Brand Associations as a Condition for Success in Co-branding Partnerships in the Fashion Industry: A Study on Younger Generations

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ABSTRACT

Title: Brand Associations as a Condition for Success in Co-branding Partnerships in the Fashion Industry: A Study on Younger Generations

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Keywords: Co-branding; Consumer Behavior; Brand Associations

This dissertation investigates the impact of brand associations on co-branding initiatives within the fashion industry. Existing co-branding literature shows that successful co-branding initiatives produce great value for the company and the consumer. We theorized another condition for success is the cognitive cues consumers make about the brands involved in a partnership. Brand associations play an important role in consumers' product evaluations and choices. Understanding the importance of brand associations in a collaboration venture may contribute to recognizing more successful co-branding initiatives.

This study adopted avoidance/approach questions to understand the impact on purchase intentions of brand associations brand fit and consumers' status-signaling needs. The study was presented to 192 participants between the ages of 23 and 38 years old and was constituted of randomized scenarios of real partnerships between a luxury brand and a mass fashion / mainstream brand.

Findings showed a strong impact of brand fit on purchase intentions that overcomes the role of individual brand associations. Consumers that perceived a positive brand fit of the co-branding initiative revealed stronger intent to buy from the collaboration. Individual brand associations do not impact purchase intentions, apart from positive associations of mainstream brands, showing that when consumers have positive associations of mainstream brands their purchase intentions will be higher. Regarding high status-signaling needs, results indicate that consumers show higher purchase intentions when possessing a high status-signaling need for any of the partnered brands.

This article discusses theoretic and practical implications and offers paths for future research.

RESUMO

Título: Brand Associations as a Condition for Success in Co-branding Partnerships in the Fashion Industry: A Study on Younger Generations

Autor: Luísa Lima

Palavras-chave: Co-branding; Consumer Behavior; Brand Associations

Esta dissertação investiga o impacto das associações de marca nas iniciativas de *co-branding* na indústria da moda. A literatura existente em *co-branding* mostra que iniciativas bem-sucedidas produzem maior valor para a empresa e o consumidor. Os autores propõem outra condição para o sucesso, as associações que os consumidores fazem sobre as marcas da parceria. Estas associações são importantes nas avaliações e escolhas dos consumidores e compreender a sua importância pode contribuir para um melhor reconhecimento de iniciativas bem-sucedidas.

Esta dissertação adota questões de proximidade/distância para entender o impacto, nas intenções de compra, das associações, do *brand fit* e da necessidade social dos consumidores de sinalizar estatuto. O estudo, constituído por cenários aleatórios com parcerias reais entre marcas de luxo e marcas de massas (ex: Nike) foi apresentado a 192 participantes entre os 23 e 38 anos de idade.

Os resultados mostraram um forte impacto de *brand fit* nas intenções de compra, sobrepondo-se ao impacto das associações individuais. Os consumidores que avaliaram as colaborações positivamente revelaram maiores intenções de compra relativamente à colaboração. As associações de marca individuais não afetam as intenções de compra, exceto as associações positivas em relação às marcas de massas, mostrando que quando os consumidores têm associações positivas da marca popular as suas intenções de compra serão maiores. Finalmente, os resultados indicam que os consumidores demonstram intenções de compra mais altas se tiverem uma necessidade de sinalizar estatuto social elevada, independentemente da marca parceira.

Este artigo discute implicações teóricas e práticas e oferece caminhos para futuras pesquisas.

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By spending a year abroad and having an experience I will never forget, I got to know myself, and came back with a clear mind to get me closer to my dreams.

However, I can truly say that this new stage of my life was equally hard and equally as gratifying. Like in China, during these last months I had a lot more challenges to overcome that I was not expecting at first. Nevertheless, every day I made the decision to never stop putting my heart on my sleeve in every trail and decision I had to take regarding this dissertation, because even if the road is tough, the destination is worthy.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The luxury clothing brand Missoni and the department store chain Target collaboration in 2011 is a successful example of a co-branding partnership: in the first day the website crashed within hours and shelves were cleared in stores within minutes; 40000 items were sold out resulting in sales of US$100 million (Luck, Muratovski, & Hedley, 2014). This partnership reinforced Missoni's luxury image and helped to gain massive brand awareness. It also allowed both brands to increase market share while maintaining their market positions. Similarly, a 2015 collaboration between luxury clothing brand Balmain and fast fashion clothing brand H&M (Hennes & Mauritz) saw their website crashing and its joint collection sold out in hours. This was not the first successful partnership of H&M with luxury brands: in 2004 it partnered with Karl Lagerfeld's own brand, continuously engaging with other luxury brands throughout the years.

On the other side of the spectrum, the same department store chain Target aligned with luxury clothing brand Neiman Marcus in 2013 in an initiative that resulted in an overpriced and undersold collection which after three weeks had prices reduced to 70% by Target (Thau, 2013). Another example is the 2010 collaboration between clothing brand DKNY and the luxury champagne brand Veuve Clicquot that appeared to meet the criteria for success was not successful, as the consumer did not see value in the final co-branded product, rain boots (Besharat & Langan, 2014).

If, amidst the 1990's, brands would collaborate for the main purpose of creating a better product (e.g. in 1999 Nike partnered with fashion company SOPHNET and created a fictional football team, Football Club Real Bristol, a partnership that lead to a follow up collaboration that created an eco-friendly collection), today brands collaborate with each other to mostly create a mutual vision and to share it with their consumers, all the while increasing market share and improving brand images and brand awareness.

Co-branding partnerships are a cooperation between two or more brands to create a new product that receives both tangible and intangible attributes from the partnering brands (Besharat & Langan, 2014). When successful these initiatives can produce a great value for the company and consumer. Delivering a better product and customer experience to the consumer generates greater consumer demand and willingness to share information from the consumer. This value exchange results from benefits in stronger quality perceptions, brand awareness, an increase in market share (Luck, Muratovski & Hedley, 2014) which may lead to satisfying social needs such as status-signaling needs (Fuchs, Prandelli, Schreier & Dahl, 2013). When unsuccessful, there is no exchange of value and a co-branding initiative which can lead to a negative impact in brand equity and weaker consumer-brand relationships (Luck et al., 2014).

Firms in industries such as the fashion industry rely on their brand image and positioning in the consumers' minds to attract and retain market share and grow the brand equity. Most of these notions have a linkage with the cognitive associations that consumers form about brands. Brand associations play an important role in consumers' product evaluations and choices (van Osselaer & Janiszewski, 2001). And while there is consensus in the conditions for co-branding initiatives to occur (such as company characteristics, quality and brand image perceptions), with existent research on previous co-branding fashion partnerships portraying the need of verticality between partnered brands, research about the particular linking of the associative transfers between brands and how they affect the perceptions of these co-branding initiatives is missing. This might be due to the complex nature of studying how these cognitive purchasing decisions arise. But understanding brands associations and their impact on co-branding initiatives may contribute to further understanding of the success of co-branding partnerships.

Previous research shows that co-branding initiatives are most effective and successful when: the unique attributes of each brand are made salient (Besharat & Langan, 2014); when the message content of the partnership (i.e. the intrinsic value for partnering) and the execution (i.e. the communication of this value) are adequate (Besharat & Langan, 2014); if the initiative results in improvement of quality perceptions of the weaker brand (Besharat & Langan, 2014); if it helps an unfamiliar brand more than a familiar brand (Besharat & Langan, 2014); if there is similarity in firm size, industry type and country of origin (C. Decker & Baade, 2016). In the fashion industry particularly, co-branding partnerships are more successful when one brand is perceived as a high-end luxury brand and the other as a step-down brand such as DKNY (Hanslin & Rindell, 2014) or mass fashion brands such as H&M (Fuchs et al., 2013).

However, there are also risks associated with co-branding, such as spillover effects between the brands and brand dilution that pose managerial concerns on the use of co-branding (Kort, Caulkins, Hartl, & Feichtinger, 2006; Oeppen & Jamal, 2014; Simonin & Ruth, 1998).

These co-branding initiatives can then be seen by companies as a useful strategy; but one that is not necessarily always successful. As exhibited, collaborations can tick many conditions and outcomes out of the list and still fail. This presents a reason to consider that other factors should be added to the mix of criteria when choosing a partner. Because the consumer is presented as one of the center pieces in a co-branding partnership (Besharat & Langan, 2014), it would make sense to consider the importance of memories and experiences about the partnered brands that consumers form – brand associations. Thus, we aim to understand in what way brand associations of the partnered brands towards the collaboration can contribute to the success factor in co-branding partnerships.

1.1 Background

As consumers or window shoppers, one may recognize the growth, in volume and exposure, of co-branding initiatives in the fashion industry.

The presented 2011 collaboration between Missoni and Target is an case of a successful co-branding partnership (Luck et al., 2014), and the Target and Neiman Marcus partnership as well as the 2010 DKNY and Veuve Clicquot collaboration are examples of unsuccessful co-branding initiatives (Thau, 2013). The Missoni initiative was successful; but considering the conditions for success it seemed to only partially meet the criteria (e.g. Target is not primarily in the fashion industry as the fashion brand Missoni; Target is a North-American brand while Missoni is an Italian brand). On the other hand, although the DKNY and Veuve Clicquot collaboration appeared to meet the criteria for success (both brands were part of the same parent brand, Louis Vuitton-Moet Hennessy [LVMH], thus appealing to the same market but different segments, as DKNY is considered a less luxurious, step-down brand [Hanslin & Rindell, 2014]; the partnership seemed to have a consistent message about the collaboration's objectives, to possess a product with status-signaling appeal and the resources for a proper execution of the initiative; the product had both brand characteristics made salient) was not successful.

These partnerships appear to be growing in volume and exposure because, in order to renew brand image and stay relevant, brands now have to appeal to younger audiences, having tapped into the new forms of communication among youngsters. Even before these new generations, Gen Y (Millennials) and Gen Z, enter the workforce, because they are always on-line, they can be in constant contact with information regarding brands. Firms have been able to reach these new consumers and adapt their brand images, but when firms are faced with the decision to invest in a co-branding partnership, they need to understand if that partnership will prompt in the consumers' minds associations that may jeopardize the company in the present or in the future.

1.2 Problem Statement

Since firms in this industry depend on brand image and positioning in the consumers' minds to attract and retain market share and grow brand equity, in the analysis of failed partnerships such as the mentioned Target and Neiman Marcus collaboration or the DKNY and the luxury champagne brand Veuve Clicquot partnership, the lack of a prior study of the brand associations could prove to be a central issue. Perhaps, by exposing consumers in a controlled scenario to the end-products of collaboration, prior to its launch, could result in insights that will reflect the interest of consumers in purchasing products from the collaboration.

