

Effects of Brand Personality and Event Personality Congruence

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Abstract

To identify the effects of congruence between brand personality and event personality on consumers' attitudes toward the brand and attitude toward the event, an experiment was conducted. Brand commitment and product involvement were included as moderators. Two brand personalities and two event personalities were used in the experiment. Results did not show beneficial or harmful effects on brand attitude and event attitude in the congruent and incongruent conditions. Also for the predicted defense mechanism of brand commitment no statistical evidence was found. Based on the results, there can be concluded that a communicated sponsored event does not affect brand attitude. Future research has to show if these effects are similar for other product classes, brands and other forms of communications of brands.

Keywords: brand personality, brand incongruity, event attitude, brand attitude, brand commitment, product involvement

Introduction

These days the possibilities for brands to connect to consumers are endless. New digital media make it possible to interact with consumers on a personal level. With communication through new and traditional media brands can create awareness, build an image and influence the consumer in making purchase decisions. Another way to increase awareness and brand image is by connecting the brand to an event. Vans and Red Bull both connect their brands to (extreme) sports events to create an exciting and daring image. Research has shown that it is possible to build an image through associations that exists with sponsored events (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999). That sort of sponsoring has advantages. First, brands can communicate their image through such an event. Second, brands reach exactly the persons in their target group. Third, sponsoring an event is not as obtrusive and irritating as regular advertising and causes therefore not that much resistance.

Sports in combination with brands like Vans and Red Bull sounds logical and seems to complement each other. But to what extent is it important that the connection between the brand and the sponsored event is logic? Would the effects of sponsorship be just as positive when a financial institution would sponsor an extreme sports event? Neijens, Smit and Moorman (2009) found out in their study that advertisement in which a brand is associated with an event, in this case the FIFA World Cup, can work positively for brand image creation. In their summary, Neijens et al. (2009) describe that “exposure level and involvement with the event had a positive effect on image transfer from event to brand” (p. 579).

Brand incongruity, a mis-match between a brand and its communication, is addressed in different studies (Sjödén & Törn, 2006; Torn & Dahlen, 2008). Although it seems logic to assume that brand congruent communication would have more positive effects on consumers’

attitude toward the brand and communication, the study of Torn and Dahlen (2008) shows that brand incongruent communication works more positive than brand congruent communication. Consumers evaluate incongruent communication more intense. In this study, sponsored events are used as communication form of brands.

Moreover, the role of brand commitment in relation to incongruent communication of a brand has not been investigated yet. Ahluwalia, Burnkant and Unnava (2000) found out in their study that brand committed consumers counter argue negative publicity of a brand. Therefore, the attitude toward the brand will not be affected. Will this “defense mechanism” also work when communication of a brand is not congruent to the brand? Besides brand commitment, product involvement also plays a role in product orientation and product evaluation (Warrington & Shim, 1988). Therefore the role of product involvement is used in this study to identify the effects of product involvement in congruent and incongruent conditions.

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of congruence and incongruence between brand personality and event personality. Thereby the moderating effect of brand commitment and product involvement will be examined. Results of this study might provide insights in the extent to which a communicated event should be congruent to a brand.

This study will try to answer the following research questions:

- 1) *To what extent does brand personality and event personality congruence influence consumers' attitudes toward the event and brand?*
- 2) *To what extent do brand commitment and product involvement influence the effects of brand personality and event personality congruence?*

Theoretical framework

Brand personality

Aaker (1997) defines brand personality as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (p. 347). The theory of Aaker (1997) shows that brand characteristics can be compared and categorized to human characteristics. Aaker (1997) performed a research to see if brands could be categorized to certain human characteristics. In her research Aaker (1997) used 37 brands and 114 personality traits to identify brand personality dimensions. In total, she used 631 subjects. Results show that it is possible to categorize brands in one of the five brand personalities: sincere, exciting, competent, sophistication, and ruggedness. Each personality can be divided in different personality traits like cheerful or reliable. Results of this research give brands insight in how consumers can perceive them. With these personalities, brands can theoretically be categorized. Finding out which personality fits to a brand could help the brand in their communication strategy. For instance, a brand with an “exciting personality” could communicate in an exciting manner while a “competent brand” could communicate more formally. Swaminathan, Stilley and Ahluwalia (2009) argue that humanizing the brand can lead to a stronger consumer brand relationship.

But how could brands use their personality in communication? Each brand personality of Aaker (1997) is divided into multiple traits. Sincerity is associated with down-to-earth, honest, wholesome and cheerful personality traits. Sincere brands could emphasize in their advertising for example family or business (professional) images to show sincerity. Excitement is associated with daring, spirited, imaginative, and up-to-date personality traits. In their communication activities, exciting brands can use daring activities like bungee jumping to show excitement. The third brand personality is competence and is associated with reliability, intelligence and success as personality traits. In communication to

consumers, competent brands might emphasize their experience and success to show their competence. The fourth brand personality is sophistication. Brands with a sophisticated personality are associated with upper class and charming personality traits. Focusing on luxury and style might be a communication strategy for this brand personality. Ruggedness, the last brand personality, is associated with outdoors and toughness as personality traits. Communicating robustness and roughness fit this brand personality.

