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Attitude Transfer Model in Fashion Co-marketing Alliance: Controlling Product Tangibility/Intangibility

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Abstract

By developing attitude transfer model, this study examined the co-marketing alliance effect between fashion and other industries (i.e., service and product brands) based upon the information integration theory. In addition, it examined the product tangibility/intangibility effects of partner brands by controlling stimuli: two alliance cases of fashion and service brands and two alliance cases of fashion and product brands. A total of 1,037 Korean women aged 20 to 39 were surveyed to compare the prior- and post- attitudes toward fashion/partner brands under four fictitious co-marketing alliance cases. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), multi-group CFA, structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis, and multi-group SEM analysis were conducted to test the hypotheses. The results demonstrated that the prior-attitude toward fashion brand partially affected the alliance attitude, and the co-marketing alliance was affected by prior-attitudes partner brands. The result of multi-group SEM analysis supported the significant differences between service and product brands as alliance partners, which might refer to the effect of product tangibility, existing in brand alliance contexts. The alliance evaluation affected the subsequent evaluations on each participating brands. This study empirically provides the conceptual structure of how consumer attitudes toward the participating brands interact with the attitudes toward alliance and offer practical insights. Specifically, upon employing the manipulated co-marketing alliances cases, this study demonstrates the partnering effect according to product tangibility of partner brands.

Key Words : Fashion Co-marketing alliance, Information Integration Theory, Attitude transfer, Product tangibility

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I. Introduction

Co-marketing alliance provides a mutual opportunity for members of brand alliance to build their equity through the transfer of brand characteristics or attributes of the partner brands[1)2)]. While many product and service brands have been vigorously seeking co-marketing alliances with diverse partners, fashion brands have particularly anchored in the partnerships with product brand partners (e.g., Stella McCartney collection for H&M; Samsung-Armani HDTV). Upon considering a partner selection for a service brand, the fashion brand that holds strong, unique, and favorable image in consumers' perception is likely to create value in relation to brand salience and brand associations.

Given the nature of brand alliance in terms of consumers' associative perception, it seems relevant to explain this attitude transfer context adopting information integration theory. Information integration theory suggests that consumers' pre-existing attitudes toward individual brands will integrate with the new information provided by the alliance, thus influencing the evaluation of the alliance[3)4)5)6)]. However, little attention has been devoted to examining the attitudinal transition effect of co-marketing alliance between product and service categories employing the appropriate theoretical platform. Besides, no empirical examination focused on the controlling effect of product tangibility/intangibility of partner brands is found in the existing literature.

The purpose of this study is to examine consumers' attitude transfer prior and post alliance based on the information integration theory. Specifically, the objectives of this study are: (1) to examine the attitude transfer effect in co-marketing alliance between fashion and other industries (i.e., product and service brands) based on proposed hypotheses; (2) to investigate the control effects of product tangibility/ intangibility of partner brands (i.e., fashion-service brand alliances and fashion-product brand alliances). This approach establishes the appropriate theoretical foundation for co-marketing alliance academia, and also benefits practitioners in selecting their joint partner more rationally.

II. Literature Review

1. Fashion co-marketing alliance

Fashion co-marketing alliance is an innovative and dynamic brand strategy distinguished from conventional partnerships between two brands under same or related product category[7)]. Diverse partnership strategies such as dual branding, product bundling, ingredient branding, co-branding, and brand extension are frequently bundled into "fashion collaboration". Although these strategies enable a brand to differentiate from its competitors by characterizing the critical benefit of the brand, each of strategies has a distinctive characteristic[8)]. In terms of collaboration with different product categories, brand extension is often compared with co-marketing alliance. Brand extension uses an established brand name to enter new product categories[9)] like Armani Casa, a home furnishing brand, which is one of the extensions of Armani brand. Brand extension involves a transfer of meaning between a brand and a new product category, whereas brand alliance implies a conjunction and elaboration of meaning from one brand to the other brand with product

category meanings encompassing underneath all involved brands[10]. Furthermore, a brand extension exploits the primary brand associations in new product categories such as relationships between mother-son brands, while a brand alliance leverages secondary associations outside the brand territory of the master brand[11]. Although most brand strategies bring all parties mutual benefits by exchanging desirable image attribute, they typically include one product component that is more prominent than the other [12].

