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Brand Extension Strategies in Fashion: A Thematic Review of Secondary Data

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ABSTRACT

This study examines brand extension strategies in the fashion industry through a thematic review of secondary data. Drawing on brand equity theory, categorisation theory, and signalling theory, the research explores how fashion brands leverage existing brand assets to introduce new products and enter new markets. Using qualitative thematic analysis, the study identifies key factors influencing extension success, including brand equity strength, perceived fit, consumer perception, and strategic alignment. The findings reveal that symbolic coherence and emotional resonance play a critical role in shaping consumer evaluations, particularly in the context of luxury and lifestyle branding. Additionally, the study highlights emerging trends such as digitalisation and sustainability, which are reshaping brand extension practices. While brand extension offers significant opportunities for growth and market expansion, it also entails risks such as brand dilution and loss of authenticity. The study contributes to the literature by providing a comprehensive synthesis of existing research and offering practical insights for fashion brand managers. Overall, successful brand extension requires a careful balance between innovation and consistency to maintain brand integrity and consumer trust.

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1. Introduction

The global fashion industry operates within a highly competitive, rapidly evolving marketplace characterised by short product life cycles, intense brand rivalry, and continuously shifting consumer preferences. In such a dynamic environment, fashion brands are compelled to adopt innovative strategies to sustain growth, enhance market presence, and maintain relevance. Among these strategies, brand extension has emerged as a widely utilised approach for leveraging existing brand equity to introduce new products or enter new market segments (Keller, 2013). Brand extension enables firms to capitalise on established brand recognition, reduce marketing costs, and accelerate consumer acceptance, thereby offering both strategic and economic advantages.

Brand extension refers to the practice of using an existing brand name to launch new products, either within the same category (line extension) or across different categories (category extension) (Aaker & Keller, 1990). In the context of fashion, brand extension manifests in diverse forms, including vertical extensions (e.g., luxury brands launching diffusion lines), horizontal extensions (e.g., expansion into accessories or fragrances), and lifestyle extensions (e.g., expansion into home décor or hospitality). For instance, luxury fashion houses frequently extend their brands into perfumes, cosmetics, and accessories to reach broader consumer segments while maintaining core brand identity (Kapferer, 2012).

The significance of brand extension in the fashion industry is closely tied to the intangible nature of fashion products, where symbolic value, identity expression, and emotional associations play a critical role in consumer decision-making (Ko & Megehee, 2012). Unlike functional goods, fashion products are deeply embedded in cultural and social contexts, making brand image and perceived meaning essential determinants of success. Consequently, brand extension strategies must carefully balance innovation with consistency to avoid diluting brand equity or confusing consumers (Loken & John, 1993).

Despite its widespread adoption, brand extension is not without risks. Failed extensions can lead to negative brand associations, reduced consumer trust, and erosion of brand equity (Reddy et al., 1994). In fashion, where brand identity is often closely tied to exclusivity, aesthetics, and heritage, inappropriate extensions may undermine the perceived authenticity of the brand. For example, luxury brands entering mass-market segments risk diminishing their prestige, while fast fashion brands attempting to move upscale may struggle with credibility issues (Kim & Lavack, 1996).

Given these complexities, understanding the strategic considerations underlying successful brand extensions is crucial. Previous research has identified several key factors influencing extension outcomes, including perceived fit between the parent brand and the extension, brand strength, consumer attitudes, and market conditions (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Boush & Loken, 1991). However, much of the existing

literature focuses on quantitative analyses or specific case studies, leaving a gap in comprehensive, thematic syntheses of secondary data that capture broader patterns and insights.

This study addresses this gap by conducting a thematic review of secondary data on brand extension strategies in the fashion industry. By systematically analysing existing literature, industry reports, and documented case examples, the research aims to identify recurring themes, strategic approaches, and critical success factors associated with fashion brand extensions. The use of secondary data allows for a holistic understanding of the phenomenon, drawing on diverse sources to generate theoretically informed insights.

The study is guided by the following research objectives:

- To examine the theoretical foundations underpinning brand extension strategies in fashion.
- To identify key themes and patterns in brand extension practices based on secondary data.
- To analyse the factors contributing to successful and unsuccessful brand extensions.
- To explore the implications of brand extension for brand equity and consumer perception.

