

Increasing Co-Product Evaluations by Using Integrative Logos

Antonia Kraus and Heribert Gierl

1 Introduction

Widespread use of the strategy of co-branding: At present, numerous companies introduce co-products into the market that indicate cooperation between two companies. When they refer to the constituent brand names, they use the technique of co-branding. For instance, Gillette and ‘The Art of Shaving’ (men’s shaving products) offer the jointly developed Fusion Chrome Collection that contains a shaver with a kind of torch light in it. “Braun Oral-B” was an electric toothbrush to which Braun contributed the electrical component and Oral B the brushes. The sportswear manufacturer Puma and the electronics company Sagem offered the “Puma smartphone of Sagem.” Danone and Mars offer a variety of products containing well-known sweets such as Mars, Twix, Bounty, or Balisto in the package corner of the Danone yogurt. The brands Milka and Daim jointly produce chocolate Santas. Milka and Philadelphia offer a cream cheese refined with chocolate. Milka and Coppenrath & Wiese (pastry) jointly created and promote the “cow stains cake.” Daimler-Benz (car manufacturer) and Swatch (wristwatches) jointly created the Smart car; Daimler-Benz was responsible for the technical components and Swatch for the car’s design. Salewa (outdoor products) and Michelin (car tires) jointly developed and promote a new sports shoe. The same strategy is used by Adidas and Continental. Krups (electric products) and Nescafé (coffee brand) created and sell the Dolce Gusto coffee machine. Daim (sweets) and Almondy (bakery brand) together promote the “Daim cake baked by Almondy.” Ritter Sport (chocolate) and Smarties (sweets) produce and sell “Ritter Sport with Smarties.” Philips (electric products) and Grohe (bathroom faucets) combined the brands for promoting a waterproof speaker which can be used in the shower. The chocolate burger Sweety is a joint product of McDonald’s and Nutella. Luxottica and Google announced to introduce a co-product (iconic wearable devices) into the market. In the case of the Moncler-Leica camera, Moncler (fashion brand) contributed the design and Leica the technical parts.

Difference between co-branding and ingredient branding: From the consumers’ perspective, two independently operating companies that offer products to the consumer combine their competences for producing and selling a co-product to which both companies contribute. Co-branding (or composite branding) differs from ingredient branding (e.g., McCarthy and Norris, 1999; van

Osselaer and Janiszewski, 2001). In the latter case, the consumers can buy a product of a host brand (e.g., a computer) that includes a branded ingredient (e.g., a processor of the Intel brand), but cannot buy only the branded ingredient.

Overview of success factors for co-branding: Prior research on co-branding investigated factors that influence co-product evaluations. The researchers found that the favorability of the attitudes toward the constituent brands (e.g., Simonin and Ruth, 1998; Washburn, Till, and Priluck, 2000) and the congruence of the brands in terms of an overlap of the brand's associations (d'Astous, Colbert, and Fournier, 2007) are success factors. Additionally, the order of the cooperating brands to denominate the co-brand (e.g., "Godiva by Slim Fast" vs. "Slim Fast by Godiva") and the complementarity of the brand's benefits proved to be important determinants of co-product evaluations (Park, Jun, and Shocker, 1996).

Relevance of brand complementarity: Regarding the complementarity factor, Park, Jun, and Shocker (1996) found that consumers evaluated a cake mix offered jointly by Godiva (chocolate) and Slim Fast (diet products) more favorably than a cake mix offered by Godiva and Häagen Dazs (ice cream). They argue and provide evidence that Godiva is associated with attributes such as good taste and high calorie and Slim Fast with attributes such as low calorie; the fictitious, jointly produced cake mix would be associated with good taste as well as low calorie. For Häagen Dazs as a partner within the co-brand, they showed that this brand is also associated with high calorie and good taste. Thus, consumers did not expect an additional benefit resulting from cooperation between Godiva and Häagen Dazs. In an additional study, these authors used the Jaguar and the Toyota brand as the constituent brands for a co-produced car. They provided evidence to the hypothesis that "when either one of the constituent brands is perceived to perform well on an attribute, the perceived attribute performance level of the composite brand will also be high" (Shocker 1995, 432). We can interpret these findings as follows: Consumers believe that companies engaged in a co-product combine their particular competences in the co-product. If the combined benefits are complementary, the companies can signal higher product quality, which improves the evaluation of the co-product.

