

Men's attitude toward female patronymic cross-gender brand extensions:
The moderating role of brand name dissimilarity

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Abstract

This research builds on similarity theory in order to understand the key success factors of brand naming strategies for cross-gender extensions of female patronymic brands that target men (e.g., Estée Lauder extending to men). Study 1 demonstrates that the most common naming strategy – adding a “Men” descriptor to the brand name – does not significantly increase brand attitude as the perceived brand masculinity cannot be enhanced for men. Study 2 tests two more distant brand naming strategies: (1) dropping the first name and (2) using brand initials. The results show an inverted-U relationship pattern that reveals the key role of similarity in brand names: Dropping the first name has the biggest impact on brand extension attitude and purchase intention. By contrast, the strategy using brand initials is too dissimilar from the initial brand name to be attractive to men. These findings provide managerial implications for practitioners considering a cross-gender extension strategy.

Keywords: *brand; gender; extension*

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