutin	Sezanne (for women) → Octobre Editions (for men) Quicksilver (for men) → Roxy (for women)	Gilette / Venus H.E by Mango Antonyme by Nat & Nin

In the existing literature, very little research has explored cross-gender extension strategies byanalysing the impact of individual variables (sex, gender)on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the impact of variables intrinsic to the brand (Jung and Lee, 2006; Sorin Ulrich, 2010; Ulrich, 2013).As far as the variables related to the brand are concerned the results show that the evaluations of these extensions depend mainly on the degrees of brand femininity and brand masculinity (Sorin Ulrich, 2010). The more a brand is feminine (vs. masculine), the less an extension to the masculine market (vs. feminine market) is appreciated by consumers. But if we consider these findings, how can we explain why two brands perceived with a high level of masculinity and a very low level of femininity, like Audemars Piguet and Rolex[2], that occupy the same sector (watchmakers) and the same level within the market and target the same consumers, have not enjoyed the same level of success with their respective cross-gender brand extensions? Why is it that Rolex has been able to impose itself on the women'swatch market whereasAudemars Piguet has failed? Perhaps part of the answer lies in the way the gender of these two brands is no doubt more complex than their degrees of masculinity and femininity. Perhaps the gender associations diversity of Audemars Piguet and Rolex (that distinguish in part their brand identities) has an influence on their potential to extend the female market.

In order to further investigate these questions and to formulate business recommendations, this paper relies on the latest research on brand femininity and masculinity, emphasising that there is no single profile for femininity or masculinity (which can be found in varying degrees) but many different ones (Azar, 2009, 2013). Among these profiles, considering studies conducted in the field of psychology (Ashmore and Del Boca, 1981; Deaux and Lewis, 1984; Eagly and Wood 1999; Williams et al., 1999; Eagly and Sczesny, 2009; Eagly and Karau, 2002), the distinction between stereotyped and non-stereotyped brand genders can help us to better understand how feminine and masculine profiles can play a key role in determining the success or failure of cross-gender extensions through the associations which they reflect. Indeed, the literature on stereotypes reveals several types of beliefs, actions or behaviors specific to one sex (male or female) while others are shared by both sexes (male and female). This diversity of profiles, transferred to brands, can help to better understand that strategies of cross-gender extension may not have the same success depending on the type of gender on which brands are based.The first objective of this research is therefore to analyse the impact of stereotyped and non-stereotyped brand gender profiles on the evaluations of cross-gender extensions.We thus intend to provide additional understanding on the success or failure of extension from one segment to another by focusing on what the brand is.

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[2]A study using a convenience sample of 43 people was conducted in order to define the perceived gender of Audemars Piguet and Rolex. Gender was measured using two 7-point Likert scales (one for femininity and one for masculinity). Both Audemars Piguet and Rolex were evaluated as highly masculine ($M_{Audemars}$ = 6.35; M_{Rolex} = 6.23) and not very feminine ($M_{Audemars}$ = 1.98 and M_{Rolex} = 2.02). Mean comparison analyses reveal that there is no significant difference between the perceived masculinity (t = 0.759; p = 0.452) or femininity of the two brands (t = -0.253; p = 0.859).

In addition, we analyse the impact of the direction of the cross-gender extension in order to verify whether the results of previous research are still valid a few years later and in other contexts.In this perspective, this study is organizedin four parts. The first one develops the literature on brand gender by introducing the concept of stereotype and on previous research on cross-gender extensions. The second describes the methodological orientations and the implementation of the experiment. The third is dedicatedto the presentation of the results. The findings show a distinction of perceived fitbetween the brand and the cross-gender extension depending on whether the brand gender is stereotyped or non-stereotyped. The results also question previous results on the direction of cross-gender extension. The discussion of these results allows us to make a number of theoretical and managerial contributions. Finally, the limits and future research paths are described.

2. Literature review and hypotheses

2.1. Cross-gender extensions and the degrees of brand femininity and masculinity

Since the increase over the last 15 years of the number of cross-gender extensions, some researchers have begun to focus on the factors that might influence their success or failure (Jung and Lee, 2006; Sorin Ulrich, 2010; Ulrich, 2013).

Beyond the impact of consumer sex, i.e. biological sex, and consumer gender, i.e. psychological sex (Jung and Lee, 2006; Ulrich, 2013), the research of Jung and Lee (2006) reveals that brand gender has a significant effect on cross-gender extensions evaluation. Consumers more positively evaluate cross-gender extensions (stronger perceived fit andattitudes) in the case of masculine brands (compared to feminine brands). Bringing greater precision to the findings of Jung and Lee (2006), Sorin Ulrich (2010) studied the impact of brand femininity and brand masculinity degrees on cross-gender extension evaluations, demonstrating that in the case of an extension from the female to the male market, the more a brand is perceived as highly masculine with little femininity, the more the cross-gender extension will be evaluated positively. The reverse findings were obtained in the case of an extension from the male market to the female market.

While these initial studies revealing a significant impact of brand gender on perceived fit and attitudes towards cross-gender extensions are essential, further research is needed. Indeed, these studies are based on a conceptualization of gender as a function of degrees of femininity and/or masculinity; this needs to be developed further.

