

Does self-brand personality fit affect brand attitudes towards cars and attitudes towards an electric car extension?

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Abstract

In representative Belgian samples, the influence of self-brand personality fit on car brand evaluation, electric car line extension evaluation and parent brand feedback effects is investigated. Evaluations of desired self-brand personality fit appear to be more relevant for brand evaluations than the mere difference between a brand's personality and the personality of the consumer. For extensions and parent brand evaluations after extensions, self-brand personality fit also plays a significant role. Moreover, the relative importance of personality dimensions that drive extension judgment and parent brand feedback is different from those of brand evaluation in general. Regardless of the brand, desirable car personality characteristics drive extension and parent brand feedback evaluations.

1. Introduction and purpose of the study

Nowadays, forced by environmental and sustainability issues, major car brands, such as Nissan (Leaf) and Opel (Ampera) have developed fully electric car alternatives. When an established car brand launches an electric variant, it is extending its product line. The success of product line extensions depends largely on the perceived fit between the extension and its parent brand (Bottomley and Holden, 2001; Czellar, 2003; Martínez and Pina, 2003; Martínez and de Chernatony, 2004; Lau and Phau, 2007; Jeong and Jung, 2013; Dens and De Pelsmacker, 2010).

Not only the fit between a brand and its extension, but also the symbolic fit between the brand or the extension and the individual consumer may play a role in brand evaluations. Consumers use or value brands for self-expression (Swaminathan, et al., 2007). They appreciate or use brands that are congruent with themselves to show their actual or desired self (Escalas and Bettman, 2003; Kirmani, 2009). A (car) brand is a carrier of this symbolic meaning (e.g. Aaker, 2004). Symbolic dimensions of car brands are used by consumers to define and signal their actual or desired identity (Fournier, 1998). Brand personality is an important component of this symbolic meaning, and as such is a major component of brand identity and brand image (Midgley, 1983; Diamantopoulos et al., 2005). Brand personality is defined as the set of human personality traits that are associated with brands (Aaker, 1997) and that differentiate brands in the mind of people, even in case there are few differences in attributes and benefits between brands. Self-brand personality fit may thus be an important determinant of evaluative judgements of brands and their extensions. Consumers may take self-brand personality fit into account in different ways, depending on the product and the context (Aaker, 1999; Graeff, 1996). In their evaluative judgement of cars, some personality characteristics may be more salient than others, and this may also differ for different brands. In electric car extension evaluation, the salience of some personality characteristics may be different from those used to judge the brand in general. An electric extension may also alter the evaluation of the parent brand in terms of self-brand personality fit dimensions.

Brand personality has not been studied often as a factor in brand extension studies (Diamantopoulos et al., 2005; Lau and Phau, 2007), let alone in self-brand personality fit terms. The purpose of the present study is to investigate how self-brand personality fit affects car brand attitudes, to what extent this fit has an impact on the evaluation of an electric car extension for existing brands, and how this personality fit affects the attitudes towards existing car brands after electric extension (parent brand feedback effects). The influence of consumers' implicit theories about fixedness (entity theory) or malleability (incremental theory) in the acceptance of brand extensions is hereby taken into consideration (Yorkston et al., 2010) The study also informs brand managers and advertisers on how to position and communicate (environmentally-friendly) extensions of existing brands.

2. Literature Review and Research Questions

Product categories and brands can either be functional (e.g., lawnmowers) or symbolic (e.g., cars). A functional product possesses mainly product-related or concrete, functional associations (de Ruyter and Wetzels, 2000; Park et al., 1986). Products with a symbolic positioning usually entail non-product-related or abstract, image-based associations (Bhat and Reddy, 2001; de Ruyter and Wetzels, 2000). In this study we focus on the symbolic meaning that cars carry (Aaker, 2004). Brand personality is an important component of this symbolic

meaning and as such is a major component of brand identity and brand image (Midgley, 1983; Diamantopoulos et al., 2005). In the mind of people, brands, like individuals, can have personalities that are indeed similar in their characteristics (Aaker, 1997; Graeff, 1996). These personalities differentiate brands in the mind of people. Brand personality can build unique and (un)favorable associations in consumer memory (Diamantopoulos et al., 2005; Pandey, 2013). The work of Aaker (1997) inspired the majority of the research on brand personality to date (Aaker, 1997, 1999, Aaker et al., 2001; Kim et al., 2001). However this brand personality structure may not be universal (Caprara et al., 2001). One of the major criticisms on the Aaker scale is that it is a mixture of personality and other image dimensions. Geuens et al. (2009) developed a scale that consists of only personality dimensions and is a purer representation of the brand personality concept. Therefore, the present study uses the Geuens et al. (2009) brand personality dimensions.