By addressing these objectives, the research contributes to both academic and practical understanding of brand extension in fashion. It integrates theoretical perspectives with empirical observations to provide a nuanced analysis of how fashion brands navigate the

challenges and opportunities associated with extending their brand portfolios. Furthermore, the findings offer valuable insights for practitioners seeking to design effective extension strategies while preserving brand integrity.

2. Literature Review

Brand extension has been extensively studied within the broader field of brand management. It is generally defined as the use of an established brand name to introduce new products or services (Keller, 2013). Aaker and Keller (1990) distinguish between line extensions, which involve new products within the same category, and category extensions, which introduce products in entirely new categories. In fashion, both forms are prevalent, with brands frequently expanding product lines or diversifying into complementary sectors.

The effectiveness of brand extension is largely influenced by the concept of perceived fit, which refers to the degree of similarity or compatibility between the parent brand and the extension (Aaker & Keller, 1990). High perceived fit facilitates positive consumer evaluations, as it allows consumers to transfer existing brand associations to the new product. Conversely, low fit may lead to scepticism and negative attitudes, particularly if the extension appears inconsistent with the brand's core identity (Boush & Loken, 1991).

2.1 Theoretical Foundations

Several theoretical frameworks underpin the study of brand extension. One of the most influential is brand equity theory, which

conceptualises brand value as a set of assets linked to a brand name that adds value to products (Aaker, 1991). Brand extensions leverage this equity to reduce perceived risk and enhance consumer acceptance. Keller's (1993) customer-based brand equity (CBBE) model further emphasises the role of brand knowledge, including awareness and associations, in shaping consumer responses to extensions.

Another important perspective is categorisation theory, which explains how consumers evaluate new products based on their similarity to existing categories (Rosch & Mervis, 1975). When a brand extension aligns with established category schemas, it is more likely to be accepted. In contrast, extensions that fall outside these schemas may require greater cognitive effort and are more prone to rejection.

Signalling theory also provides insights into brand extension strategies, particularly in contexts where information asymmetry exists (Erdem & Swait, 1998). Strong brands serve as signals of quality and reliability, enabling consumers to make informed decisions even in the absence of complete information. This is especially relevant in fashion, where experiential attributes and symbolic meanings dominate.

2.2 Brand Extension in the Fashion Industry

The application of brand extension in fashion is shaped by the unique characteristics of the industry. Fashion brands often operate as symbolic brands, where identity, lifestyle, and emotional resonance are central (Ko & Megehee, 2012). As a result, extensions must

align not only with functional attributes but also with the brand's symbolic meaning.

Luxury fashion brands, in particular, have extensively utilised brand extension to expand their market reach. Kapferer (2012) notes that luxury brands often adopt vertical extension strategies, introducing lower-priced products such as fragrances and accessories to attract aspirational consumers while maintaining exclusivity in their core offerings. However, this approach requires careful management to avoid brand dilution.

Fast fashion brands, on the other hand, tend to pursue horizontal extensions, expanding into adjacent product categories such as footwear, accessories, and beauty products. These extensions are often driven by economies of scale and the desire to offer a comprehensive lifestyle experience (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2010).

2.3 Determinants of Brand Extension Success

A substantial body of literature has identified key factors influencing the success of brand extensions. Among these, brand strength plays a critical role. Strong brands with high levels of awareness and positive associations are more likely to succeed in extending into new categories (Keller, 2013).

Perceived quality is another important determinant. Extensions from high-quality brands are generally perceived as more credible and trustworthy (Reddy et al., 1994). Additionally, consumer innovativeness and brand loyalty can influence acceptance, as loyal customers are more willing to try new products from familiar brands (Kim & Lavack, 1996).

The concept of brand consistency is also crucial. Extensions that maintain consistency with the brand's core values and identity are more likely to be successful (Loken & John, 1993). In contrast, inconsistent extensions may lead to confusion and negative evaluations.

2.4 Risks and Challenges

While brand extension offers numerous benefits, it also entails significant risks. One of the primary concerns is brand dilution, which occurs when extensions weaken the brand's associations or reduce its distinctiveness (Loken & John, 1993). This is particularly problematic in the fashion industry, where brand image is a key driver of consumer choice.

