

# **Impact of different naming strategies on consumer's evaluation of mixed-target brands**

## **ABSTRACT**

- Purpose: Brands with strong gender identities, either feminine or masculine, are not always successful at targeting both men and women, particularly in symbolic product categories. Managers struggle to capitalize on one single brand while attempting to maximize their sales for both targets, hesitating between different naming strategies. Building on brand gender literature, the research objective is to understand the potential relevance for mixed-target brands (i.e. brands targeting men and women) to adopt an endorsed brand system (EBS), rather than a single brand strategy.
- Design/methodology/approach: The research uses a before-after experimental design to examine the potential effect of the introduction of a non-congruent gendered endorsed brand (i.e., feminine endorsed name for masculine brands and masculine endorsed name for feminine brands) on consumers' attitude.
- Findings: Adopting an EBS is unable to increase the perceived brand masculinity for feminine brands, whereas in contrast perceived femininity increases for masculine brands. Second, it negatively impacts the consumer attitude toward the brand, with a stronger negative effect for feminine brands than for masculine brands. Third, it reveals a negative feedback effect on the initial brands.
- Originality/value: This research emphasizes the asymmetrical evaluation of masculine vs feminine brands. It demonstrates that a feminine endorsed brand name significantly increases the EBS femininity but, in contrast, a masculine endorsed brand name is not able to significantly increase the EBS masculinity. This result highlights that manipulating brand perceived masculinity with an added masculine endorsed brand name appears to be very difficult.

## **Keywords**

*Brand Gender, Brand Strategy, Brand Personality, Brand Name*

## Introduction

Brands with a strong gendered image, either feminine or masculine, are not always successful at targeting both men and women, particularly for symbolic product types that are the expression of self-image and social identification (Park et al, 1986), such as fashion or cosmetics. For instance, despite important efforts to develop the segment, male clothes represent only 14% of the total sales of *Esprit*<sup>1</sup>, perceived as feminine by consumers (Lieven et al, 2014). Conversely, female clothes do not represent more than 15% for *Hugo Boss*<sup>2</sup>, perceived as masculine by consumers (Lieven et al, 2014). Certain companies choose to launch and support two distinct brands that target either men or women, such as *Celio* and *Jennyfer*. However, the main trend for fashion companies eager to target both genders appears to capitalize on the awareness and the image of one single brand to address both men and women, although they may be perceived as strongly feminine like *Zara* (Lieven et al, 2014), or as strongly masculine like *Lacoste* (Azar, 2015). Nevertheless, managers struggle to maximize their sales for both targets and hesitate between different naming strategies or different brand architectures. For instance, Mango decided to extend to the male target by launching *H.E by Mango* in 2008, then switched to *Mango man* in 2014 and then to *Mango* in 2015. *Quiksilver* opted to launch *Quiksilver women* in 2008, while its separate brand *Roxy* has existed for women since 1991; however, it halted *Quiksilver women* in 2013. How can these failures be explained? What could be the most relevant naming strategy for feminine or masculine brands already addressing both genders to target the opposite gender more efficiently?

Building on the research on brand personality (Aaker, 1997), brand gender has emerged as a growing topic for scholars this last decade. Grohmann (2009) empirically showed that brands possess masculine and feminine personalities, categorizing them in four groups reproducing the human gender approach of Bem (1974): 1) masculine, 2) feminine, 3) androgynous (high on masculinity and femininity) and 4) undifferentiated (low on both dimensions). Building on this work, Lieven et al (2014) proved that high levels of brand femininity and masculinity elicit higher ratings of brand equity. Scholars have also examined the influence of brand design (Lieven et al, 2015) or linguistic elements (Yorkston and De Mello, 2005; Wu et al, 2013; Guévremont and Grohmann, 2015) on brand gender perception, as well as the impact of brand gender in the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions (Jung and Lee, 2006; Ulrich, 2013). However, no research has thus far investigated the impact of different naming strategies on the

---

<sup>1</sup> Esprit annual report FY 2016, June 2016

<sup>2</sup> Tess Lochanski, « L'homme qui va habiller la planète », n° 2630, 2 avril 2015

consumer's evaluation of mixed-target brands (i.e., brands targeting both men and women) that possess a feminine or a masculine image. Yet, this is crucial for brands belonging to symbolic product categories, where brand name is of utmost importance (Del Rio et al, 2001).

Accordingly, this research's objective is to understand the potential relevance for masculine and feminine mixed-target brands to adopt an Endorsed Brand System (EBS) as in *H.E by Mango*, rather than a single brand strategy. This research examines the potential effect of the introduction of a non-congruent gendered endorsed name (i.e., feminine endorsed name for masculine brands and masculine endorsed name for feminine brands) on consumer attitude. Moreover, prior literature highlighted a potential feedback effect of brand extension on the evaluation of the parent brand (Czellar, 2003; Völckner et al, 2008), with a possible dilution of the brand values when there is low fit between the brand and the extension (Loken and John, 1993). These findings were countered by more recent studies on brand extensions (Zimmer and Bath, 2004). However, in our case, introducing a non-congruent gendered endorsed brand name creates a situation similar to a line extension with low fit, since the products belong to the same product category but with an opposite gender. To the best of our knowledge, the only paper that examined line extensions was Kim and al (2001), who showed an impact on the attitude toward the parent brand in the case of vertical line extensions. Therefore, the research also investigates the impact of the introduction of a non-congruent gendered endorsed name on the consumer attitude toward the initial brand.

Study 1 investigates the effects of the brand name change on the 'new' targeted group of the brand, i.e., men for feminine brands and women for masculine brands. First, it shows that adding a masculine endorsed name to a feminine endorser brand is unable to increase the perceived brand masculinity, in contrast with the addition of a feminine endorsed name to a masculine endorser brand resulting in higher perceived brand femininity. Second, it reveals that this brand name change negatively impacts the consumer attitude toward the brand in the short run, with a negative effect stronger for feminine brands than for masculine brands. Study 2 explores the effects of the brand name change on the 'initial' targeted group of the brand, i.e., men for masculine brands and women for feminine brands. It highlights a negative feedback effect on the initial brands, be they masculine or feminine.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### *Brand gender and the influence of brand name*

Brand gender has regained focus from scholars recently. Grohmann (2009) defines brand gender as “the set of human personality traits associated with masculinity and femininity applicable and relevant to brands” (p.106). Although Bem presented a new vision of gender in 1974 that showed masculinity and femininity are two independent dimensions, marketing researchers continued to measure brand gender using a binary representation of this construct until 2009: Some researchers measured either the masculine dimension or the feminine dimension and concluded that the brand was either feminine or masculine (eg. Vitz and Johnston, 1965; Fry, 1971). Others opposed these two constructs using semantic scales (Alreck et al, 1982; Worth et al, 1992; Jung and Lee, 2006). The only scale explicitly designed to capture the two independent dimensions was developed by Grohmann (2009): masculine brand personality scale (MBP) and feminine brand personality scale (FBP). This new approach to brand gender leads to the emergence of four brand genders: masculine (high on masculinity and low on femininity), feminine (high on femininity and low on masculinity), androgynous (high on both dimensions) and undifferentiated (low on both dimensions). Brand gender appears to be theoretically and managerially relevant, because it influences the brand attitude, the purchase intention and the word-of-mouth communication (Grohmann, 2009), and it relates positively to brand equity (Lieven et al, 2014).

Brand name is one of the brand elements that affect brand perceptions, such as brand gender or brand personality (Batra et al., 1993; Azar, 2015). Encountering a brand name, consumers rely on the meaning conveyed by its phonemes to form inferences about brand attributes and performance (Yorkston and Menon, 2004). Brand names convey gendered associations because the phonemes contained in names convey masculinity and/or femininity, as explained by the sound symbolism literature (Klink, 2000; Wu et al, 2013). Specifically, stops consonants (e.g., k/p/t) increase the perceived masculinity of the brand name, while fricatives (e.g., s/f) increase the perceived femininity of the brand name (Klink, 2000; Guévremont and Grohmann, 2015). In addition, Wu et al (2013) demonstrate that brand names with front vowels (e.g., i) create a feminine brand personality, whereas brand names with back vowels (e.g., o) create a masculine brand personality.

