UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

***Thread-lightly*: Effects of Co-Branding between Luxury and Retail Fashion Firms.**

MSc Thesis Project

Faculty of Economics and Business

MSc Business Administration – Digital Marketing Track

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Word count: 13,220 (excluding reference list and table of content)

Submission Date: June 23rd, 2022

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Utrecht, June 24th, 2022

Acknowledgements

While I cannot shake the surreal feeling of being almost at the finishing line of both my Masters' degrees, I want to take a moment to appreciate the people and situations that led me to achieve this. First, to my colleagues and team-mates: Aleska, Rebeca, Maartje, Lili, Alejandro and Ioannis, for making this year unforgettable and inspiring. Secondly, to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Shameek Sinha, for encouraging me to pursue a topic that I find fascinating and for all the comments and notes that pushed me to deliver this paper. Thirdly, I want to thank my family: My resilient mother, who spent half a lifetime driving me to classes, making sure I could take advantage of every learning opportunity, and who fostered in me the love for learning and the confidence to do it regardless of the difficulties. To my caring father, for always being an inspiration, a perfect picture of hard work and motivation, and for pursuing his high-school degree and graduating with me. To my sister, as her memory fuels me to live my life fully, unruly, daring and with no regrets. Finally, to my partner Rein, for being the constant in the sea of uncertainty that life is and being my comfort in this seemingly endless process that was my last year of studies.

I never would have thought that a passion of mine that was born in my teenage bedroom, shifting through pages of glossy Vogue magazines was going to be such a distinctive pillar in my academic years. Thus, this is also dedicated to my idols, Susan Sontag and Anna Wintour.

Abstract

In the last decade, changes in the consumer landscape of the fashion industry have prompted retail and luxury fashion houses to embark in co-branding ventures that brought different levels of success. This branding strategy capitalises from aspects of the individual brands to be transferred to the collaboration and back. Nevertheless, there are factors that can impact this strategy: From issues of brand fit and how consumers assess brand cohesion, to the type of fashion consumer and how they signal their identity through brand prominence. This MSc Thesis explores consumer perception of co-branded products by means of a 3x2 online experiment, investigating (i) the direct effects of brand fit and brand prominence on product quality and purchase intention after being presented with a fictitious collaboration between a luxury and a retail (fast) fashion brand, and (ii) the moderating effects of prior brand reputation and luxury consumer segmentation on that relationship. A mix of ANOVA, MANCOVA, and PROCESS Model 2 Regression analyses were used to analyse the responses (*N=564*) that were randomly assigned to one of the 6 conditions through an experimental survey administered via Qualtrics. Results showcased a significant direct impact of brand fit on perceptions of product quality, and of consumer segmentation on purchase intention. Moreover, this paper showed the impact that prior brand reputation, gender and generational differences have in the assessment of perceived quality and purchase intention. No significant results were found considering brand prominence and moderation effects. This research concludes that co-branded products impact consumer perceptions of quality and purchase intention depending on brand fit, prior brand reputation, generational and segmentation characteristics of consumers, while brand prominence does not influence perceptions greatly, which poses implications for future research and managerial knowledge.

Keywords: co-branding, brand fit, brand prominence, luxury consumer segmentation, brand equity, purchase intention, perceived quality

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1.1 Joint-venture co-branding

“*Are Luxury Brands Pushing Too Many Collaborations?*" reads a headline in the finance section of the fashion business platform *Business of Fashion* in May 2021 (Mallevays, 2021). Collaborations, also known as joint-venture co-branding, are a branding strategy where brands leverage secondary associations of other brands as a way to add consumer-based equity to their own (Åsberg & Uggla, 2019; Mrad et al., 2019). This strategy involves combining two or more brands into one product and is used to leverage brands and associations (Hemilg et al., 2007; Leuthesser et al., 2003). These alliances are developed at a tactical level, and each brand has a structural role in the co-branding relationship, where one brand acts as a dominant or modified brand. In contrast, another acts as a subordinate or modifier (Åsberg & Uggla, 2019). This strategy gained prominence in the fashion and luxury industry over the last decade, with luxury brands like Alexander Wang joining retail brands (*Alexander Wang for H&M*) being a modifier brand to modified fast fashion value brands (Åsberg & Uggla, 2019; Mrad et al., 2019). The use of such strategies is linked to the changes in the consumer landscape involving new generations, the democratization of luxury goods, and the furthered accessibility of the industry due to new technologies and digital communications (Ko et al., 2016). These trends make the competition between brands grow and impulse luxury brands to have innovative strategies to stay relevant in the current reality while strategically keeping a co-branding fit by partnering with companies in the same category (Decker & Baade, 2016).

Prior co-branding research is mainly concerned with brand-related risks (Decker & Baade, 2016), and it has been focused mainly on modified brands rather than modifiers (Åsberg & Uggla, 2019). Moreover, in marketing literature, there is no consensus regarding the definition of co-branding. Whereas it has been interchangeably presented as *brand alliances* or *composite branding*, this branding strategy has been defined broadly as the collaboration or pairing of two or more brands in a marketing context (Leuthesser et al., 2003). However, this paper uses a narrower definition, presented as the combination of two (or more) brands *"to create a single unique product"* (Leuthesser et al., 2013, p.36). These collaborations signal commitment between companies and have become a popular branding strategy over the last decade in different industries (Ahn & Sung, 2012). Research on joint-venture co-branding in fashion has been researched in the past, focusing on collaboration as a signaling strategy to borrow mental associations of both brands by appearing in the same context within advertising (Nguyen et al., 2018), on product fit and disparity between brand images (Childs & Jin, 2019; Ko et al., 2016; Moon & Sprott, 2016), and on cultural differences for the reception of collaborations (Wang et al., 2015). Other pursued research has to do with the qualitative exploration of managerial motivation and strategic objectives (Oeppen & Jamal, 2014) and the qualitative investigation of consumer reactions within the U.K. (Mrad et al., 2019). However, despite recognizing the value of co-partnering and the known implications for luxury and non-luxury brands, no research has obtained quantitative, generalizable data about this phenomenon.

Different dimensions can impact the success of collaborations. On the one hand, positive beliefs and attitudes towards the collaborating brands can positively impact the co-branded product (Aaker & Keller, 1990). On the other hand, one (or both) of the brands can be transferring or creating negative associations that can obscure the success of the collaboration (Kafalatis et al., 2012). Issues of "fit" and how consumers assess the cohesion of the brands in terms of category or relevance are an essential dimension that managers need to be aware of while proposing a collaboration with a different brand (Monga & Lau-Gesk, 2007). Specifically, in the fashion industry, consumers assess brands in terms of personality, and if the personalities of the collaborating brands are incongruent it can negatively affect the collaboration. Additionally, another characteristic that can impact collaborations in the fashion industry is the extent to which both brands are visible and recognizable, otherwise known as brand prominence (Han et al., 2010). In the case when brands are not a congruent fit, brand prominence can impact perceptions of quality and brand image, and be one of the factors contributing to the success or demise of the business venture (Bockholdt et al., 2020; Cheah et al., 2015).

1.2. Fashion consumers

Fashion has always played an important role in society, reflecting status and being a significant portion of international trade and economy (Okonkwo, 2007). Traditionally, luxury consumers were perceived as seeking authenticity, distinctiveness, and symbolic self-reference in luxury, prioritizing not only the quality and rarity of the products but also the services and experiences surrounding them (Oeppen & Jamal, 2014). However, this segment has flourished in the last decade, becoming a complex and highly competitive industry and increasingly gaining academic interest and research (Ko et al., 2016). Nowadays, the increase in education and disposable income and shifting trends amongst consumers have changed the landscape of luxury fashion consumers, including middle-market consumers (Silverstein &

Fiske, 2003) and companies catering to new target audiences with accessible items amongst their traditional catalogues (Mrad et al., 2019). These changes in luxury consumption habits have shifted the interest of luxury brands to different consumer sections with a distinct involvement of East Asia as the main consumers (Li et al., 2019) and to different branding opportunities, including collaborations (Ko et al., 2016; Mrad et al., 2019; Oeppen & Jamal, 2014).

Fashion, whether it is luxury or retail, is a significant contributor and reflection of consumers' identity, playing a symbolic role in peoples' lives and in the assumptions and inferences about others (Han et al., 2010). With fashion choices, consumers establish themselves as part of certain (reference) groups while differentiating from others (White & Dahl, 2007). Therefore, choices of consumption of fashion brands are symbolic and not done by chance. Brands and whether they are luxury or fast fashion is a distinguishing feature for different types of consumers. Traditionally, luxury fashion consumers were part of minorities with high purchasing power who wanted to distinguish themselves by eccentricity and hedonism (Escobar, 2016). Nowadays, different social sectors can access luxury goods, which are not reserved solely for the elite. Within luxury fashion, different consumer groups prefer types of products with more or less brand prominence (quiet vs. loud), such as the display of their logo or not, and brands often cater to both types of consumers (Han et al., 2010). Han et al. (2010) offer a categorization of consumers based on their need for status and income: patrician, parvenu, poseur and proletarian, For example, wealthy high social status luxury customers (Patricians) often prefer products that are low in brand prominence, as these are less counterfeited and allow members from the in-group to recognize each other while recognizing other groups by the loud brand prominence they chose (Han et al., 2010).

These careful considerations that consumers exhibit have an impact on their experiences with co-branded products. Co-branded products imply a more complex evaluation determined by attitude and subjective norms (Hemilg et al., 2007), and their purchase consideration represents a rational and thoughtful decision with higher uncertainty than with individual brands, as consumers have to evaluate not only the composite brand but both collaborators.

1.3 Problem statement

This master thesis aims to explore consumer perceptions of both modifier and modified brands of co-branded products consumer-based brand equity. Namely, perceptions of company reputation and value, while seeking to understand differences between the typology of fashion consumers defined by Han et al. (2010) as patricians, parvenus, poseurs, and proletarians, in their purchase intention (Ko et al., 2016; Moon & Sprott, 2016) of collaborations between fast-fashion and luxury fashion brands. Thus, this master thesis aims to answer the research question: "*How do co-branded products of both luxury and fast-fashion retailers impact consumers' perception of product quality and purchase intention?"*. Furthermore, this paper will delve into sub-questions related to the consumer perception of these collaborations, answering: "*How do the perceptions of collaborations of luxury and fast-fashion brands differ between older vs. younger consumers, and between the different typology of consumers (patrician/parvenu/poseur/proletarian)?*", "*Are perceived company reputation of modifier and modified brands a mediator of the perception of the collaboration?",* and *"Are prior perceptions of one brand transferred to the other during collaborations?".*

1.4 Academic and managerial contribution

The academic contribution of this paper lies in the area of branding and consumer behavior by deepening the investigation of collaboration between brands that can be perceived to have a low fit between each other due to the different brand images and symbolism. By conducting an experimental survey, this paper contributes to the corpus about joint-venture co-branding by exploring the identified limitation of current studies on this area proposed by Mrad et al. (2019) as the lack of generalizable data on consumers' perception of brand image, quality, and purchase intention with contradictory or dissimilar brands. Moreover, this study will advance the study of brand symbolism and self-presentation by showcasing novel results linked to consumers' preferences and identity while not only showcasing the implications for co-branded products but accounting for the repercussions for modifier and modified brand companies. Moreover, this thesis is expected to contribute to managerial literature by providing new evidence of the investigation surrounding co-branding and facilitating insights to assess the possibility of success or failure preventively. The quantitative nature of this thesis provides measurable and comparable data in an ever-growing industry as Fashion and Luxury Fashion while being applicable to other fields.

1.4 Outline

This research paper is organized into six chapters. After the introduction, chapter 2 discusses an overview and analysis of existing literature on branding extensions, co-branding and consumers' responses, focusing on perception of product quality and purchase intention. Moreover, it addresses the phenomenon of co-branding and consumer behavior in the fashion and luxury industry context. It presents hypotheses of what is expected of the experiment based on prior research. Chapter 3 describes the methodology of this research, presenting the research design, sampling, experimental stimuli and procedure, and the measurement of the variables included in the study. Afterward, chapter 4 presents the results of the experimental research based on hypothesis testing and additional findings from statistical analyses in data analyzer and visualizer IBM SPSS Statistics 28. Chapter 5 discusses the significance of the papers' findings based on previously presented academic literature and describes the managerial implications the findings have. Additionally, it highlights limitations and contributions and proposes further research in the field. Lastly, chapter 6 summarises the research and its approach.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Branding extensions: Co-branding

Companies engage in branding strategies to change consumers' perceptions in an effort to exchange goods and services through the management of their associative networks (Henderson et al., 1998). As brands create strategic positions, they help consumers develop mental models called associative networks. Associative networks can be explained as all perceptions, images, preferences, and choices in memory linked to a specific brand (Aaker, 1991). These vary broadly and are critical components of consumer-based brand equity, as these associations add value to the brand and can be leveraged for consumers to process and retrieve information that is linked to the brand, and to evoke positive affect (Henderson et al., 1998). Consumer-based brand equity is the effect that brand knowledge has on consumers' response to a brands' marketing activity, and it can be leveraged by (1) choosing a particular brand identity and elements, (2), strategically designing and communicating marketing activities and (3) by eliciting secondary associations linking the brand to other entities (Keller, 2005; 2014).

