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경영학석사학위논문

**The Impact of Salesperson Look-
Brand Personality Congruence on
Brand Affect**

판매원 외모-브랜드성격 일치성이
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이 희 경

The Impact of Salesperson Look- Brand Personality Congruence on Brand Affect

지도교수 이 유 재

이 논문을 경영학석사학위논문으로 제출함

2016 년 11 월

서울대학교 대학원

경영학과 마케팅전공

이 희 경

이희경의 석사학위논문을 인준함

2016 년 12 월

위 원 장 김병도 (인)

부 위 원 장 송인성 (인)

위 원 이유재 (인)

ABSTRACT

The Impact of Salesperson Look- Brand Personality Congruence on Brand Affect

Heekyung Lee

College of Business Administration

The Graduate School

Seoul National University

As brand personality concept has been widely recognized as an effective marketing tool to achieve competitive advantage, the importance of frontline employees is also emphasized more than ever as they play important role in establishing and reinforcing the brand concept to customers, by directly interacting with them. In fact, Sirianni, Bitner, and Brown (2013) has introduced the concept of “branded service encounter,” which describes interactions between customers and employees that are in congruence with the firm’s brand positioning. Branded service encounter is a comprehensive construct in terms that this alignment of brand positioning can be achieved

along several dimensions, such as employee appearance, manner, and personality. While previous research on branded service encounter has mainly focused on behavioral trait of employee, this research examines physical appearance of employee in association with brand positioning strategy. Also, despite the fact that aesthetic labor (i.e., strategic control of physical appearance of salesperson to the level it matches the company's brand positioning) has been widely accepted by brand managers as an effective marketing tool in building and enhancing brand personality concept, this issue did not receive much attention from academic researchers. To fill this gap, this research empirically tests whether the strategical alignment of salesperson's look with brand personality actually results in customers' positive affective response toward the brand, as expected by marketing practitioners. Across two studies, this research reveals that (1) salesperson look-brand personality congruence has positive impact on brand affect and (2) identifies the underlying mechanism of the relationship between brand personality-salesperson look congruence and brand affect through the serial mediation of perceived representativeness and positive affect. In other words, when there is brand personality-salesperson look congruence, customers are more likely to perceive the salesperson as representing the brand, which in turn increases positive affect as a result of expectation-confirmation process. That is, when customers perceive the salesperson as brand representative, it

confirms their prior expectation about the salesperson's appearance, which is developed from brand positioning strategy that uses brand personality concept (e.g., advertisement, promotional messages). Increased positive affect is then transferred to that toward the brand and eventually results in increased brand affect. Furthermore, this research reveals (3) the moderating role of social anxiety such that the positive impact of brand-salesperson congruence on brand affect is stronger for customers with high social anxiety than those with low social anxiety.

Keywords: aesthetic labor, branded service encounters, perceived representativeness, brand affect, frontline employees, social anxiety, positive affect

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I. INTRODUCTION

Aesthetic labor has been established as a widely accepted branding strategy in service retail industry. Indeed, service marketers strategically control a salesperson's physical appearance to match for an image congruent with the corporate or brand personality in an attempt to build and reinforce customers' perceptions of brand personality, which eventually serves as a competitive advantage that differentiates the brand from its competitors. For instance, Korean cosmetic retailer Etude House strategically hires young females as salespeople and dresses them like a "little princess" with pink, lace-embroidered uniform to promote their young and girlish brand image. Furthermore, a salesperson working for the global cosmetic brand Clinique wears white lab coat that reminds customers of a medical doctor to emphasize the brand's image as a skin doctor that tends to customers' skin problems. Despite the important role a physical appearance of salesperson has been playing in marketing practice, only a few research empirically examined whether strategically aligning the overall look of salesperson to the brand personality actually takes part in creating emotionally gratifying consumption experience for customers, as expected by brand managers. Indeed, most prior studies on relationship between salesperson and brand perception have rather focused on the behavioral aspect of salesperson such as the research that revealed the impact of strategic alignment between salesperson behavior and

brand personality on brand evaluation (Sirianni et al., 2013).

Further, few studies that did address the physical appearance of salesperson has mainly examined the issue in terms of human resource management, focusing on the impact of aesthetic labor on the employee's emotion and attitude. Considering the dyadic nature of consumption experience, the customer's side of the story is unfairly neglected in the fields of aesthetic labor research and further research regarding this issue is called for.

For these reasons, this research aims to empirically examine the relationship between the overall physical appearance of frontline service providers and the strategic brand concept (Park, Jaworski, & MacInnis, 1986) in terms of its effect on customers' affective responses toward the brands. Specifically, I believe strategically aligning the overall look of salesperson with the brand personality (Aaker, 1997) increases brand affect, which is defined as a brand's potential to elicit a positive emotional response (i.e., happy, joyful, affectionate) of the average consumer as a result of its use (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

Furthermore, this research also contributes to the existing literature by investigating the underlying mechanism of the relationship between brand personality-salesperson look congruence and brand affect through expectation-confirmation process. To that end, I develop a three item measure

for “perceived representativeness”, which measures the extent to which customers perceive the frontline service provider as the representative of the brand. I believe perceived representativeness and positive affect serially mediate the impact of salesperson look-brand personality congruence on brand affect. To be more specific, congruence between salesperson’s overall look and brand personality increases perceived brand representativeness of that salesperson, which in turn increases positive affect. This increase in positive affect is transferred to customers’ affective responses to brands, thereby eventually increasing brand affect.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Impact of Brand-Salesperson Congruence on Brand Affect

Prior research on branded service encounter suggests that strategically aligning salesperson’s behavior with the brand personality trait increases overall brand evaluation and customer-based brand equity (Sirianni et al., 2013). However, employees can influence the associations a customer makes with a corporate brand not only by what they do and how they do it, but by how they appear to the customer (Davies & Chun, 2010). In fact, marketing practitioners in service retail industry are widely adopting the concept of

aesthetic labor (i.e., strategic control of employee's physical appearance to the level that it matches the brand concept) in hopes of building and solidifying the brand meaning and providing emotionally gratifying consumption experience (Pounders, Babin, & Close, 2015; Warhurst, Nickson, Witz, & Marie Cullen, 2000). For example, apparel retailer Abercrombie and Fitch (A&F) is notorious for recruiting employees as much for their physical appearance as for their abilities to sell. Indeed, A&F not only selectively hires employees whose looks are congruent with the brand concept to begin with, but also apply strict appearance policy to make sure their frontline service providers maintain the typical A&F look of youthful, casual, sensual American beauty (Davies & Chun 2010; Pounders et al. 2015). Ethnic restaurants (e.g., Indian and Chinese restaurants) also tend to recruit staff from the same culture as the restaurant theme and require their staff to wear the folk costume as uniform.

Previous studies on physical appearance of frontline service provider also suggest that salesperson look-brand personality congruence has positive impact on brand affect. For instance, Davies and Chun (2010) revealed that customers evaluated the brand more favorably when stereotypical belief driven by a salesperson's age (i.e., a visual cue that consists of a salesperson's physical appearance) is consistent with the brand personality trait. Specifically, customers were likely to evaluate the brand with "competence"

brand personality more favorably when encountered with a salesperson who looked old than a salesperson who appeared to be of younger age. This was because expectation driven by an old salesperson (i.e., knowledgeable and professional) matched with the brand personality trait of competence, while stereotypical belief driven by a young salesperson (i.e., exciting and energetic) did not.

Furthermore, Pounders et al. (2015) found that aesthetic labor increases patronage intention. Patronage intentions, by definition, are similar in concept to purchase (behavioral) brand loyalty such that the former represents “the likelihood of an ongoing relationship with the service provider in the form of future visits and purchase intentions” (Pounders et al., 2015, p. 673) and the latter is defined as the willingness of the average consumer to repurchase the brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Indeed, Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) has shown that there is a positive relationship between purchase brand loyalty and brand affect in terms that brands that make consumers “happy” or “joyful” or “affectionate” prompt greater purchase loyalty. These findings, in sum, suggest that aesthetic labor increases brand affect.