Increasing perceptions of brand complementarity by creating co-product logos: We contribute to this research by presuming and testing different co-product logo versions. Until now, practice either adds the logos of both brands or creates entirely new logos. To illustrate this practice, we show two examples of added logos (Braun Oral-B toothbrushes, Philips-Grohe speakers) and one example of a novel logo (Smart car) in Figure 1. We hypothesize and test that creating co-brand logos that are composed of the original logos of the brands (integrated logos) can enhance complementarity perceptions and, as a consequence, result in more favorable co-brand evaluations.

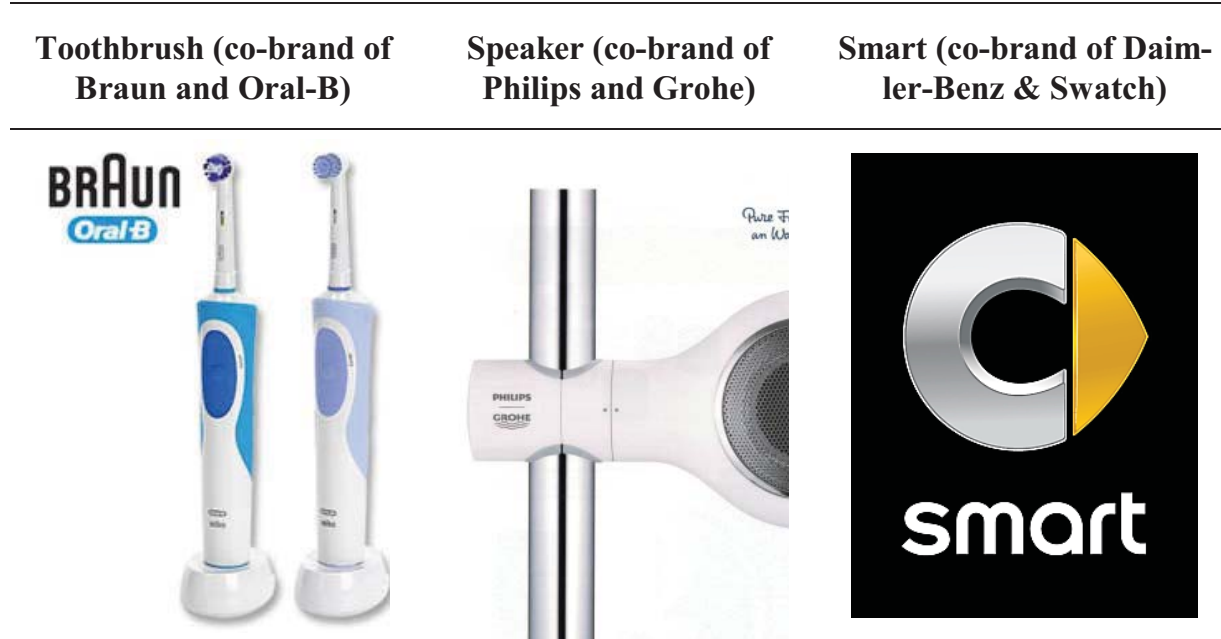


Figure 1: Added and entirely novel logos used for promoting co-brands in practice

2 Theoretical Considerations and Hypotheses

2.1 Cue-Utilization Model

We use the cue-utilization theory to predict an effect of using *integrative* logos compared to using *added* logos for co-products on co-product evaluations.

This general theory was originally developed by Cox (1967). It considers the condition in which consumers experience uncertainty about important product properties such as the quality of product alternatives. If consumers have low capabilities or are not willing to spend much effort to search for detailed information about these properties, they tend to rely on heuristic cues, i.e., pieces of information that can easily be recognized and processed. Consumers utilize these cues to avoid effortful thinking. Eagly and Chaiken (1993, 327) state that individuals have learned the informational value of such cues “on the basis of people’s past experiences and observations and are represented in memory.” Cox (1967) considers the condition in which numerous cues are available to reduce uncertainty about an important property. He develops presumptions about the characteristics cues should have in order to be utilized to evaluate this property. This approach suggests that consumers rely on cues that have both a high confidence and a high predictive value.