Eliciting new associations to secondary entities changes the meaning of the brand for consumers, as it conveys new information and meanings about the brand (Keller, 2020). Therefore, secondary associations can change the way consumers feel about the brand image (The emotional/hedonic component of a brand), and its performance (The utilitarian/rational component of a brand). In the case of co-branding alliances, brands attempt to transfer positive associations from the original brands to the co-branded offering, while receiving benefits such as marketplace exposure, access to new markets and enhancing their reputation (Dickinson & Heath, 2006). These partnerships can have significant implications for all brands in the alliance, including changes in product quality perception and purchase intention and behaviour (Dickinson & Heath, 2006; Newmeyer et al., 2018; Oeppen & Jamal, 2014). Thus, from a managerial perspective, it is utterly important to decide on collaboration based on a consumer viewpoint, assessing the desirability of the collaboration and its relevance for the targeted market (McAnally & de Chernatony, 1999).

2.1.1 Perceived product quality of co-branded products

Success of brand extensions in the context of collaborations depends on different aspects of consumer behaviour, such as (1) holding positive beliefs toward the brands, (2) forming positive attitudes towards the co-branded product and (3) not transferring or creating negative associations (Aaker & Keller, 1990). Therefore, the value placed to the cooperation will have an impact on the perceived quality of the product. Perceived quality is a construct defined as the global assessment of a consumers' judgement about a product (Aaker & Keller, 1990). Collaborations should elicit unambiguously positive consumers' judgements to leverage good secondary associations. Perceived product quality is signalled by properties of co-brands that consumers can evaluate, such as the salience and conspicuousness of brands, and the brand fit (Kafalatis et al., 2012).

On the one hand, prior research has shown that benefits of co-branding in terms of perceived quality gains are often enhanced for weaker brands (lower prior quality perception), than for the stronger, high-quality perceived brands (Mitchell & Balabanis, 2021). On the other hand, whereas the quality of the already perceived high-quality brand would not be greatly impacted, this brand can access new categories or markets, and transmit emotional elements of their brand to new consumers, facilitating salience and resonance to their brand (Alexander & Contreras, 2016; Keller, 2020). Nevertheless, there are several factors that can negatively influence the perception of quality of both the co-branded product and the modifier and modified brands, such as poor brand fit between the brands (Dickinson & Heath, 2006; Monga & Lau-Gesk, 2007; Mrad et al., 2016; Oeppen & Jamal, 2014), and not tailoring the offer to specific audiences that would have the intent to purchase the co-branded offerings (Han et al., 2010; Mrad et al., 2016; Pino et al., 2019).

2.1.2. Purchase intention

Parting from consumer behaviour, intention is defined as the determination to act in a certain way and having the intention of purchasing a specific product can be considered a predictor of actual subsequent behaviour (Bagozzi et al., 1990). Nevertheless, as explained by the Theory of Planned Behaviour, intentions are formed through attitudes (Ajzen, 1985). Consumers use information cues to form their attitude towards a product with the goal of decreasing perceived risk and increasing trust in the brand(s) and its offerings (Chang & Chen, 2008). Besides, depending on the attitudes towards collaborations and the brands included in the venture, consumers can have both external and internal motivations to purchase products (Amatulli & Guido, 2011; Rodrigues & Biswas, 2004). In brand alliances, the brand names signal specific properties and brand equity of the individual brands in a way that the modified brand cannot do by itself (Rao et al., 1999). This synergic effect is expected to affect the consumer's purchase intentions (Rodrigues & Biswas, 2004), and if the attitudes towards the product are positive, consumers would be willing to pay more for the collaboration.

2.2. Fashion collaborative alliances: Joint-venture co-branding

As previously explained, brand alliances involve intentionally combining efforts of two or more brands and have different levels of integration (Newmeyer et al., 2018). In the fashion industry, whereas luxury fashion firms often have better-perceived reputations, images, and quality than fast-fashion brands, the market size of fast fashion is larger than luxury. Therefore, collaborations between brand partners are used to create shared value, ranging from awareness to value endorsement and secondary associations (Oeppen & Jamal, 2014). In these relationships, the brand controlling distribution and owning most of the customer base is the leading entity of the composite structure and known as the dominant brand or the modified brand, which is often the fast-fashion brand (Åsberg & Uggla, 2019). The subordinate brand or modifier brand, being the secondary entity, contributes to symbolic associations enhancing the composite brand beyond the dominant brand capabilities. This type of collaboration was explored by fast-fashion brand H&M with 19 different luxury brands for more than ten years, from 2004 to 2017, where H&M is considered to be the modified brand, and the co-partnering luxury brands are considered the modifiers (Mrad et al., 2019). Whatever the objective behind the collaboration is, these alliances impact perceptions of allied brands, as the evaluation of one brand's corporate reputation can spill over onto the partner (Newmeyer et al., 2019).

2.2.1 Perceived brand fit

In joint-venture co-branding, previous research has discussed topics of fitting, how consumers compare and associate brands in terms of category or relevance (Aaker & Keller, 1990). These are value judgments on the extent the alliance between brands is aligned with the category, value propositions and brand personality of both brands (Monga & Lau-Gesk, 2007; Oeppen & Jamal, 2014). Luxury and fast-fashion or retail collaborations are utterly interesting due to their complexity regarding brand fit. One one hand, these collaborations have high congruence in category fit, as they are part of the apparel and fashion industry. On the other hand, consumers can experience perceived poor fit due to the different traits associated with each brand's personality (Monga & Lau-Gesk, 2007). Brand personality consists of the set of human characteristics associated with a brand, as consumers build relationships with these brands by attaching anthropocentric meaning to help make sense of their relationship (Maehle et al., 2011). Companies in luxury fashion might be associated with the trait of sophistication, whereas fast-fashion brands would be associated with sincerity and down-to-earthness.

Perceived fit is key for determining responses and consumer attitudes towards co-branding relationships. Thus, compatibility and consistency in associations may lead to effective and favourable market outcomes (Monga & Lau-Gesk, 2007). Whereas previous literature indicates that brand fit between luxury and fast fashion is low, giving the example of how the collaboration between H&M and luxury brands was perceived as negative in terms of their prior corporate reputation and congruence to collaborate (Mrad et al., 2019), such scepticism did not equate with market performance as the collaborations were successful. This phenomenon could be explained via the means of consistency of H&M associating their brand with luxury companies as a way for consumers to oversee the lack of compatibility. Thus, H&M could be considered in between what would be assessed as "high" fit and "low" fit (A "mid" fit). This in turn, showcases the gap and the need to address differences of fit between (fast-)fashion companies with prior experience in collaboration with luxury, in comparison of those that did not previously collaborate and non-fast-fashion companies. This would deepen the understanding of brand fit, and how this is engrained in the corporate reputation of the collaborating firms. In order to address the interesting phenomena of collaboration brand fit parting on the differences encountered in prior research concerning compatibility and consistency, this master thesis presents the following hypothesis:

> **H1:** *A high collaboration brand fit between a Luxury and Fast-fashion brand will lead to positive (a) product quality perception and (b) purchase intention in comparison with a mid and a low collaboration brand fit. A low collaboration brand fit between a Luxury and a fast-fashion brand will lead to negative (c) product quality perception and (d) purchase intention in comparison with mid and high collaboration brand fit.*

2.2.2 Brand reputation & forward spillover effects

Brand personality can be considered within the context of brand image, as one of the drivers for consumer-based brand equity (Keller, 2014). Brand image is associated with the emotional dimension of brand reputation and serves as the mental picture individuals have of an organisation (Foroudi et al., 2014). On the other hand, brand reputation provides the overall evaluation of consumers, and is dynamic and developed over time, being affected by brand image (Fombrun, 1996; Foroudi et al., 2014). Thus, positive brand image positively affects evaluations and perception of brand reputation (Walsh et al., 2009). In order to identify brand fit in a collaboration, it is imperative to understand the previous perception of the individual collaborating brands, as they act as the constituent brands generate direct effects, also known as forward spillover effects (Simonin & Ruth, 1998).

Fashion brands use co-branding to attempt the transfer of positive associations of partner brands to the co-branded product, while in return these evaluations reflect and influence the perceptions of partner brands (Washburn et al., 2000). To guarantee a successful co-branded product and a strong fit, both parent brands' reputations have to establish positive direct effects to influence consumer acceptance (Dickinson & Heath, 2006). Therefore, while considering the effects of collaboration brand fit on co-branded products, it is imperative to note the moderating effect of prior brand reputation perception for both collaborating brands. In line with prior research this study expects brand reputation to have forwards spillover effects and affect the perception of brand fit and ultimately, the collaboration, as highlighted in the following hypothesis:

H2: *Prior brand reputation of both luxury and fast-fashion brands, will moderate the collaboration brand fit. If (one of the) brands has a prior negative brand reputation, it will negatively affect (a) product quality and (b) purchase intention.*

2.3. Luxury Consumers vs. Fast fashion consumers

Fashion consumption is not merely utilitarian or practical. By deciding what to wear, individuals make efforts to create and signal their own identity, adding symbolic value to their garments and making them part of their self-concept (Solomon, 2012; White & Dahl, 2007). However, the motivation of fashion consumption is influenced by the importance consumers place on owning things that display their identities or signals status, and by their personal characteristics and economic background (Pino et al., 2019). On one hand, the low-cost and great-speed retailed fashion clothing known as fast-fashion (Reinach, 2005) is an extremely diversified industry catering to fashion-oriented consumers by quickly responding to emerging trends and designing inexpensive products quickly in short-cycles (Choi et al., 2010). Fast-fashion products emulate the design of high fashion products at accessible prices, allowing non-wealthy consumers who are in need of status signalling to purchase items that are on-trend (Reinach, 2005). On the other hand, luxury fashion has a different symbolic meaning for consumers and it is tied to the heritage and sophistication of the brands (Han et al., 2010), characteristics that cannot be copied by fast-fashion. Nevertheless, whereas the traditional luxury consumer is associated with high purchasing power minorities, nowadays luxury fashion is accessible to other social sectors, including middle-market consumers (Ko et al., 2016; Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). Thus, this can act as a moderator for fashion consumption and decisions over products.

Due to the changes in the fashion landscape and the need of consumers to showcase their identity and self-image through fashion, traditional luxury consumers often purchase luxury items that are not easily identified as luxurious (Han et al., 2010; Pino et al., 2019). These consumers do this to avoid being associated with other consumers that might be trying to signal status with luxury items with loud brand logos displays and brand prominence. These differences are often considered by luxury brands, which create items tailored to different consumer segments, including minimal display of brand logo and cues for association, and heavily branded items that are easy to associate with the brand (Han et al., 2010; Ko et al., 2016).

2.3.1. Brand prominence

Brand prominence plays a role in consumer self-identity and self-image as it allows individuals to display brand names as a way to identify and differentiate themselves from others (Cheah et al., 2015). This construct reflects the conspicuousness of a brand logo and how present and easily recognisable it is on the products (Han et al., 2010). Fast-fashion brands often do not incorporate distinctive patterns in their products, as they mimic luxury products (Bockholdt et al., 2020). On the other hand, luxury companies support signalling intentions by incorporating their logos or recognizable markings on some products, yet also producing others that are not as easily recognizable (Pino et al., 2019). Therefore, depending on the intention of the consumer to generate a specific image and impression, brand prominence of certain brands is encouraged or discouraged.

Research on brand prominences of incongruent brand collaborations showcase that one brand being more prominent than other has higher efficacy for consumer focus (Baghi & Gabrielli, 2018). However, this applies for consumers that aim to differentiate themselves through material goods. Other streams of research showcase that products without logos are not as useful to serve self-expression needs (Baghi & Gabrielli, 2018; Wilcox et al., 2009). Nevertheless, luxury products without logos are often less counterfeited, which serves as a signalling on itself for some luxury consumers that want to differentiate from newer consumers looking for loud products (Han et al., 2010; Wilcox et al., 2009). Consequently, following the prior research on efficacy for consumer focus and signalling intentions, the following hypothesis was developed:

H3: *Quiet brand prominence of the retail brand in collaboration with a luxury brand will have a positive effect on (a) product quality and (b) purchase intention, in comparison to loud brand prominence collaborations.*

2.3.2. Luxury consumer segments

Research indicates that based on the need for status and economic wealth, four groups of fashion consumers can be identified (Han et al., 2010). Consumers of luxury products are driven by premium characteristics that are present solely in this category such as high price, high quality, rarity, aesthetics and symbolism (Wilcox et al., 2009). Normally, their intangible and symbolic value is higher than functional value when considering pricing of luxury items. Therefore, only consumers with higher economic wealth are the ones that normally can afford these products, yet they appeal to consumers with need for status (Nueno & Quelch, 1998; Wilcox et al., 2009). On the other hand, non-luxury products appeal to consumers that value functionality over status or symbolic values (Nueno & Quelch, 1998). The segmentation of consumers is then based on the extent to which they seek to gain prestige or status, and their financial means (Han et al., 2010). This division in four groups showcases social identity dynamics of different segments in respect of which groups they want to be associated or dissociated with.