#### *Cross-gender extensions, mixed-target brands and naming strategies*

The literature on cross-gender brand extensions, masculine or feminine brands that extend to target the opposite biological gender, has been scarce. Jung and Lee (2006) have shown that consumer acceptance is higher for a masculine brand extending to the opposite gender than the reverse scenario. Yet, a major limitation of their work is inherent in their measure of the brand

gender: a set of unidimensional semantic differential scales were used (opposing masculinity to femininity). This is in contradiction with Grohmann's (2009) conceptualization of brand gender and Bem's (1974) conceptualization of human gender. Despite this limitation in the operationalization of brand gender, their finding is consistent with earlier research suggesting a higher desirability of masculine brands for women than feminine brands for men (Stuteville, 1971; Alreck et al, 1982; Neale et al., 2016). In parallel, Jung and Lee (2006) have highlighted that women are more receptive than men to cross-gender brand extensions. This finding contrasts with Ulrich (2013) who showed an effect of consumer gender role attitudes but not of biological gender on the evaluation of these brand extensions. To our knowledge, no research has specifically addressed the issues of mixed-target brands in symbolic product categories, which are those brands that target both men/women and that must structure their nominal identity in categories such as fashion, underwear, watches, perfumes or cosmetics. Support for investigating the nominal identity of mixed-target brands emerges from managerial practices, where marketers currently hesitate and struggle between different naming strategies (as illustrated in Table 1). Olins (1990) distinguished three brand name strategies, which are currently reflected in managerial practices: monolithic, endorsed and branded identity. Monolithic brand name strategy uses a single brand name for different product categories or genders. The endorsed brand name strategy uses two brand names for the same product, and branded identity strategy consists in providing a name for each product category. Bhat et al (1998) went further by distinguishing two types of endorsed brand name strategies: "sub-brand" and "nested brand". "Sub-brand" strategy refers to products where a new brand name is added adjacent to an existing brand name (e.g. *Macintosh Quadra*, *Gillette Venus*), and "nested brand" strategy is when the new product is merely introduced by an existing brand (e.g. *Dockers by Levi's*, *H.E. by Mango*). This last approach stresses the importance of the parent brand as it provides credibility and expertise to the nested brand while enabling some independence between both brand names. Later, Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) used the generic term "endorsed brand" for both approaches. Following Aaker and Joachimsthaler, this paper refers to an Endorsed Brand System (EBS) for these brand approaches.

	<u>Monolithic system</u> single brand name for both genders	<u>Monolithic with modifier system</u> single brand name + descriptive modifier	<u>Endorsed brand system</u>	<u>Branded identity</u> two separate brands for each gender
Prêt-à-porter	Zara, Desigual, Gap, Diesel, The Kooples, Lacoste, Mango (in 2015)	Mango Man (in 2014) Lafayette Homme	H.E. by Mango (in 2008)	Celio & Jennyfer Camaieu & Jules Naf-Naf & Chevignon
Haute couture	Chanel, Hermès,	Jack Spade		

	Dior			
Underwear	Dim, Athena	Aubade Men		
Sportswear	Nike	Quiksilver women Adidas women		Quiksilver & Roxy
Cosmetics		Nivea for Men Lancôme Men Dove Men L'Oréal Men Expert	Dior Homme/ Dermo System	Estée Lauder & Aramis
Razors	Bic	Wilkinson Women Gillette for Women (1994)	Gillette/ (2001) Venus	

**Table 1: Different naming strategies for brands targeting both genders.**

Some brands have attempted to target both genders by solely retaining the initial brand name (such as *Zara*, *Desigual* and most fashion Haute-Couture brands), others by adding a descriptive modifier (such as *Adidas Women* or *Nivea For Men*), or by structuring an Endorsed Brand System (like *Gillette/ Venus*, or *H.E. by Mango*). This last system should create linguistic distancing between the parent brand and the line targeting the opposite gender, as explained by Kim et al (2001), on vertical extensions. In addition, the acceptance of cross-gender extensions is lower for symbolic product categories than for functional product categories (Jung & Lee, 2006); this may explain why choosing the correct naming strategy is important for brands targeting both genders with symbolic product types. However, to our knowledge, thus far, no research has examined which naming strategy would be more appropriate for brands that target both genders in symbolic product categories. To fill this literature gap, this research's objective is to examine the interest of EBS vs single brand name strategy for mixed-target brands in symbolic product categories.

#### *Adding a gendered endorsed brand name and the asymmetry of masculinity/femininity*

As brand names convey masculinity/femininity (Klink, 2001; Guévremont and Grohmann, 2013), adding an endorsed brand name with a non-congruent gender should modify the degree of perceived femininity/masculinity of the new extension (Endorsed Brand system, i.e., EBS). Previous research has repeatedly shown that women more easily accept masculine brands and are likely to purchase them, whereas men will reject feminine brands (Fry, 1971; Stuteville, 1971; Alreck et al, 1982). Penaloza (1994) specifically explains that, because most of those with money and power are men, the crossing of women into the male domain by wearing clothes associated with the masculine is viewed as rational and is naturalized. Therefore, men and women should not evaluate similarly the EBS gender modification.

Women have a less rigid definition of gender roles than men (Werner and La Russa, 1985). Therefore, for a high masculine/low feminine mixed-target brand, where the strategy is to add a high feminine brand name to better attract a women's target, women should acknowledge this

modification and perceive an increase in femininity and decrease in masculinity after the name change. Therefore, the following hypothesis is predicted:

*H1: For women, adding a high feminine/low masculine endorsed brand name to a masculine brand significantly (a) increases the perceived femininity of the Endorsed-Brand system (EBS) and (b) decreases the perceived masculinity of the EBS.*

According to studies in gender stereotyping, masculine traits tend to be regarded higher than traditional feminine traits (Ashmore et al, 1986). Androcentrism reigns in most cultures, where masculinity is more highly valued and is viewed as normal, while femininity is deviant from and less valued than masculinity (Kramer, 2005). The most important rule of manhood is not to behave as a woman; therefore, most men manage their masculinity through consumption to ward off fears that others will view them as effeminate or gay (Kimmel, 1996). Alreck et al (1982) have also found that men tend to exaggerate the gendered differences between brands more than women; they would perceive feminine brands more feminine and masculine brands more masculine. For all these reasons, using feminine brands carries a greater stigma for men than using masculine brands does for women (Avery, 2012). Therefore, when adding a masculine endorsed brand name to an existing mixed-target brand that is perceived as strongly feminine, the strength of the initial feminine associations of the parent brand should be difficult to overcome for men, and some male resistance to an increased perception of masculinity for the new proposal should be displayed. Therefore, in contrast to H1, the following hypothesis would be expected:

*H2: For men, adding a high masculine/low feminine endorsed brand name to a feminine brand (a) does not significantly increase the perceived masculinity of the EBS system but (b) significantly decreases the perceived femininity of the EBS system.*

#### *The impact on consumer evaluation of the new EBS system*

As Kapferer (2012) emphasizes, brand name changes are risky processes as the consumer loses its main point of reference and may not recognize the brand or may initially feel confused. Several papers indicate that, with no communication, consumer evaluations post re-naming are less favorable in the short run regarding the attitude towards the brand. This finding is mainly due to consumers encountering an unknown new brand name (Collange, 2008; Aimé, 2008, Pauwels Delassus and Mogos Descotes, 2012). Moreover, adding a non-congruent gendered endorsed name (i.e., a feminine endorsed name for masculine brands and a masculine endorsed name for feminine brands) may bewilder the consumers more, as the prior literature on brand

extension shows that the fit between parent brand and brand extension is the main contributor to favorable consumer evaluation (Czellar, 2003; Dacin and Smith, 1994; Völckner et al, 2008). For all these reasons, one anticipates a lower attitude immediately after the announcement of the brand name change. In this regard, this research seeks to investigate whether these effects should be identical for both masculine and feminine endorser brand names. Specifically, Jung & Lee (2006) have shown that cross-gender brand extensions are less favorably evaluated for feminine brands than for masculine brands, with a lower attitude towards the extension. Thus, the negative effect on the attitude towards the EBS should be more important for feminine endorser brands than for masculine endorser brands. Therefore, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

*H3: For the new targeted group, adding an endorsed brand name with a gender opposite to the gender of the endorser brand negatively impacts the attitude toward the EBS.*

*H4: This negative effect on the attitude is stronger for feminine endorser brands than for masculine endorser brands.*