2.2. Evolution of brand gender conceptualization

Beyond the sexualised image of products (Morris and Cundiff, 1971; Stuteville, 1971; Mervis and Rosh, 1981; Fugate and Phillips, 2010), there is a tendency among consumers to categorize brands based on masculine or feminine characteristics. Researchers began to study this "gendered" consumption at the beginning of the 1960s, and this research topic continues to be important (Avery, 2012; Azar, 2015). Brand gender is linked to the brand personality traits of the brand-as-a-person metaphor (Azar, 2015). Grohmann (2009, p. 106) defines brand gender as "the set of human personality traits associated with masculinity and femininity applicable and relevant to brands". Therefore, brand gender differs from brand sex (defined as a demographic characteristic and referring to the biological difference between men and women) and brand sexual orientation (defined as a behavioural characteristic and referring to the human sexual orientation associated with a brand) (Azar, 2015).Whereas brand sex (for men and/or women) and sexual orientation (for heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual) were easy to code, coding brand gender was much more complicated and led to various conceptualizations.

Marketing studies define brand gender as a one- or two-dimensional construct. Researchers who present brand gender as a unidimensional concept consider its evaluations to relate either to one item, whereby masculine/feminine traits are opposed (Vitz and Johnson, 1965; Fry, 1971), or to a range of bipolar scales (Alreck et al., 1982; Till and Priluck, 2001; Jung and Lee, 2006). Those who see it as a bidimensional concept argue that brands can be studied based on their share of femininity and their share of masculinity (Bem, 1974; Debevec and Iyer, 1986; Grohmann, 2009; Sorin Ulrich, 2010; Ulrich et al., 2010; Azar, 2015), using one scale to evaluate the degree of femininity and one scale to evaluate the degree of masculinity of each brand. More recently, studies have been conducted in response to criticism of this dual conceptualization of brand gender based on degrees of femininity and masculinity (Helgeson, 1994) and have explored the fact that there is not just one type of masculinity or femininity but many different types (Azar, 2009, 2013).

Relying on sociologists'work, Azar (2009, 2013) highlights four profiles of brand femininity based on the philanthropy and attractivenessdimensions (altruistic, fluffy, emphasized and tempting) and four profiles of brand masculinity based on the chauvinism and heroism (hegemonic, subaltern, emerging and chivalrous). This research allows us to not only consider brand based on degrees of femininity or masculinity and to specify their gendered identity by associating them with various positions.

2.3. Stereotyped / non-stereotyped brand genders and cross-gender extensions

Analysis of brand gender can be complemented by psychological research on stereotypes. Gender stereotypes relate to beliefs with certain attributes that differentiate men from women (Ashmore and Del Boca, 1981). Studies suggest that stereotypes are made up of four distinct elements: trait descriptors (e.g. self-assertion or concern for others), physical characteristics (e.g. hair length, body size), role behaviours (e.g. leader, taking care of children), and occupational status (e.g. truck drivers, elementary school teachers) (Deaux and Lewis, 1984). Stereotyped genders play a prescriptive role. Stereotypes are relevant to the psychology of gender because they shape how people process information about gender and influence judgments made about members of various groups. Stereotypes serve as schema, or lens, through which individuals view their social world (Casas and Wexler, 2017). Especially, they determine whether a specific type of behaviour is appropriate for a woman or a man (Eagly and Karau, 2002). For example, attributes such as sensitivity or affection are considered more typical of women, while aggressiveness and courage are considered more typical of men (Williams and Best, 1990; Williams et al., 1999). More precisely, it is possible to make the distinction between positive and negative stereotypes (Casad and Wexler, 2017). For example, for positive stereotypes, women are warm, friendly and caring, whereas men are competent, confident and assertive. For negative stereotypes, we can note emotional, irrational and incompetent for women and hot tempered, violent and lack empathy for men.

These stereotypes are still largely present in our society, although changes can be identified, reducing the differences between personality traits associated with men and women (Eagly and Wood, 1999; Eagly and Sczesny, 2009). Thus, there are traits of femininity that are stereotyped and others that are not. Like human beings, brands will be associated with a stereotyped or non-stereotyped femininity / masculinity.

Given that stereotyped gender (feminine or masculine) is linked to the tasks and beliefs of just one gender (woman or man), it seems difficult for brands relying on such a profile to develop cross-gender extensions. Indeed, the characteristics of a stereotyped femininity (vs. masculinity) will be not logical for men (vs. women). Perceived fit between the cross-gender extension and the brand is likely to be low. Conversely, because non-stereotyped gender (feminine or masculine) is not linked to the tasks and beliefs of just one gender (woman or man) but it is associated to values shared by both, it seems easier for brands relying on such a profile to develop cross-gender extensions. This gives us the following hypothesis:

H1: When a brand relies on a **non-stereotyped brand gender**, consumers will perceive a higher level of fit between the brand and its cross-gender extension than when it relies on a **stereotyped brand gender**.

