Consumer Response to Brand Gender Bending: An Integrated Review and Future Research Agenda

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Abstract
In the postmodern era many marketers have disturbed the strict gender discipline traditionally associated with gendered brands. Marketers are redoing their gender work by blurring the stark distinction between masculine and feminine brands. New consumption ideologies are developing that transcend the gendered meanings of brands and encourage men and women to infiltrate brands traditionally associated with the opposite gender. “Unisex” is emerging as the by word. This review convenes the phenomenological consumer responses to brand gender bending. It specifically highlights the contrast between the ways in which men and women react to dilution/revision of the gender identity meanings of their brands. The article also underscores the ethnographic, sociological, psychological and anthropological reasons that justify these reactions. Based on the review and scientific understanding of the long-standing research, the article proposes a conceptual framework that exhibits the determinants that govern consumer responses to brand gender bending. Future researchers may empirically examine the validity of the framework. The practical implications of the article focus on providing suggestions to marketers engaged in the design of cross gender brand extension strategies. It is believed that this article adds a fresh multidisciplinary perspective to the exiting literature on brand gender bending.

Key Words
Gender, gendered brand, gender bending, brand extension, masculine, feminine, unisex

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