#### *The impact on consumer evaluation of the initial endorser brand*

Finally, it appears crucial to check the impact of the brand name change on the initial endorser brand for the initial consumer target (women, for feminine endorser brands, and men for masculine brands). The extensive literature on brand extension has investigated a potential feedback (or spillover) effect of brand extension on the evaluation of the parent brand (Czellar, 2003; Martínez & de Chernatony, 2004; Völckner et al, 2008). Loken and John (1993) as well as Kim and al (2001) have revealed a possible dilution of the brand values of the extended brand for a low fit between the extension and the parent brand, even if some papers found no harmful effects either on brand attitude (Zimmer and Bhat; 2004) or on brand personality (Diamantopoulos, Smith and Grime; 2004). Brand extensions may also have a negative impact on the sales of the parent brand (Balachander and Ghose, 2003; Swaminathan et al, 2001) or on its evaluation in the presence of differing attribute cues about the extension (Lane and Jacobson, 1997). These findings are confirmed recently for services brands and occur more for consumer goods brands (Pina et al, 2013). For cross-gender extensions, Jung and Lee (2006) suggest that the pattern of effects on the attitude towards the initial brand mirrors that of the extension. Specifically, they show with directional support that a cross-gender extension from a feminine brand results in a more negative attitude towards the initial brand than a cross-gender extension from a masculine brand. Hence, the following hypotheses are stated:



*H5: Adding an endorsed brand name with a non-congruent gender negatively impacts the initial endorser brand in attitude towards the brand for the initial target.*

*H6: This negative effect is stronger for feminine brands than for masculine brands for the initial target.*

To test these hypotheses, two main experimental studies were conducted. Study 1's objective is to investigate the effects of the brand name change on the 'new' targeted group of the brand, i.e., men for feminine brands and women for masculine brands (H1, H2, H3 and H4). This study focused on this target first, as it is the main objective of such a strategic move. Moreover, as the whole experiment required a large sample of both genders, it helped to optimize the recruitment process of participants. Study 2 completes Study 1 by exploring the effects of the spillover effect of brand name change on the 'initial' targeted group of the brand, (H5, H6).

### **Study 1: Impact of the brand name change on the 'new' targeted group**

#### *Methodology*

The research methodology builds on an experimental design, developed on the fashion prêt-à-porter product category, as it carries high symbolic associations (Aaker, 1997) and as brand masculine/feminine personality traits appear as key segmentation criteria in the fashion industry (Goutron, 2006). Qualitative and quantitative pilot test were first conducted to select the brand names that would be used in our experimental design. Next, Study 1 tested H1, H2, H3 and H4 through a before/after experimental design, which will be detailed hereafter.

#### *Pilot test and brand name selection*

*Qualitative pilot test:* The objective of this first qualitative pilot test was to generate the pool of fictitious and real brand names that would be used in the experimental design. Thus, a brainstorming (regrouping of experienced marketing scholars and marketers from the fashion industry) was organized to generate fictitious endorsed brand names, resulting in 37 potential feminine candidates and 36 masculine candidates. Next, an exploratory qualitative approach with nine respondents (four men and five women) allowed the emergence of a list of 20 fictitious endorsed brand names and 12 potential real mixed-target brand names in the Prêt-à-porter product category (to be used as the endorser brand in the future quantitative studies). In this exploratory qualitative study, a collage technique was used to explore the gendered associations towards real and fictitious brand names. This procedure allowed the reduction of

the pool of brand names to 9 real mixed-target brand names and 10 fictitious endorsed names that were appreciated similarly by consumers as regards their attractiveness and fit with the fashion product-category. These 10 fictitious endorsed names were as follows: *Koro, Zac, Tyler, Dezario, Joe's, Lilly, Olivia Moon, Rachel, Madame* and *Flor*. Finally, based on the judgment of five experts (fashion marketers and marketing scholars), the perceived fit between the fictitious endorsed names and (1) the product category, then (2) the real brand names were investigated. Only six endorsed names were retained for the next pre-test (*Dezario, Zac* and *Tyler* as potentially masculine; *Lilly, Madame* and *Flor* as potentially feminine).

*Quantitative pre-test:* Second, a quantitative pre-test was then conducted with the six fictitious endorsed brand names elicited in the qualitative pilot test (n=128) and with the nine well-known brand names targeting both sexes (n=66). The objective was to choose the final pool of brand names to be used in the final experimental design. Respondents were first requested to evaluate the gender of mixed-target brands in the fashion industry using the 6 masculine brand personality items and the 6 feminine brand personality items from Grohmann's scales (2009), then brand familiarity was assessed using a single item (Michel, 2000). Finally, the respondents were requested to evaluate the fictitious endorsed brand names in terms of brand name masculinity and femininity. To minimize the burden on each informant, each respondent evaluated 3 real mixed-target fashion brands.

On the basis of familiarity and brand masculine/feminine personality ratings, this pre-test led to the selection of four real mixed-target brand names: *Dior, Mango, Diesel* and *Hugo Boss*. Specifically, *Dior* and *Mango* were rated significantly more feminine than other brands for the total sample (difference of scores MBP-FBP=-1.04 and -1.42, respectively, Table 2) and for the male and female samples considered separately. *Diesel* and *Hugo Boss* were rated significantly more masculine than other brands for the total sample (MBP-FBP=2.12 and 1.77, respectively, Table 2) and for the male and female samples considered separately. In parallel, these brands achieved suitable levels of brand familiarity. All other brands were required to be excluded, since the difference of scores MBP-FBP was not significant for the total sample or for the men's or women's samples. In addition, *Mango* and *Diesel* on the one hand, and *Dior* and *Hugo Boss* on the other hand had been found equivalent in terms of prestige perception in the previous qualitative pilot test; therefore, these brands were selected.

Brand Name	Brand Familiarity	$\delta$ sample (MBP-FBP)	$\delta$ men (MBP-FBP)	$\delta$ women (MBP-FBP)
<b>Dior</b>	<b>4.98 (1.18)</b>	<b>-1.04** (1.53)</b>	<b>-.91** (1.72)</b>	<b>-1.11** (1.44)</b>

<b>Mango</b>	<b>4.34 (1.72)</b>	<b>-1.42** (.89)</b>	<b>-1.24** (1.09)</b>	<b>-1.53** (.75)</b>
Zara	5.12 (1.29)	.11 ns (1.95)	-.21 ns (1.64)	.22 ns (2.14)
Armand Thierry	3.09 (1.89)	-2.97 ns (1.85)	-.03 ns (1.64)	-.49 ns (1.97)
Esprit	4.04 (1.79)	1.03 ns (1.82)	-.86 * (1.53)	.39 ns (1.76)
Desigual	3.88 (1.82)	.683** (1.78)	-.49 ns (1.39)	1.58 ** (1.53)
<b>Diesel</b>	<b>5.01 (1.44)</b>	<b>2.12** (1.71)</b>	<b>1.72** (1.49)</b>	<b>2.45** (1.84)</b>
Bershka	4.63 (2.02)	-.35 * (1.56)	.026 ns (1.45)	-.64 * (1.59)
<b>Hugo Boss</b>	<b>4.41 (1.34)</b>	<b>1.77*** (.61)</b>	<b>1.80** (.50)</b>	<b>1.75** (.67)</b>

Notes: \* Significance level, 5 percent; \*\* significance level, 1 percent; ns, not significant

**Table 2: Familiarity, MBP-FBP scores for real brands (paired sample t-test).**

Moreover, two fictitious endorser brand names were chosen for the final experimental design on the criteria of brand gender from among the six candidates: Lilly ( $M_{MBP}=1.27$  and  $M_{FBP} = 6.42$ ) as the most feminine endorsed brand names and Zac ( $M_{MBP}=6.05$  and  $M_{FBP} = 1.93$ ) as the most masculine endorsed brand names (Table 3 for detailed results).

<b>Fictitious Brand Names</b>	<b>Brand Masculinity</b>	<b>Brand Femininity</b>	<b><math>\delta</math> sample (MBP-FBP)</b>	<b><math>\delta</math> men (MBP-FBP)</b>	<b><math>\delta</math> women (MBP-FBP)</b>
<b>Lilly</b>	<b>1.27 (.83)</b>	<b>6.42 (1.16)</b>	<b>-5.15** (1.66)</b>	<b>-4.96** (1.90)</b>	<b>-5.05** (1.69)</b>
Dezario	5.96 (1.37)	2.18 (1.51)	3.76** (2.38)	3.34** (2.34)	4.02** (2.13)
Tyler	5.99 (1.44)	2.03 (1.39)	3.92** (2.38)	3.63** (2.55)	3.74** (2.30)
<b>Zac</b>	<b>6.05 (1.39)</b>	<b>1.93 (1.45)</b>	<b>4.13** (2.35)</b>	<b>3.65** (2.56)</b>	<b>4.08** (2.06)</b>
Madame	1.40 (1.09)	6.38 (1.37)	-4.99** (1.93)	-4.69** (2.16)	<b>-5.25** (1.55)</b>
Flor	2.27 (1.40)	5.46 (1.54)	-3.21** (2.55)	-3.30** (2.41)	-3.11** (2.71)

Notes: \* Significance level, 5 percent; \*\* significance level, 1 per cent

**Table 3: Masculinity/Femininity scores for fictitious endorsed names (paired sample t test)**

### *Sample, procedure and measures*

A before-after experimental design on these four mixed-target brand names (Mango, Dior, Diesel and Hugo Boss) was then conducted to determine the effect of the endorsed brand name addition on the respondent's attitude toward the brand. Prior to data collection, a pre-test with a class of 28 students was conducted to evaluate time and feasibility and to ensure the clarity of items used in this study. Then, data were collected through the administration of an online questionnaire.