Building on these findings, I propose that customers show more positive affective responses toward the brands when there is congruence between the overall physical appearance of a frontline service provider and the brand personality trait than when there is incongruence. Of the five brand

personality traits conceptualized by Aaker (1997), the current study focuses on the role of brand sophistication and ruggedness.

H1: Brand personality-salesperson look congruence has positive impact on brand affect. When the overall look of the salesperson is in congruence with the brand personality, customers feel greater brand affect than when the overall look of salesperson is incongruent with the brand personality.

The Mediating Role of Perceived Brand Representativeness of a Salesperson and Expectation-Confirmation Model

Brand personality (Aaker, 1997) serves as a competitive advantage that differentiates the brand from its competitors by creating unique consumption experience through associating symbolic meaning to goods and services. In other words, brand personality bestows symbolic meaning to the brand by attributing human characteristics to the brand, thereby ultimately strengthening emotional bond between customers and the brands. Being well aware of this, marketers have invested significant time and effort in supporting the firm-selected brand image through strategic brand concept management, using 5 dimensions of brand personality: sophisticated, rugged, sincere, competent, and exciting (Aaker, 1997; Park et al., 1986). Controlling physical appearance of a salesperson to the level it matches the brand

personality (i.e., aesthetic labor) is one such strategy widely adopted by marketing practitioners. Being constantly and repetitively exposed to these brand positioning strategies via advertisement and other promotional messages, customers develop certain impression of a brand in a similar way they form impression of a fellow human being. For example, when exposed to Harley Davidson brand, consumers naturally associate the brand with a person whose physical appearance matches the rugged personality trait of the brand, as intended by marketers.

Since customers commonly perceive a salesperson as a reliable source that delivers information about the service or brand (i.e., inference theory), strategical positioning of brand personality also creates stereotypical belief about what a “typical” salesperson that works for the brand should be like (Aggarwal, 2004). In other words, when exposed to brand positioning strategy that uses brand personality concept, customers develop expectation that a salesperson, as a brand representative, should have a physical appearance or attitude that reflects the personality of the brand. When encountered with a salesperson whose overall look matches the brand personality trait, customers indeed perceive him (her) as sharing the social identity of brand representative (Pounders et al., 2015), thereby confirming the “salesperson = brand ambassador” expectation previously created by the exposure to brand personality concept. However, when the overall look of a

salesperson and the brand personality trait are misaligned, customers are less likely to perceive him (her) as representing the brand. Because the actual look of a salesperson disconfirms what is expected of him (her) to look like as the brand representative, customers cannot associate the salesperson with the brand anymore.

Previous research in stereotyping suggests that the processing of stereotype-consistent information (e.g., gender-stereotype-congruent information; passive-dependent woman) elicits positive affect, whereas the stereotype-inconsistent information (e.g., aggressive-assertive woman) leads to negative affect (Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Marecek, & Pascale, 1975; Jackson & Cash, 1985). Findings from Jackson and Cash (1985) further suggest that this negative affect driven by the violation of stereotype-based expectancies is associated with the stimulus person (e.g., salesperson) and eventually results in negative evaluation of that person. Similarly, findings from Crawford, Sherman, and Hamilton (2002) also suggest that impression one makes of a certain individual extends to that toward the entire group when that individual is perceived as representing the group, showing that when an individual A is primarily regarded as an exemplar of the group, the behavioral characteristic of person A is considered as the common trait of the group. When, however, the stimulus person is considered more strongly as an individual with a unique set of characteristics rather than as his (her) group

membership, s(he) is disassociated from the stereotype, and the impression one makes of that person is not transferred to a general impression of the group (i.e., subtyping; Kunda & Oleson 1995). These results suggest that when the salesperson is perceived as representing the brand, affective responses toward that person is transferred to the brand, whereas when the salesperson is not associated with its group membership, affective responses toward him (her) do not extend to brand affect.

Building on these findings, I propose that when there is brand personality-salesperson look congruence, customers perceive a salesperson as a representative of the brand (H2a), which in turn increases general positive affect (H2b) as a result of stereotype-consistent information processing, and this increase in positive affect eventually leads to greater brand affect (H2c). Specifically, customers develop stereotypical expectation that a salesperson should have a certain physical appearance that represents the brand (s)he is working for, as a result of repetitive exposure to the brand positioning strategies through advertising and other promotional messages from mass media. When encountered with a salesperson whose overall look matches the personality of the brand, customers feel positive affect because the actual look of a salesperson is consistent with their prior expectations of certain look that the salesperson should present as a brand representative (i.e., expectation-confirmation process). This increase in general positive affect driven by brand

personality-salesperson look congruence extends to that toward the brand, thereby increasing brand affect eventually.

H2: A customer's perceived brand representativeness of a salesperson (i.e., perceived representativeness) and positive affect serially mediate the relationship between brand personality-salesperson look congruence and brand affect.

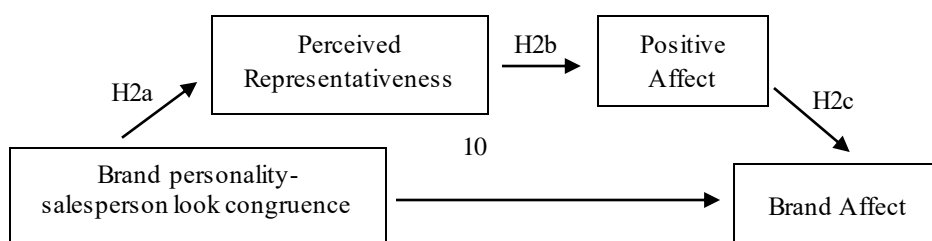
H2a: Brand personality-salesperson look congruence increases perceived representativeness.

H2b: Increased perceived representativeness leads to greater positive affect.

H2c: Positive affect is positively related to brand affect.

FIGURE 1

CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH MODEL (H1 & H2)



The Moderating Effect of Social Anxiety

In addition to testing the main effect of brand personality-salesperson look congruence on brand affect (i.e., congruence effect), this research also examines the potential moderating effect of social anxiety on the congruence effect, considering the social nature of the underlying mechanism behind the congruence effect: indeed, social anxiety, as a negative social emotion, is highly likely to influence the customers' motivation to interact with a salesperson. Specifically, social anxiety is defined as anxiety resulting from the prospect or presence of personal evaluation in real or imagined social situations such as having conversations with strangers and customer-salesperson interaction (Bagozzi, 2006; Cacioppo, Glass, & Merluzzi, 1979; Schlenker & Leary 1982). Social anxiety, with its nature as a social emotion, can influence customers' reactions to service encounters with frontline employees by activating customers' self-presentation concerns as a result of impression management efforts (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975). In other words, social anxiety, being significantly correlated to public consciousness and self-presentation concern, can motivate customers to avoid interacting

with a salesperson out of fear that they may not be able to make good impression of themselves. In fact, prior research has suggested that socially anxious individuals are hesitant about talking to strangers, avoid extensive interpersonal interactions in uncertain environments, and eventually feel more satisfaction from consumption experience when there is less social contact with salespeople (Fenigstein et al., 1975; Bearden, Malhotra, & Uscategui, 1988). Also, several previous studies have provided empirical evidence that people with high social anxiety level are generally more apprehensive about interacting with an attractive other (Wenzel & Emerson, 2009) out of concern that (s)he may make unfavorable evaluation of them (Wan & Wyer, 2015). Social anxiety fluctuates over time and situations, but there are individual differences (produced by personal experience and probably biological factors) in the degree to which people experience it (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). In this research, I will focus on chronic social anxiety as a dispositional trait that influences customers' reaction to daily service encounters.

Considering the previous findings on social anxiety suggesting that social anxiety is highly correlated with impression management motivation, I predict that even a person with high social anxiety is less likely to feel social discomfort around a salesperson when the salesperson is perceived as the representative of the brand rather than an individual with a unique set of

characteristic who they should form good impression on. However, the positive impact of brand-salesperson congruence on brand affect may be relatively weaker for customers with low social anxiety in a sense that they get less nervous around strangers in the first place, and accordingly less likely to notice the differences in salesperson's appearance. Also, previous findings on aesthetic labor and stereotype theory have suggested that brand personality-salesperson look congruence leads customers to perceive the salesperson as its group membership of brand representative, while a salesperson is rather considered as a relatively unique individual when his (her) overall look and brand personality is incongruent¹.

