Connecting Places and Products: Exploring the Effectiveness of a Tourism-Agriculture Co-marketing Alliance

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This thesis is presented for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

This Ph.D. research project examined the effectiveness of a co-marketing alliance between a tourism place and its local products, including agriculture-based products (e.g., agrifood products). The relationship between a place and a product has been acknowledged in prior research. For example, drawing on the country-of-origin literature, Han (1989) argues that consumers develop perceptions of a country to form their perceptions of products originating from that country. Beyond this however, the product-place relationship has not been adequately understood from a co-marketing alliance perspective, especially in a tourism-agriculture context. Understanding the characteristics of a successful place-product co-marketing alliance across two different industry sectors is important, not least because it can potentially help operators in both sectors identify ways to maximize the opportunities open to them. In summary, the three papers included in this Ph.D. research project sought to explore how to achieve a successful place-product co-marketing alliance, as well as ways to enhance its effectiveness.

The first paper (Paper 1) examined the relationship between a tourism place and its local product offerings by examining the role of three image types (i.e., general country image, product country image, and tourism place image) on consumer behaviour (i.e., purchase intention and visit intention) in a place-product co-marketing context. In addition, the roles of advertising and consumer knowledge were also explored.

A sample of 147 participants were recruited at shopping centres in China and invited to participate in a quasi-experimental study. The data, analysed via a Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) approach using the AMOS software package, revealed that product-country image has a positive impact not only on consumers’ product purchase intentions, but also on their intentions to
visit a tourism place from where the product originates. Similarly, tourism place image not only positively influenced consumers’ visit intentions but also their intentions to purchase a product originating from this place. The findings of this paper suggest the existence of valuable co-marketing opportunities for the tourism and agriculture sectors.

The second paper (Paper 2) explored ways to achieve a successful co-marketing alliance between a tourism place and its local products (e.g., agricultural products). Most prior research examining the place-product relationship has focused on the influence of a place on a product (e.g., Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005; Lee & Lockshin, 2009; Ranasinghe, Park, & Malanee, 2017). The influence of a product on a place has only received limited attention. Paper 2, therefore, empirically examined three image transfer types (i.e., functional image transfer, symbolic image transfer, and experiential image transfer) in a product to place context, as well as identified consequences (i.e., a tourist’s desire to visit). Using a quasi-experimental design, a total number of 662 valid responses were collected online in China. A Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) approach was used to analyse the data using the AMOS software package. The results of this study suggested that symbolic images of a product can be directly transferred to a place and subsequently lead to stronger tourist desire to visit the place. Functional image transfer from a product to a place can also enhance tourist desire to visit the place but indirectly so through self-congruity.

The third paper (Paper 3) examined how the effectiveness of a place-product co-marketing alliance can be enhanced through perceived fit. Corresponding to the three image transfer types discussed in Paper 2, this paper empirically examined the impact of three types of benefit-based perceived fit (i.e., functional fit, symbolic fit, and experiential fit) in a place-product co-marketing alliance context. A quasi-experimental approach was also adopted in this study and a total number of 1000 potential Chinese tourists were recruited online. The results suggested that all three benefit-
based types of perceived fit contributed significantly to the evaluations of a place-product co-marketing alliance. Specifically, all three types of fit directly influenced both place and product attitudes. In addition, while functional fit and symbolic fit directly influenced consumers’ desire to visit a place or purchase a product, experiential fit indirectly influenced product desire through positive product attitudes.

In summary, this Ph.D. research project advances understanding of a place-product co-marketing alliance by examining relevant theoretical foundations as well as practical ways to achieve a successful co-marketing alliance. As such, this research not only contributes to the limited literature in the area, but it also provides important suggestions for both tourism and agricultural product marketers, especially those with an interest in Chinese consumers.
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# Authorship Declaration: Co-Authored Publications

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Chapter One provides an overview of this thesis. It begins with the background of this research project. This is followed by a discussion of the research gaps and research questions. A summary of the research objectives is presented next. This chapter then presents the research context, research design, methodology, and expected contributions.

1.1 Research Background

A fiercely competitive market has sparked firms’ growing interest in seeking alliances or stepping into partnerships to differentiate themselves from others and achieve a competitive advantage (e.g., Bengtsson, 2002; Grieco & Iasevoli, 2017). This marketing strategy, which has become increasingly popular since 1990, involves co-marketing: the creation of strategically complementary alliances between two or more independent businesses as they work toward a shared goal (Bucklin & Sengupta, 1993; Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Firms can benefit from co-marketing alliances in several ways, such as by mitigating risk and conserving costs during new product development, improving firms’ recognition, or expanding market share (Thompson & Strutton, 2012). Many practical examples of such alliances exist, especially in the global market. For instance, fashion brands often establish alliances to reinforce their brand images and raise brand awareness (Geylani, Inman, & Hofstede, 2008). One case is H&M, a fast-fashion clothing brand that has collaborated with luxury brands such as Alexander Wang and Balmain (Ahn, Kim, & Forney, 2009) to promote its brand image. Yet co-marketing alliances are not guaranteed to be successful—computer giant Dell’s reputation suffered from quality problems attributable to its
partner Intel (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Therefore, how to cultivate a fruitful co-marketing alliance represents a key issue for researchers and practitioners alike.

The term ‘co-marketing alliance’ is broad and is not limited to collaborative efforts between two brands; numerous types of alliances are possible. A co-marketing alliance can be instituted in different product categories (i.e., cross-category marketing), between a brand and a product (i.e., brand extension), or between a person and a brand (i.e., endorsement) (Ahn, Kim, & Forney, 2009). Although many terms have been adopted to describe this form of cooperation, co-marketing alliances are defined in this thesis as those involving any associations between two or more partners. The co-marketing alliance of interest in this work involves a tourism place and its local products.

Within tourism, marketers and researchers have sought to market places by identifying a distinctive image or strengths that differentiate one location from others (e.g., Rein, Kotler, & Haider, 1993). Tourism places can collaborate with local product producers as a means of distinction. In particular, local products can amplify tourists’ recall of their visits (i.e., purchasing these products as souvenirs) (e.g., Altintzoglou, Heide, & Borch, 2016; Mossberg, 2007; Sims, 2009; Sthapit & Björk, 2019). Local products also infuse a place with unique value, helping the location cultivate a clear ‘sense of place’ compared with other destinations (e.g., Haven-Tang & Jones, 2005; Kivela & Crotts, 2006). Torres (2002) suggested that introducing tourists to local and domestic products can strengthen the connection between tourism and agriculture. Several governments, including that of Australia, have come to recognise the potential link between these sectors. Indeed, integrating agribusinesses and tourism presents ample opportunities for both industries (Cciwa.com, 2017).
Most studies investigating the place–product relationship have focused on a place’s impact on a product. For example, the place image can benefit a product (e.g., Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005; Lee & Lockshin, 2009; Phillips, Asperin, & Wolfe, 2013; Ranasinghe, Thaichon, & Ranasinghe, 2017). In the country-of-origin literature, Padopoulos and Heslop (1986) were among the first to consider how a positive place image influences products originating from that place. They discovered that tourists who had previously visited a destination were more likely to display favourable perceptions of products made there versus tourists who had not visited before. Relatedly, Han (1989) developed the HALO model to demonstrate that the image of a country, as a place, could positively influence evaluations of products originating from that country.

Knowledge of this positive place–product association has been applied in many product contexts. One case is Swiss watches, where the characteristics of these watches are often associated with the attributes of Switzerland as a country (i.e., reliability and meticulousness). Similarly, for ‘Paris Channel perfume,’ the attributes of Parisian perfume are associated with the city’s qualities such as elegance (e.g., Azevedo, 2004; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1986; Ranasinghe, Thaichon, & Ranasinghe, 2017). Limited research has explored the opposite relationship (i.e., marketing a place from a product perspective). However, scholars have demonstrated that a product can contribute to favourable consumer perceptions of a tourism place from where the product originates (e.g., Azevedo, 2004). For example, Kim and Kwon (2018) noted that local Korean food may enhance Korea’s overall image and increase tourists’ willingness to visit.

Given the documented relationship between a place and a product, both objects can be co-marketed (e.g., Ranasinghe, Thaichon, & Ranasinghe, 2017). Studies have provided useful insights into the place–product relationship. Yet whether favourable product perceptions benefit place
image remains poorly understood, as does the mutual influence of place image and product image. These possibilities warrant further inquiry.

1.1.1 Relationship Between Place Image and Product Image

Place image captures consumers’ holistic impressions of a place (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991); product image refers to consumers’ overall impressions, beliefs, and/or attitudes regarding a product (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Elliot, Papadopoulos, and Kim (2011) developed an integrative model combining place image and product image. They were the first to empirically examine the interaction between both image types. Their study showed that, if consumers favored products originating from a tourism destination, they may perceive this place as highly attractive and be more inclined to visit. Scholars have come to similar conclusions in other settings such as Korea (e.g., Kim & Kwon, 2018; Phillips, Asperin, & Wolfe, 2013). Due to the limited understanding of place–product relationships, the first aim of this thesis is to investigate the cross-over effect between a tourism place and a local product associated with that place.

Advertising is an essential tool for marketing tourism places and products. In a product marketing context, advertising emphasises products’ feature(s), price, and performance, thereby raising consumers’ product awareness and convincing them to purchase (Ulgado, Wen, & Lee, 2011). For instance, tourism marketing campaigns can boost the appeal of nature-based tourism destinations and encourage visitation (Hem, Iversen, & Gronhaug, 2003; Salehi & Farahbakhsh, 2014). Advertising efforts around a tourism place and its local products may be more effective if approached collaboratively. This thesis therefore also seeks to clarify the role of advertising in a place–product co-marketing context. To elucidate the place–product relationship, this research is grounded in the following questions, which are addressed in Paper 1 (Chapter 3):
• What are the relationships among various types of images (i.e., place image and product image)?

