



What brand extensions need to fully benefit from their parental heritage

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Abstract

It is well established that consumer acceptance of a brand extension depends on how strongly it fits with its parental origins. Less appreciated is how this acceptance also depends on the mental association created in consumers' minds between the extension and its parent brand. Our investigation considers the gateway role played by this association's mental accessibility in allowing extensions to fully benefit from their parental heritage. Six studies examine the effect of reinstating an extension's association with its parent brand on extension evaluations. When reinstatement enhances the parental association's accessibility, it strengthens the parent brand's influence, leading to more or less favorable extension evaluations contingent upon the extension's fit with its parental origins. These reinstatement effects carry important implications for brand-extension managers and researchers.

Keywords Brand extensions · extension-parent brand association · reinstatement effect · accessibility · assimilation and contrast effects

Brand extensions, whereby an established parent brand lends its name to products not offered originally by the brand, are ubiquitous in today's marketplace. Parent brands hope to bestow their equity (e.g., how much consumers like the parent brand, their perceptions of product quality, etc.) upon their offspring. For example, Smith & Wesson has sold firearms

and ammunition since 1852. Today its brand appears on clothing, watches, sunglasses, and many other items. The Dr. Pepper name and unique taste can be found in the form of licorice sticks, jelly beans, and even lip gloss. Disney offers its Disney Baby clothing line and Disney Cruise Line for family-oriented vacations. Duracell capitalizes upon its reputation for long-lasting batteries by selling a wireless charger for mobile devices. The Food Network Kitchen represents this television network's entry into the restaurant business.

Understanding the benefits a new product may receive when positioned as a brand extension has been of interest to researchers in the field of marketing for more than 30 years (University of Minnesota Consumer Behavior Seminar 1987). To date, the extent to which extensions benefit from their parental heritage as an intangible asset (Hulten 2010) has been explored in terms of a parent brand's relevance to its extension or, in the parlance of the extension literature, how well the parent brand and extension "fit" together (Aaker and Keller 1990; Broniarczyk and Alba 1994; Park et al. 1991). Stronger fit increases the parent brand's influence on consumers' evaluations of its extension. The importance of fit is aptly illustrated by Gerber's pursuit of growth opportunities beyond its core baby market. Gerber Graduates, targeting the toddler market, gained consumer acceptance. Gerber Singles, targeting young adults, quickly failed.

Our investigation seeks to add to the field's understanding of when brand extensions may fully benefit from their parental heritage. It does so by considering extensions' most

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fundamental characteristic, their connection to their parent brands. Companies forge these connections in the marketplace by branding their extensions with their parental heritage. Marriott’s pursuit of business travelers led to its Courtyard by Marriott hotel chain and the placement of both brand names on Courtyard’s buildings. Gerber’s name and an image of the iconic Gerber baby appear on Graduates’ packaging. Advertising also communicates an extension’s parentage. An FSI ad for Kellogg’s with the headline “Find A New Fave” displays the parent brand name and some of its extensions, from various cereals to its Pop Tarts brand.

Importantly, although the *physical* presence of an extension’s connection to its parent brand in the marketplace is necessary for an extension to inherit the parent brand’s positive equity, we caution marketers that it may not, by itself, be sufficient. It is the *mental* presence of this connection when consumers are evaluating products, forming consideration sets, and making their choices that ultimately determines whether an extension fully benefits from its parental heritage. This connection becomes a mental association between memory nodes representing the parent brand and the extension within the consumer’s mind (Keller 1993, 2003). We refer to this mental association as the extension’s *parental association*.

The purpose of our investigation is to document the pivotal role played by the parental association’s accessibility (i.e., the likelihood of it being mentally activated) at the moment of extension evaluation. By reminding consumers of an extension’s parental origins as they are about to render their evaluations, thereby maximizing its accessibility at this key

moment, and comparing these evaluations to those obtained in the absence of such a reminder, one can determine if this memorial association is of sufficient strength to allow the extension to reap the full rewards of its parental heritage. For instance, if reactivating an extension’s parental association proves inconsequential, this indicates that the association’s strength is sufficient. If, however, reactivation causes a noticeable increase in the parent brand’s influence on extension evaluations, this is a clear indication that the parental association’s strength is insufficient and further strengthening is needed. We refer to this increased influence of a parent brand on consumer response due to reactivating an extension’s existing parental association at the moment of extension evaluation as the *reinstatement effect*.

As summarized in Table 1, we present six (five here, one in a Web Appendix) studies that speak to the reinstatement effect and whether existing brand extensions are benefiting from the full benefits of their parental heritage. The initial three studies illustrate reinstatement’s influence on the accessibility of an extension’s parental association and, consequently, extension thoughts and evaluations. The remaining studies were more motivated by their relevance to practitioners. Thus, we inform marketers about the lost opportunities to capitalize on a parent brand’s equity that may occur if their extension’s parental association is neglected. We present an easily implemented methodology for gauging whether the strength of their extensions’ parental association is sufficient for the parent brand to maximize its impact on consumer response or if it needs further strengthening. Our investigation also adds to the

Table 1 Summary of reported studies

Study	Research question	Independent variable(s)	Dependent variable	Brand extension	Key finding(s)
1	Does prior accessibility of the parental association moderate the reinstatement effect?	Reinstatement; parental association’s prior accessibility	Extension evaluations	Gerber Graduates	Reinstatement enhances extension evaluations under lower accessibility of parental association of an extension, but has no effect when this association’s accessibility is higher.
2	How are thoughts about the extension affected by reinstatement?	Reinstatement	Thought listing	Gerber Graduates	Reinstatement enhances thoughts about the extension involving its parent brand.
3	Does reinstatement produce a contrast effect?	Reinstatement	Extension evaluations	Lamborghini’s fictitious concept car	Reinstating the parental association of an extension that fails to fit its parental heritage lowers extension evaluations.
4	Does the parent brand’s physical presence during extension evaluation negate the reinstatement effect?	Reinstatement	Extension evaluations	Gerber Graduates Lil’ Biscuits	Reinstatement enhances extension evaluations despite the parent brand’s identification on the packaging that was present when participants reported their evaluations.
5	Might the parental association be so strong that reinstatement does not matter?	Reinstatement; product ownership	Extension evaluations	Apple iPhone	Reinstatement does not affect extension evaluations regardless of iPhone ownership.
Web Appendix	Might product purchase moderate the reinstatement effect?	Reinstatement; purchase behavior	Extension evaluations	Gerber Graduates	Reinstatement enhances extension evaluations for former purchasers and non-purchasers; it has no effect on current purchasers’ evaluations.

extension literature, as past efforts say very little about the accessibility of an extension's most fundamental association, its parental connection. We further inform extension researchers about how the presence of an extension's parental association in their measurements can shape consumer response to brand extensions.

Our paper takes the following path. We initially discuss the reasons why marketers cannot rely solely on the physical presence of their extensions' parental branding within the marketplace to ensure that extensions are receiving the full benefits of their parental heritage. We then review the extent to which accessibility, in general, and that involving the extension's parental association, in particular, has been examined empirically within the brand extension literature. Afterwards, we present our conceptualization of the reinstatement effect and the hypotheses it suggests, followed by five studies. We conclude with the implications of our investigation for marketing practice and extension research.

Accessibility of extensions' parental heritage

It might be tempting to think that the marketplace connection between an extension and its parent brand is sufficient for the extension to fully benefit from its parental heritage. Such a view presumes that the physical presence of the parent brand on the extension offering equates to its mental presence when consumers are making their extension evaluations and purchase decisions. Yet there are reasons to resist this temptation.