In sum, I propose that brand personality-salesperson look congruence will result in greater positive affect (i.e., less emotional discomfort) among customers with high social anxiety than those with low social anxiety. This increased positive affect will in turn lead to greater affective responses toward the brand.

H3: The positive impact of brand personality-salesperson look congruence

¹ Recall that in H2, I hypothesized that when there is brand personality-salesperson look congruence, the salesperson is considered the representative of the brand, based on previous findings suggesting that customers develop certain expectations about a salesperson of that brand when exposed to brand personality positioning strategy (Aggarwal, 2004), and that salespeople are perceived as sharing social identity of brand ambassador when their physical appearance is strategically aligned with the personality trait of the brand (Pounders et al., 2015).

on brand affect is stronger for customers with high social anxiety than those with low social anxiety (i.e., the moderating role of social anxiety).

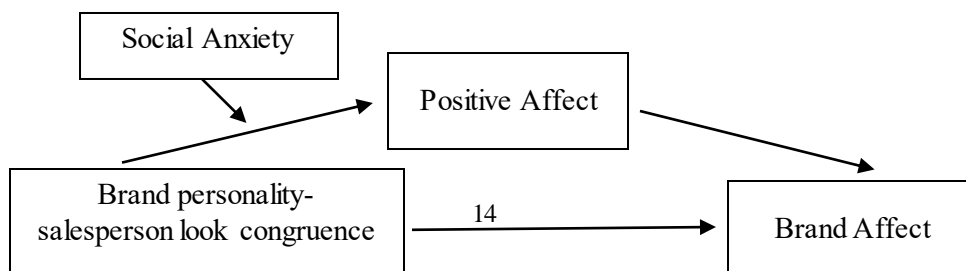
H4: The moderating impact of social anxiety on the relationship between brand personality-salesperson look congruence on brand affect is mediated by positive affect.

H4a: When customers have high social anxiety, brand personality-salesperson look congruence increases positive affect, and in turn results in greater brand affect.

H4b: When customers have low social anxiety, positive affect does not significantly mediate the impact of brand personality-salesperson look congruence on brand affect.

FIGURE 2

MODERATED MEDIATION (H3 & H4)



III. STUDY 1

Study 1 tests the main effect of brand personality-salesperson look congruence on brand affect (H1) and also tests whether perceived representativeness and positive affect serially mediates this relationship between congruence and brand affect (H2). The sequence of congruence effect among the serial mediation route of brand personality-salesperson look congruence, perceived representativeness, positive affect and brand affect aims to uncover the underlying mechanism of this main effect.

Measures and manipulation method used in this experiment are mostly adapted from Sirianni et al. (2013) that examined whether brand personality-employee behavior alignment elicits positive affective responses toward the brand.

Method

Subjects. A sample of 272 individuals between the age of 20 and 77 were

recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to participate in the experiment in exchange for \$1. All of the participants were female to control for the possible moderating effect of sex-congruence between salesperson and customer (i.e., same-sex, opposite-sex) on brand affect². In order to maintain experimental reliability of the sample, IMC (Instructional Manipulation Check) questions were adopted to screen out participants who have difficulty understanding English and those who are not paying attention during the survey (Goodman, Cryder, & Cheema 2013; Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009). Out of 274 participants, two of them did not answer the IMC question correctly and data collected from those two participants were eliminated.

Also, to increase the quality of the data, only the participants with an approval rate of at least 97% (i.e., 97% or more of that participant's previous submissions were approved by requesters) and the number of HITs approved is greater than 5000 (i.e., the number of time participants have participated in the survey and got approved for their work is greater than 5000 times) were allowed to take part in the survey in this research, following the example of

² Indeed, several previous studies show that gender congruence between employee and customer moderates the effect of physical attractiveness of a salesperson on customer's mood, using social comparison theory. (Wan & Wyer 2015; Kenrick, Groth, Trost, & Sadalla, 1993) Considering that, in Study 1, I controlled gender, which may influence the impact of physical appearance of an employee on positive affect and brand affect.

Goodman et al. (2013).

Design & procedures. The experiment employed 2 (Brand personality: rugged vs. sophisticated) X 2 (Overall salesperson look: rugged vs. sophisticated) between-subjects design. Participants read one of the four randomly assigned scenarios and answered the questions. All four scenarios were divided into two parts: participants were first shown the scenario that describes the personality of the imaginary brand (i.e., R and S, respectively rugged and sophisticated, brand), which is assumed to be the leading apparel company in US. Adopting the manipulations from Sirianni et al. (2013) the scenario described the personality of rugged brand as outdoorsy, rugged, sturdy, rock-solid, hardy, strong, and durable (Aaker, 1997). In sophisticated brand personality condition, participants read the scenario accentuating upscale, glamorous, sophisticated, fashionable, smooth, charming, and refined traits that fit with a sophisticated brand personality (Aaker, 1997; see Appendix A).

Only after having finished reading this first part of the scenario, participants were then able to move to the next part of the scenario describing the situation that a female participant (customer) visits the R or S brand dealership and encounters a male (opposite-sex) salesperson. In brand-

congruent (i.e., rugged brand personality-rugged salesperson look, sophisticated brand personality-sophisticated salesperson look) condition, participants read “Imagine yourself in R/S brand dealership. As you walk in, the salesperson A greets you. His overall style is a **typical brand-R/S-look** that you have expected to see.” In brand-incongruent (i.e., rugged brand personality-sophisticated salesperson look, sophisticated brand personality-rugged salesperson look) condition, participants read “Imagine yourself in R/S brand dealership. As you walk in, the salesperson A greets you. His overall style is **far from** a typical brand-R/S-look that you have expected to see.” Specifically, rugged salesperson look was described as “masculine and wild overall, tanned, looks physically strong and healthy, wearing casual, outdoorsy outfits such as a T-shirt and jeans,” whereas sophisticated salesperson look was described as “looking polished, cultured and sophisticated overall: he is in a suit, has a fair skin, and his hair is well-groomed and refined looking (see Appendix B).”

Measures. After reading the scenario, participants were asked the questions that measured dependent variables.

Brand affect was measured as an average of three 7-point items (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Participants reported the level of agreement with each of the following three statements: “I feel good when I use this brand,” “This

brand makes me happy,” “This brand gives me pleasure” (1 = completely disagree, 7 = completely agree). Reliability analysis showed the scale was unidimensional and Cronbach’s alpha was 0.95.

Positive affect was also measured as an average of four 7-point items (Allen & Janiszewski, 1989): bad/good, negative/positive, unpleasant/pleasant, sad/happy. These four items turned out to be highly reliable to measure positive affect (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.96).

In addition, I developed three 7-point items to measure the degree to which participants perceive a salesperson as a brand representative, based on expressions commonly found in service marketing literatures examining employee branding (Harquail, 2006; Pounders et al., 2015). Specifically, using 7-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = completely disagree, 7 = very much agree), participants rated to what extent they agree with each of the following three statements: “The salesperson A is the exemplar of the brand,” “The salesperson A is the ambassador of the brand,” “The salesperson A represents the brand.” The ratings for the three items were averaged to create perceived representativeness index ($\alpha = 0.96$).

After completing the dependent measures, participants answered manipulation check questions. Their perceptions of (1) the salesperson’s rugged and sophisticated look traits and (2) the brand’s rugged and

sophisticated personality traits were measured by separate six 11-point items (i.e., 1 = not at all, 11 = very much), which asked participants to rate the extent they think each of the six adjectives (i.e., rugged, tough, resilient, sophisticated, refined, cultured) describes (1) the characteristics of the salesperson's look or (2) R/S brand's personality (Aaker, 1997; Weber & Crocker, 1983). I created rugged salesperson look index by averaging the three items that measured rugged characteristics of a salesperson look (i.e., athletic, tough, resilient; $\alpha = 0.94$) and sophisticated salesperson look index by averaging the other three items that measured sophisticated characteristics of a salesperson look (i.e., sophisticated, refined, cultured; $\alpha = 0.97$). Furthermore, rugged brand personality was measured as an average of three items (i.e., rugged, tough, resilient; $\alpha = 0.98$) and sophisticated brand personality was measured as an average of other three items (i.e., sophisticated, refined, cultured; $\alpha = 0.97$).