Different studies show the positive effects of brand personality. Zhang, Whang and Zhao (2014) show in their study that four out of five brand personalities (sincere, competent, exciting and sophistication) lead to a higher consumer satisfaction and therefore higher brand loyalty. Kim, Han and Park (2001) found out in their study that the self-expressive value of a brand (personal expressions through a brand) positively influences the attractiveness of a brand personality and that this attractiveness positively influences word of mouth. Similar to Zhang et al. (2014), Kim et al. (2001) found an indirect effect of brand personality on brand loyalty. Thus, for brands it is beneficial to be associated with a brand personality.

Although the brand personality theory of Aaker (1997) is a good theory to categorize brands on their identity and personality, it is not clear to what extent a brand should be congruent to its brand personality. Should a brand always behave in line with their personality? Should a brand with an exciting personality implement an exciting tone of voice? Additional research is necessary to find out to what extent the personalities play in practice. Although the brand personality theory does not provide answers to these questions, it is a helpful theory to categorize brands personalities and to use as a theoretical basis for experiments. This study aims to provide answers in the effects of using brand personality in practice.

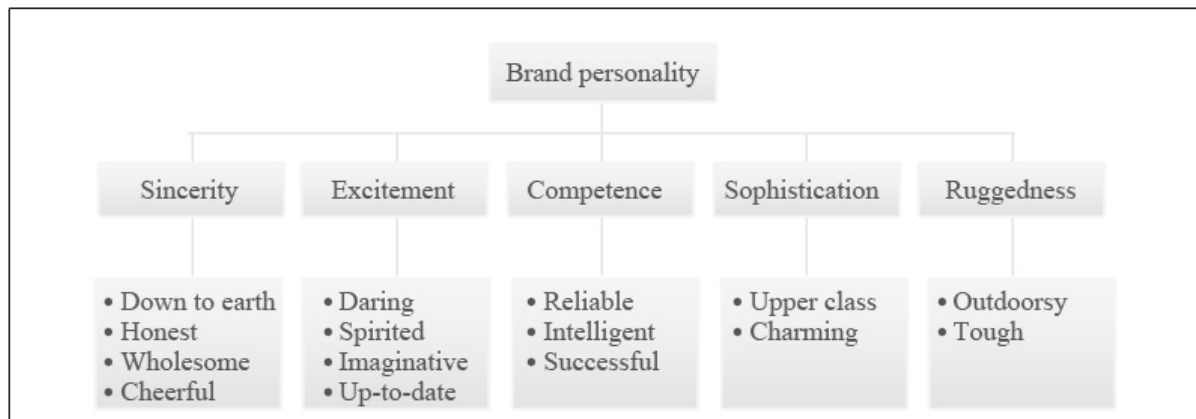


Figure 1. A brand personality framework (Aaker, 1997)

Brand incongruity

In the previous section, the construct of brand personality is explained. Sjödin and Törn (2006) explain brand image incongruity, as “a discrepancy between a particular piece of communication about a brand and the brand image already established with consumers” (p.32). Sjödin and Törn describe that when a brand’s communication is not in line with the brand associations by the customers (mismatch), there is brand image incongruity. They hypothesize that brand incongruity can lead to positive results. In their article, they explain that brand incongruity might facilitate the recall of information, creates a higher emotional response towards a message, a higher attraction and elaboration towards the message. On the other hand, Sjödin and Törn also hypothesize that brand incongruity could lead to lower evaluations and lower perceived credibility towards the message. Furthermore, they describe that a brand will not suffer directly from an incongruent element because incongruence will be seen as an exception and will not make consumers revise their prior beliefs. The assumptions Sjödin and Törn hold are interesting because they describe that incongruence could lead to positive as well as negative results.

Although there are no studies found about the congruence between a brand and its communication, there are studies found that address the congruence between a brand and its

sponsorship (Nan & Heo, 2007; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006), congruence between spokespersons and product type (Kamins & Gupta, 2006) and congruence on brand extensions (Buil, Chernatony, & Hem, 2009). Nan and Heo (2007) showed in their study that cause-related marketing messages had a positive effect on attitude toward the company. That is, brands that support a foundation or charity and use this in their communication.

Congruence between the brand and the cause-related marketing message only had an influence on consumers who score high on brand consciousness. The consumers from this study had a more favorable attitude toward the company when there was congruency between the brand and the cause-related marketing message. Simmons and Becker-Olsen (2006) found out that “the fit between a firm’s specific associations and a sponsored cause can reinforce or blur the firm’s positioning” (p.154). In another study, Kamins and Gupta (2006) showed that increased congruence between a spokesperson and product resulted in a more favorable product attitude. Buil et al. (2009) found out that congruence of a brand and the extensions create more favorable consumer evaluations than a low fit between a brand and the extensions. In summary, congruence between a brand and corporate social responsibility, spokesperson or brand extension has positive effects. However, involvement and brand consciousness seems to play a role in the extent to which this attitude is favorable.