First, the desired branding may not be executed properly, particularly when other parties become involved in the selling process. Consider the travel sites offering bookings at a variety of hotels. Sometimes they list Courtyard by Marriott, but sometimes it is listed only as Courtyard, even within the same site.

Second, consumer decision making is not limited to situations where products and information about them are physically present. Consumer researchers differentiate between stimulus-based and memory-based decision making (Barone et al. 2017; Lynch Jr. and Srull 1982; Lynch Jr. et al. 1988; Shapiro et al. 1997). Consumers scrolling through a travel site to identify hotels worth considering for an upcoming trip are using a stimulus-based decision process. Consumers searching through memory for hotels to consider are following a memory-based decision process. The physical presence of an extension's parental association becomes inconsequential in memory-based decision processes. It is the accessibility of decision inputs that is critical (Nedungadi 1990). In memory-based decision processes, unless consumers are retrieving preexisting extension evaluations already engrained with the effects of the extension's parental heritage, an extension cannot benefit from its parent's equity without its parental association being accessible when extension evaluations are being made.

Finally, even when an extension's parental association is physically available during stimulus-based decision making (e.g., the consumer looking at a package of Graduates on the grocer's shelf), this does not guarantee that the association will be highly accessible at the moment of product evaluation. Many stimuli will be available for processing and competing for the consumer's attention (e.g., other elements on the extension's package, its price, competitors' products and prices). As such, the parent brand's presence may not catch the consumer's attention. Even if it does and its association to the extension is activated, this parental association may still lack the accessibility needed to influence extension evaluation. The accessibility of one piece of information can be undermined by the processing of additional stimuli, giving rise to interference effects (Alba and Chattopadhyay 1986; Burke and Srull 1988). Thus, stimuli processed other than the extension's parent brand may interfere with the parental association's accessibility.

Ultimately, whether the physical presence of an extension's parental association ensures its mental presence (that it is highly accessible) during product evaluation can only be determined empirically. Accordingly, one of our studies provides such an empirical test. Next, we consider what existing brand extension research has learned about the influence of accessibility, particularly that involving the association between a parent brand and its extension.

Prior extension research testing accessibility effects

To better understand the attention given to accessibility by previous brand extension research, we searched for articles appearing in peer-reviewed marketing journals within the EBSCO database using the keywords "brand extensions" and either "accessibility," "prime/priming," or "salience." We included priming because it is expected to enhance the accessibility of certain cognitive structures or associations. Salience is sometimes used interchangeably with accessibility. We identified 12 relevant articles, the details of which are reported in Table 2.

Extension researchers have examined accessibility effects for a variety of cognitive inputs, from as micro as a parent brand's durability association (Meyvis and Janiszewski 2004) to as macro as consumers' thinking style (Monga and John 2007, 2010) and self-view (Ng and Houston 2006). However, only Barone (2005) appears germane to our interests. He finds that the impact of an extension–parent fit manipulation depends on the order in which participants respond to measures assessing their extension evaluations and their perceptions of the extension's similarity to its parent brand. When extension evaluations were measured before perceived similarity, these evaluations were unaffected by the fit manipulation. The fit manipulation did impact extension evaluations assessed following the measure of perceived similarity.

Table 2 Brand extension research testing accessibility effects

Article	Examines the accessibility of:	Independent variables	Dependent variable(s)	Principal finding(s)
Ahluwalia and Gürhan-Canli (2000; Study 2)	Extension information	Accessibility of extension information, degree of fit, valence of extension information	Parent brand beliefs, parent brand attitude	Accessibility of extension information moderates feedback effects on parent brand attitudes. Dilution and enhancement effects occur irrespective of extension typicality under lower accessibility, but not when accessibility was higher.
Bambauer-Sachse et al. (2011)	Extension-parent brand fit	Fit prime, degree of fit, advertising element	Extension evaluations, parent brand attitude	Advertising elements that prime the fit between parent brand and extension enhance evaluations of a moderately congruent extension, but not the evaluations of a poor fitting extension.
Barone (2005; Experiment 2)	Extension-parent brand similarity	Mood, extension type, measurement order	Extension evaluations, perceived fit	Accessibility of parent brand-extension similarity moderates the effect of extension type on extension evaluations. When parent brand-extension similarity was measured before extension evaluations, these evaluations depend on extension type. The influence of extension type disappears when measured in the opposite order.
Chang et al. (2011)	Self-regulatory foci	Priming of self-regulatory foci, benefit overlap, similarity	Extension evaluations	Priming of self-regulatory foci moderates the effects of similarity and benefit overlap on extension evaluations.
Loken and John (1993)	Extension typicality	Extension attribute information, product type, measurement order	Family brand beliefs	Prevention-focused (promotion-focused) consumers depend only on similarity (benefit overlap) for extension evaluation. Dilution of family brand beliefs is less likely for atypical extensions when extension typicality is measured before family brand beliefs.
Mao and Krishnan (2006; Experiment 2)	Type of extension-parent brand fit	Accessibility of fit type, fit type, cognitive resources	Extension evaluations	Accessibility of exemplar (prototype) fit under low (high) cognitive resources results in more favorable extension evaluations.
Maoz and Tybout (2002; Experiment 2)	Information about extension competitive performance	Degree of fit, accessibility of competitive performance	Extension evaluations, parent brand attitude, attribute recall, post-evaluation fit, task satisfaction	Accessibility of extension performance information relative to competitors moderates the effect of fit on extension evaluations. The facilitative effect of moderate incongruence on extension evaluations emerged only when the extension was undifferentiated from competitors. When the extension enjoyed a competitive advantage, extension evaluations did not differ between congruent and moderately incongruent conditions.
Mathur et al. (2012; Study 2)	Brand personality	Implicit theory goal orientation, fit, brand personality salience	Parent brand attitude, extension evaluations, pre and post brand personality measures	Salience of brand personality moderates the effects of implicit theory goal orientation and extension fit on brand personality impressions. High personality salience leads incremental theorists to focus on the effort in introducing extensions and update (dilute) parent brand personality impressions only for poor (good) fitting extensions that involve high (low) effort. These differences are attenuated when brand personality is not salient.
Meyvis and Janiszewski (2004; Experiments 1-3)	Parent brand's durability benefit association	Experiment 1 : Similarity of existing parent brand products to extension, breadth of products offered by parent brand, counterbalanced presentation order and brand name, category replicates	Extension choice	Because the parent brand's benefit association is more accessible for dissimilar than similar broad parent brands, the extension is chosen more often as the extension becomes more dissimilar to its broad parent brand. The opposite occurs for narrow parent brands where accessibility is unaffected by parent-extension similarity.