		No	%			No	%
Age	16–22	265	40.4	Level of education	High School	187	28.5
	23–28	166	25.3		Bachelor's degree	197	30.0
	29–35	90	13.7		Master's degree	183	27.9
	36–45	50	7.6		Other	89	13.6
	46–77	85	13.0				
Sex	Male	257	39.2	Job status	Full-time	333	50.8
	Female	399	60.8		Student	284	43.3
					Not working	39	5.9
Total		656	100.0	Total		656	100.0

**Table 4 : Sample demographics**

Our sample consists of 656 respondents: 257 males, 399 females; sample demographics are provided in Table 4. In this study, male respondents evaluated the addition of a masculine endorsed brand name to feminine endorser brands (*Zac by Dior*, or *Zac by Mango*), and female respondents evaluated the addition of a feminine endorsed brand name to masculine endorser brands (*Lilly by Diesel*, or *Lilly by Hugo Boss*), as we were interested to evaluate the impact of the brand name change on the opposite gender group targeted by the brand; this constitutes the strategic ‘new’ target for these brands.

In the first stage, participants indicated their familiarity with the product category (three items from Oliver and Bearden, 1985;  $\alpha=.894$ ), and with the brand (three items adapted from Lai, 2000; Michel, 2000 and Dib, 2006,  $\alpha=.842$ ), brand attitude (two items, in accordance with Kapoor and Heslop, 2009; Michel and Donthu, 2014;  $\alpha=.894$ ), and perceived brand masculinity and femininity. The study used the Grohmann scales (2009) for these last two measures but were required to eliminate the items “aggressive” for masculinity ( $\alpha=.853$ ) and “elegant” for femininity ( $\alpha=.948$ ), to have higher fit indices.

In the second stage, participants were exposed to a short message explaining the renaming (“*In order to develop its range for men/women, Brand X has decided to rename it. So, the male/female clothes X will be named Zac by X/ Lilly by X*”). Next, the participants completed the measures on the same seven-point Likert-type scales for perceived masculinity (Grohmann, 2009;  $\alpha=.891$ ) and femininity (Grohmann, 2009;  $\alpha=.965$ ) and brand attitude (Kapoor and Heslop, 2009; Michel and Donthu, 2014, 1990;  $\alpha=.821$ ). Brand fit (adapted from Aaker & Keller, 1992;  $\alpha=.895$ ) and product category fit (two items from Smith & Park, 1992;  $\alpha=.867$ ) were also measured to serve as a manipulation check.

Brand familiarity, product category familiarity, brand fit and product category fit were checked for the different groups of respondents; no significant differences were noted (Table 4). Therefore, these results are not discussed further. In addition, exploratory and confirmatory analyses were conducted to assess the reliability and validity of all the variables used in this

study. Our final model has good fit indices:  $\chi^2/\text{ddl}=2.194$ ,  $\text{TLI}=.962$ ,  $\text{CFI}=.968$ ,  $\text{GFI}=.910$ ;  $\text{AGFI}=.887$ ,  $\text{RSMEA}=.043$  (range .04-.047). The convergent and discriminant validity for all constructs were also tested. All measurement models have consistency and stability (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values are greater than .80). All standardized regression weights are significant. In support of the discriminant validity, the square roots of the average variance extracted are superior to any correlations between the latent variables (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). These data are presented in Appendix 1.

	Brand Familiarity	Product category Familiarity	Brand Fit	Product category Fit
Zac/ Dior (116)	3.26 (1.51)	4.14 (1.20)	3.35 (1.41)	3.23 (1.57)
Zac/ Mango (141)	3.18 (1.18)	4.19 (1.41)	3.52 (1.55)	3.59 (1.70)
Lilly/ Diesel (219)	3.42 (1.55)	4.32 (1.47)	3.18 (1.54)	3.32 (1.66)
Lilly/ Hugo Boss (180)	3.24 (1.55)	4.00 (1.58)	3.49 (1.69)	3.41 (1.73)
	$F(3,655)=.943$ $P=.419$	$F(3,655)=1.627$ $P=.182$	$F(3,655)=1.771$ $P=.151$	$F(3,655)=1.184$ $P=.315$

**Table 5: Manipulation check for brand familiarity, product category familiarity, brand fit and product category fit.**

## *Findings*

### *Impact of the renaming on the perceived brand femininity and masculinity*

To test hypothesis 1 and 2, a one way repeated measures analysis of variance was conducted to compare scores on the levels of masculinity and femininity between time 1 (prior to the introduction of a non-congruent endorsed brand name) and time 2 (after the introduction of a non-congruent endorsed brand name). Subjects were divided into two groups (Group 1: male respondents evaluating the addition of a masculine endorsed brand name to a feminine endorser brand; and Group 2: female respondents evaluating the addition of a feminine endorsed brand name to a masculine endorser brand) prior to data analysis. For women, there was a significant effect of introducing a high feminine/low masculine endorsed brand name on the levels of the perceived masculinity ( $F(1,398)=111.75$ ,  $p<.1\%$ , partial  $\eta^2=.22$ ) and femininity ( $F(1,398)=139.91$ ,  $p<.1\%$ , partial  $\eta^2=.26$ ) of the final brand name. As hypothesized, the level of brand masculinity significantly decreased ( $M_{\text{MBP\_BEFORE}}=4.00$ ;  $M_{\text{MBP\_AFTER}}=3.23$ ), and the level of brand femininity significantly increased ( $M_{\text{FBP\_BEFORE}}=2.49$ ;  $M_{\text{FBP\_AFTER}}=3.63$ ). For men, there was a significant effect of introducing a high masculine/low feminine endorsed brand name on the levels of perceived femininity ( $F(1,256)=90.95$ ,  $p<.1\%$ , partial  $\eta^2=.26$ ) but not on the level of the perceived masculinity ( $F(1,256)=1.608$ ,  $p=.206$ ) of the final brand name. As hypothesized, the level of brand femininity significantly decreased ( $M_{\text{FBP\_BEFORE}}=3.86$ ;  $M_{\text{FBP\_AFTER}}=2.98$ ), whereas the level of brand masculinity remained stable ( $M_{\text{MBP\_BEFORE}}=3.22$ ;

$M_{MBP\_AFTER} = 3.32$ ). H1 and H2 were therefore supported. These findings were confirmed at the aggregated brand level (masculine and feminine brands) and for each brand name tested separately (Table 6).

	Masculinity Before	Masculinity After		Femininity Before	Femininity After	
Masculine Endorser Brands (399 women)						
Total (399)	4.00 (1.46)	3.23 (1.48)	F(1,398)=111.75 8, $p < .1\%$ , partial $\eta^2 = .219$	2.49 (1.38)	3.63 (1.82)	F(1,398)=139.911, $p < .1\%$ , partial $\eta^2 = .260$
Diesel (219)	4.05 (1.46)	3.18 (1.54)	F(1,218)=65.985, $p < 1\%$ , partial $\eta^2 = .232$	2.35 (1.28)	3.59 (1.83)	F(1,218)=96.333, $p < 1\%$ , partial $\eta^2 = .306$
Hugo Boss (180)	3.93 (1.46)	3.28 (1.41)	F(1,179)=46.701, $p < 1\%$ , partial $\eta^2 = .207$	2.66 (1.48)	3.67 (1.80)	F(1,179)=47.075, $p < 1\%$ , partial $\eta^2 = .208$
Feminine Endorser Brands (257 men)						
Total (257)	3.22 (1.18)	3.32 (1.33)	F(1,256)=1.608, $p = .206$	3.86 (1.48)	2.98 (1.36)	F(1,256)=90.95, $p < 1\%$ , partial $\eta^2 = .262$
Mango (141)	3.00 (1.12)	3.16 (1.26)	F(1,140)=3.075, $p = .082$	3.76 (1.42)	3.03 (1.30)	F(1,140)=40.432, $p < 1\%$ , partial $\eta^2 = .224$
Dior (116)	3.49 (1.19)	3.51 (1.40)	F(1,115)=.015, $p = .903$	3.98 (1.55)	2.91 (1.44)	F(1,115)=51.442, $p < 1\%$ , partial $\eta^2 = .309$

**Table 6 – Testing hypothesis 1 and 2**

### *Impact of the renaming on brand attitude*

To test hypotheses 3 and 4, a mixed between-within subjects' analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of the renaming on the brand attitude between time 1 (prior to the brand name modification) and time 2 (after the brand name modification). Respondents were again divided into the same two groups (Group 1: male respondents evaluating the addition of a masculine endorsed brand name to feminine endorser brands; and Group 2: female respondents evaluating the addition of feminine endorsed brand name to masculine endorser brands).