However, co-marketing alliances are lateral relationships between two brands at the same level in the value-added chain and represent a form of "symbiotic marketing"[13] as exemplified in Samsung-Armani cellphone case. At first glance, it seams to be a plain co-branding founded on licensing. However, Armani extends its territory to new product categories (cell phone) and simultaneously, Samsung brings the Armani brand name on which adds a competitive edge in the electronics market. Magnifying own competitive specialties, these brands technically cooperate with one another in developing a new product (i.e., Armani is in charge of designing, and Samsung takes responsibilities on manufacturing), and distribute the new product in each brand's store.

Therefore, this study assume that two brands under co-marketing alliances are on equal status, though most studies discriminate between core- and sub-brand in alliance context.

2. Attitude Transfer Model based on Information integration theory

Attitudes result from the processing of incoming information and from the integration of the new information with the previous attitude[14]. Hillyer and Tikoo[15] suggest that the retrieved affect toward the attitude object influences consumer perception by favoring attitude-consistent information and behavior. Attitudes and attitude formation are critical issues because consumer attitudes are closely related to purchase intension[16]. In general, attitude transfer explains that a consumer's affect toward one element may be transferred to the other element in brand extension, product bundling, co-branding and alliance context[17][18][19][20]. For example, consumer's affect toward a parent brand is simply transferred to an extended brand in brand extension context[21]. However, more complex and reciprocal transition between two independent brands should be reflected in co-marketing alliance context. Through brand alliance, firms are able to transfer the original brand attitude from partner brand to their own brand, and vice versa. This transfer effect originates from the integration and modification with the partner brand and the co-marketing alliance cue. Hence, scrutinizing consumers' evaluations on co-marketing alliances can be explained employing the information integration theory which is very broadly defined and widely applied in psychology so that responses may be in the form of utilities, preference and difference judgments, or attitudes[22].

Information integration theory[23][24] describes how people combine different pieces of information when forming evaluation[25]. It evolves from the concept of individuals as active integrators of informational stimuli in their environment. Attitude is formed and modified as people receive, interpret, evaluate, and then integrate the new stimulus information with their prior attitude[26][27][28][29]. With conjunctions of brand alliances and information integration perspectives; (1) one brand is certainly presented in the

context of other and vice versa; (2) judgments about the brand alliance are likely to be affected by prior attitudes toward each brand; and (3) subsequent judgments about each brand is likely to be affected by the context of other brand[30].

Examining the effect of the bundling strategy, Simonin and Ruth[31] suggest that prior attitudes toward the brands are important determinants of consumer evaluation of the bundle itself. Other empirical studies support this finding in investigating the antecedents of attitudes toward the alliance[32] and the sponsors' influence on sponsored events[33]. In the context of Cause-brand alliances (CBA), the favorable perceptions of the cause and the brand have an impact on the consumer evaluations of CBA[34]. Consistent with the information integration theory, the evaluations of each brand will be combined and integrated to produce the overall evaluation of alliance when providing a new information cue, co-marketing alliance. Consumer prior attitudes toward each entrant brand may have direct impacts on evaluations of the co-marketing alliances. Thus, the following hypotheses are tested:

H1a: Prior attitude toward fashion brand positively affects the attitude toward the co-marketing alliance.

H1b: Prior attitude toward the partner (service/ product) brand positively affects the attitude toward the co-marketing alliance.

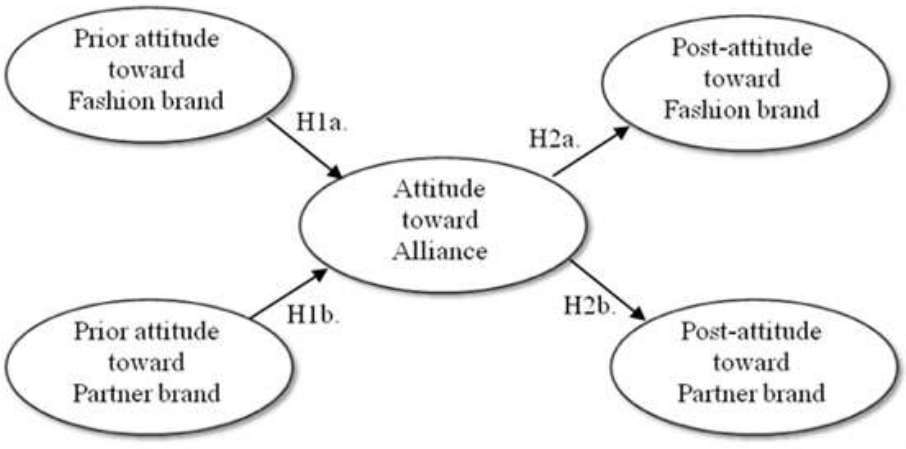
Since attitudes are relatively stable psychological constructs[35], the affect associated with the co-marketing alliance may be transferred to the affect associated with the respective partner brands. The impact of branding extension could be positive or negative when the new associations damage consumer attitudes toward the parent brand[36]. Keller and Aaker[37] observe the feedback effect of brand extension which successful extensions result in positive evaluations on an average quality core brand. Although Washburn et al.[38] argue that partner brands benefit from a co-branding strategy, Leuthesser et al.[39] conclude that the perceptions of a co-branded product could have spillover effects on the parent brands. Specifically, attitudes toward strong, well-known brands are less likely to be influenced by co-branding than less known brands. In empirical studies, brand alliances of various types significantly influenced the evaluations of the partner brand[40], and the effect of CBA on perceptions of post-attitudes was confirmed[41]. Hence, two hypotheses are examined and the hypothesized model is proposed as <Figure 1>;