Thus, we hypothesize that purchase intentions concerning co-branding initiatives are influenced by the past brand associations consumers have of individual brands in the collaboration **(H_1)**. Considering the importance of not only individual but collective associations, we also hypothesize that in a co-branding initiative, brand fit perceptions, i.e. the collective cognitive cues regarding the fit of the partnership will influence purchase intentions of the collaboration **(H_2)**. Finally, considering the social needs and behaviors young generations have, we propose that the impact of brand associations on purchase intentions will be moderated by the status-signaling needs of consumers, with consumers with high status-signaling needs displaying higher purchase intentions irrespective of their preferred brand **(H_3)**. Our conceptual framework is displayed in Figure 1.

1.3 Relevance

In retail it is quintessential to understand the consumer (Foxall, 2015) in order to try to anticipate consumers' decisions. From a managerial point of view, it is crucial to bridge the gap between the process and the result of consumers' cognitive cues concerning purchase decisions. Furthermore, brands in particular are one of the most valuable intangible assets that firms have (Keller & Lehmann, 2006); in some settings it has become just as important to understand why a consumer prefers a brand as the product itself.

From an academic point of view, we first aim to present further knowledge on cognitive associations regarding co-branding initiatives. Previous research provides boundary conditions for successful outcomes of co-branding initiatives (Besharat & Langan, 2014; C. Decker & Baade, 2016; Lee & Decker, 2016) but fails to determine what is the importance of the consumer and in particular, of the brand associations in the partnership. Applicable to the fashion industry, existent research predominantly focuses on concepts such as new product development, product fit, brand fit, brand dilution and spillover effects and offers useful insights from a company perspective (Jamal & Goode, 2001; Moon & Sprott, 2016; Oeppen & Jamal, 2014; Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Nevertheless, findings concerning consumers' associations of the partnered brands in a collaboration and how these cognitive cues transfer between brands in the co-branding partnership are missing.

Secondly, we intend to help compile additional research on younger generations' consumer habits, as most literature focuses on school and work patterns that do not provide a holistic view on their consumer behavior and habits. Millennials are now one of the largest and growing segments of the population (Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Tanyel, Stuart, & Griffin, 2013) and the last youngsters of this generation are coming into the workplace with Gen Z starting to enter the job market. Millennials and Gen Z have reached buying power. It is clear that these generations will occupy the bigger segment of work force in the next decades (Sawyer, 2018).

These new generations are already the target audience of many fashion brands (e.g. Dolce & Gabbana casted solely Millennials in a 2017 campaign and launched the book *Dolce & Gabbana Generation Millennials: The New Renaissance*; brands like Vans and Adidas have an "open-source" platform that allows the pop culture to guide and influence their position with the consumer). One could argue that this converges with existent literature that portray Millennials as being more concerned with status-related issues and identifying with the brands (Noble, Haytko, & Phillips, 2009) justifying the engagement from brands, and it enlightens on the growing need to captivate Generation Z, often reported as seeking instant gratification and presenting less preference for brands (Noble et al., 2009) due to their exposure to many choices. As such, it could be relevant to present findings that better portray behaviors such as loyalty patterns, preferences and purchasing patterns.

1.4 Research methods

In order to answer the hypotheses formulated, it was implemented a web survey as the data collection method. An experimental design was conducted in order to answer the hypotheses. The participants that were presented with a scenario-based experiment in the survey were individuals that follow in the age groups of Generation Y and partially Generation Z. Although no consensus exists towards the age ranges, in 2018 Millennials' are believed to be between 25 and 38 years old (Tanyel et al., 2013) and for Generation Z, the oldest iGen are 23 years old (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Considering both the researcher's reach and the fact that these generations are the new consumers of today and tomorrow, the study will focus on Millennials and Gen Z.

1.5 Dissertation outline

The next section outlines the literature review and the development of the research topics that will guide this dissertation. The literature review will introduce the concepts relevant for the study and describe how relevant and impactful the labelled variables are for the study of consumer perceptions on fashion cross-brand collaborations. The third chapter presents the methodology in which the study hopes to answer to the research questions by detailing the structures that will establish the questionnaire and the procedure and how each statistical test will be applied to the data retrieved. The fourth chapter will portray an analysis of the results obtained through the data. Based on these findings there will be some considerations regarding the effective and practical meaning of such results. The final chapter will address the conclusions of this dissertation, limitations that arise from it and the subsequent suggestions for further research in this area of study.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

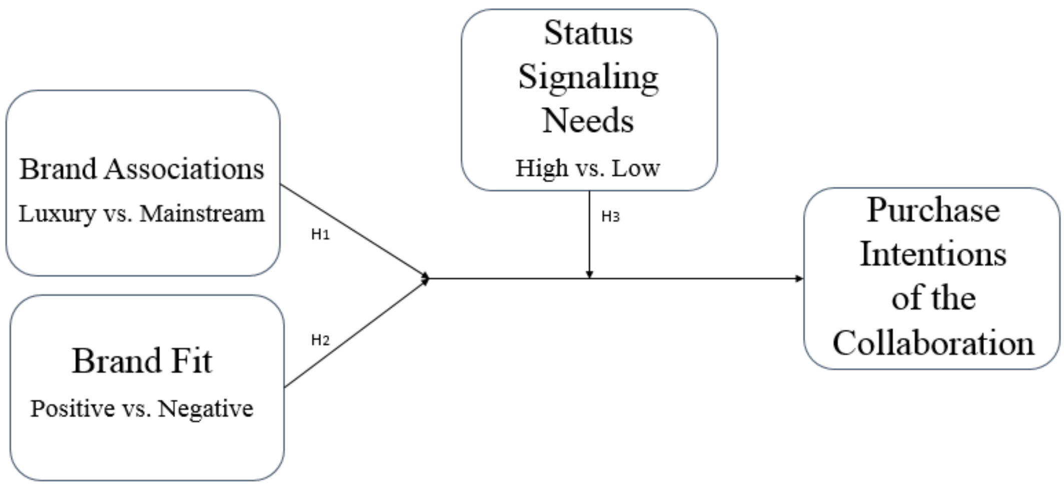

Figure 1 - Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Co-branding: The Desirable Conditions for It to Work

Co-branding is best defined as a "long-term cooperation between two (or more) brands to create a new product (or service) that inherits both tangible and intangible attributes from the partnering brands and enters an existing or new market; the identity of the associated brands is communicated through the inclusion of the brand names on the product (or package)" (Besharat & Langan, 2014). It can result in the creation of co-branded products (Blackett & Boad, 1999) and in marketing efforts (Kapferer, 2012).

Besharat & Langan (2014) propose a co-branding value exchange framework where the three members of a co-branding arrangement, the two brands (Brand A and Brand B) and the Consumer, are represented by three interrelated circles, stating that the more the circles interrelate, the more successful a co-branding initiative is for the elements that compose this value exchange. The framework depicts the interaction between the overlapping circles: firstly it portrays "product" as the product-related benefits (e.g. a product with better quality or the perception of buying a product from luxury brand that is affordable due to its collaboration with a mass fashion brand) the consumer will retrieve from interacting with Brand A and vice-versa; secondly "image" as the image-related benefits (e.g. by growing the brand's image) the consumer will retrieve from interacting with Brand B and vice-versa, and finally "market" as the market-related benefits (e.g. increase in market share) brands retrieve from interacting with one another.

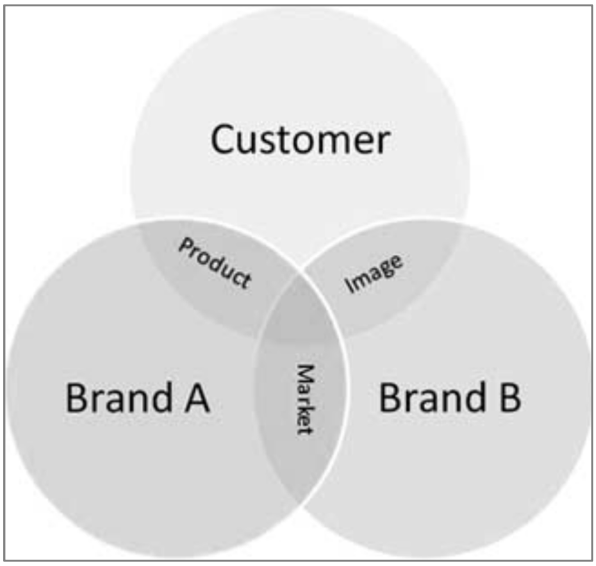

Figure 2 - Co-branding Value Exchange Framework

Regarding successful co-branding partnerships in the fashion industry, Luck, Muratovski, & Hedley (2014) centered their research on analyzing the 2011 Missoni and Target partnership. Following the framework, there was a balanced value exchange between all parties: Target reinforced the brand's image; the family-owned luxury brand Missoni brand gained immediate access to a market difficult to reach, increasing its brand awareness; consumers were provided access to a high-quality product with an elite brand image.

Regarding unsuccessful co-branding partnerships, the same department store chain aligned with luxury clothing brand Neiman Marcus in 2013 in an initiative that resulted in an overpriced and undersold collection which after three weeks had prices reduced to 70% by Target. Consumers did not perceive an improvement in quality in a product that justified being sold beyond the regular price range for Target. Besharat & Langan (2014) also presented the unsuccessful initiative between the luxury clothing brand DKNY and the luxury champagne Veuve Clicquot. The consumers saw the partnership as ill-matched, even though both brands are part of the same parent brand. Consumers did not perceive benefits in the co-branded products (rain boots) of these superior brands that would justify buying from the collaboration, ultimately leading to a distance between the consumer and the brands. Considering the value exchange framework, we could recognize that the results of interrelating the three circles were prejudicial, having resulted in no exchange of value for both Brand A and Brand B, and the Consumer.

Besharat & Langan (2014) also compiled research on the conditions and outcomes that can help determine the success of value exchange of a co-branding initiative. Findings relating the conditions of co-branding partnerships were: "co-branding effectiveness is determined by the message content and execution" and "co-branding is effective when common and unique attributes are made salient"; findings concerning outcomes portray that "co-branding improves quality perception of the weaker brand"; "co-branding leverages the brand attitude towards the weaker brand"; "co-branding helps an unfamiliar brand more than a familiar brand". These findings can also be seen as criteria for brands that if met could improve the success of a co-branding initiative.