• Does advertising play a role in image perception formation (i.e., place image and product image)?

1.1.2 Influence of a Product on a Place Through Image Transfer

Paper 1 suggests that favourable consumer perceptions of local products can generate visit intention; however, exactly how this outcome arises is unclear. The image transfer literature (Yang & Ha, 2014) may offer theoretical support for the mechanism underlying this relationship. Image transfer refers to the transferability of information (e.g., attributes or benefits) from one entity to another (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999). Advertising scholars have long realised the potential for image transfer between an endorser and the endorsed brand/product (e.g., Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001): an endorser’s positive image, such as physical attractiveness, trustworthiness, or responsibility, can transfer to the endorsed brand or product. In other words, an endorser’s image can inform the image of a brand or a product (McCracken, 1989).

Image transfer can also occur between products and brands. If consumers hold favourable perceptions of a product made in a specific place (i.e., the strong reputation of German cars), they will likely express positive beliefs about a new brand in the same category (i.e., various car brands made in Germany) (Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, & Palihawadana, 2011). In terms of brand extension, the positive image of a parent brand (i.e., high quality) is likely to be transferred to its product extensions under the same brand (Park, Jun, & Shocker, 1996). Image transfer can occur between two brands as well, such as the image of Apple (i.e., high quality, appealing to youth) being transferred to its collaborative partner Gatorade (Smarandescu, Rose, & Wedell, 2013). A
place and a product can likewise benefit from image transfer in a place marketing context (e.g., Aydin, Erdogan, & Baloglu, 2021; Azevedo, 2004; De Nisco, Elliot, & Papadopoulos, 2016). Positive perceptions of Switzerland as a country (i.e., reliability, perfectionism) are apt to be transferred to watches made there (Ranasinghe, Thaichon, & Ranasinghe, 2017). The country is considered at the place level in this scenario. As such, to determine how a product influences a place, this thesis empirically explores image transfer between a tourism place and its local products.

The co-marketing literature can partly explain the image transfer process. Effective co-marketing is widely thought to depend on successful image transfer between participating partners (e.g., Smarandescu, Rose, & Wedell, 2013; Yang & Ha, 2014). Image transfer can positively influence consumers’ purchase behaviour (e.g., Kahle & Homer, 1985; Liu & Brock, 2011). It may also lead to other consequences that are essential to a co-marketing alliance. One such element, self-congruity, is a core image consideration in marketing research. Self-congruity refers to the match or mismatch between consumers’ perceptions of themselves (i.e., self-concept) and the image of a product/brand or a tourism destination (Sirgy & Johar, 1999; Sirgy & Su, 2000). Based on the assumption that image transfer can happen between a place and a product, self-congruity toward a tourism place is presumably likely to increase due to advantages associated with the image of a product transferring to that of a place. Self-congruity is also a significant predictor of consumer behaviour (e.g., Ibrahim & Najjar, 2008). Therefore, it seems logical to investigate how self-congruity relates to a tourism place. The role of image transfer in self-congruity has basically gone unnoticed but represents a worthy research focus. To discern how products affect places in a place–product co-marketing context, Paper 2 (Chapter 4) intends to address the following question:

- What is the role of image transfer in a place-product co-marketing context?
1.1.3 Role of Perceived Fit in a Place–Product Co-marketing Context

Paper 2 demonstrates the importance of image transfer in a place–product co-marketing context. A natural extension of this work involves examining ways to promote image transfer. This thesis hence also contemplates this question (Paper 3 in Chapter 5).

Fit perceptions should be taken into account to encourage image transfer. These perceptions have been suggested as primary determinants of effective image transfer (e.g., Ahn, Kim, & Forney, 2009; Ahn & Sung, 2012). More precisely, if consumers perceive a strong fit or see a strong link between partners in a co-marketing alliance, the image of one partner may transfer more easily to the other than in a case of no or weak fit. Image transfer can thus be either established or enhanced depending on whether two heterogeneous products or brands appear suited to one another (e.g., James, 2006; Jongmans et al., 2019; Norman, 2017; Smith, 2004). A poor fit may lower the probability of positive association transfer between partners (e.g., Aaker & Keller, 1990; Smith, 2004). The ability of perceived fit to expedite image transfer has been documented with respect to brand extension (e.g., Bridges, Keller, & Sood, 2000), co-branding (Ahn, Kim, & Forney, 2009), endorsement, and sponsorships (Smith, 2004). Fit perceptions deserve consideration to ensure successful co-marketing.

Perceived fit refers to the degree of congruity between two product categories or brands. This fit can build on brand associations, including attributes that connect partners (Bridges, Keller, & Sood, 2000; Simonin & Ruth, 1998; Zdravkovic, Magnusson, & Stanley, 2010). The image literature (Keller, 2003) has outlined three major forms of product benefits: functional, symbolic, and experiential. Fit types corresponding to these benefits also exist, namely functional fit, symbolic fit, and experiential fit. Scholars have ascertained the effects of these fit types on
consumers’ responses to a co-marketing alliance. For example, consumers’ fit perceptions about functional aspects (i.e., ruggedness or reliability) can contribute to a favourable marketing alliance between the automotive and technology industries (Van der Lans, Van den Bergh, & Dieleman, 2014). Fit perceptions of partners’ symbolic features (i.e., sophistication) have been shown to inform consumers’ purchase behaviour in a brand alliance between a watch brand and a phone brand (Ahn & Sung, 2012). Experiential fit (i.e., being fun to use) positively affected consumers’ attitudes toward a co-marketing alliance between clothes and watches (Riley, Charlton, & Wason, 2015). Fit perceptions can exert differential impacts on consumers’ evaluations of a co-marketing partnership as well (e.g., Ahn & Sung, 2012; Riley, Charlton, & Wason, 2015).

Aside from the aforementioned examples, a vivid picture of the impact of perceived fit on co-marketing alliances remains elusive. The concept is often treated as either functional or symbolic (Ahn & Sung, 2012). Partners must account for several types of fit when forging a marketing alliance. For instance, upon detecting fit-related impacts, entities will be better positioned to choose highly advantageous partners in co-marketing alliances (e.g., Newmeyer, Venkatesh, & Chatterjee, 2014). Paper 3 scrutinizes the effects of three types of fit (functional fit, symbolic fit, and experiential fit) on consumer behaviour in a place–product co-marketing alliance based on the following research question:

- What are the relationships between the various types of perceived fit and consumers’ responses toward a place–product co-marketing alliance?

The general and specific objectives of this thesis are presented in the next section.
1.2 Research Objectives

The overall objective of this research is to examine how to achieve a successful marketing collaboration between a tourism place and its local products. The specific aims of this work are threefold:

1. To explore the relationships between consumers’ perceptions of a place and its products (Paper 1);
2. To explore how a product promotes a tourism place through image transfer (Paper 2); and
3. To explore the role of perceived fit in a place–product co-marketing context (Paper 3).

1.3 Research Context

1.3.1 Place and Product Selection: Australian Ecotourism and Agricultural Products

This thesis investigates Chinese tourists’ responses to a collaborative marketing effort between Australian ecotourism and an Australian agricultural product. The tourism and agriculture sectors are two of the country’s pillar industries; both contribute significantly to its economy (Ecotourism Australia, 2015; National Farmers’ Federation, 2019). During the 2018–2019 fiscal year, the tourism industry directly contributed roughly AU$60.8 billion to Australia’s gross domestic product (GDP). This proportion exceeded the growth in national GDP and generated 666,000 jobs comprising 5% of the Australian workforce (Tourism Australia, 2022). Agriculture is another important sector in Australia, contributing about AU$90 million per annum to the national economy (Webcache, 2014). The Australian government has acknowledged the promise of collaboration between these two industries and has sought to link them (Cciwa.com, 2017). Marketing a tourism place with the help of local products therefore represents a worthy endeavor.
Ecotourism was the chosen tourism format for this thesis. It generally refers to responsible travel to natural areas that preserves nature with low environmental impacts and that provides socioeconomic benefits to local society (The International Ecotourism Society, 2019). Ecotourism is a vital and growing part of Australia’s tourism industry, contributing heavily to the country’s economy while offering continuous employment opportunities for its rural and remote communities (Ecotourism Australia, 2015). Australia is renowned for nature-based tourism (Liu et al., 2015) that attracts millions of international visitors for ecotourism purposes (Ecotourism Australia, 2016, 2019).

Australian agricultural products are typically perceived as green, clean, natural, and healthy (Burrell, 2014). Honey served as the focal product in this research: it is one of the most prominent agricultural products made in Australia and has contributed more than AU$90 million to the national economy (Webcache, 2014). Honey is also of particular interest to overseas consumers (Benecke, 2003). Therefore, ecotourism and honey were deemed an appropriate tourism format and agricultural product to consider.

1.3.2 Sample Selection

Chinese consumers who resided in China and who had never visited Australia were recruited for this research. China was deemed an appropriate setting for several reasons. First, the country represents one of the world’s largest outbound tourism markets (Statista, 2022): more than 150 million Chinese have traveled abroad. Outbound Chinese travelers also rank first in terms of tourism expenditure, with approximate total spending of US$254.6 billion in 2019 (Blazyte, 2022). Chinese tourists further represented the highest number of visitors to Australia and ranked second in per capita spending in 2015 (Tourism Research Australia, 2015). Second, China is one of the
largest international markets for Australia’s ecotourism sector (Liu et al., 2015). A growing number of Chinese tourists have expressed interest in partaking in ecotourism (Jaafar et al., 2013). For example, according to Tourism Australia (2014), 77% of Chinese tourists who have visited Australia reported having taken part in such activities.