According to Cox (1967, 331), a cue’s confidence value “is a measure of how certain the consumer is that the cue is what she thinks it is.” The predictive value of a cue “is a measure of the probability with which a cue seems associated

with (i.e., predicts) a specific product attribute.” A cue’s confidence value is high when the consumer is confident that he has sufficient capabilities to correctly recognize and judge the cue (Olson and Jacoby, 1972; Olson, 1977). The predictive value of a cue is the result of a learning process. It is high when consumers have learned due to own experience that the cue is present when the important property is also present (Olson, 1978; Rao and Monroe, 1988; Pechmann and Ratneshwar, 1992; Broniarczyk and Alba, 1994; Baumgartner, 1995). This approach has been tested for numerous cues thus far. For instance, Heimbach, Johansson, and MacLachlan (1989) used this approach for investigating the role of the confidence and the predictive value of country-of-origin information on product evaluations. In the case of country-of-origin information, the confidence value mirrors the consumer’s belief that the stated country is the true country of origin, and the predictive value reflects the belief that one can infer quality from the country of origin. Schellinck (1983) applied this approach to explain why consumers use the product price, the brand name, and warranties as cues to evaluate the product quality. For instance in the case of the brand name, this cue’s confidence value is high when consumers believe that the producer correctly states the true brand (i.e., does not use brand piracy); the predictive value is high when consumers infer quality from the brand name. Rao and Ruekert (1994) discussed whether the information indicating that a product is the result of a brand alliance serves as a cue.

2.1 *Logo Version as a Cue for the Degree of Cooperation*

Logo version as a cue: Cox (1967) developed the cue-utilization model to indicate characteristics of heuristic cues that consumers prefer to use when they evaluate the quality of a product. In our case, the cue is the logo version and the important property that can be judged by using this cue is the product quality.

Confidence value: We interpret the confidence value of the logo version (integrative vs. added logo) as the consumers’ belief that the logo version signals the degree of cooperation of the constituent brands. We posit that there is a higher confidence value of an integrative logo compared to an added logo. It gains the attention of the consumers because it is an unusual or novel piece of information. The consumers likely try to find a plausible explanation for the existence of an integrated logo and could develop thoughts such as “Obviously, the companies want to show that the co-product is really the result of an intense collaboration of both brands.”

Predictive value: The predictive value of the logo version reflects the belief that the degree of cooperation (indicated by the logo version) signals product quality. Moreover, we suppose that consumers infer higher co-product quality from intense collaboration of the constituent brands. Through prior experiences

with co-products, consumers might have learned that a relationship between the degree of cooperation and the quality of a co-product exists. For instance, with regard to this issue, Kostyra and Klapper (2015, 70) argue as follows: “From the consumers’ point of view, the basic assumption behind brand alliances is that a brand would not join a brand alliance if it could offer a product of equal value on its own.”

Figure 2 illustrates our considerations. We presume that consumers use the logo version as a cue that indicates the degree of collaboration. Assuming that consumers have general prior knowledge about a collaboration-quality relationship for co-brands, we can conclude that the evaluation of a co-product is more favorable when the cooperating brands use an integrative logo compared to an added logo.

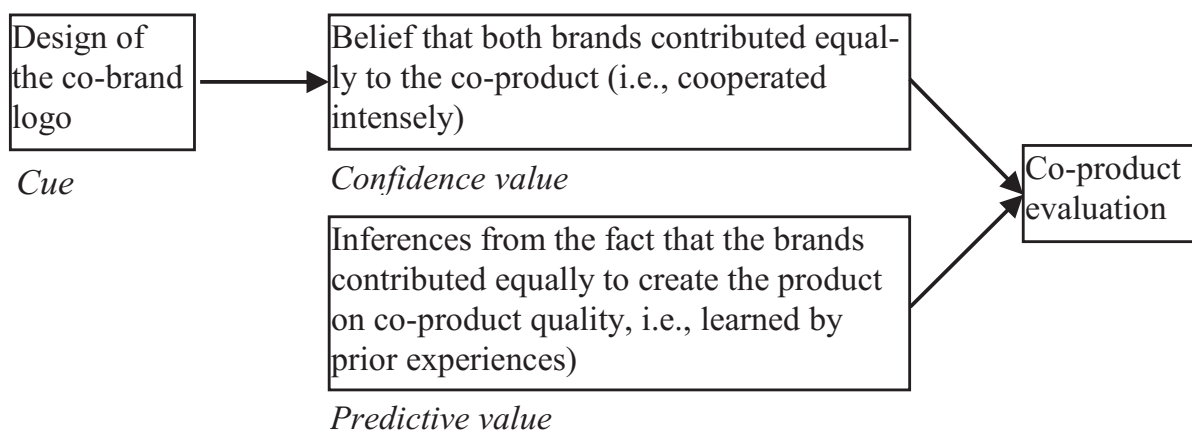


Figure 2: Using the cue-utilization model to explain the effect of co-brand logo designs

The cue-utilization model was developed for the condition in which consumers have little capabilities or a low willingness to systematically process product information, i.e., a low-involvement condition. Thus, we presume that the effect of the logo version on evaluations of the co-product is higher when consumer involvement is low. In summation, we postulate:

H1: Evaluations of the co-product are higher when the brands use an integrative form of logo compared to simply displaying both original logos.