Lee & Decker (2016) showed that partnerships in which brands are "identical" (e.g. a hypothetical Adidas and Nike partnership) or "highly incongruent" (e.g. an imaginary partnership between McDonald's and the health club chain Virgin Active) co-branding initiatives tend to fail. The authors then showed that brands need to understand upfront what possible revisions of the brands consumers might make, as one of the goals of co-branding is to strengthen existing attribute-beliefs about the brands and associated brand images. Such findings are particularly relevant to cement the necessity that in a co-branding partnership a firm must not only know its consumers but also its partners to better predict the associations towards a partnership. These conclusions converge with the findings of Mazodier & Merunka (2014) that demonstrated that congruity fit with the secondary brand and need for uniqueness impact positively on co-branding purchases.

Decker & Baade (2016) also examined the conditions for dissimilarities in fit of co-branding initiatives in unrelated partner firms. Aiming to explore the consumers' assessment of brand fit and purchasing decisions, the authors showed consumers are aware of the firms that create a co-branded product and showed that if the partnered brands are different in firm size, industry type and country of origin, there is a negative effect on brand fit perception, ultimately suggesting that high dissimilarity between partners may result in the reduced performance of the co-branding alliance. These findings provided us with further criteria that help determine the success of value exchange of a co-branding initiative.

Finally, the work of Shen, Choi & Chow (2017) observes the market practices, having focused on the partnerships of H&M and set out to understand how brand loyalty can affect the co-branding performance. The research revealed that fast fashion brands experience greater benefits when working with well-known luxury fashion brands, pointing out the linkage between vertical extensions and greater success in co-branding partnerships. This need for verticality (as opposed to a hypothetical collaboration between ZARA and H&M) portrays another condition that makes collaborations more successful.

Gathering the main findings on conditions and outcomes regarding co-branding partnerships, we have explored part of the circle framework, having focused on the relation between the brands (Brand A and Brand B) and its conditions and outcomes.

2.2 Consumer Behavior

2.2.1 Consumer Decision-Making Process

Having gathered the desirable conditions for co-branding initiatives to succeed pertaining both brands, it is time to look at the final element in the framework, the consumer.

Consumer behavior is the process that consumers experience when they make a purchase, encompassing factors that will have an impact on their decision (Stankevich, 2017). The consumer first acknowledges a need or problem and in order to fulfill that need, the consumer undertakes a sequence of cognitive actions (Solomon, 2013). In the consumer's everyday life there is a wide range of the purchase decisions: some buying decisions are less important and therefore lead to less and more automatic evaluation efforts, and other decisions need more complex assessments (Solomon, 2013). Fashion-related purchases can be incorporated in the latter decisions. Existent literature segments these evaluating processes into three different types of decision-making courses as seen below: affective, habitual and cognitive decision-making processes (Bruner & Pomazal, 1992; Hutchinson & Alba, 1987; Payne, Bettman, Coupey, & Johnson, 1992; Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999; Solomon, 2013; Stankevich, 2017).

Habitual Decision-Making

Everyday purchasing decisions, e.g. grocery shopping, can be cataloged as habitual or convenience decision-making processes. Purchases like these generally encompass a low level of risk and involvement from the consumer, since the consumers rely on memory cues from past purchases to trigger automatic decisions (Solomon, 2013). Some buying decisions are so customary that the consumer only has a residual conscious effort, a process referred as automaticity (Hutchinson & Alba, 1987; Solomon, 2013). Brand familiarity further impairs the evaluation, as prior brand knowledge and experience are expected to influence purchase decisions (Payne et al., 1992). This familiarity and awareness are higher for classic brands that present heritage and prestigious images (Brown, Kozinets, & Sherry, 2003), which encompasses luxury brands.

Cognitive Decision-Making

Regarding cognitive processes, the five-stage decision model was introduced in 1910 by John Dewey. The five stages are comprised in: Problem Recognition; Information Search; Evaluation of Alternatives; Purchasing Choice; and Outcomes (Solomon, 2013). In the first stage, the consumer perceives that a need is not being met, creating a difference between their actual state of needs and a desired state (Bruner & Pomazal, 1992; Solomon, 2013). In the Information Search stage, the consumer retrieves information both from their memory (internal search) and from the environment (external search) (Solomon, 2013). But the amount of search varies and the extent of this search can be influenced by factors such as the level of the involvement and product familiarity (Moore & Lehmann, 1980). These deliberations will in turn shape the array of alternatives available in the consumers' minds, where the consumer will comprise the alternatives that he knows (evoked set) and the alternatives the consumer will actually consider when buying (consideration set), which often do not attune (Solomon, 2013). Once consumers gather all the relevant information to make a decision, they are able to choose a product. Here, the consumer will use evaluative criteria, i.e. he will use chosen attributes to assess the alternatives (Solomon, 2013). We can consider that purchasing decisions like fashion-related purchases encompass greater involvement from the consumer, requiring an intensive search and entailing greater perceived risks (Stankevich, 2017).

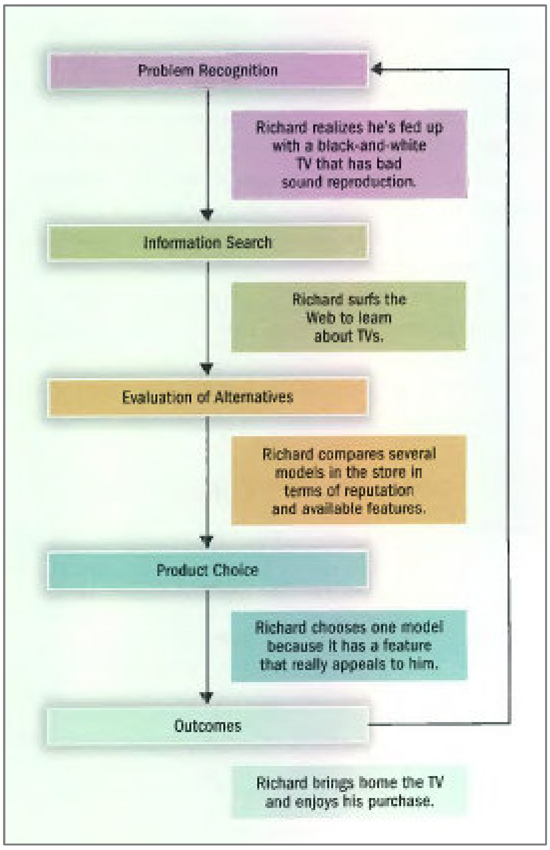

Figure 3 - Five Stages of Cognitive Decision-Making Processes

Affective Decision-Making

However, not all decisions may be explained as logically, since consumers may also rely on emotional responses to products to make purchasing decisions (Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999). When these decisions are based on emotional reactions and no single quality determines the decision (Solomon, 2013) consumers use an affective decision-making process. When the consumer is exposed to a stimulus, two occurrences are possible: the information related to the stimulus can trigger a quick, basic and automatic associative process before the cognitive processes (such as appraisals or interpretations) that will lead to simpler affective reactions of avoidance or approach; or the information can suffer a more complex cognitive processing that will either strengthen or weaken such avoidance or approach and result in more complex affective reactions ("high-road" cognitive processes") (Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999).

These decision-making processes are intrinsically supported by the memories and experiences, i.e. associations, a consumer creates with a brand over a period of time.

2.2.2 Brand Associations: Associations of the Partnered Brands

Associations play an important role in consumers' product evaluations and choices (van Osselaer & Janiszewski, 2001). Brand associations is a notion present in concepts such as brand fit (Simonin & Ruth, 1998), brand equity (Keller, 1993) and product evaluations (Broniarczyk & Alba, 1994) since there is the underlying assumption that consumers retrieve cues to analysis consumption benefits (van Osselaer & Janiszewski, 2001). This prior knowledge will in turn influence purchase decisions (Payne et al., 1992). This happens because there are four types of brand associations consumers form (James, 2005), two of which reveal pertinent to our dissertation. Firstly, associations related to product attributes, in which these can be "tangible or intangible and represent the 'uniqueness' of a given brand"; secondly, associations related to customer benefits that are retrieved by the consumer and can be extended to or enhanced by a co-branding partnership (James, 2005).

A brand can thus become intertwined with a consumer or contaminated by consumers (Argo, Dahl, & Morales, 2006), showing that a company's brand or the unique image or association a consumer may have goes beyond a particular product or service and has an important influence over consumer decision-making (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Insights on associative cues of brands are important, as van Osselaer & Janiszewski (2001) highlight perceptively that associations help to understand matters such as why extending a brand name to a lower quality product may hurt brand equity (Loken & John, 1993), why brands can extend to some product categories but not others (Boush & Loken, 2011; Broniarczyk & Alba, 1994; Park, Milberg, & Lawson, 1991), why brand extensions can hurt brand beliefs but not product beliefs (John, Loken, & Joiner, 1998), and why brand alliances can create expectations of a superior product (Park, Jun, & Shocker, 1996) and can benefit a weaker partner (Simonin & Ruth, 1998).

Considering the decision-making processes and the importance of brand associations we posit that:

H1: Positive (Negative) Brand Associations of the partnered brands will have a positive (negative) impact on Purchase Intentions.

There are two general classes of models of associations that explain the cognitive events the consumer performs, i.e. how the associations between brand names and predicted benefits are formed, how they evolve and affect consumer decisions. The first class of models is more recently associated with Keller (1990; 1993; 2006) and is called Human Associative Memory (HAM) theory of human cognition. The second class of models are the adaptive network models (van Osselaer & Janiszewski, 2001; van Osselaer & Alba, 2000). In the HAM theory the declarative knowledge, i.e. the learning associations, is represented as a network of concepts that are connected by links. The strength will depend on the frequency of co-occurrence between the cues and the outcomes, hence, when the brand name co-occurs with a benefit, the link between the brand name and the benefit will be stronger. This rationale leads to the assumption that the associations between a cue and an outcome are learned independently.

Like HAM models, the adaptive network models also converge to the linkage that association strengths evolve as cues are learned. However, whereas HAM models hold that cues are learned independently, adaptive network models hold that cues interact, and often compete (van Osselaer & Janiszewski, 2001), making these associations interdependent. Thus, the adaptive network models propose that the strength of the association between a brand name and a benefit depend on how uniquely a brand name can predict the benefit. Though these models operate based on different principles, both are founded on the idea that consumers can be influenced by both positive and negative brand associations, and consumers' brand perceptions can influence the reputational and financial well-being of a company or organization (Schulz, 2016).

