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Person Thing Orientation and Brand Extensions

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Abstract

Emerging research has shown that consumers differ in their interaction with the environment. Person-oriented individuals selectively examine the environment and direct their attention towards people and relationships. Thing-oriented individuals primarily focus on objects and their functionality. Three studies document that person thing orientation (person vs. thing) influences how consumers evaluate brand extensions and feedback effects on the parent brand. For person-oriented (vs. thing-oriented) individuals, who are more likely to take the parent brand's perspective and closely relate the parent brand with its extension, extension fit impacts extension evaluations as well as parent brand assessments. Specifically, for person-oriented individuals, extension evaluations, feedback effects on evaluations and inherently salient brand personality impressions are more (vs. less) favorable when extension fit is high (vs. low). In contrast, thing-oriented individuals *only* evaluate the extension (vs. parent brand) such that high fit extension is viewed more favorably than low fit extension. We identify conditions that lead thing-oriented individuals to pay attention to parent brand assessments. The theoretical contributions to individual difference literature and brand extension research are highlighted along with implications for managers.

Keywords: individual differences, branding, persuasion, brand equity.