Another challenge is cannibalisation, where new products compete with existing offerings, potentially reducing overall profitability. Additionally, unsuccessful extensions can damage consumer trust and negatively impact the parent brand's reputation (Reddy et al., 1994).

2.5 Emerging Trends in Fashion Brand Extension

Recent developments in the fashion industry have introduced new dimensions to brand extension strategies. The rise of digital platforms and e-commerce has enabled brands to experiment with virtual products, collaborations, and limited-edition releases (Hagberg et al., 2016). Collaborations between fashion brands and artists, designers, or other brands have become increasingly popular as a form of co-branding and extension.

Sustainability has also emerged as a critical consideration. Brands are increasingly extending into eco-friendly product lines to align with changing consumer values and regulatory pressures (Joy et al., 2012). These extensions not only enhance brand image but also contribute to long-term competitiveness.

2.6 Research Gap

Despite extensive research on brand extension, there is a lack of comprehensive thematic analyses that synthesise insights from diverse secondary sources, particularly within the fashion industry. Existing studies often focus on specific variables or contexts, limiting their generalizability. This study seeks to address this gap by providing a holistic, thematic review of secondary data, offering a deeper understanding of brand extension strategies in fashion.

3. Theoretical Framework

The present study is grounded in an integrative theoretical framework that draws upon brand equity theory, categorisation theory, and signalling theory to explain the mechanisms underlying brand extension strategies in the fashion industry. These theoretical perspectives provide complementary insights into how consumers perceive, evaluate, and respond to brand extensions, particularly in contexts characterised by symbolic consumption and high brand involvement.

3.1 Brand Equity Theory

Brand equity theory serves as the foundational framework for understanding brand extension strategies. Aaker (1991) conceptualises brand equity as a set of brand

assets and liabilities linked to a brand name that add or subtract value from a product or service. These assets include brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty. In the context of brand extension, these dimensions play a crucial role in facilitating consumer acceptance of new products.

Keller's (1993) customer-based brand equity (CBBE) model further elaborates on this concept by emphasising the role of consumer knowledge structures in shaping brand perceptions. According to Keller (2013), brand knowledge consists of brand awareness and brand image, with the latter encompassing the associations held in consumers' memory. When a brand extends into new categories, consumers rely on these existing associations to evaluate the extension. Positive and strong associations enhance the likelihood of favourable evaluations, whereas weak or inconsistent associations may hinder acceptance.

In the fashion industry, where symbolic value and emotional resonance are central, brand equity assumes heightened importance. Fashion brands often embody lifestyle, identity, and cultural meaning, making their equity highly sensitive to extension strategies (Ko & Megehee, 2012). Extensions that align with the brand's established image can reinforce equity, while incongruent extensions may dilute it (Loken & John, 1993). Thus, brand equity theory provides a critical lens for analysing both the opportunities and risks associated with brand extension.

3.2 Categorisation Theory

Categorisation theory offers a cognitive perspective on how consumers process and evaluate brand extensions. Rooted in cognitive psychology, this theory posits that individuals categorise new stimuli based on their similarity to existing mental schemas (Rosch & Mervis, 1975). In the context of brand extension, consumers assess the degree of "fit" between the parent brand and the extension by comparing it to their existing knowledge structures.

Aaker and Keller (1990) highlight that perceived fit is a key determinant of extension success. Fit can be based on product-related attributes, such as functional similarity, or on more abstract associations, such as brand image or usage context. High perceived fit facilitates the transfer of positive associations from the parent brand to the extension, resulting in favourable evaluations. Conversely, low fit may lead to cognitive dissonance and negative responses (Boush & Loken, 1991).

In fashion, categorisation processes are particularly complex due to the symbolic and experiential nature of products. Consumers often rely on aesthetic coherence, brand narrative, and lifestyle congruence when evaluating extensions (Kapferer, 2012). For example, a luxury fashion brand extending into high-end home décor may be perceived as a natural progression due to shared symbolic attributes, even if the functional categories differ. This highlights the importance of both functional and symbolic fit in shaping consumer perceptions.