2.3. Impact of the cross-gender extension direction

In addition to the effect of brand gender, Jung and Lee (2006) reveal that the direction of cross-gender extensions has a significant impact on perceived fit. Moreover, cross-gender extensions are more readily accepted in the case of extensions from the male market to the female market (Jung and Lee, 2006). This finding is in line with Alreck et al. (1982), who suggest that men are more likely to reject feminine brands and women are more likely to accept masculine brands. Stuteville (1971) also pointed out that it is easier for a product oriented towards men to attract women than the other way around, suggesting that this is because society has a negative image of men acting like women, while women acting like men is more widely accepted as a positive act. These findings have been again highlighted in the research of Neale, Robbie and Martin (2016). However, the literature on stereotypes tells us that the social roles associated with men and women evolve over time (Eagly and Wood, 1999; Eagly and Sczesny, 2009). The differences appear to be narrowing, with a shift towards a balance between men and women. This trend could serve to moderate the fact that there are differences in consumer perceptions of men's brands extended towards the female market and women's brands extended towards the male market.

Given the opposition between these two research views, it is essential to verify whether the direction of brand extensions still has an impact on evaluations of cross-gender extensions. This gives us the following hypothesis:

H2: When cross-gender extension is **from the male market to the female market**, consumers will perceive a higher level of fit between the brand and its cross-gender extension than when the cross-gender extension is **from the female market to the male market**.

2.4. Joint effect of brand gender and the cross-gender extension direction

Previous research shows that when the gender is stereotyped, the beliefs with certain attributes differentiate men from women (Ashmore and Del Boca, 1981; Williams and Best, 1990; Williams et al., 1999). Moreover, Stuteville (1971) pointed out that it is easier for a product oriented towards men to attract women than the reverse. We can then expect that when the brand gender is stereotyped, the cross-gender extension from men to women will be more perceived as consistent than the extension from women to men.

At the opposite, when brand gender is not stereotyped, there is a greater likelihood that men and women share the same values (Williams and Best, 1990; Williams et al., 1999). Thus, the statement that men are more likely to reject feminine brands and women are more likely to accept masculine brands should not be significant.

Thus, in the case of non-stereotyped brand genders, we can expect that cross-gender extensions should be perceived as consistent, regardless of the direction in which they are made (from men to women or from women to men). On the other hand, in the case stereotyped brand genders, cross-gender extensions should be seen more as coherent when the direction is from men to women. This gives us the following hypothesis:

H3: When a brand relies on a **stereotyped brand gender,** the impact of the **cross-gender extension direction** on the perceived fit between the brand and the extension will be higher than when a brand relies on a **non-stereotyped brand gender.**

2.5. Perceived fit and attitude toward cross-gender extensions

The theory of perceived fit represents a significant body of research in the fields of psychology and consumer behaviour. Although different terms are used (congruence, fit, link, match-up effect), the overall meaning remains the same. Perceived fit refers to the fact that consumers perceive the products of the extension and the brand as "logical" (Tauber, 1981), as going well together. It expresses a coherence of image between the extension and the brand (Magnoni, 2016). Many studies show that it is one of the most important determinants of a brand extension evaluation (Völckner and Sattler, 2006). They show that the higher the perceived fit between the brand and the extension is, the more positive the consumer evaluations of the extension (attitudes) are (Aaker and Keller, 1990; Park et al., 1991; Jap, 1993; Bhat and Reddy, 2001; Bottomley and Holden, 2001; Völckner and Sattler, 2006; Kim and John, 2008; Gierl and Huettl, 2011; Pina, Dall'Olmo and Lomax, 2013; Evangeline and Ragel, 2016). Brands therefore try to create new products that are perceived by consumers as logical as possible, whether in terms of their functional and/or symbolic associations. Although these results were obtained in the analysis of the key success factors of brand extensions (in new products categories) (Srivasta and Sharma, 2012) or for vertical brand extension (Dall'Olmo Riley, Pina and Bravo, 2015), we assume that these can be found in the case of cross-gender extensions. This gives us the following hypothesis:

H4: The more the fit between the brand and the cross-gender extension is, the more positive the attitude toward the cross-gender extension will be.

Figure 1: graphic representation of the hypotheses
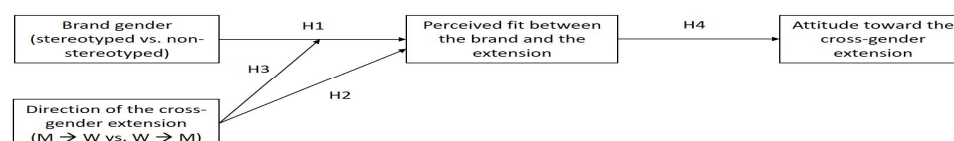
3. Method

An experimental research design with a 2 (brand genders: stereotyped vs. non-stereotyped) x 2 (directions of cross-gender extension: Male market → Female market vs. Female market → Male market) between subjects, full factorial design was used to test the proposed hypotheses. In order to increase the validity of the method, two different product categories (one perceived as feminine and one perceived as masculine) are used for each experimental condition. The experimentation is made on a fictitious brand.

