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The Impact of Fashion x Culinary Co-Branding on Customer Evaluation

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Abstract

Existing literature has extensively explored the influence of co-branding on customer evaluation, particularly concerning variables such as brand personality, product fit, brand fit, brand attachment, and brand awareness. However, a research gap in implementing co-branding exists in the specific context of fashion x culinary. Consequently, this study aims to investigate the impact of these variables on customer evaluation of fashion x culinary co-branding products. In order to achieve this, a quantitative research methodology is employed, involving collecting data from 498 cases, which is subsequently analyzed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. The findings reveal a significant influence of fashion x culinary co-branding on customer evaluation. Notably, the indirect effect of perceived co-brand personality on customer evaluation, mediated by brand awareness, emerges as the most influential factor. These findings contribute to the existing body of research on co-branding and brand alliances by offering new insights and recommendations that have the potential to enhance industry practices.

Keywords: co-branding, culinary, customer evaluation, fashion

A. INTRODUCTION

Collaboration between fashion and culinary brands is becoming a trend among fashion businesses (Lo, 2022). Fashion and luxury marketing expert Susanna Nicoletti (cited in Lim, 2022) stated that the fashion and food collaborations deliver an immersive experience to the final customer, where partnering brands may represent a lifestyle rather than just an outfit or a look. The relationship between fashion and the food industry is designed to captivate the client's senses and create a memorable customer trip. Additionally, fashion, especially streetwear and culinary collaborations, reflect the next evolution of a long-standing trend centred on limited-edition drop collections. This bold, almost garish combination appeals to customers' sensibilities on several levels and combines cult following, uniqueness, and brand loyalty (Yaskey, 2023). Several local brands have produced apparel products in Indonesia due to fashion and culinary co-branding strategies. A streetwear footwear brand, Aerostreet, has been collaborating with many culinary brands in creating new product designs. One example is its partnership with Tong Tji Tea, producing shoes with its brand logo and colour palette (Figure 1). Within the same product category, Swallow, an Indoneisan footwear brand, has created a new co-branded sandal with one of the most famous Indoneisan culinary brands, Indomie (Figure 2). Similarly, a streetwear brand called Monstore has been collaborating with Segitiga Biru in developing a set of products containing shirts and tote bags with Segitiga Biru's logo as the design (Figure 3). Looking at the pattern, it can be concluded that the collaboration between the fashion and culinary industries typically produces a fashion item by extracting the culinary brand's logo and colour palette (Chen, 2018).

However, despite its popularity, the application has risks (Singh et al., 2016; Lim, 2022). Brands need to consider many factors when planning to execute a collaboration between fashion and culinary (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020). Thompson & Strutton (2012) stated that to lead a better perceptual fit between two brands, the host brand should collaborate with other companies that could benefit the co-branded items. Similarly, Keller & Swaminathan (2020) claimed that to successfully execute a co-branding strategy, both partnering brands must have strong brand awareness, positive and distinctive meanings, and positive consumer views. Research conducted by Turan (2021) even revealed that whilst the potential partner has a strong brand identity, if the two company identities clash, there is little likelihood that consumers would view the co-branding favourably, and it

is unlikely to be a commercial success. Despite that, the execution of fashion x culinary co-branding seems to contradict mentioned theories, making it an interesting subject to further study.



Figure 1. Aerostreet x Tong Tji Collaboration source: instagram.com/aerostreet



Figure 2. Swallow x Indomie Collaboration source: instagram.com/swallowfootwear



Figure 3. Monstore x Segitiga Biru Collaboration source: instagram.com/monstore

Prior researchers and businesses have discussed how co-branding become an influential strategy offering premium experience and affecting brand awareness (Ueltschy & Laroche, 2004; DeAcetis, 2021; Vitasek, 2022). Since more and more customers expect experiences from businesses, brands that could respond to this demand automatically receive higher economic value (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Additionally, studies have revealed how co-branding benefits constituent brands, especially in building brand reputation (Blackett & Boad, 1999). However, preliminary research conducted by the author shows a contradicting result. After being shown two products from local fashion and culinary collaborations, 57.7% of the respondents stated that the co-branded products mentioned did not affect their perception of the brands. The remaining 26.25% of the respondents even stated that the collaborations make them like the brands less, while the other 16.25% stated that the collaborations make them like the cullaboration between fashion and culinary brands, especially from Indonesian brands, did not always positively impact customer evaluation. Understandably, other factors might reduce the effectiveness of the fashion and culinary co-branding strategy.