Speed and Thompson (2000) conducted a study about the response to a sponsorship. Thereby, congruence between the sponsor and sponsored event was an important construct. In their study, they found proof for their hypothesis that the level of fit between the sponsor and the event was positively associated with the response towards the sponsorship. However, in their study, Speed and Thompson (2000) did not provide a definition of congruence or fit. In the scale used by Speed and Thompson (2000) the fit exists when there is a logical connection between the sponsor and the event and a similar image between the sponsor and

the event. Speed and Thompson (2000) show with their study that the level of congruence can be important in evaluating a sponsorship.

Attitude toward the brand

Before brand attitude is discussed, the general definition of an attitude is important. Petty (2012) defines an attitude as “a global evaluation of a person, object, or issue indicating the extent to which it is liked or disliked” (p.224). Petty (2012) describes in his article that attitudes and behavior can change through a peripheral route or a central route. According to the elaboration likelihood model, consumers of whom the motivation or ability to think is low will use the peripheral route. Consumers who are highly motivated, or are able to process the whole message, follow the central route (Petty, 2012). For instance, consumers watching commercials on television are often not 100% motivated to actively process information of commercials. Therefore, commercials often use the peripheral route to affect the attitude and behavior of consumers. Thus, the elaboration likelihood model (Petty, 2012) shows that an attitude can be affected through two routes. However, the elaboration likelihood model explains that attitude change through the peripheral route is temporary (not enduring) and not a predictor of behavior whereas the central route can create an enduring change in attitude and can predict behavior.

The elaboration likelihood model shows through which ways an attitude could be changed. However, the theory does not make a distinction in different strengths of attitudes. Pomerantz, Chaiken and Tordesillas (1995) summarize in their article that the amount of knowledge a person holds, the importance of the issue and the extremity of an attitude influences the way an attitude could be changed and could result in resistance against social influence. Kokkinaki and Lunt (1999) show with their findings that “high involvement with an advertising message enhances the accessibility of the resulting brand attitudes” (p.49). Pomerantz et al. (1995) define in their article strong attitudes as “those that lead to selective

cognitive processing and that are resistant to change, persistent over time, and predictive of behavior” (p.408). In short, attitudes in general are not stable and can be changed through conscious and unconscious conditions. However, the strength of an attitude plays a role in attitude change and could result into resistance against the change.

Mitchell and Olson, as cited by Dolbec and Chebat (2013), define brand attitude as “the general appreciation of a brand by a consumer” (p.461). Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich and Lacobucci (2010) explain in their article brand attitude as the “strength as the positivity or negativity (valence) of an attitude weighted by the confidence or certainty with which it is held” (p.1). Park et al. (2010) summarize in their article that brand attitude strength “predicts behaviors of interest to firms, including brand consideration, intention to purchase, purchase behavior, and brand choice” (p.1). Priester, Nayankankuppam, Fleming and Godek (2004) show in their study that strongly held attitudes have a greater influence on choice than weakly held attitudes. According to Priester et al. (2004) “attitude and attitude strength, in combination, influence whether an alternative is considered” (p.583). Thus, when consumers have a positive attitude toward a brand, the strength of the attitude predicts whether or not consumers will choose the brand.

Schivinski and Dabrowski (2014) conducted an experiment to see what the effects of Facebook communication (firm-created content and user-generated content) are on brand equity, brand attitude and purchase intention. They found out that both firm-created content and user-generated content positively influence brand attitude and indirectly positively influence purchase intention. However, the effect of a single message was not measured in their study. The study proves that communicating through social networks, in this case Facebook can be beneficial to increase brand attitude of consumers.

To predict the effects of an online incongruent brand message, the study of Torn and Dahlen (2008) is used. In their study the effects of an incongruent print-ad on attention, ad

recall, brand recall, ad attitude and brand attitude were measured. Torn and Dahlen (2008) found positive effects in the incongruent condition on attention, ad recall, brand recall and ad attitudes. There were also positive effects on brand attitude but not significant. Although the positive effect was not significant, the trend that incongruence positively affects brand attitude can be used to develop the following hypothesis:

H1: When brand personality and event personality are incongruent, scores on attitude toward the brand will be higher than when the brand personality and event personality are congruent.

Attitude toward the event

Since there is no literature about specific brand incongruent communication messages in other contexts, literature about ad evaluations could be used to find out if a message of a brand influences the attitude toward the event or the other way around. Pham, Geuens and De Pelsmacker (2013) found recently statistical evidence of a relation between ad-evoked feelings and brand evaluations. That is, when ads evoke positive emotional feelings for consumers, the brand is more positively evaluated. However, Pham et al. (2013) only included positive feelings (cheerfulness, creativity) in their study and do not address a possible negative relation between ad-evoked feelings and brand evaluations. Gwinner and Eaton (1999) found out in their study that sponsoring an event by a brand could result in image transfer. They also found out that image transfer was enhanced when the event and brand were related to each other. However, to what extent the results are also applicable for the event attitude construct is not clear.

In line with the results of the study of Torn and Dahlhen (2008) in which they found significant evidence of increased ad attitudes in incongruent communication by brands, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: When brand personality and event personality are incongruent, scores on attitude toward the event will be higher than when brand personality and event personality are congruent.