H2: The effect of the logo version is stronger for low-involvement consumers compared to high-involvement consumers.

3 Study

3.1 Experimental Design

We created two versions of logos for three co-products. In one of the versions, the logos of the cooperating brands were not modified but simply added, i.e., were lined up next to each other. In the other version, a new logo was designed which was composed of the elements of the logos of both brands and appeared as an integrative form of logo. Figure 3 provides the versions of the logos designed for the co-products. As co-products, we considered chocolate bananas created by the Chiquita and the Sarotti brand, a USB stick created by the Chanel and the LG brand, and an iPod sport kit developed by the Nike and the Apple brand. The first two co-products were fictitious co-products. In summation, our experiment is based on a 2 (type of logo for the co-product: added vs. integrative) \times 3 (co-product: chocolate bananas, USB stick, or iPod sport kit) design. It should be noted that we created two slightly different versions of the integrative logo for the USB-stick, but collapsed the data across these versions because the results did not depend on these versions.







Co-product	Added logo	Integrative logo
Chocolate banana jointly created by Chiquita bananas and Sarotti chocolate		
USB stick jointly created by Chanel jewelry and LG consumer electronics		
iPod Sport Kit jointly created by Apple consumer electronics and Nike sports wear		

Figure 3: Added and integrative logos used in the experiment

3.2 Test Stimuli

We integrated these logos in advertisements that promoted the co-products. The advertisements contained an image of the promoted product and the logo. The size of the logos in the advertisement was for both types of the logo (added or integrative) approximately equal. Additionally, in the case of the iPod sport kit, the functionality of the co-product was described in detail in the print advertisements. The ad versions differed only with respect to the shown logo. Figure 4 provides an image of the advertisements.



Figure 4: Test stimuli



Figure 4: Test stimuli (continued)

3.3 Sample

In total, 260 students (48% female) took part in this experiment. Data were collected in lectures, in front of the university building, and in cafeterias in face-to-face interviews. Each test participant was exposed to a set of six advertisements that contained either one or two versions of the test stimuli. We included four or five filler ads to reveal the purpose of the test and informed the participants about the purpose of the study when data collection was completed. The filler ads had a very simple design and looked almost the same. Every filler ad depicted a product, a logo and a slogan. For the filler ads, we used products in which students are also interested in (e.g., smartphone and soft drink). The target ad was always the third ad in the sequence of the six advertisements. In the case that the set contained two versions of the test stimuli, the target advertisements were always the third and the fifth ad in the sequence. By doing so, the sample size for the ad promoting the chocolate bananas (vs. USB stick vs. the iPod sport kit) was 156 (vs. 143 vs. 149). Thus, the number of observations equals 448 meaning that one test person had contact to 1.72 test ads on average. None of the test persons had contact to both ad versions for the same co-product. The sample size for the iPod sport kit was reduced from 149 to 79 because this product is very special and thus we removed data of test persons indicating no interest at all in this product from the sample. Thus, the final sample size was 378. As mentioned above, we had created two versions of the integrative logo for the USB-stick. In this case, approximately one-half of the respective sub-sample either had contact to the first or the second version of the integrative logo.

3.4 Procedure and Measures

The test persons could watch each advertisement as long as they wanted. After seeing an ad, they evaluated the promoted product by agreeing or disagreeing with “It is a very attractive product” and “The quality of this product is very

high” on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. We averaged these items because they were highly correlated ($R = .713$) and considered it as the depending variable. When the test participants saw an ad for a co-product, they also evaluated both constituent brands by agreeing or disagreeing to the same items for each of both brands. Additionally, we asked the test persons to indicate whether they would buy the product (seven-point scale). Finally, they reported their interest in and their knowledge regarding the product category the test product belongs to (seven-point scale). We used the latter variables to infer on consumer involvement, i.e., consumer propensity to rely on heuristic cues.