Table 2 (continued)

Article	Examines the accessibility of:	Independent variables	Dependent variable(s)	Principal finding(s)
		Experiment 1 Experiment 2: Same as Experiment 1	Extension choice	Changing to a stimulus-based decision context (versus Experiment 1's memory-based context) eliminates differences in accessibility and the advantage of a broad parent brand being dissimilar.
Monga and John (2007; Study 2)	Styles of thinking	Experiment 3: Parent brand breadth, benefit accessibility/diagnosticity, counterbalanced presentation order and brand name, category replicates Culture, styles of thinking prime	Extension choice	Shows expected changes in extension choice due to reductions in the accessibility of the broad parent brand's benefit association relative to the narrow brand.
Monga and John (2010; Studies 2-5)	Styles of thinking	Study 2: Parent brand concept (functional versus prestige), styles of thinking prime	Extension evaluations, perceived fit	Priming Caucasian (Indian) Americans to think holistically (analytically) enhances (reduces) perceptions of an extension's fit with the parent brand and extension evaluations.
		Study 3: Styles of thinking prime, brand architecture (direct brand versus sub-brand)	Extension evaluations, perceived fit	Primed styles of thinking interact with brand architecture such that holistic (analytic) thinkers perceive stronger (weaker) extension-parent fit and held more (less) favorable evaluations of a distant extension from a functional parent brand using a direct branding strategy. No such differences occurred with a sub-branding strategy.
	Styles of thinking, communication	Study 4: Styles of thinking prime, communication type (no information versus elaborational information)	Extension evaluations, perceived fit	Primed styles of thinking interact with communication type such that holistic (analytic) thinkers perceive stronger (weaker) extension-parent fit and held more (less) favorable evaluations introduced with no information. No such differences occurred when the extension was introduced with an elaborational communication.
	Styles of thinking	Study 5: Styles of thinking prime, message frame (analytic versus holistic)	Extension evaluations, perceived fit	Primed styles of thinking interact with message frame such that analytic (holistic) thinkers perceive stronger (weaker) extension-parent fit and held more (less) favorable evaluations of a distant extension from a functional parent brand when introduced with an analytic message frame. Conversely, holistic (analytic) thinkers perceive stronger (weaker) extension-parent fit and held more (less) favorable evaluations of a distant extension from a functional parent brand when introduced with a holistic message frame.
Ng and Houston (2006; Study 4)	Self-view	Brand variance, self-view prime	Extension evaluations, perceived fit	Priming self-view produced differential effects on extension evaluations and perceived fit. Priming an interdependent (independent) self-view led to more favorable extension evaluations and stronger perceived fit when brand variance was low (high).

Parental fit matters only if the parent brand is being considered when constructing extension evaluations, and such consideration requires an accessible parental association. Asking about the similarity between a parent brand and its new extension necessarily activates the extension’s parental association; doing so immediately before assessing extension evaluations makes this association more accessible when these evaluations are being rendered. Thus, the measurement order effect observed by Barone may be due to altering the parental association’s accessibility. However, another possibility is that the order effect stems from making thoughts about the extension’s similarity to the parent brand, not simply their association, more accessible. As such, there is some ambiguity about the particular judgmental inputs (e.g., thoughts about the parent brand versus those about its similarity to the extension) made more accessible by having participants make similarity judgments prior to reporting their evaluations.

In the following section, we present an approach that isolates the influence of enhancing the parental association’s accessibility on extension evaluations by reinstating this association within the evaluation measure itself. We conceptualize when reinstatement should impact extension evaluations and present some of the hypotheses suggested by this conceptualization that are examined by our research.

The reinstatement effect

Consider the market researcher interested in assessing consumers’ evaluations of Gerber Graduates. A measure asking “What is your opinion of Gerber’s Graduates?” reinstates the extension’s parentage and ensures its high accessibility at the time of judgment. By comparison, a measure asking “What is your opinion of Graduates?” does not. In this instance, the parental association’s accessibility depends on consumers’ propensity to activate the parent brand when queried about

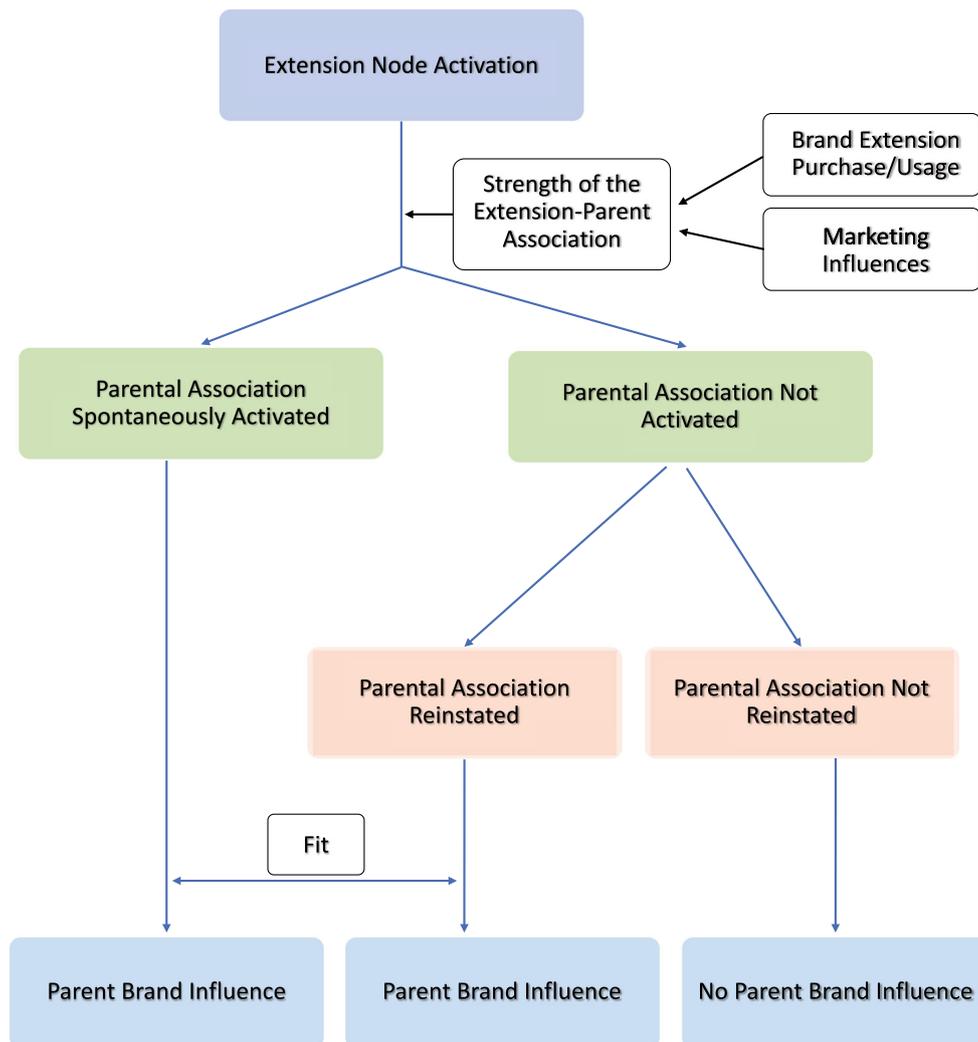


Fig. 1 Conceptualizing the reinstatement effect

the sub-branded product only. Significant differences in the extension evaluations obtained by these two measures would evidence a reinstatement effect and indicate that the mental linkage between the extension and parent brand nodes is not of sufficient strength to reach the level of accessibility achieved by its reinstatement.

A diagrammatic representation of our conceptualization for when reinstatement should matter is presented in Fig. 1. A fundamental determinant of the reinstatement effect is what happens when the memorial node representing a brand extension is activated. If the associative strength between the parent brand and its extension is so strong that the former is spontaneously activated while thinking about the latter (e.g., thinking about Graduates triggers its connection to Gerber), reinstating the extension's parent brand is immaterial. The parent brand's influence on extension evaluations should be the same whether consumers are asked about Graduates or Gerber Graduates. When reinstatement does not alter consumers' evaluations, this indicates that the memorial strength of the parental association is at its optimum level.