These associative cues are present in theory and in practice. For example, in the oil company Shell and LEGO partnership, brand associations played a major role: while the partnership was successful for fifty years, LEGO enjoyed distribution and Shell received positive association by being associated to one of the world's biggest toy brands. But after public outcry when Greenpeace alerted to the arctic drillings by Shell, consumers started associating LEGO products negatively, leading to the end of the partnership between the firms (Schulz, 2016).

H_1: Positive (Negative) Brand Associations of the partnered brands will have a positive (negative) impact on Purchase Intentions

H_{1a}: Positive (Negative) Brand Associations for Luxury Brands will have a positive (negative) impact on Purchase Intentions of the collaboration;

H_{1b}: Positive (Negative) Brand Associations for Mainstream Brands will have a positive (negative) impact on Purchase Intentions of the collaboration.

2.2.3 Brand Alliance Fit: Associations of the Partnership

Brand image is defined as the perceptions of the brand that reflect the associations consumers have of the brand in memory (Keller, 1993; Simonin & Ruth, 1998). When two or more brands are presented jointly, as the example of LEGO and Shell, two families of brand associations are prompted in the consumer's mind and both brands' evaluations are likely to be elicited in addition to certain brand-specific associations (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). If consumers perceive the two images as somehow inconsistent, a causal or attributional search may be activated (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Simonin & Ruth, 1998), through which consumers are likely to question why these two brands are associated and such a poor fit in terms of brand images and associations can trigger undesirable beliefs and judgments and to some extent taint consumers' images of brands (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Hence, the more shared associations and the more positive they are, the greater the perception of fit between two brands (van der Lans, Van den Bergh, & Dieleman, 2014).

Research has shown that brand image consistency of the two partner brands is positively related to brand alliance evaluations (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). This happens because consumers perform an assessment of brand fit based on brand-specific associations (e.g. attributes or performance levels), with the congruence of these brand associations determining the "cohesiveness" of brand image in the consumer's mind (Keller, 1993; Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Following this rationale, van der Lans et al. (2014) investigated whether partners in a brand alliance should be similar or dissimilar in brand image to foster favorable perceptions of brand fit. Findings indicate that similarity effects are more pronounced than dissimilarity effects and showing that similarity between partner brands increases fit (Simonin & Ruth, 1998).

Thus, research shows that when choosing partners firms can choose a partner that offers a moderately "incongruent" co-branding initiative but should bet on a similar brand image because if there is an overall perception of "fit" or "cohesiveness" between the two brands, the alliance will be evaluated more favorably. This converges with the need for vertical partnerships that involve a luxury brand and a mass fashion or mainstream brand due to the vertical comparisons consumers make (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Fuchs et al., 2013). However, considering the successful H&M collaborations and the unsuccessful partnership of DKNY and Veuve Clicquot, one can question to what extent cohesive and congruent partnerships between luxury and mainstream brands generate more favorable evaluations in the fashion industry.

Having this in mind, we hypothesize that brand fit will have an impact on purchase intentions **(H_2)**, with a positive brand fit evaluation resulting in higher purchase intentions regarding the collaboration. We also set out to understand if both group of associations have an impact on purchase intentions – the individual associations of the partnered brands or the collective cues that form brand fit evaluations – and what group has a higher impact.

H_2: Brand Fit will have an impact on Purchase Intentions

H_{2a}: Positive Brand Fit evaluations will lead to higher Purchase Intentions regarding the collaboration

H_{2b}: Brand Fit and Brand Associations for Luxury Brands will have an impact on Purchase Intentions

H_{2c}: Brand Fit and Brand Associations for Mainstream Brands will have an impact on Purchase Intentions

2.2.4 Status-Signaling Needs

Consumer behavior encompasses needs and feelings, e.g. agentic feelings (Fuchs et al., 2013). The needs and desires a consumer satisfies can be utilitarian (i.e., a desire to achieve some functional or practical benefit) or hedonic (i.e., an experiential need, involving emotional responses or fantasies) and they range from hunger and thirst to love or status (Solomon, 2013). Fashion products are highly identity relevant since they help develop a person's self-concept and signal it to others (Fournier, 1998; Fuchs et al., 2013). This signaling motivation lies in the social distance and comparison psychological literature (e.g., Locke, 2003). It is the "process of thinking about information about one or more other people in relation to the self" (Locke 2003). Vertical comparison, i.e. the "perceived comparison as standing above the self (an upward comparison) or below the self (a downward comparison)" (Locke, 2003) is a dimension of social comparison and it is performed along characteristics that share a common basis for evaluation, such as wealth (Festinger, 1954; Locke, 2003). Psychologists have also found that vertical comparisons are predictive of feelings of status (agentic feelings): in the case of downward comparisons, for example, people tend to feel confident, superior, and worthy.

In the "fashion pyramid" (Fuchs et al., 2013; Kapferer, 2014) high-end luxury brands are at the top of the pyramid, positioned around a narrow, wealthy customer segment and mainstream labels are at the basis, comprising a diffused clientele. These luxury brands stimulate vertical comparisons, create social distance, and facilitate a downward comparison and a boost in agentic feelings (e.g., feeling superior to others) by enabling consumers to signal a high status (Fuchs et al., 2013; Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2010): it is the specific luxury brand attribute (e.g., its image, its logo), and not the product category per se, that boosts agentic feelings (e.g. Han et al., 2010).

It is then established that clothing is primarily a means of communicating one's social self rather than just the personal identity (Noesjirwan & Crawford, 1982). However, understanding how different groups of people make different judgements about the same brand of clothing is critical to fashion (Auty & Elliott, 1998). Social surroundings have an influence on the consumption of fashion (Auty & Elliott, 1998) and in this parameter it should be included brand characteristics and both the income and the purchasing patterns of the consumers.

Dependent on brand characteristics, consumers reveal different brand preferences. Such is the case of brand equity (Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, & Donthu, 1995), defined as the additional brand value linked to a brand that goes beyond the value provided by a product or service (Washburn, Till, & Priluck, 2000). Mass fashion brands such as Nike, H&M and Zara were one of the most valuable brands in 2017 and with higher growth (Mau, 2017).

Moreover, bearing in mind the individual's financial constraints, we can then understand how some consumers might perceive that some products of mass fashion brands (e.g. a pair of Nike sneakers) can provide a certain level of status they need.

Considering these two contrasting interpretations, we hypothesize that the consumers' level of status-signaling needs will moderate the impact of brand associations for luxury brands on purchase intentions, but also that a consumer with a high status-signaling need will always show higher purchase intentions regardless of the partnered brand **(H_3)**.

H_3: Consumers' level of Status-Signaling Needs will have an impact on Purchase Intentions

H_{3a}: High Status-Signaling needs for Luxury brands will moderate the impact of Luxury Brand Associations on Purchase Intentions

H_{3b}: Consumers’ High in Status-Signaling Needs will show higher Purchase Intentions for the collaboration

Considering Gen Y and X – a General Description

Although social needs like status-signaling is not critical for all consumers (Rucker & Galinsky, 2009), it may be important to some, namely young consumers. And while Gen Y is cognizant of fashion trends and attributes importance to identifying with the brands they buy, Gen X has a stand-off approach as they feel brands do not represent them, paying more importance to instant gratification, sometimes in the form of the lowest price (Noble et al., 2009). Skinner et al. (2018) provide a fair description of generation Y based on review of previous existing literature, describing Millennials as “independent, savvy, strong-willed, moral, serious, optimistic, spiritual, conservative, idealistic, and mature. The research also explores the inconsistency of Millennials enjoying thrilling and risky activities and being wary of new ideas. This generation of Digital Natives (Kilian, Hennigs, & Langner, 2012) and online multitaskers (Tanyel et al., 2013) can easily perform different activities on their devices, and are the first generation to use digital media not just for entertainment but for actions like online shopping and accessing and sharing information, overlooking traditional forms of media. Considering Morton’s journal article *Segment to Target College Students* that states brand loyalties that last a lifetime are often formed during the college years, research shows Millennials to be responsible as college students for setting trends and influencing purchases of individuals close to them, creating a youth market that became and still is a pivotal segment for marketers (Noble et al., 2009; Wolburg & Pokrywczynski, 2001). Thus, one could perceive how that these young consumers can establish deeper connections with brands.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter a description of the research methods will be provided as well as the variables chosen to answer the hypotheses previously presented. We hypothesized that purchase intentions concerning co-branding initiatives are influenced by brand associations consumers create of the partnered brands in the collaboration **(H_1)**. We also hypothesized that in a co-branding initiative, brand fit evaluations will influence purchase intentions of the collaboration **(H_2)**. Finally, we proposed that a consumer's level of status-signaling needs regarding luxury brands will moderate the impact of brand associations for the luxury brand and that a consumer with a high status-signaling need will always show higher purchase intentions **(H_3)**.

3.1 Research Approach

In order to answer the hypotheses formulated, it was implemented a web survey as the data collection method. This dissertation based its methodical studies mainly on the work of Decker & Kottemann (2017); Fuchs et al. (2013); Simonin & Ruth (1998), as well as on the knowledge of the decision-making cognitive processes presented in the previous chapter.

The participants were presented with a scenario-based experiment and the survey was targeted to individuals that follow in the age groups of Generations Y and Z. In 2018, Millennials' ages can be broadly situated between 25 and 38 years old. Regarding the new age group of Generation Z, they are just now entering adulthood, thus still establishing generational behaviors and habits. Seemiller & Grace (2017) state that the first post-millennial Generation Z (Tapscott, 2009) youngsters arrived to college in 2013, understanding the age group of Gen X as being from mid-1990's to 2010's. Thus, and considering the author's reach for the study, the age gap defined for the surveyed individuals is from 1980 to 1995, inclusive, having a 23-38 years old survey age gap. We base this choice of dates on the previously mentioned most accepted age gaps for Millennials and also for Generation Z. As there are financial and time constraints, participants were selected randomly under the investigator's reach, via an online link shared through various social platforms. The reach was internationally distributed with the age gaps defined by previous work on generations, reaching mainly Millennials.

The study was a scenario-based experiment with several real partnerships. This was necessary to help ensure results would not be dependent on the particular brands selected and exposing participants to real co-branding partnerships was necessary so it could result in more credible information (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). We chose brands with what we expected to be more and with less brand familiarity (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). We anticipated brand familiarity for mass fashion brands would be relatively high and the brand familiarity would vary for luxury fashion brands (Simonin & Ruth, 1998) due to their market reach.