This symbolic meaning, or more particularly, brand personality, is used by consumers in different ways. Often, brand evaluation and use is driven by the motivation to express the own self (Sirgy, 1982). Consumers use brands to define, signal and manage their identity towards themselves and others. People tend to use and appreciate brands they perceive as having a personality that is similar to their own. Self-brand congruency is the match between a consumer's self-concept and brand image. Consumers can see brands as part of their self-concept, and use them for communicating their identities to others and to themselves (Escalas and Bettman (2003). Self-brand congruency has been found to have a positive effect on the brand in terms of brand purchase intention (Park and John, 2010; Lam et al. 2010), and the attitude towards the brand (Sirgy, 1982). However, consumers can also use or prefer brands to express their desired or ideal self towards others and themselves (Escalas and Bettman, 2003). A lot of consumer research refers to the driving role of self enhancement in consumers' affinities towards brands (Escalas and Bettman, 2003; Fournier, 1998). Berger and Heath (2007) and Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) state that, besides self-continuity, also self-distinctiveness and self-enhancement drive brand identification and brand appreciation of consumers. Consumers may create or adapt their self and identity based on the brands they own or like. Consumers may prefer brands with appealing personalities to enhance their selves (Swaminathan et al., 2007). The brand may then have a positive effect on their self-perception in line with the brand personality (Park and John, 2010). One of the aims of the present paper is to investigate the relevance of car brand personality for expressing the actual or desired self.

Adding an electric car model to a product line of an existing car brand is a line extension. One of the factors that has emerged as most important in determining extension and parent brand feedback evaluation by consumers is the perceived fit between the extension and the parent brand (Aaker and Keller, 1990; Patro and Jaiswal, 2003). Extension evaluation and parent brand feedback is positively influenced when consumers perceive the extension to fit with the parent brand (Bottomley and Holden, 2001; Czellar, 2003; Martinez and Pina, 2003; Martinez and de Chernatony, 2004; Lau and Phau, 2007; Jeong and Jung, 2013; Martínez et al., 2009; Aaker and Keller, 1990; Diamantopoulos et al., 2005; Dens and De Pelsmacker, 2010, Supphellen et al., 2004; Swaminathan et al., 2003; Keller and Sood, 2003). However, the evaluation of an extension and the parent brand after extension may also be determined by the extent to which the extension fits the actual or desired personality of a consumer. Especially in case of symbolic products, imagery or personality considerations are often important determinants of brand and extension evaluations (Batra et al., 2010; Bhat and Reddy (2001). Moreover, consumers take personality fit into account in different ways, depending on the product and the context. The consumption of or preference for a brand may

be strongly related to an individual's actual or desired self- image in one situation, but not in another (Sirgy, 1982). The self-concept is relatively stable over time, but it may be influenced by social roles and situational cues.

The way in which consumers respond to extensions and develop parent brand feedback effects also depends upon implicit self-theories of consumers. Individuals adhering to the incremental self-theory believe that personality traits are malleable and can be developed ('the malleable self'). Individuals who believe in the entity self-theory perceive personal characteristics as fixed and difficult to change (Aaker, 1999; Graeff, 1996; Levy et al., 1998). Entity self-theorists will therefore react more negatively to extensions that do not fit their own perceived personality, and may develop negative parent brand feedback effects. Incremental self-theorists believe in the malleable self and are more readily prepared to develop different personality fit responses in different contexts and adjust their appreciation structure when faced with new brand information, such as an electric extension. Therefore, it is possible that, in consumers' evaluative judgement of an electric car extension and parent brand feedback effects, some personality characteristics are more salient than others, and differ from a brand without extension information.

Brand personalities are relatively stable over time. Most research to date shows that extensions that are non-fitting in terms of brand personality do not lead to parent brand dilution effects (Lau and Phau, 2007; Diamantopoulos et al., 2005). Parent brands may be immune to such dilution effects when these brands have a high familiarity and well-established brand personalities (Roedder John et al., 1998). However, parent brand feedback effects can vary in different consumer settings. Consequently, parent brand feedback effects after an extension may also be based on different personality fit considerations than perceiving a brand without extension information, because different personality characteristics may have become salient. The present study investigates how self-brand personality fit affects extension evaluation and parent brand feedback, and to what extent this fit plays a different role than in brand evaluation in general.