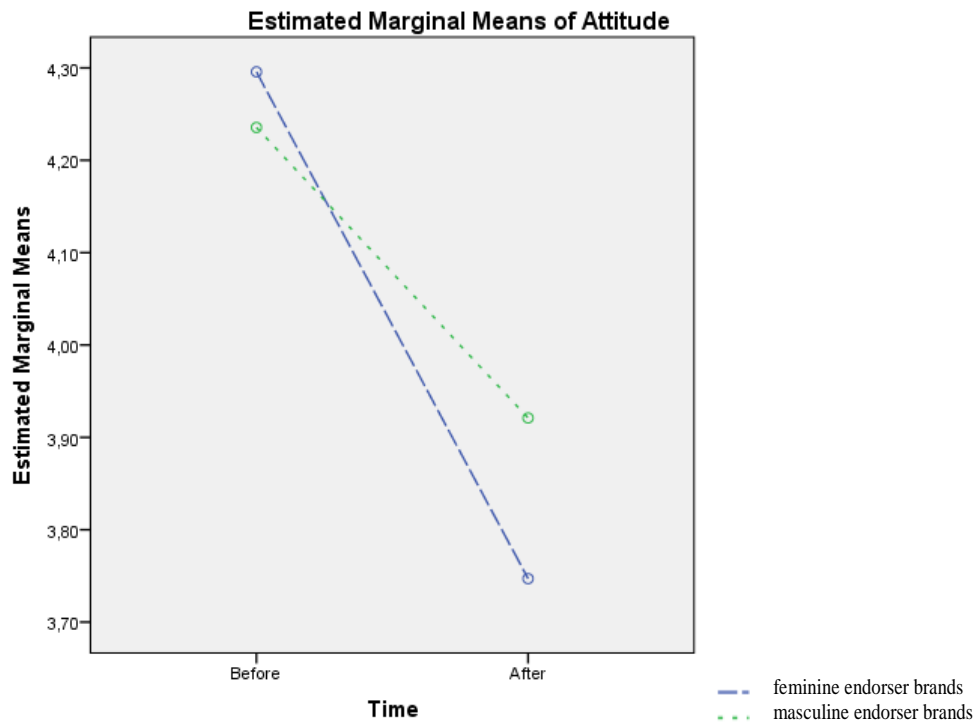
There was a significant main effect for time on the attitude toward the brand for both feminine endorser brands ( $F(1,256)=40.86$ ,  $p<1\%$ , partial  $\eta^2=.138$ ) and masculine endorser brands ( $F(1,398)=23.79$ ,  $p<1\%$ , partial  $\eta^2=.056$ ). Therefore, one can conclude that the brand name change negatively impacted the attitude as predicted (for feminine endorser brands:  $M_{ATT\_BEFORE}=4.29$  and  $M_{ATT\_AFTER}=3.74$ ; for masculine endorser brands:  $M_{ATT\_BEFORE}=4.23$  and  $M_{ATT\_AFTER}=3.92$ ).

Therefore, H3 was supported. These findings were supported at the aggregated brand level (masculine and feminine brands) and for each brand name tested separately (Table 7).

	Attitude Before	Attitude After	
Masculine Endorser Brands (399 women)	4.23 (1.32)	3.92 (1.22)	$F(1,398)=23.79$ , $p<1\%$ , partial $\eta^2=.056$
Diesel (219)	4.04 (1.25)	3.71 (1.16)	$F(1,218)=16.04$ , $p<1\%$ , partial $\eta^2=.069$
Hugo Boss (180)	4.46 (1.38)	4.17 (1.25)	$F(1,179)=8.27$ , $p=.05\%$ , partial $\eta^2=.044$
Feminine Endorser Brands (257 men)	4.29 (1.25)	3.74 (1.32)	$F(1,256)=40.86$ , $p<1\%$ , partial $\eta^2=.138$
Mango (141)	4.08 (1.14)	3.79 (1.34)	$F(1,140)=9.87$ , $p=.02\%$ , partial $\eta^2=.066$
Dior (116)	4.55 (1.34)	3.69 (1.31)	$F(1,115)=33.63$ , $p<1\%$ , partial $\eta^2=.226$

**Table 7 – Testing hypothesis 3**

Regarding the attitude toward the brand, there was a significant interaction between the gender of the endorser brands and time ( $F(1,654)=4.893$ ,  $p=2.7\%$ , partial  $\eta^2=.007$ ). As shown in figure 1, one can conclude that this negative effect in terms of brand attitude is more important for feminine brands than for masculine brands. Therefore, H4 is supported.



**Figure 1 – Attitude toward the brand (before and after), comparing feminine and masculine endorser brands (H 4)**

## **Study 2: Impact of the brand name change on the ‘initial’ targeted group**

### *Methodology*

The main objective of this study is to explore the spillover effects of the brand name change on the initial targeted consumer group of the brand. Therefore, our male respondents evaluated the impact of the addition of a feminine endorsed brand name to a masculine endorser brand (*Lilly by Diesel*, or *Lilly by Hugo Boss*) on the masculine initial brand (*Diesel* or *Hugo Boss*). In parallel, female respondents evaluated the impact of the addition of a masculine endorsed brand name on a feminine endorser brand (*Zac by Dior* or *Zac by Mango*) on the feminine initial brand (*Dior* or *Mango*). Thus, the research methodology builds on the same experimental design used in study 1; a before/after experimental design was used to test H5 and H6 concerning the feedback effect on the initial endorser brand.

### *Sample, procedure and measures*



This study used a convenience, non-random sample technique and collected 511 respondents. Our sample consisted of 207 males and 304 females; sample demographics are provided in Table 8.

		No	%			No	%
<b>Age</b>	16–22	211	41.3	<b>Level of education</b>	High School	86	16.9
	23–28	165	32.3		Bachelor's degree	160	31.3
	29–35	36	7.0		Master's degree	201	39.3
	36–45	47	9.2		Other	64	12.5
	46–77	52	10.2				
<b>Sex</b>	Male	207	40.5	<b>Job status</b>	Full-time	176	34.4
	Female	304	59.5		Student	311	60.9
					Not working	24	4.7
<b>Total</b>		<b>511</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>511</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 8 : Sample demographics**

Study 2 used the same questionnaire and measure instruments as in Study 1, evaluating the impact of the renaming on the initial brand name instead of its impact on the EBS. Therefore, respondents were requested to evaluate their attitude toward the initial brand.

The reliability and validity of all the variables used in this second study were checked before further analysis: They show good fit indices of the tested model, and all constructs had consistency and stability and showed convergent and discriminant validity (Appendix 1). Before testing our hypotheses, it has been checked that no significant differences were noted between the four brands used in this study regarding brand familiarity, product category familiarity, brand fit and product category fit (Table 9).

	Brand Familiarity	Product category Familiarity	Brand Fit	Product category Fit
Dior (106)	3.54 (1.53)	4.13 (1.52)	2.86 (1.34)	2.97 (1.47)
Mango (198)	3.99 (1.75)	4.23 (1.54)	3.18 (1.59)	3.31 (1.67)
Diesel (126)	3.88 (1.40)	4.38 (1.43)	2.99 (1.35)	3.03 (1.51)
Hugo Boss (81)	3.69 (1.60)	3.97 (1.48)	3.27 (1.61)	3.35 (1.59)
	F(3,507)=2.080 P=.102	F(3,507)=2.923 P=.277	F(3,507)=1.628 P=.182	F(3,507)=1.767 P=.152