H2a: Attitude toward the co-marketing alliance influences post attitude toward fashion brand.

H2b: Attitude toward the co-marketing alliance influences post attitude toward the partner (service/ product) brand.

3. Control Effect of Product Tangibility/ Intangibility

Service brands are fundamentally distinct from product brands in four respects as followings: intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity and perishability[42]. Service offering characterizes the performance nature since it is impossible to make a trial before purchasing such as banking service and art theatre service[43][44]. Inseparability of production and consumption refers to simultaneous evaluation of production and consumption, and it offers opportunities for customizing service to best serve the individual customer's needs[45]. It is also inseparable from both the service provider and the service consumer[46]. Therefore, heterogeneity or inconsistency of services is the major concern for variability of service performance[47]. It is difficult to standardize service since only the



<Figure 1> Attitude transfer model in fashion co-marketing alliance

manual labor can provide. Perishability means that services are consumed with time passage, hence, it cannot be stored, saved for reuse at a later date, or returned[48)49)]. These features of a service brand reflect the abstract attributes of brand, so called intangibility which is the most frequently and widely cited characteristic in the related literature. Abstract attributes might be transferred to a broader set of product classes than concrete attributes that are defined as physical, tangible product characteristics[50)]. Therefore, the control effect of tangibility/ intangibility of a product category in co-marketing alliance is tested as follow:

H3. Product tangibility/intangibility effect in co-marketing alliance differs in the attitude transfer model.

III. Methods

1. Data collection

Data were collected from a convenient sample of 1,037 female residents aged 20 to 39 in Seoul, Korea with employing self-administered questionnaires. Survey was conducted with the snowball sampling where study subjects recruited future subjects from their acquaintances. <Table 1> shows the demographic information of all respondents. Upon reading the fictitious newspaper article advertising co-marketing alliance between brands, they were asked to respond regarding their attitudes toward individual brands in pre and post exposure of alliances. Existing scales were modified to measure brand attitude in prior- and post-alliance contexts using 7-point Likert-type scales (1=very negative/not favorable, 7=very positive/favorable).

As research stimuli objects, two service brands and product brands which are not directly related with or do not belong to fashion industry were selected. Since using authentic brands is critical so that genuine brand affect and associations can be activated by the brand alliance[51)], all stimuli brands were determined on the basis of secondary data from public institution such as Korea National Statistical Office and Korean Management Association

Consulting. Therefore, a jeans brand ("L" jeans) was chosen as the alliance linchpin between two compatible product brands. Consequently, four fictitious co-marketing alliances cases were manipulated: Case 1: jeans-banking service ("L" jeans-"N" banking; N=265); Case 2: jeans-art theater ("L" jeans - "S" art center; N=251); Case 3: jeans-coupé ("L" jeans -"T" coupé; N=254); and Case 4: jeans-cellphone ("L" jeans -"M" cellphone; N=267).