3.3 Signalling Theory

Signalling theory provides an additional perspective by focusing on the role of brands as signals of quality and credibility in markets characterised by information asymmetry (Erdem & Swait, 1998). In such contexts, consumers may lack complete information about product attributes and therefore rely on brand reputation as a heuristic for decision-making.

Strong brands with high levels of credibility serve as effective signals, reducing perceived risk and uncertainty associated with new products. This is particularly relevant for brand extensions, where consumers may have limited prior experience with the new category. The reputation of the parent brand can thus facilitate trial and adoption by conveying implicit assurances of quality and reliability (Keller, 2013).

In the fashion industry, signalling effects are amplified due to the prominence of intangible attributes such as prestige, exclusivity, and authenticity. Luxury brands, in particular, rely heavily on signalling mechanisms to justify premium pricing and maintain differentiation (Kapferer, 2012). When such brands extend into new categories, their established reputation can serve as a powerful signal, enhancing consumer confidence. However, if the extension undermines the perceived exclusivity or authenticity of the brand, the signalling effect may weaken, leading to adverse outcomes.

3.4 Integrative Framework

The integration of brand equity theory, categorisation theory, and signalling theory provides a comprehensive framework for

analysing brand extension strategies in fashion. Brand equity theory explains how existing brand assets influence extension outcomes, categorisation theory elucidates the cognitive processes underlying consumer evaluations, and signalling theory highlights the role of brand reputation in reducing uncertainty.

Together, these theories suggest that successful brand extensions are those that:

- Leverage strong and positive brand equity.
- Achieve a high degree of perceived fit with the parent brand.
- Maintain or enhance the brand's signalling value.

This integrative framework guides the thematic analysis conducted in this study, enabling the identification of key patterns and insights across diverse secondary data sources.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on the systematic analysis of secondary data. Qualitative approaches are particularly suitable for exploring complex phenomena such as brand extension strategies, as they allow for in-depth interpretation of meanings, patterns, and relationships (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given the exploratory nature of the research objectives, a thematic review methodology is employed to synthesise insights from existing literature and industry sources.

Secondary data analysis involves the use of data that have already been collected and

published by other researchers or organisations (Johnston, 2017). In the context of this study, secondary data provide a rich and diverse source of information, enabling the examination of brand extension strategies across different contexts, time periods, and market segments.

4.1 Data Sources and Selection Criteria

The data for this study were collected from multiple secondary sources to ensure comprehensive coverage and triangulation. These sources include:

- Peer-reviewed academic journal articles
- Scholarly books and book chapters
- Industry reports and market analyses
- Case studies of fashion brands
- Reputable online databases and publications

To ensure the quality and relevance of the data, specific inclusion criteria were applied. First, sources had to be published in English and adhere to academic or professional standards. Second, they had to focus on brand extension, brand management, or related topics within the fashion or consumer goods industries. Third, preference was given to sources published within the last two decades, although seminal works were also included to provide theoretical grounding.

Exclusion criteria included non-scholarly sources, opinion pieces without empirical or theoretical support, and studies unrelated to brand extension. This rigorous selection process enhances the credibility and reliability of the findings.

4.2 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process involved systematic searches of academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science using keywords including “brand extension,” “fashion branding,” “luxury brand strategy,” and “brand equity.” Boolean operators and search filters were used to refine the results and identify relevant studies.

In addition to academic sources, industry reports, and case studies were identified through reputable publications and organisational websites. These sources provided practical insights into real-world brand extension strategies, complementing the theoretical perspectives found in academic literature.

All selected sources were carefully reviewed and organised using a structured data extraction process. Key information, including study objectives, methodologies, findings, and theoretical frameworks, was recorded to facilitate subsequent analysis.

4.3 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

The study employs thematic analysis as the primary analytical method. Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative technique for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is particularly suitable for synthesising large volumes of textual data and generating meaningful insights.

The analysis followed a six-phase process as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006):

- **Familiarisation with the data:** Reading and re-reading the selected sources to gain an overall understanding.
- **Generating initial codes:** Identifying relevant concepts and patterns related to brand extension strategies.
- **Searching for themes:** Grouping codes into broader themes that capture recurring patterns.
- **Reviewing themes:** Refining and validating the themes to ensure coherence and relevance.
- **Defining and naming themes:** Clearly articulating the meaning and scope of each theme.
- **Producing the report:** Integrating the themes into a coherent narrative aligned with the research objectives.