In addition to the effect of fashion x culinary co-branding implementation, the likelihood of conflict arising from a possible co-branding partner's attitudes and values diverging from the parent brand should not be understated (Blackett & Boad, 1999). In 2014, Moschino created a whole collection of fashion items with McDonald's trademark Golden Arches and other attributes of the fast-food brand (Peterson, 2014). Unfortunately, this collaboration received much criticism from McDonald's workers and several members of medical establishments (Fleming, 2014; Marriott, 2014). People accused Moschino of mocking McDonald's employees by selling USD 1000 clothing inspired by McDonald's workers who earn minimum wage (Fleming, 2014). Other than that, some health-conscious people also question reinforcing fast food, while 25% of Britons are classed as obese (Marriott, 2014).

Considering previous findings about co-branding failures and side effects, prior studies revealed that for co-branded products, perceived brand personality is the most influential factor affecting customers' positive evaluation (Tang, 2020; Cândido, 2021). At the same time, previous research also implies that entire product categories (e.g., fashion and food) or subcategories (e.g. beer, wine, and tea), rather than just individual brands within them, have a "personality" (Batra et al., 2010). This leads to an intriguing relationship between fashion and culinary as different categories in applying a co-branding strategy. Candido (2021) also studied the attachment to the initial brand, while Tang (2020) added brand awareness as a stimulus influencing customer evaluation of constituent brands. Furthermore, a meta-analysis conducted by Turan (2021) concluded that out of all the factors under the relationship between brands, brand fit has the strongest link with co-branding evaluation, followed by product fit. Turan asserted that if the partner brands successfully create a seamless logic from the combined offer, consumers can identify the benefits and consequently favourably consider co-branding. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Walchli (2007), which assesses the between-partner congruity of co-branded products.

The study revealed how each congruity level impacts customer evaluation differently. However, there is currently no sufficient evidence on the implementation and effectivity of the following factors in cross-category collaborations, specifically between fashion and culinary.

In order to obtain a better understanding of factors influencing positive responses towards cross-category collaboration products, this research aims to examine the impact of co-branding between fashion and culinary brands in affecting customer evaluation by assessing brand congruency and brand awareness. To add further, the object of this study will be the effectivity of perceived brand personality, brand fit, product fit, attachment to the initial brand, and brand awareness in affecting customer evaluation—consisting of compatibility and favorability—towards fashion x culinary co-branding products. The conceptual framework used in this study can be seen in Figure 4. There are six main hypotheses where every variable with a direct relationship with customer evaluation generates 2 sub-hypotheses to assess (a) the favorability and (b) the compatibility of customer evaluation. This results in a total of 11 hypotheses used for the study.



Figure 4. Conceptual Framework

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopted a quantitative approach with an online survey as the method. Quantitative research pertains to using quantitative data as the foundation for research. It corresponds to a research paradigm that advocates for the empirical investigation of social and behavioural phenomena. It aims to achieve precise depiction, prediction, explanation, and ultimately constructive intervention (in terms of problem-solving) in the natural and human realms (Vogt & Johnson, 2011). Following the approach, the research methodology involves the utilization of a questionnaire, which consists of a predetermined sequence of questions presented in written or typed form on one or multiple forms, to complement the survey administration. The survey population is specifically concentrated on a distinct population comprising millennials (27 - 42 years old) and gen z (11 - 26 years old) as the main consumers of fashion products who have been previously exposed to the co-branding products, namely Aerostreet x Tong Tji, Swallow x Indomie, and Monstore x Segitiga Biru. By targeting these specific groups, the study aims to ensure a comprehensive understanding of customer evaluation within the context of fashion x culinary co-branding implementation.

Malhotra (2010) developed a guideline for sample sizes in marketing research, specifying the minimum size for various types of studies. In this research, the recommended minimum sample size for test-marketing studies, as per Malhotra's guideline, is 200 respondents. This study employs a standardized approach to evaluate all three fashion x culinary products using the same set of indicators (Table 1). This ensures that each indicator receives equal treatment and allows for a consistent product assessment. Additionally, a 5-point Likert scale is utilized to assess the operational variables. This approach is widely recognized and adopted in research due to its effectiveness in reducing respondent confusion and enhancing response rates (Bouranta et al., 2009).