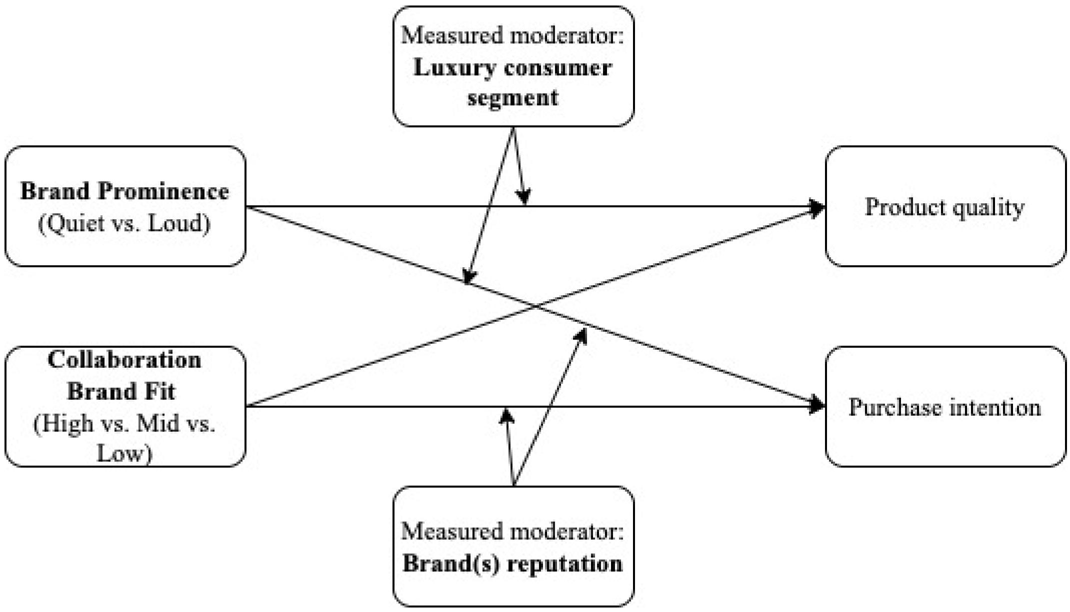
Han et al. (2010) labelled the four groups as *Patricians, Parvenus, Poseurs* and *Proletarians*. The patricians are wealthy consumers that have less need to externalise their social standing to disassociate from masses but wish to associate with in-groups while consuming luxury products that bring personal gratification (Han et al., 2010; Pino et al., 2019). The second category, the parvenus' group, are those consumers that have significant financial means yet do not have the cultural capital of patricians. This group then has the need to showcase their social standing through purchasing luxury items that will differentiate them from the masses (Pino et al., 2019).

On the other end, the following two groups have lower financial means. Poseurs are individuals that crave status and associate themselves with reference groups (Parvenus) and disassociate from proletariats, the fourth group (Han et al., 2010). This last group is composed of consumers that are neither affluent nor desire to externalise social status. Thus, they are not driven to consume luxury goods in the first place. Furthermore, another driver for consumption of luxury goods is consumers' susceptibility to normative influence and the desire to appear fashionable (Cheah et al., 2015; Pino et al., 2019; Siahtiri & Lee, 2019). Based on the previous categorization, this thesis assumes that consumers associated with each segment will have marked differences in the perception of product quality and subsequent purchase intention of collaborations between luxury and fast fashion brands. This is outlined in the following hypothesis:

> **H4:** *Luxury consumer segment will moderate the effects of brand prominence. Loud brand prominence in collaborations between Luxury and Fast-fashion brands will lead to negative (a) product quality and (b) purchase intention for patricians and proletariat segments, but to positive (d) product quality and (e) purchase intention for parvenus and poseurs' segments.*

2.4. Conceptual Model

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of thesis



3. Method

3.1. Research method

Quantitative experimental studies are the most appropriate method to test causal effects, and to reflect logic emerging from data through statistical analyses (Babbie, 2011). This was needed in this thesis as it aimed to explore and analyse the relationship between collaboration fit and brand(s) prominence on the perception of product quality and the purchase intention of co-branded fashion products. As experiments count with the manipulation of variables, it allows the comparison of outcomes depending on the modifications done by a researcher, facilitating measurable direct- and moderator-effects (Gunter, 2012; Neuman, 2014). Moreover, experiments are situations created and designed for analyses, so only relevant variables are included, which gives a sharp focus to the research (Neuman, 2014). Nevertheless, experiments involve deception, which is an important ethical issue (Babbie, 2011). In the case of this thesis, the use of deception was only temporary and did not represent any grievance for the participants. Additionally, the participants were presented with a consent form before starting the survey, and debriefed about the experiment while finishing it, as revealing the nature of the experiment would have prompted participants to respond with social desirability bias (Sue & Ritter, 2012).

3.2. Sample

An a priori power analysis for factorial analysis of variance that examines main effects and interactions showed that 128 participants would provide 80% power (α = .05) to detect a medium effect (Cohen's f = .25) in the dependent measures of interest. Nevertheless, due to the ease of recruiting participants, a larger total sample was achieved. Seven hundred and thirty-six responses *(N=736)* were drawn as a sample from a population of world-wide adults recruited using the software Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) in the period between May 7th, 2022 to May 11th, 2022. MTurk is a crowdsourcing software designed to outsource virtual tasks, such as survey participation (Rouse, 2019). This data collection method was utilised due to three main benefits: (1) Inexpensive and fast method, (2) Representative and diverse sample, and (3) Presumption of good quality data. Moreover, whereas in some cases, the data collected via MTurk can be less reliable than normative samples, the reliability and quality of MTurk data showcased that using attention checks improves reliability (Rouse, 2015, 2019). Thus, this thesis included an attention check question, and all participants were given a monetary incentive to participate.

Out of the initial sample, seventy-one participants did not complete the attention check correctly, leaving six hundred and sixty-five ($N=665$) respondents ranging from eighteen-years-old to seventy-eight years old ($M=35.70$, $SD=11.70$). Moreover, participants that did not meet the criteria for inclusion (Those not knowing the presented companies and those not willing to disclose their estimated yearly income), participants that did not complete the entire survey, and significant outliers were removed. Thus, leaving a final sample of five hundred and sixty-four participants ($N=564$) with which analyses were conducted. Out of the final participants, 287 were male, 272 were females, two were non-binary and three preferred not to disclose such information. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of the six conditions using Qualtrics Software through an online link. Moreover, posthoc power analysis for factorial analysis of variance (ANCOVA) showcased that the total sample size of 564 participants provided 99% power ($\alpha = .05$) to detect a medium effect (*Cohen's* $f = .25$) in the dependent measures of interest.

Regarding their educational background, 292 participants obtained an undergraduate (51.8%), 199 participants obtained a graduate degree (35.3%), 62 obtained a high school degree (11%), 7 obtained a doctorate (1.2%), and 4 participants received less than high school education (0.7%). Additionally, the sample had participants from 33 different countries, with most respondents being from the United States (55%), India (26.4%), Argentina (4.3%), the Netherlands (2.3%), and the United Kingdom (2.1%). A complete overview of the participants' nationalities' frequency can be found in Appendix A.

3.3. Stimuli

The research was a between-subjects 3x2 experiment with six different conditions (Table 1). The first independent variable used was Collaboration (brand) fit. It was manipulated by using three levels: high, mid, and low fit. The high fit was represented by the collaboration of an Italian luxury brand, Gucci, with the affordable American luxury brand Kate Spade New York. Kate Spade is a fashion design house founded in 1993, which currently competes with brands such as Coach and Michael Kors in the mid-range luxury market (Sherman, 2018). While the brands have not previously collaborated, the success and refinement of the Kate Spade brand can be associated with the luxury firm.

The mid fit was represented by the collaboration between Gucci and H&M. The decision to include H&M as a mid-fit has to do with the success of the company in prior luxury-fast-fashion collaborations, while still being considered a “low” fit for a luxury brand (Mrad et al., 2019). Finally, the low fit manipulation was presented by the collaboration between Gucci and SHEIN, a Chinese fast-fashion retailer that has an unmatched speed-to-market ability and low prices (Chen, 2022). The decision to use SHEIN as the low fit has to do with the apparent disparity between the high-priced luxury goods of Gucci and the fast-paced, low-price strategy of SHEIN.

The second independent variable used was brand prominence, and it was manipulated by using two levels: loud or quiet prominence. For loud prominence, the logo of the modified company was featured largely across the chest of the collaboration. On the other hand, for the quiet brand prominence, the logo of the modifier was showcased only in a corner of the t-shirt and did not catch attention to it, being harder to spot. The overall manipulation consisted in showcasing the collaboration product in a fictitious retailer website. The researcher manipulated an image of a t-shirt offered by H&M with Adobe Photoshop software to include a Gucci classic design and the logotype of the three different companies depending on the condition. Moreover, the product was offered in the three different brands' websites where the participant could see a screenshot of a product page mentioning the collaboration and the t-shirt offering, which can be observed on appendix B.

Table 1. *Online experiment - between subjects - 3x2*

		Brand prominence	
Collaboration (Brand) Fit		Loud	Quiet
	High	*High-Loud*	*High-Quiet*
	Mid	*Mid-Loud*	*Mid-Quiet*
	Low	*Low-Loud*	*Low-Quiet*

3.3.1. Manipulation Checks

Prior to the launching of the online experiment, a short pilot study was done with a convenience sample of acquaintances of the student researcher (*N*=124). The brand prominence was not included as a check since a conversation with other students resulted in the agreement that the differences between big logo (loud) and no logo (quiet) was visible and unmistakable. On the other hand, brand fit (low, mid, and high) was more complicated to assess. Thus, the pre-test checked this manipulation. The 124 participants were divided between the 3 different collaboration brands: SHEIN (*N* = 33), H&M (*N*=42) and Kate Spade (*N*=49). An analysis of variance compared the means of the 7-point Likert-scale variable ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree on the question "*Do you think this* *collaboration represents the prestige of Gucci?*". The between-groups ANOVA showcased a statistically significant difference between the groups [$F(2, 121) = 26.65$, $p < .001$]. The means of the Kate Spade group (M=4.39; SD=1.37) and the means of the H&M group (M=3.90, SD=1.76) were significantly different from the SHEIN group (M=2.18, SD = .58). Thus, the manipulation and manipulation check were used in the final survey.

3.4. Experiment procedure

The online experiment was set up on Qualtrics, and the first block was used to inform the participants of the nature of the survey and to ask for their consent. The total amount of time expected to complete the survey was delineated at 6 minutes. The following block presented information about the collaboration brands: (1) if they were knowledgeable of the brand, (2) a scale measuring the brand reputation. The first question was used to filter out participants that did not previously know the brands. Then, participants were presented with one of the six conditions randomly, and were asked to carefully inspect the image presented and proceed after 20 seconds. After the stimuli, the manipulation questions regarding Brand fit and a scale to measure (collaboration) brand reputation were presented. In the following block, the dependent variable items for perceived product quality and purchase intention were asked to participants. Finally, the respondents had to answer some demographic and personal questions including a scale for their need for status, age, gender, education and annual income. The survey ended by presenting a thank you message and a code for MTurk users. The complete overview of the survey and the different conditions can be found on Appendix C.

3.6. Measurement

The variables presented in this study were abstract constructs that cannot be observed directly or indirectly (Babbie, 2011). Scales from peer-reviewed research were used to facilitate the measurement of them. Participants of the online experiment were presented with items in a 7-point Likert scale. Factorial analyses were run to evaluate the scales and make sure that they were measuring the same construct. From the scales used, all items had high commonalities (>.40), thus were composed into single item scales by aggregating and averaging the individual items.

Perceived product quality. The perception of respondents of the collaboration product quality was measured with five items adapted from a study on the effects of price, brand and store information on buyers' perceptions of product quality and value (Dodds et al., 1991). The original article's Cronbach's Alpha was .95. Nevertheless, in this study the result of the five items reliability analysis indicated low reliability (*Cronbach's α* = .47). However, the analysis indicated that one item was causing this disruption: "*This product is likely to be trustworthy*," and the Cronbach's Alpha if the item was deleted significantly improved the reliability of the scale (*Cronbach's α* = .86). Therefore, the decision made was to eliminate the item and compose the scale with the remaining four items.

Purchase intention. The scale measuring purchase intention asked respondents three questions anchored by strongly disagree/strongly agree borrowed from a study on brand alliances (Rodrigues & Biswas, 2004). This scale had a Cronbach's Alpha of .93, indicating high reliability, with corrected item-total correlations above .30, indicating that each item was correlated with the total score of the scale.