**Table 9 – Manipulation check (study 2)**

## Results

### *Checking the impact of the renaming on the perceived brand femininity and masculinity*

Even not hypothesized, in order to generalize the findings of study 1, H1 and H2 were replicated to the 'initial' group of consumers (men for masculine brands, and women for

feminine brands) in order to check if the same asymmetrical relation between brand masculinity and brand femininity applies to both men and women. A one way repeated measures analysis of variance was conducted to compare the scores on the levels of masculinity and femininity prior to the introduction of a non-congruent endorsed brand name and after this introduction. This time, male respondents evaluated the addition of a feminine endorsed brand name to a masculine brand, and female respondents evaluated the addition of a masculine endorsed brand name to a feminine brand. For masculine brand names, there is a significant effect of introducing a high feminine/low masculine endorsed brand name on the levels of the perceived masculinity ( $F(1,206)=91.848$ ,  $p<.1\%$ , partial  $\eta^2=.308$ ) and femininity ( $F(1,206)=121.617$ ,  $p<.1\%$ , partial  $\eta^2=.371$ ) of the final brand name. The level of brand masculinity significantly decreases ( $M_{MBP\_BEFORE}=4.33$ ;  $M_{MBP\_AFTER}=3.45$ ), and the level of brand femininity significantly increases ( $M_{FBP\_BEFORE}=2.51$ ;  $M_{FBP\_AFTER}=3.82$ ). Therefore, H1 is also supported for men. For feminine brands, there is a significant effect of introducing a high masculine/low feminine endorsed brand name on the levels of the perceived femininity ( $F(1,303)=113.61$ ,  $p<.1\%$ , partial  $\eta^2=.371$ ) but not on the level of the perceived masculinity ( $F(1,303)=3.594$ ,  $p=.059$ ) of the final brand name. The level of brand femininity significantly decreases ( $M_{FBP\_BEFORE}=3.68$ ;  $M_{FBP\_AFTER}=2.80$ ), whereas the level of brand masculinity directionally increases but not significantly ( $M_{MBP\_BEFORE}=3.37$ ;  $M_{MBP\_AFTER}=3.50$ ). Therefore, H2 is also supported and one can conclude that women react similarly to men. As shown in table 10, these findings were confirmed at the aggregated brand level (masculine and feminine brands) and for each brand name tested separately.

	Masculinity Before	Masculinity After		Femininity Before	Femininity After	
Masculine Brands (207 men)	4.33 (1.24)	3.45 (1.40)	$F(1,206)=91.848$ , $p<.1\%$ , partial $\eta^2=.308$	2.51 (1.34)	3.82 (1.64)	$F(1,206)=121.617$ , $p<.1\%$ , partial $\eta^2=.371$
Diesel (126)	4.63 (1.06)	3.54 (1.39)	$F(1,125)=87.893$ , $p < 1\%$ , partial $\eta^2=.413$	2.42 (1.24)	3.85 (1.69)	$F(1,125)=93.920$ , $p<1\%$ , partial $\eta^2=.429$
Hugo Boss (81)	3.87 (1.35)	3.31 (1.43)	$F(1,80)=15.006$ , $p < 1\%$ , partial $\eta^2=.158$	2.66 (1.48)	3.77 (1.56)	$F(1,80)=32.032$ , $p<1\%$ , partial $\eta^2=.286$
Feminine Brands (304 women)	3.37 (1.26)	3.50 (1.46)	$F(1,303)=3.594$ , $p=.059$	3.68 (1.52)	2.80 (1.32)	$F(1,303)=113.47$ , $p<1\%$ , partial $\eta^2=.272$
Mango (198)	3.26 (1.31)	3.39 (1.43)	$F(1,197)=1.958$ , $p=.163$	3.84 (1.56)	2.88 (1.37)	$F(1,197)=80.475$ , $p<1\%$ , partial $\eta^2=.290$

Dior (106)	3.58 (1.13)	3.72 (1.49)	F(1,105)=1.776, p=.186	3.39 (1.39)	2.64 (1.21)	F(1,105)=33.178, p<1%, partial $\eta^2$ =.240
------------	-------------	-------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------	---

**Table 10 – Testing hypothesis 1 and 2 (study 2)**

*Spillover effect: Impact of the renaming on the initial brand name attitude*

To test hypotheses 5 and 6, a mixed between-within subjects' analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of the renaming on the brand attitude prior to the brand name modification and after the brand name modification. There was a significant main effect for time for both masculine (F(1,204)=32.66, p<1%, partial  $\eta^2$ =.138) and feminine brands (F(1,291)=74.84, p<1%, partial  $\eta^2$ =.205). Therefore, it can be concluded that the brand name change negatively impacts the attitude toward the parent brand name as predicted (for masculine brands:  $M_{ATT\_BEFORE}$ =4.42 and  $M_{ATT\_AFTER}$ =4.00; for feminine brands:  $M_{ATT\_BEFORE}$ =4.66 and  $M_{ATT\_AFTER}$ =4.13). Therefore, H7 is supported at the aggregated level and for each brand name tested separately, as shown in table 11.

**Table 11 – Testing hypothesis 5 (study 2) spillover**

	Attitude Before	Attitude After	
Masculine Brands (205)	4.42 (1.31)	4.00 (1.33)	F(1,204)=32.666, p<.1%, partial $\eta^2$ =.138
Diesel	4.30 (1.27)	3.88 (1.22)	F(1,124)=19.204, p <1%, partial $\eta^2$ =.134
Hugo Boss (80)	4.60 (1.34)	4.18 (1.48)	F(1,79)=13.397, p<1%, partial $\eta^2$ =.145
Feminine Brands (292)	4.66 (1.25)	4.13 (1.26)	F(1,291)=74.846, p<1%, partial $\eta^2$ =.205
Mango (189)	4.72 (1.28)	4.26 (1.30)	F(1,188)=35.190, p<1%, partial $\eta^2$ =.158
Dior (103)	4.55 (1.20)	3.90 (1.13)	F(1,103)=44.715, p<1%, partial $\eta^2$ =.305

Regarding the spillover effect toward the brand, there was no significant interaction between the gender of the brand and time (F(1,495)=1.158, p=28.2%). Therefore, one can conclude that this negative effect was no more important for feminine brands than for masculine brands as hypothesized; thus, H6 is rejected.

## Discussion, Implications and Conclusions

### *Theoretical contributions*

First, our findings emphasize the asymmetrical evaluation of masculine vs feminine brands. The research demonstrates that a feminine endorsed brand name significantly increases the EBS femininity but, in contrast, a masculine endorsed brand name is not able to significantly increase the EBS masculinity. This result highlights that manipulating brand perceived masculinity with an added masculine endorsed brand name appears to be very difficult. Hence, this research contributes to a better theoretical comprehension of the impact of brand name change on the perceived brand gender, adding to the brand gender literature (Grohmann, 2009; Lieven et al, 2015). This first result could explain the underlying consumer thinking process regarding previous findings suggesting that women more easily accept masculine brands than men accept feminine brands (Stuteville, 1971; Alreck et al, 1982; Neale et al, 2016) and finally, that they are more receptive to cross-gender brand extensions than men (Jung and Lee, 2006). The paper also adds to prior literature highlighting male resistance to cross-gender bending (Avery, 2012) and more broadly male resistance to all feminine-related consumption practices for fear of the feminine (Kimmel, 1996).

Second, this research shows that brand name changes, including minor ones such as adding an endorsed brand name without modifying the main brand, are risky processes: This adds to the previous literature (Kapferer, 2012). For mixed-target brands, adding an endorsed brand name of non-congruent gender with no communication has a negative short-term effect on the attitude towards the brand; this replicates the findings of the prior studies on brand name substitutions (Collange, 2008; Aimé, 2008; Pauwels Delassus and Mogos Descotes, 2012).

Third, a major theoretical contribution of this research is that this negative effect is stronger for feminine brands than for masculine brands. Adding a non-congruent endorsed brand name more negatively impacts the consumer attitude toward the new EBS for feminine brands. This adds to previous findings on cross-gender brand extensions, revealing that cross-gender brand extensions generate a less favorable attitude towards feminine brands than masculine brands (Jung and Lee, 2006). Moreover, the research shows that changing the brand architecture for feminine brands with a masculine endorsed brand appears to not be fruitful, adding to the prior literature about endorsed brands (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000; Olins, 1990).

Fourth, this research reveals a negative feedback effect of this specific brand name change on the attitude towards the initial brand, be it masculine or feminine. This contributes to the previous literature outlining the negative impact of brand extension on the evaluation of the parent brand (Czellar, 2003; Martínez and de Chernatony, 2004; Völckner et al, 2008). Adding a gender-incongruent endorsed brand to a masculine or feminine brand is a situation where

there is low fit between the initial endorser brand and the new EBS. In such a situation of low fit, research on brand extensions has shown a possible dilution of the initial brand values (Loken and John, 1993; Kim and al, 2001), leading to an unfavorable evaluation. Hence, our study contributes to this stream of research. Finally, our results do not highlight a more negative attitude towards the initial brand for feminine brands than masculine brands, in contrast with our final hypothesis. However, this finding can be explained, as Jung and Lee (2006) had only obtained directional support but no significant results for attitude towards the initial brand on cross-gender extensions from feminine vs masculine brands. It is probable that the change to a gender-incongruent EBS may be perceived by consumers as weaker than the change to a cross-gender extension/ parent brand system; therefore, the consecutive effects on the initial brand would be weaker.