3.1. Stimulus development and pretests

3.1.1. Pretest 1: choice of product categories

The first pretest was conducted to select two product categories, one perceived as feminine and another perceived as masculine. A study was conducted on a convenience sample of 32 people (23 women and 9 men). They were asked to evaluate nine product categories from the fashion sector based on their gender and using two 7-point Likert scales (one for masculinity,from 1: Not at all masculine to 7: Very masculine, and one for femininity, from 1: Not at all feminine to 7: Very feminine). Fashionwas chosen because it is a sector in which cross-gender extensions are widely used. The analysis (conducted using SPSS) reveals that lingerie (underwear) is identified as the most feminine category ($M_{lingerie-fem}$ = 6.12)and the less masculine category ($M_{lingerie-masc}$ = 2.59). The mean comparison between the perceived masculinity and the perceived femininity of the lingerie category is significant (t=-10.908; p<0.001).At the opposite, the watchmaking category (watches) has been perceived as the most masculine category ($M_{watch-masc}$ = 5.56) and the less feminine category ($M_{watch-fem}$ = 4.47). The mean comparison between the perceived masculinity and the perceived femininity of the watchmaking category is significant (t=-4.421; p<0.001). Moreover, the evaluation of perceived masculinity is significantly different between watches and lingerie categories (t=10.144; p<0.001). The difference is also significant between the perceived femininity of the two categories (t=-5.718; p<0.001). According to these results, watches and lingerie are thus selected for the experiment.

3.1.2. Pretest 2: Choice of brand name

The second pretest was conducted to find an unknown brand name without any gender-specific resonance so it could be adapted to the different experimental units. Indeed, because brand name is one of the elements that affects brand gender (Klink, 2000; Wu et al, 2003; 2015; Azar, 2015), it is important that the choice of the brand name for the experiment does not bias the results. We therefore control this variable by choosing a brand name whose consonance is neither feminine nor masculine. The name Granney was chosen from a list in the dictionary of patronyms. The decision to use a patronym was based on the fact that many fashion brand names are linked to their founder. The name Granney was then tested on a sample of 32 individuals (23 women and 9 men). A 1-item familiarity scale is used. Gender is measured using two 7-point Likert scales (one for femininity and one for masculinity). The results reveal that Granney was not at all familiar to 100% of respondents. Moreover, Granney is a brand name perceived as neither masculine nor feminine ($M_{masculinity}$= 3.69; $M_{femininity}$= 3.37) with a not significant means difference between the evaluation of the masculinity and the femininity (t=0.526; p=0.603).

3.1.3. Pretest 3: Creation of scenarios

The scenarios relating to the experimental design can be divided into three parts: (1) a description of the category and quality of the brand's products; (2) a description of the brand gender (stereotyped vs. non-stereotyped); and (3) a description of the brand's initial market (women vs. men) (see Appendices).

The description of the brand genders (stereotyped and non-stereotyped) is based on the work of Eagly and Karau (2002) and Azar (2009, 2013). Non-stereotyped profile relates to success and professional recognition for both sexes. Stereotyped femininity relates to maternal tenderness and the role of the sensual spouse, and stereotyped masculinity to virility and physical strength. The choice of these values is based on anobservation study of current advertisements that used stereotyped femininity and masculinity.A quantitative study of a convenience sample was also conducted on 27 persons (10 men and 17 women). These individuals were asked to rate among a list of 15 values linked to gender (included the values used in the scenarios) and issued from Eagly and Karau (2002) and Azar (2009, 2013): desire, virility, seduction, tenderness, strength, dependence, independence, professionalism, affection, charm, machismo, sentimentalism, courage, maternity.

Respondents have to indicate which were the most stereotyped for femininity and masculinity by using two 7-point Likert scales (from 1 = not at all stereotyped for men to 7 = very stereotyped for men and, from 1 = not at all stereotyped for women to 7 = very stereotyped for women).The results show that virility and physical strength are the values perceived as the most stereotyped for men ($M_{Masc-virility}$ = 6, $M_{Masc-Force}$ = 5.63) but the least stereotyped for women ($M_{Fem-virility}$= 1.74, $M_{Fem-force}$ = 1.52). Mean comparisons are significant ($t_{virility}$ = 8,205, p<0.001, $t_{strength}$ = 6.346, t <0.001).

Maternity and tenderness are the most stereotyped values for women ($M_{Fem-maternity}$ = 6.22, $M_{Fem-tenderness}$ = 5.07), but the least stereotyped for men ($M_{Masc-maternity}$ = 1.70, $M_{Masc-tenderness}$ = 2.85). Mean comparisons are also significant ($t_{maternity}$ = 8.955, t <0.001, $t_{tenderness}$ = 5.927, t <0.001). The scenarios were finally pretested by two researchers not engaged in this research. The 8 scenarios were shown to each of the researchers. They were instructed to place each of the scenarios in the experimental design table. 100% of the scenarios were placed in the correct manipulation unit. Five undergraduates have also evaluated the scenarios in face-to-face interviews. All of them were also able to put the scenarios back into the correct experimental cells.

Table 2: Experimental design

		Brand gender	
		Non-stereotyped	Stereotyped
Direction of the cross-gender extensión	Feminine brands → Extension to male market	M1 (watches) M5 (underwear)	M2 (watches) M6 (underwear)
	Masculine brands → Extension to female market	M3 (watches) M7 (underwear)	M4 (watches) M8 (underwear)

3.2. Measures

To analyse the hypothesis, several measures have been used: the perceived fit between the brand and the cross-gender extension, and the attitudes towards the cross-gender extension. Perceived fit scale is adapted from Taylor and Bearden (2002) and includes 3 items in 5 points: The extension accurately corresponds to the image of brand X; Launching this extension makes sense for brand X; Launching this extension corresponds to what brand X knows how to make (α=0,776). The scale to measure attitudes towards the cross-gender extensions was adopted from Yoo and Donthu (2001) and includes 3 items in 5 points: Poor quality - Good quality; Not at all desirable - Very desirable; Not at all pleasing - Pleasing (α=0,859).