Results

Manipulation checks. I tested the manipulations of salesperson look trait and brand personality with a series of 2 x 2 ANOVAs. First, a 1-way ANOVA with rugged characteristics of salesperson look as the dependent variable

revealed a significant main effect of salesperson look characteristic ($F(1,271) = 550.63, p < .001$). As expected, the salesperson was perceived as more rugged looking for participants in rugged look condition ($M_{rugged} = 5.83$) than those in sophisticated look condition ($M_{sophisticated} = 2.39$ [out of 7]). Second, a 1-way ANOVA with sophisticated characteristics of salesperson look as the dependent variable showed a significant main effect of salesperson look characteristic ($F(1,271) = 534.01, p < .001$). Also as expected, participants in sophisticated look condition perceived the salesperson as more sophisticated looking overall than those in rugged look condition ($M_{sophisticated} = 6.09$ vs. $M_{rugged} = 2.66$ [out of 7]). Third, a 1-way ANOVA of brand personality trait (rugged vs. sophisticated) on rugged brand personality index showed a significant main effect ($M_{sophisticated} = 2.35$ vs. $M_{rugged} = 6.10$; $F(1,271) = 959.75, p < .001$). Fourth, a 1-way ANOVA with sophisticated brand personality index as the dependent variable revealed a significant main effect of brand personality trait ($M_{sophisticated} = 6.25$ vs. $M_{rugged} = 2.43$; $F(1,271) = 996.78, p < .001$).

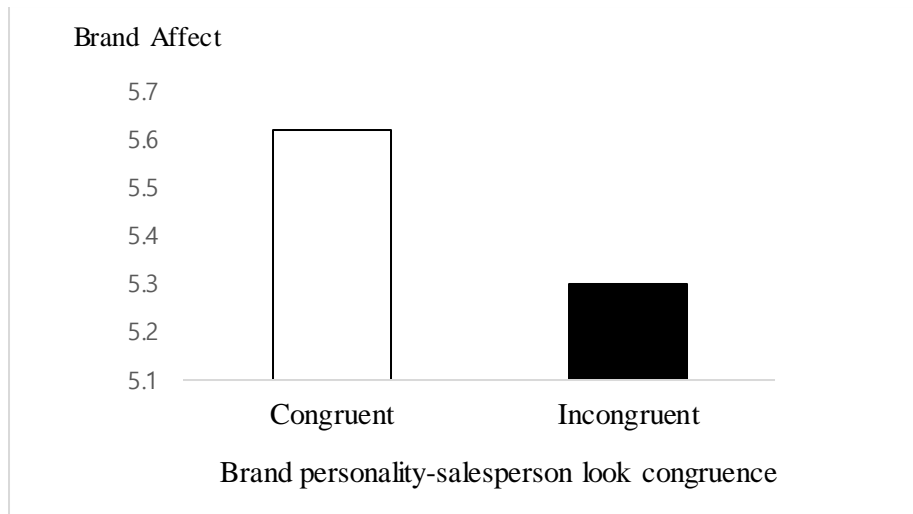
The effect of brand personality-salesperson look congruence on brand affect. To test hypotheses that examine the impact of salesperson look-brand personality congruence on brand affect, “congruence” variable was created:

“rugged brand personality-rugged salesperson look” condition and “sophisticated brand personality-sophisticated salesperson look” condition were classified as a “congruent” variable, whereas “rugged brand personality-sophisticated salesperson look” condition and “sophisticated brand personality-rugged salesperson look” condition were labeled as an “incongruent” variable.

Results of 1-way ANOVA showed that participants reported higher affective response toward the brand (i.e., brand affect) when there was congruence between the brand personality and salesperson look ($F(1,271) = 5.38, p < .05$), supporting H1. Specifically, participants felt greater brand affect when encountered with a salesperson whose overall look was in congruence with the brand personality ($M_{congruent} = 5.62$) than when the salesperson’s overall look is incongruent with the brand personality ($M_{incongruent} = 5.30$ [out of 7]; see figure 3).

FIGURE 3

THE IMPACT OF BRAND PERSONALITY-SALESPERSON LOOK CONGRUENCE ON BRAND AFFECT (STUDY 1)



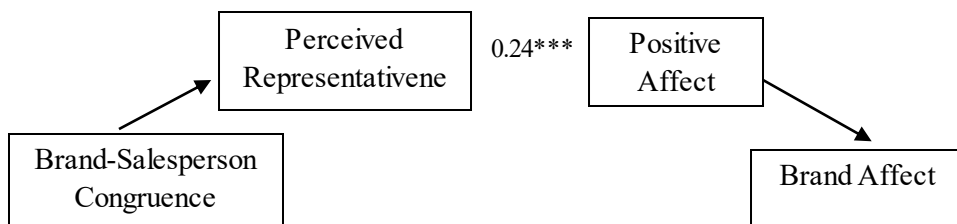
Serial mediation of positive affect and perceived representativeness. A separate 1-way ANOVA revealed the significant main effect of brand-salesperson look congruence on positive affect ($F(1,271) = 11.51, p < .01$) and perceived representativeness ($F(1,271) = 628.51, p < .001$). In other words, participants felt greater positive affect when encountered with a salesperson whose overall look was in congruence with the brand personality ($M_{congruent} = 6.01$ vs. $M_{incongruent} = 5.54$ [out of 7]). Also, participants perceived the salesperson as more representative of the brand when his overall look was congruent with the brand personality than when they were incongruent ($M_{congruent} = 6.17$ vs. $M_{incongruent} = 2.53$ [out of 7]), in support of H2a.

To test whether perceived representativeness and positive affect serially

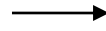
mediate the impact of salesperson-brand congruence on brand affect (H2), bootstrapping analysis was conducted using PROCESS, model 6 (Hayes, 2013). Using 5,000 bootstrapping samples, the procedure indicated a significant indirect path of “brand-salesperson congruence → perceived representativeness → positive affect → brand affect” ($b = 0.45$, 95% CI = [0.25, 0.67]; incongruent = 0, congruent = 1; see figure 4), suggesting that brand-salesperson congruence has indirect impact on brand affect through a causally linked multiple mediators of perceived representativeness and positive affect: when there was congruence between salesperson look and brand personality, participants were more likely to perceive the salesperson as representing the brand (H2a) and this perception in turn increased general positive affect (H2b) as a result of expectation confirmation process. In other words, participants felt greater positive affect when there was congruence between salesperson look and brand personality because it confirmed their prior expectation of what a salesperson of the particular brand should look like.

FIGURE 4

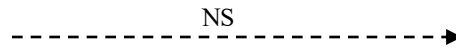
SERIAL MEDIATION ANALYSIS (STUDY 1)



3.63***



0.51***



Note.—Significance levels are denoted by *** at $p < .0001$

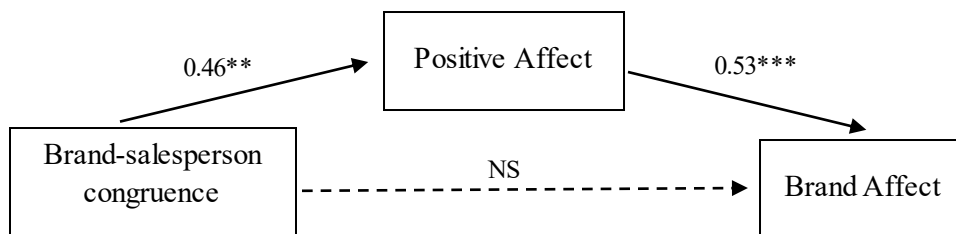
Also, a separate mediation analysis using PROCESS model 4 revealed that positive affect mediates the impact of brand personality-salesperson look on brand affect. Using 5,000 bootstrapping samples, the procedure showed significant indirect effect of brand personality-salesperson look congruence on brand affect via positive affect ($b = 0.25$, 95% CI = [0.10, 0.40]; incongruent = 0, congruent = 1; see figure 5).