The survey was developed in English in Qualtrics, divided in blocks according to the four scenarios. The study was launched on December 5th, remaining active until December 16th, with a result of 192 valid responses. Participants were selected randomly under the investigator's reach, via an online link shared through email and various social platforms (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn).

3.2 Procedure

The scenario-based experiment with a total of 4 partnerships in the fashion industry with a 1x1 (luxury brand vs. mainstream brand) setting was presented in random order. The first partnership (Moschino and H&M) was presented to 57 respondents, the second partnership (Stella McCartney and Adidas) was presented to 42 respondents, the third collaboration (Louis Vuitton and Supreme) was presented to 59 respondents and the forth partnership (Off-White and Nike) was presented to 34 respondents. After the partnership was presented, the survey was constructed to answer questions only for the given collaboration and brands.

Participants were first informed that we were seeking "feedback on the collaborations of two established fashion brands". We asked respondents to indicate their category involvement regarding fashion products on a 7-point scale, with higher scores indicating a more favorable rating by being asked to indicate the importance of the brand when choosing fashion products. They were then told that they would see "commercials of products these brands created and are sold worldwide". They were also told that, in a previous study, consumers in their age group rated the brands, having assessed almost all brands as trending and "in line" with their own values, style, and personality. The respondents (n = 192) were then assigned randomly to one partnership. The target stimulus was a commercial and stated that "(luxury brand) and (mass fashion brand) are the brands for you".

After the commercial, respondents first answered questions regarding brand familiarity. Familiarity with the luxury brand and the mainstream brand were measured through three five-point semantic differential scales assessing the degree to which the respondent was familiar/unfamiliar, recognized/did not recognize, and had heard of/had not beard of the brand before.

After, participants were asked about the products of the collaboration and the collaboration itself to measure product fit and brand alliance fit, having provided an overall evaluation of each. All measures were assessed through seven-point bipolar semantic differential scales.

Participants answered next questions related to hedonic and utilitarian dimensions of brand associations. These questions represent associations consumers have with the chosen brands. However, having in consideration how the cognitive processing of information in the consumer's mind can suffer affective reactions of avoidance or approach that will either strengthen or weaken; we wanted to investigate further the associative transfers that occur between the partnered brand. We designed items on a 2-point multi-item scale to attempt to measure transfers of brand associations.

Then, participants answered status-related questions based on the work of regarding each of the two presented brands as well as the collaboration.

Finally, respondents were asked standard demographic questions.

3.3 Variables / Measures

The first independent variable in this study is brand associations regarding the partnered brands of the co-branding initiatives, namely the positive, neutral and negative associations of each Luxury Brand and Mainstream Brand in the collaborations. We designed, on a 2-point multi-item scale, the item "I have positive associations for this collaboration mostly because of this Brand" where participants chose which brand best complemented the sentence, indicating "1 = True 2 = False" for the items "I feel more identified with [Luxury Brand] because I like the [Mainstream Brand]" and "I feel less identified with [Luxury Brand] because I dislike the [Mainstream Brand]" and vice-versa ([Mainstream Brand]/[Luxury Brand]).

The second variable is the brand fit (positive vs. negative) evaluations, i.e. the collective associations of each collaboration. All measures (negative/positive; unfavorable/unfavorable; bad/good; is/is not consistent; is/is not complementary) were assessed through seven-point bipolar semantic differential scales and adapted from Simonin & Ruth (1998).

For the moderating variable, we captured status-signaling needs regarding the collaboration with the four items on five-point scales adapted from Fuchs et al., (2013) (see also Locke, 2003), with the preamble "How would you feel to own and wear a product from this collaboration?" The items were "I would feel better off than wearing others" "I would feel I had high status" and "I could signal more prestige" (for each brand, 1 = "strongly disagree" and 5 = "strongly agree") (Fuchs et al., 2013).

The dependent variable in this study is the purchase intentions. We captured purchase intentions on a five-point scale (1 = "strongly disagree"; 5 = "strongly agree") with five items ("I feel I can now afford luxury items with collaborations like these"; "I feel I now want to buy a product of these brands"; "I feel closer to luxury brands that collaborate with mainstream brands"; "I feel I now want to buy a product of these brands"; "I feel mainstream brands can taint my brand image of luxury brands") (Fuchs et al., 2013).

Finally, participants were asked demographic questions pertaining the regularity of fashion item purchases, average monthly income, gender and nationality.

Measure	Variables/Items	Source
Brand Associations	*I feel more identified with [Brand A/B] because I like [Brand B/A]* *Positive-Mainstream* *Positive-Luxury* *I feel less identified with [Brand A/B] because I dislike [Brand B/A]* *Negative-Mainstream* *Negative-Luxury*	Own Construct
Brand Fit	*Goodness of fit* *Consistency* *Complementarity* *Favorability*	Simonin, B. L., & Ruth, J. A. (1998)
Brand Preference	*I like this collaboration mostly because of this brand*	Own Construct
Status-Signaling Needs	*I would have high status* *I feel better off*	Locke (2003); Fuchs, C., Prandelli, E., Schreier, M., & Dahl, D. W. (2013)
Purchase Intentions	*I feel I can now afford* *I feel I now want to buy a product (collaboration/brands)* *I feel closer to luxury brands* *I feel mainstream brands taint luxury brands' image*	Adapted from: Fuchs et. al (2013) Own construct
Demographics	*Gender* *Nationality* *Purchasing Habits* *Monthly Income*	Own construct

Table 1 - Sources and Items of Measures

3.4 Sample Characterization

The sample consists of 192 valid responses. All valid responses are of respondents corresponding to ages between 23 years old and 38 years old. 66,1% of the respondents that answered to the survey are females while 33,9% are males. Regarding nationalities, 63,5% of the respondents are Portuguese and 20,8% are German, while the remaining 15,6% are of diverse countries of origin, such as United States of America, China, United Kingdom, among others.

Regarding the monthly household income of the respondents, almost 85% earn up to 1500€ per month: 28,1% reported to have as income between 0€ and 500€. 34,4% of the respondents stated they have as income between 500€ and 1000€ per month and 22,4% receive between 1000€ and 1500€. Only 4,2% have as monthly income 1500€ to 2000€ and 10,9% receive more than 2000€ per month.

Concerning buying habits related to clothing purchases, only 2,1% shops at least once a week. Almost half of the sample, 48,4% buys clothing items at least once a month, while 38% shops only every six months. 11,5% reported to buy clothing items at least once a year.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Outlier Analysis

We started by analyzing the outliers in the sample. A Mahalanobis distance was computed for each participant. When this distance has a p-value below 0,001, the participant should be considered an outlier. Since no particular outliers seem to bias the data, all the answers were kept as valid responses.

4.2 Main Results and Discussion

4.2.1 Impact of Brand Associations (IV) on consumers' Purchase Intentions

H_1: Positive and Negative Brand Associations of the partnered brands will have an impact on Purchase Intentions

H_{1a}: Positive (Negative) Brand Associations for Luxury Brands will have a positive (negative) impact on Purchase Intentions of the collaboration

To determine whether brand associations regarding the luxury brands (positive and negative) would have an impact on purchase intentions of the collaboration, we ran an Independent Samples T-Test analysis.

Participants with positive brand associations did not significantly differ in purchase intentions from those with neutral brand associations (Purchase Intentions: $M_{\text{Positive BA Lux}} = 3{,}13$ vs $M_{\text{Neutral BA Lux}} = 2{,}93$; $t(115{,}95) = 0{,}199$; $p>0.05$). Participants with negative brand associations did not significantly differ from those with neutral brand associations (Purchase Intentions: $M_{\text{Negative Lux}} = 2{,}83$ vs $M_{\text{Neutral Lux}} = 3{,}04$; $t(48{,}54) = 0{,}308$; $p>0.05$).

Results suggest that, even though participants who reported to have associative transfers (positive or negative) between the brands showed distinctive scores regarding purchase intentions, these associations do not influence purchase intentions. These results do not support H_{1a}.

Table 2 - Results from the Independent Samples T-Test between Luxury Brand Associations and Purchase Intentions

Brand Associations of Luxury Brand

	Positive			
	Mean	*SD*	*T-test*	*P-value*
Purchase Intentions	3,13	1,026	-1,291	0,199

	Negative			
	Mean	*SD*	*T-test*	*P-value*
Purchase Intentions	2,83	1,171	1,031	0,308

H_{1b}: Positive (Negative) Brand Associations for Mainstream Brands will have a positive (negative) impact on Purchase Intentions of the collaboration

In order to understand whether brand associations regarding the mainstream brands (positive and negative) would have an impact on purchase intentions of the collaboration we ran again a T-Test analysis.

Since the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not met, $p<0.05$, in the case of analyzing positive associations for mainstream brands, we used a Welch's Robust Test of Equality of Means. Results suggest a significant difference in the purchase intentions regarding the collaboration due to brand associations about the mainstream brands (Purchase Intentions: $M_{\text{Positive BA Main}} = 3{,}37$ vs $M_{\text{Neutral BA Main}} = 2{,}81$; $t(189{,}57) = 0{,}000$; $p<0.001$), i.e. consumers who identify positively with the mainstream brand show a higher interest in purchasing from the same collaboration, having higher purchase intentions.

Participants with negative mainstream brand associations did not significantly differ from those with neutral brand associations (Purchase Intentions: $M_{\text{Negative BA Main}} = 3{,}05$ vs $M_{\text{Neutral BA Main}} = 2{,}99$; $t(52{,}26) = 0{,}751$; $p>0.05$). Results suggest that these associations do not influence purchase intentions and consumers may show a similar interest in purchasing from the same collaboration regardless of their associations. These results partially support H_{1b}.

Table 3 - Results from the Independent Samples T-Test between Mainstream Brand Associations and Purchase Intentions

Brand Associations of Mainstream Brand

	Positive			
	Mean	*SD*	*T-test*	*P-value*
Purchase Intentions	3,37	0,585	-3,983	0,000

	Negative			
	Mean	*SD*	*T-test*	*P-value*
Purchase Intentions	3,05	0,927	-0,319	0,751

Conclusion of H_1:

Results show that only positive associations concerning mainstream brands have an impact on purchase intentions of the collaboration. Hence, results do not support H_1.

