

The Mechanism of How Brand Collaborations Influence Consumer Purchasing Behavior: A Multi-Case Study Based on Collaborations Between Anime IPs and Luxury Brands

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ABSTRACT

As collaborations between luxury brands and anime intellectual property (IP) become increasingly visible in youth culture, their influence on consumer behavior is drawing growing attention. This paper investigates three aspects of how such co-branding influences purchase decisions: cultural alignment, emotional resonance, and social interaction. This study investigates three partnerships—JIMMY CHOO × Sailor Moon, GUCCI × Doraemon, and FENDI × Pokémon—using a qualitative multi-case analysis approach. The study applies a three-stage coding process to organize brand materials and user-generated content from social media platforms. According to the results, cultural alignment enhances brand identification; emotional resonance generates nostalgic resonance; social interaction promotes involvement and self-expression. This study deepens the theoretical lens of co-branding and offers actionable insights for luxury brand strategy.

KEYWORDS

Co-branding; Anime IP; Luxury brands; Consumer behavior

1 Introduction

1.1 Research background

Luxury brand collaborations with anime IPs, such as JIMMY CHOO × Sailor Moon, often generate significant social media attention. Through generating buzz and presenting a more youthful image, these partnerships strengthen brand relevance. However, some criticize them for exploiting nostalgia or for being merely superficial "logo mashups." Despite the controversy, such collaborations have shown a considerable influence on user conversion and sales. In contrast to the popularity of the IP or the prestige of the brand, this suggests that the success of co-branding depends on a more thorough integration of cultural symbols, emotional resonance, and social interaction mechanisms.

1.2 Present research situation

Brand extension theory and the concept of cultural capital are cited in earlier studies to highlight the importance of brand synergy and symbolic reconfiguration. Recent years have also seen research on social currency and emotional attachment. However, there are two remaining gaps in the present research. First, there is a lack of understanding about how luxury businesses interact with subcultures like anime IPs. Second, the relationship between cultural alignment, emotional resonance, and social interaction has not been sufficiently studied.

1.3 Research question

This study explores how collaborations between luxury brands and anime IPs shape consumer purchasing decisions. It focuses on three interrelated mechanisms—cultural alignment, emotional resonance, and social interaction—to construct an integrated understanding of their impact.

1.4 Research methods

This study uses a qualitative multi-case approach and examines three collaborations: Jimmy Choo × Sailor Moon, Gucci × Doraemon, and Fendi × Pokémon. To discover the key influencing mechanisms, this study uses a three-stage coding method that includes brand design, communication strategies, and user feedback.

2 Research method

2.1 Method selection and applicability

This study adopts a qualitative multiple case study method, focusing on three typical joint cases: JIMMY CHOO × Sailor Moon, GUCCI × Doraemon, and FENDI × Pokémon, to explore how the joint venture between luxury brands and anime IP affects consumers' purchasing behavior. The case study method is particularly suitable for exploring "how a certain phenomenon occurs," so it helps to deeply understand the cultural alignment, emotional resonance and social interaction processes contained in brand cooperation. The selected cases span categories such as shoes, ready-to-wear and luggage, combined with classic anime IP, not only reflect the mainstream trend of the market, but also have good diversity and

representativeness.

2.2 Theoretical foundation and analytical framework

This study builds an analytical framework consisting of three dimensions: cultural alignment, emotional resonance, and social interaction. The theoretical foundations are as follows:

(1) Cultural Alignment Mechanism: Based on Bourdieu's field theory, this study explores the symbolic integration and value reconstruction of brands and IP in terms of aesthetic style and cultural symbolism, revealing the process of re-organization of cultural symbols within the field.

(2) Emotional Resonance Mechanism: Combining Stryker's identity theory and Bowlby's attachment theory, this mechanism analyzes consumers' purchasing motivations driven by self-identity projection and emotional attachment through co-branded products.

(3) Social Interaction Mechanism: Drawing on Becker's art world theory and Joachimsthaler's social currency perspective, this study examines the socialized dissemination logic of co-created content between brands, consumers, communities, and KOLs.