The optimum associative strength between the parent brand and its extension is likely to depend on a variety of factors. Associations are strengthened through repeated activation. Graduates' association with Gerber, for instance, is present on the product packaging. So each time Graduates is purchased or used, its parental association is potentially activated and strengthened. Repeated activation of this association may eventually strengthen it to the point where activating Graduates alone causes the spontaneous activation of Gerber. For this reason, consumers' purchase and usage of the brand extension may be an important influence on the strength of the parental association, a possibility examined by a study reported in the Web Appendix. Buying and using the product more frequently makes the association stronger and its spontaneous activation more likely.

Similarly, marketing efforts (e.g., advertising) may strengthen the association through repetitive reactivation, perhaps overriding any moderating effects of purchase and usage. Starting with its 1984 Super Bowl commercial for the Macintosh computer, Apple Inc.'s marketing prowess has long been recognized, helping it become one of the most valuable brands in the world (Elliott 2013). Perhaps one benefit of Apple's marketing presence has been the creation and strengthening of the parental association with its various extensions to the point that thinking about one of them automatically triggers its parentage. We empirically explore the strength of the iPhone–Apple connection later.

It is only when spontaneous activation does not occur that reinstating the parental association has the possibility of impacting extension evaluations. A unique aspect of reinstating the parental association within the extension evaluation measure is that it ensures its maximum accessibility at the precise moment extension evaluation takes place. This is, of

course, what marketers desire. It is not necessarily equivalent to the reinstatement that may occur due to an extension's packaging, however. Although the parental connection on the packaging may be processed before the consumer engages in product evaluation, time may elapse between these two events as other stimuli in the shopping environment are processed. If so, the parental association's accessibility is undermined.

Guidance on how the parental association will shape extension evaluations is provided by the inclusion/exclusion model (IEM; Bless and Schwarz 2010; Schwarz and Bless 2007). The IEM recognizes that accessible information can be influential in two different ways. On the one hand, it can be used to form a mental representation of the to-be-judged object. When accessible information (e.g., the parent brand) is included in the mental representation of some object (e.g., its extension), the evaluation of the object should assimilate toward the evaluation of the information. So if a positive (negative) parent brand becomes part of the extension's representation, extension evaluations will become more (less) favorable (i.e., assimilation will occur). The stronger the fit between the parent brand and its extension, the more likely assimilation takes place.

Alternatively, rather than using the parent brand when forming a representation of the extension, it might be used to develop a representation of the judgmental standard by which the extension is evaluated. This is possible when parent brands extend themselves in ways that conflict with their parental heritage (e.g., Gerber's extension targeting young singles). So, if a positive (negative) parent brand becomes part of the standard used to judge the extension, extension evaluations will become less (more) favorable (i.e., contrast will occur).

Finally, when accessible information is not used when forming representations of the standard or target, it will be inconsequential and neither contrast nor assimilation will ensue. In accordance with the IEM's predictions, Wanke et al. (1998) report assimilation and contrast effects on brand extension evaluations based on whether the name of a car extension encouraged its categorization as a member of the parent brand category.

This conceptualization of the reinstatement effect offers a number of testable predictions. Below are the particular hypotheses suggested by it and tested in our investigation:

- H1: Reinstatement of an extension's association to a well-liked parent brand will not influence extension evaluations when it does not alter the parental association's accessibility.
- H2a: When reinstatement of an extension's association to a well-liked parent brand enhances this association's accessibility during extension evaluation, evaluations of extensions that fit their parental heritage will increase.

H2b: When reinstatement of an extension’s association to a well-liked parent brand enhances this association’s accessibility during extension evaluation, evaluations of extensions that do not fit (i.e., strongly depart from) their parental heritage will decrease.

Study 1

Our initial study assesses the reinstatement effect of H2a for an established and successful extension from a parent brand possessing considerable equity, namely, Gerber Graduates. It was further expanded to provide a test of H1. A prerequisite for the reinstatement effect’s occurrence is that activating the extension node does not spontaneously activate the extension’s parental association. If it does, this association will be highly accessible, thereby leaving reinstatement no opportunity to impact its accessibility and, consequently, to affect extension evaluations. By making the parental association highly accessible immediately before participants encounter the extension evaluation measure, reinstatement’s opportunity for enhancing this association’s accessibility would be diminished. The reinstatement effect should therefore be attenuated, if not eliminated.

Method

Design and participants A total of 111 undergraduate business students from a southeastern U.S. university participated for extra credit. They were assigned randomly to the cells of a 2 (reinstatement: present or absent) × 2 (prior accessibility: higher or lower) factorial design. The reinstatement manipulation varied the presence of the parental association in the extension evaluation measure. The prior accessibility

manipulation altered the presence of a measure intended to make the parental association highly accessible prior to participants providing their extension evaluations.

Stimuli, procedure, and measures Upon logging into an online survey, participants learned they would evaluate a brand extension from a well-known brand. They viewed an actual ad for Graduates mini-fruit snacks containing copy referring to the advertised product as Gerber Graduates. The Web Appendix contains the ad, the instructions given to participants, and all of the measures administered in the study (such materials are available in the Web Appendix for all of the studies being reported).

After viewing the ad, those in the lower prior accessibility condition reported their extension evaluations on the subsequent screen. The phrasing of this measure varied across the two conditions. In the reinstatement cell, the measure was: “My opinion of Gerber Graduates mini-fruit snack for toddlers is.” The evaluation measure used in the non-reinstatement cell simply omitted the parent brand. Participants reported their evaluations using two nine-point scales anchored by negative/positive and unfavorable/favorable. These responses were averaged ($r = .81, p < .01$); higher scores indicate more favorable evaluations.

For the higher prior accessibility condition, a screen and measure appeared between the screens containing the ad and the extension evaluation measure. This measure asked participants to identify the advertised product by selecting one of these options: “Gerber,” “Graduates,” “Gerber Graduates,” “None of the above, it had a completely different name,” or “Sorry, I can’t remember the product name.” To the extent that Gerber Graduates is identified correctly (77.2% did so), this will increase the parental association’s accessibility, thus undermining any boost in accessibility due to reinstatement in the subsequent evaluation measure.

All participants were then asked some additional questions, primarily demographic in nature. These measures and

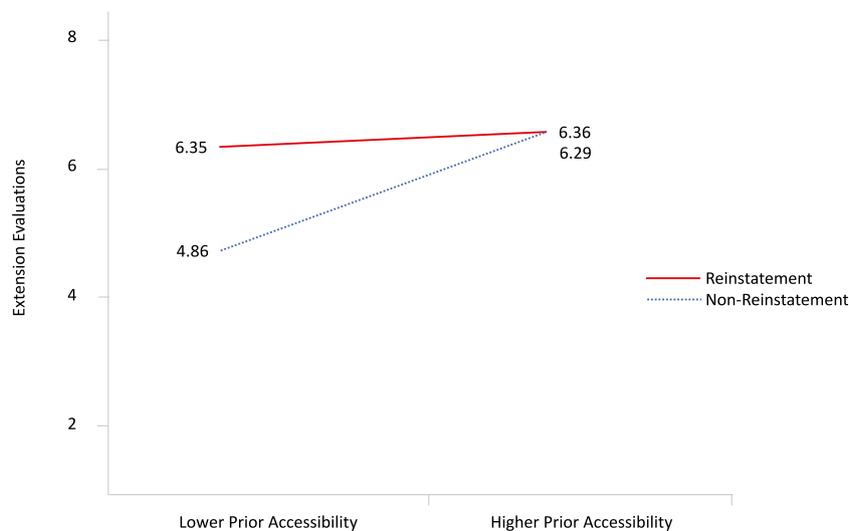


Fig. 2 Extension evaluations by reinstatement and prior accessibility (Study 1)

participants' responses to them for this and the remaining studies are provided in the Web Appendix.