Other individual variables are measured in the research: the implication into the product category and the consumer gender. Implication in the product category is measured with 6 items in 5 points adapted from Strazzieri (1994): This is a product that really matters a lot to me; It is a product to which I attach a special importance; I particularly like to talk about this product; It can be said that it is a product that interests me; I am particularly attracted to this product; The only fact of learning about this product is a pleasure (α=0,960). Even if the literature review shows that it is better to consider a bi-dimensional measure, consumer gender is measured by 4 items in 5 points (from 1: Very masculine to 5: Very feminine), adapted from the scale of Stern, Barak and Gould (1987): I think I am…; I have the appearance of someone...; I have the typical behavior of someone who is ...; My interests are mostly those of a person who is ... (α=0,944). This choice to limit the number of items by using a one-dimension scale of gender is motivated by the length of the survey and the risk to have less responses. In addition to the gender measure, we also take into account the sex of respondents with a distinction between men and women.

Table 3: Psychometric quality of measurement scales

	Number of items	Reliability		Convergent validity
		α	P	ϱ vc
Perceived congruence between brand and extension (5 points)Adapted from Taylor and Bearden (2002)	3	0,776	0,872	0,699
Attitudes towards extension (5 points) Adapted from Yoo and Donthu (2001)	3	0,859	0,914	0,780
Product involvement(5 points) Adapted from Strazzieri (1994)	6	0,960	0,968	0,833
Consumer gender(5 points) Adapted from Stern, Barak and Gould (1987)	4	0,944	0,959	0,855

3.3. Sample and procedure

The sample used to test the hypotheses was compiled from a consumer panel (Createst company). It comprises 408 people (distributed equally across the experimental units). It is composed by 50% of men and 50% women. The average age is 30. They live in the major cities of France. Data was collected using an online survey sent to respondents by emails. The questionnaire was preceded by a presentation of the scenario and the launch of Granney's cross-gender extension. The hypotheses were tested using variances analysis and simple regression with the SPSS software.

4. Results

4.1. Manipulation check

The results of the manipulation check of the scenarios are based on the evaluation of 4 items, measured on 5-point scales. Two refer to stereotyped genders and two to non-stereotyped genders[3]. The averages of the two stereotyped items and the two non-stereotyped items are performed. In addition, respondents were asked to choose between two pictures: one representing a stereotyped gender (male or female) and one representing a non-stereotyped gender (male or female).For the picture that represents the stereotyped gender for male, respondents can see a sporty and muscular man that plays rugby. For the picture that represents the stereotyped gender for female, respondents can see a seductive and sexy woman that poses half lengthened. And finally, for the picture that represents the non-stereotyped gender for male and female, respondents can see a man or a woman dressed in black work suit.

The results of the means comparisons (1 factor ANOVA) show that for stereotyped gender scenarios, consumers evaluated brand stereotyped items more strongly than non-stereotyped items ($M_{stereotyped}$=3.85, $M_{nonstereotyped}$=2.88; F=129.431; p<0.001), whereas for non-stereotyped gender scenarios, consumers evaluated non-stereotyped gender items more strongly than stereotyped gender items ($M_{stereotyped}$=2.93; $M_{nonstereotyped}$=3.90, F=93.574; p<0.001).

Moreover the results of the chi-square tests between the scenarios and the pictures show that consumers associated stereotyped pictures with stereotyped gender scenarios and non-stereotyped pictures with non-stereotyped gender scenarios (χ^2=52.716; p <0.001).All these results confirm that the gender brand manipulation is successful.

4.2. Hypotheses testing results

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[3] For male brands, the items are: the Granney brand emphasizes the values of virility; The Granney brand emphasizes physical power; The Granney brand promotes professional success; The Granney brand highlights personal achievement values
For women's brands, the items are: the Granney brand emphasizes the values of sensuality; The Granney brand puts forward the woman stirring up desire; The Granney brand promotes professional success; The Granney brand emphasizes the values of personal achievement.
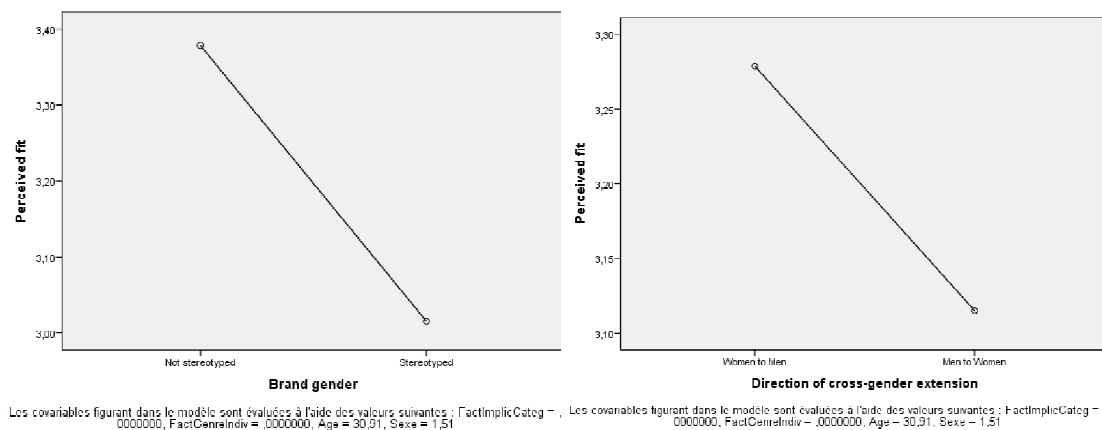
The hypotheses on the direct impact between, on the one hand, the brand gender (stereotyped vs. non-stereotyped) and the perceived fit between the brand and the cross-gender extensions (H1) and, on the other hand, the direction of cross-gender extension and the perceived fit (H2) are tested via covariance analysis (ANCOVA). The hypothesis related to the effects of interaction between the brand gender and the direction of extension (H3) is also tested via ANCOVA covariance analysis. The impact of the perceived fit between the brand and the cross-gender extension and the attitude toward the cross-gender extension (H4) is tested with a simple regression.