Brand reputation. All brands included in the experiment (Gucci, H&M, Shein and Kate Spade) as well as the collaboration between the brands' reputations were measured using RepTrak™ Pulse, a four-item scale measuring firm reputation (Ponzi et al., 2011). The Cronbach's Alpha of the companies ranged from .88 to .93, and the Cronbach's Alpha of collaborations' reputations ranged from .85 to .95; Thus, all scales presented high reliability and the results of the brands reputation scales were used as moderators for the effects of brand fit on purchase intention and perceived product quality.

Luxury consumer segment. The segment the participants belonged to was hypothesised to be a moderator of brand prominence, as different types of consumers prefer more or less prominent branding. This moderator was adapted from the study of Han et al. (2010) on brand prominence and luxury consumer segments. The authors explained that the segment was constructed with a categorization of financial means, for which this survey included an annual income estimation, and by the participant's need for status. Thus, this survey used the Need for Status scale included in the research by Hans et al., composed of four items. The Cronbach's Alpha of the scale was of .95, indicating high reliability.

To generate a matrix of 2x2 (low vs. high income, low vs. high need for status), this study relied on data on average income per country (WorldBank, n.d.) and created a dummy categorical variable based on the median income per sector. This was done by using the select cases condition in SPSS and filtering out countries, then computing variables ranging from low to mean for lower-income (N=420) and from mean to highest score for high income (N=144). The division for the categories of low vs. high need for status was created in a way that all the respondents below the mean (M = 4.67, SD = 1.82) were categorised as low need for status, and those on or above the mean as high need for status. Finally, a variable was computed representing the four possible combinations of high vs. low income and high vs. low need for status, as they showcase the luxury segments of Proletariat (N=269), Poseurs (N=151), Parvenus (N=83) and Patricians (N=61).

4. Results

After a data-cleaning process and analysis of reliability, factorial and demographic information, the data was analysed to understand the descriptive statistics of each condition on the dependent variables. This information can be found in the table below (Table 2). Moreover, correlations between different variables were analysed (Table 3). A strong correlation between product quality perception and prior retail brand (*H&M, Shein* or *Kate Spade)* reputation was observed (r =.65*,* p < .01). Additionally, it was found that purchase intention was strongly correlated to the reputation of Gucci (r =.58*,* p < .01) and to the need-for-status scale (r =.76*,* p < .01). The manipulated independent variables (Brand Fit and Brand Prominence) and control variable gender were excluded from the analysis since Pearson Correlation would not provide an accurate correlation measure for categorical variables (Pallant, 2013). Lastly, a stringent level of significance (.01) was chosen to evaluate the results of the MANOVA analyses due to the differences in sizes between the different groups. To explore if there were any significant differences between the groups, Pillai's Trace was used, as it is recommended for data with problems of sample sizes (Pallant, 2013).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the experimental conditions *(N*=564).

Brand fit	**Brand prominence**	**Perceived product quality**		**Purchase intention**		***N***
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	
High	*Loud*	5.66	.91	3.56	1.22	101
	Quiet	5.76	.85	3.55	1.32	94
Mid	*Loud*	5.65	.87	3.82	1.06	92
	Quiet	5.59	.93	3.42	1.37	92
Low	*Loud*	3.56	1.43	3.51	1.22	88
	Quiet	3.92	1.33	3.65	1.20	97

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations of all Measured Variable*s (N=564)*

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Product quality perception	*5.04*	*1.41*	*1*							
2. Purchase intention	*3.59*	*1.23*	*.279 ***	*1*						
3. Retail brand prior reputation	*4.85*	*1.29*	***.650** ***	*.373***	*1*					
4. Gucci prior reputation	*5.67*	*1.04*	*.262 ***	***.577*****	*.372* **	*1*				
5. Need for status	*4.67*	*1.82*	*.225 ***	***.759*****	*.383* **	***.561** ***	*1*			
6. Age	*36.04*	*11.50*	*N.C.*	*-.118***	*N.C.*	*N.C.*	*-.152 ***	*1*		
7. Education	*3.25*	*.69*	*N.C.*	*.220***	*.149* **	*.187 ***	*.285* **	*N.C.*	*1*	
8. Income	*5.12*	*3.12*	*N.C.*	*N.C.*	*N.C.*	*.165 ***	*N.C.*	*.240 ***	*.097**	*1*

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-Tailed).*
** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-Tailed).*
N.C. = No statistically significant correlation

4.1. Hypotheses testing

4.1.1. Effect of Brand Fit.

The first hypothesis of this thesis referred to the impact of brand fit on the product quality perception and purchase intention of participants when considering collaborations with different levels of fit between the brands. Hypothesis 1a stated that a high fit would positively impact the perception of product quality in comparison to mid and low fit collaborations. Hypothesis 1b, referred to the positive impact that high brand fit would have on purchase intention in comparison to mid and low fit collaborations. Additionally, hypothesis 1c relates to the negative effects that low brand fit would have on perceived product quality in comparison to the mid and high brand fit. Finally, hypothesis 1d stated that a low brand fit would negatively impact purchase intention in comparison to mid and high fit.

In order to accept or reject the hypothesis, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted on SPSS (Table 4), as there were two continuous dependent variables (perceived product quality and purchase intention), and the main interest was in examining differences between the different brand fit groups (Pallant, 2013). As the groups were significantly different in size, Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was significant for product quality perception (p <.001) and a more stringent significance level was used.

The MANOVA analysis showcased a statistically significant difference between the brand fit groups on both dependent variables $F(4, 1104) = 10.92$, $p < .001$; Pillai's Trace = .08; partial eta squared = .04. When the results were considered separately, *Perceived product quality* reached a statistically significant difference $F(2, 552) = 11.95$, p <.001, Partial Eta squared = .041, meaning that only 4.1% of the variance of product quality perception was explained by brand fit having a small effect. When comparing the groups, the statistically significant differences could be seen between the low-fit group (SHEIN) and the mid (H&M) and high-fit (Kate Spade) groups. For both groups, SHEIN had a mean difference of -1.87 with H&M and of -1.96 with Kate Spade. Therefore, ***H1a was partially accepted*** as the perceived quality of the high brand fit collaboration (M = 5.07, SD = 0.14) was significantly higher than the low brand fit collaboration (M = 3.91, SD = 0.20) but not significantly different than the mid brand fit collaboration (M = 4.94, SD = 0.15). On the other hand, ***H1c was accepted*** as the means of low brand fit (M = 3.91, SD = 0.20) were significantly lower than those for mid brand fit (M = 4.94, SD = 0.15) and high brand fit (M = 5.07, SD = 0.14) collaborations.

Purchase intention also reached a statistically significant difference *F* (2, 552) = 4.58, *p* =.001, *Partial Eta squared* = .016. Thus, only 1.6% of the variance of purchase intention was explained by brand fit having a small effect. Nevertheless, ***H1b and H1d were rejected*** as the differences between groups were not statistically significant. In addition, the differences on purchase intention are contrary to what was expected in the hypotheses. The low and mid brand fit were more likely to be chosen to purchase than the high brand fit. However, this can be in line with the pricing. Whereas H&M and SHEIN are low-priced items (Around 20 dollars), Kate Spade is a more expensive brand (Around 90 dollars). Thus, price might have acted as a control variable influencing the effect of brand fit on purchase intention.

Table 4. Means, Standard Deviations and Multivariate Analyses of Variance (MANOVA) for brand fit on perceived product quality and purchase intention (*N*= 564).

	Brand Fit							
	High (Kate Spade)		Mid (H&M)		Low (SHEIN)		*F* (2, 552)	*Eta squared*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Perceived Product Quality	5.067	0.144	4.944	0.152	3.907	0.202	11.95	.002
Purchase intention	2.494	0.152	2.783	0.161	3.287	0.213	4.58	.001

4.1.2. Effect of prior brand reputation.

The second hypothesis explored the moderation of brands' reputations prior to the collaboration on the effects of brand fit on perceived product quality (H2a) and purchase intention (H2b). A MANOVA analysis looked at the interaction effects of brand fit and the brands previous reputations, which were re-coded into dichotomous variables representing bad prior reputation (1) and good prior reputation (2). As the brand Gucci did not have enough respondents thinking it had a bad reputation (*N* = 50), there were not enough respondents per condition to test the variable as a moderator (for which PROCESS Model 2 was used later on). For the reputation of the collaborating brands, as with Hypothesis 1, the groups were significantly different in size and Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was significant for product quality perception ($p <.001$). Therefore, as with hypothesis 1, a more stringent level of significance (.01) and Pillai's trace were used to evaluate the results.

The MANOVA analysis reported a significant direct effect for (retail) brand reputation on both dependent variables, $F\ (2, 557) = 30.02$, $p <.001$, *Pillai's Trace* = .10, *Partial eta squared* = .097. For *Perceived product quality,* only 3.2% of variance was explained by prior reputation, $F\ (1, 558) = 18.55$, $p <.001$, *Pillai's Trace* = .10, *Partial eta squared* = .032. Additionally, for *purchase intention*, 9.2% of variance was explained by prior reputation, $F\ (1, 558) = 56.23$, $p <.001$, *Pillai's Trace* = .10, *Partial eta squared* = .092. Thus, only a small variance of the dependent variables was explained by the direct effect of the reputation of the brands (Table 5). Nevertheless, there was no significant interaction effect for brand fit and (retail) brand reputation. Thus, both ***Hypothesis 2a and 2b were rejected*** as there was not a moderator effect of prior brand reputation.

A PROCESS Model 2 regression analysis was performed to analyse the possible moderating effects (Hayes, 2013) of the prior reputation of Gucci and the prior reputation of the retail brand on perceived product quality. The overall model was statistically significant, $R = .652$, $F\ (5, 558) = 82.49$, $p < .001$. Nevertheless, neither of the interactions was statistically significant. Finally, a second PROCESS Model 2 regression was performed to analyse the moderation of prior reputation on purchase intention. Similarly to the first analysis, the overall model was statistically significant, $R = .604$, $F(5, 558) = 63.94$, $p < .001$, but the interactions did not reach significance. Given the results and the lack of significance of Brand fit in the model, it is possible to suggest that retail and luxury brands' prior reputation had a direct effect on the variables. This was further explored in the additional analyses.

Table 5. Means, Standard Deviations and Multivariate Analyses of Variance (MANOVA) for interaction of (retail) brand reputation and brand fit on perceived product quality and purchase intention (*N*= 564).

	Prior brand reputation													
	Bad prior reputation						Good prior reputation							
	High (Kate Spade)		Mid (H&M)		Low (SHEIN)		High (Kate Spade)		Mid (H&M)		Low (SHEIN)		**F (1, 558)**	**Eta squared**
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Perceived Product Quality	5.16	.18	5.07	.21	3.71	.08	5.83	.08	5.71	.08	4.05	.23	18.55	.001
Purchase intention	2.48	.19	2.42	.23	3.53	.09	3.80	.09	3.81	.09	3.99	.25	56.23	.009

4.1.3. Effect of Brand Prominence

Hypothesis 3 explained that there was an expected positive effect on perceived product quality (H3a) and purchase intention (H3b) if the brand prominence of the collaborator brand (modified & non-luxury) was low. A MANOVA was conducted on SPSS to compare the participant groups that were presented with the loud brand prominence (featuring the retail branding logo with high visibility) and the ones presented with the quiet brand prominence (featuring only a small, low visibility retail logo). It was concluded that there was no significant difference in means of perceived product quality or purchase intention due to brand prominence, $F(2, 555) = 1.01$, $p = .344$, ns, *Pillai's Trace* = .004, *Partial Eta square* = .004 (Table 6). Therefore, both ***hypotheses 3a and 3b were rejected*** as brand prominence does not explain the variance of purchase intention or perceived quality at a statistically significant level.

Table 6. Means, Standard Deviations and Multivariate Analyses of Variance (MANOVA) for brand prominence on perceived product quality and purchase intention (*N*= 564).

	Loud brand prominence			**Quiet brand prominence**			***F* (2,555)**
	M	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	1.07 (ns)
Perceived product quality	5.01	1.46	281	5.07	1.35	283	
Purchase Intention	3.63	1.17	281	3.54	1.29	283	

4.1.4. Effect of Luxury Segmentation

The final hypothesis (4) tested the moderation of luxury segmentation on the appeal of brand prominence as investigated by Han et al. (2010). To evaluate the hypothesis a PROCESS Model 1 and a MANOVA analyses were conducted and tested the interaction effect of luxury segments and brand prominence. PROCESS Model 1 was not statistically significant for perceived product quality, $R = .067$, $F(3, 560) = .84$, $p = .475$, and whereas it was significant for purchase intention, $R = .356$, $F(3, 560) = 27.02$, $p < .001$), the interaction effect did not reach significance. Moreover, in the MANOVA there were no significant differences between the means due to the interaction effect, $F(6, 556) = 1.28$, $p = .265$, ns, *Pillai's Trace* = .014 *Partial Eta square* = .007 (table 7), resulting in both ***H4a, H4b, H4c and H4d to be rejected***.

Table 7. Means, Standard Deviations and Multivariate Analyses of Variance (MANOVA) for interaction effect of luxury segment and brand prominence on perceived product quality and purchase intention (*N*= 564).