Results and discussion

Extension evaluations were submitted to a 2 (reinstatement) \times 2 (prior accessibility) ANOVA. In accordance with H2a, a reinstatement main effect emerged ($F(1, 107) = 4.81, p < .04, \eta^2 = .04$), with more favorable evaluations in the reinstatement ($M = 6.32, S.D. = 1.50$) than non-reinstatement ($M = 5.65, S.D. = 2.02$) condition. There was also a main effect for prior accessibility ($F(1, 107) = 4.98, p < .03, \eta^2 = .041$) as evaluations were more favorable in the higher ($M = 6.32, S.D. = 1.73$) than lower accessibility condition ($M = 5.66, S.D. = 1.81$).

These effects were qualified by an interaction, depicted in Fig. 2, between prior accessibility and reinstatement ($F(1, 107) = 5.71, p < .02, \eta^2 = .047$). In accordance with H2a, reinstatement produced more favorable evaluations ($M = 6.35, S.D. = 1.59$) compared to non-reinstatement ($M = 4.86, S.D. = 1.74, F(1, 107) = 10.2, p < .003, \eta^2 = .084$) in the lower prior accessibility condition. This was not so in the higher prior accessibility condition. Consistent with H1, evaluations did not differ between the reinstatement ($M = 6.29, S.D. = 1.43$) and non-reinstatement ($M = 6.36, S.D. = 2.01$) conditions ($F(1, 107) < 1$). In support of an accessibility accounting, prior accessibility of the extension's parental association moderates the reinstatement effect, as expected.

Study 2

This study supplements the preceding evidence concerning reinstatement's influence on the parental association's accessibility. Presumably, by increasing the accessibility of the extension's parental association, reinstatement leads to more thinking about the parent brand and its association with the extension. We tested this expected impact on thinking by having participants report retrospectively their thoughts while processing an ad for Gerber Graduates. When the thought-listing measure reinstates the parental association, reported thoughts should show greater activation of Gerber and more of its presence in thoughts about Graduates.

Method

Design and participants A total of 55 undergraduate business students from a Midwestern U.S. university participated for extra credit. They were assigned randomly to either a reinstatement or non-reinstatement cell.

Stimuli, procedure, and measures Participants attending face-to-face sessions were told that they would evaluate a brand

extension from a well-known brand and were given a folder holding an ad, a filler page, and a page containing a thought-listing measure. They then viewed the ad for Graduates mini-fruit snacks used in Study 1. Participants proceeded through the materials at their own pace, but they could not turn back once they had turned to a new page. In the reinstatement condition, the thought-listing measure instructed participants to report the thoughts and feelings they experienced when looking at the ad for Gerber Graduates. The measure in the non-reinstatement condition used an identical instruction except for its omission of Gerber.

Results and discussion

Participants' written thoughts were coded by two judges blind to condition. First, the frequency of Gerber or Graduates appearing in the thoughts was recorded. Thoughts were also coded into one of three categories based on whether they pertained to the product ($n = 118$) or the ad ($n = 187$). Ambiguous thoughts or those pertaining to something else were classified separately ($n = 15$). Product thoughts were further categorized as described subsequently. Inter-judge agreement was 94%; disagreements were resolved through discussion.

One indication of reinstatement enhancing Gerber's accessibility is this brand being mentioned more frequently and by more participants. Consistent with this, a one-way ANOVA showed that Gerber was mentioned significantly ($F(1, 53) = 5.29, p < .03, \eta^2 = .09$) more often when it was reinstated ($M = 1.18$) than when it was not ($M = 0.67$). Similarly, the percentage of those mentioning Gerber at least once was greater ($Z = 1.80, p = .072$) in the reinstatement (71.4%) than non-reinstatement (48.2%) cell. In contrast, as the Graduates name always appeared in the measure, Graduates' accessibility should be insensitive to the reinstatement manipulation. Mentions of Graduates and the percentage mentioning it were unaffected ($p > .2$).

Product thoughts were classified into four categories: (1) thoughts about the parent brand (e.g., "Gerber is all about nutrition"; $n = 25$), (2) extension thoughts that mention the parent brand (e.g., "Gerber is making a product that satisfies the nutritional and developmental needs"; $n = 27$), (3) extension thoughts that do not mention the parent brand (e.g., "positive healthy snacks for kids"; $n = 40$), and (4) thoughts about the fit between the parent brand and extension (e.g., "It is relevant to Gerber's other products, so it would be better accepted"; $n = 26$). One-way ANOVAs indicated that reinstatement increased Gerber thoughts ($M = .61$ versus $M = .30; F(1, 53) = 4.32, p < .04, \eta^2 = .08$) and extension thoughts involving Gerber ($M = .68$ versus $M = .30; F(1, 53) = 6.00, p < .02, \eta^2 = .10$). Reinstatement did not affect extension thoughts that were independent of the parent brand ($p > .2$) or thoughts involving fit ($p > .4$). Collectively, these results are consistent with reinstatement's presumed enhancement of the parental association's accessibility which should increase the parent brand's presence during and influence on thinking.

Study 3

The next study broadens our findings about the reinstatement effect in several ways. Previous research has examined extensions from a wide range of product categories that typically did not receive a separate brand identity. This study uses an unbranded extension from an automobile maker, a more involving product category than considered thus far. Study 1's results are further limited by the type of reinstatement effect they evidence. They show that reinstating the parental association will enhance extension evaluations (H2a), unless this association is already highly accessible (H1). Study 3 assesses H2b's prediction that reinstatement will lower evaluations of an extension strongly departing from its parental origins.

Additionally, Study 3 considers the plausibility of an alternative accounting for reinstatement's influence. Similar to respondents inferring meaning from response scales (e.g., Menon et al. 1995), the parent brand's presence in the evaluation measure may be interpreted as conveying its expected relevance to the requested evaluation. From this perspective, the parent brand becomes a judgmental input because reinstatement signals it should be used, not because it is more accessible. Conversely, when reinstatement is not employed, the parent brand's absence might be interpreted as a signal that the parental association should be ignored and extension evaluations are adjusted accordingly. We evaluate this possibility by assessing whether participants' perceptions of how they were expected to rate the extension might account for the reinstatement effect.

Method

Design and participants Participants were assigned randomly to one of three cells in which they received information about a concept car. In two of the cells, Lamborghini, the highest rated automobile brand in a pretest, was described as the concept car's manufacturer. These two cells differed only in Lamborghini's reinstatement within the measure assessing evaluations of the concept car. In the third cell, the materials were silent about the concept car's maker, thereby providing a useful baseline for gauging the impact of associating the concept car with Lamborghini.

Participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk in return for compensation. Only those passing an attentional screener were allowed to participate in the study. This screener involved asking "How carefully will you perform the tasks in this survey?" followed by a nine-point not at all–very carefully scale. Preceding this question were instructions indicating that respondents should answer "not at all" to show that they had read and followed the instructions. Of the 181 individuals attempting to participate in our study, 31 individuals failed this screener. Our findings are based on the 150 individuals that passed it.

Stimuli, procedure, and measures All participants received materials describing a new concept car and its features, and containing a picture of the car. We selected features for this concept car that were atypical for a Lamborghini. It was a single-passenger hybrid vehicle designed to provide cost effective transportation. It would not be unfair to suggest that the car resembled a box on wheels. Other than being an automobile, there was nothing in the description or image remotely suggestive of a Lamborghini.