Chinese consumers also tend to favor Australian products, especially agricultural ones, both while visiting Australia and when shopping online; they view these items as safe and trustworthy (Lim, 2016). Chinese consumers are even inclined to pay premium prices for Australian products; for instance, they are willing to spend $20.00 online for a squeezable bottle of honey that costs $7.30 in Australian stores (Han, 2015). Lastly, China represents a crucial market for Australia due to personal preferences and the relatively large number of businesses that export agricultural products (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2017). The Chinese market has imported around 15% of Jarrah honey produced annually (Medlen, 2016).

1.4 Research Design and Methodology

A quantitative method was adopted across three studies (i.e., Papers 1, 2, and 3). Hypotheses were tested via a quasi-experimental design because each study involved different comparison groups (Lynn & Lynn, 2003). Advertisements served as the stimuli in each study. Advertising scholars concur that, if consumers are unfamiliar with a product or a brand, advertisements are useful for conveying new information (Andrews & Shimp, 2017). Each study included a structured questionnaire to measure the constructs of interest and to examine their relationships. All data were analysed in SPSS and AMOS software. Hypothesized relationships were evaluated through structural equational modeling. Each study addressed a specific research aim as summarized below.
The first study pertained to the relationship between place image and product image. Specifically, Paper 1 investigates the place–product relationship with a specific tourism format (ecotourism) and a specific product category (honey) associated with a specific place (Australia). The relationships among country image, place image, and product image are explored to predict consumers’ visit and purchase intentions. Paper 1 also considers the role of advertising in the relationship between place and product image and associated consumer behaviour. Data were gathered from a sample of 147 consumers who frequently visited a shopping mall in Nanjing, the capital city of Jiangsu Province, China.

The second paper examines the role of a product in promoting a place for tourism purposes. Paper 2 particularly addresses the transferability of numerous image aspects between a product to a place and the role of transferability in self-congruity and visit desire. Data were obtained in Chongqing, a municipality in China. The sample contained 100 shoppers recruited via a mall-intercept method and 167 online respondents. Although face-to-face data collection was preferable, the COVID-19 outbreak rendered it necessary to acquire additional data online. Paper 3 concerns perceived fit from a multidimensional image perspective along with impacts on consumers’ visit desire and purchase desire. Data were gathered online from 1000 consumers in Nanjing.

1.5 Expected Contributions

A competitive global market has led co-marketing alliances to become a prevalent marketing strategy. The effectiveness of these arrangements is not fully understood, especially with respect to place–product co-marketing and in the major foreign market segment of China. By evaluating marketing efforts between a tourism place and its agricultural products in a single context, this
thesis enriches knowledge about this fast-growing marketing topic. Findings also reveal actionable insights for researchers and practitioners in the tourism and agriculture industries.

The first paper delineates the impacts of various image types (general country image, place image, and product image) in an unexplored context. Results advance understanding of the effectiveness of collaborative marketing between a tourism place and its local products. The tourism place image and the image of products made in this place were shown to promote consumers’ place receptivity (i.e., for Australian ecotourism and honey). These outcomes explicate the cross-over effect between a tourism place and local products. Contextualizing this collaboration and its potential influence on consumer behaviour will enable marketers in the tourism and agricultural sectors to create more persuasive marketing campaigns.

Second, research on the place–product relationship has mostly revolved around a place’s effect on a product. The opposite relationship—marketing a place from the product perspective—has been largely neglected. Paper 2 seems to be the first to empirically explore a product’s impact on a place by investigating the transferability of image aspects between a product and a place in the co-marketing context. The study unveils positive consequences of image transfer from a product to a place, such as desire to visit and self-congruity toward the tourism place. The comprehension of self-congruity from an image transfer standpoint is hence extended. The second study also offers tourism marketers a novel angle to market places from the product perspective. By pinpointing the roles that various types of image transfer play in consumer behaviour, tourism marketers can identify which aspects to prioritize when collaborating with local product producers. This knowledge can further guide tourism practitioners’ marketing strategies.
Paper 3 evaluates types of perceived fit in place–product co-marketing. Results add to the literature by determining ways to increase co-marketing effectiveness, such as through enhanced fit perceptions. This study is one of only a few empirical attempts to scrutinize multiple fit perceptions. The observed effects of various types of fit on co-marketing alliances should aid marketers in choosing beneficial alliance partners. This paper also presents implications for tourism and agricultural practitioners seeking to implement successful marketing tactics.

1.6 Thesis Structure

This thesis comprises six chapters, including this introduction that describes the research background. To provide a strong theoretical foundation, Chapter 2 presents a review of relevant literature and theoretical underpinnings. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 consist of a series of studies. These three papers are to be submitted to journals; therefore, each has its own structure in line with target journal requirements. Chapter 6 synthesizes these papers and details theoretical and practical contributions. The chapter closes with suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Two provides a review of the relevant literature to build a theoretical foundation for this research project. The chapter begins with a discussion of the concepts of co-marketing and image, which offer a holistic background for the project. Next, the chapter reviews the literature on these and other key concepts in depth. Chapter 2 is organised as follows:

- Section 2.1 discusses co-marketing strategies.

- Section 2.2 discusses image (i.e., the key images examined in marketing and how they are formed and interrelated).

- Section 2.3 discusses image transfer in a place–product co-marketing context.

- Section 2.4 discusses the potential outcomes of image transfer.

- Section 2.5 discusses the facilitators of image transfer (i.e., perceived fit).

- Section 2.6 summarizes the chapter.

2.1 Co-marketing

2.1.1 Co-marketing Alliances

The study of co-marketing alliances has its roots in the study of strategic alliances, which cover any type of collaboration that enables businesses to improve their value and competitiveness (Grieco & Iasevoli, 2017). The growing expansion of alliances represents an enormous change in
corporate culture and business practices (Elmuti & Kathawala, 2001). Strategic alliances have received significant attention since the 1950s. Early economics research discussed strategic alliances in terms of the anti-competitive nature of joint ventures and cooperation between and among firms, arguing that such cooperation can increase firms’ market power (e.g., Fusfield, 1958). Early sociological research also examined strategic alliances with respect to interorganizational relations, highlighting the structure and processes of cooperation and competition between and among organizations (Levine & White, 1961; Litwak & Hylton, 1962).

Strategic alliances are commonly defined as partnerships of two or more organizations that work together (e.g., developing new products, sharing resources or skills) to achieve mutually beneficial strategic goals and objectives (e.g., Elmuti & Kathawala, 2001; Gundlach & Murphy, 1993; Varadarajan & Cunningham, 1995). For example, the interorganizational cooperative strategy of lateral partnerships between firms and their competitors is a type of strategic alliance (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Firms’ underlying motivation for entering into strategic alliances is to increase their sales or profits by gaining access to new markets, expanding their product lines, learning new skills, and/or sharing costs (Varadarajan & Cunningham, 1995). Strategic alliances are a broad topic and include many forms of alliances, such as joint ventures, franchising, marketing agreements, and licensing (James, 1985). Co-marketing alliances have been suggested as a specific type of strategic alliance, because the core of a co-marketing alliance is cooperation between or among partners (Bucklin & Sengupta, 1993; Varadarajan & Cunningham, 1995).

The concept of a co-marketing alliance emerged from that of symbiotic marketing (Griec & Iasevoli, 2017). Focusing on interorganizational relationships, Adler (1966) described this phenomenon as symbiotic marketing. Symbiosis was examined in the early ecological literature, referring to the mutualistic (symbiotic) relationships between participants in a business ecosystem.
(Yoon, Moon, & Lee, 2022). Accordingly, symbiotic marketing was defined by Adler (1966, p. 60) as “an alliance of resources or programmes between two or more independent organizations designed to increase the market potential of each.” Adler (1966) was among the first to analyse the mutual benefits that firms can derive from cooperation in marketing and revealed that marketing alliances go far beyond traditional trade between firms. Adler (1966) suggested that an increasing number of companies are willing to co-develop marketing strategies to overcome barriers to business operation, such as new market entry. Research has also demonstrated many positive outcomes of co-marketing alliances for firms, such as building consumer awareness (Bucklin & Sengupta, 1993), enhancing firms’ collaborative image (Simonin & Ruth, 1998), and increasing market share (Smarandescu, Rose, & Wedell, 2013).

There is no universally accepted definition of a co-marketing alliance, due to the difficulties of identifying its proper boundaries (Grieco & Iasevoli, 2017). Taking a narrow view of the criteria for creating a co-marketing alliance, Bucklin and Sengupta (1993) described co-marketing as an alliance among firms at a lateral level in the value chain rather than among firms at different levels. Taking a broader view, Cherubini and Canigiani’s (1999) widely acknowledged definition of co-marketing describes a wide range of alliances in which two or more individual partners work together to establish initiatives at the analytical, strategic, or operational level to achieve their marketing goals.

According to the definition of a co-marketing alliance proposed by Cherubini and Canigiani (1999), alliances can establish goals for any type of marketing (i.e., analytical, strategic, or operational) (Grieco & Iasevoli, 2017). Therefore, a variety of alliances can be characterized as co-marketing alliances, including cross-category marketing, co-branding, brand extension, co-development of a new product, cause–brand alliances, sponsorship, and joint promotion (e.g.,
Cherubini & Canigiani, 1999; Grieco & Iasevoli, 2017). Cross-category marketing and co-branding are the two of the most widely adopted types of co-marketing alliance. The literature on those alliances that is relevant to this research project is discussed below.