Results from ANCOVA show that, after controlling the impact of consumer age, consumer sex, consumer gender and consumer involvement in the product category, the main effect of brand gender on perceived fit is significant. The perceived fit between the brand and the cross-gender extension is more positive when the brand gender is not stereotyped than when the brand gender is stereotyped ($M_{stereotyped}=3.01$; $M_{nonstereotyped}=3.37$; $F=20.395$; $p<0.001$), supporting H1. The cross-gender extension is perceived as more consistent when the brand gender is based on common men's and women's beliefs (such as is professional success and recognition). Conversely, the cross-gender extension seems less consistent when brand gender is based on beliefs associated only with men (such as physical strength and virility) or with women (such as maternity). Also after controlling the individual variables, the effect of the cross-gender extension direction on perceived fit between the brand and the cross-gender extension is also significant.
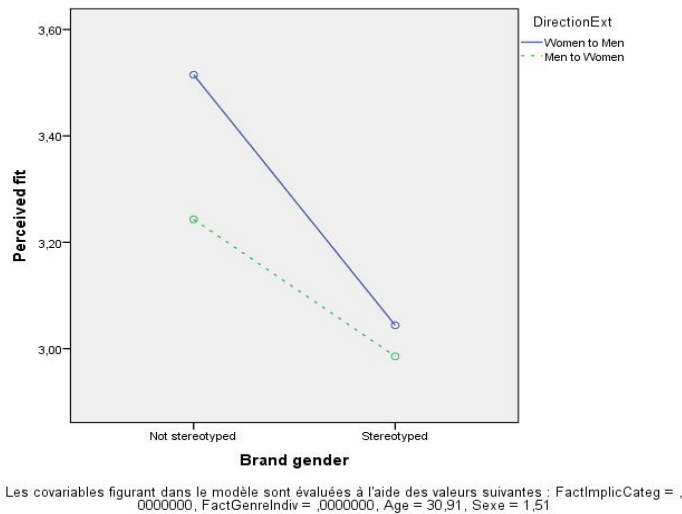
But the results show that the perceived fit is more positive when the cross-gender extension is from the female market to male market ($M_{WomentoMen}=3.292$; $M_{MentoWomen}=3.10$; $F=3,961$; $p=0.047$), while the hypothesis stated the opposite. Thus, H2 is not supported. The respondents perceived a better consistency between the cross-gender extension and the brand when the brand initially sales products for women and is extended in the men market than reversely.

**Figure 2: Graphic representations of gender and direction impacts**

Les covariables figurant dans le modèle sont évaluées à l'aide des valeurs suivantes : FactImplicCateg = ,0000000, FactGenreIndiv = ,0000000, Age = 30,91, Sexe = 1,51   Les covariables figurant dans le modèle sont évaluées à l'aide des valeurs suivantes : FactImplicCateg = ,0000000, FactGenreIndiv = ,0000000, Age = 30,91, Sexe = 1,51

The interaction effect between the brand gender and the cross-gender extension direction is not statistically significant ($F=1.759$; $p=0.185$). Thus, H3 is not supported. However, when we compare the means of fit between the cross-gender extension and the brand by taking into account the direction of the extension, we observe differences. For the brands with a non-stereotyped gender, the direction of the cross-gender extension has a greater impact on the perceived fit between the brand and the extension ($M_{WomentoMen}=3.068$, $M_{MentoWomen}=2.96$) than for brands with a stereotyped gender ($M_{WomentoMen}=3.50$, $M_{MentoWomen}=3.24$). In the case of brands with a stereotype gender, the fit assessment is almost identical regardless the direction of the cross-gender extension.

Figure 3: Graphic representations of interaction effect

Les covariables figurant dans le modèle sont évaluées à l'aide des valeurs suivantes : FactImplicCateg = ,
0000000, FactGenreIndiv = ,0000000, Age = 30,91, Sexe = 1,51

Finally, the results of the regression show that the fit between the brand and the cross-gender extension explains 13% of the variance ($R^2=0.130$; $F=65.53$; $p<0.001$). The analysis highlighted that the more the fit between the brand and the cross-gender extension is, the more the attitude toward extension is positive ($\beta=0.373$; $p<0.001$), supporting H4.