Table 4 -Summary Table of H1

		Purchase Intentions	
		μ	*P-value*
Brand Associations for Luxury Brands	*Positive*	3,13	0,199
	Negative	2,83	0,308
Brand Associations for Mainstream Brands	*Positive*	3,37	**0,000**
	Negative	3,05	0,751

4.2.2 Impact of Brand Fit (IV) on Purchase Intentions

H_2: Brand Fit will have an impact on Purchase Intentions

H_{2a}: Positive Brand Fit evaluations will lead to higher Purchase Intentions regarding the collaboration

Next, we looked at whether brand fit evaluations have an impact on purchase intentions. We used an Independent Samples T-Test, since the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not met, $p<0.05$, we used the Welch's ANOVA.

Results show a significant difference in consumers who perceive a positive fit in the collaboration have higher purchase intentions (Purchase Intentions: $M_{\text{Positive BF}} = 3{,}25$ vs $M_{\text{Negative BF}} = 2{,}06$; $t(49{,}18) = 0{,}000$; $p<0.05$). These results suggest that brand fit has an impact on purchase intentions and that consumers who show a positive brand fit evaluation regarding a collaboration show a higher interest in purchasing from the collaboration These results support $H_{2a.}$

Table 5 - Results from the Independent Samples T-Test between Brand Fit and Purchase Intentions

Brand Fit

	Negative		*Positive*			
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*T-test*	*P-value*
Purchase Intentions	2,06	1,098	3,25	0,758	-6,445	0,000

H_{2b}: Brand Fit and Brand Associations for Luxury Brands will have an impact on Purchase Intentions

A simple linear regression was calculated to predict purchase intentions for the collaboration based on the individual associations for luxury brands, namely positive associations (β = 0,078 (3) = 1,197, $p>0.05$) and negative associations (β = -0,003 (3) = -0,043, $p>0.05$) as well as the brand fit (β = 0,497 (3) = 7,835, $p<0.001$). A significant regression equation was found (F (3, 188) = 21,605, p=0,000), with an R^2 of 0,256. These results support $H_{2b.}$

Table 6 - Results from the Linear Regression Model 1

Predictors	B	*SD*	β	*t*	*Sig.*
Constant	1,863	0,326		5,712	0,000
Positive Luxury Associations	0,159	0,132	0,078	1,197	0,233
Negative Luxury Associations	-0,007	0,158	-0,003	-0,043	0,966
Brand Fit	1,180	0,151	0,497	7,835	0,000

Model fit: R = 0,506[a] R^2 = 0,256 Adjusted R^2 = 0,245
[a] Dependent Variable: Purchase Intentions

H_{2c}: Brand Fit and Brand Associations for Mainstream Brands will have an impact on Purchase Intentions

A simple linear regression was calculated to predict purchase intentions for the collaboration based on the individual associations for mainstream brands (positive, β = 0,211 (3) = 3,162, $p<0.005$; negative, β = 0,168 (3) = 2,579, $p<0.05$), and the brand fit (β = 0,471 (3) = 7,416, $p<0.001$). A significant regression equation was found (F (3, 188) = 26,597, $p=0.001$), with an R^2 of 0,298. These results support H_{2c}.

Table 7 - Results from the Linear Regression Model 2

Predictors	B	*SD*	β	*t*	*Sig.*
Constant	1,043	0,322		3,241	0,001
Positive Mainstream Associations	0,428	0,135	0,211	3,162	0,002
Negative Mainstream Associations	0,420	0,163	0,168	2,579	0,011
Brand Fit	1,118	0,151	0,471	7,416	0,000

Model fit: R = 0,546[a] R^2 = 0,298 Adjusted R^2 = 0,287
[a] Dependent Variable: Purchase Intentions

Conclusion of H_2:

Results show that brand fit has a positive impact on purchase intentions of the collaboration, with positive perceptions of the fit between the brands resulting in higher purchase intentions.

In the first model, R^2 indicates that approximately 26% of the variance in purchase intentions is explained by the associations for luxury brands and brand fit. In the second model, R^2 indicates that approximately 30% of the variance in purchase intentions is explained by the associations for mainstream brands and brand fit.

Even though results show that the strength of this relationship is not high and that there must be other variables that have an influence, significant equations were found, thus supporting H_2.

4.2.3 Impact of Status-Signaling Needs (Moderator) on Purchase Intentions

H_3: Consumers' level of Status-Signaling Needs will have an impact on Purchase Intentions

H_{3a}: High Status-Signaling needs for Luxury brands will moderate the impact of Luxury Brand Associations on Purchase Intentions

ANOVA tests were performed to determine if the individual need of status-signaling regarding luxury brands would moderate the impact of the individual (positive and negative) associations regarding luxury brands on the purchase intentions of the collaboration.

For luxury brands, there was a statistically significant interaction between the effects of positive associations and status-signaling needs on purchase intentions (F (1, 188) = 11,641, *p*=0.001) with a main effect (F (1, 188) = 9,426, *p*=0.002). Values show, however, that high status-signaling needs and positive luxury brand associations do not necessarily lead to higher purchase intentions (Purchase Intentions: $M_{\text{Positive BA, Low SS}}$ = 3,60 vs $M_{\text{Positive BA, High SS}}$ = 3,06).

Table 8 - Results from the ANOVA between Positive Luxury Brand Associations and Status-Signaling Needs on Purchase Intentions

	Positive Luxury Brand Associations		*Luxury Status-Signaling*		*BA*SS*	
	F-Test	*P-value*	*F-Test*	*P-value*	*F-Test*	*P-value*
Purchase Intentions	9,426	0,002	0,500	0,480	11,641	0,001

Results do not show a statistically significant interaction between the effects of negative associations and status-signaling needs on purchase intentions (F (1, 188) = 0,173, p>0.05), with a significant main effect (F (1, 188) = 7,891, p<0.05). Values show, however, that purchase intentions are higher if a consumer has high status-signaling needs irrespective of negative associations (Purchase Intentions: $M_{\text{Negative BA Low SS}}$ = 2,38 vs $M_{\text{Negative BA, High SS}}$ = 3,01).

These results partially support $H_{3a.}$

Table 9 - Results from the ANOVA between Negative Luxury Brand Associations and Status-Signaling Needs on Purchase Intentions

	Negative Luxury Brand Associations		*Luxury Status-Signaling*		*BA*SS*	
	F-Test	*P-value*	*F-Test*	*P-value*	*F-Test*	*P-value*
Purchase Intentions	0,974	0,325	7,891	0,005	0,173	0,678

Table 10 - Summary of Interactions of H3a

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2"></td><td colspan="3">Positive Associations</td><td colspan="3">Negative Associations</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"></td><td>μ</td><td>P-value</td><td>Main Effects</td><td>μ</td><td>P-value</td><td>Main Effects</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Status-Signaling for the Luxury Brand</td><td>Low</td><td>3,60</td><td rowspan="2">0,001</td><td rowspan="2">BA p= 0,002
SS p= 0,480</td><td>2,38</td><td rowspan="2">0,678</td><td rowspan="2">BA p= 0,325
SS p= 0,005</td></tr>
<tr><td>High</td><td>3,06</td><td>3,01</td></tr>
</table>

H_{3b}: Consumers' High in Status-Signaling Needs will show higher Purchase Intentions

Independent Samples T-Tests were performed to determine whether the social need to signal status regarding both luxury and mainstream brands would have an impact on purchase intentions, particularly if a high need to signal status regarding the partnered brands would result in higher purchase intentions of the collaboration.

Concerning the Independent Samples T-Test for the luxury brands, since $p<0.05$, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not met and a Welch's Robust Test of Equality of Means was performed (Purchase Intentions: $M_{\text{Low SS}} = 2{,}58$ vs $M_{\text{High SS}} = 3{,}11$; $t(62{,}98) = 0{,}002$; $p<0.05$). Concerning the Independent Samples T-Test for the mainstream brands, results presented a partially significant difference (Purchase Intentions: $M_{\text{Low SS}} = 2{,}77$ vs $M_{\text{High SS}} = 3{,}07$; $t(75{,}34) = 0{,}061$; $p<0.10$). These results partially support H_{3b}.

Table 11 - Results from the Independent Samples T-Test between Status-Signaling Needs and Purchase Intentions

Status-Signaling Needs for Luxury Brands

	Low		*High*			
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*T-test*	*P-value*
Purchase Intentions	2,58	0,882	3,11	0,960	-3,273	0,002

Status-Signaling Needs for Mainstream Brands

	Low		*High*			
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*T-test*	*P-value*
Purchase Intentions	2,77	0,962	3,07	0,959	-1,900	0,061

Conclusion of H_3:

Values in H_{3a} show a significant result for the moderation effect of status-signaling needs on positive associations for luxury brands; regarding the same moderation effect for negative associations no significant interaction was found. However, for the first interaction, status-signaling needs do not have a significant main effect and consumers with low status-signaling report higher purchase intentions; for the second interaction, the social need to signal status has a significant result.

In H_{3b} results show that only the level of status-signaling needs of consumers for luxury brands reveal a significant impact. This converges with existent literature on vertical comparison and social distance through luxury brands (Fuchs et al., 2013; Han et al., 2010; Kapferer, 2014).

4.2.4 Further Analysis

The Importance of Brand Preference

We ran further analysis to understand the role brand preference. Literature shows the positive impact of brand preference on purchase intentions (Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995; Vihn & Huy, 2016). Research also establishes a connection between brand preference with the self-attributes of consumers, stating that the identification the consumer has with the brand will reflect on brand preference (Jamal & Goode, 2001). Nonetheless, a linkage between the brand preferences and the consumer's evaluations of a co-branding partnership was missing. Thus, a further analysis is required to understand if, in a partnership, a consumer's preference (i.e. between the luxury and mainstream brand) would lead to higher purchase intentions.

Results were not significant, showing that even though participants who reported to have a preference for the mainstream brand displayed a slightly higher score regarding purchase intentions, (Purchase Intentions: $M_{BP\ Lux} = 2{,}95$ vs $M_{BP\ Main} = 3{,}22$; $t(190) = 0{,}138$; $p>0.05$), brand preference has no impact on purchase intentions.

Table 12 - Results from the Independent Samples T-Test between Brand Preference and Purchase Intentions

Brand Preference

	Luxury		*Mainstream*			
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*T-test*	*P-value*
Purchase Intentions	2,95	1,041	3,22	0,429	-1,491	0,138

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

5.1 Main Findings & Conclusions

We theorized that another condition for success in co-branding partnerships might lie within brand associations consumers have. Such theorizing started by understanding what thoughts consumers have when evaluating a collaboration between two brands: as a consumer of the luxury brand, will the consumer feel the collaboration taints the image they possess of the brand; as a consumer of the mainstream brand, will the collaboration give a chance to satisfy one's needs and wants, such as status-signaling needs; will the collaboration make the consumer further avoid or approach the brands or will it have no effect on his/her judgments of the brands. Then, by revising existent literature, we have encountered empirical support related to the importance of brand associations and reasons to consider studying more consumer-related concepts regarding co-branding partnerships.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to assess the importance of brand associations of the partnered brands in consumers' purchase intentions (**H_1**). The analysis also focused on the impacts of brand fit perceptions on purchase intentions (**H_2**) and the moderation effect of social need of consumers to signal status (**H_3**).