The individual partners in a marketing alliance can occupy either the same or different product categories. Cross-category marketing is a type of co-marketing that employs the win–win strategy of cooperation between companies selling products in different categories, such as Starbucks (coffee) and Hewlett–Packard (information technology) (Smarandescu, Rose, & Wedell, 2013). Another example involves the placement of beer and diapers in the same supermarket aisle, on the assumption that young fathers purchasing diapers after work may pick up beer at the same time (Yao, 2014). Russell and Peterson (2000) indicated that cross-category marketing can occur because of dependencies exhibited in consumer behaviours. In other words, a consumer’s decision to purchase a product from one category may result in a decision to purchase another product from a related category (Terbeek, 1993). For example, in a supermarket context, Bandyopadhyay (2009) analysed scanner data and found that consumer demand for one product category impacted demand for another product category. Kaur and Kang (2021) used a technique called association rule mining to track market basket transactions and found that consumers were likely to purchase products from different product categories at the same time (i.e., butter, cheese, and burgers). Some researchers have found that demand for different products is triggered not only by supermarket displays featuring different product categories but also by price promotions in a single product category, which trigger higher demand both for that product and for products in other categories (e.g., Bandyopadhyay, 2009; Leeﬂang & Selva, 2012; Russell & Petersen, 2000). Accordingly, many companies are willing to use cross-category marketing strategies to increase their market share (Smarandescu, Rose, & Wedell, 2013).
Co-branding is another type of co-marketing alliance (e.g., Cegarra & Michel, 2001; Cherubini & Canigiani, 1999; Simonin & Ruth, 1998; Taek, Lee, & Dubinsky, 2010; Venkatesh, Mahajan, & Muller, 2000). The term broadly refers to a short- or long-term marketing strategy that combines two or more individual brands or products through cooperation (Aghdaie, Dolatabadi, & Aliabadi, 2012; Besharat, 2010; Leuthesser, Kohli, & Suri, 2003; Walchli, 2007; Washburn, Till, & Priluck, 2000). Keller (2003) emphasised that co-branding is an effective marketing strategy for a brand to build positive associations by linking it to places, people, events, or other brands. There are many practical examples of co-branding. For example, in the fashion industry, H&M (a clothing brand) has co-branded with Moschino (a fashion brand that sells both clothing and bags) (Pinello, Picone, & Destri, 2021). Co-branding can also involve two department stores, such as when Target co-branded with Neiman Marcus (Pinello, Picone, & Destri, 2021). Sometimes the brands involved belong to different product categories. For example, Apple has co-branded with Mastercard (Boger, Kotteman & Decker, 2018).

A co-marketing alliance (e.g., cross-category marketing, co-branding) is the marketing communication strategy most widely used to build a desirable brand image in the marketplace (Washburn et al., 2000). Many firms and brands enter into co-marketing alliances to enhance or reinforce strong, unique, and favourable brand images, which may enhance consumer perceptions of the brands (e.g., Abratt & Motlana, 2002; Ahn, kim & Forney, 2009). A co-marketing alliance is considered a win–win strategy for both brand partners (Geylani, Inman, & Hofstede, 2008). In addition to reinforcing partners’ brand images, co-marketing alliances offer multiple advantages, such as brand repositioning, enhancing brand attractiveness and recognition, generating favourable consumer attitudes toward partners, increasing purchase intention for both brands, and encouraging loyalty (e.g., Ashton & Scott, 2011; Geylani, Inman, & Hofstede, 2008; Helmig, Huber, Leeflang, 2008).
2008; James, Lyman, & Foreman 2006; Rodrigues, Souza, & Leitão 2011; Simonin & Ruth, 1998; Smarandescu, Rose, & Wedell, 2013). For example, a “spillover effect” was found by Simonin and Ruth (1998, p. 31) in a marketing alliance between a car brand and a microprocessor brand, indicating that consumers’ attitudes toward each partner brand were enhanced by the alliance. Similar findings have been reported in other studies (e.g., Baumgarth, 2004; Washburn, Till, & Priluck, 2000).

While co-marketing alliances could produce many positive consequences, the “dark side” of the co-marketing alliances may also occur under some circumstances (e.g., Washburn et al., 2000; Woisetschlaeger et al., 2008; Pinello et al., 2022). For example, building a co-marketing alliance with a wrong partner could lead to brand dilution (Cornelis, 2010). Collaborating with a novel brand may undermine the value of both partner brands (Janiszewski & van Osselaer, 2000). Further, if a partner brand experienced a crisis, its alliance partner might also be affected by negative publicity (Dahlén & Lange, 2006). For example, when Intel experienced quality problems (Simonin & Ruth, 1998), its partner Dell also received skepticism from its consumers. In addition, if two partner brands are perceived “unfit” (i.e., a mismatch) or are positioned on dissimilar associations, consumers’ evaluations of the alliance may turn negative (e.g., Pullig et al., 2006; Ilicic & Webster, 2013; Besharat & Langan, 2013).

In this regard, co-marketing alliances are not always considered as win/win strategies for partners (Washburn et al., 2000). To achieve a successful co-marketing alliance, it is important to understand how consumers evaluate a co-marketing alliance. Factors that can influence the evaluation of a successful co-marketing alliance are discussed below.

2.1.2 Factors Influencing the Success of a Co-marketing Alliance
Many factors contribute to the success of a co-marketing alliance. For example, from the perspective of marketing communication strategy, Nguyen et al. (2018) investigated marketing alliances between consumer-packaged brands and retailers or charities brands and suggested that adopting advertisements that integrate two brands from distinct categories may benefit them both. From the consumer perspective, individual differences play a role. Smarandescu, Rose and Wedell (2013) examined a fictional alliance with partners in different categories and reported that consumer with a greater need for cognition (i.e., consumers’ tendency to actively participate in cognitive activities) was likely to show favourable responses toward the alliance. In addition, consumer familiarity may affect evaluation of a co-marketing alliance (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). More specifically, consumers who are familiar with partner brands tend to develop more favourable attitudes toward a co-marketing alliance than consumers who are unfamiliar with the brands. Accordingly, consumer familiarity is considered to be a determinant of the success of a co-marketing alliance (Levin & Levin, 2000).

In addition to the above factors, many studies have focused on the determinants of consumers’ evaluations of a marketing alliance from the partners themselves. The most well-known of these studies is Simonin and Ruth (1998), who proposed a framework for understanding consumers’ evaluations of a co-marketing alliance, indicating that consistency between the partners’ image (either at a brand level or a product level) had a positive influence on consumers’ attitudes toward the co-marketing alliance. The importance of image consistency in co-marketing evaluations has also been well documented (e.g., Anh et al., 2009; Ashton & Scott, 2011; Bluemelhuber, Carter, & Lambe, 2007; Lafferty, Goldsmith, Hult, 2004; Lanseng & Olsen, 2010; Xiao & Lee, 2014). Other factors, such as brand credibility (Aghdaie, Dolatabadi, & Aliabadi, 2012), perceived quality (Rao, Qu, & Ruekert, 1999), partner brand positioning (Wason & Charlton, 2015), and brand equity
(Washburn et al., 2000), have also been found to enhance consumer evaluations of a co-marketing alliance.

The main factor determining the success of a co-marketing alliance is the possibility of image transfer, in which the attributes of one partner are transferred to the other (Smarandescu, Rose, & Wedell, 2013). Image transfer may take place either between the partners and their co-marketed products or between the partners. More specifically, the partners’ images are likely to be transferred to the co-marketed products (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005). In the co-marketing context, a new image (i.e., an image of the co-marketed products or the alliance) is likely to be created by consumers. For example, Nike co-marketed a product with Apple (the Apple Watch Nike+). LG, a cell phone brand, co-marketed a cellphone with Prada, a fashion brand. Under these conditions, consumers will form an overall perception of the alliance or the co-marketed product (i.e., the Apple Watch Nike+, the Prada-LG cell phones) (Ahn, 2011).

In this case, the meanings of the partner brands are likely to be transferred to the co-marketed product (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005). For example, the meanings and images of the two brands Slim-Fast and Godiva, namely a healthy (low calorie) food supplement and luxury chocolate, were transferred to their co-branded product, a cake mix (Park et al., 1996). Accordingly, a new image is formed on the basis of the two attribute profiles, which can develop a meaning constellation that is beneficial to the brand alliance (Prince & Davies, 2002). Whereas many studies have examined consumers’ overall attitudes toward alliances (Ahn, 2011; Baumgarth, 2004; Decker & Baade, 2016; Simonin & Ruth, 1998), only limited research has examined co-marketing alliances from an image perspective, especially the image transfer perspective.
Researchers and marketers accept that when two partners are marketed or promoted together, both partners can create new images by adopting a co-marketing strategy (Washburn et al., 2000). The rationale for the new image formation is the exchange of desirable meanings or images between the partners (e.g., Ahn, 2011; Bengtsson & Servais, 2005; Russell, 1999; Seno & Lukas, 2007; Uggla, 2004). This is because co-marketing alliances allow the partners to receive benefits derived from their complementarities (Bucklin & Sengupta, 1993). For example, a brand can acquire positive attributes (i.e., high quality) from its partners that were unobservable before the alliance (e.g., McCarthy & Norris, 1999; Rao et al., 1999). Through image transfer, partners’ images can be enhanced simultaneously (e.g., Ahn, Kim, & Forney, 2009). Uggla (2004) developed a brand association base model that identified this image transfer process and indicated the potential for each partner brand to obtain a better attribute profile than before the alliance (e.g., Bengtsson & Servais, 2005).

Many examples of image transfer between co-marketing partners exist. For example, Smarandescu, Rose Wedell (2013) revealed a positive relationship between the attribute ratings for Apple iPod devices and the attribute ratings for Gatorade. Another example lies in the partnership between two industrial brands: Junckers, a wooden parquet floor brand, and Devi, an electric underfloor heating system brand. Through the alliance, Devi’s perceived credibility was enhanced and customers viewed Junckers differently, as they no longer viewed traditional wooden flooring and electric underfloor heating as incompatible (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005). Similarly, in the context of celebrity endorsement of a brand, the image of the brand is enhanced by the image of the celebrity (Seno & Lukas, 2007). Indeed, if image is successfully transferred, either between partners and the alliance or between partners, more favourable evaluations of the co-marketing
alliance are likely to be generated (e.g., Azevedo 2004; Seno & Lukas 2007; Smarandescu, Rose, & Wedell, 2013).