Figure 4: Graphic representations of regression
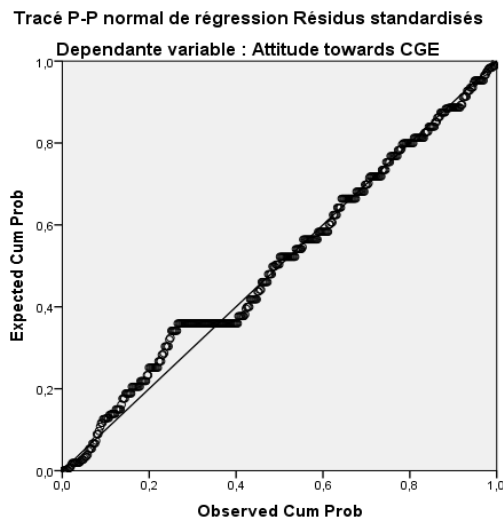
5. Discussion

Understanding the key success factors of cross-gender extension and especially the impact of brand characteristics is critical for brands. This study extends research on this topic through an integrative examination of two mains variables that were analysed in previous research separately. This research provides a better understanding of how consumers evaluated cross-gender extension according to the brand gender and the direction of the cross-gender extension. More precisely, for the brand gender, this study provides clarification comparing with previous research (Jung and Lee, 2006; Sorin Ulrich, 2010; Ulrich, 2013) by integrating the distinction between stereotyped and non-stereotyped genders.It has been shown that extensions to the opposite gender are perceived to be more consistent and have better evaluations fromconsumers when they are launched by brands whose gender is not stereotyped.

It also highlights the impact of the direction of extension, with better evaluations when the extension is from the women market rather than from the men market. This is especially true when the gender of the brand is stereotyped.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

In theoretical terms, several contributions linked to brand management can be highlighted.The first contribution pertains especially to the brand gender and its conceptualization. This research doesn't take into account the brand gender as degrees of femininity or masculinity. It considers a diverse range of masculine and feminine profiles (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Azar, 2009, 2013). More precisely, the distinction between stereotyped and non-stereotyped gender leads to show that both for femininity and for masculinity, several types of values can be found and used by brands. This consideration allows to go beyond previous research on brand management by providing more details about brand differentiation according to their gender. Moreover, although researchers have highlighted that over time the differences between women and men values appear to be attenuated as part of a shift towards gender balance (Eagly and Sczesny, 2009), this paper reveals that stereotyped genders are still used in brand strategies and in defining the identity of brands. This finding is in line with Knoll et al. (2011), who demonstrated that brands continue to make widespread use of the stereotypes associated with femininity and masculinity in their advertising content. The second contribution concerns more precisely the impact of stereotyped and non-stereotyped brand genders on evaluations of cross-gender extensions. More specifically, the level of perceived fit between the brand and the cross-gender extension is higher when the brand gender is non-stereotyped than when the brand gender is stereotyped. These results can be explained by the fact that stereotyped gender is more associated with a specific sex (male or female) (Williams and Best, 1990; Williams et al., 1999), making it more difficult for a brand that relies on such an identity to be desirable for the other sex when it is extended in the opposite market. This theoretical contribution is significant as it provides a better understanding of the success or failure of brands that develop such extensions. This research complements the findings of Jung and Lee (2006) and Sorin Ulrich (2010) by no longer looking at the bi-dimensionality of brand gender but instead introducing various profiles of femininity and masculinity and studying their impact.

If we want to identify the potential success or failure of a cross-gender brand extension, it is not simply a matter of determining whether the brand is highly feminine and not very masculine (or vice versa), but rather which type of profile of femininity or masculinity the brand relies on. This approach enables us to understand the differences between Audemars Piguet and Rolex (two brands defined as highly masculine and not very feminine) in terms of developing cross-gender extensions in the luxury watch market. The masculine gender of Audemars Piguet is very stereotyped in the sense that the values are linked to virility and physical strength. This gender probably limits the extension to the market of women. Conversely, the masculine gender of Rolex is more focused on the professional success and is therefore much less stereotyped.

The third contribution pertainsthe impact of the cross-gender extension direction. The results of this research don't support the previous findings of Jung and Lee (2006), who revealed that consumers perceive higher level of perceived fit towards cross-gender extensions when brands develop extensions from the male market to the female market. In this paper, the direction of the cross-gender extension has a significant impact but the perceived fit between the brand and the cross-gender extension is more positive in the case of extensions from the female market to the male market. The difference observed between this research and those of Jung and Lee (2006) can be explained by the evolution of the society and its feminization. While some time ago, women sought to enter the world of men, now the opposite begins to appear. Many men are more and more attracted to the values and behaviors of women in everyday life and supports the trend associated with the feminization of society. This result is consistent with the research of Eagly and Sczesny (2009).

The fourth contribution pertains the fact that no interaction effect between the brand gender and the cross-gender extension direction has been significantly found. However, it has been shown that the evaluation of the perceived fit between the brand and the cross-gender extension is quite the same for stereotyped brand gender, whether the extension is from men market to female market or conversely. It means that, in all the cases, for brand with a stereotyped gender, the risk to make cross-gender extension is very high. At the opposite, we can observe that the direction of the cross-gender extension plays a key role when the brand gender is not stereotyped. The perceived fit is more positive when the extension is from the female market to male market than conversely.