Brand commitment

Lastovicka and Gardner (1978) define brand commitment as an “emotional or psychological attachment to a brand within a product class” (p.764). Wang (2002) assumes with his definition of brand commitment that consumers always hold a relationship with a brand and that the emotional attachment to this relationship differs. Shuv-Ami (2010) defines brand commitment as “the degree of attachment and readiness the consumer has toward a preferred brand that they use and re-buy or re-patronize” (p.3). Since Lastovicka and Gardner (1978) mention the type of attachment – emotional or psychological – and do not assume that consumers always hold a relationship with a brand. Their definition of brand commitment is chosen for this study.

In the study of Muniz and O’Guinn (2001), they found out that a strong brand commitment leads to a higher intention to repurchase the same brand, a higher intention to purchase related products and a greater positive word of mouth. Brand commitment is an attachment to a brand that leads to loyalty. Therefore, it is important for brands to increase the commitment of their customers since they can spread a positive word of mouth and repurchase products of the brand. Czepiel, as cited by Mellens, Dekimpe and Steenkamp (1996) explains that the costs of “attracting a new customer have been found to be about six times higher than the costs of retaining an old one” (p.507). Therefore, for brands it is more beneficial to create committed customers instead of focusing only on attracting new ones. Ahluwalia et al. (2000) used brand commitment as a moderator to see how negative brand publicity was perceived by highly and low involved consumers. They found out that highly involved consumers (highly committed) counterargue negative publicity about a brand.

Therefore, the attitude toward the brand is not affected by negative publicity. Ahluwalia et al. (2000) also explain a negativity effect. That is consumers tend to pay more attention to negative information than to positive information. Moreover, Sjödin and Törn (2006) explain in their article that involvement leads to resolving of brand image incongruity. Thus, when a communication stimulus is not in line with the associations a person holds for brands, brand committed consumers will resolve incongruity.

Based on the fact that brand commitment is seen as a defense mechanism, protecting consumers' attitude toward the brand, it is fair to predict that consumers with a strong commitment toward a brand neglect information that might harm their attitude. Therefore, there will be differences between consumers with a strong or weak brand commitment on the evaluation of an incongruent event. The following hypotheses are formulated for the brand commitment construct:

H3: Brand commitment decreases the effect of congruence between brand personality and event personality on brand attitude.

H4: Brand commitment decreases the effect of congruence between brand personality and event personality on attitude toward the event.

Product involvement

Product involvement, in literature often referred to as 'ego-involvement', seems to be a moderator in brand and product evaluation. In the article of Beatty, Homer and Kahle (1988), Greenwald's (1982) definition of ego-involvement is adopted who explains ego-involvement with self-concern and personal importance. Warrington and Shim (2000) found out that "product involvement and brand commitment significantly influence product orientations and product evaluations as well as sources of brand information" (p.776). Thus, persons who are highly involved in a certain product group, will process product information and sources of brand information to a larger extent.

As already described, permanent attitude change only occurs through the central route (Petty, 2012). A message can only be processed through the central route when a person is motivated and able to process the message. Motivation can also be seen as a form of product involvement. Consumers who are motivated in a product group are more motivated to process a message.

In their study, Beatty et al. (1988) empirically showed that product involvement is a precursor of purchase intention, which resolves in brand commitment. With these findings, the product involvement construct gained importance in the marketing field. In the study of Warrington and Shim (2000), results show that product involvement and brand commitment are not directly related to each other and are unique constructs.

Based on the literature above, the level of product involvement will intensify the evaluation of congruence between the brand personality and event personality. Thus, participants who are product involved will evaluate both congruent as incongruent ads more intensive. The following hypothesis is formulated:

H5: Product involvement decreases the effect of congruence between brand personality and event personality on brand attitude.

H6: product involvement decreases the effect of congruence between brand personality and event personality on attitude toward the event.