As image transfer contributes to the success of a co-marketing alliance (i.e., cross-category marketing, co-branding), image transfer is one focus of this research project. Although image transfer has frequently been mentioned in the co-marketing literature, only limited empirical research on this topic is available. In other words, it is unclear how image transfer occurs. What image components of a partner brand can be transferred to its partner in a co-marketing context? To acquire a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying the image transfer process, the broader image literature is reviewed in the following section. Subsequently, the image transfer literature is discussed in detail.

2.2 Image and Image Formation

2.2.1 Image in Marketing

The idea of image was introduced to early social psychological research by Boulding (1956). The concept of image reflects an individual’s knowledge of or perceptions of the world. In other words, image represents an individual’s mental construct. In general, image refers to an individual’s overall beliefs or impressions created by an entity or an object (i.e., a company, a product, a person, or a place) in the minds of others (Dichter, 1985) and may be an important factor shaping consumer behaviour (Boulding, 1956). The following sections briefly discuss three major image types examined in marketing: general country image, tourism place image, and product image.

General Country Image. The concept of image has received significant attention in the marketing field since the early 1960s. Research on country-of-origin (COO) was probably the first
attempt in the marketing field to understand a country’s image. The marketing field has extensively examined COO, which is defined as the home country in which a product is produced or manufactured (Samiee, 1994). Schooler (1965) was among the first of these studies, exploring the impact of “made in” labels (e.g., products made in the U.S. or Mexico) on consumers’ purchase intentions. COO’s influence on consumers’ attitudes and buying behaviour has also been well studied (e.g., Han & Terpstra, 1988; Lin & Chen, 2006; Su, 2010). In the COO literature, two major concepts have emerged: general country image and product country image.

The study of general country image examines how consumers’ perceptions of and attitudes toward a country, its people, and its products in the market are influenced by that country’s image (Lu et al., 2016). Nagashima (1970) was the first to study country image by examining how businessmen from the U.S. and Japan evaluated foreign products differently based on country image. A country’s general and product images have been considered separately since the 1980s. The term general country image generally refers to consumer perceptions of a particular country’s overall political, social, economic, and technological environment (Martin & Eroglu, 1993; Papadopoulos et al., 1988). It has been suggested that general country image has both cognitive and affective dimensions (e.g., Ayyildiz & Turna, 2013; Elliot, Papadopoulos, & Kim, 2011; Martínez & Alvarez, 2010). Cognitive country image refers to consumers’ general beliefs about a country, and affective country image refers to consumers’ general feelings or emotions toward a country (Maher & Carter, 2011).

Product and Brand Image. Product image refers to consumer perceptions of and the mental image associated with a product (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). In the literature, product image has been defined in many ways; for example, in the COO literature, the definition has focused on the perceptions of a country’s product (e.g., Roth & Romeo, 1992). The term product country image
has been defined as consumers’ perceptions of products that are made in a particular country (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2003). For example, customers generally believe that German-made goods are trustworthy, long-lasting, and well-made (Wang et al., 2012). Product country image positively influences purchase intention (i.e., the likelihood of purchasing a product), a relationship that has been well established in the literature (e.g., Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, & Palihawadana, 2011; Javalgi et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2006; Wang et al., 2012). For consistency, this thesis uses the term product image throughout.

A product is often associated with a brand (e.g., Biel, 1992; Keller, 1993), and product and brand images are closely linked and developed using similar principles or frameworks. Gardner and Levy (1955) were among the first to indicate that a consumer’s purchase decision is built upon both the physical attributes and functions of a brand and the social or psychological meanings (i.e., consumers’ feelings about or attitudes toward the brand) that are associated with it. In the literature, there have been no widely agreed upon definitions of brand image, leading to many approaches to understanding and interpreting the concept. From a general point of view, brand image refers to the totality of consumers’ impressions or beliefs about a brand (e.g., Dichter, 1985; Herzog, 1963; Newman, 1957). In addition, consumers’ overall experiences of a brand’s products or services contribute to their total impressions of it (Dichter, 1985).

From a more comprehensive perspective, it has been agreed that brand image is formed by brand associations (e.g., Biel, 1992; Faircloth et al., 2001; Keller, 1993; Torres & Bijmolt, 2009). One widely accepted definition was proposed by Keller (1993, p. 3), who indicated that brand image is ‘consumers’ perceptions about a brand as reflected by brand associations held in memory’. According to Keller, brand associations can be learned from the direct brand experiences and information provided by a diverse range of sources, such as the firm itself, business trade, or word-
of-mouth. It can be classified into the following four dimensions: types of brand associations, favorability of brand associations, strength of brand associations, and uniqueness of brand associations (see Figure 2.1).

The favorability, strength, and uniqueness of the brand associations in consumers’ minds have been suggested to influence brand image (Keller, 1993). The term favourable brand associations refers to how favorably consumers evaluate a brand, which has a positive or negative impact on the brand’s image (Keller, 1993). The strength of brand associations can be explained by the extent to which an individual considers brand information and how that individual processes the information. The more meaningful the brand information, the stronger the association generated in the individual’s memory. Unique brand associations distinguish different brands and are uniquely noticed by consumers (Keller, 1993). To better understand brand image, it is necessary to conduct a detailed exploration of the different types of brand associations.

Attributes and benefits are two major types of brand association (Keller, 1993). Consumers often generate beliefs about a brand or a product from its attributes (Wang et al., 2012). The term attributes refer to the physical features or specific aspects that describe a particular good or service; attributes are usually characterized as product-related attributes or non-product-related attributes. Product-related attributes are products’ physical ingredients and are directly related to product performance. Non-product-related attributes are a product’s external aspects, such as price information, packaging or product appearance, user imagery, or usage imagery (Keller, 1993).

Benefits are the values that consumers derive from a product or service’s attributes, including functional benefits, experiential benefits, and symbolic benefits (Keller, 1993). The term functional benefits refers to the functional, practical, or instrumental value that consumers receive from
consuming a product, and such benefits are usually consistent with product-related attributes (i.e., quality, safety, and reliability). Experiential benefits relate to the feelings that consumers derive from consuming a product or service (i.e., fun and or excitement), and they usually correspond to product-related attributes. Symbolic benefits usually relate to non-product-related attributes and reflect a brand’s extrinsic value. They generally refer to a product’s ability to satisfy consumers’ underlying need for social identification (i.e., social status, prestige, or achievement) (Keller, 1993).

Figure 2.1: Brand Knowledge Model (Keller, 1993)

In summary, functional benefits, experiential benefits, and symbolic benefits have been considered as three key aspects of both product image and brand image. This classification is consistent with prior research that has emphasised image, taking into account both the functional and the psychological aspects (i.e., the feelings) of an entity (e.g., Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Martineau, 1958). A benefit-based product image (i.e., functional benefits, experiential benefits, and symbolic benefits) has been found to positively influence consumers’ product attitudes and
purchase behaviour, and this relationship has been widely demonstrated in prior studies (e.g., Chitturi, Raghunathan, & Mahajan, 2008; Liu et al., 2019; Loebnitz & Grunert, 2018; Orth & Marchi, 2007; Zhou & Hui, 2003).

**Tourism Place Image.** Tourism is very much an image-driven industry (Elliot, Papadopoulos, & Kim, 2011). In the tourism literature, tourism place image represents a form of specific country image. The concept of tourism place image evolved from the product image literature (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). According to the earliest research on tourism place image, in the 1970s, the term *tourism place image* refers to potential tourists’ total beliefs, impressions, or feelings associated with a place as a travel destination (e.g., Crompton, 1979; Hunt, 1975).

Although tourism place image represents the sum of tourists’ beliefs about a tourism destination, it has been investigated from different perspectives. First, the image of a tourism place has been conceptualized from both a functional and a psychological perspective (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). Whereas the functional components of a tourism place include observable characteristics such as scenery, price level, quality, and service, psychological components such as tourists’ feelings about a tourism destination are also significant (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). Second, tourism place image can be perceived as either common or unique based on its functional or psychological characteristics. For example, a tourism place can be interpreted based on both a common functional characteristic such as price level and a common psychological characteristic such as friendliness (Echtner & Rithcie, 1991). In addition, a tourism place’s unique offering (e.g., a must-see sight) can also be interpreted as a common offering (e.g., a beach), at least to some extent (Pearce, 1988).

Similar to product image, tourism place image has three main sets of benefits: functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits. For example, the functional benefits of a
tourism place include the place’s tangible or observable characteristics, such as scenery, price levels, quality, and service (e.g., Alcañiz, García, & Blas, 2009; Choi, Chan, & Wu, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Tasci & Kozak, 2006). Although only a handful of studies have focused on the symbolic benefits of a tourism place, some researchers have suggested that symbolic place image has person-like characteristics, which are the more intangible image aspects of a place, such as competence and sophistication (e.g., Hosany & Ekinci, 2006; Sahin & Baloglu, 2011; Santos, 2004). Experiential image aspects are also covered in tourism place image. Experiential place image is related to tourists’ feelings or emotions about a place, such as their experience of the place as exciting, pleasant, or relaxing (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2006; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Tasci & Kozak, 2006).