Personality fit effects on extensions and parent brand feedback may differ from one brand to another. For instance, Jeong and Jung (2013) investigated two dimensions of brand personality ('sincere' and 'prestige') and concluded that a non-fitting extension of sincere brands may alter brand personality, as opposed to extending a prestige brand in which case the extension leaves the brand personality unaffected. Fournier (1998) and Park and John (2010) state that identification and appreciation is easier for 'warm' than for 'cold' brands. On the other hand, personality fit responses may also (partly) be driven by product category specific effects, i.e. cars in general may trigger desirable personality characteristics, or by the context, for instance different personality traits may be more salient when evaluating an environmentally-friendly brand (Caprara et al., 2001). We thus also investigate to what extent personality fit effects work differently for different car brands or, instead, have common effects on different brands.

In the present study, we try to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How does actual or desired self-brand personality fit affect the attitude towards existing car brands?

RQ2: How does self-brand personality fit affect the attitude towards an electric extension of existing car brands?

RQ3. How does self-brand personality fit and extension attitude impact parent brand feedback effects?

RQ4. Are these effects different for car brands with different brand personalities?

3. Method

Pretest

A focus group and two online quantitative study resulted in a selection of four brands that have substantially different personalities. Alfa Romeo is most strongly associated with 'emotional' and 'bold', and least often with 'simple' and 'responsible'. BMW is most often referred to as responsible, active and bold, but not as simple. Toyota is described as simple and not at all active or emotional. Volvo's is responsible, relatively unsophisticated (simple) and not at all active, bold or emotional (see the main study for details of the personality scale used).

Samples and procedure

In the main study, two samples were studied. In the first one, 30 participants scored the personality of one of the four brands as well as their own personality. The total sample size was thus 120. The second sample contained 480 participants, 120 per tested brand. In all subsamples, half the respondents owned the car brand they had to evaluate, while the other half owned another car brand. The participants in this sample saw eight pictures of an electric car: one general picture of a car with six characteristics typical of electric cars, six pictures highlighting the details of each of the six characteristics, and the general picture again. They were told that the brand they had to evaluate was going to launch this electric extension. They were asked to evaluate the extension, their perception of the personality of the extension, evaluate the parent brand and their perception of the personality of the parent brand after extension. Finally they were asked to score their own personality. The data were gathered by means of an online questionnaire, administered to a selection of panel members of a professional online data collection agency. The samples are representative of the Belgian population of owners of a driver's license between 18 and 65, in terms of gender and age.

Measures

In the second sample, the attitude towards the branded electric extension was measured by means of a 3-item, 5-point Likert scale (e.g., 'I am positive about the electric car brand shown') (Cauberghe & De Pelsmacker, 2011, alpha = .92). The attitude towards the parent brand after extension was measured using the same scale, but this time applied to the parent brand (alpha = .94). In the first sample, the same brand attitude scale was used, but without reference to an electric extension. Brand personality was measured in all samples using the 12-item 5-point scale of Geuens et al. (2009). The scale consists of five personality dimensions: Responsibility (responsible, down to earth, stable, alpha = .86), Activity (active, dynamic, innovative, alpha = .85), Boldness (aggressive, bold, alpha = .80), Simplicity (ordinary, simple, alpha = .79) and Emotionality (romantic, sentimental, alpha = .91). The same scale was used in all samples to also measure the personality of the participants. Per scale, all scores were averaged across items for further analysis.

On the basis of the brand and consumer personality scores, ten additional variables were calculated. First, the consumer personality scores for each of the five personality dimensions were distracted from the brand personality scores for each of the five dimensions. This resulted in five scores. A positive score means that, in the perception of that individual, the brand possesses this personality characteristic more than the person himself. A negative score means that the individual possesses more of this personality characteristics than the brand he evaluated. Five more variables (one per personality dimension) were then calculated as the absolute value of the previously calculated difference scores. For these variables, a higher score means that there is a larger difference (in absolute terms) between an individual's score and the brand's score on this personality characteristic.

4. Results

Self-brand personality fit effects without electric extension

On the basis of the first sample, it was checked to what extent the four brands used had different personalities as anticipated in the pretest. Table 1 shows that this is indeed the case. Alfa Romeo is most strongly associated with 'emotional' and 'bold', and least often with 'simple' and 'responsible'. BMW is most often referred to as responsible, active and bold, but not as simple. Toyota is described as simple and not at all active or emotional. Volvo's main characteristic is responsible and rather simple and not at all active, bold or emotional.