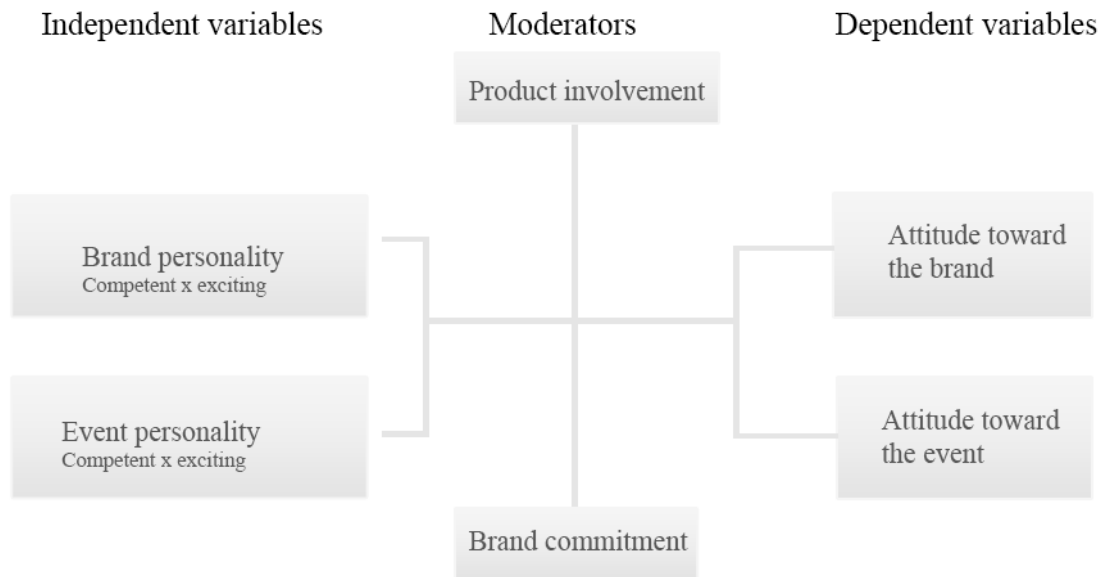


Figure 2. Research model

Method

Pretest

Pretests were used to categorize 24 brands in one of the different brand personalities created by Aaker (1997). In the pretest respondents were asked to rank their level of agreement on 16 personality traits items based on the study of Aaker (1997). The 16 items contained personality traits like “daring” and “reliable” that could categorize a brand in one of the five brand personalities. Of the 24 brands, 7 could significantly be identified as one of the personalities. There were 4 significant competent brand personalities, 1 significant sincere brand personality and 2 significant exciting brand personalities. Based on the significant results, two brands were selected to use for the study: one competent brand (HTC) and one exciting brand (Malibu). Another pre-test was used to test the different events on brand personality. Thereby, type of event, words and terms related to competence and excitement were used to connect the event to a personality. For the competent event, an “intelligent” event was chosen. The event of a competition between universities throughout the

Netherlands was significantly ranked as competent. For the exciting event, a media event was used on which different artists and shows would be performed. The first pre-test identified two different brand personalities that could be used and the second pre-test provided two different event personalities that could be used in the main study.

Design

The effects of brand incongruity on attitude toward the event, event-sponsor congruence and brand attitude were measured using a 2 (brand personality) x 2 (event personality) between-subjects design. In the study, two brand personalities were included (1 = competent, 2 = exciting). Also for the events two personalities were included (1 = competent, 2 = exciting). For the data analysis, matching personalities and mismatching personalities were ranked (1 = congruent, 2 = incongruent). When both the brand personality and event personality were similar, there was congruence. Moreover, the degree to which participants are committed to a brand was measured. Thereby participants were divided in two groups around the median response (1 = low commitment, 2 = high commitment). Also, the degree to which participants are involved in the product category was measured. Again, participants were categorized in two groups around the median response (1 = low product involved, 2 = high product involved).

Stimuli

For the study, four scenarios were created. Two events and two brands were selected. As an environment, a Facebook event page was used. The four scenarios differed on brand and text. The two brands used for the study were HTC and Malibu. The used events were based on personality traits of the competent and exciting brand personalities. For the competent brand personality, a competition of Universities was used as an event. The text for that event contained keywords as “knowledge” and “intelligence”. For the exciting brand personality, a

media event was used as event. The text for the exciting brand personality contained keywords as “spectacular”, “stunts” and “firework show”.



Figure 3. Congruent event Malibu

Procedure

For the data collection, an online survey was created and spread. In the online survey, respondents were automatically assigned to one of four scenarios. Participants were collected via e-mail and social media. First, participants had to fill out scales about brand commitment and product involvement. Next, participants were exposed to the stimulus and had to fill out different scales on event-sponsor congruence, brand attitude and event attitude.

Variables

To measure participants' attitude toward the event, a five-point Likert scale from Singh, Balasubramanian and Chakraborty (2000) was used. In this scale, participants were asked to what extent they associate different characteristics with the event, for instance favorable and irritating. To measure participants' attitude toward the brand, the 5-point scale of Cho, Lee and Tharp (2001) was used. The 5-point scale of Kim, Choi, Qualls and Han (2008) was used to measure the moderator variable: brand commitment. An example of an item is: I have psychological attachment to the brand. Last, the 5-point scale of Beatty et al. (1988) was used to measure the moderator product involvement. An example of an item from that scale is: I can make many connections or associations between my use of a smartphone and experiences in my life. Unfortunately scores of this scale could not be included in the research because of the low Cronbach's alpha (.526). The congruence scale of Till and Busler (2000) was included in the study for the manipulation check. An example of an item of the Till and Busler scale (2000) is: Brand belongs to the event.

Table 1
Cronbach's alpha scores

Construct	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronbach's alpha
Attitude toward the event	3.51	.54	.799
Brand attitude	2.58	.81	.797
Brand commitment	1.88	.69	.834
Product involvement	2.84	.71	.522
Congruence	2.61	.85	.874

Results

Participants

In the main study, 224 respondents participated. The age of the participants was between 18 years and 61 years with an average of 28.9 years ($SD = 8.64$). 118 respondents were male (52.7%) and 106 were female (47.3%). The majority of the participants were highly educated: College (42.4%) and University (30.8%). Participants are mostly working. The majority of the participants work fulltime (62%). A smaller percentage works part-time (12%). 22.3% of the participants are in college or following another type of education.

Table 2
Average age and gender of respondents

		<i>n</i>
Gender	Male	118
	Female	106

Attitude toward the brand

A two-way between-groups analysis of variance was performed to identify the impact of brand personality and event personality on attitude toward the brand. Participants were divided into two groups of brand personality (Group 1: competent; Group 2: exciting) and event personality (Group 1: exciting; Group 2: competent). There was no statistically significant main effect for brand personality, $F(1, 220) = .02, p = .90$. Also, the main effect for event personality, $F(1, 220) = .08, p = .78$, and the interaction effect, $F(1, 220) = 1.13, p = .29$ did not reach statistical significance.