Since the 1970s, scholars have demonstrated that destination image is an important predictor of tourists’ travel behaviour (e.g., Hunt, 1975). In more recent tourism research, it has been widely accepted that consumers with more favourable tourism place perceptions are more willing to build positive visit intentions toward a tourism place (i.e., favourable tourism place perceptions reflect tourists’ tendency to visit) (e.g., Chapuis, Falher, & Gonzalez, 2015; Elliot, Papadopoulos, & Kim, 2011; Gibson, Qi, & Zhang, 2008; Kim & Kerstetter, 2016; Yang, Yuan, & Hu, 2009; Zhang et al., 2016). More specifically, all three major aspects of tourism place image—functional tourism place image (e.g., Chaulagain et al., 2019; Elliot & Papadopoulos, 2016; Pratt & Sparks, 2014), symbolic tourism place image (Hosany & Ekinci, 2006; Zeugner-Roth & Žabkar, 2015), and experiential tourism place image (e.g., Elliot & Papadopoulos, 2016; Lee et al., 2005; Papadimitriou, Apostolopoulou, & Kaplanidou, 2015)—have been found to positively impact consumers’ intention to visit.
2.2.2 Image Connections

General country image, place image, and product image may be related to each other, as they are based on perceptions of a place (Nadeau et al., 2008). Consumers build their perceptions of a country in a hierarchical way, starting with cognitive cues and moving on to affective cues (Orbaiz & Papadopoulos, 2003). In other words, prior to developing feelings about a country, people evaluate its cognitive cues (Phillips, Asperin, & Wolfe, 2013). Accordingly, affective country image has been shown to be influenced by cognitive country image (e.g., De Nisco et al., 2016; Elliot, Papadopoulos, & Kim, 2011; Kim & Kwon, 2018; Maher & Carter, 2011).

Han and Terpstra (1988) were among the first to examine the relationship between country image and product image. The HALO model (see Figure 2.2) proposed by Han (1989) can help us understand the relationship between country image and product image. According to the HALO model, if consumers know little about a product, a country image can serve as a cue to help them build their perceptions of a product originating from that country. In this case, product image appears to be influenced by general country image (Ayyildiz, Turna, & Eris, 2013). Consumers tend to rely on their stereotypical beliefs of a country (i.e., their cognitive country image) to form their evaluations of a product (Han, 1989). In such circumstances, stereotypical beliefs about a country influence product belief, resulting in purchase behaviour. The relationship between cognitive country image and product image has been well demonstrated in prior studies (e.g., Elliot, Papadopoulos, & Kim, 2011; Orbaiz & Papadopoulos, 2003; Wang et al., 2012). However, if consumers have knowledge about a product, they rely more on their perceptions of the product than on their perceptions of its country of origin to make their purchase decisions (Wang et al., 2012). Accordingly, the impact of cognitive country image on purchase intention is indirect and occurs through product image.
Consumers’ evaluations of a product or a place are stimulated by both their cognitive beliefs and their affective evaluations of the relevant country (Elliot, Papadopoulos, & Kim, 2011). Psychological research has shown that affect is crucial to information processing and can provide consumers with a foundation to make judgements or decisions (Wyer et al., 1999). In this way, consumers can evaluate and form a belief about an object by assessing their feelings (Wang, Clore, & Isbell, 2012). In this regard, consumers’ affective evaluation of a particular country is expected to be positively associated with product image. Compared with country image, affective country image is more likely to enhance consumer behaviour intention (e.g., Laroche et al., 2005). This idea is congruent with studies in the advertising literature showing that emotions can elicit more powerful reactions than pure thought (e.g., Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008). Accordingly, the relationships between affective country image and product image and/or purchase intention have been well studied (e.g., Ayyildiz, Turna, & Eris, 2013; Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, & Palihawadana, 2011; Orbaiz & Papadopoulos, 2003; Wang et al., 2012).

Similarly, general country image has been discussed in the tourism literature; its favourable associations with place image are particularly relevant (Ayyildiz & Turna, 2013; Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2005). The positive impact of cognitive country image and affective country image on tourism place image has been supported by numerous studies (e.g., Ayyildiz & Turna, 2013; Baloglu & Mcleary, 1999; Bertoli, 2013; De Nisco, Elliot, & Papadopoulos, 2016). In addition, the relationship between affective country image and tourists’ visit intention has been demonstrated (e.g., Bertoli, 2013; Whang, Yong, & Ko, 2016). Similar that of to product image, the impact of cognitive country image on visit intention is indirect and passes through the tourism place image (e.g., Elliot, Papadopoulos, & Kim, 2011).
The relationship between place image and product image has been examined in the literature (e.g., Han, 1989; Han & Terpstra, 1988). However, the crossover effect between these two images has not been fully understood. In other words, there is not a complete understanding of whether tourism place image predicts not only the intention to visit a place but also the intention to purchase products originating from it. Similarly, we do not know whether product country image predicts not only the intention to purchase the product but also the intention to visit the place where the product is made. Because this crossover can help us understand the relationship between a tourism place and a product, it can serve as a basis for understanding the co-marketing alliance between the two. Therefore, this research further explores the issue.

One of the first studies to explore the possible relationship between product image and tourism place image was conducted by Papadopoulos and Heslop (1986). Their results revealed that tourists who had previously visited a country had more favourable perceptions of its products than people who had not visited the country. This finding implies that perceptions of a country can help build images of products originating from that country. This notion is also supported by Han’s (1989) HALO model, which indicates that favourable beliefs about a place (e.g., Australia) can help consumers form positive beliefs about a product from that place (e.g., Australian wine), which can
further enhance their intention to purchase that product. Accordingly, a positive tourism place image can directly arouse tourists’ purchase intention toward the products made in that place (Bowe & Lockshin, 2011).

Some researchers have attempted to explore the influence of a product on the place where it is made (e.g., Elliot, Papadopoulos, & Kim, 2011; Phillips, Asperin, & Wolfe, 2013). For example, Elliot, Papadopoulos, and Kim (2011) empirically examined the relationship between product image and tourism place image and found that favourable perceptions of a product not only predicted product purchase intention but also attracted potential consumers to visit the place where the product was produced. Phillips, Asperin and Wolfe (2013) also found a positive relationship between the product image of Korean food and U.S. consumers’ intention to visit Korea. Similarly, Lee (2015) found that the positive image of Korean cosmetic products had a positive effect on Singaporean consumers’ intention to visit Korea.

A country’s products, especially its food, are a driving force for tourism (e.g., Karim & Chi, 2010; Quang & Wang, 2004). Tourists’ visit intention toward a country can be predicted by their perceptions of that country’s products (i.e., food) (Phillips, Asperin, & Wolfe, 2013). The summary effect proposed by Han (1989) can also help us understand this relationship. More specifically, when consumers are familiar with a product, their perceptions of the product help form their beliefs about the country where the product originates while simultaneously enhancing their intention to visit. Therefore, a favourable product country image can directly influence consumers’ intention to visit (Elliot, Papadopoulos, & Kim, 2011).
Based on the above discussions, this thesis explores in depth the relationships between general country image, product image, and place image, along with their influences on consumers’ purchase and visit intentions.

The above discussion of various types of image (i.e., country image, product image, and tourism place image) reveals that image has been widely examined in the marketing field. However, the role of image in the co-marketing context (i.e., whether the role of image changes in the co-marketing context (i.e., image transfer), is less well empirically understood. Accordingly, later sections of this work explore the issue of image transfer in greater detail.

2.3 Image Transfer

As discussed in Section 2.1.2, image transfer occurs when information (e.g., attributes or benefits) associated with one entity is conveyed to another entity (e.g., Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Yang & Ha, 2014). Indeed, image transfer between two entities is widely believed to be a significant determinant of a successful co-marketing alliance (e.g., Azevedo, 2004; Seno & Lukas, 2007; Smarandescu, Rose, & Wedell, 2013). One of the best known models that can help us understand the image transfer process is the meaning transfer model, which is discussed in the next section.

2.3.1 Meaning Transfer Model

The possibility of image transfer has long been recognised in the advertising literature; for example, the image of a celebrity can be transferred to an endorsed product (Erdogan et al., 2001). The meaning transfer model proposed by McKracken (1989) can help explain this image transfer process. According to the meaning transfer model, the meanings associated with a celebrity (i.e., their professional knowledge, physical attractiveness, personality, credibility, and lifestyle) can be
transferred to the sponsored product, which might influence how consumers evaluate the endorsed product or brand (McKracken, 1989). More specifically, the meaning transfer model is composed of three stages (McKracken, 1989). In Stage 1, celebrities create their own meanings based on their roles, campaigns, characteristics, and achievements in both their professional and their personal lives. In Stage 2, when a celebrity endorses a product, the meanings that are associated with the celebrity are transferred to the product or the brand. In Stage 3, when consumers are exposed to an advertisement for a celebrity-endorsed product, they observe the same meanings for the products that are derived from the endorser. At the same time, the meanings of the products are transferred to consumers through their purchase behaviour or consumption. Accordingly, successful meaning transfer from a celebrity to a product results in favourable consumer evaluations of the product (e.g., Ko & Lu, 2021; Priester & Petty, 2003).

The meaning transfer model has been applied in the product and brand contexts. In support of the meaning transfer model, Keller’s (1993) leveraging model has been widely adopted to explain image transfer between two brands.

2.3.2 Leveraging Model

In an increasingly competitive market environment, companies tend to build brand equity for their products by linking their brands to other entities (i.e., people, brands, places, or things), which can alter consumers’ perceptions of their brands (Keller, 2020). A brand can create meanings by borrowing meanings from other entities (Keller, 2003). This borrowing process can be viewed in relation to the process of leveraging secondary associations, where the term secondary associations refers to the associations of the linked entity that can alter consumers’ perceptions of a brand, at least in some respects (Bergkvist & Taylor, 2016).
In other words, brand knowledge can be established or changed by associating the brand with another person, place, or thing that is recognizable to consumers, who thus believe that their knowledge of the linked person, place, or thing also expresses some pertinent information about the brand (Keller, 1993). Therefore, brands can create “secondary” brand associations by borrowing from or leveraging their associations with the linked entity. Keller (1993) modeled this phenomenon using major secondary sources of brand knowledge (see Figure 2.3).