The fifth contribution relates to congruence theory for extension strategies. This research is in line with previous research on this topic (Aaker and Keller, 1990; Park et al., 1991; Bottomley and Holden, 2001; Magnoni, 2016) that demonstrate the impact of perceived fit on attitude toward the brand extension. In this research, the results have been extended into another type of extensions: the cross-gender extension. Perceiving fit between an extension (whatever it is: brand extension, vertical line extension, cross-gender extension) and the brand remains one of the major contributors to the success or failure of launching a new product / a new range for a brand.

5.2. Managerial contributions

The results of this research involve managerial contributions for branding. The purpose is to help brand managers to make decisions about the choice to develop or not cross-gender extensions when they initially want to use the same brand name. Several complementary strategies are also proposed. First, managers are encouraged to carry out an assessment of their brand's gender on which it relies. The typologies developed by Azar (2009, 2013), as well as the literature on gender stereotypes (Williams and Best, 1990; Williams et al., 1999; Eagly and Sczesny, 2009), could be used as analytical tools. Semiotics can also be an interesting approach to highlight the gender values on which the brands are related. More and more consulting firms are specialized in this methodology in order to define the identity of brands and therefore their gender. Efforts to define what brands are and how they are perceived by consumers, prior to developing any strategy, are of fundamental importance in order to maintain consistency of brand development in the long term and the success of cross-gender extensions.

Second, after the definition of the brand genders, it is essential to consider cross-gender extensions only in the case of brands that rely on gender profiles which facilitate the acceptance of the proposed new products, i.e. non-stereotyped profiles. Note that this is especially the case of brands for female market that target men market, the results showing a better perceived fit in this case. In contrast, it is not advisable to develop such extensions in the case of brands linked to a stereotyped gender profile. Alternative strategies should be considered. The use of more independent branding, such as subsidiary brands, may be a preferable option.

By using a new brand name that is relatively close to the initial brand but with a linguistic difference, the perceived link between the product ranges for men and for women would be weaker, and greater acceptance of brand extensions would be likelier. It is also possible to implement a longer-term strategy to gradually make evolve the brandgender evolve. By adding less stereotyped associations, the brand will gradually become more desirable for both market segments (men and women). This will allow it to launch in a more legitimate way the cross-gender extensions.Specific work on communication around the brand will be necessary.

The third managerial contribution relates to future brands. Managers are advised, as soon as brands are first created, to define a brand identity whereby the adopted profiles of femininity and masculinity later allow for the option of extending from the male market to the female market or vice versa.For new brands, when it is financially possible, another strategy is to directly launch products for men and products for women. Creating neutral products (that target simultaneously men and women) could also be an adequate solution.

5.3 Limitations and further research

This research has some limitations, from which areas for future research can be suggested. Firstly, the experiment uses a fictitious brand. Although this is justified by the need to control consumers' attitudes and affect in relation to real brands (Derbaix, 1995), it has also been shown that it is more complex for individuals to project themselves into the scenario presented to them. It could therefore be useful to develop the same type of experimental study by using real brands. The objective would be to compare the results with those obtained herein in order to reinforce the internal validity of the research. Secondly, the research methodology focused on the fashion sector. This choice was driven by the large number of cross-gender extensions found in this sector. However, even though two product categories have been taken into account, this approach limits the generalization of the research results. Thus it could be interesting to extend this work to another sector, such as automobiles, where brands tend to launch cars by targeting distinctly men and women.It would also be veryenlightening to investigate this strategy in services.

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Appendices 1: Examples of scenarios for the experimentation

M1 (watches – non-stereotyped feminine brand)

Since 1860, Granney is a high-end watch brand. Mixing innovation and tradition to create high quality watches, Granney is specialized in watches for women.

Through its many and varied actions, the brand promotes visionary women who, through their exceptional talent and quality of achievement, make a significant contribution to the world we live in such areas as business or sciences. The brand's universe thus offers legitimacy and social recognition to a creative and inspired female clientele. Wearing a watch Granney is synonymous with success and self-realization, especially in the entrepreneurial world.

The brand offers a wide range of classic watches for women, available in yellow gold, white gold or platinum

M2 (watches - stereotyped feminine brand)

Since 1860, Granney is a high-end watch brand. Mixing innovation and tradition to create high quality watches, Granney is specialized in watches for women.

Charm, romance, aesthetics and elegance are some of Granney's key words. The perfect combination of seduction and know-how, the Granney models are at the heart of fashion trends. For women, this is the promise to highlight their beauty through a graceful jewelery watch. Wearing a Granney watch is to sublimate the refinement and the voluptuousness of affective woman. Wearing a Granney watch is also to fully play its femininity to seduce.

The brand offers a wide range of classic watches for women, available in yellow gold, white gold or platinum

Text of cross-gender extension launch

Granney now wants to expand its business. It therefore made the strategic decision to expand and sell not only watches for women but also watches for men. For several weeks now, Granney has been selling watches for men with the same characteristics as women, but with just a few modifications, in order to adapt to the new market segment.

Appendices 2: Pictures to test brand gender

Non-stereotyped gender

Stereotyped genders