Table 1. Perceived differences in brand personality between Alfa, BMW, Toyota and Volvo

	Alfa	BMW	Toyota	Volvo	p
Responsible	3.58	4.27	3.90	4.45	.006
Active	4.11	4.45	3.51	3.75	.001
Bold	3.50	3.24	2.44	2.28	.001
Simple	1.50	1.65	3.24	2.44	.000
Emotional	3.07	2.76	2.68	2.13	.074

In case individuals evaluate brands more positively the higher their self-brand personality fit is, brand attitude should be more positive the smaller the absolute difference between brand and consumer personality. This should result in a negative effect of the absolute difference personality variables on brand evaluation (self-congruency seen as positive, entity theory). Alternatively, individuals may evaluate a brand more positively or negatively when it possesses certain personality characteristics more or less than the individual himself (self-expansion seen as positive, incremental theory). In this case, it would signal an aspiration effect, the desire of consumers to express their 'ideal' self, and brand attitude should be more positive or negative as a function of the (non-absolute) differences between brand and consumer personality. In tables 2 and 3, the results are shown of regression analyses in which parent brand attitude is predicted by means of absolute (Table 2) and non-absolute (Table 3) differences in self-brand personality fit. Results are given for the pooled analysis of all four brands, and per individual brand. The results show that, indeed, a number of absolute differences in brand-consumer personality fit have the expected negative effect on parent brand evaluation. For the four brands taken together, especially the absolute personality fit differences 'responsible', 'simple' and 'emotional' appear to have the expected significant negative effect on parent brand evaluation. However, the explanatory power of the models with non-absolute brand-consumer personality differences in Table 3 is substantially

higher than those for absolute differences in Table 2. Moreover, the signs of the coefficients indicate that some personality fit indicators have a positive effect on brand evaluations, and others have a negative effect. This is not captured by the model in which absolute differences are used, and signals an aspirational judgment of brands in terms of personality fit. In general, individuals like car brands more when they are more responsible and active than themselves, and less when they are more bold and simple than themselves. For individual brands, the same personality fit dimensions play a role, but their relative importance are to a certain extent different.

Table 2. Brand attitude as a function of the absolute difference between the brand scores and the individuals' scores on the five personality dimensions (regression analysis)

Personality characteristic	All brands	Alfa	BMW	Toyota	Volvo
Responsible	-.266 (.004)	-.377 (.042)	-.326 (.037)	.082 (.676)	-.436 (.045)
Active	.059 (.530)	.064 (.717)	.151 (.377)	.059 (.769)	-.063 (.771)
Bold	-.112 (.201)	.090 (.651)	-.647 (<.001)	-.273 (.114)	.009 (.962)
Simple	-.217 (.019)	-.066 (.741)	-.019 (.895)	-.561 (.014)	-.048 (.825)
Emotional	-.195 (.026)	-.373 (.047)	-.079 (.600)	-.013 (.941)	-.243 (.212)
R ²	.179	.284	.597	.296	.259

Cells are standardized Betas (significance levels). Total sample size: 120, 30 per brand.

Table 3. Brand attitude as a function of the difference between the brand scores and the individuals' scores on the five personality dimensions (regression analysis)

Personality characteristic	All brands	Alfa	BMW	Toyota	Volvo
Responsible	.038 (.630)	.370 (.097)	.132 (.309)	-.096 (.569)	-.327 (.040)
Active	.428 (<.001)	.114 (.599)	.373 (.015)	.574 (.009)	.203 (.259)
Bold	-.213 (.006)	.086 (.642)	-.550 (<.001)	-.321 (.041)	-.053 (.715)
Simple	-.332 (<.001)	-.252 (.191)	.019 (.876)	-.246 (.237)	-.447 (.010)
Emotional	.060 (.428)	.049 (.796)	.048 (.725)	-.023 (.880)	.113 (.483)
R ²	.424	.256	.694	.567	.517

Cells are standardized Betas (significance levels). Total sample size: 120, 30 per brand.