![Secondary Sources of Brand Knowledge](image)

Figure 2.3: Secondary Sources of Brand Knowledge (Keller, 2003)

To acquire an in-depth understanding of how secondary knowledge of a linked entity transfers to a brand’s product or service, Keller (2003) posited three factors that explain this transfer or leveraging effect. The first factor is the knowledge of the linked entity, referring to customers’ existing knowledge of the entity that is likely to be transferred to the brand. The second factor is the meaningfulness of the knowledge of the linked entity, which relates to the part of this
knowledge that is meaningful or helpful to a brand. The third factor is related to the transferability of the knowledge of the entity, in which meaningful knowledge of the linked entity can be transferred to the brand.

The transferability of brand knowledge model (see Figure 2.4) was developed by Keller (2003), who indicated that any knowledge aspects of the linked entities, such as attributes, benefits, and experiences, are likely to be transferred to the brand, which will affect existing brand knowledge. Recently, Keller (2020) revealed that brand associations that represent extrinsic or intangible aspects of a brand (i.e., personality) are more likely to be influenced by secondary associations than associations that relate to more functional aspects (i.e., features or characteristics) of the brand. The author explained that because each entity has personality characteristics, secondary associations from linked entities are especially helpful for building or strengthening a brand’s personality dimensions. For example, if a brand wants to be viewed as “tough” or “masculine,” the famous boxer Mike Tyson might be an appropriate endorser.

The marketing alliance research has devoted substantial attention to the brand leveraging model, as it provides a basic understanding of image transfer (e.g., Aaker & Keller, 1990; James, 2005; Vaidyanathan & Aggrawal, 2000). For example, by linking itself to a cartoon character, a cereal brand can leverage people’s awareness of or the reputation of the character in its marketing communication strategies (Aaker, 1996). In other words, the image or associations of the character might be transferred to the cereal brand. Therefore, when two brands enter into an alliance, each attempts to leverage the other’s secondary brand knowledge; this process can also occur during the image or association transfer process (Uggla, 2004).
According to the brand leveraging model (Keller, 1993), a brand can be associated with another brand, a place, or a person. The following sections review various types of leverage related to image transfer, including endorser–product image transfer, product–brand image transfer, brand–brand image transfer, and product–place image transfer.

**Endorser–Product Image Transfer.** Image transfer from an endorser to a product has long been recognised as influencing the effectiveness of the endorsement process (e.g., McCracken, 1989). As discussed above with respect to the brand leveraging model (Keller, 1993), when a brand is linked with a celebrity, the brand’s associations can be influenced by the celebrity through their endorsement. The pre-existing associations related to the celebrity are linked to the sponsoring brand, and in essence, the image of the celebrity is transferred to the brand.
Meanings or images can be built on any characteristics of or associations with a person or a product (McCracken, 1989). For instance, the positive characteristics of the famous golfer Tiger Woods, such as sportsmanship, youthfulness, and glamour, are transferred to Nike, the brand he endorses (Smith, 2004). A celebrity’s characteristics may have both functional and symbolic meanings, such as attractiveness, confidence, and intelligence. Numerous studies have indicated that aspects of the endorser’s image, such as functional associations (e.g., masculine), symbolic associations (e.g., status), and experiential associations (e.g., exciting), can be successfully transferred to the sponsored brand or product (e.g., Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001; He et al., 2019; Lynch & Schuler, 1994; Owen & James, 2006; Seno & Lukas, 2005).

Image transfer, a key determinant of successful endorsement, plays an important role in influencing favourable consumer behaviour, such as a positive brand or product attitude and stronger purchase intention (e.g., He et al., 2019; Kahle & Homer, 1985; Liu & Brock, 2011; Misra & Beatty, 1990; Till & Busler, 2000). In addition to image transfer between a product and a person, image transfer can occur between a product and a brand, as discussed in the next section.

**Product–Brand Image Transfer.** Image transfer can occur either from a product to a brand or from a brand to a product. The COO literature (e.g., Essoussi & Merunka, 2007; Han, 1989) has shown how product category image influences consumer perceptions of a new brand (i.e., brand image) in the same category. Specifically, if consumers have a positive perception of a particular product category made in a specific place, there is a strong possibility that they will have a positive perception of a new brand in the same category. For example, the strong symbolic attribute (i.e., reputation) of German cars in general is likely to transfer to a specific German car brand (Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, & Palihawadana, 2011). Other positive consumer responses,
such as favourable brand attitude and purchase behaviour, are additional potential consequences (e.g., Allman et al., 2016; Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, & Palihawadana, 2011; Han, 1989).

Image transfer from a brand to a product has also received attention in the brand literature in terms of brand extension. Research has indicated that the image of a parent brand can transfer to a new extended product category (Keller, 1993; Le et al., 2012). For example, researchers have revealed that consumers’ positive perceptions of the functional benefits of a parent brand (e.g., high quality, luxuriousness) can be transferred to product extensions by the parent brand (e.g., Arslan & Alunam, 2010; Owen & James, 2006; Park, Jun, & Shocker, 1996). Such positive image transfer can also generate favourable consumer behaviour (e.g., enhanced purchase intention) (Liu, Hu, & Grimm, 2010).

**Brand–Brand Image Transfer.** This section discusses image transfer from one brand to another brand. Keller (2003) was among the first to explore the possibility of image transfer between two partner brands. Through such linkage, a brand’s image, such as its attributes and benefits, can be transferred to its partner brand (Keller, 2003).

Image transfer from one brand to another often occurs in the context of brand alliances. If one brand has prominent aspects that are superior to those of another brand, image transfer can take place from the superior brand to the inferior brand (Uggla, 2004). For example, Smarandescu, Rose and Wedell (2013) indicated that in a collaboration effort between Apple and Gatorade, the prominent functional image aspects of Apple (i.e., high quality, attractive to young people) transferred to Gatorade. Symbolic attribute (i.e., reputation) transfer was also demonstrated in a brand alliance between Dell, a personal computer manufacturer, and Intel, a multinational technology company (Blackett & Russell, 2000). In addition, in an industrial marketing context,
Bengtsson and Servais (2005) found that the symbolic attribute of credibility enjoyed by Junckers (a wooden flooring brand) was transferred to Devi (an electric underfloor heating brand) in a brand alliance. The potential consequences of the alliance, such as attitudes toward or perceptions of the brand partners, should be enhanced after a successful image transfer (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005).

**Product–Place Image Transfer.** Research on image transfer between a product and a place is rare. However, places can be regarded as brands (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2010). Thus, the brand leveraging model can also help explain product–place image transfer. In addition, all of the above image transfer situations involve two entities working together in contexts such as endorser–product (McCracken, 1989), product–brand (Diamantopoulos et al., 2011), and/or brand–brand (Blackett & Russell, 2000) transfers. Therefore, a collaborative effort can arguably be conducted between a tourism place and a product that originates from that place.

Without considering the direction of transfer, past research has indicated that when marketing a physical product associated with a tourism place, the image of the tourism place can enhance the image of the product (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005). For example, when a consumer is more familiar with a country/place than with its products, a halo effect occurs in which the country/place’s image can be transferred to the unfamiliar products (Han, 1989). Alternatively, there may be a summary effect (Han, 1989), in which the images of products can help form the image of a country.

Most prior research examining the relationship between a tourism place and a product has focused on image transfer from the place to the product. However, the issue of whether a place image can benefit from a product image when the place associated with the product is marketed has not been well studied. One exception is Azecedom (2004), who suggested that if a consumer
has a favourable product image, that image is likely to be transferred to the place of production, boosting tourist intention to visit the place. However, that author did not empirically examine this image transfer process. Although the research on product–place image transfer is limited, image transfer between a product and a tourism place can be understood as a crossover effect between products and places, as discussed above (e.g., Elliot, Papadopoulos, & Kim, 2011; Phillips, Asperin, & Wolfe, 2013). For example, Elliot, Papadopoulos, and Kim (2011) found that product image positively influenced tourists’ travel intention. Accordingly, product image should help form a tourism place image; in other words, the image of the product can be transferred to the tourism place, which can promote travel intention.

Having discussed the various contexts of image transfer from the brand-leveraging perspective, the following sections discuss two other theoretical foundations that can also help explain the occurrence of image transfer. Those theories are information integration theory and the theory of learning.

2.3.3 Information Integration Theory

Information integration theory was first proposed by Anderson (1981), who explained how stimuli are integrated to create beliefs or attitudes. More specifically, this theory explores how new information is integrated with preexisting cognitions or thoughts to develop and form attitudes. For example, Lafferty and Goldsmith (2004) argued that consumers, as active information integrators, form attitudes by integrating new information with prior attitudes.

From the perspective of information integration theory, in a co-marketing context, participating partners appear to exist in the context of the other partners. Evaluations of the co-marketing alliance can be affected by prior attitudes toward the partners. Judgements or evaluations
of each participating partner are likely to be affected by the context of the other brand (Ahn, 2011), and this process can be considered to represent image transfer. Some co-marketing research has adopted information integration theory to demonstrate that partners can benefit each other, resulting in more positive evaluations of both partners (e.g., Baumgarth, 2004; Lafferty, Goldsmith, & Hult, 2004; Simonin & Ruth, 1998).

2.3.4 Theory of Learning

The theory of learning is also useful in developing a better understanding of the image transfer process. The importance of prior knowledge in the learning process has been widely acknowledged (Bada & Olusegun, 2015; Cobb, 1994; Park & Lessig, 1981; Raaij, 1977). Specifically, people use their existing knowledge or previous experience to construct new understandings (Bada & Olusegun, 2015; Pressley et al., 1992; Van Giesen et al., 2015). Similarly, in the process of interpreting text, readers tend to rely heavily on relevant prior knowledge to comprehend new information in the text (Maria & MacGinitie, 1980). Readers who have prior knowledge have a greater ability to comprehend unfamiliar (new) information than readers who do not have prior knowledge (Afflerbach, 1990; Davey & Kapinus, 1985; Ozuru, Dempsey, & McNamara, 2009). Based on the above discussion, in a consumption setting, if consumers are more familiar with one object than another, they will employ (transfer) cues from this familiar object to make sense of the unfamiliar but related object.