Table 1. Questionnaire Design						
Variable	Label	Indicator	Source			
Perceived Co-Brand Personality	PCP	Brand personality measurement	Aaker, 1997			
	PF1	Product category consistency	Simonin & Ruth, 1998			
Product Fit	PF2	Product category complementariness	Helmig et al., 2007			
	PF3	Product category logic	Newmeyer et al., 2018			

Table 1. Questionnaire Design

Variable	Label	Indicator	Source
	BF1	Brand image consistency	Simonin & Ruth, 1998
Brand Fit	BF2	Brand image complementariness	Helmig et al., 2007
	BF3	Brand image logic	Newmeyer et al., 2018
	AIB1	Degree of good thoughts evoked by the fashion brand	Park et al., 2010
	AIB2	Personal connection towards the fashion brand	Japutra et al., 2018
Attachment to the Initial Drand	AIB3	Fashion brand's relatability	Japutra et al., 2018
Attachment to the initial Brand	AIB4	Degree of good thoughts evoked by the culinary brand	Park et al., 2010
	AIB5	Personal connection towards the culinary brand	Japutra et al., 2018
	AIB6	Culinary brand's relatability	Japutra et al., 2018
	BA1	Brand awareness	Kilei et al., 2016
Brand Awareness	BA2	Brand recognition	Yoo et al., 2000
	BA3	Brand recall	Tang, 2020
	CEF1	Evaluation of product idea	Park et al., 1991
Favorability of Customer Evaluation	CEF2	Product likability	Samu et al., 1999
	CEF3	Superiority	Besharat, 2010
	CEC1	Collaboration's matching	Drengner et al., 2011
Compatibility of Customer Evaluation	CEC2	Collaboration's usefulness	Besharat, 2010
	CEC3	Collaboration's understandability	Charlton & Cornwell, 2019

Source: Research data, 2023

The collected data will undergo analysis using descriptive statistics and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The analysis process will encompass several procedures to ensure the quality of the measurement instruments. This includes conducting a reliability analysis to assess the consistency of the measures, a validity analysis to examine the extent to which the measures capture the intended constructs, and a collinearity analysis to identify and address potential multicollinearity issues. Additionally, bootstrapping will be employed to determine the significance of the structural paths, and key indicators such as the coefficient of determination (R²), Stone-Geisser test (Q²), and effect sizes (f²) will be examined. The analysis will also include evaluating total indirect and total effects and conducting mediation result analysis. By utilizing these analytical techniques, a comprehensive examination of the data will be conducted, enabling a robust interpretation of the findings.

C. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

A total of 209 respondents were gathered for this study, meeting the predetermined characteristics to ensure a sufficient sample size for analysis. The age distribution of the study respondents consists of 59.8% Gen Z (aged between 11 to 26 years old) and 40.2% Millennial (aged between 27 to 42 years old). Upon identifying prior exposure towards the example products, this research results in 498 cases consisting of 173 respondents assessing Aerostreet x Tong Tji, 162 respondents assessing Swallow x Indomie, and 163 respondents assessing Monstore x Segitiga Biru. The findings of the descriptive analysis for this study are presented in Table 2, offering a comprehensive overview of the variables under investigation.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis						
Variable	Item	Mean	STDEV	Min - Max		
Perceived Co-Brand Personality	PCP	3.779	0.950	2-5		
	PF1	3.843	0.882	1 - 5		
Product Fit	PF2	3.835	0.966	2 - 5		
	PF3	3.811	0.955	1 - 5		
	BF1	3.809	0.939	2 - 5		
Brand Fit	BF2	3.761	0.938	1 - 5		
	BF3	3.753	0.938	1-5		
	AIB1	3.839	0.877	2 - 5		
	AIB2	3.715	0.931	1 - 5		
Attachment to the Initial Brand	AIB3	3.962	0.949	1 - 5		
	AIB4	3.918	0.891	2 - 5		
	AIB5	3.817	0.925	2-5		

AIB6	3 730		
	5.739	0.953	1 - 5
BA1	3.815	0.970	1 - 5
BA2	3.813	0.905	1 - 5
BA3	3.751	0.975	1-5
CEF1	3.829	0.986	1 - 5
CEF2	3.717	0.911	1 - 5
CEF3	3.922	0.933	1 - 5
CEC1	3.843	0.950	1-5
CEC2	3.757	0.929	1-5
CEC3	3.741	0.940	1-5
	BA1 BA2 BA3 CEF1 CEF2 CEF3 CEC1 CEC2 CEC3	BA1 3.815 BA2 3.813 BA3 3.751 CEF1 3.829 CEF2 3.717 CEF3 3.922 CEC1 3.843 CEC2 3.757 CEC3 3.741	BA1 3.815 0.970 BA2 3.813 0.905 BA3 3.751 0.975 CEF1 3.829 0.986 CEF2 3.717 0.911 CEF3 3.922 0.933 CEC1 3.843 0.950 CEC2 3.757 0.929 CEC3 3.741 0.940