Nonetheless, in two of the cells, the concept car was associated with Lamborghini. For these cells, the descriptive materials and concept car's picture were preceded by (1) a heading "Meet the NEW concept car from" followed by the image of Lamborghini's iconic logo containing its name and the golden bull and (2) a paragraph about the company and its sports cars. In the third cell, nothing pertaining to Lamborghini was presented.

Procedurally, participants read a cover story that a company was interested in consumers' opinions about a new product being considered for market introduction. Next, they encountered the concept car materials (with or without the Lamborghini association) and responded to the following measures. First, they evaluated the concept car on two nine-point scales anchored by negative/positive and unfavorable/favorable. These responses were averaged ($r = .96, p < .001$). In the two cells linking the concept car to Lamborghini, the evaluation measure asked "What is your opinion of the Lamborghini concept car?" in the reinstatement cell or "What is your opinion of the concept car?" in the non-reinstatement cell. This latter measure was also used in the third cell where a parental association was not created.

Immediately after evaluating the concept car, participants indicated their perceptions of how they were expected to rate the concept car by selecting one of the following options: "I have no idea about what was expected," "I was expected to rate it favorably," or "I was expected to rate it unfavorably." This measure allowed us to assess if participants' interpretations of how they should respond based on the presence or absence of the parent brand name could account for the findings. Participants in the Lamborghini cells then reported their perceptions of the fit between this brand and the concept car on three nine-point scales anchored by not at all logical/very logical, not at all appropriate/very appropriate, and a bad fit/good fit ($\alpha = .97$). They also reported their attitudes toward Lamborghini automobiles in general using three nine-point scales (bad/good, undesirable/desirable, and inferior/superior; $\alpha = .93$).

Results and discussion

Attitudes toward Lamborghini automobiles were highly favorable ($M = 7.84, S.D. = 1.33$) and did not differ across the cells linking the concept car to this company ($t(98) < 1$). Nor did

these cells differ in the perceived fit between Lamborghini and the concept car ($t(98) < 1$) which, on average, was quite poor ($M = 4.13$, $S.D. = 2.53$).

We initially compared evaluations of the concept car in the reinstatement and non-reinstatement cells in a one-way ANOVA that included fit as a covariate. Fit was a significant covariate ($F(1, 97) = 58.66$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .37$). Extension evaluations were lower ($F(1, 97) = 4.88$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2 = .03$) in the reinstatement ($M = 5.71$, $S.D. = 2.9$) than non-reinstatement cell ($M = 6.61$, $S.D. = 2.4$), indicating H2b's predicted contrast effect.

Evaluations of the concept car were also submitted to a one-way ANOVA using all three cells in order to assess how evaluations of the concept car as an extension compared to those of the concept car when it lacked a parental affiliation. As fit was not measured in the latter cell, it could not be used as a covariate in this analysis. The overall test of differences across the cells did not reach significance ($F(1, 147) = 2.16$, $p = .12$, $\eta^2 = .028$). However, our interests lie in comparing particular cells. Pairwise comparisons indicated that evaluations of the concept car did not differ ($F(1, 147) < 1$) when the car was not linked to a parent brand ($M = 6.61$, $S.D. = 2.06$) or it was associated with Lamborghini without this association being reinstated in the evaluation measure ($M = 6.61$, $S.D. = 2.4$). However, associating the concept car with Lamborghini and reinstating this association in the measure produced evaluations ($M = 5.71$, $S.D. = 2.9$) less than those obtained in the absence of the Lamborghini connection ($F(1, 147) = 3.24$, $p = .07$, $\eta^2 = .02$) and for the Lamborghini concept car evaluated in the absence of reinstatement ($F(1, 147) = 3.26$, $p = .07$, $\eta^2 = .02$). Thus, when the parental association was not reinstated, the concept car was evaluated no differently than if the parental association had never existed. Only when reinstatement made this association highly accessible did evaluations suffer. The car's poor fit with the well-liked Lamborghini brand induced a contrast effect.

We next considered participants' perceptions of how they were expected to rate the concept car. Although most participants had no idea about how they were expected to respond, this perception was less evident ($Z = 2.5$, $p = .01$) in the reinstatement (51%) than non-reinstatement (74.5%) cell. Thus, the presence of the parent brand led more participants to infer that they were expected to rate the car in a particular way. It was not, however, in a manner that could account for reinstatement's contrast effect in this study. To do so, more participants in the reinstatement cell should be reporting that they were expected to rate the car less favorably. Instead, the opposite occurred as 42.9% in the reinstatement cell thought they were expected to rate the concept car favorably compared to 25.5% in the non-reinstatement cell ($Z = 1.86$, $p = .06$). These results do not support the alternative accounting of the

reinstatement effect based upon respondents using the parent brand's presence as a signal of how they were expected to evaluate the product.

Study 4

As noted in our prior discussion of why marketers should be concerned with the mental accessibility of their extension's parental association, an extension's parental association might be presumed to be highly accessible in stimulus-based decision environments so long as this association is physically available for processing. We also explained why this may not be so. In this study, we examine whether reinstatement enhances the parent brand's influence when an image of the extension's packaging featuring the parent brand is present during extension evaluation. The plausibility of the alternative account for reinstatement's influence tested in the prior study is again tested here.

Method

Design and participants Participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk in return for compensation and were assigned randomly to either a reinstatement or non-reinstatement cell. We limited participation to members of the focal product's (Gerber Graduates) target market (mothers with at least one child less than ten years of age). Given the potential for participants to misrepresent themselves in order to qualify for the study (Wessling et al. 2017), 270 individuals were screened initially using a set of demographic measures; 63 qualified as target market members. This group then encountered the same attentional screener used in Study 3. Five did not pass, leaving 58 mothers that participated in the study.

Stimuli, procedure, and measures Participants were asked to imagine that they were shopping for their family in a grocery store. They would be shown some grocery products and asked their opinions about them. They then proceeded to look at an image of the front packaging of five typical grocery products, large enough to easily view the package elements and information, one product at a time. Only the last product, Gerber Graduates Lil' Biscuits, a snack for toddlers, was of interest; the rest served as filler products.

Each screen also contained a measure placed directly below the product image. As such, participants could see and easily refer to the packaging, if they so desired, when responding to the measure. Each product had its own unique measure in the hope that doing so would be more engaging and lead to more thoughtful responses. For the focal product, participants in the reinstatement cell were asked to indicate their opinion of the Gerber Graduates snack for toddlers on the two response scales used previously. An identical measure,

except for the omission of Gerber, was used in the non-reinstatement cell. Responses for the extension evaluation measure were averaged ($r = .87, p < .001$). Finally, we again asked participants to report their perceptions of how they were expected to rate the snack as done in Study 3.

Results and discussion

Extension evaluations were compared between the reinstatement and non-reinstatement cells. Consistent with H2a, these evaluations were more favorable ($t = 2.08, p < .05, \eta^2 = .077$) when the parental association was reinstated ($M = 6.91, S.D. = 1.92$) than when it was not ($M = 5.71, S.D. = 2.47$). Thus, despite the parent brand's identification on the packaging that was present when participants reported their evaluations, insuring its accessibility via reinstatement enabled the extension to further benefit from its parental heritage.

We next considered participants' perceptions of how they were expected to rate the snack. Most (68%) had no idea about how they were expected to respond and this perception did not differ ($Z < 1$) between the reinstatement (69%) and the non-reinstatement (68%) cells. Similarly, no difference was found ($Z < 1$) between those perceiving they were expected to rate the snack favorably in the reinstatement (31%) and non-reinstatement (29%) cells. Only one participant thought she was expected to rate the snack unfavorably. As in Study 3, there is no indication of the reinstatement effect being due to participants' perceptions of how they were expected to evaluate the product.