3.5 Results

Test of Hypothesis 1: To analyze the effect of the logo version, we adopted the conceptual model of Simonin and Ruth (1998, 31) who also examined the impact of antecedents on evaluations of brand alliances. These authors included attitudes toward each of the cooperating brands and measures of fit in a model to explain the attitude toward a brand alliance. Analogously, we included the evaluations of each of the constituent brands and a binary variable for the logo version (1 = integrative logo, 0 = added logo) into the model and used regression analysis to estimate the effects. The intercorrelation between the evaluations of both constituent brands was .350 and the intercorrelation between the evaluations of brand A (or B) with the logo version was lower than .10. Table 1 contains the coefficients of the regression model for each co-product and for the data aggregated across the co-products.

Table 1: Regression analysis results on the effect of the logo version and the attitudes toward the constituent brands on co-product evaluations

	Chocolate bananas: Chiquita (A) and Sarotti (B)	USB stick: Chanel (A) and LG (B)	iPod Sport Kit: Nike (A) and Apple (B)	Overall
Intercept	.217	.500	1.651	.063
Attitude toward brand A (1-7)	.333 (4.23 ^a)	.483 (6.13 ^a)	.371 (3.26 ^a)	.445 (8.43 ^a)
Attitude toward brand B (1-7)	.262 (3.23 ^a)	.241 (2.85 ^b)	.263 (2.55 ^b)	.343 (6.37 ^a)
Logo (1 = integrative, 0 = added)	.398 (1.50 ^c)	.530 (2.59 ^b)	.428 (1.49 ^c)	.410 (2.61 ^b)
R^2	.217	.378	.282	.330
n	156	143	79	378

Notes: Data indicate β -coefficients and in parentheses t -values.

^a $p < .001$, ^b $p < .01$, ^c $p < .10$ (one-tailed test).

The results show that the attitudes toward the cooperating brands as well as the logo version (integrative compared to added) have a positive effect on co-product evaluations. On the aggregate level and controlling for the effects of the attitudes toward the constituent brands, the difference between co-product evaluations in the integrated-logo condition versus the added-logo condition was .410 on the seven-point scale ($t_{374} = 2.61, p < .01$). On the co-product level, the significance levels were higher (all p 's $< .10$). In summation, the data are in line with Hypothesis 1 stating a positive effect of the use of an integrative logo instead of simply adding the brand logos on co-product evaluations.

Test of Hypothesis 2: Next, we considered interest in and knowledge regarding the respective product category as moderating variable for the effect of the type of co-brand logo. We averaged these items because they were highly correlated ($R = .865$) and then split the sample at the average value of the resulting scale (values below 4 vs. values equal or above 4) to assign the test persons into the low- and high-involvement condition (0 = low involvement ($n = 198$), 1 = high involvement ($n = 180$)). We calculated an interaction term by multiplying the binary logo-version variable with the binary involvement variable. According to Hypothesis 2, we expected a negative effect of the interaction term, i.e. a reduction of the positive effect of the logo version (integrative version compared to the added version) for the high-involvement consumers. We included the logo-version variable and the interaction term into the regression model and kept the attitudes toward each of the constituent brands as independent variables in the model. We report the findings for the overall sample in Table 2. The results are in line with the presumption that the effect of using an integrative logo is lower for high-involvement consumers compared to low-involvement consumers ($\beta = -.294, p < .10$). On the co-product level, the interaction effect was negative as well but not significant.

Table 2: Regression analysis results on the effect of the logo version depending on consumer involvement and the attitudes toward the constituent brands on co-product evaluations.

	β	t -value	p -value*
Intercept	.049	.167	
Attitude toward brand A (1-7)	.444	8.399	< .001
Attitude toward brand B (1-7)	.348	6.458	< .001
Logo (1=integrative, 0=added)	.569	2.877	< .01
Logo version (1= integrative, 0 = added) × Involvement (1 = high, 0 = low)	-.294	-1.324	< .10

Notes: $R^2 = .333, n = 378, *$ one-tailed test.

Finally, we conducted a mediation analyses as suggested by Preacher and Hayes (2004) and tested whether the version of the logo affected purchase intent via the evaluations of the co-products. The estimated model is contained in Figure 5 ($n = 378$, $R^2 = .258$). A residual direct effect would indicate that the design of the logo has an additional effect; for instance, the integrative version could have been liked better due to its unusual design. We found $\beta_{\text{logo version} \rightarrow \text{co-product evaluation}} = .52$ ($p < .01$), $\beta_{\text{co-product evaluation} \rightarrow \text{purchase intent}} = .53$ ($p < .001$), but an insignificant residual direct effect (c' path: $\beta = -.08$, *NS*). Thus, we can conclude that additional factors such as liking/disliking the logo version had no effect on the response to the co-product.