Together, the framework integrates cultural structure, identity construction, and social practice to systematically reveal how co-branding influences consumer behavior.

2.3 Data sources and collection

This study mainly relies on secondary data for analysis and contains the following types of sources:

(1) Official information released by brands, such as co-branding announcements, product design descriptions, etc.

(2) Media reports and industry perspectives to help understand the background of the collaboration and market response.

(3) User content on social platforms (e. g., UGC, purchase reviews and interactive discussions on Weibo and Xiaohongshu), which can show real feedback from consumers.

(4) Activity materials, including image data of the Pop-up store events and online promotional content.

2.4 Data analysis method

Data underwent three-stage qualitative coding:

First, in the open coding stage, this study extracted keywords (e.g., "childhood memories", "identity", etc.) from the text to initially capture consumers' attitudes and behavioral characteristics; Then, in the axial coding stage, this study organize and generalize these words to correspond to three themes: cultural alignment, emotional resonance, and social interaction; Finally, in selective coding, the three themes are integrated to construct an analytical model that describes how co-branding affects consumer behavior.

3 Research results

3.1 Overview of findings

This study is based on three representative joint cases: JIMMY CHOO × Sailor Moon, GUCCI × Doraemon and FENDI × Pokémon. Through three-stage coding analysis, three core aspects that affect consumer purchase intentions are sorted out: cultural alignment, emotional resonance and social interaction. These factors are presented differently in different cases, but they are intertwined with each other and together shape the key conditions for the joint brand and IP to generate market influence.

3.2 Comparative analysis of the three cases

3.3 Summary of coding results

3.4 Description of results

From the analysis, although these three cases are different in terms of style, brand positioning and timing, they all show the interaction of three core mechanisms:

(1) Cultural alignment: Brands will establish a deep connection with IPs through visual symbols, characterization or festive atmosphere. For example, JIMMY CHOO combines "Transformation Fantasy" with high heels, GUCCI combines monogram totems with Doraemon elements, and FENDI uses the symbol of dragons to link up product design and festivals.

(2) Emotional resonance: All three cases emphasize the emotional resonance of childhood memories and "character projection". When consumers say things like "Isn't this me" or "Childhood dreams are still alive", the IP is not just a cute pattern for them, but a kind of emotional attachment and identity extension that still exists in adulthood.

(3) Social interaction: Through celebrity fashion demonstrations, limited edition events, flash stores, and social sharing, sparking a sense of involvement and encouraging consumers to actively participate and express themselves in online communities.

Table 1

Co-branding case	cultural alignment mechanism	emotional resonance mechanism	social interaction mechanism
JIMMY CHOO × Sailor Moon	By blending character-inspired colors with luxury craftsmanship, brands enhance a dream-like aesthetic.	The fantasy of transformation resonates emotionally with female consumers.	Celebrity outfits and pop-up store visits encourage the spread of user-generated content.
GUCCI × Doraemon	Combine monogram and anime to match the Spring Festival mood.	Doraemon brings back memories of childhood companionship, subtly encouraging nostalgic spending.	Brands create a lot of social media attention by using celebrity endorsements and popular Weibo conversations.
FENDI × Pokémon	Use Dragonite in trendy designs to connect with Lunar New Year culture.	These IP collaborations elicit "memory-triggering" situations and strengthen a sense of identity continuity.	Pop-up store lines and community-driven purchases increase customer involvement.

Table 2

Coding level	Original quote	Category induction
Open coding	"Falling into the JIMMY CHOO co-branding trap", "Doraemon accompanies like a friend", "Watching animation when I was a child, buying luxury goods when I grew up"	Keywords reflecting consumers' emotions and behaviors.
Axial coding	Integration of character colors into luxury product design, Integration of FF logo and IP image, Juxtaposition of brand monogram and anime image.	Group keywords into cultural, emotional, and social themes.
Selective coding	Celebrity makeup imitation, pop-up store visits, shopping and sharing, social buzz.	Combine themes to explain co-branding's effect on behavior.