Discussion. Results of Study 1 show that aligning brand personality and salesperson look increases brand affect (i.e., congruence effect) and also identify the serial mediation effect of perceived representativeness and positive affect as the underlying mechanism behind the relationship between brand-salesperson congruence and brand affect, respectively supporting H1 and H2. To further examine the boundary condition of the congruence effect, I turn to Study 2 to test the moderating effect of social anxiety. Also, to increase generalizability and reliability of the results, Study 2 is conducted

among male participants and sex-congruence between customer and salesperson is also added to the experimental design as a control variable. That is, Study 2 extends its experimental setting by including same-sex situation in addition to the original opposite-sex setting.

FIGURE 5

**MEDIATING ROLE OF POSITIVE AFFECT
ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
BRAND-SALESPERSON CONGRUENCE AND BRAND AFFECT
(STUDY 1)**



Note.—Significance levels are denoted by ** at $p < .001$; *** at $p < .0001$

IV. STUDY 2

Study 2 not only tested the main effect of brand personality-salesperson look congruence on brand affect (H1) and revealed the underlying mechanism

of this relationship by testing the serial mediation of perceived representativeness and positive affect (H2), but also examined the moderating role of social anxiety on the relationship between congruence and brand affect (H3). Study 2 incorporated the same experimental procedures used in Study 1 with a few modifications. While Study 1 focused on opposite-sex condition, Study 2 controlled for and examined the possible moderating effect of “salesperson-customer sex-congruence” variable by adding it to the experiment design. Specifically, Study 2 used 2 (Salesperson look: rugged vs. sophisticated) x 2 (brand personality: rugged vs. sophisticated) x 2 (sex congruence: same-sex vs. opposite-sex) between-subjects design. Social anxiety, a dispositional variable, was measured along with other dependent variables such as brand affect, positive affect, and perceived representativeness. As in Study 1, measures, manipulation method, and procedures used in Study 2 were mostly adapted from Sirianni et al. (2013) in an attempt to maintain reliability of measurement.

Method

Subjects. A sample of 178 male participants between the age of 19 and 70 years ($M = 36.16$, $SD = 10.03$) were recruited from MTurk to participate in

the experiment in exchange for \$1.5. Unlike Study 1, in which all of the participants were female, Study 2 was conducted among male participants in order to prevent MTurk workers who had already participated in Study 1 from taking the similar survey again and also to maintain diversity of the sample. In addition to adopting IMC questions, participants currently residing in United States were selected to take part in the study in an attempt to maintain experimental reliability of the sample. Also, as in Study 1, only those who met certain qualifications (i.e., approval rate above 97% and the number of HITs approved being greater than 5000) provided by MTurk system to enhance the quality of the data were allowed to participate in the experiment.

Design & procedures. The experiment employed 2 X 2 between-subjects design, in which I manipulated salesperson's look (rugged vs. sophisticated) and brand personality (rugged vs. sophisticated). Brand personality was manipulated with the same scenarios used in Study 1, except for that the certain expressions that may hint the size and reputation of the imaginary brand (i.e., R/S brand is **one of the nation's leading** ... companies with **many** stores located across the United States.) were revised to more neutral expressions (i.e., R/S brand is the ... **retailer with its store located** across the United States) in order to eliminate the possible bias. In order to control for "salesperson-customer sex-congruence" variable, the second part of the

scenario described the appearance of a female salesperson (i.e., opposite-sex) whose look is characterized as either rugged or sophisticated. Specifically, rugged salesperson look was described as “outdoorsy and tough, overall, tanned, looks physically fit, strong and healthy, has a natural hairstyle, with her hair let down and loose, wearing casual, outdoorsy outfits such as a leather jacket, T-shirt, jeans and western boots,” whereas sophisticated salesperson look was described as “looking polished and sophisticated overall: She has a formal, office look, wearing a tailored jacket and an h-line, midi skirt. She has a fair skin, and her hair is neatly done and refined looking (see Appendix C).”

In advance to the manipulation of salesperson’s look and brand personality, dispositional variable of social anxiety was measured using eleven 7-point items (e.g., “I often feel nervous even in casual get-togethers”; $\alpha = 0.95$) developed by Leary (1989). Participants were asked to answer the social anxiety scale before they were exposed to the stimulus, thus guarding against potential contaminations from common method biases (Rao & Monroe, 1988).

Measures. After reading the scenario, participants were asked the questions that measured dependent variables. I used the same scales as in Study 1 to measure brand affect ($\alpha = 0.96$), positive affect ($\alpha = 0.95$), and perceived

representativeness ($\alpha = 0.94$).

After completing the dependent measures, participants answered manipulation check questions. Their perceptions of the salesperson's rugged and sophisticated look traits were measured by six 7-point items, which asked participants to rate the extent to which they think each of the eight adjectives (i.e., outdoorsy, athletic, tough, country-western; polished, sophisticated, glamorous, upper-class). Also, participants' perceptions of the brand's rugged and sophisticated personality traits were measured by ten 7-point items (i.e., 1 = not at all, 7 = very much), which asked participants to rate the extent they think each of the ten adjectives (i.e., rugged, tough, strong, country-western, outdoorsy; sophisticated, glamorous, smooth, upper-class, charming) describes the brand's rugged or sophisticated personality (Aaker, 1997; Weber & Crocker, 1983).

I created rugged salesperson look index by averaging the four items that measured rugged characteristics of a salesperson look (i.e., outdoorsy, athletic, tough, country-western; $\alpha = 0.96$) and sophisticated salesperson look index by averaging the other three items that measured sophisticated characteristics of a salesperson look (polished, sophisticated, glamorous, upper-class; $\alpha = 0.97$). Furthermore, rugged brand personality was measured as an average of four items (i.e., rugged, tough, strong, country-western, outdoorsy; $\alpha = 0.98$) and sophisticated brand personality was measured as an average of other four

items (i.e., sophisticated, glamorous, smooth, upper-class, charming; $\alpha = 0.97$).

Results

Manipulation checks. I tested the manipulations of salesperson look trait and brand personality with a series of ANOVAs. First, a 1-way ANOVA with rugged characteristics of salesperson look as the dependent variable revealed a significant main effect of salesperson look characteristic ($F(1,176) = 834.18$, $p < .001$). As expected, the salesperson was perceived as more rugged looking for participants in rugged look condition ($M_{rugged} = 6.13$) than those in sophisticated look condition ($M_{sophisticated} = 1.82$ [out of 7]). Second, a 1-way ANOVA with sophisticated characteristics of salesperson look as the dependent variable showed a significant main effect of salesperson look characteristic ($F(1,176) = 437.26$, $p < .001$). Also as expected, participants in sophisticated look condition perceived the salesperson as more sophisticated looking overall than those in rugged look condition ($M_{sophisticated} = 6.17$ vs. $M_{rugged} = 2.53$ [out of 7]). Third, a 1-way ANOVA of brand personality trait (rugged vs. sophisticated) on rugged brand personality index showed a significant main effect ($M_{sophisticated} = 2.09$ vs. $M_{rugged} = 6.13$; $F(1,176) = 446.93$, $p < .001$). Fourth, a 1-way ANOVA with

sophisticated brand personality index as the dependent variable revealed a significant main effect of brand personality trait ($M_{sophisticated} = 6.21$ vs. $M_{rugged} = 2.45$; $F(1,176) = 433.13$, $p < .001$).

Preliminary analysis. As in Study 1, “congruence” variable was created to test hypotheses that examine the impact of salesperson look-brand personality congruence on brand affect. “Sex-congruence” variable was created such that male participants assigned to the female salesperson scenario were categorized as “opposite-sex”, while those assigned to the male salesperson condition were labeled as “same-sex.”