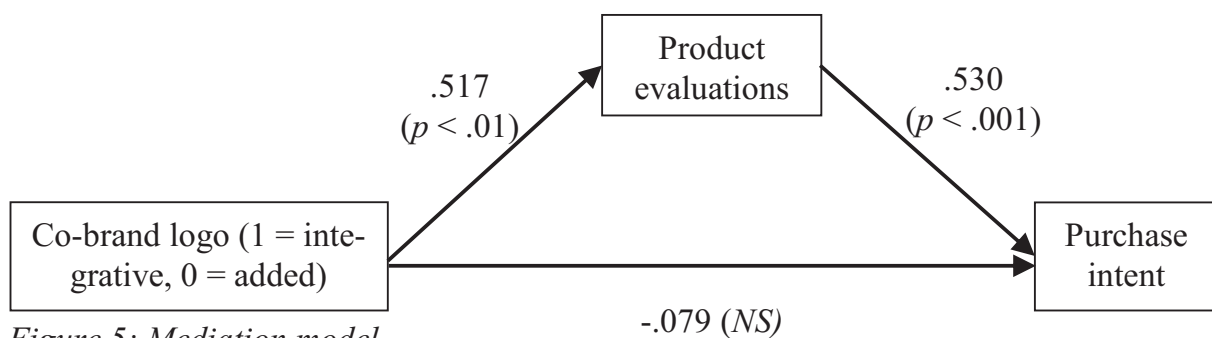


Figure 5: Mediation model

4 Conclusion

The regression analysis revealed that the evaluation of a co-product is higher when the constituent brands use an integrative logo compared to simply displaying both original logos. The combination of both original logos of the constituent brands illustrates consumers a close cooperation between the brands. As a result, consumers evaluate the quality of the co-product more favorably. Thus, the design of the co-brand logo can be used to increase consumers' perceptions of brand cooperation.

Moreover, the results show that the effect of the integrative logo on the co-product evaluation is stronger for low-involvement consumers. Consistent with the cue-utilization theory developed by Cox (1967), consumers with low involvement tend to use the integrative logo as cue to evaluate the co-product. Thus, the use of an integrative form of logo promoting co-products seems to be advantageous for companies that offer co-products to consumers who have low interest in or little knowledge regarding the respective product category.

Moreover, our findings indicate that the logo version affects purchase intent via product evaluations. Thus, we can conclude that the effect of integrative logos on purchase intent does not depend on whether the design of the integrative form of logo is liked to a higher degree than the design of added logos.

5 Limitations and Implications

Limitations: A weakness of our study results from using only brand logos that are suitable for creating an integrative form of logo. Logos which consist mainly of one word (e.g., Dove, Lindt, Mars, or Ikea) offer little potential to be integrated with another brand logo. Moreover, we used well-known logos to create logo versions. For co-products of brands with less well-known logos, integrative logos might confuse consumers and, thus, could even impair product evaluations. A further limitation is that we used a student sample. Students might possess more capabilities to process novel cues such as integrative logos and interpret the information transported by these logos adequately. For other samples, the capabilities to understand the meaning of the novel logo might be lower and hence the use of integrative logos could be less advantageous. Future research should consider these aspects.

Implications for advertising theory: In general, an integrative logo used for promoting co-products is novel and thus contradict expectations of consumers. They would expect seeing the original logos of the brands. Exposure to integrative logos is incongruent with the contact to logos with which consumers are familiar. Thus, this condition has commonality to the situation that is described by Mandler's (1982) schema-incongruence theory. Consumers could understand and solve the incongruity, i.e., generate thoughts such as "The novel logo indicates that the partner brands actually contributed equally to create and produce a new product." In sum, our study provides additional support to the presumption that moderately incongruent cues in advertisements produce positive effects on product evaluations (for related research see Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1989; Meyers-Levy, Louie, and Curren, 1994; Peracchio and Tybout, 1996).

Implications for marketing practice: We recommend companies that consider the introduction of co-products into the market to develop logos for co-brands that integrate elements of the brands' original logos. Especially when the brands' logos mainly consist of graphical symbols, joint logos could be created easily. However, companies that sell numerous co-products (e.g., Smarties chocolate and Oreo chocolate) should be careful when creating integrative logos because the co-existence of numerous integrative forms of logos including, for instance, the Smarties logo or the Oreo logo, might cause confusion in consumers.

6 Notes

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