Source: Research data, 2023

The table examination reveals that AIB3 attains the highest mean score of 3.962 among all the indicators, suggesting a strong association between respondents' perception of themselves and the brand. Conversely, AIB2 obtains the lowest mean score of 3.715 among all the indicators. This suggests that, within the context of the fashion x culinary co-branding, AIB2 is the least agreed-upon indicator by respondents on average, implying a relatively lower level of personal connection between respondents and the host brand. As for the standard deviation, it can be observed that CEF1 has the highest standard deviation score of 0.986, while AIB1 has the lowest standard deviation score of 0.877. This indicates that within the context of the fashion x culinary cobranding, the indicator "evaluation of product idea" from the customer evaluation (favorability) variable elicits the most diverse responses. This suggests that some respondents agree with the statement while others do not. On the other hand, the indicator "degree of good thoughts evoked by the fashion brand" from the attachment to the initial brand variable demonstrates the least variation in responses. This implies that, on average, respondents share a similar viewpoint regarding this statement.

After assessing the descriptive analysis result, an indicator reliability test, internal consistency reliability test, convergent validity test, and discriminant validity test are taken. The results show that the indicators are reliable, consistent, and valid. However, the discriminant validity test exhibits a lack of validity evidence. Thus, several iterations are performed to eliminate invalid indicators based on the assessment of the Fornell-Larcker table. After conducting the analysis, it has been determined that the following indicators need to be removed: PF1 for the product fit variable, BF1 for the brand fit variable, AIB1, AIB2, AIB4, and AIB5 for the attachment to the initial brand variable, BA1 for the brand awareness variable, CEF2 for the customer evaluation (favorability) variable, and CEC1 for the customer evaluation (compatibility) variable. Collinearity test following the adjusted indicators then being conducted. It results in VIF scores higher than 5, indicating that all the indicators are safe from possible bias. Subsequently, the calculations of Partial Least Squares (PLS) are conducted to analyze the results of hypothesis testing. PLS-SEM employs a nonparametric sampling bootstrapping procedure to assess the significance of estimated coefficients (Méndez-Suárez, 2021). Wong (2013) stated that T-statistic greater than 1.96 is generally considered acceptable at a 5% significance level. The results of the hypothesis testing can be found in Table 3.

Table 1. Hypothesis Testing Result						
Hypothesis	Structural Path	T Value	P Value	Result		
H1	PCP → BA	60.448	0.000	Accepted		
H2a	PCP \rightarrow CEF	2.268	0.023	Accepted		
H2b	PCP \rightarrow CEC	5.809	0.012	Accepted		
H3a	$PF \rightarrow CEF$	8.011	0.000	Accepted		
H3b	$PF \rightarrow CEC$	5.093	0.002	Accepted		
H4a	$\mathrm{BF} \mathrm{CEF}$	6.584	0.000	Accepted		
H4b	$\mathrm{BF} \mathrm{CEC}$	2.519	0.000	Accepted		
H5a	AIB → CEF	3.107	0.000	Accepted		
H5b	AIB \rightarrow CEC	5.841	0.000	Accepted		
H6a	$BA \rightarrow CEF$	4.305	0.000	Accepted		
H6b	BA \rightarrow CEC	6.840	0.000	Accepted		
		1 1	22			

The bootstrapping result shows that PCP significantly impacts BA (t-value ≥ 1.96 , p-value < 0.05), supporting H1. This is followed by the significance of the impact of PCP towards CEF and CEC (t-value ≥ 1.96 , p-value < 0.05), which pictures the direct relationship between perceived co-brand personality and the favorability and compatibility of customer evaluation, proving H2a and H2b. The result also suggests that PF influences CEF and CEC (t-value ≥ 1.96 , p-value < 0.05), which provides evidence of H3a and H3b. Similarly, H4a and H4b are also proven acceptable as the calculation reveals that BF significantly impacts CEF and CEC (t-value ≥ 1.96 , p-value < 0.05). These depicted the relationship of both product fit and brand fit towards the favorability and compatibility of customer evaluation. A statistically significant relationship between customers' attachment to the initial brand (AIB) and the favorability and compatibility of customer evaluation (CEF and CEC) is found (t-value ≥ 1.96 , p-value < 0.05), supporting H5a and H5b. Not least of all, BA has been calculated to show a notable impact on CEF and CEC (t-value ≥ 1.96 , p-value < 0.05), providing evidence for H6a and H6b while also helping draw the indirect relationship of PCP on CEF and CEC with BA as the mediating variable.