A multiple regression analysis on brand affect with congruence, social anxiety, and their interaction showed significant interaction effect of congruence x social anxiety ($b = 0.30$, $t(174) = 2.28$, $p < 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.07$, $R_{adj}^2 = 0.05$)³. In this regression model, the main effect of congruence ($b = -0.66$, $t(174) = -1.11$, $p = 0.26$) and social anxiety ($b = -0.15$, $t(174)$

³ A multiple regression analysis on brand affect with congruence, sex-congruence, social anxiety and their interactions were also conducted to control for sex-congruence variable. In this regression model (i.e., model 2), none of the interactions and main effects were significant, except for a marginally significant interaction effect of congruence x social anxiety ($b=0.34$, $t(170)=1.79$, $p=0.07$, $R^2 = 0.08$, $R_{adj}^2 = 0.04$). Since the exploratory power of model 2 is lower than model 1, in which brand affect was regressed on congruence, social anxiety, and their interaction ($R_{adj,1}^2 = 0.05$ vs. $R_{adj,2}^2 = 0.04$), I only reported the results of model 1 in “result” section of this research paper.

= -1.73, $p = 0.08$) was not significant.

However, a separate analysis of 1-way ANOVA with a covariate of sex-congruence showed significant main effect of congruence on brand affect ($F(1,175) = 7.93, p < 0.01$). Specifically, participants showed greater brand affect when encountered with a salesperson whose overall look was in congruence with the brand personality ($M_{congruent} = 4.86$) than when there the salesperson's overall look is incongruent with the brand personality ($M_{incongruent} = 4.26$ [out of 7]). In sum, these results suggest that the significant interaction effect of brand-salesperson congruence x social anxiety on brand affect is stronger than the significant main effect of brand-salesperson congruence.

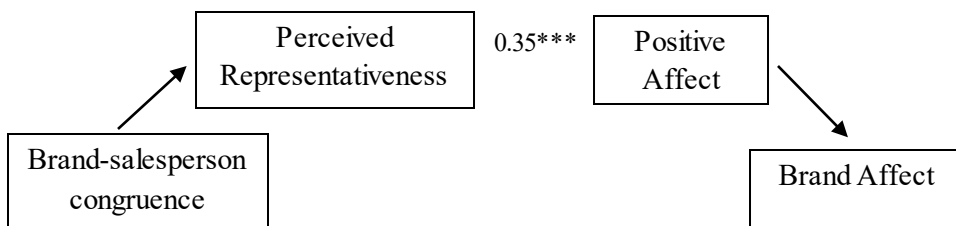
Serial mediation analysis. A separate 1-way ANOVA with a covariate of sex-congruence revealed the significant main effect of brand-salesperson look congruence on positive affect ($F(1,175) = 10.68, p < .005$) and perceived representativeness ($F(1,175) = 316.92, p < .001$). In other words, participants felt greater positive affect when encountered with a salesperson whose overall look was in congruence with the brand personality ($M_{congruent} = 5.61$ vs. $M_{incongruent} = 5.02$ [out of 7]). Also, participants perceived the salesperson as more representative of the brand when his overall look was congruent with

the brand personality than when they were incongruent ($M_{congruent} = 6.04$ vs. $M_{incongruent} = 2.83$ [out of 7]), in support of H2a.

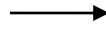
To test whether perceived representativeness and positive affect serially mediate the impact of salesperson-brand congruence on brand affect (H2), bootstrapping analysis was conducted using PROCESS model 6 (Hayes 2013). Using 5,000 bootstrapping samples, the results showed a significant indirect path of “brand-salesperson congruence \rightarrow perceived representativeness \rightarrow positive affect \rightarrow brand affect” ($b = 0.73$, $se = 0.02$, 95% CI = [0.35, 1.21]; incongruent = 0, congruent = 1; see figure 6). Specifically, when there was congruence between salesperson look and brand personality, participants were more likely to perceive the salesperson as representing the brand ($b = 3.21$, $se = 0.18$, $t = 17.80$, $p < .0001$, 95% CI = [2.85, 3.57]) and this perception in turn increased general positive affect ($b = 0.35$, $se = 0.07$, $t = 5.11$, $p < .0001$, 95% CI = [0.22, 0.49]), consistent with H2a and H2b. Greater positive affect significantly increased brand affect ($b = 0.64$, $se = 0.08$, $t = 0.26$, $p < .0001$, 95% CI = [0.48, 0.79]), in support of H2c.

FIGURE 6

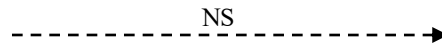
SERIAL MEDIATION ANALYSIS (STUDY 2)



3.21***



0.64***



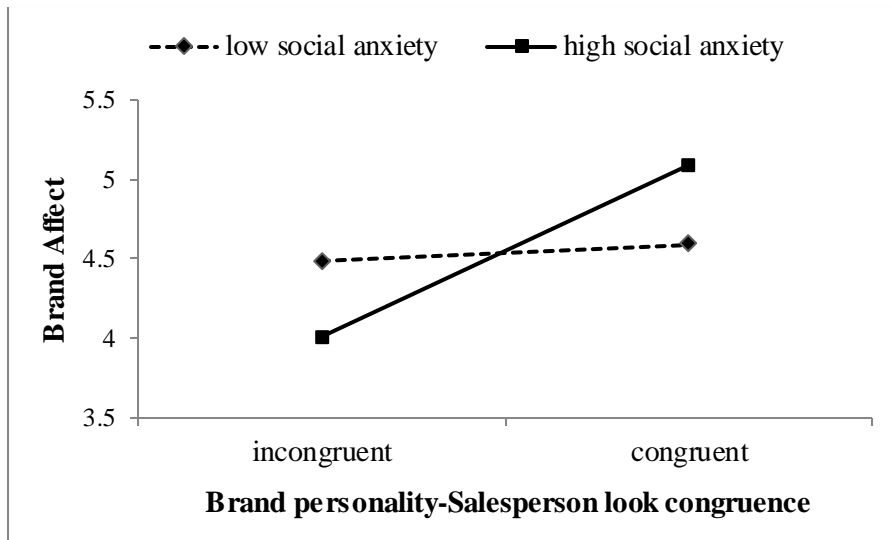
Note.—Significance levels are denoted by *** at $p < 0.0001$

The Moderating effect of social anxiety. The preliminary multiple regression analysis reported earlier in this research paper revealed significant interaction effect of congruence x social anxiety ($b = 0.30$, $t(174) = 2.28$, $p < 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.07$, $R_{adj}^2 = 0.05$). To look more deeply into this pattern of results, spotlight analysis was conducted to examine the effect of salesperson look-brand personality congruence on brand affect among participants who were high and low in chronic social anxiety level (i.e., those 1 standard deviation above and below the mean value; Krishna, 2016; Spiller, Fitzsimons, Lynch, & McClelland, 2013). Given that the default case in Hayes' PROCESS computes conditional effects at the mean, mean plus 1 standard deviation, and mean minus one standard deviation of the moderator variable, I conducted a spotlight analysis using PROCESS model 1 with a covariate of sex-congruence variable to test the moderating effect of social anxiety on the relationship between congruence and brand affect when sex-congruence is controlled for (H1). Using 5,000 bootstrapping samples, the procedure

indicated a significant interaction effect of congruence x social anxiety on brand affect ($b = 0.30$, $se = 0.13$, $t = 2.28$, $p < 0.05$, $95\% \text{ CI} = [0.04, 0.56]$). Specifically, when social anxiety level is high (i.e., social anxiety index = SA index = 5.74), salesperson look-brand personality congruence significantly increases brand affect ($b = 1.08$, $se = 0.29$, $t = 3.63$, $p < 0.0005$, $95\% \text{ CI} = [0.49, 1.67]$; incongruent = 0, congruent = 1), consistent with H3a. However, among participants whose social anxiety level is low (i.e., SA index = 2.54), the impact of congruence on brand affect was not significant ($b = 0.10$, $se = 0.30$, $t = 0.35$, $p = 0.72$, $95\% \text{ CI} = [-0.49, 0.70]$; see figure 7), supporting H3b.