2. Procedure of Data Analysis

In order to validate measures of constructs and to assess unidimesionality and metric equivalence across four alliance groups, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and multi-group CFA was performed. After confirming measurement invariance, hypothesized model for each of four groups was individually tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis, and

<Table 1> Demographic profile of respondents

Variables	Frequency (%)			
	Case 1 (N=265)	Case 2 (N=251)	Case 3 (N=254)	Case 4 (N=267)
Age				
20-24	104(39.2)	96(38.4)	96(37.8)	104(39.0)
25-29	102(38.5)	93(37.1)	93(36.6)	103(38.6)
30-34	46(18.4)	40(15.9)	42(16.5)	46(17.2)
35-39	13(4.9)	14(5.6)	22(8.7)	14(5.2)
Occupation				
Student	117(38.1)	110(43.8)	96(37.8)	120(44.9)
Employed	142(59.6)	128(50.9)	149(58.7)	142(53.1)
Unemployed	5(1.9)	5(2.0)	8(3.1)	3(1.1)
Education				
High school	11(4.2)	11(4.4)	19(7.5)	10(3.7)
Undergraduate course	78(29.4)	72(28.7)	57(22.4)	79(29.6)
Bachelor's degree	103(38.9)	92(36.7)	105(41.3)	104(39.0)
Master's degree or higher	71(26.8)	67(26.7)	71(28.0)	72(27.0)
Income(monthly in KRW)				
Below ₩2 million	55(20.8)	49(19.5)	58(22.8)	56(21.0)
₩2-4 million	62(23.4)	56(22.3)	53(20.9)	62(23.0)
₩4-6 million	64(24.2)	60(23.9)	42(16.5)	65(24.3)
₩6-8 million	22(8.3)	23(9.2)	26(10.2)	23(8.6)
₩8-10 million	29(10.9)	26(10.4)	31(14.2)	29(10.9)
Above ₩10 million	32(12.1)	29(11.6)	42(16.5)	32(12.0)

then multi-group SEM analysis was conducted to compare the paths across alliance groups. For the comparison of more than two groups, this study followed the procedure of Calantone and Zhao's comparison[52].

3. Measure Validation and Measurement Invariance

An initial CFA using maximum likelihood was individually employed to ensure validity of measurements for each of the four groups. All items loaded significantly on their respective factors and had no cross loadings, so that no item was deleted from the model. <Table 2> displays that the results of measurement models exhibited acceptable levels of fit except chi-square statistics which is sensitive to sample size ($\chi^2_{(92)}$= 190.70; 159.88; 195.12; 196.14, p=.00 for case 1,2,3, & 4). Normed chi-square values (χ^2/df=2.07; 1.74; 2.12; 2.13) were less than 3.0, which are acceptable. The values of NFI ranged from.95 to .96 and CFI values were from .97 to .98. RMSEA were from .54 to 67. These fit indices suggest that the measurement models for all four groups fit the data adequately. All items loaded significantly (t-value> 1.96) on their corresponding latent constructs indicating convergent validity was obtained. Construct reliabilities for all the measures ranging from .86 to .98 exceeded .70 of Cronbach's alpha across the four groups. Average variance extracted (AVE) ranged from .61 to .96 with each measure exceeding the .50. Discriminant validity was tested by comparing AVE of each pair of constructs and Φ^2 (i.e., the squared correlation between two constructs). Φ^2 did not exceed AVE between each pair of constructs. Overall, discriminant validity was obtained.

Successively, multi-group CFA was conducted to test the equivalence of the measurement model across the four alliance groups. Weak factorial invariance only requires invariance constraints on the relationship between indicators and the corresponding latent variables[53]. If the measurement properties are the same for the four groups, factor patterns and factor loadings should be equal[54]. Therefore, metric invariance was tested by constraining the factor loadings of the same items to be equal across the four groups. The result showed that there was not a significant increase in chi-square between the unconstrained model and the constrained model ($\Delta\chi^2_{(33)}$=32.09, p=.51>.05). The constrained model also exhibited a adequate fit with $\chi^2_{(413)}$ of 835.79 (p=.00), NIF of .95 ,CIF of .98, RMSEA of .031, and χ^2/df of 2.02. Thus, measurement invariance was supported.

IV. Results and Discussion

1. Hypotheses testing

In order to test hypothesis, the hypothesized model for each of the four fictitious alliances groups was tested individually. As <Table 3> shows, the case 1 and 2 models converged well and three of four paths were statistically significant in both models. The case 3 and 4 models showed a good model fit and all paths were statistically significant. To sum-up, the model fits of the hypothesized model for each of the four groups were satisfactory. Examining the path coefficient across groups, the path coefficient from the prior-attitude toward fashion brand to the overall attitude toward alliance (H1a) is insignificant only for Case 1 and Case 2.