Self-brand personality fit effects with electric extension

The following results are based on the second sample in which an electric extension was presented for each brand and extension attitude and parent brand feedback attitude were measured. These analyses were all performed on non-absolute personality fit differences as also in this case they proved to have substantially more explanatory power than the absolute differences (Tables 4 and 5). Extension attitude across brands is significantly influenced by all personality fit dimensions (only marginally for the emotional dimension), per brand and across all brands (Table 4). Electric extensions are more positively evaluated when they are perceived as more responsible and more active than the individual. If an electric extension is perceived as simpler (less sophisticated) than the individual, it is evaluated more negatively. For all individual brands, the responsibility dimension is highly significant. Alfa and BMW electric extension are more negatively evaluated when they are perceived as less sophisticated than the individual, which is not the case for Toyota and Volvo. Toyota extensions are more positively evaluated when they are more active and emotional than the individual. Volvo extensions are more positively evaluated when they are bolder than the individual.

Parent brand attitudes after the electric extension are significantly positively influenced by the attitude towards the extension. This indicates a parent brand feedback effect of the line extension. Overall, across brands, the attitude towards the extension is the most important determinant of the attitude towards the parent brand after extension. The parent brands are also more positively evaluated when they are more responsible, more active, more emotional and less simple than the individual. For individual brands, again, being more responsible than the individual is a strong determinant for all parent brands' attitudes. Being perceived as more active is important for all cars, except Volvo. Being too simple has a negative effect on the Toyota and Volvo parent brand, and being more emotional than the individual benefits BMW (Table 5).

Table 4. Attitude towards the extension as a function of the difference between the brand scores and the individuals' scores on the five personality dimensions (regression analysis)

Personality characteristic	All brands	Alfa	BMW	Toyota	Volvo
Responsible	.341 (<.001)	.296 (.003)	.463 (<.001)	.329 (.001)	.337 (<.001)
Active	.151 (.002)	.117 (.265)	.143 (.134)	.198 (.041)	.097 (.310)
Bold	.092 (.027)	.099 (.298)	.084 (.262)	.038 (.634)	.236 (.006)
Simple	-.127 (.003)	-.172 (.072)	-.163 (.035)	-.097 (.259)	-.005 (.950)
Emotional	.068 (.091)	.028 (.749)	.086 (.240)	.182 (.028)	.013 (.874)
R ²	.261	.196	.419	.292	.237

Cells are standardized Betas (significance levels). Total sample size: 480, 120 per brand.

Table 5. Attitude towards the parent brand following extension as a function of the difference between the brand scores and the individuals' scores on the five personality dimensions and the attitude towards the extension (AttExtension) (regression analysis)

Personality characteristic	All brands	Alfa	BMW	Toyota	Volvo
Responsible	.292 (<.001)	.207 (.017)	.246 (.015)	.262 (.001)	.276 (.002)
Active	.204 (<.001)	.246 (.015)	.275 (.008)	.238 (.006)	.043 (.644)
Bold	.008 (.844)	.103 (.231)	-.008 (.918)	-.051 (.440)	-.009 (.912)
Simple	-.143 (<.001)	-.109 (.151)	-.040 (.592)	-.276 (<.001)	-.241 (.003)
Emotional	.083 (.020)	.097 (.227)	.166 (.034)	.064 (.306)	.061 (.410)
Attextension	.305 (<.001)	.274 (<.001)	.181 (.019)	.350 (<.001)	.363 (<.001)
R ²	.423	.402	.401	.568	.383

Cells are standardized Betas (significance levels). Total sample size: 480, 120 per brand.

Table 6 integrates the first columns of the tables 3, 4 and 5 (analyses across brands), and thus compares the role of the different personality fit dimensions for brand evaluation in general, electric extension evaluation, and parent brand feedback effects after electric extension. Being more active and sophisticated than the individual are significant drivers of brand attitude in all three cases, albeit that their impact is substantially smaller after electric extension than without electric extension. Being more emotional, but especially being more responsible, are much more important drivers after electric extension than without extension. Being more bold than the individual impacts a brand negatively, while it has a positive effect on extension evaluation, and no effect on the attitude towards the parent brand after extension.