Results showed that for both brands, respondents scored higher on brand attitude in the incongruent condition. Although this result is not significant, it is in line with results of the study of Torn and Dahlen (2008). In the study of Torn and Dahlen (2008) brand attitude was also higher in the incongruent condition. Scores on brand attitude were almost similar for both brands used in this study.

To explore the effects of congruence between brand personality and event personality on brand attitude, an independent-samples t-test was conducted; comparing the means of brand attitude in the congruent and incongruent group. There was no significant difference in the congruent condition ($M = 2.53$, $SD = .84$) and incongruent condition ($M = 2.64$, $SD = .79$; $t(222) = .107$, $p = .29$).

Table 3
Mean scores on brand attitude

Brand	Condition	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
HTC	Congruent	2.53	.80
	Incongruent	2.62	.82
Malibu	Congruent	2.52	.87
	Incongruent	2.66	.76

Attitude toward the event

A two-way between-groups analysis of variance was performed to identify the impact of brand personality and event personality on attitude toward the event. Participants were divided into two groups of brand personality (Group 1: competent; Group 2: exciting) and event personality (Group 1: exciting; Group 2: competent). There was a statistical significant main effect for brand personality, $F(1, 220) = 7.78$, $p < .01$; however, the effect size was small (partial eta squared = .03). There was also a statistical significant main effect for event personality, $F(1, 220) = 6.23$, $p = .013$; with a small effect size (partial eta squared = .03). However, there was no statistical significant interaction effect, $F(1, 220) = .23$, $p = .63$.

Significant results show that respondents in the conditions with the HTC brand, ranked the events higher than respondents in the conditions with the Malibu brand. Significant results also show that the university of the year contest scored higher than the media event. Apart from the brands that were used, respondents liked the university of the year event more than the media event.

To find out if the attitude toward the event was higher in the congruent group than in the incongruent group, an independent-samples t-test was conducted; comparing the means of attitude toward the event in the fit and non-fit group. There was no significant difference in scores for the congruent condition ($M = 3.48$, $SD = .59$) and incongruent condition ($M = 3.54$, $SD = .48$; $t(222) = .75$, $p = .45$).

Table 4
Mean scores on event attitude

Brand	Condition	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
HTC	Congruent	3.69	.43
	Incongruent	3.54	.45
Malibu	Congruent	3.31	.65
	Incongruent	3.52	.50

Moderating effect of brand commitment

In hypothesis 3 and 4 the moderating effect of brand commitment in this study is predicted. Thereby, it is predicted that respondents with a high brand commitment score will use this brand commitment as a defense mechanism against information that is in contrast to their brand associations.

A 2 by 2 between-groups analysis of covariance was conducted to assess the moderating effect of brand commitment on brand attitude and attitude toward the event. The independent variable was the level of congruency (Group 1: congruent; Group 2: incongruent) and the moderator variable was brand commitment (Group 1: low; Group 2: high). The dependent variables were brand attitude and attitude toward the event. Results show no significant interaction effect between the level of congruence and brand commitment on brand attitude, $F(1,220) = 1.8$, $p = .18$. Moreover, there was also no significant interaction effect between the level congruence and brand commitment on attitude toward the event, $F(1,220) = .81$, $p = .37$. Thus, there is no statistical evidence found to support the brand commitment defense mechanism.

Manipulation check

To see if participants perceived the congruent and incongruent conditions as so, a manipulation check was performed.

To find out if the attitude toward the event and the brand were higher in the congruent condition than in the incongruent condition, an independent-samples t-test was conducted; comparing the means of attitude toward the event and attitude toward the brand in the “perceived congruent” and “perceived incongruent” condition. A median split was used to categorize participants in one of two groups (1= perceived congruence, 2=perceived incongruence). There was a significant difference for attitude toward the event in scores for the perceived congruence condition ($M = 3.68$, $SD = .452$) and perceived incongruent condition ($M = 3.38$, $SD = .56$; $t(220) = -4.21$, $p < .0005$). There was no statistical difference between scores on brand attitude in the congruent group ($M = 2.70$, $SD = .77$) and incongruent group ($M = 2.49$, $SD = .84$; $t(222) = -1.89$, $p = .06$).

Results show that perceived congruence between brand personality and event personality do influence the attitude toward the event. Thus, participants score higher on event toward the event when they think that the brand personality and event personality are congruent.

Table 5

Overview hypotheses results

Hypothesis	Construct	Supported
H1	Brand attitude	No
H2	Attitude toward the event	No
H3	Brand commitment vs. brand attitude	No
H4	Brand commitment vs. attitude toward the event	No
H5	Product involvement vs. brand attitude	-
H6	Product involvement vs. attitude toward the event	-

Discussion

The aim of this study was to identify the effects of congruence and incongruence between brand personality and event personality. With the results, brands could gain insight in the effects of communicating in line or not in line with their personality and the possible positive or negative effects that could occur. There was hypothesized that incongruence between brand personality and event personality would result in a higher scores on attitude toward the brand and attitude toward the event. Results do not support the hypothesized effects on brand attitude and event attitude. Results show that the effects of one single congruent or incongruent event have no effect on brand attitude and event attitude. In answer to the first research question, no statistical evidence was found to provide guidelines for brands.