<Table 2> Measurement model results (n=1,037)

	Case 1 Jeans-banking model (N=265)			Case 2 jeans-art theatre model (N=251)			Case 3 jeans-coupé model (N=254)			Case 4 jeans-cell phone model (N=267)		
Constructs	S.F.L.[a]	SE	t-value	S.F.L.[a]	SE	t-value	S.F.L.[a]	SE	t-value	S.F.L.[a]	SE	t-value
Pre-attitude toward fashion brand												
X1: Liking	.929	.141	10.706	.937	.136	10.910	.903	.121	10.982	.937	.135	11.070
X2: Favorability	.937	.148	10.718	.925	.141	10.872	.951	.124	11.150	.928	.140	11.040
X3: Preference	.584	–	–	.601	–	–	.607	–	–	.594	–	–
X4: A reason to choose	.545	.093	10.158	.566	.083	13.634	.657	.091	11.745	.552	.091	10.360
Construct reliability[b]	**.855**			**.861**			**.874**			**.855**		
Extracted variance[c]	**.694**			**.698**			**.696**			**.697**		
Pre-attitude toward partner brand												
X5: Liking	.915	.125	11.717	.958	.134	11.334	.960	.192	9.494	.942	.106	12.801
X6: Favorability	.939	.129	11.808	.958	.136	11.335	.931	.196	9.458	.979	.111	12.982
X7: Preference	.625	–	–	.604	–	–	.534	–	–	.640	–	–
X8: A reason to choose	.665	.067	15.480	.655	.083	13.634	.613	.098	11.371	.649	.057	16.894
Construct reliability[b]	**.891**			**.893**			**.871**			**.902**		
Extracted variance[c]	**.638**			**.657**			**.612**			**.669**		
Attitude toward alliance												
X9: A favor feeling	.857	–	–	.858	–	–	.786	–	–	.796	–	–
X10: Liking	.885	.036	27.756	.868	.032	28.888	.833	.051	20.257	.817	.040	24.543
X11: Buying intention	.954	.052	22.175	.969	.047	23.403	.956	.070	17.943	.960	.063	19.102
X12: Recommendation	.899	.052	20.133	.954	.048	22.759	.926	.075	17.321	.924		
Construct reliability[b]	**.949**			**.959**			**.935**			**.938**		
Extracted variance[c]	**.809**			**.835**			**.771**			**.769**		
Post-attitude toward fashion brand												
X13: Favorability	.926	–	–	.961	–	–	.925	–	–	.954	–	–
X14: Liking	.999	.027	39.631	.999	.019	54.301	.999	.029	38.307	.999	.021	51.192
Construct reliability[b]	**.961**			**.980**			**.958**			**.975**		
Extracted variance[c]	**.928**			**.961**			**.927**			**.954**		
Post-attitude toward partner brand												
X15: Favorability	.992	–	–	.990	–	–	.968	–	–	.982	–	–
X16: Liking	.958	.026	38.720	.970	.026	38.254	.950	.034	30.302	.969	.023	42.962
Construct reliability[b]	**.974**			**.980**			**.958**			**.958**		
Extracted variance[c]	**.951**			**.961**			**.920**			**.920**		

Unconstrained model: χ^2=804.028(df=380, p<.000); NFI=.954; CFI=.975; RMSEA=.033; χ^2/df=2.116

Constrained model: χ^2=835.787(df=413, p<.000); NFI=.952; CFI=.975; RMSEA=.031; χ^2/df=2.024

[a]Standardized factor loading; the first item for each construct was set to 1.

[b]Cronbach α

[c]calculatedas[$\sum$(std.loading^2)]/[$\sum$(std.loading^2)]+$\sum\xi i$];