Study 5

Is it possible for a parent brand to forge such a strong mental association with its offspring that an extension's parentage is spontaneously activated, even among consumers who are not currently buying or using the extension? Our final study was motivated by this question. As suggested in the prior section on conceptualizing the reinstatement effect, we suspected that Apple might be such a brand. We further suspected that Apple's strong brand rankings reflected not only the positive equity earned by Apple among so many consumers, but that it might also be indicative of how strongly Apple is connected mentally with its extensions. Study 5 examines this possibility using the Apple iPhone.

Method

Design and participants In exchange for extra credit, a total of 401 students were recruited from a large public university in the southeastern U.S. ($n = 272$) and a private university in Mexico City ($n = 129$). The online survey was distributed in English in both countries. Participants were assigned

randomly to one of two cells which varied the parent brand's presence in the extension evaluation measure.

Stimuli, procedure, and measures Participants were told they would be reporting their product opinions. Unlike the preceding studies where the extension's parental association was activated by exposure to an ad or other materials before extension evaluations were assessed, participants in this study were not provided any such materials before reporting their evaluations. They indicated their evaluations of either the iPhone or the Apple iPhone using the same response scales as before ($r = .90, p < .001$). Participants also indicated their experience owning an iPhone by selecting one of three options: I currently own an Apple iPhone ($n = 326$); I have owned an Apple iPhone, but not now ($n = 37$); I have never owned an Apple iPhone ($n = 38$). Finally, participants reported their attitudes toward the Apple parent brand ($\alpha = .91$) and demographics.

Results and discussion

We begin with parent brand attitudes to assess whether the Apple brand's equity differed between the American and Mexican participants. These attitudes were analyzed using a 3 (ownership) \times 2 (reinstatement) \times 2 (sample: U.S. or Mexico) ANOVA. Only the main effect of ownership achieved significance in this analysis ($F(2, 389) = 67.46, p < .01, \eta^2 = .173$). Current iPhone owners held more favorable attitudes toward Apple ($M = 7.9, S.D. = 1.16$) than did previous owners ($M = 6.3, S.D. = 2.09, t(361) = 7.73, p < .01$) or those who had never owned an iPhone ($M = 5.5, S.D. = 1.93, t(362) = 11.66, p < .01$). These latter two groups did not differ in their attitudes toward Apple ($t(73) = 1.72, p > .05$).

Extension evaluations were submitted to a 3 (ownership) \times 2 (reinstatement) \times 2 (sample) ANOVA. Again, the only significant effect involved ownership ($F(2, 389) = 102.91, p < .01, \eta^2 = .264$). Participants currently owning an iPhone held more favorable iPhone evaluations ($M = 8.1, S.D. = 1.39$) than those who were previous owners ($M = 5.6, S.D. = 2.11, t(361) = 9.83, p < .01$) or who had never owned an iPhone ($M = 4.7, S.D. = 1.78, t(362) = 13.71, p < .01$). These latter two groups did not differ in their iPhone evaluations ($t(73) = 1.89, p > .05$).

Importantly, evaluations of the iPhone were unaffected by whether Apple was present ($M = 7.49, S.D. = 1.94$) or absent ($M = 7.62, S.D. = 1.88$) in the measure ($F(1, 389) = 2.24, p > .1, \eta^2 = .006$). Nor did reinstatement interact with ownership ($F(2, 389) = 1.46, p > .1, \eta^2 = .003$). These results indicate that the association between the extension and its parent brand was so strong that simply thinking about the former activated the latter and made it highly accessible at the time extension evaluations were rendered regardless of whether the extension had ever been owned.

Web Appendix study

Although Study 5 provides encouraging evidence of a company's ability to forge very strong associations between a parent brand and its extension, we thought it worth examining the robustness of these findings for a different product, parent, and extension. We did so for Gerber's Graduates and observed noteworthy differences in the reinstatement effect depending on whether consumers were currently purchasing the product. Space constraints prevent us from describing here the study's details and findings; these are available in the Web Appendix.

General discussion

Our research considers how and when reinstatement of an extension's parental association may influence consumers' extension evaluations. Sometimes an extension is so strongly connected to its parent brand that thinking about the former activates the latter. When this happens, reinstatement will prove inconsequential (H1).

It is when this association is of insufficient strength that reinstatement may matter. It matters because reinstatement has the opportunity to enhance the accessibility of the parental association, thereby causing the associations attached to the parent brand node to also become more accessible. Having these associations accessible during extension evaluation gives the parent brand a better opportunity for influencing this evaluation. When it does, extensions benefit from their association with a well-liked parent brand and assimilation occurs (H2a). It is also possible that extensions may depart too far from their parental origins. If they do, the parent brand's positive equity hurts extension evaluations and contrast occurs (H2b).

Our findings consistently support this depiction of the reinstatement effect. Reinstating Graduates' connection to the well-liked Gerber brand showed greater parental influence on thinking (Study 2) and resulted in more favorable evaluations (Studies 1 and 4). However, reinstatement did not always enhance favorable extension evaluations. When Graduates' parental association was made highly accessible prior to being reinstated, the reinstatement effect disappeared (Study 1). Nor did reinstating the iPhone's parent brand matter as their connection is so strong that consumers spontaneously activated the Apple brand regardless of whether they had ever owned an iPhone (Study 5). Finally, the potential for reinstatement to reduce extension evaluations was demonstrated by testing an automobile extension that strongly departed from its parental origins (Study 3).

Our attention to the reinstatement effect was motivated by several factors. Given accessibility's importance in determining consumers' product attitudes and the parent brand's

potential to shape extension evaluations, understanding the influence that originates from their intersection (the accessibility of the extension's parental association) seemed needed. Such an understanding may be valuable for those responsible for an extension's success. It may be valuable for those researching brand extensions. We now address both of these implications.

Managerial implications

Intangible assets are investments in organizational capabilities that create or strengthen product and service platforms that position a firm to compete in existing and new markets (Hulten 2010). They are of growing importance in valuing firms and creating capital (Haskel and Westlake 2018), dominating the valuation of tangible assets such as land, buildings and plant in many sectors. One such asset is the equity a brand holds among consumers. Capitalizing upon this equity enhances a firm's prospects for success when moving into new markets. Our research seeks to enhance practitioners' appreciation of what is required before brand extensions can fully capitalize on the equity of their parental origins.

The physical presence of an extension's parent brand affiliation in the marketplace does not guarantee the full inheritance of its parental heritage. This presence becomes irrelevant when consumers rely solely on the contents of their memories during decision making. Even if the extension's parental association is physically present during decision making, this should not be equated to its mental presence at the moment consumers are evaluating the extension. Indeed, despite the presence of Graduates' packaging containing the Gerber parent brand and its iconic image of a smiling baby, the mothers participating in our research still reported more favorable extension evaluations when the parental association was made highly accessible through reinstatement at the precise moment they were asked for these evaluations (Study 4).

Ultimately, it is the strength of the extension's mental association with its parent brand that matters. It is essential for those offering brand extensions to make this association so strong that the parent brand is activated automatically whenever consumers are thinking about the extension during product evaluation and decision making. It will not be easy to do so. Despite decades of existence, Graduates' connection to Gerber has not grown strong enough to cause many of our participants to spontaneously activate its parental association, as evidenced by the impact of reinstating Graduates' parentage in multiple studies. Even previous customers of Graduates held more favorable product attitudes when its parentage was reinstated (see Web Appendix study). These findings underscore the marketing challenge of building the connection between the extension and its parent brand within the

consumer's mind. Nonetheless, this is not an insurmountable challenge, as documented by Study 5's examination of the Apple iPhone. Regardless of whether they had ever owned an iPhone, consumers from two countries reported iPhone evaluations unaffected by Apple's reinstatement, thereby indicating that the iPhone-Apple association is so strong that thinking about the iPhone activates its parental heritage.