### *Managerial contributions*

This research provides many insights for managers. First, it shows that, for mixed-target brands in symbolic product categories, changing from a single brand name strategy toward an EBS strategy appears unsuccessful in the short run and without further communication, regardless of the gender of the initial brand (i.e., masculine or feminine). Second, the research highlights that a change of brand naming architecture appears to be completely fruitless for feminine brands; it does not generate an increased perception of masculinity for the EBS. The renaming results in a more unfavorable attitude toward the new system, as the brand loses one part of its personality, its femininity, without gaining masculinity. Thus, this paper emphasizes the challenge for brands with a strong feminine identity to be attractive for men and may explain the difficulties of *Mango* in addressing men. Regarding masculine brands, the results obtained remain uncertain in the long run, as the renaming has managed to increase the level of femininity of the EBS and therefore, its acceptability for women. The attitude of women toward the EBS may evolve favorably with time and promotion, since prior literature shows that women have a less rigid definition of gender roles than men (Werner and La Russa, 1985). Third, the study reveals potential negative feedback effects on the attitude toward the initial brand post renaming in the short run. Therefore, a naming strategy such as *H.E* by *Mango* should not be recommended to marketers for feminine brands and should be carefully studied for masculine brands. However, these findings may be linked to the product category and the brand names selected in the experiment. *Prêt-à-porter* consumption can be considered conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1979; Braun and Wicklund, 1989), because consumers buy certain brands with the objective of

making an impression on others. Therefore, changing the brand name in this category can make these brands appear less desirable for consumers and generate this unfavorable attitude.

Finally, the research reveals that changing the brand name is not sufficient to change the brand gender perception for men/women. Therefore, marketers need to build on other marketing strategies, working on other antecedents to brand gender perception such as logo design and brand design (Lieven et al., 2015; Azar, 2015) or brand advertising (Azar, 2015).

### *Limitations and further research*

One limitation of this work is focusing on one sole brand extrinsic characteristic (e.g., brand name) in our experimental design, therefore artificially influencing consumers' relative brand name importance. Azar (2015) showed the existence of eight other antecedents to brand gender perception. Providing information about intrinsic attributes and other extrinsic characteristics (e.g., product design, material used, and logo design) can also influence a consumer's evaluation process. Further studies should test the impact of other brand gender antecedents or other types of brands (e.g., androgynous and undifferentiated) in this context.

Regarding internal validity, study 1 and 2 introduced a short text to present the renaming. This text may have made the respondents focus on the brand more than they would in real world conditions. Moreover, assessments of change were based on immediate reactions, which may evolve with time or more communication. To reinforce internal validity, further research could use a different methodology to allow respondents to discover the renaming in more realistic situations and should measure attitudes directly after presenting the renaming, attitudes should be measured again at a later date.

Regarding external validity, on the one hand, this study was conducted in a French context; the French culture has a moderate level of masculinity/femininity (Hofstede, 2001), as in Europe overall. It would be interesting to generalize these findings to other countries. On the other hand, the findings are limited to one symbolic product-category (prêt-à-porter), which can be considered conspicuous consumption, as outlined previously. Further research may replicate this study using symbolic product categories that are less status-linked to generalize these findings.

### **Main references**

- Aaker D.A. and Joachimsthaler E.A. (2000), The brand relation spectrum: The key to the brand architecture challenge, *California Management Review*, 42, 4, 1-23.
- Aaker D.A. and Keller K.L. (1992), The effects of sequential introduction of brand extensions, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 29,1, 35-60.

- Aaker J.L. (1997), Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34, 3, 347-356.
- Aimé-Garnier, I. and Lai, C. (2008), Le changement de nom de marque : définition, clarification et proposition d'une typologie. *Décisions Marketing*, 33-46.
- Alreck, P.L., Settle, R.B. and Belch, M.A. (1982), Who Responds to Gendered Ads, and how? *Journal of Advertising Research*, 22, 25-32.
- Ashmore, R.D., F.K. DelBoca, and A.J. Wohlers (1986), Gender Stereotypes, in R.D. Ashmore & F.K. DelBoca (eds.), *The social psychology of female-male relations: A critical analysis of central concepts*, New York: Academic Press, 69-119.
- Azar, S.L. (2013), Exploring brand masculine patterns: moving beyond monolithic masculinity. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 22, 7, 502-512.
- Azar, S.L. (2015), Toward an understanding of brand sexual associations. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 24, 1, 43-56.
- Avery, J. (2012), Defending the markers of masculinity: consumer resistance to brand-gender-bending, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 29, 322-336.
- Balachander, S., and Ghose, S. (2003). Reciprocal spillover effects: A strategic benefit of brand extensions. *Journal of Marketing*, 67, 1, 4-13.
- Batra, R. Lehmann, D.R. and Singh, D. (1993), The brand personality component of brand goodwill : some antecedents and consequence, in Aaker, D. and Biel, A. (Eds), *Brand Equity and Advertising*, Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale, NY.
- Bhat S., Kelley G. E., and O'Donnell K. A. (1998), An investigation of consumer reactions to the use of different brand names, *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 7, 1 1, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed December 13, 2016).
- Bem, S.L. (1974), The measurement of psychological androgyny, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 42, 155-162.
- Collange, V. (2008), L'impact de la substitution de marques sur l'évaluation et l'intention d'achat du produit. *Recherche et Applications en Marketing*, 23, 2, 1-18.
- Czellar, S. (2003), Consumer attitude toward brand extensions: An integrative model and research propositions. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 20, 1, 97-115.
- Dacin P.A. and Smith D.C. (1994), The effect of brand portfolio characteristics on consumer evaluations of brand extensions, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 31, 5, 229-242.
- Del Río, A.B., Vázquez, R., Iglesias, V. (2001), The role of the brand name in obtaining differential advantages. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 10, 7, 452-465.
- Diamantopoulos, A., Smith, G., & Grime, I. (2005), The Impact of brand extensions on brand personality: Experimental evidence. *European Journal of Marketing*, 39, 172, 129-149.
- Fry, J.N. (1971), Personality variables and cigarette brand choice, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 8, 298-304.
- Goutron J. (2006), L'impact de la personnalité de la marque sur la relation marque-consommateur, application au marché du prêt-à-porter féminin, *Revue Française du Marketing*, 207, 43-59.
- Grohmann, B. (2009), Gender dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 46, 1, 105-119.
- Guevremont, A. and Grohmann, B. (2015), Consonants in brand names influence brand gender perceptions. *European Journal of Marketing*, 49, 1/2, 101-122.
- Jung, K. and Lee W. (2006), Cross-gender brand extensions: effects of gender of the brand, gender of consumer, and product type on evaluation of cross-gender extensions. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 33, 1, 67-74.
- Kapferer, J.N., (2012), *The New Strategic Brand Management: Advanced Insights and Strategic Thinking*, 5th edition, Kogan.
- Kapoor, H., & Heslop, H. A. (2009). Brand positivity and competitive effects on the evaluation of brand extensions. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 26, 228-237.