4 Discussion

4.1 Summary of findings

This study analyzes three representative cases and finds that the co-branding of luxury brands with secondary IPs can influence consumers' purchasing behavior in three aspects: "cultural alignment", "emotional resonance" and "social interaction". In other words, when the aesthetic style of the brand and the IP are harmonized, and the brand evokes the emotional connection of consumers' childhood memories or character resonance, coupled with the social design that can attract participation and sharing, it can effectively stimulate the purchase motivation. This interconnected mechanism reveals how luxury brands can move beyond their traditional positioning and truly approach the values and consumer psychology of the young generation.

4.2 Interpretation and theoretical dialogue

These findings not only support existing branding theories but also offer fresh insights into how co-branding functions across emotional and cultural domains:

This study confirms previous findings by Park et al. and Aaker & Keller that customer views are influenced by perceived brand-extension fit.

When a premium brand design language and anime IP's aesthetic are symbolically linked, buyers are more likely to form positive views and associations.

Emotional resonance: The affective side of co-branding has links with Thomson et al. and Bowlby. Emphasis is placed on emotion's role in consumer-brand relationships. Nostalgic feelings and early childhood memories take precedence in consumers' emotions towards the brand. For Gen Z in particular, the collaborative relationship means more than just nostalgia—it offers the fan communities a canvas to project themselves onto the storylines.

Social interaction: Referencing Joachimsthaler's social currency theory wherein the shared consumption product itself becomes another type of currency, this study shows how brands produce their own "social currency". Instead of simply trading products for money at Taobao or Amazon stores, consumers treat them instead as something that can be exchanged for likes, comments, and engagements within the space of co-creation — leading to higher conversion and brand participation likelihood.

In addition, this study builds on Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and field interaction. It suggests that co-branding between luxury labels and anime IPs is not simply a commercial strategy, but also a type of cultural reproduction and symbolic negotiation. Through aesthetic and participative methods, the cooperation creates a space for

defining cultural borders and restructuring social power.

4.3 Research limitations

Although this study adopts a multi-case approach to provide a relatively comprehensive understanding of co-branding mechanisms, several limitations remain:

(1) The number of data subjects is limited. This study depends less on in-person interviews with consumers about their reasons for making purchases and more on news and social media reporting.

(2) Only three luxury brands and three Japanese anime IPs were used; IPs from the West and other regions were absent. This suggests that cultural reactions may differ.

(3) Subjectivity in interpretation: Although software assisted with qualitative coding, the procedure still required the interpretation of the researcher. The categorization of topics may have been impacted by semantic variations and individual prejudice. In their future research, researchers can use triangulation once more by conducting the survey or interview. More diverse cultural cases and IP types may lead to stronger generalizability.

4.4 Practical implications

This study has several implications for branding practices: First, when choosing a co-branded IP, businesses should prioritize the fit between aesthetics and values, so as to avoid prioritizing short-term hype over brand integrity. Secondly, co-branding should not only be a design cooperation, but also deepen users' recognition and attachment to the brand through the co-creation of emotions and stories. Finally, social interaction design requires systematic planning, such as launching outfit challenges and fan participation activities to stimulate UGC (user-generated content) co-creation, further expanding the brand's voice and penetration.

5 Conclusion

Using Japanese anime IPs as cases, this study shows that collaborations between luxury brands and subcultures can influence consumers through three forces: cultural alignment, emotional resonance, and social interaction. When a brand aligns with an IP's style, it can evoke a sense of belonging; by triggering childhood memories and character projection, it bridges the emotional gap; and through community interaction and outfit sharing, it amplifies engagement and buzz. Together, these elements transform consumption into a shared cultural experience.

Successful collaborations are not merely commercial partnerships but a reimagining of emotion and identity. Theoretically, this study complements the analytical perspective on luxury brand collaborations; practically, it recommends that brands select IPs with compatible aesthetics, leverage nostalgic emotions, and design participatory activities, avoiding reliance on short-term buzz. Future research could expand to different cultural contexts, such as European and American animation, combining quantitative research to validate the universality of the mechanism and assisting brands in developing more globally oriented collaboration strategies.

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