H1a, which predicts the impact of prior-attitude toward fashion brand on the attitude toward alliance, was supported in case 3 and 4. (H1a: Case 3: β=.413, p<.001; Case 4: β=.650, p<.001). In Case 1 and 2 which a fashion brand is paired with service brands, H1a was found to be insignificant. Thus, H1a was partially supported. In other words, when service brands like banking services and art theatres were paired with fashion brands under alliance, the prior-attitude toward fashion brand didn't affect to alliance. Conversely, the prior-attitude toward fashion brand had an impact upon the attitude to alliance, when fashion brands partnered with tangible products brands such as automobiles and cell-phones. H1b states the relationship between the prior-attitude toward partner brands and the attitude toward alliance. In all models, H1b was supported (H1b: Case 1: β=.673, p<.001; Case 2: β=.565, p<.001; Case 3: β=.699, p<.001; Case 4: β=.501, p<.001). According to H2a and H2b, the attitude toward the alliance has a positive impact on the post-attitude toward the both anticipating brands each. H2a (Case 1: β=.316, p<.001; Case 2: β=.428, p<.001; Case 3: β=.419, p<.001; Case 4: β=.374, p<.001) and H2b (Case 1: β=.419, p<.001;Case 2: β=.367, p<.001; Case 3: β=.549, p<.001; Case 4: β=.543, p<.001) were significantly supported in all cases. See <Table 3>.

To sum-up, three (H1b, H2a, & H2b) of the four predict paths were found to be significant in all cases, H1a was partially supported. Interestingly, Case 1 and 2, alliances with service brands, and Case 3 and 4, alliances with product brands had a same result. This result provides some interesting respects in terms of alliance partner's product attributes and requires a more detailed comparison across four cases.

2. Controlling effect of the product tangibility

From the result of testing four individual structural

<Table 3> Results of hypotheses testing

		Case 1 jeans-banking service model (N=265)	Case 2 jeans-art theatre model (N=251)	Case 3 jeans-coupé model (N=254)	Case 4 jeans-cell phone model (N=267)	Multi-group
Standardized Path Coefficient	H1a:	n.s.	n.s.	.413***	.650***	
	H1b:	.673***	.565***	.699***	.501***	
	H2a:	.316***	.428***	.419***	.374***	
	H2b:	.419***	.367***	.549***	.543***	
Model fit	χ^2 (df)	211.443(95)	194.287(95)	199.497(95)	198.802(95)	804.028(380)
	NFI	.950	.957	.950	.958	.954
	CFI	.972	.977	.973	.978	.975
	RMSEA	.068	.065	.066	.064	.033
	χ^2/df	2.226	2.045	2.100	2.093	2.116

***p<.001;Hypotheses are supported.

n.s.=not significant

models, it was found that there were differences of path from the prior-attitude toward fashion brand to the overall attitude toward alliance among groups. A multi-group SEM analysis was conducted to test whether the path coefficients were equal across the four groups. Following the procedure of Calantone and Zhao's comparison[55], Firstly, one path was constrained to be equal across the four groups and then freely estimated this path. This test was repeated for every path of the hypothesized model. If there is no difference between the constrained and unconstrained model, it would suggest an equivalent path coefficient across four groups. However, a significant difference would mean that at least one path coefficient is statistically different among the four. In this case, a paired comparison was conducted to detect differences between any two groups.

The results of multi-group comparison showed that the path from the prior-attitude toward fashion brand to the attitude toward alliance (H1a), and from the attitude toward alliance to the prior-attitude toward fashion brand (H2b) were significantly different among cases (Table 4). In detail, there was no significant difference in the paths between Case 1 and 2 (H1a: $\Delta\chi 2$=.117, p>.05; H2b: $\Delta\chi 2$=.520, p>.05). And an equivalent path coefficient between Case 3 and 4 was found (H1a: $\Delta\chi 2$=2.772, p>.05; H2b: $\Delta\chi 2$=.010, p>.05) as well as <Table 4> shows. In comparing the coefficient value of the relationship, the prior-attitude toward fashion brand had a stronger influence on the alliance attitude for Case 3 and 4 (Case 3: β=.413, p<.001; Case 4: β=.374, p<.001). In the relationship from the attitude toward alliance to the post-attitude toward partner brands, a stronger impact was partially found for Case 3 and 4 (Case 3: β=.549, p<.001; Case 4: β=.543, p<.001).

<Table 4> Results of Multi-group Comparison

Constraint	Results of Multigroup Comparison	*Chi-square* Difference
H1a: Pre-Attitude toward fashion brand→ Attitude toward Alliance	case 1=case 2 case 1<case 3 case 1<case 4 case 2<case 3 case 2<case 4 case 3=case 4	n.s 9.323** 20.608*** 6.065* 14.985*** n.s
H1b: Pre-Attitude toward service/product brand→ Attitude to Alliance	case 1=2=3=4	n.s.
H2a: Attitude toward alliance → Post-Attitude toward fashion brand	case 1=2=3=4	n.s.
H2b: Attitude toward Alliance→ Post-Attitude toward service/ product brand	case 1=case 2 case 1=case 3 case 1=case 4 case 2<case 3 case 2<case 4 case 3=case 4	n.s. n.s. n.s. 7.142** 7.105*** n.s.