Our research further illustrates an easily implemented approach for assessing whether an extension's connection to its parent brand possesses the strength needed for it to fully benefit from its parental heritage. Simply compare consumers' evaluations of an extension in the presence versus absence of its parental connection being reinstated. When extensions from parent brands with strong equity are evaluated the same regardless of the parent's reinstatement, the strength of the parental association is as good as it can be and the extension is receiving its full parental benefits (as was the case for the Apple iPhone). If extensions are evaluated more favorably when the parent brand is reinstated, further strengthening of the extension's parental association will be needed for it to fully enjoy its parental heritage.

Our findings are, however, silent about how extension marketers can strengthen the association between an extension and its parent brand in consumers' minds. This guidance will require further efforts beyond the scope of this investigation. With this caveat in mind, we offer some suggestions. Perhaps adjustments in the prominence of the parent brand and/or its placement relative to the extension's name on packaging and in advertising will help. Our interest in brand extensions has heightened the attention paid to these executional aspects and we have encountered ads and packages that seemed suboptimal for strengthening the parental association and its accessibility. For instance, a commercial for Courtyard hotels that aired during the 2017 holiday season made no reference to its parental affiliation until the very end, when it briefly showed the Marriott name with no auditory reinforcement. It seems reasonable to think that consistent and repetitive activation of the extension–parent brand connection in marketing communications can strengthen this association.

Finally, our research illustrates that a strong mental connection between an extension and a parent brand possessing substantial equity does not guarantee that the extension will benefit from its parental heritage. To the contrary, it may actually undermine consumer acceptance. This was so for the concept car that did not fit the image of a Lamborghini automobile (Study 3). The lack of fit did not simply eliminate the concept car's ability to gain from its parental heritage; it caused the car to be evaluated even less favorably than if this parental association never existed. It is only when extensions fit their parental origins will they benefit from being strongly connected inside the consumer's mind.

Implications for future brand extension research

It is known that detecting the effects of marketing stimuli (e.g., comparative advertising) may depend heavily on the measurements used for their detection (Miniard et al. 1993; Rose et al. 1993). Our findings convey the significance of this in detecting the effects of positioning an offering as a brand extension, as aptly illuminated by Study 3. Evaluations of the concept car were unaffected by its parental association so long as this association was not reinstated in the evaluation measure; it was as if the parental association had never existed. Yet when the parental association was reinstated, a significant reduction in evaluations was observed. Thus, a small change in measurement (a single word's presence or absence) can substantively alter what is found and concluded about a parent brand's influence. Researchers should consider the appropriateness of reinstating the parent brand when measuring extension evaluations.

Notably, parental influence has been observed previously despite the use of measures that did not reinstate explicitly the extension's parental association (e.g., Sood and Keller 2012; Spiggle et al. 2012). The difference between these findings and the null effects observed here for the non-reinstatement measures raises questions about what might account for these variations. Particular methodological features or characteristics of the parent brands and extensions tested might be responsible and yet presently unrecognized. Additional efforts will be needed to reveal their existence.

Another methodological implication of our research is the value of a control group for evaluating extensions that have wandered too far from their parental origins. Unambiguous identification of the contrast effect in Study 3 would not have been possible without it. Previous extension research (e.g., Sood and Keller 2012; Monga and John 2007; Mathur et al. 2012) showing diminished evaluations as fit declines have lacked the control group needed to determine whether poor fitting evaluations simply stopped benefiting from their parental association versus were penalized for being too distant from their parental origins. Studies interested in distinguishing between these two possibilities would benefit from including the appropriate control group for doing so.

Further theorizing and research is needed for developing a more nuanced understanding of the reinstatement effect. Our investigation, while documenting how and when reinstatement of an extension's parental association may impact extension evaluations, is silent, conceptually and empirically, about the role played by different types of parent brand associations in producing the reinstatement effect. Activating the consumer's attitude toward the parent brand would enable evaluative consistency inferences; activating attribute-specific associations of the parent brand would allow for probabilistic inferences. This lack of knowledge about the parent brand associations and inferential processes underlying the reinstatement effect might be addressed.

Moreover, our conceptualization of the reinstatement effect presumes a process in which evaluations are constructed based on those accessible judgmental inputs deemed relevant. Such a process must occur when evaluations are formed for the first time. Yet once formed and stored in memory, consumers might follow a different process in which these preexisting evaluations are retrieved and used during decision making. Others have considered this distinction and its implications (e.g., Nayakankuppama et al. 2018; Schwarz 2007). Its relevance to the impact of reinstatement should be considered as well. In this regard, we would note that preexisting extension evaluations will be engrained with whatever parental influence existed during their initial construction. Seemingly, this would eliminate the potential for reinstating the parental association to influence measured extension evaluations. If so, then a null reinstatement effect could indicate measured evaluations either (1) are being constructed and the extension's association to a strong equity parent brand is activated despite the absence of reinstatement or (2) are based on the retrieval of preexisting evaluations. Notably, the pragmatic implication (no need to strengthen the extension's association with its parent brand) is the same for either possibility.

Our investigation also raises a question about the practice of sub-branding in which the extension is given its own brand identity such as Graduates (e.g., Janiszewski and Van Osselaer 2000; Milberg et al. 1997; Sood and Keller 2012). Sub-branding is thought to evoke a subtyping process (Sujan and Bettman 1989; Weber and Crocker 1983) in which a potential category member is represented cognitively as a special instance of the category, linked as a subcategory, but kept outside the category itself. As such, subtyping is thought to immunize an offspring from its parental association. Consistent with this, Sood and Keller (2012, Experiment 1) report that sub-branding an extension eliminated fit's influence on extension evaluations.

Interestingly, the immunizing effect anticipated by this branding tactic was not evident in our research. Consumer response was affected by an extension's parental association, even when sub-branded, so long as this association was highly accessible at the time of product evaluation. Perhaps this divergence in findings is due to differences in the accessibility of the extension's parental association. Sood and Keller's (2012) evaluation measure did not reinstate the parental association. Whatever the reason for these divergent findings, their existence indicates more needs to be learned about this branding tactic. This is important for not only understanding a parent's influence on its extension, but for understanding an extension's ability to exert feedback effects on parent brand attitudes (e.g., Ahluwalia and Gürhan-Canli 2000; Gürhan-Canli and Maheswaran 1998; John et al. 1998; Loken and John

1993). Sub-branding is the only mechanism identified thus far by which a parent brand might protect itself from adverse feedback effects. This protection's vulnerability to the accessibility of a parent brand's extension association could be explored.

Much is known about what determines the accessibility of that which resides in human memory (e.g., associative strength, how recently activated, interference effects). This knowledge provides a foundation for understanding the factors that impact the accessibility of a brand's associations. This knowledge has not, however, been applied to building our understanding about enhancing the accessibility of an extension's parental association. Various brand architectures (Aaker and Joachimsthaler 2000) may differ in their potential to facilitate a parent brand's accessibility. How and where a parent brand is presented on packaging seems likely to matter. Nor have extension researchers considered the potential for marketing activities to strengthen the association between an extension and its parent brand. Efforts along these lines would certainly help to inform extension marketers how they can better bestow their extensions with the benefits of their parental heritage.

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