In the second research questions, the role of brand commitment and product involvement in evaluation a congruent or incongruent event was questioned. Results do not support the predicted role of brand commitment as defense mechanism described by Ahluwalia et al. (2000). Results show that participants, who score high on brand commitment, do not evaluate congruent or incongruent events differently than respondents who score low on brand commitment. The product involvement construct could not be used as moderator because the Cronbach's alpha was too low. To answer the second research questions, brand commitment does not play a role in this study as moderator in evaluating congruent or incongruent events.

In the study a manipulation check was used to find out if the respondents perceived the assumed congruence, a congruent brand personality and event personality, as so. Results show that respondents, who scored higher on event-sponsor congruence, scored significantly higher on event attitude. This finding shows that the role of fit does play a role in the evaluation of an event. However, there was found no significant difference on the brand attitude construct.

Despite the lack of significant results for the congruent versus incongruent conditions, there were some significant results. First, respondents who saw events with HTC as sponsor scored significantly higher on attitude toward the event. Second, the university of the year event scored significantly higher on event attitude than the media event. This finding can be explained by the personal preferences of respondents. Respondents might have more personal interest in a contest than in a media event. The level of education of respondents could also be an important element in this significant finding. Almost a third of the respondents followed courses at a university.

To summarize, there are no positive and negative effects found for congruence and incongruence between brand personality and event personality. Based on this study, specific guidelines for brand to communicate in line or in contrast to their personality cannot be given. However, similar to the results of Torn and Dahlen (2008), the attitude toward the brand scored higher in the incongruent conditions. Because of the fact that there was no statistical evidence, an advice for brands cannot be given. Also the role of brand commitment as defense mechanism was not proven in this study.

Limitations

Different explanations can be given for the lack of significant results in relation to the level of congruence of brand personality and event personality. First of all, in the study a single experiment was used to test the hypotheses. This means that a single communication message of a brand should change or affect the general attitude toward a brand. Since the attitude toward the brand develops over time and is not based on one communication message, it is not likely that consumers' attitude toward a brand will change because of an event that fit or does not fit to the brand. The experiment of Torn and Dahlen (2008) also showed that the brand attitude did not increase significantly. Pomerantz, Chaiken and

Tordesillas (1995) explain in their article that different factors like amount of knowledge, importance and extreme attitudes could strengthen an attitude. Moreover, Petty (2012) shows in the elaboration likelihood model that permanent attitude change could only be established when consumers are motivated and able to process the information. In an online survey, respondents could lack motivation when reading the text about the event. For instance because respondents do not know the brand or have an unfavorable attitude toward the brand. In future research, the strength of the attitude could be measured before the experiment to see to what extent consumers know the brand. Also, series of communication messages over a longer period could give more insight in the effect of incongruent communication of a brand.

Second, pre-tests were used to identify personalities of brands and events. In the pre-tests brands and events were rated separately on different personality traits of Aaker (1997). The two brands and the two events were categorized to a brand personality. In the main experiment, the brands and events were combined. Testing the combination of the event and brand could have given additional results. It is possible that although the brand personality and event personality were congruent, the brand and event did were not perceived by respondents as congruent. For instance, the tone of voice of the text could have been incongruent with the tone of voice that consumers associate with the brand. In future research, the combination of the brand and event should also be pretested.

Third, for the two brands that were selected (HTC and Malibu), participants both scored low on brand attitude and brand commitment. This means that participants were not really involved in the brands and therefore possibly not enough aware of the brand identity. The sponsored event would in that case not conflict with existing associations with the brand. This could explain why the communication messages did not affect the attitude variables. In future research, researchers should include questions to identify to what extent participants know the brand or use products of the brand. Another way to be sure if participants know the

brand well enough is to collect the data from the Facebook pages or customer base of a particular brand.

Fourth, the product classes of the two selected brands were not similar. In the experiment, a manufacturer of mobile devices (smart phones, tablets, etc.) was picked and a manufacturer of an alcoholic drink was used. Not only is there a difference in product class, the target group of both brands is different. While HTC is focusing more on 18-34 years, Malibu focuses on 18-24 years consumers. Also, HTC can be seen more as a “male brand” while Malibu is more of a “female brand”. These differences could have had an influence on the scores of the different scales.

Fifth, in this research little characteristics of the respondents were asked. Literature suggests that attachment styles play a role in influence of brand personality on consumers (Swaminathan et al., 2009). In their study Swaminathan et al. (2009) show that “individuals who have an anxious attachment style (negative view of self) are more likely to discriminate between brands based on their personality than those who are less anxious about relationships” (p.996). Moreover, purchase likelihood, brand attachment and brand choice are enhanced when a person with an anxious attachment style finds similarities between a brand and personality traits that are important for relationships with others. In future research, the influence of personal characteristics could be included to broaden the conclusions.