This systematic approach ensures transparency and rigour in the analytical process.

4.4 Reliability and Validity

To enhance the reliability and validity of the study, several measures were implemented. First, data triangulation was achieved by using multiple sources, thereby reducing the risk of bias associated with a single data type (Denzin, 1978). Second, a transparent and systematic coding process was employed to ensure consistency in theme identification.

Additionally, the use of established theoretical frameworks provides a robust foundation for interpreting the findings. While qualitative research does not aim for generalizability in the same way as quantitative studies, the depth and richness of

the analysis contribute to the transferability of the insights.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

As the study relies exclusively on secondary data, it does not involve direct interaction with human participants and therefore does not raise significant ethical concerns. However, ethical standards were maintained by properly acknowledging all sources and adhering to academic integrity guidelines (Mannan & Farhana, 2026). All references are cited in accordance with APA (7th edition) standards.

5. Findings and Analysis

The thematic analysis of secondary data revealed several recurring patterns that characterise brand extension strategies in the fashion industry. These themes reflect both strategic intent and consumer perception, highlighting the complex interplay between brand identity, market dynamics, and consumer cognition. The findings are organised into six major themes: strategic leveraging of brand equity, perceived fit and coherence, vertical and horizontal extension strategies, brand dilution and risk management, consumer perception and emotional resonance, and emerging trends in digital and sustainable extensions.

5.1 Strategic Leveraging of Brand Equity

One of the most dominant themes identified in the analysis is the central role of brand equity in facilitating successful brand extensions. Fashion brands with strong equity, characterised by high awareness,

positive associations, and strong loyalty, are more likely to achieve favourable consumer responses when introducing new products (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2013). The findings suggest that brand equity acts as a form of “cognitive shortcut,” enabling consumers to transfer their trust and expectations from the parent brand to the extension.

Luxury fashion brands, in particular, exemplify this phenomenon. Their well-established reputations for quality, craftsmanship, and exclusivity allow them to extend into categories such as fragrances, cosmetics, and accessories with relative ease (Kapferer, 2012). These extensions often serve as entry points for aspirational consumers, thereby expanding the brand’s market reach without compromising its core identity.

However, the analysis also indicates that the effectiveness of brand equity is contingent upon its consistency. Brands that maintain a coherent identity across all touchpoints are better positioned to leverage their equity. In contrast, inconsistent brand messaging or positioning can weaken the transferability of brand associations, leading to ambiguous or negative consumer perceptions (Loken & John, 1993).

5.2 Perceived Fit and Brand Coherence

Perceived fit emerged as a critical determinant of brand extension success. Thematic patterns indicate that consumers evaluate extensions based on both functional and symbolic congruence with the parent brand (Aaker & Keller, 1990). Functional fit refers to the similarity in product attributes,

while symbolic fit relates to the alignment of brand image, values, and lifestyle associations.

In the fashion industry, symbolic fit often outweighs functional considerations. For instance, a luxury brand extending into home décor or hospitality may not share functional similarities with its core apparel products, yet it can still achieve high perceived fit due to shared symbolic attributes such as elegance, exclusivity, and aesthetic coherence (Kapferer, 2012). This underscores the importance of brand narrative and identity in shaping consumer evaluations.

The analysis further reveals that perceived fit is not static but can be influenced by marketing communication and consumer experience. Brands can enhance perceived fit through storytelling, consistent visual identity, and strategic positioning. Conversely, extensions that lack a clear connection to the parent brand are more likely to be perceived as opportunistic or inauthentic, resulting in negative evaluations (Boush & Loken, 1991).

5.3 Vertical and Horizontal Extension Strategies

Another prominent theme is the distinction between vertical and horizontal brand extension strategies. Vertical extensions involve moving up or down the price or quality spectrum, while horizontal extensions involve entering new product categories at a similar level of quality (Kim & Lavack, 1996).