* p< .05, ** p< .01, ***p< .001, n.s.=not significant
case 1: jeans-banking service, case 2: jeans-art theatre, case 3: jeans-coupé, case 4: jeans-cell phone
Model Fit: $\chi^2_{(380)}$=804.028; NFI=.954; CFI=.975; RMSEA=.033; χ^2/df=2.116

This result supports the significant differences between service and product brands as alliance partners, which might refer to the effect of product tangibility, existing in brand alliance contexts. Hence, hypothesis 3 was supported as product tangibility of partner brands differently affected consumer evaluations under co-marketing alliances.

V. Conclusions and implications

By adopting the information integration theory to co-marketing alliance contexts, this study empirically provides the conceptual structure of how consumer attitudes toward the participating brands interact with the attitude toward alliance and offers practical insights. Specifically, upon employing the manipulated co-marketing alliances cases, this study demonstrates the partnering effect according to product tangibility of partner brands.

First, this study confirms the attitude transfer effect in co-marketing alliance context based on information integration theory in terms of consumer attitudes toward brands. Three out of four hypotheses in the attitude transfer model were supported in all cases and one path was partially supported. The evaluation of co-marketing alliance was affected by prior-attitudes toward each participating brands, then the combined information, named as the alliance evaluation, affected the subsequent evaluations of each individual brands. In other words, the positive evaluation of co-marketing alliance brings the positive attitude toward participating brands. It suggests that firms that are interested in inter-industrial co-marketing alliances can promote more favorable consumer attitudes by increasing the consumer estimate of the alliance. Furthermore, the positive evaluations of the alliance might be transferred from consumers' pre-existing attitudes toward individual brands. Thus, marketers should invest more efforts on not only elevating the favorability of their brands but also selecting partner brands with a positive estimation.

Second, the partial impact of prior-attitude toward fashion brands on the alliance attitude provides some interesting perspectives in terms of alliance partner's product types. Interestingly, Case 1 and 2, alliances with service brands, and Case 3 and 4, alliances with product brands had the same result. Particularly, the rejection of H1a in Case 1 and 2 implies that the alliance between fashion and intangible service categories (i.e., 'jeans-banking' and 'jeans-art theatre') do not affect the attitude toward alliance. In other words, when service brands like banking services and art theatres were paired with fashion brands under alliance, the prior-attitude toward fashion brand would not transfer into the attitude to alliance. Conversely, the prior-attitude toward fashion brands had an impact on the attitude to alliance, when fashion brands partnered with tangible products brands. From the results of multi-group comparison to confirm this finding, there were significant differences between service and product brands as a fashion brand's partner. These differences are derived from the product tangibility, which determines whether brands provide tangible products or intangible services. Since product brands sell tangible products, consumers might be restricted in their associations with the brands. Provided as a retrieval cue, these concrete images or features of products can impair the recall of the product brands' images. Consequently, the limited brand images can prevent consumers developing associations to

alliances. Therefore, fashion brands might help consumers determine the attitudes toward alliance. On the contrary, less concrete images of intangible service brands than products brands can be extended to the associations of alliances without any aid of fashion brands. Thus, the attitude toward a service brand itself affects the attitude toward the alliance regardless of the attitude toward fashion brands. This might be explained by the part-list cuing effect in the literature of recall and memory. Offering consumers with a subset of brands from a product category can inhibit recall of remaining brands in that category[56)57)]. Furthermore, drawing from the distinctions between concrete and abstract attributes[58)], abstract attributes might be transferred to a broader set product classes than concrete attributes, which usually are associated with specific product classes. Therefore, marketers will need to understand their brand image based on product tangibility and select a complementary partner brand like fashion brands with Janus-face. In particular, fashion brands with unfavorable evaluations should consider the co-marketing alliance with service brands of good reputation to increase consumer favorability through the halo effect of partners.

Looking for a perfect partner for inter-industrial co-marketing alliance is an ongoing and never-ending issue. Upon exploiting information integration theory, this study provides an initial step toward framing this challenge from the view of product tangibility. Although this study provides preliminary insights for partner selections in co-marketing alliances between fashion and non-fashion industries, further research using diverse product categories and brands are necessary to reinforce the findings.

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