Our study showed that brand fit posits a fundamental element in the equation, strongly influencing purchase intentions, overcoming the role of individual brand associations, and being of utmost importance both for luxury and mainstream brands. Consumers that perceived a positive brand fit of the co-branding initiative revealed stronger intent to buy from the collaboration.

Concerning brand associations, we tested positive, negative and neutral individual associative cues by asking consumers if feeling (un)identified with one brand resulted in feelings of (un)identification with the other brand. The study showed that positive brand associations regarding luxury brands did not influence purchase intentions, with these associations not being taken into account when considering whether to purchase products from the collaboration. This finding counters our expectations since research shows that consumers purchase from these collaborations precisely because of the partnered luxury brands, since mainstream brands almost always offer affordable products. The study showed that only positive brand associations of mainstream brands have an influence on purchase intentions, with associations for luxury brands not having an impact on purchase intentions. In other words, consumers that have a positive brand association for the mainstream brand in the co-branding initiative revealed stronger intent to buy from the collaboration. These findings reflect a scenario where these positive brand associations are taken into account by the consumer when considering whether to purchase products from the collaboration. Results indicate that consumers think whether they feel identified the mainstream brand when deciding whether to purchase from a collaboration. These results align with the successful examples of luxury brands partnering up with known and popular mainstream brands in vertical partnerships.

When considering both brand associations and brand fit, results shed light on consumer's cognitive process (priority), namely the conditions for this priority to occur. For the luxury brand, the alliance fit associations the consumer forms when assessing the collaboration overcomes consumer's associations of the partnered brands. For the mainstream brand, the consumer will consider both the individual and collective associations when deciding to purchase from the partnership. Again, this strongly converges to the successful examples of vertical partnerships and the benefits luxury brands retrieve from collaborating with mainstream brands.

Finally, we analyzed the role of the social need to signal status on the intent to buy from the collaboration, in order to understand whether luxury brands always benefit from partnering initiatives for consumers who eagerly look for status. Indeed, results show that consumers with a high need for status-signaling for the luxury brand have higher purchase intentions towards the collaboration. Findings pointed in the direction of conditions in which the consumer considers his/her status-signaling needs and brand associations of luxury brands, suggesting that only when consumers have any negative associations of the luxury brand presented in the collaboration does the consumer deliberate whether the collaboration will satisfy his/her social need to signal status. For mass fashion brands, results suggest consumers who feel they can signal status by using a product from a mainstream brand will also have higher purchase intentions. This notion that mainstream brands can satisfy status needs may be explained with factors such as social surroundings (Auty & Elliott, 1998), financial constraints and the consumers' own purchase habits and preferences that prove pertinent to the consumer's social needs. Nonetheless, results reiterate the known impact of needs of status on luxury brands (Fuchs et al., 2013) and points in the direction of and elucidating on the cognitive connections between consumers' social needs and brand associations.

Interestingly, when analyzing successful co-branding initiatives, brand preferences do not play an important role. Indeed, our findings point no influence of brand preferences on the purchase intentions regarding the collaborations. When testing brand preference along with brand associations, results have shown no significant impact in purchase intentions.

In summary, results show that the individual associative transfers between the consumer and the brands are not important when choosing whether to buy from a collaboration, with the exception of positive associations regarding the mainstream brands.

Regarding collective associations, findings revealed the strong impact of brand fit on co-branding partnerships and showed the importance of collective associations consumers form upon having knowledge of the collaboration. In other words, the way a consumer perceives a collaboration collectively – if there is a positive or negative fit between the brands based on the consumer's own associations – will influence the decision to buy the collaboration. This finding suggests that brand associations about the partnership play a role in the success of these co-branding initiatives in the fashion industry.

Lastly, findings strengthened the understanding of social needs and their intrinsic connection to consumers' purchase choices. Findings showed status-signaling needs to affect purchase intentions. Results displayed mixed relationships between the variables but pointed to the direction that consumers may purchase from the collaboration not particularly because they like the luxury brand but due to these social needs, in particular the feelings of satisfaction and gratification consumers experience by "buying to impress others" (Tsai, 2005).

5.2 Academic and Managerial Implications

Academic Implications

The findings presented in this dissertation help to reach a better understanding of the role of brand associations in a co-branding setting, namely a co-branding partnership in the fashion industry and contribute to the study and consideration of a future addition of the role of brand fit as another condition for successful co-branding partnerships.

Firstly, results converge with the fact that prior brand knowledge and experiences affect buying decision processes (Payne et al., 1992). We complement by demonstrating the role of collective associations and its importance in these cognitive evaluations. This aligns with the work of Simonin & Ruth (1998) tapping on prior knowledge, i.e. if, in a cognitive event, associations complement each other, fit evaluations will likely be more positive than if the consumer perceives the partnership is not a good fit. It also brings new notions, i.e. in what condition does the consumer take each brand's individual cues or associations and in what condition do collective associations overcome individual ones. Findings show that when a consumer is presented with a collaboration between brands, the (positive and negative) associations about mainstream brands will, along with brand fit, determine whether the consumer will feel more or less inclined to purchase from the collaboration. In the case of luxury brands in the collaboration, values show that only the collective associations (i.e. brand fit) are taken into account.

Secondly, the findings provided by this study will help to build on the knowledge gathered by Besharat & Langan (2014) by contributing to the deepening of the understanding of the role the consumer plays in the value exchange framework. As presented in the literature review, Besharat & Langan (2014) propose a co-branding value exchange framework where the three members of a co-branding arrangement, the two brands (Brand A and Brand B) and the Consumer, are represented by three interrelated circles. The framework depicts the interaction between the elements, portraying "product", "image" and "market" as the main occurrences in which value exchanges exist: "an enhanced product or service; an improved brand image and/or access to a new market" (Besharat & Langan, 2014).

Our study details that how consumers perceive the interaction with both brands is a key factor of the success of the partnership. It is not enough to consider only an intersection with Brand A and Brand B based on the "product" offered by one brand and on "image" perceptions of the other brand. In a collaboration scenario, the consumer will look at both brands comprehensively to gather cognitive associations about the partnership to then retrieve value from it. In other words, the consumer may retrieve value from a product and brand image because s/he will form collective cognitive associations about the collaboration in order to evaluate the partnership. In these associations, our findings show that individual brand evaluations do not appear to be relevant, thus revealing that cognitively, to the consumer there may be no brand individuality in a collaboration.

Managerial Implications

The findings presented in this dissertation are relevant for brand managers when designing new strategic partnerships in the future, allowing addressing this matter with a clearer reasoning and criteria when choosing a partner. Because concentrating the evaluation of a future partner solely on aspects such as the comparison in terms of more tangible skill sets is too restricting (James, 2005), managers need to understand how linked associations perform and try to identify the impacts of the partnership from the perspective of the brand's set of associations; the potential partnered brand's set of associations and lastly the combined set of associations (Wason & Charlton, 2015).

If these findings can be generalized, a crucial takeaway is that managers should consider beforehand what are the possible trade-offs between the complementarities of features and of fit perceptions with future partners (Wason & Charlton, 2015). It is key to understand that different co-branding outcomes will arise depending on the type of associations a consumer has formed (James, 2005) and depending on the different brand positioning strategies (Wason & Charlton, 2015). If a brand positioning is hedonic in nature, as is the case of fashion brands, managers should give weight to the complementary of fit between the partners over product fit considerations (Wason & Charlton, 2015). If a brand has prestige positioning, as is the case of luxury brands, co-branding partnerships present a greater risk and brand fit should be carefully considered along with product fit (Wason & Charlton, 2015).

Thus, in preparation for a co-branding alliance, managers need to understand if any established brand associations will be in conflict, if any of the associations will be negative when linked to the products created and if the combination of associations as a result of a co-branding initiative could turn out negative. For that assessment, it is recommendable that managers should: firstly, understand their present brand image and positioning characteristics; secondly, understand what are the brand's goals regarding its positioning in the market and what strategy shifts is the company setting out to achieve; thirdly, understand what are the benefits the company wants to give to and retrieve from consumers through the partnership; fourthly, find a partner that presents a good fit with both the company's present and future brand image and positioning and that can produce the desired benefits; lastly, engage in screenings and pilot testing of the products of the collaboration, presenting the partnership and the co-branded products to a defined sample of consumers in order to gather knowledge on their perceptions and evaluations of the co-branded products and partnership, ensuring the partnerships presents a good fit and provides the desired benefits.

5.3 Limitations and Further Research

As with all empirical studies this work also presents some limitations.

Firstly, very specific brands were assessed. Findings suggest that brand associations play a role in the success of co-branding partnerships. However, we focused on collaborations in the fashion industry that generated co-branded products. Therefore, generalizations must be made with caution. Research should be replicated with different brand pairings (e.g. hypothetical and real fashion partnerships and collaborations that go beyond clothing items and focus on other products and services) to clarify the relationships that show partial support in the study.

Secondly, the sample was based on the importance of studying younger generations and participants were between the "23-38 years old" requirement. However, this resulted in the main representation of Generation Y, with only a limited number of consumers of Generation X being represented. Furthermore, considering that many participants are relatively young, their financial wealth may not be particularly defined. Since associations regarding mainstream brands showed better results in general, we consider that it may be due to the financial status of the respondents. Another study with wider age requirements and coverage in terms of country of origin and financial capability should be conducted in order to collect more diverse data that would result in a better understanding iGen's buying patterns and overall generational differences.

Thirdly, with the results we understood the need to consider both intangible associations and tangible attributes, because consumers need to identify with the collaboration as well as to see the real benefits of it (Wason & Charlton, 2015). Thus, other elements could have been incorporated, and data could be collected to test a model under different conditions such as brand familiarity, brand loyalty and consumer involvement. Product category was measured, as Fuchs et al. (2013) state that "it is specific interplay between brand and product category that determines the extent to which a given product–brand bundle is instrumental in effective status-based social comparison". However, when designing the model, the focus relied on intangible attributes (brand associations; brand fit; status-signaling needs and brand preferences) since research of physical attributes is vast.