	Loud brand prominence								**Quiet brand prominence**								***F* (6, 556) N.S.**	***Eta Squared***
	Proletariat		**Poseurs**		**Parvenus**		**Patricians**		**Proletariat**		**Poseurs**		**Parvenus**		**Patricians**			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Perceived product quality	4.84	1.42	5.05	1.61	5.03	1.57	4.44	1.25	5.01	1.29	5.06	1.51	5.07	1.70	4.42	.91	0.16	.001
Purchase intention	3.38	1.20	4.06	.82	4.71	.85	2.66	1.36	3.25	1.33	4.28	.79	4.67	.75	2.06	1.05	2.13	.011

Nevertheless, the MANOVA analysis found a statistically significant direct effect of luxury segmentation on purchase intention and perceived product quality, $F(6, 1112) = 31.54$, $p < .001$, *Pillai's Trace*: .291, *Partial Eta square* = .145. When analysing the dependent variables separately, the only difference to reach statistical significance was purchase intention, $F(3, 556) = 73.11$, $p < .001$, *Partial Eta Squared* = .283 (table 8). The means of the different groups were statistically significant between each other (Appendix D). Patricians were the group that scored the lower means for purchase intention (*M*=2.34, *SD* = .14), followed by proletariats (*M*=3.31, *SD* = .07). On the other hand, Poseurs (*M*=4.18, *SD* = .09) and Parvenus (*M* = 4.70, *S.D.* =.12) were the most likely to purchase the collaboration, with Parvenus being the higher means group.

Table 8. Means, Standard Deviations and Univariate Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) for luxury segment on purchase intention (N= 564).

	Proletariat		Poseurs		Parvenus		Patricians			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F* (3, 560)	*Eta Squared*
Purchase intention	3.31	1.27	4.18	.81	4.69	.80	2.34	1.24	74.10	.033

4.2. Additional Analyses

4.2.1. Generational differences

As the collected data has a wide range of ages, an additional analysis was devised to understand if there are differences in perception of quality and purchase intention depending on the generational cohort the participants belong to. A new variable was computed using the division presented by the Pew Research Center (Dimock, 2019), dividing the participants in four groups: Gen Z (N = 52), Millennial (N = 358), Gen X (N = 117) and Baby Boomers (N = 37). After computing a MANOVA analysis of variance, a statistically significant difference of means was found for generation, F (6, 1080) = 12.42, p < .001, *Pillai's Trace* = 0.14, *Partial Eta squared* = .068 (Table 9). Moreover, a significant interaction effect between generation and brand fit was found, F (12, 1080) = 2.61, p = .002, *Pillai's Trace* = .06, *Partial Eta Squared* = .028. Nevertheless, a non-significant interaction effect between generation and brand prominence was found, F (2, 555) = 1.97, p = .160, *Pillai's Trace* = .007, *Partial Eta Squared* = .007.

When considering both dependent variables separately for the direct effect of generation, both proved significant (Perceived product quality, F (3, 540) = 4.31, p = .005, *Partial Eta Squared* = .023; Purchase intention, F (3, 540) = 25.64, p < .001, *Partial Eta Squared* = .125). Pairwise comparisons showcased that only millennials, when compared to Gen X and Baby Boomers, had significant differences between the means for perceived product quality. On the other hand, multiple significant differences between the groups were found for purchase intention depending on the Generation. Generation Z and Baby Boomers were the most negative when assessing purchase intention compared to Gen X and Millennials. A complete overview of the pairwise comparisons can be found in Appendix E. Finally, for the interaction effect, the separate assessment of the dependent variables showcased that only product quality perception had a significant difference in means, *F* (6, 540) = 3.46, *p* = .002, *Partial Eta Squared* = .037, meaning that the variance of Generation and brand fit together only represented a 3.7% of the total variation of product quality perception.

Table 9. Means, Standard Deviations and Multivariate Analyses of Variance (MANOVA) for direct effect of Generation on perceived product quality and purchase intention (*N*= 564).

	Gen Z		Millennial		Gen X		Baby Boomer			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F* (3, 540)	*Eta Squared*
Perceived product Quality	4.98	.16	5.14	.06	4.84	.10	4.61	.18	4.31	.001
Purchase Intention	2.64	.17	3.87	.06	3.45	.11	2.70	.19	25.64	.001

4.2.2. Gender differences

Within the sample, there were 287 males and 272 females. All brands except Kate Spade cater to males, yet they are most often frequented and shopped by women (Sondhi & Singhvi, 2006). Therefore, a difference in the perception of quality and purchase intention can appear between more knowledgeable shoppers (women) than less knowledgeable ones (men). A MANOVA analysis of variance allowed to check for the direct effects of gender and the interaction effects of gender on both independent variables. The results showcased that there was a significant direct effect of gender, F (2, 546) = 12.56, $p < .001$, *Pillai's Trace* = .04, *Partial Eta Square* = .043. Moreover, an interaction effect between gender and brand fit was statistically significant, F (4, 1094) = 3.59, $p = .006$, *Pillai's Trac*e = .03, *Partial Eta Square* = .013, and the interaction effect between gender and brand prominence was non-significant, F (2, 554) = .99, $p = .371$, *Pillai's Trac*e = .004, *Partial Eta Square* = .004. When analysing the dependent variables separately, only purchase intention was significant for the direct effect, F (1, 547) = 24.38, $p < .001$, *Partial Eta Squared* = .043, and only purchase intention was significant for the interaction effect of brand fit and gender, F (2, 547) = 5.74, $p = .003$, *Partial Eta Squared* = .021.

The pairwise comparisons showcased women (*M* = 3.36, *SD* = .07) are less likely to purchase the collaborations compared to men (*M* = 3.87, *SD* = .07). Nevertheless, gender only accounts for 4.3% of the variance of purchase intention. When considering brand fit and gender together, there was a striking difference for the means of purchase intention for the brand collaboration of Kate Spade, while men were mostly positive about purchasing (*M*= 4.07, S.D. = .13), women were less likely to purchase (M = 3.11, S.D. = .12). As with prior results, this could also be mediated by price sensitivity.

4.2.3. Gucci Halo Effects

Whereas it was not hypothesised in this thesis, Gucci's positive brand reputation could act as a bias for respondents creating a halo error in the assessing of the retail brands reputation. The halo effect is explained as the connection that an individual makes between independent characteristics or dimensions when these are presented together (Leuthesser et al., 1995). In consumer research, these effects are explained as the tendency of a dominant brand association to influence other beliefs about a brand (Vance et al., 2016). Thus, as the associations with Gucci's reputation were mostly favourable, these could have influenced the association with the retail brands to be also favoured by the respondents. As it was found that retail brand reputation had a direct effect on the dependent variables (F (2, 557) = 30.02, p <.001, Pillai's Trace = .10, Partial eta squared = .097), a PROCESS Model 1 was used to test if Gucci's brand reputation was moderating the relation between retail brand reputation and both dependent variables. Thus, product quality perception was regressed onto retail brand reputation, Gucci brand reputation, and their interaction (Table 10). This revealed a significant positive main effect for retail brand reputation, $b = .65$, 95%CI[.58, .72], $t(560) = 17.19$, $p < .001$, a positive main effect for Gucci brand reputation, $b = .16$, 95%CI[.06, .26], $t(560) = 3.13$, $p = .002$. Moreover, there was a significant interaction, $b = .20$, 95%CI[.13, .27], $t(560) = 5.68$, $p < .001$.

A second PROCESS Model 1 was used to test the second dependent variable (Table 11). This revealed a significant positive main effect for retail brand reputation, $b = .17$, 95%CI[.10, .24], $t(560) = 4.74$, $p < .001$, a positive main effect for Gucci brand reputation, $b = .62$, 95%CI[.52, .71], $t(560) = 12.85$, $p < .001$. However, the interaction effect was non-significant, $b = .02$, 95%CI[-.04, .08], $t(560) = .68$, $p = .497$. Therefore, the halo effect can only be seen partially, as the moderation effect is significant for perceived product quality but not for purchase intention.

Table 10. Regression analysis for moderation of relationship between retail brand reputation and perceived product quality by Gucci brand reputation (*N*=564)

	b	**95%CI**	***SE B***	***t***	***p***
Constant	4.94**	[4.85, 5.03]	.05	104.66	.000
Retail Brand Reputation	.65**	[.58, .72]	.04	17.19	.000
Gucci Brand Reputation	.16*	[.06, .26]	.05	3.13	.002
INT.	.20**	[.13, .27]	.04	5.68	.000
Model Summary	$R2 = .45$, $F(3, 560) = 155.43$, $p < .001$				
** $p < .001$	* $p < .01$				

Table 11. Regression analysis for moderation of relationship between retail brand reputation and purchase intention by Gucci brand reputation (*N*=564)

	b	95%CI	*SE B*	*t*	*p*
Constant	3.57**	[3.49, 3.66]	.05	79.76	.000
Retail Brand Reputation	.17**	[.10, .24]	.04	4.74	.000
Gucci Brand Reputation	.62**	[.52, .71]	.05	12.85	.000
INT.	.02	[-.04, .08]	.03	.68	.497
Model Summary		$R2 = .36$, $F(3, 560) = 105.97$, $p < .001$			
** $p < .001$					

4.3. Overview of hypotheses

H1a	*A high collaboration brand fit between a Luxury and Fast-fashion brand will lead to positive product quality perception in comparison with a mid and a low collaboration brand fit.*	Partially supported
H1b	*A high collaboration brand fit between a Luxury and Fast-fashion brand will lead to positive purchase intention in comparison with a mid and a low collaboration brand fit.*	Not supported
H1c	*A low collaboration brand fit between a Luxury and a fast-fashion brand will lead to negative product quality perception in comparison with a mid and a high collaboration brand fit.*	Supported
H1d	*A low collaboration brand fit between a Luxury and a fast-fashion brand will lead to negative purchase intention in comparison with a mid and a high collaboration brand fit.*	Not supported
H2a	*Prior brand reputation of both luxury and fast-fashion brands, will moderate the collaboration brand fit. If (one of the) brands has a prior negative brand reputation, it will negatively affect product quality.*	Not supported
H2b	*Prior brand reputation of both luxury and fast-fashion brands, will moderate the collaboration brand fit. If (one of the) brands*	Not supported

	has a prior negative brand reputation, it will negatively affect purchase intention.	
H3a	*Quiet brand prominence of the retail brand in collaboration with a luxury brand will have a positive effect on product quality in comparison to loud brand prominence collaborations.*	Not supported
H3b	*Quiet brand prominence of the retail brand in collaboration with a luxury brand will have a positive effect on purchase intention, in comparison to loud brand prominence collaborations.*	Not supported
H4a	*Luxury consumer segment will moderate the effects of brand prominence. Loud brand prominence in collaborations between Luxury and Fast-fashion brands will lead to negative product quality for patricians and proletariat segments.*	Not supported
H4b	*Luxury consumer segment will moderate the effects of brand prominence. Loud brand prominence in collaborations between Luxury and Fast-fashion brands will lead to negative purchase intention for patricians and proletariat segments.*	Not supported
H4c	*Luxury consumer segment will moderate the effects of brand prominence. Loud brand prominence in collaborations between Luxury and Fast-fashion brands will lead to positive product quality for parvenus and poseurs segments.*	Not supported
H4d	*Luxury consumer segment will moderate the effects of brand prominence. Loud brand prominence in collaborations between Luxury and Fast-fashion brands will lead to positive purchase intention for parvenus and poseurs segments.*	Not supported

5. Discussion

This study aimed to deepen the understanding of joint-venture co-branding by measuring the perception of purchase intention and product quality of fictitious collaborations between Gucci and retail brands. Additionally, it examined the level of influence of luxury consumer segmentation and prior brand reputation on collaborations between brands.

5.1. Brand fit and (forward) spillover effects

Current literature on co-branding ventures highlights the importance of secondary associations and how they add new information and meanings about the brands involved (Dickinson & Heath, 2006; Keller, 2020; Newmeyer et al., 2018; Oeppen & Jamal, 2014). However, whereas this marketing structure is heavily utilised by the luxury and fashion industry, studies on collaboration between luxury or high-end brands, with lower-end or fast-fashion brands have given mixed results (Åsberg & Uggla, 2019; Mrad et al., 2019; Newmeyer et al., 2019). Some researchers found that a low brand fit would damage the image and reputation of the modifier brand (luxury brands), and that compatibility may lead to favourable consumer perceptions (Monga & Lau-Gesk, 2007; Oeppen & Jamal, 2014), while other stream of research proved that low fit collaborations, even when considered incongruent, shield good results (Mrad et al.. 2019).