- Kim, C. K., Lavack, A. M. and Smith, M. (2001). Consumer evaluation of vertical brand extensions and core brands. *Journal of Business Research*, 52, 3, 211-222.
- Kimmel, M. S. (1996), *Manhood in America*. New York: Free Press.
- Klink, R. R. (2000), Creating brand names with meaning: the use of sound symbolism, *Marketing Letters*, 11, 1, 5-20.
- Kramer, L. (2005), *The sociology of gender*. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing Company.
- Lane V. and Jacobson R. (1997), The Reciprocal Impact of Brand Leveraging: Feedback Effects from Brand Extension Evaluation to Brand Evaluation, *Marketing Letters*, 8,3, 261-271.
- Lieven, T., Herrmann, A., Landwehr, J.R. and van Tilburg, M. (2011), Sex matters: the effect of brand gender on brand equity, in Ahluwalia, R., Chartrand, R.L. and Ratner, R.K. (Eds), *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 39, Association for Consumer Research, Duluth, p 527.
- Lieven, T., Grohmann, B., Herrmann, A., Landwehr, J. R., & van Tilburg, M. (2015). The effect of brand design on brand gender perceptions and brand preference. *European Journal of Marketing*, 49, 1/2, 146-169.
- Loken B. & John D.R., (1993). Diluting brand beliefs: When do brand extensions have a negative impact? *Journal of Marketing*, 57, 71-84
- Martínez, E., & de Chernatony, L. (2004). The effect of brand extension strategies upon brand image. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 21(1), 39-50.
- Michel G., and Donthu N. (2014), Why negative brand extensions evaluations do not always negatively affect the brand: The rule of central and peripheral central associations. *Journal of Business Research*, 67, 12, 2611-2619.
- Neale, L., Robbie, R., & Martin, B. (2016). Gender identity and brand incongruence: when in doubt, pursue masculinity. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 24(5), 347-359.
- Olins, W. (1990), *Corporate identity: bedrijfsstrategie in beeld*. Veen Uitgevers, Utrecht.
- Park, C.W., Jaworski, B.J., MacInnis, D.J. (1986). Strategic Brand Concept-Image Management. *Journal of Marketing*, 50, 135-145.
- Pauwels Delassus V. and Mogos Descotes R., (2012). "Brand name substitution and brand equity transfer". *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 21, 117-125
- Penaloza, L. (1994), Crossing boundaries/drawing lines: A look at the nature of gender boundaries and their impact on marketing research. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 11, 359-379.
- Pina, M. J. M., Dall'Olmo Riley F. and Lomax W. (2013). Generalizing spillover effects of goods and service brand extensions: A meta-analysis approach, *Journal of Business Research*, 66, 9, 1411-1419.
- Swaminathan V., Fox R.J., Reddy S. K. (2001). The Impact of Brand Extension Introduction on Choice. *Journal of Marketing*, 65, 4, 1-15.
- Stuteville J. (1971), Sexually polarized products and advertising strategy. *Journal of Retailing*, 47, 2, 3-13.
- Ulrich, I. (2013), The effect of consumer multifactorial gender and biological sex on the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions. *Psychology & Marketing*, 30, 9, 794-810.
- Vitz, P.C., Johnston, D. (1965), Masculinity of smokers and the masculinity of cigarette images, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 49, 3, 155-159.
- Völckner, F., Sattler, H. & Kaufmann, G. (2008). Image feedback effects of brand extensions: Evidence from a longitudinal field study, *Marketing letters*, 19,2, 109-124
- Werner, P.D. and La Russia, G.W. (1985), Persistence and change in sex-role stereotypes, *Sex Roles*, 12, 1089-1100.
- Worth L.T., Smith J., and Mackie D.M. (1992), Gender schematicity and preference for gender-typed products, *Psychology and Marketing*, 9, 1, 17-30.
- Wu, L., Klink, R. R., and Guo, J. (2013), Creating gender brand personality with brand names: The effects of phonetic symbolism. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 21, 3, 319-330.



- Yorkston E.A. and De Mello G.E. (2005), Linguistic gender making and categorization. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32, 224-234.
- Yorkston, E.A. and Menon, G. (2004), A sound idea: phonetic effects of brand names on consumer judgments. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31, 1, 43-51.
- Zimmer M. and Bhat S. (2004) The reciprocal effects of extension quality and fit on parent brand attitude. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 13,1,37-46

Appendix 1	Study 1						Study 2					
	Mean	St. D.	Stand. Reg. Weights	Reliability Analysis	CR	AVE	Mean	St. D.	Stand. Reg. Weights	Reliability Analysis	CR	AVE
<b>Brand Femininity before</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>1.57</b>		<b>.948</b>	<b>.948</b>	<b>.785</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>1.55</b>		<b>.944</b>	<b>.944</b>	<b>.772</b>
Sensitive	3.57	1.78	.864				3.20	1.66	.874			
Fragile	3.19	1.75	.926				3.41	1.80	.936			
Tender	3.02	1.77	.944				3.21	1.71	.937			
Sweet	3.07	1.77	.863				3.17	1.74	.873			
Graceful	2.90	1.71	.829				3.06	1.69	.761			
<b>Brand Masculinity before</b>	<b>3.69</b>	<b>1.41</b>		<b>.851</b>	<b>.853</b>	<b>.540</b>	<b>3.76</b>	<b>1.34</b>		<b>.836</b>	<b>.837</b>	<b>.508</b>
Brave	3.32	1.76	.649				3.32	1.66	.676			
Daring	3.85	1.74	.668				3.98	1.75	.660			
Dominant	3.96	1.84	.770				4.28	1.71	.708			
Sturdy	3.82	1.84	.784				3.84	1.73	.780			
Adventurous	3.57	1.78	.789				3.37	1.75	.733			
<b>Brand Femininity after</b>	<b>3.38</b>	<b>1.68</b>		<b>.966</b>	<b>.965</b>	<b>.847</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>1.54</b>		<b>.956</b>	<b>.956</b>	<b>.812</b>
Sensitive	3.45	1.79	.873				3.25	1.64	.842			
Fragile	3.50	1.82	.932				3.28	1.66	.917			
Tender	3.38	1.79	.958				3.21	1.68	.938			
Sweet	3.44	1.82	.956				3.17	1.70	.929			
Graceful	3.23	1.82	.880				3.16	1.68	.875			
<b>Brand Masculinity after</b>	<b>3.26</b>	<b>1.42</b>		<b>.892</b>	<b>.891</b>	<b>.621</b>	<b>3.52</b>	<b>1.46</b>		<b>.895</b>	<b>.896</b>	<b>.634</b>
Brave	3.33	1.77	.877				3.54	1.72	.847			
Daring	3.62	1.78	.861				3.70	1.77	.870			
Dominant	3.10	1.68	.775				3.51	1.76	.763			
Sturdy	3.01	1.63	.697				3.40	1.69	.753			
Adventurous	3.26	1.73	.714				3.48	1.72	.739			
<b>Familiarity with the product category</b>	<b>4.18</b>	<b>1.45</b>		<b>.894</b>	<b>.895</b>	<b>.741</b>	<b>4.20</b>	<b>1.50</b>		<b>.916</b>	<b>.916</b>	<b>.784</b>
Familiar	4.43	1.59	.907				4.45	1.63	.914			
Well informed	4.08	1.60	.876				4.07	1.57	.881			
Knowledgeable	4.03	1.63	.795				4.09	1.67	.861			
<b>Brand Familiarity</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>1.47</b>		<b>.838</b>	<b>.842</b>	<b>.640</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>1.61</b>		<b>.888</b>	<b>.883</b>	<b>.716</b>
X is a very familiar brand	3.64	1.81	.748				4.07	1.85	.777			
I know a lot of products of brand X	3.23	1.68	.844				3.77	1.74	.933			
I know much better brand X than the people around me	2.99	1.67	.805				3.63	1.74	.821			
<b>Brand Attitude before</b>	<b>4.27</b>	<b>1.31</b>		<b>.811</b>	<b>.894</b>	<b>.808</b>	<b>4.55</b>	<b>1.28</b>		<b>.917</b>	<b>.918</b>	<b>.848</b>
Very negative/very positive opinion	4.21	1.38	.867				4.50	1.31	.922			
Very good/ very bad opinion	4.33	1.37	.930				4.60	1.37	.920			
<b>Brand Attitude after</b>	<b>3.83</b>	<b>1.28</b>		<b>.708</b>	<b>.821</b>	<b>.698</b>	<b>3.72</b>	<b>1.27</b>		<b>.739</b>	<b>.749</b>	<b>.599</b>
Very negative/very positive opinion	3.85	1.65	.760				3.78	1.28	.744			
Very good/ very bad opinion	3.87	1.40	.905				3.66	1.56	.803			
<b>Brand Fit</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>1.57</b>		<b>.923</b>	<b>.895</b>	<b>.741</b>	<b>3.08</b>	<b>1.49</b>		<b>.916</b>	<b>.918</b>	<b>3.08</b>
The association between X and Y is coherent	3.32	1.74	.907				3.01	1.65	.891			
The brands X and Y are complementary	3.28	1.67	.876				3.03	1.58	.919			
brand X is in perfect harmony with brand Y	3.50	1.69	.795				3.20	1.61	.852			
<b>Product category fit</b>	<b>3.39</b>	<b>1.68</b>		<b>.708</b>	<b>.867</b>	<b>.756</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>1.58</b>		<b>.873</b>	<b>.875</b>	<b>3.18</b>
The name Y by X is a good brand name for clothes	3.63	1.90	.874				3.27	1.73	.867			
the name Y by X is representative of the idea I have of clothes brands	3.14	1.68	.875				3.08	1.62	.896			
<b>Brand Attitude spillover effect</b>							<b>4.07</b>	<b>1.29</b>		<b>.855</b>	<b>.857</b>	<b>.749</b>
Very negative/very positive opinion							3.93	1.34	.846			
Very good/ very bad opinion							4.22	1.42	.885			

Correlation values were used as an indicator of reliability for scales with two items. For all other scales we used Cronbach's  $\alpha$ .