Luxury fashion brands frequently adopt downward vertical extensions, introducing more affordable product lines such as

perfumes and accessories. This strategy allows brands to tap into a broader consumer base while maintaining exclusivity in their core offerings. However, the analysis highlights the delicate balance required to avoid overexposure, which can lead to brand dilution (Kapferer, 2012).

Fast fashion brands, on the other hand, tend to pursue horizontal extensions, expanding into adjacent categories such as footwear, beauty products, and home goods. These extensions are often driven by the goal of creating a comprehensive lifestyle brand, offering consumers a one-stop shopping experience (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2010).

The findings suggest that the choice between vertical and horizontal extension is influenced by brand positioning, target market, and competitive dynamics. While both strategies offer growth opportunities, their success depends on alignment with the brand's core identity and consumer expectations.

5.4 Brand Dilution and Risk Management

The risk of brand dilution is a recurring concern in the literature. Brand dilution occurs when extensions weaken the brand's associations or reduce its distinctiveness (Loken & John, 1993). The analysis indicates that this risk is particularly pronounced in the fashion industry, where brand image is a key driver of consumer choice.

Several factors contribute to brand dilution, including excessive extensions, low-quality products, and inconsistent brand messaging. For example, luxury brands that overextend

into mass-market segments may lose their aura of exclusivity, while fast fashion brands attempting to move upscale may face credibility challenges (Kim & Lavack, 1996).

To mitigate these risks, brands employ various strategies, such as limiting the number of extensions, maintaining strict quality control, and using sub-branding to differentiate new products. Sub-branding allows firms to leverage the parent brand's equity while creating a distinct identity for the extension, thereby reducing the risk of negative spillover effects (Keller, 2013).

5.5 Consumer Perception and Emotional Resonance

Consumer perception plays a pivotal role in determining the success of brand extensions. The findings indicate that fashion consumers are highly sensitive to the symbolic and emotional dimensions of brands. Extensions that resonate with consumers' self-concept and lifestyle aspirations are more likely to be successful (Ko & Megehee, 2012).

Emotional resonance is particularly important in the context of luxury fashion, where consumption is often driven by identity expression and social signalling. Extensions that align with these motivations can enhance brand attachment and loyalty. Conversely, extensions that fail to evoke emotional engagement may struggle to gain traction, even if they offer functional benefits.

The analysis also highlights the role of consumer innovativeness and brand loyalty in shaping extension outcomes. Loyal customers are more willing to try new products from familiar brands, while

innovative consumers are more open to novel extensions. These factors interact with brand equity and perceived fit to influence overall evaluation.

5.6 Emerging Trends: Digitalisation and Sustainability

The final theme identified in the analysis relates to emerging trends in brand extension, particularly digitalisation and sustainability. The rise of digital platforms has enabled fashion brands to experiment with new forms of extension, including virtual products, online collaborations, and direct-to-consumer channels (Hagberg et al., 2016).

Digital extensions offer unique opportunities for innovation and consumer engagement, allowing brands to reach global audiences and create immersive experiences. However, they also require new capabilities and may pose challenges in maintaining brand consistency across digital and physical environments.

Sustainability has also become a key driver of brand extension strategies. Many fashion brands are introducing eco-friendly product lines and adopting sustainable practices to align with changing consumer values (Joy et al., 2012). These extensions not only enhance brand image but also contribute to long-term competitiveness.

Overall, the findings highlight the evolving nature of brand extension strategies in the fashion industry, reflecting broader changes in consumer behaviour and market dynamics.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study provide important insights into the strategic and theoretical dimensions of brand extension in the fashion industry. By integrating the identified themes with the theoretical framework, this section offers a deeper interpretation of the results and their implications for both theory and practice.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

The findings strongly support the relevance of brand equity theory in explaining brand extension outcomes. The ability of strong brands to facilitate consumer acceptance of new products underscores the importance of maintaining and enhancing brand equity over time (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2013). However, the analysis also suggests that brand equity is not a static asset but a dynamic construct that can be reinforced or weakened through extension strategies.