Finally, even though existent research has studied associations in various ways (e.g. James, 2005; Keller, 1993; Simonin & Ruth, 1998; van Osselaer & Janiszewski, 2001) with a wider acceptance of studies under the concepts of hedonism and utilitarianism, the core conclusion lies in the reminder that brand associations are comprehensively abstract (James, 2005). Research shows that brand associations that are positive on an individual basis can change when the brands take on a brand partner in an alliance (James, 2005; Simonin & Ruth, 1998)). However, research needs yet to validate if two strong attributes will combine to form positive associations in the consumer's mind. Secondly, research needs to determine still to what extent an association about one brand can influence the associations of another brand – if it has a positive or negative influence – and how that transfer occurs in the consumer's mind; finally, research has yet to determine whether consumer pairs associations to form a judgement about the co-branding partnership or if the consumer will create new ones. Furthermore, the survey focused on measuring brand associations on an avoidance/approach basis, strictly aligned with each collaboration presented, i.e. whether the consumer felt or did not feel identified with the brands presented based on his or her previous cognitive cues of the brands. This focus on identification seemed sensible because, if the focus centers on the logic of associations, e.g. their hedonic / utilitarian natures, we may not be recognizing that it is very often what the consumers "feel" that matters (Wason & Charlton, 2015).

Nevertheless, results produced mixed relationships: values showed that a high need to signal status will lead to higher purchase intentions. However, it also showed that consumers who reported positive brand associations for the luxury brand and low status-signaling for the same brand scored higher purchase intentions. The latter indications should be pursued in posterior studies.

Thus, a much more complex study, one that involves the study of different generations, brands and collaborations, integrates additional factors and incorporates more comprehensive measurements, should be conducted in order to corroborate or discredit the information gathered by this dissertation and ultimately to become one step closer to understanding how these complex cognitive cues are formed and transferred in the consumer's mind.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Introduction to the survey

We need your help!
We are conducting a survey for a master thesis at Católica Lisbon about fashion products.
Your participation in this survey will only take about 10 minutes and your honest feedback will help us greatly.
All responses will remain anonymous. Again, thank you for your participation!
Before we begin, we would like to make sure you qualify for this study. Please indicate your age:

- Under 23 years old
- Between 23 and 38 years old
- Over 38 years old

If answered "Between 23 and 38 years old", opens a random collaboration

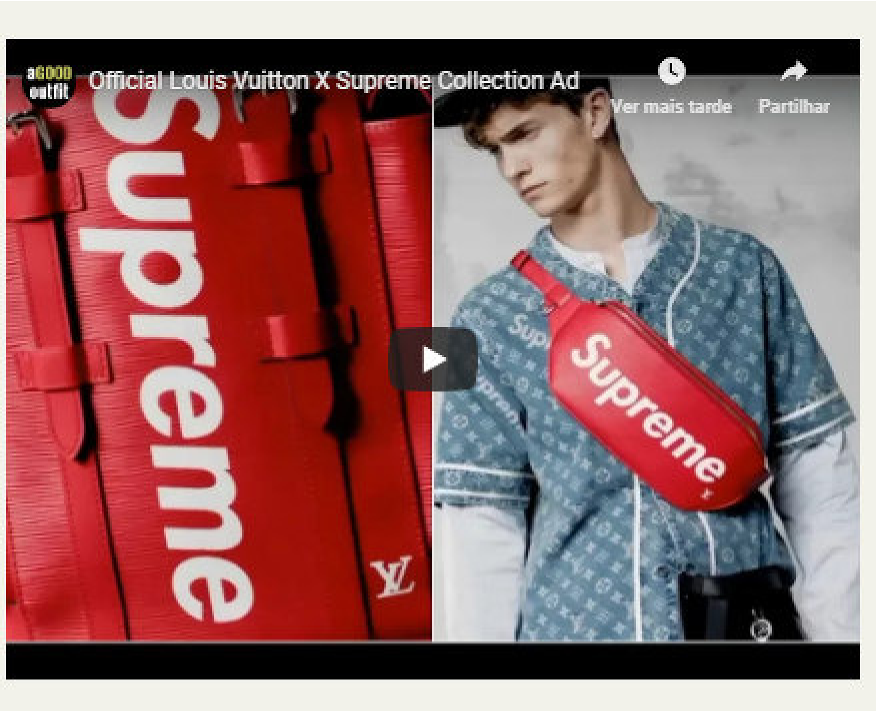
Q1: We are seeking feedback on collaboration partnerships of two established fashion brands. These collaborations resulted in products sold by both brands.
How important is for you choosing a brand when buying a fashion product?

Not Important at All	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Extremely Important

Q2: Here is a commercial of products these brands created and that are sold worldwide.
In a previous study, consumers in your age group rated these brands.
They assessed almost all brands as trending and "in line" with their own values, style, and personality.

Louis Vuitton and Supreme[1] are the brands for you!

[1] Third scenario of four scenarios.



Q3: How familiar are you with the brands presented?

Familiar	○	○	○	○	○	Unfamiliar
Recognized the brand	○	○	○	○	○	Did not recognize the brand
Had heard of the brand before	○	○	○	○	○	Had not heard about the brand before

Q4: What do you think about **the products** of this Louis Vuitton and Supreme collaboration?

Bad	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Good
Inconsistent	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Consistent
Incompatible	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Complementary

Q5: What do you think about **the collaboration** between Louis Vuitton and Supreme?

Negative	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Positive
Unfavorable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Favorable
Bad	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Good
Inconsistent	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Consistent

Q6: How would wearing a product of this brand make you feel?

	I would have high status					I would feel better off wearing other brands				
	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Louis Vuitton	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Supreme	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q7: Please drag the words to the brands you better associate with:

Items

Fun

Practical

Fascination

Usefulness

Exciting

Functionality

Joy

Utility

Louis Vuitton

Supreme

Q8: Choose only **4 words** for each brand:

	Reliability	Innovative	Durability	Premium	Luxury	Elegance	Exclusiveness	Well-being	Price	Quality
Louis Vuitton	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Supreme	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q9: How would you feel to own and wear a product from this collaboration?

	I would feel I had high status				
	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Louis Vuitton	○	○	○	○	○
Supreme	○	○	○	○	○

I would feel better off than if wearing other collaborations				
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○

I could signal more prestige				
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○

Q10: I like this collaboration mostly because of this brand:

Louis Vuitton	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Supreme

Q11: Please choose the most appropriate answer:

I feel more identified with Louis Vuitton because I like Supreme		I feel more identified with Supreme because I like Louis Vuitton	
True	False	True	False
○	○	○	○

Q12: Please choose the most appropriate answer:

I feel less identified with Louis Vuitton because I dislike Supreme		I feel less identified with Supreme because I dislike Louis Vuitton	
True	False	True	False
○	○	○	○

Q13: Purchase Intentions

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I feel I can now afford luxury items with collaborations like these	○	○	○	○	○
I feel I now want to buy a product of these brands	○	○	○	○	○
I feel closer to luxury brands that collaborate with mainstream brands	○	○	○	○	○
I feel I now want to buy a product of this collaboration	○	○	○	○	○
I feel mainstream brands can taint my brand image of luxury brands	○	○	○	○	○

Q14: How often do you purchase clothing items?

- At least once a week
- At least once a month
- Every six months
- At least once a year

Q15: How much is your monthly personal income?

- 0€-500€
- 500€-1000€
- 1000€-1500€
- 1500€-2000€
- More than 2000€

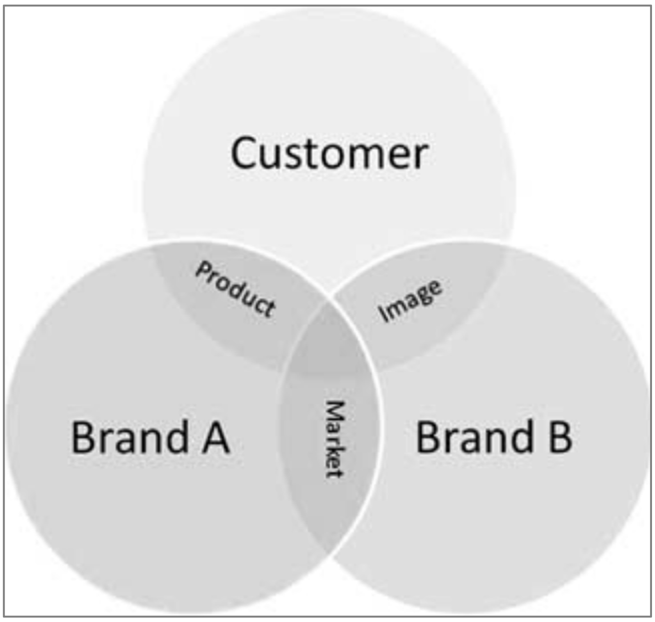
Q16: What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

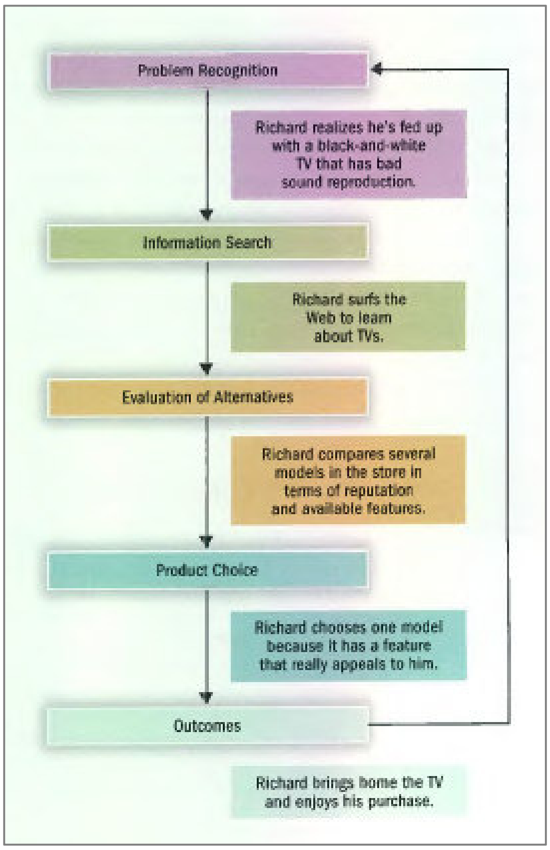
Q17: Can you tell us your nationality?

Open text

Appendixes 2 and 3



Appendix 2 – Co-branding Value Exchange Framework



Appendix 3 – Five Stages of Cognitive Decision-Making Processes