Table 6. Attitude towards the brand, attitude towards the electric extension, and attitude towards the parent brand following extension as a function of the difference between the brand scores and the individuals' scores on the five personality dimensions (regression analysis across all brands)

Individual Personality characteristic	Brands	Branded electric extension	Parent brand after electric extension
Responsible	.038 (.630)	.341 (<.001)	.292 (<.001)
Active	.428 (<.001)	.151 (.002)	.204 (<.001)
Bold	-.213 (.006)	.092 (.027)	.008 (.844)
Simple	-.332 (<.001)	-.127 (.003)	-.143 (<.001)
Emotional	.060 (.428)	.068 (.091)	.083 (.020)
AttExtension			.274 (<.001)
R ² (p-value F-test)	.424 (<.001)	.261 (<.001)	.423 (<.001)

Cells are standardized Betas. Significance level between brackets

5. Discussion and conclusions

Aspirational evaluations (desired self) of self-brand personality fit appear to be more relevant for brand evaluations than the mere difference between a brand's personality and one's own (actual self). This implies that consumers do not so much want to project their own self, but, on the contrary, are more positive for brands that they desire the personality characteristics of (Berger and Heath, 2007; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). Also for extensions and parent brand evaluations after extensions, personality fit plays a significant role. The relative importance of personality dimensions that drive extension judgment is different from those of brand evaluations in general. This lends support to the claim that different personality fit characteristics can be important depending on the context in which judgments are formed. Additionally, the personality fit dimensions that drive parent brand attitude after an electric extension are much more in line with extension attitude formation than with brand evaluation without extension, even when the effect of extension attitude is controlled for. This indicates that this extension impacts the way in which individuals take different personality dimensions into account when forming brand judgments, beyond the evaluation of the extension itself. One could conclude that an extension triggers different personality fit priorities, beyond the direct effect of the extension itself. This indicates that consumers consider themselves in their relation to brands as malleable and adhere to an incremental self-theory (Levy et al., 1998).

Looking at table 3, there are brand-specific effects of personality fit. BMW and Toyota are more positively evaluated when the brand is perceived more active and less bold than the individual. The attitude towards Volvo is more positive the less responsible and simple it is perceived to be compared to the individual. Boldness is a distinctive characteristic of BMW, while responsibility and simplicity are distinct characteristics of Volvo. The results may point at a compensatory evaluation: BMW is bold as it is, but it should not become too bold; Volvo is responsible and simple, but it should not be too simple. A similar effect is apparent in the Toyota evaluation. Toyota is not positioned as an active brand, but a perception of activity improves its attitude score. In other words, there is some indication that consumers judge brands more positively when they perceive them to be less outspoken in terms of their dominant characteristics. This also indicates that the relationship between consumers and their brands is not just a matter of congruency, but also of desired personality and for compensating personality traits that are too dominant or not dominant enough. These results also lend support to the idea that rather functional, sincere and cold brands, such as Volvo and Toyota, benefit from the perception that they are less cold, simple and serious, indicating that consumers find these brands more attractive when they perceive them (or their extensions) as less 'typical' for these simple, functional brands (Jeong and Jung, 2013; Fournier, 1998; Park and John, 2010).

Especially regarding post-extension evaluation, there is a clear indication that the same personality dimensions are relevant across brands: brands are judged more favorably when the extension or the parent brand are more responsible and active and less simple than the individual. However, there are also brand-specific personality fit dimensions that drive attitudes. The Alfa and BMW extensions are evaluated more negatively when they are perceived as more simple than the individual. Simplicity is not at all a core personality characteristic of these brand. Extending them into what is perceived as a too simple extension, hurts the extension. Toyota and Volvo extensions, on the other hand, are not evaluated negatively when perceived as simple, probably because this characteristic fits the brands. On the other hand, after extension, these parent brands are evaluated more negatively if they are perceived as more simple than the individual. Being simple is a distinctive characteristics of

both car brands. Probably consumers are negatively affected by a perception that these cars are even more simple than they are. In other words, they are negatively triggered by a personality dimension with a negative connotation, especially for those brands that are already known for this rather negative personality characteristic. All in all, be it through extension evaluation or through parent brand feedback effects, being perceived as simpler than oneself appears to hurt brand evaluation for all four brands, again pointing at a category characteristic rather than an individual brand mechanism. These results seem to point at a predominantly car category driven effect of personality fit, and not so much a brand-specific effect (Caprara et al., 2001)..

Future research could explore the relative importance of extension-parent brand fit and brand-consumer fit for extension evaluation. In the present study, brand evaluations were made by owners and non-owners of the brand. Future research could study the difference between owners and non-owners of a brand, since they may have different perceptions and attitude formation mechanisms. Brand owners can be assumed to be more committed and involved with their car brand, which may possibly trigger more outspoken effects of personality fit on extension evaluation, and more or less outspoken parent brand feedback effects. In the present study, parent feedback effects were measured shortly after exposure to the electric extension and questions about the extension itself. This may have biased the results. Future research should measure parent feedback effects in the longer run.

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