Practical implications

With this study specific brand messages were used to examine the influence of congruent and incongruent messages on attitude toward the brand and attitude toward the event. Based on previous research, congruent and incongruent communication of a brand could result in positive effects on attitude toward the brand and event. Results of this study show that there is no difference in effects on attitude toward the brand and attitude toward the event when the

event personality is congruent or incongruent to the personality of the brand. Results of this study show that the use of an incongruent event does not lead to significant higher scores on attitude toward the brand and event. In practice this means that brands can use messages that do not fit their associations.

Although the results of this study are neutral, it provides insights in the importance of communicating in line with the personality of the brand. Results of previous studies showed that both congruent and incongruent communication could have positive effects. Therefore, for brands it is possible to use incongruent elements in their communication or sponsoring on an occasionally basis. Those incongruent elements will increase awareness, evaluation and possibly lead to positive results. Even when the communication is assessed as incongruent to the brand, there is a chance the consumer will resolve this incongruence so that it will not affect their attitude toward the brand.

Results of this study also provide new research possibilities. This study was limited to Facebook events. Respondents of this study were not directly involved in those events. It was also emphasized that the events were fictional and would not take place. Future research in other fields of brand communication and consumer involvement could provide more insights in the effects of congruent and incongruent communication by brands.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

Congruence (Till & Busler, 2000)

Brand and event

Does not belong with/belongs with

Does not go together/go together

Does not fit together/fits together

Attitude toward the event (Singh, Balasubramanian, & Chakraborty, 2000)

Good/Bad

Like/Dislike

Irritating/Not irritating

Interesting/Uninteresting

Fair/Deceptive

Favorable/Unfavorable

Harmless/Harmful

Attitude toward the brand (Cho, Lee, & Tharp, 2001)

Brand

I like ..

.. is satisfactory

.. is desirable

Brand commitment (Kim , Choi , Qualls & Han, 2010)

I have psychological attachment to the brand.

I want the brand to be continuously successful.

I think that using the brand is important.

I am a loyal customer of the brand.

Product involvement

Product involvement (Beatty, Homer & Kahle, 1988)

I can make many connections or associations between my use of product type and experiences in my life.

The brands or types of product type I use say a lot about who I am.

My friends give me a hard time if I choose the wrong product type.

Demographics

What is your gender?

What is your age?

What is your education level?

What is your work situation?

Appendix B: Stimulus

facebook

Zoek naar mensen, plaatsen en dingen



Universiteit van het jaar
 Openbaar · Door Malibu

Deelnemers (1.071)

 Gasten verwelkomen (20 nieuw)

Misschien (365)


Uitgenodigd (866)

 Exporteren · Delen · Rapporteren

← Evenementen
 Deelnemen
 Misschien





Binnenkort vindt in Utrecht de jaarlijkse competitie tussen verschillende universiteiten van Nederland plaats. In deze competitie strijden teams van de in voorrondes geplaatste universiteiten in Nederland om de titel 'Universiteit van het jaar'.

 Teams van 5 studenten zullen het tegen elkaar opnemen in een competitie waarbij hun kennis, inzicht en intelligentie centraal staan. De competitie bevat vragen over verschillende categorieën als politiek, wetenschap en geschiedenis.

 Malibu sponsort de competitie dit jaar, en zal dus ook aanwezig zijn in Utrecht om de teams te ondersteunen. Daarnaast zal Malibu met verschillende activiteiten rondom de competitie geld inzamelen voor het goede doel. De competitie en de activiteiten eromheen zijn vrij toegankelijk voor publiek. Welke universiteit zal dit jaar de titel 'universiteit van het jaar' verdienen? Meer informatie over de wedstrijd volgt op korte termijn.



facebook

Zoek naar mensen, plaatsen en dingen



Media-evenement
 Openbaar · Door Malibu

Deelnemers (1.071)

 Gasten verwelkomen (20 nieuw)

Misschien (365)


Uitgenodigd (866)

 Exporteren · Delen · Rapporteren

← Evenementen
 Deelnemen
 Misschien





Binnenkort zal in de jaarbeurs in Utrecht een groot media-evenement plaatsvinden voor jong en oud. Verschillende activiteiten en spannende optredens zullen verspreid over de dag worden georganiseerd.

 Een aantal bekende artiesten uit Nederland zal een optreden verzorgen. Daarnaast zullen er ook gewaagde optredens en stunts vertoond worden door illusionisten. De dag zal afgesloten worden met een spectaculaire vuurwerkshow.

 Als sponsor zal Malibu bij het evenement aanwezig zijn en met verschillende creatieve workshops geld ophalen voor het goede doel. Lijkt dit evenement jou interessant en zou je graag deel willen nemen aan een van de workshops? Houd dan de berichtgeving in de gaten.



facebook
Zoek naar mensen, plaatsen en dingen

htc

quietly brilliant

Universiteit van het jaar
Openbaar · Door HTC

Deelnemers (1.071)
Gasten verwelkomen (20 nieuw)

Misschien (365)

Uitgenodigd (866)
Exporteren · Delen · Rapporteren

Evenementen
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Misschien

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facebook
Zoek naar mensen, plaatsen en dingen

htc

quietly brilliant

Media-evenement
Openbaar · Door HTC

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