Brand Age Cues and Their Impact on Perceived Risk and Acceptance of Low-Fit Brand Extensions

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Abstract

To fuel growth and secure long-term success, firms often use brand extensions to launch new products, yet many extend into low-fit categories. Such extensions appear risky because their weak similarity to the parent brand makes them harder to process, prompting consumers to seek additional information. Reducing this perceived risk is therefore crucial for successful launches. We propose that adding a brand age cue (e.g., "Since 1986") in advertising and on packaging offers reassuring signals of experience and reliability that increase acceptance of low-fit extensions. Across two empirical studies, we show that age cues lower perceived product risk for low-fit extensions, which in turn improves brand attitudes, quality perceptions, and purchase intention. Simply highlighting how long a brand has existed can thus support successful extensions into diverse product categories, while requiring minimal additional marketing investment for both new and existing customers.

Track: Product and Brand Management