Categorisation theory is also validated by the central role of perceived fit in shaping consumer evaluations. The findings highlight that both functional and symbolic dimensions of fit are important, particularly in the fashion industry, where symbolic meaning often takes precedence (Rosch & Mervis, 1975). This extends existing research by emphasising the importance of aesthetic and lifestyle congruence in addition to traditional product-based similarity.

Signalling theory provides further explanatory power by illustrating how brands reduce perceived risk and uncertainty in extension contexts (Erdem & Swait, 1998). The findings indicate that strong brands serve as effective signals of quality and credibility,

particularly in categories where consumers have limited prior experience. However, the effectiveness of these signals depends on the consistency and authenticity of the brand.

6.2 Strategic Implications for Fashion Brands

From a managerial perspective, the findings highlight several key considerations for developing effective brand extension strategies. First, brands must carefully assess their existing equity and ensure that extensions align with their core identity. This requires a deep understanding of the brand's values, positioning, and consumer perceptions.

Second, achieving a high degree of perceived fit is critical. Brands should consider both functional and symbolic dimensions when evaluating potential extensions. Marketing communication plays a crucial role in shaping these perceptions, suggesting that storytelling and brand narrative are essential tools for enhancing fit.

Third, the choice between vertical and horizontal extension strategies should be guided by the brand's positioning and target market. Luxury brands must balance accessibility with exclusivity, while fast fashion brands must ensure consistency across diverse product categories.

Fourth, risk management is essential to prevent brand dilution. This includes maintaining quality standards, limiting the number of extensions, and using sub-branding or endorsements where appropriate. Brands must also monitor consumer feedback and adapt their strategies accordingly.

6.3 Consumer-Centric Insights

The findings underscore the importance of adopting a consumer-centric approach to brand extension. Understanding consumer motivations, preferences, and perceptions is critical for designing extensions that resonate with target audiences. Emotional and symbolic factors play a particularly important role in fashion, suggesting that brands must go beyond functional attributes to create meaningful connections with consumers (Ko & Megehee, 2012).

The role of consumer innovativeness and brand loyalty also has important implications. Brands can leverage loyal customers as early adopters of new products, while targeting innovative consumers to drive acceptance of novel extensions. This highlights the need for segmentation and targeted marketing strategies.

6.4 Emerging Trends and Future Directions

The increasing importance of digitalisation and sustainability presents both opportunities and challenges for fashion brands. Digital extensions offer new avenues for growth and engagement, but require careful integration with existing brand strategies (Hagberg et al., 2016). Similarly, sustainability-driven extensions can enhance brand image but must be authentic and credible to avoid accusations of "greenwashing."

These trends also point to potential areas for future research. For example, the impact of digital technologies on brand perception and the role of sustainability in shaping consumer attitudes toward brand extensions warrant further investigation.

6.5 Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The reliance on secondary data may limit the ability to capture real-time consumer perspectives. Additionally, the findings are based on a thematic synthesis of existing literature, which may be influenced by the scope and quality of available sources.

7. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of brand extension strategies in the fashion industry through a thematic review of secondary data. By integrating theoretical perspectives with empirical insights, the research highlights the multifaceted nature of brand extension and its implications for brand management.

The findings demonstrate that brand extension is a powerful strategic tool for leveraging existing brand equity and achieving growth. However, its success depends on several critical factors, including the strength of the parent brand, the degree of perceived fit, and the alignment with consumer expectations. In the fashion industry, where symbolic meaning and emotional resonance are paramount, these factors become even more significant.

The study also underscores the importance of managing the risks associated with brand extension, particularly brand dilution. Maintaining consistency in brand identity, ensuring product quality, and adopting appropriate extension strategies are essential for preserving brand equity. Additionally, the findings highlight the need for a consumer-

centric approach, emphasising the role of emotional and symbolic connections in shaping consumer behaviour.

Emerging trends such as digitalisation and sustainability present new opportunities for innovation but also require careful consideration to ensure alignment with brand values. These trends are likely to play an increasingly important role in shaping the future of brand extension in fashion.

In conclusion, brand extension is not merely a growth strategy but a complex process that requires strategic foresight, theoretical understanding, and careful execution. By providing a holistic analysis of this phenomenon, the study contributes to both academic research and managerial practice, offering valuable insights for navigating the challenges and opportunities of brand extension in the fashion industry.

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