Taking into account passive and abstract consumer' outcomes, such as the perception of quality, something that does not require a specific action from the consumer, this thesis is consistent with the research on congruent brand fit as an enabler of favourable customer perceptions. The hypotheses that concerned product quality perception were partially supported and supported, and showcased a difference between the low fit, and high and mid fit collaborations. However, the inclusion of a mid-fit collaboration in this study was in line with research by Mrad et al. (2019) conclusions on the collaborations between luxury firms and H&M. In this study, H&M was used as the mid-fit stimuli, and there were no significant differences between high fit (Kate Spade) and mid-fit (H&M). This might imply that companies that are successful in prior collaborations are not regarded as low-fit even if they are incongruent brands. Nevertheless, this did not prove consistent when assessing more concrete consumer-based outcomes such as purchase intention. The study did not see a difference between consumer responses based on fit when evaluating their own purchase intention. In fact, whereas non-significant statistical results were found, participants were more willing to purchase the mid and low fit collaborations than the high-fit collaboration. However, the pricing of the items was different, and the high-fit collaboration was significantly more expensive than the mid and low fit. Thus, pricing could have acted as a non-measured control variable.

When considering the prior reputation of the collaborating brands separately, this study contradicts previous findings on the importance of high congruence of brands in collaborations (Åsberg & Uggla, 2019; Mrad et al., 2019; Newmeyer et al., 2019), as the negative prior perception of the retail brands did not moderate the participants' purchase intention or perceived product quality depending on the brand-fit of the collaboration. Nonetheless, the prior reputation of both the modified and modifier brands had a direct impact on the participants' responses, and as showcased by the additional analyses, a halo effect of the perception of the luxury brand might have influenced the associations with the retail brand when assessing the perceived quality of the items. These results contradict previous literature on forward spillover effects, as they expected synergic effects and brand equity brought by the collaboration to the participating brands (Rao et al., 1999; Rodrigues & Biswas, 2004; Simonin & Ruth, 1998; Washburn et al., 2000). This study showcases that the prior brand perception of participants was not easily changed with the collaboration and that their prior judgements were a predictor of the collaboration’s results in a spillover manner, but not prompting a change in perception of the brands.

5.2. Brand prominence and luxury segmenting

Prior literature on brand prominence highlights the role of fashion brands' branding as a marker of self-image and identity for consumers (Cheah et al., 2015; Han et al., 2010), and explain why fast-fashion products often do not include a recognisable logotype, as people do not want themselves to be associated with such brands (Bockholdt et al., 2020). Contrary to this, the present research did not show significant difference in respondents' reactions to the quiet or loud brand prominence scenarios where the fast-fashion logo was visible or not. Moreover, this research borrowed the segmentation of luxury consumers identified by Han et al. (2010), in order to uncover differences between the different types of consumers based on their income and need for status (Nueno & Quelch, 1998; Wilcox et al., 2009). Whereas the authors saw differences in the preference of loud and quiet prominence based on the four groups: *Patricians, Parvenus, Poseurs* and *Proletarians* (Han et al., 2010), this paper did not find a statistically significant difference between the groups and their preferred brand prominence.

However, the consumer segmentation of luxury was significant in this study as a predictor of purchase intention and perceived product quality. Therefore, this study complements the research on segmentation by Han et al. (2020) partially as it identified differences between the segments and their willingness to purchase and their assessment of product quality. Patricians, the segment that is most affluent and with low need for status, and proletarians, the segment with less income and low need for status were less likely to purchase the items. This can be explained by the low interest of proletarians on luxury fashion, and the patricians' affluence as they are a segment that does not need to purchase retail fashion and they can access luxury items at their regular prices. The disinterest in the collaborations is aligned with prior literature on the symbolic value of garments and self-concept (Solomon, 2012; White & Dahl, 2007), as it showcases the differences between the consumers when assessing the collaboration through the lens of their own segment.

5.3. Generational and gender differences

As described by prior literature, the current fashion landscape has changed significantly and allowed new middle-market consumers to have purchase power on items that were previously reserved for elites (Oeppen & Jamal, 2014; Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). Nevertheless, literature did not sufficiently address the differences between older consumers that might be aligned with an elitist type of segmentation, and a younger audience that is nowadays more present and strives for social change and equality (Ko et al., 2016; Mrad et al., 2019; Oeppen & Jamal, 2014). This paper is aligned with prior findings as it showcases a generational difference between participants and their perceptions of the collaborations. Older consumers, part of the Baby Boomer generation, were significantly more negative while assessing the collaborations than younger generations like Gen X and Millennials. However, both Baby Boomers and Gen Z, the youngest Generation, were the least likely to purchase the collaborations. While for Baby Boomers that might have to do with their generational gap and prior associations with luxury, for younger audiences this issue can be rooted in the importance of sustainability in brands, as the brands showcased in collaborations are part of fast-fashion brands (Ko et al., 2016; Mrad et al., 2019; Oeppen & Jamal, 2014). Finally, this research showcased women are often more critical than men when assessing collaborations, which has an impact in purchase intention and product quality perception.

5.4. Managerial Implications

This paper offers significant findings for managers of brands considering a co-branding venture as part of their marketing strategy. First, it showcased the importance of building a strong brand prior to the collaboration, as the spillover of the original brands affect the way people perceive collaborations, regardless of the brand fit between brands. Therefore, a detailed assessment of the collaboration partner is of utter importance, as it can have an impact in the collaboration purchase intention of consumers, and this includes moving forward from a dichotomous judgement of low vs. high fit, or luxury vs. retail, as brands that are generally considered low fit or fast-fashion, such as H&M were not regarded as negatively as presented in prior research (Han et al., 2010). Thereby, a holistic assessment of both modified and modifier brands on pillars such as prior brand image, customer segment targets, and prior collaborations would allow for a better interpretation and prediction of the support and success of the collaboration.

Considering brand prominence of the modified brand, this paper did not shield significant results. However, it showcased that segmentation (gender, generation and luxury consumer-type) is an important predictor of the success or failure of a collaboration. Women are more critical of collaborations than men, and these judgements impact the way they perceive quality and their willingness to purchase. Marketeers need to approach this barrier through different routes, as most of the collaborations are targeted towards women. Moreover, it is important to note that there are generational differences, and whereas Millennials and Gen X are more prone to assess collaborations positively, there might be different underlying issues making Gen Z less inclined. As discussed previously, this could have roots on the environmental and social influences of the participating brands. Therefore, a thorough research on the underlying motivations and barriers of the target audience would prove useful for managers while assessing which brands to collaborate with.

5.5. Limitations & future research directions

There are limitations to this study that could be avenues of further research. First, the participant recruitment of this study was done through MTurk. This platform is often used by low-income individuals and the results might be more homogeneous and overly positive as the workers often complete surveys as fast as possible as this is their source of income. Moreover, participants were mainly from the United States and India, but the sample included several nationalities. For such a detailed segmentation, data from one country would be beneficial as it would allow more significant differences, as the comparison between incomes and need for status would be more specific, and there would not be so many exogenous factors such as cultural differences when contemplating the results. Therefore, future research should focus on national data or cross-national results by including less varied nationalities. Secondly, the differences in prices of the collaborations acted as a non-measured control variable. Whereas the decision was rooted in preserving the realism of the different collaborations by using pricing that the original brands use, it might have impacted participants' responses. Future research should include pricing as a controlled variable if they replicate prices of real offerings or create fictitious brands and establish the same pricing throughout all different scenarios.

Lastly, the inclusion of only one luxury brand in this study may have hindered the results. Gucci, generally speaking, is a well-known and highly regarded brand with little to no controversies, which was showcased by participants as most of them (N=514) assessed the prior reputation of the company positively. Including a company with more reputational concerns as another luxury brand might have showcased significant differences regarding the influence of brand fit and the moderation of prior reputation. Additionally, it would have allowed to hypothesise about halo bias, which is an interesting area to research further when considering spillover effects from brands in co-branding ventures.

6. Conclusions

The present study aimed to answer the research question "*How do co-branded products of both luxury and retail fashion retailers impact consumers' perception of product* *quality and purchase intention?"*. To do so, a 3x2 between-subjects online experiment was created to test the influence of brand fit (High, mid and low) and brand prominence (Loud and Quiet) on participants' perception of quality and willingness to buy a collaboration between a luxury brand (Gucci) and three retail-oriented brands (Kate Spade, H&M and Shein). Moreover, it was argued that the prior brands reputations would moderate the results of brand fit through spillover and forward spillover effects, and that depending on the luxury consumer segmentation of the participants, they would prefer loud or quiet brand prominence over the other. Whereas the results showed non-significant differences for differences in brand prominence, or segmentation moderating brand prominence, the different segments had a significant effect on both purchase intention and perceived product quality. Furthermore, brand fit has a significant effect when considering perceived quality, with high and mid fit collaborations being perceived more positively than the low fit collaboration. However, these differences were non-significant when assessing purchase intention. Finally, prior brand fit of the retail company had a direct effect on the perception of quality and the willingness to purchase, but it did not moderate the effect of brand fit, showcasing that the prior reputational concerns of participants were also applied to the collaborations even when one of the brands was positively regarded.

Valuable contributions blossomed from this study considering how to assess brands prior to collaboration, and how targeting is essential for a successful collaboration, as it requires an integral view of generational and luxury-consumer segmentation influences to understand the possible barriers of a collaboration prior to its launch. With said results and discussion, practitioners can take into consideration different aspects that impact co-branding ventures, moving from a dichotomous assessment of high vs. low fit, to a more holistic perspective that is more detailed and comprehensive.

To conclude, this research answers the research question as follows: Co-branded products impact consumer perceptions of quality and purchase intention depending on brand fit, prior brand reputation, generational and segmentation characteristics of consumers, while brand prominence does not influence perceptions greatly.

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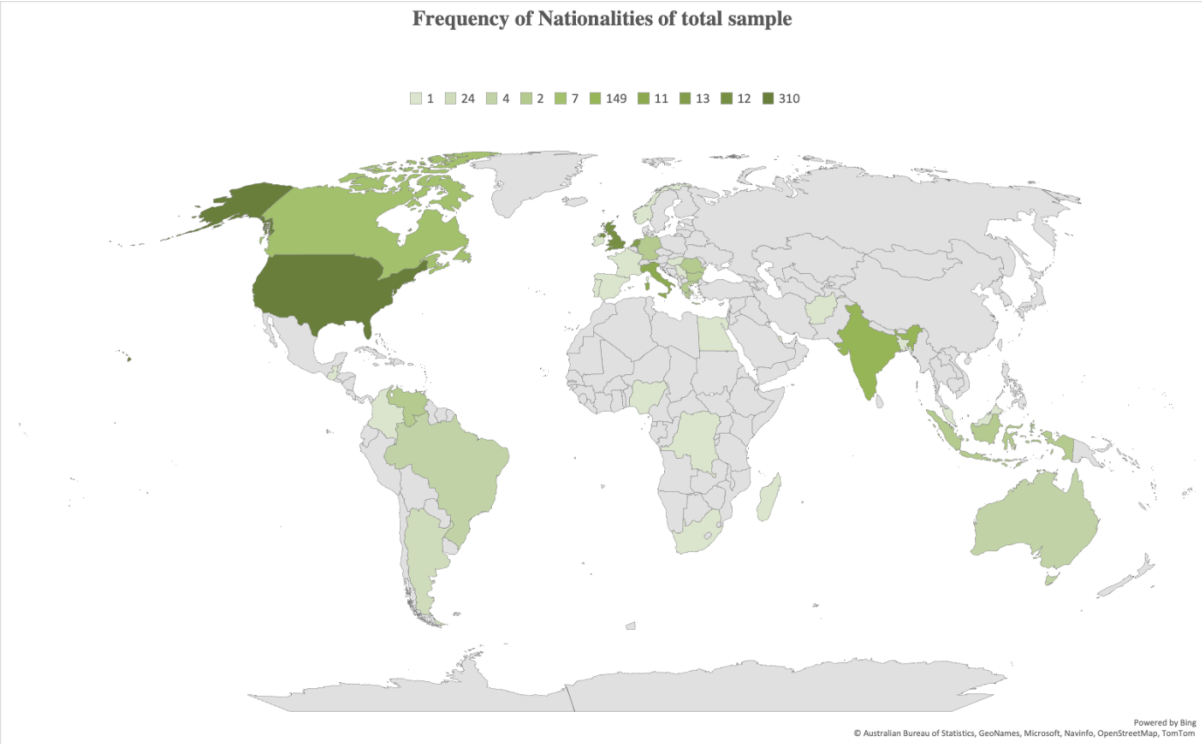
8. Appendices

