

Cobranding with Pinterest: Expediting Apparel Retail Brand Experience

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Cobranding with Pinterest: Cobranding creates a compelling point of difference for the brand, which generates greater sales from the existing target market and opens opportunities with new consumers and channels (Lebar, Buehler, Keller, & Sawicka, 2005). Pinterest is attracting much of interest from apparel brands as an effective cobranding platform to interact with consumers. Subsequently, 69% of apparel brands have a presence on Pinterest, including 90% of online specialty retailers in 2013. Pinterest users number 70 million, and 88% purchase a product they pin (Bullas, 2015). This Pinterest phenomenon is an emerging example of cobranding with apparel brands. Thus, we aim to examine: (a) the impacts of apparel brand reputation (Brand-effect1) and Pinterest usefulness (Brand-effect 2) on consumer experiences of apparel brand at Pinterest; (b) the impacts of consumer experiences of apparel brands at Pinterest on attitudinal loyalty toward apparel brand (Brand-loyalty 1) and Pinterest (Brand-loyalty 2) respectfully; and (c) the mediation of consumer apparel brand experience at Pinterest between apparel brand reputation (Brand-effect1) and apparel brand's attitudinal loyalty (Brand-loyalty 1).

Hypothesis: Brand reputation refers to the cumulative judgments of a brand over time (Gioia, et al., 2000). Perceived usefulness is the extent to which users believe technology will help facilitate task completion (Davis, 1989). Consumer brand experiences are operationalized as technology enabled social interactions with brands in digital environments (Shaw, 2009). Attitudinal loyalty refers to visit intention, recommendations to others and relational attachment (Veloutsou, 2007). To test the cobranding effect of Pinterest, five hypotheses are developed:

H1 & H2: Apparel brand's reputation (Brand-effect 1: H1) and Pinterest usefulness (Brand-effect 2: H2) positively influences consumer brand experience at Pinterest.

H3 & H4: Apparel brand experience at Pinterest positively influences attitudinal loyalty toward apparel brand (Brand-loyalty 1: H3) and Pinterest (Brand-loyalty 2: H4).

H5: Apparel brand experience in Pinterest mediates the relationship between apparel brand reputation (brand-effect 1) and apparel brand attitudinal loyalty (Brand-loyalty 1).

Methods: Existing scales from literature measured: brand reputation and attitudinal loyalty (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009), perceived usefulness (Davis, 1989), and consumer experience (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013). A consumer panel of Pinterest users ($n = 300$) was recruited via an online consumer panel. A majority of respondents were female aged 25-34 years (49.8%) or 18-24 years (35.8%), with a majority of household incomes of \$25,000-\$43,999 (45.8%) or \$44,000-\$64,999 (22.7%), and a bachelor's degree (39.1%) or some college (33.4%).

Findings: The measurement model showed a good model fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 244.567$, CFI of .928, RMSEA of .083), and the fit statistics of the structural model indicated a good fit ($\chi^2 = 239.949$, CFI of .932, RMSEA of .078). Upon testing the structural model, the effects of 'Brand-effect 1' (H1: $\Gamma = .365$, $t = 3.487$, $p < .001$), and Brand-effect 2 (H2: $\Gamma = .630$, $t = 4.931$, $p <$

.001) on consumer apparel brand experience at Pinterest were significant. The effects of apparel brand experience at Pinterest on 'Brand-loyalty 1' (H3: $\beta = .813$, $t = 10.770$, $p < .001$) and 'Brand-loyalty 2' (H4: $\beta = .956$, $t = 12.350$, $p < .001$) were also significant. To test the mediating effect of apparel brand experience at Pinterest, the rival model was estimated. The fit statistics of the rival structural model indicated a good fit ($\chi^2 = 115.848$, CFI of .933, RMSEA of .094). While there is no direct effect of 'Brand-effect 1' to 'Brand-loyalty 1' ($\beta = .110$, $t = 1.146$, $p = .252$), robust positive impacts of 'Brand-effect1' on retail brand experience at Pinterest ($\beta = .940$, $t = 9.207$, $p < .001$) and 'Brand-loyalty 1' ($\beta = .583$, $t = 7.312$, $p < .001$) was revealed. Thus, the mediating effect of Pinterest site was supported, which validates the cobranding effect of Pinterest for the apparel brand. In sum, all hypotheses were robustly supported, which empirically support the cobranding effect of apparel brand's reputation with Pinterest's popularity.

Conclusion. The co-branding agreement involves two or more brands acting in cooperation to associate various brand effects to a specific product that is designated for this purpose. Cobranding with Pinterest combines the strength of partner brands, in order to increase value to brands, attract new customers, and validate the brand among consumers. An effective brand Pinterest page creates important backlinks that expand apparel brand awareness and direct other consumers to the brand website (Walberg, 2015).

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