FIGURE 7

THE MODERATING EFFECT OF SOCIAL ANXIETY
ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
BRAND-SALESPERSON CONGRUENCE AND BRAND AFFECT
(STUDY 2, H3)

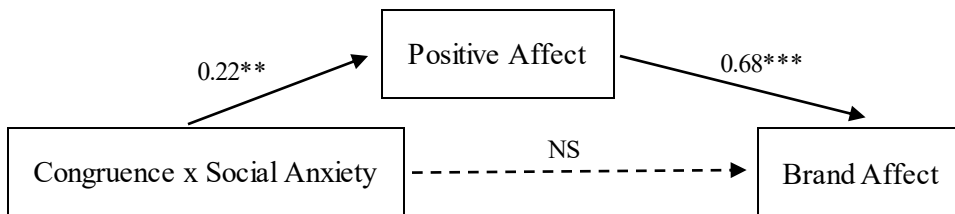


Moderated mediation analysis. Next, a moderated mediation analysis was conducted to test whether positive affect mediated the interactive effect of congruence and social anxiety on brand affect (H4) when sex congruence variable is controlled for, using PROCESS model 8. Using 5,000 bootstrap samples, the results showed a significant indirect path that was mediated by positive affect ($b = 0.15$, $se = 0.07$, $95\% CI = [0.006, 0.31]$) while the direct path turned out to be insignificant ($95\% CI = [-0.07, 0.37]$), suggesting that positive affect fully mediated the salesperson look-brand personality congruence x social anxiety effect on brand affect. Specifically, spotlight analysis showed that positive affect significantly mediated the relationship between congruence and brand affect among participants with high social anxiety level ($b = 0.69$, $se = 0.19$, $95\% CI = [0.34, 1.14]$), while the mediation

effect of positive affect was not significant among those with low social anxiety level ($b = 0.19$, $se = 0.16$, $95\% CI = [-0.11, 0.52]$; see figure 8). These results support H4.

FIGURE 8

MEDIATING EFFECT OF POSITIVE AFFECT ON
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONGRUENCE x SOCIAL ANXIETY
AND BRAND AFFECT (STUDY 2, H4)



Note.—Significance levels are denoted by ** at $p < .05$; *** at $p < .0001$

Discussion. Study 2 not only replicates the findings from Study 1 but also shows the moderating effect of social anxiety on the relationship between brand personality-salesperson look congruence and brand affect, testing H1-H3 among different sample with sex-congruence variable controlled for. Specifically, Study 2 provides further evidence that brand personality-salesperson look congruence result in increased brand affect and identifies the underlying mechanism behind this relationship as a serial mediation of

perceived representativeness and positive affect. Furthermore, Study 2 sheds more light on the boundary condition of social anxiety such that congruence significantly increases brand affect only when a customer has high level of social anxiety, while there is no significant difference in brand affect between congruent and incongruent conditions for customers with low level of social anxiety. More specifically, moderated mediation analysis results demonstrate that positive affect mediates the interaction effect of brand-salesperson congruence and social anxiety on brand affect. That is, customers with high social anxiety level feel more positive affect when there is congruence between brand personality and salesperson look, possibly because they find the salesperson as the representative of the brand rather than an individual on whom they should present good impressions of themselves. On the other hand, for customers with low social anxiety who do not usually feel nervous around salesperson in the first place, brand-salesperson congruence does not have significant impact on brand affect.

V. GENERAL DISCUSSION

As brand personality has long been emphasized as a competitive advantage that differentiates brands from each other by associating symbolic meaning to the brands, the frontline employees, with their social identity as brand

ambassadors, are also increasingly recognized by marketing practitioners as an effective tool to construct and deliver brand personality concept to customers in a sense that salespeople are generally accepted as an important source of brand information, directly interacting with customers. Despite this growing interest in frontline employees' role as the brand ambassadors and the widespread utilization of aesthetic labor in service retail industry, little research has been done empirically addressing this issue. Indeed, most prior studies on branded service encounter (i.e., strategic association of salesperson to brand perception; Sirianni et al., 2013) have rather focused on the behavioral aspect of salesperson, showing that corporate organization recognizes "employee branding" as valuable assets in reinforcing brand meaning and uses its advertising and PR efforts as tools to influence employees and encourage on brand behavior (Mitchell, 2002; Pringle and Gordon, 2001; Sirianni et al., 2013). Also, few studies that did address the issue of aesthetic labor has been mainly concerned with its impact on employee's emotion and behavior rather than looking into this issue in customer behavioral perspective. This research contributes to existing service marketing literature, marketing practitioners, and human resources managers by filling this gap, empirically examining the relationship between frontline employees' physical appearance and brand positioning strategy.

Across two studies, this research shows significant main effect of brand

personality-salesperson look congruence on brand affect and investigating when and why salesperson's brand-aligned physical appearance is most influential in shaping customers' affective responses toward the brands. Specifically, Study 1 reveals that customers feel greater brand affect when brand personality and salesperson's overall look is in congruence and also identifies serial mediation of perceived representativeness and positive affect as the underlying mechanism behind this relationship, demonstrating the route of "congruence → perceived representativeness → positive affect → brand affect." That is, when there is congruence between brand and salesperson, customers perceive the salesperson as the brand representative, and this in turn increases general positive affect by confirming the expectation customers develop as they are exposed to brand positioning strategy. This increased positive affect extends to the affective response towards the brand and eventually increases brand affect. These findings have several important theoretical and managerial implications.

First, the finding that brand-salesperson look congruence increases brand affect not only contributes to branded service encounter and aesthetic labor literature but also has practical implications in terms that management of the physical appearance of a frontline employee is much easier to accomplish than strategically aligning the behavior of a salesperson with the brand personality. While the physical appearance of a salesperson can be easily

modified and controlled to the extent it matches the brand personality concept by changing the way (s)he dresses and encouraging him (her) to wear brand-representing products, managing the behavior of salesperson requires more time and effort in a sense that it is usually much harder to change one's attitude and behavior which is an outcome of one's distinctive life experiences and nature. Also, physical appearance of a salesperson would play more important role in alluring customers to engage in shopping for certain brands, considering that visual stimuli often allow for customers to form more immediate and instinctive first impression of the brand. Only after the customers find the first impression of the brand favorable enough to actually enter the store, salespeople are then given opportunity to interact with customers and persuade them with their brand-aligned behaviors and other marketing tactics.

Second, the finding of study 1 is important in that it reveals that customers perceive the salesperson as the brand representative when salesperson look is in congruence with the brand's positioning. Although many researchers have consistently suggested in their conceptual papers that the frontline employees play important role as brand ambassadors in constructing and reinforcing brand meaning to customers, there have not been much study that empirically tested this issue. This research is important in that it develops 3-item scales that measure perceived representativeness and provides empirical evidence

that the salesperson is indeed regarded as the representing figure of the brand when the salesperson's overall look matches the brand personality trait.

Furthermore, Study 2 revealed an important boundary condition of the findings of Study 1 by identifying the moderating role of dispositional social anxiety: the positive impact of brand personality-salesperson look congruence on brand affect is significant only among customers who have high social anxiety. This finding has important implications for marketing managers in that it suggests potential customers (i.e., customers with high social anxiety), who would have otherwise avoided interacting with salespeople, can be encouraged to get inside the store and engage in shopping experience by simply aligning salesperson's look with the brand positioning.

Despite these contributions, I also recognize several limitations that provide room for future research. One of the limitations involves the scenario manipulation of salesperson's physical appearance. Considering the nature of salesperson's look as a visual stimulus, scenario may not be the most effective way to manipulate the overall physical appearance of a salesperson. To increase the realistic nature of a scenario in future research, photographs that are actually used in brand advertisement or videos can be used to create more vivid and realistic stimulus material. Also, future research may extend the findings of my research by examining the branded service encounters in service settings other than the apparel retail context. Furthermore, while this

research focused on customers' affective responses toward the brand as the outcome of brand-salesperson congruence, it would be insightful for future researchers to explore salesperson's role as an extrinsic cue that signals for service quality and product performance⁴. Although many previous studies have examined the impact of extrinsic cues (i.e., price, brand, store display) on customers' perception of quality and value (Richardson, Dick, & Jain, 1994; Teas & Agarwal, 2000), salesperson's physical appearance has not been mainly considered as one of the extrinsic product cues, thus providing good research opportunity.