Following the hypothesis testing, the f² effect size is analyzed. F² effect size, also known as the F square effect size, is a statistical measure used to assess the magnitude of the relationship between variables by examining the impact of an exogenous latent variable on the R² value of an endogenous variable (Wong, 2013). According to Cohen (1988), the interpretation of f² values depends on the magnitude of each variable. A value exceeding 0.35 indicates a large effect size, while a value ranging from 0.35 to 0.15 represents a medium effect size. Additionally, a value between 0.15 and 0.02 suggests a small or weak effect size and a value below 0.02 indicates the absence of a substantial effect. The calculation of each variable relationship's f² effect size can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. F Square Test Result								
	AIB	BA	BF	CEC	CEF	PCP	PF	
AIB				0.037	0.058			
BA				0.100	0.086			
BF				0.072	0.137			
CEC								
CEF								
РСР		1.910		0.013	0.010			
PF				0.020	0.064			
		a						-

Source: Research data, 2023

The results of the data analysis in this study demonstrate the significant impacts of various variables on customer evaluation. The statistically significant relationship between the variables supports the hypothesis regarding perceived co-brand personality's impact on brand awareness. The f² values further confirm the significance of this relationship. Similarly, the hypothesis regarding the impact of perceived co-brand personality on customer evaluation (favorability) and customer evaluation (compatibility) is supported by statistically significant results. However, the f² values indicate that the effect sizes of these relationships are relatively small. Statistically significant results support the hypothesis on product fit's impact on customer evaluation. The f² values show a small effect size for the relationship between product fit and customer evaluation (favorability) and no substantial effect for the relationship with customer evaluation (compatibility). Brand fit's impact on customer evaluation is also statistically significant, with small effect sizes indicated by the f² values for both facets of customer evaluation. The relationship between attachment to the initial brand and customer evaluation (favorability) and customer evaluation (compatibility) is statistically significant but exhibits small effect sizes according to the f² values. Lastly, the hypothesis on brand awareness's impact on customer evaluation is supported by statistically significant results, although the effect sizes are relatively weak according to the f² values.

D. CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of the Indonesian fashion x culinary co-branding strategy on the compatibility and favorability of co-branded products, as evaluated by customers. In order to achieve this, three existing local fashion x culinary co-branding products were selected for assessment: Aerostreet x Tong Tji, Swallow x Indomie, and Monstore x Segitiga Biru. Based on the survey results, it can be concluded

that the fashion x culinary co-branding strategy significantly impacts the compatibility and favorability of cobranded products. However, the effectiveness of this impact is contingent upon several variables, namely perceived co-brand personality, brand fit, product fit, attachment to the initial brand, and brand awareness. These variables play a crucial role in determining the success of the co-branding strategy and influencing customers' evaluations of the co-branded products.

Drawing upon the research findings, the author provides recommendations tailored to Indonesian fashion brands seeking to enhance the evaluation of their co-branding strategies with culinary brands. The first one is utilizing brand personality to increase brand awareness. It is because perceived co-brand personality has a more effective impact on the favorability and compatibility of customer evaluation when it is mediated by brand awareness. This implies that fashion brands aiming to enhance favourable and compatible evaluations should prioritize incorporating their brand personality into their marketing strategies, such as advertising campaigns and other marketing initiatives. Second is increasing product and brand fit by inviting brands with consistent, complementary, and logical product and image compatibility from the customers' perspective. By prioritizing these factors, brands can enhance customer evaluation and improve the effectiveness of their co-branding strategy. Lastly, it is to strengthen the attachment to the initial brand. Fedorikhin et al. (2008) suggested that brand attachment can mitigate the negative spillover effects of moderate fit. This implies that collaborating with brands with higher levels of brand attachment can result in better customer evaluations. By partnering with strong brand attachments, fashion brands can enhance their co-branded products' overall perception and evaluation.

However, this study has several gaps that future researchers can further investigate. The first one is that the results of this study indicate that among all relationships between variables, only one relationship demonstrates a moderate effect size, while the remaining relationships exhibit weak or negligible effects. Future researchers are encouraged to explore additional variables that may contribute to the success of fashion x culinary co-branding strategies to understand better the factors involved. Other than that, the generalizability of this study may be limited to the specific Indonesian brands and products examined, suggesting the need for broader exploration across different brands and regions. Additionally, clear differentiation between product fit and brand fit questions design is recommended to address respondent confusion and enhance data quality. As a final point, conducting a comparative study that assesses customers' conditions before and after exposure to co-branding products can provide deeper insights into the impact of the fashion x culinary co-branding strategy.

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