Appendix A. *Nationalities represented in the sample (N=564).*

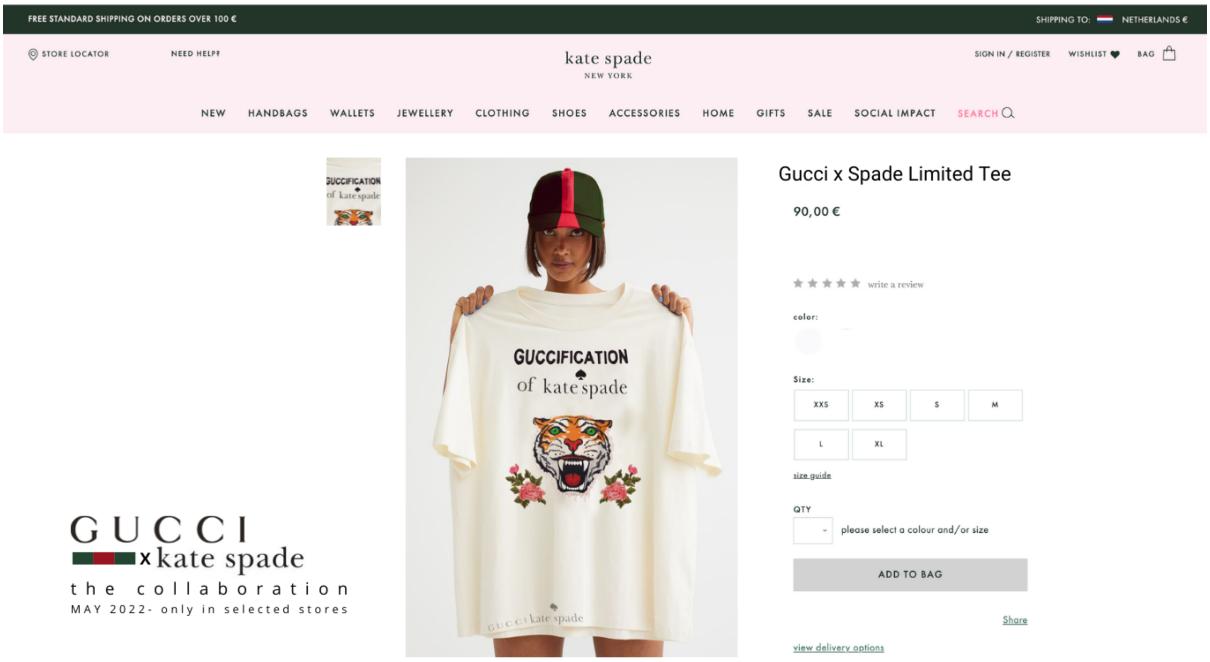


	Frequency	*Percent*
Afghanistan	*1*	*0,2*
Argentina	*24*	*4,3*
Australia	*4*	*0,7*
Bangladesh	*1*	*0,2*
Brazil	*4*	*0,7*
Bulgaria	*2*	*0,4*
Canada	*7*	*1,2*
Colombia	*1*	*0,2*
Congo	*1*	*0,2*
Egypt	*1*	*0,2*
France	*1*	*0,2*
Germany	*2*	*0,4*
Greece	*2*	*0,4*
Guatemala	*1*	*0,2*
Hungary	*1*	*0,2*
India	*149*	*26,4*
Indonesia	*2*	*0,4*
Ireland {Republic}	*1*	*0,2*
Italy	*11*	*2,0*
Madagascar	*1*	*0,2*

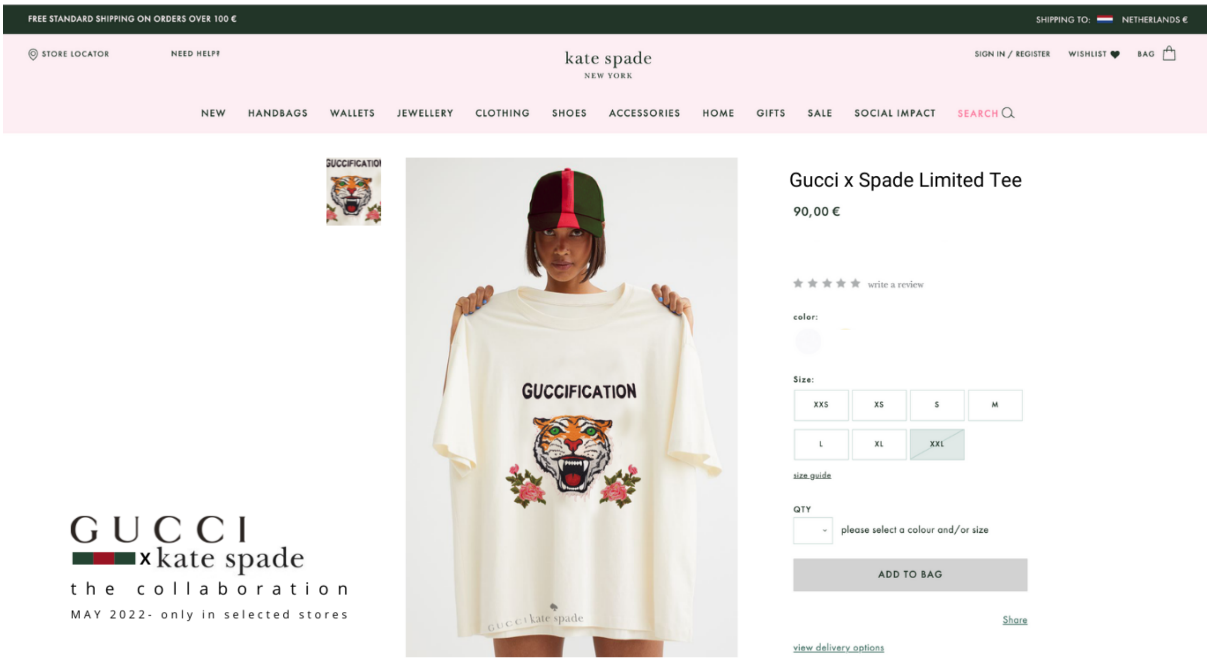
Malaysia	*1*	*0,2*
Netherlands	*13*	*2,3*
Nigeria	*1*	*0,2*
Norway	*1*	*0,2*
Portugal	*1*	*0,2*
Qatar	*1*	*0,2*
Romania	*2*	*0,4*
Serbia	*1*	*0,2*
South Africa	*1*	*0,2*
Spain	*1*	*0,2*
United Kingdom	*12*	*2,1*
United States	*310*	*55,0*
Venezuela	*2*	*0,4*
Total	*564*	*100,0*