⁴ Indeed, I conducted a separate ANOVA analysis with expected service quality (Dabholkar, Thorpe, & Rentz, 1996), expected product quality and brand credibility (Baek, Kim, & Yu, 2010) as dependent variables in Study 2. The results show that there is significant main effect of brand-salesperson congruence on expected service quality ($M_{congruent} = 5.84$ vs. $M_{incongruent} = 4.92$; $F(1,176) = 37.77$, $p < 0.001$), expected product quality ($M_{congruent} = 5.99$ vs. $M_{incongruent} = 5.56$; $F(1,176) = 7.27$, $p < 0.01$), and brand credibility ($M_{congruent} = 5.86$ vs. $M_{incongruent} = 5.34$; $F(1,176) = 11.42$, $p = 0.001$)

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APPENDIX A: Scenario Part 1 (Study 1)

Rugged Brand

R brand is one of the nation's leading **country-western** and **outdoors** companies with many stores located across the United States. R brand also serves customers through its online presence and catalogs. Customers have come to R brand for **rugged, sturdy** clothing and a **rock-solid** shopping experience. Known for their **hardy** construction and use of **strong, durable** materials, R brand's goal is to provide outstanding service every day, one customer at a time.

Sophisticated Brand

S brand is one of the nation's leading **upscale** companies with many stores located across the United States. S brand also serves customers through its online presence and catalogs. Customers have come to S brand for **glamour, sophistication, exceptional fashion**, and a **smooth** shopping experience. Known for their **charm** and **refinement**, S brand's goal is to provide outstanding service every day, one customer at a time.

APPENDIX B: Scenario Part 2 (Study 1)

Rugged, Congruent

Imagine yourself in R brand dealership. As you walk in, the salesperson A greets you.

His overall style is a **typical brand-R-look** that you have expected to see. He looks masculine and wild overall. He is tanned and looks physically strong and healthy. He is in casual, outdoorsy outfits, wearing a T-shirt and jeans.

Rugged, Incongruent

Imagine yourself in R brand dealership. As you walk in, the salesperson A greets you. His overall style is **far from** a typical brand-R-look that you have expected to see. Rather than looking masculine and wild, he looks polished and sophisticated overall: he is in a suit, has a fair skin, and his hair is well-groomed and refined looking.

Sophisticated, Congruent

Imagine yourself in S brand dealership. As you walk in, the salesperson A greets you. His overall style is **a typical brand-S-look** that you have expected to see. He looks polished, cultured and sophisticated overall: he is in a suit, has a fair skin, and his hair is well-groomed and refined looking.

Sophisticated, Incongruent

Imagine yourself in S brand dealership. As you walk in, the salesperson A greets you. His overall style is **far from** a typical brand-S-look that you have expected to see. In fact, he doesn't particularly look refined or sophisticated. Rather, he looks wild and masculine overall: he is tanned and looks physically strong and healthy. He is in casual, outdoorsy outfits, wearing a T-shirt and jeans.

APPENDIX C: Scenario Part 2 (Study 2)

Scenarios for same-sex condition (i.e., description of male salesperson's physical appearance) are the same with the ones used in Study 1.

Rugged, Congruent

Imagine yourself in R brand dealership. As you walk in, the salesperson A greets you. Her overall style is a **typical brand-R-look** that you have expected to see. She looks outdoorsy and tough, overall. She is tanned and looks physically fit, strong and healthy. She has a natural hairstyle, her hair let down and loose. She is in casual, outdoorsy outfits, wearing a leather jacket, T-shirt, jeans and western boots.

Rugged, Incongruent

Imagine yourself in R brand dealership. As you walk in, the salesperson A greets you. Her overall style is **far from** a typical brand-R-look that you have expected to see. In fact, she rather looks polished and sophisticated overall: She has a formal, office look, wearing a tailored jacket and an h-line, midi skirt. She has a fair skin, and her hair is neatly done and refined looking.

Sophisticated, Congruent

Imagine yourself in S brand dealership. As you walk in, the salesperson A greets you. Her overall style is a **typical brand-S-look** that you have expected to see. She looks polished and sophisticated overall: in fact, she has a rather formal, office look, wearing a tailored jacket and an h-line, midi skirt. She has a fair skin, and her hair is

neatly done and refined looking.

Sophisticated, Incongruent

Imagine yourself in S brand dealership. As you walk in, the salesperson A greets you. Her overall style is **far from** a typical brand-S-look that you have expected to see. Indeed, she rather looks outdoorsy and tough, overall. She is tanned and looks physically fit, strong and healthy. She has a natural hairstyle, her hair let down and loose. She is in casual, outdoorsy outfits, wearing a leather jacket, T-shirt, jeans and western boots.

국문초록

고객-서비스종업원 간 상호작용이 기업의 브랜드 포지셔닝 전략과 일치성을 가지는 경우에 이러한 관계를 일컬어 서비스 접촉의 브랜드화(branded service encounters; Sirianni et al., 2013)라고 한다. 이렇듯 고객-서비스종업원 간에 발생하는 서비스 접촉을 브랜드 포지셔닝 전략과 일치시키는 방법에는 여러 가지가 있는데, 종업원의 외모, 태도, 성격 등을 브랜드 성격과 일치하도록 제어하는 것을 그 예로 들 수 있다. 그 중에서 종업원의 외양을 브랜드 성격에 일치하는 방향으로 조정하는 미적 노동(aesthetic labor)은 브랜드의 상징적인 의미를 구축하고 강화하는데 효과적인 도구로서 기능할 것이라는 마케터들의 기대 하에, 특히 마케팅 실무에서 널리 활용되고 있다. 하지만 이렇듯 미적 노동이 마케팅 실무에서 차지하는 중요성에도 불구하고, 이에 대한 실증연구는 매우 부족한 것이 현실이다. 실제로 서비스 접촉의 브랜드화와 관련한 과거 연구는 대부분 종업원의 태도 및 행동에 초점을 맞추어, 종업원의 행동과 브랜드 성격 간에 일치성이 있는지 여부가 소비자의 브랜드 인식에 주는 효과를 규명하였다. 이처럼 마케팅 실무에서 활발하게 사용되고 있는 미적 노동에 대한 실증연구의 필요성, 그리고 서비스 접촉의 브랜드화에 대한 과거 연구가 주로 중

업원의 태도에 초점을 맞추었다는 점을 고려하여, 이 연구에서는 종업원의 외양(physical appearance)이 브랜드 포지셔닝 전략에 활용됨으로써 소비자의 브랜드 정서(brand affect)에 어떤 영향을 주는지 중점적으로 살펴보았다. 구체적으로, 이 연구에서는 실험 1과 2를 통해 다음과 같은 두 가지의 결과를 도출하고 있다. 첫째, 브랜드 성격과 판매원의 전반적인 외모 간의 일치성(i.e., 브랜드 성격-판매원외모 일치성)은 브랜드 정서를 증가시킨다. 둘째, 브랜드성격-판매원외모 일치성은 지각된 대표성(perceived representativeness)과 긍정적 정서(positive affect)의 연속매개를 통해 브랜드 정서를 증가시킨다. 즉, 브랜드 성격과 판매원의 외모 간에 일치성이 있을 때 소비자들은 해당 판매원이 브랜드를 대표한다고 지각하게 된다. 이에 따라, 브랜드 포지셔닝 전략에 노출된 결과로써 형성된 판매원의 외양에 대한 기대가 충족되고, 결국 긍정적 정서가 증가하게 된다. 이렇게 증가한 긍정적 정서는 브랜드에 대한 정서로 이전되어, 궁극적으로 브랜드 정서가 증가하는 효과를 가져온다. 셋째, 소비자의 기질적 특성으로서의 사회적 불안감(social anxiety) 수준이 브랜드성격-판매원외모 일치성과 브랜드 정서의 관계를 조절한다. 즉, 사회적 불안감이 높은 소비자에 대해서 브랜드-판매원 일치성은 브랜드 정서를 유의하게

증가시키지만, 사회적 불안감이 낮은 소비자에 대해서는 브랜드-판매원 일치성의 효과가 유의하지 않게 나타난다.

주요어: 미적 노동, 서비스 접촉의 브랜드화, 지각된 대표성, 브랜드 정서, 서비스 접점 직원, 긍정적 정서, 사회적 불안감

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