Appendix B. *Stimuli – Experimental conditions*

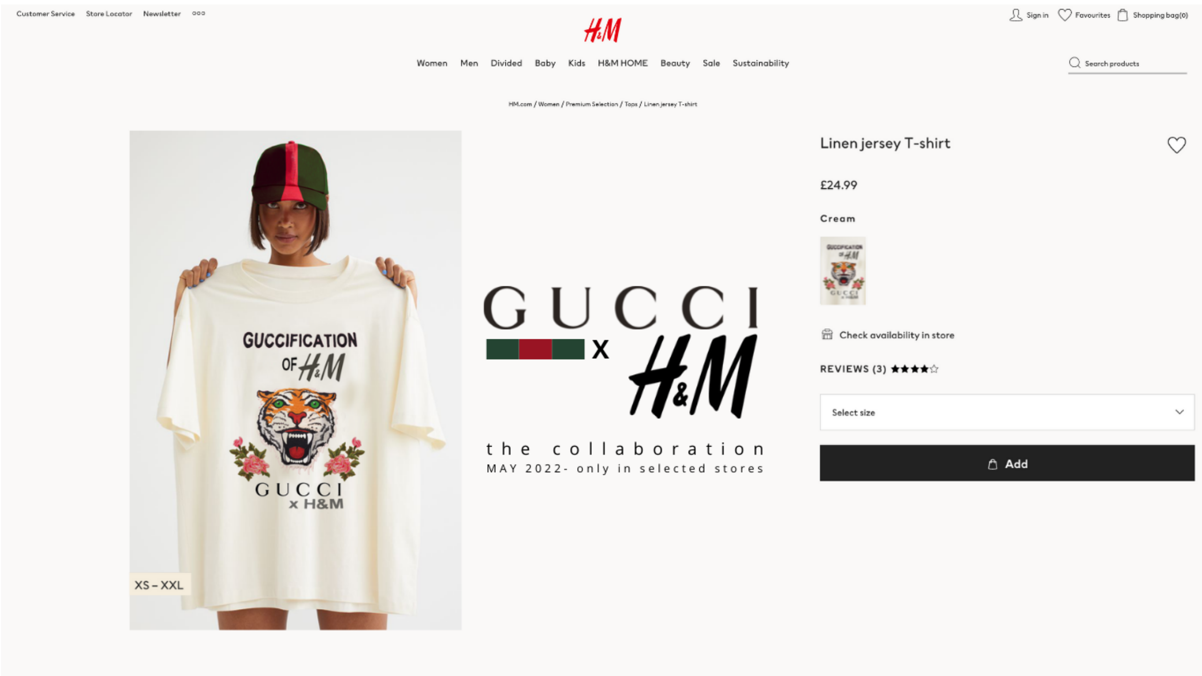
High brand fit x Loud brand prominence



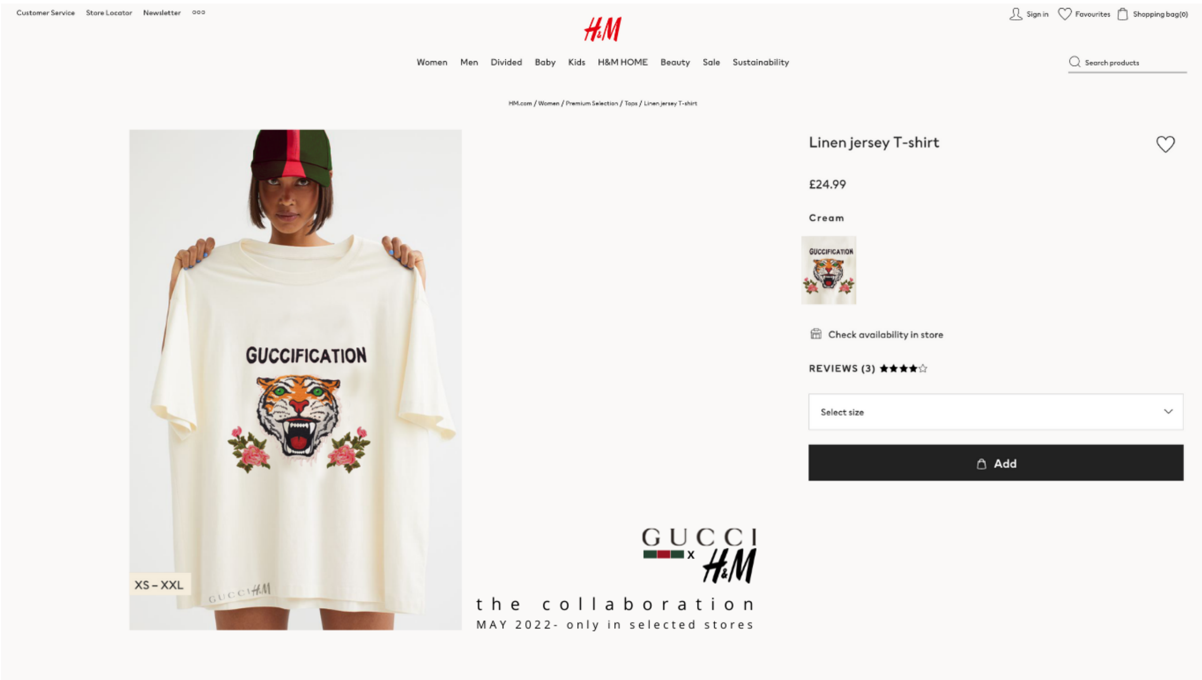
High brand fit x Quiet brand prominence



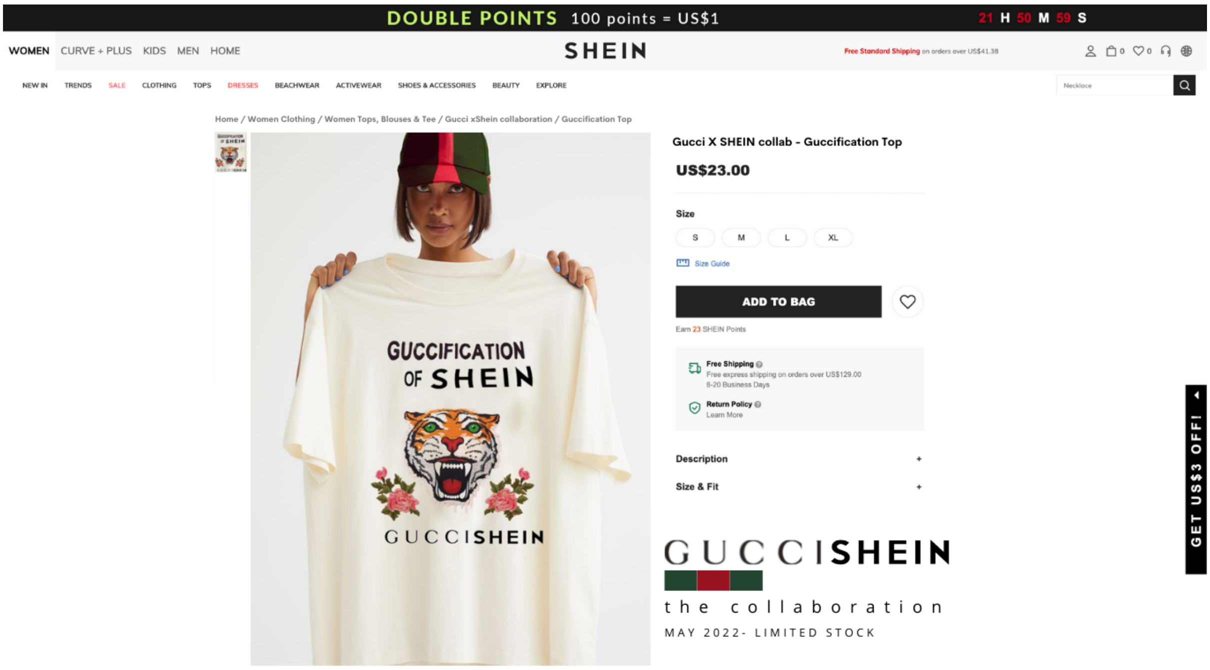
Mid brand fit x Loud brand prominence



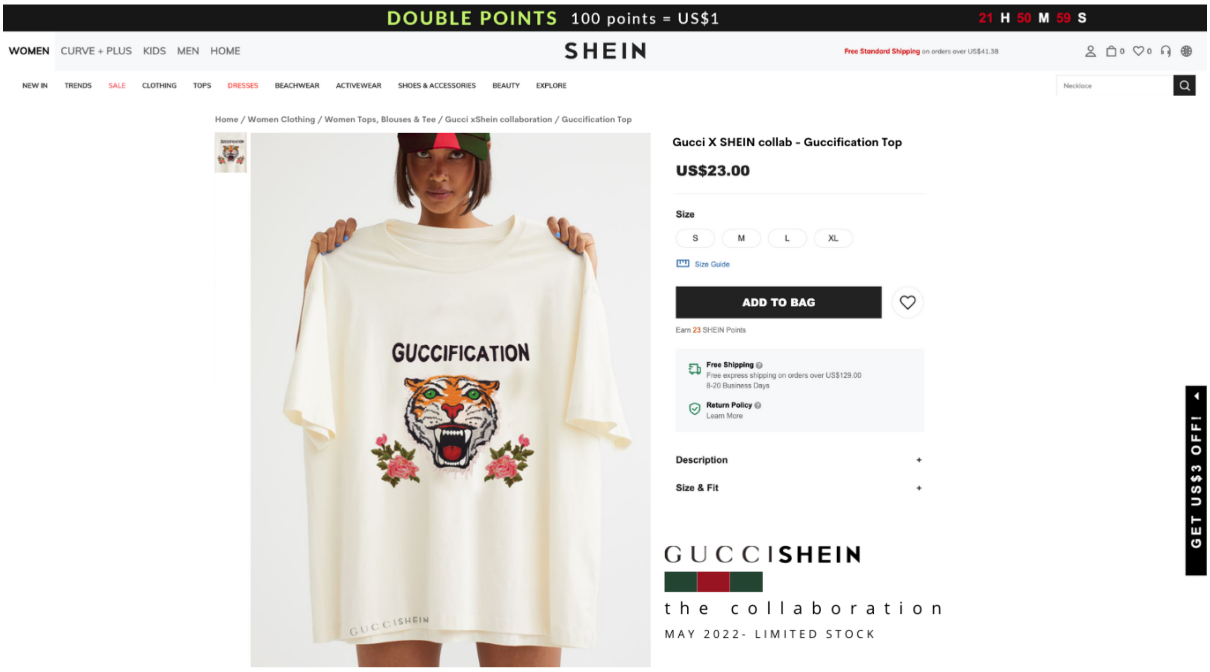
Mid brand fit x Quiet brand prominence



Low brand fit x Loud brand prominence



Low brand fit x Quiet brand prominence



Appendix C. *Experimental Survey design*

https://uva.fra1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1GH1JBRvIv30CA6

<table>
<tr><td>BLOCK 1</td><td>Introduction</td><td>Dear participant,
Thank you for your interest in participating in this research. This questionnaire is conducted as a part of a Business Administration Master Thesis research at the University of Amsterdam. The survey aims to gain a deeper understanding of branding strategies for fashion companies. The questionnaire will only take 5 minutes. You can participate if you are 18 years or older.

Please finish the survey, otherwise, the data will be declared invalid. All personal information will be kept confidential and anonymous. You are free to stop participating at any point. By checking the box below, you acknowledge that you are aware of your rights and that you accept to participate in this study.
If you have any questions or would like to receive further information, please do not hesitate to contact me via cecilia.arroyo@student.uva.nl.

Thank you for helping me graduate!

Cecilia Arroyo
MSc Business Administration: Digital Marketing Track
University of Amsterdam

I agree to participate in this research.

Yes
No</td></tr>
<tr><td>BLOCK 2</td><td>Parent brand companies</td><td>“Do you know this brand?: GUCCI
Yes
No</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>"Gucci is an Italian high-end luxury fashion house based in Florence, Italy. Its product lines include handbags, ready-to-wear, footwear, and accessories, makeup, fragrances, and home decoration. Gucci was founded in 1921 by Guccio Gucci in Florence, Tuscany." (Wikipedia, 2022).

Read and Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements:
Gucci is a brand I have a good feeling about
Gucci is a brand that I trust
Gucci is a brand that I admire and respect
Gucci has a good overall reputation
(Likert 7 point scale)</td></tr>
<tr><td>BLOCK 3</td><td>Parent brand companies</td><td>“Do you know this brand?: H&M
Yes
No
“H & M Hennes & Mauritz AB is a Swedish multinational clothing company headquartered in Stockholm. Its focus is fast-fashion clothing for men, women, teenagers, and children” (Wikipedia, 2022)

Read and Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements:
H&M is a brand I have a good feeling about
H&M is a brand that I trust</td><td>“Do you know this brand?: SHEIN
Yes
No
"Shein is a Chinese online fast-fashion retailer. It was founded in 2008 by Chris Xu in Nanjing, China. The company is known for its affordably priced apparel" (Wikipedia, 2022).

Read and Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements:
SHEIN is a brand I have a good feeling about
SHEIN is a brand that I trust</td><td>“Do you know this brand?: Kate Spade
Yes
No
"Kate Spade New York is an American luxury fashion design house founded in January 1993 by Kate and Andy Spade" (Wikipedia, 2022).

Read and Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements:
Kate Spade is a brand I have a good feeling about
Kate Spade is a brand that I trust
Kate Spade is a brand that I admire and respect</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>• H&M is a brand that I admire and respect
• H&M has a good overall reputation

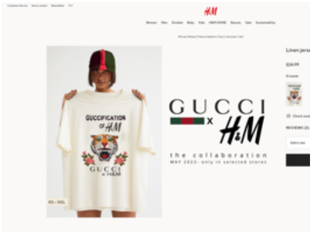
(Likert 7 point scale)</td><td>• SHEIN is a brand that I admire and respect
• SHEIN has a good overall reputation

(Likert 7 point scale)</td><td>• Kate Spade has a good overall reputation

(Likert 7 point scale)</td></tr>
<tr><td>**BLOCK 4**</td><td>EXPERIMENT CONDITIONS</td><td>Gucci has released a collaboration with the brand H&M.

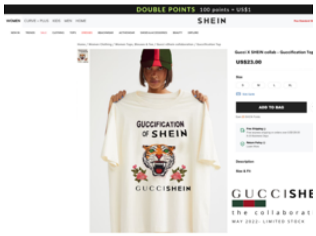
Please take a moment to look at the new product of the collaboration between GUCCI X H&M. It is featured in the website capture below.

You won't be able to see the image after clicking the "Next" button.

After a 20-second timer, you will find the NEXT button.
</td><td>Gucci has released a collaboration with the brand SHEIN.

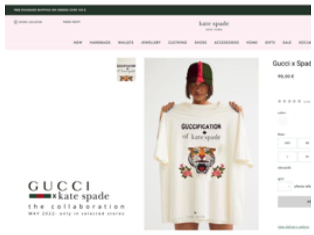
Please take a moment to look at the new product of the collaboration between GUCCI X SHEIN. It is featured in the website capture below.

You won't be able to see the image after clicking the "Next" button.

After a 20-second timer, you will find the NEXT button.
</td><td>Gucci has released a collaboration with the brand Kate Spade

Please take a moment to look at the new product of the collaboration between GUCCI X Kate Spade. It is featured in the website capture below.

You won't be able to see the image after clicking the "Next" button.

After a 20-second timer, you will find the NEXT button.
</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Gucci has released a collaboration with the brand H&M.

Please take a moment to look at the new product of the collaboration between GUCCI X H&M. It is featured in the website capture below.

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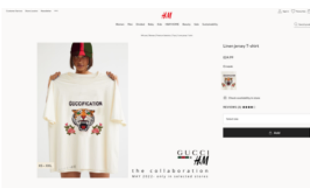
</td><td>Gucci has released a collaboration with the brand SHEIN.

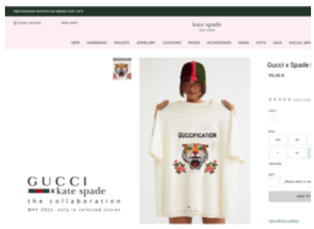
Please take a moment to look at the new product of the collaboration between GUCCI X SHEIN. It is featured in the website capture below.

You won't be able to see the image after clicking the "Next" button.

After a 20-second timer, you will find the NEXT button.
</td><td>Gucci has released a collaboration with the brand Kate Spade

Please take a moment to look at the new product of the collaboration between GUCCI X Kate Spade. It is featured in the website capture below.

You won't be able to see the image after clicking the "Next" button.

After a 20-second timer, you will find the NEXT button.
</td></tr>
<tr><td>**BLOCK 4**</td><td>Attention check</td><td colspan="3">Which product is featured in the collaboration?
• A purse
• **A T-Shirt / Top**</td></tr>
</table>

		• Shoes
BLOCK 5	Perceived product quality	Statements: • *The likelihood that the product would be reliable is:* • *The workmanship of the product would be:* • *This products' quality should be:* • *The likelihood that this product is trustworthy is:* • *This product would seem to be durable:*
BLOCK 6	Purchase intention	• how appealing the brand alliance product is (very unappealing/very appealing), • how likely are you to try the brand alliance product (very unlikely/very likely) • and how likely are you to buy the brand alliance product (very unlikely/very likely).
BLOCK 7	Need for status	Need for status: • I would buy a product just because it has status. • I am interested in new products with status. • I would pay more for a product if it had status. • I care for products that show my status to others Do you own luxury fashion goods? (e.g. Chanel purse, Hermes scarf, Gucci belt, etc.) - Excluding beauty (Perfumes and Make-up). • Yes • No
BLOCK 8	Demographics	• Gender • Age • Education • Nationality • Income

Appendix D. *Pairwise comparison of means for Purchase intention of Luxury Segmentation MANOVA analysis* (N = 564).

		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Proletariat	Poseur	-.866*	0,111	0,000
	Patrician	.967*	0,155	0,000
	Parvenus	-1.382*	0,138	0,000
Poseur	Proletariat	.866*	0,111	0,000
	Patrician	1.832*	0,166	0,000
	Parvenus	-.516*	0,150	0,004
Patrician	Proletariat	-.967*	0,155	0,000

	Poseur	-1.832*	0,166	0,000
	Parvenus	-2.348*	0,185	0,000
Parvenus	Proletariat	1.382*	0,138	0,000
	Poseur	.516*	0,150	0,004
	Patrician	2.348*	0,185	0,000

Based on estimated marginal means

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Appendix E. *Pairwise comparison of means for Perceived product quality and Purchase intention of Generations MANOVA analysis* (N = 564).

Dependent Variable			Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.[b]
Perception Product Quality	Gen Z	Millennials	-0,162	0,166	0,330
		Gen X	0,135	0,186	0,468
		Baby Boomers	0,372	0,238	0,118
	Millennials	Gen Z	0,162	0,166	0,330
		Gen X	**.297***	**0,116**	**0,011**
		Baby Boomers	**.533***	**0,188**	**0,005**
	Gen X	Gen Z	-0,135	0,186	0,468
		Millennials	**-.297***	**0,116**	**0,011**

		Baby Boomers	0,237	0,206	0,251
	Baby Boomers	Gen Z	-0,372	0,238	0,118
		Millennials	**-.533***	**0,188**	**0,005**
		Gen X	-0,237	0,206	0,251
Purchase Intention	Gen Z	Millennials	**-1.230***	**0,178**	**0,000**
		Gen X	**-.802***	**0,200**	**0,000**
		Baby Boomers	-0,060	0,255	0,815
	Millennials	Gen Z	**1.230***	**0,178**	**0,000**
		Gen X	**.428***	**0,124**	**0,001**
		Baby Boomers	**1.171***	**0,202**	**0,000**
	Gen X	Gen Z	**.802***	**0,200**	**0,000**
		Millennials	**-.428***	**0,124**	**0,001**
		Baby Boomers	**.742***	**0,221**	**0,001**
	Baby Boomers	Gen Z	0,060	0,255	0,815
		Millennials	**-1.171***	**0,202**	**0,000**
		Gen X	**-.742***	**0,221**	**0,001**

Based on estimated marginal means

*. The mean difference is significant at the .01 level.