Accordingly, employing the above learning process argument, it is logical to suggest that in a co-marketing context, if consumers are familiar with one partner, the meaningful cues they derive from that partner will help them to make sense or form perceptions of the other partner. In this
regard, if consumers have positive perceptions of one partner in an alliance, these positive perceptions are likely to be transferred to the other partner.

Through reviewing several key theories, the above discussions highlight the importance of image transfer in a successful co-marketing alliance. As the focus of the current project is on image transfer between a place and a product, the Knowledge Transfer Model is considered as the most relevant theoretical foundation and hence to be adopted at the current research project.

The next section discusses the outcomes of image transfer, which may offer a deeper understanding of the importance of image transfer in the co-marketing context.

2.4 Potential Outcomes of Image Transfer

As discussed in Section 2.3.2, image transfer has received significant attention in various research contexts due to its positive consumer outcomes, such as favourable brand attitude and higher purchase intention. Although much of the literature has focused on intention as an outcome of image transfer, the concept of desire, which refers to a positive mental state associated with a consumer’s personal motivation to act, may be even more helpful for understanding the process of consumer decision formation (Han et al., 2014; Hwang & Choe, 2019; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001).

One of the models most frequently used to explain consumers’ decision-making process is the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991). According to the TPB, consumer intention to perform a behaviour is determined by individual attitudes toward the behaviour. Researchers have revealed that an individual may establish an intention based on having a motivational force to act in the future (e.g., Bagozzi, 1992; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001). Accordingly, some have suggested incorporating a motivational component, namely desire, into the TPB model, arguing that by doing
so, the TPB model will better explain how decisions are made (e.g., Han, Kin, & Lee, 2018; Hunter, 2006; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2004). In this context, the model of goal-directed behavior (MGB) has emerged (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001).

According to the first half of the MGB, desire is a positive consequence of attitudinal evaluations (Han et al., 2014). That is, consumers are more likely to be motivated to engage in a behaviour by favourable attitudes toward that behaviour. The influence of attitude on desire has been well examined in consumer behaviour research (e.g., Han et al., 2017; Hwang & Choe, 2019; Lee et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2017). *Attitude* refers to attitudes toward behaviour and attitudes toward objects (Ajzen, 1991; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Consumers’ attitudes toward an object positively influence their desire for that object (e.g., Ekinci et al., 2022; Han et al., 2014; Japutra et al., 2019). For example, favourable attitudes toward a tourism destination have been found to be positively related to consumers’ desire to visit that destination (Japutra et al., 2019).

According to the second half of the MGB, consumer behaviour is indirectly predicted by intention through desire. In some cases, however, desire is a stronger predictor of behaviour than intention. This notion can be explained as follows. First, desire represents the fundamental *why* elements of an action and usually expresses individuals’ interest in making something happen (e.g., Perugini & Bagozzi, 2004; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2011; Vallacher & Wegner, 1987). As a personal motivation, the desire to achieve an end state is a crucial causal factor that influences action formation (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2004). For example, a consumer may purchase a handbag because of their desire to own it. Desire plays an important role in predicting an individual’s actual behaviour.
Second, the intention to act is stronger when a person has more confidence in their ability to complete the action. In other words, intention requires self-commitment (i.e., an individual’s commitment to do something), or at least some kind or degree of planning, to achieve a specific outcome (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2004). This might imply that consumers’ intention to engage in a behaviour either requires a level of cognitive effort or is formed on the basis of careful consideration (Schröder, Stewart, & Thagard, 2014). In contrast, the desire to enact a behaviour tends to be motivational or emotional and is usually formed by affective responses (e.g., Perugini & Bagozzi, 2004; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2011). The advertising literature has shown that emotions can produce stronger reactions than can thought alone (Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008). Therefore, desire is expected to have a stronger influence on behaviour than intention. The AIDA (attention, interest, desire, and action) model, a theory of communication proposed by St. Elmo Lewis in 1989, may also help explain this notion (Strong, 1925).

The AIDA model, originally introduced as a promotional strategy, describes four psychological stages that a consumer experiences before making a purchase (Strong, 1925). People first become aware of and are attracted to a product, usually through advertising (attention). Second, their interest in the product increases because of its features and benefits (interest). Third, they develop a purchase motive toward the product (desire). Fourth, they make the purchase decision (action) (Lee & Hoffman, 2015). In this case, consumer desire, which is formed by consumers’ affective responses to advertisements, is directly related to consumer behaviour (Montazeribarforoushi, Keshavarzsaleh, & Ramsøy, 2017).

If tourists who had never visited a place before, it is assumed that they were not familiar with this place. In this situation, the tourists could become familiar with this place based on any pictures or advertisements. The advertisement is expected to arouse the tourists’ emotional or affective
responses to the advertisement and then tourists would develop a purchase motive (i.e., desire), which is likely to lead to actual behaviour without full consideration or commitment. As desire was considered a more reliable and proximal predictor of a person’s actual behavior than intention in the current research context, it was selected as an outcome variable of image transfer.

**Image Transfer and Desire.** The influence of image transfer on desire can also be understood from the relationship between image and desire. The relationship between image and desire has received significant attention in many settings. The belief–desire–intention (BDI) model (Bratman, Israel, & Pollack, 1988) can be used to understand the image–desire relationship. Based on the BDI model, people can perform either cognitive or affective evaluations of the status of their surroundings or an object. If their evaluations are favourable, they are more likely to develop the desire to achieve a particular related goal than if their evaluations are unfavourable (e.g., Koo, Chung, & Kim, 2015; Koo et al., 2016).

In the place–product co-marketing context, the image of a tourism place is expected to be enhanced when the product’s benefit (i.e., functional benefit, symbolic benefit, and experiential benefit) is transferred to the place (i.e., a successful image transfer). The enhanced place image then stimulates consumers’ desire to visit. Based on the above discussion, this thesis explores the relationships between various types of image transfer and desire.

As set forth above, it has been suggested that successful image transfer determines the success of a co-marketing alliance (e.g., Azevedo, 2004; Seno & Lukas, 2007; Smarandescu, Rose, & Wedell, 2013). Factors that can facilitate image transfer are discussed in the next sections.
2.5 Perceived Fit: A Key Facilitator of Image Transfer

Due to the importance of image transfer to the success of a co-marketing alliance, researchers have explored the factors that may facilitate it. For example, consumer-related factors such as brand familiarity have been shown to influence the image-transfer process (e.g., Carrillat, Harris, & Lafferty, 2010; Smith, 2004). By pairing a well-known brand with a less familiar brand, the image of the well-known brand is transferred to the other brand (Heslop et al., 2013). In other words, similar to the learning theory discussed above, if consumers are familiar with a partner brand, their existing knowledge of the brand helps to build their perceptions of another brand. In this case, their brand familiarity can help enhance image transfer. Other factors that are related to the brand itself may also influence image transfer. For example, in a sponsorship context, the domain of sponsorship, the number of sponsorships, and the duration of sponsorship may impact image transfer from the sponsor to the event (Smith, 2004).

One of the main factors known to influence image transfer is the similarity of or fit between partners. A high level of consistency in the key perceptions of two partners (i.e., perceived fit) can enhance the image-transfer process (e.g., Anh, kim, & Forney, 2009; Ahn & Sung, 2012). This notion has been applied in various contexts, such as brand extension (Bhat & Reddy, 2001), co-branding (Xing & Chalip, 2006), sponsorship (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999), and celebrity endorsement (Lynch & Schuler, 1994). Before acquiring an in-depth understanding of the important role of perceived fit in image transfer, it is necessary to elaborate on the concept of perceived fit, which is discussed in the next section.
2.5.1 The Concept of Perceived Fit

Based on the co-marketing alliance literature, a successful image transfer ensures a successful co-marketing alliance. The key to a successful image transfer is the perceived fit between partners (Aaker & Keller, 1990). If consumers perceive a close fit or easily establish a strong link between the partners in a co-marketing alliance, the image transfer from one partner to another may be easier than if there is either no fit or only a weak fit (e.g., Anh, Kim, & Forney, 2009; Ahn & Sung, 2012).

The importance of perceived fit was first emphasised by Tauber (1981), who suggested that in a brand extension context, the level of fit is high when consumers perceive a new product as rational and what they would expect from a brand. In general, perceived fit refers to the degree of the congruity between two product categories or brands (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Perceived fit or similarity can describe any properties that products share, such as essential attributes or usage situations (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Bridges et al., 2000; Smith & Park, 1992). Perceived fit is frequently used in place of terms such as congruity, congruence, consistency, and similarity (e.g., Ahn & Sung, 2012; Lafferty, 2007; Tsabari, Tziner, & Meir, 2005; Walchli, 2007; Zdravkovic, Magnusson, & Stanley, 2010). Despite some differences between these terms, the fundamental ideas underlying them are similar to those underlying perceived fit.

For example, Osgood and Tannenbaum (1955) stated that consumers’ evaluations always change direction toward greater congruence with the current frame of reference. Congruity theory states that the more congruent or consistent the beliefs that consumers hold about two objects, the greater evaluations of these two objects are developed due to the perceptions of consumers’ existing perceptions being confirmed and strengthened through the congruence (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955). In a similar manner, cognitive dissonance theory, as discussed above, reveals that when
consumers experience cognitive dissonance, they feel psychologically uncomfortable and attempt to minimize any inconsistency between their beliefs about and perceptions of two objects (Festinger, 1964). Therefore, the fundamental idea underlying perceived fit, congruity, and consistency is consumers’ belief that two entities match and are well suited to each other (Speed & Thompson, 2000).

To further explain the role of perceived fit in the co-marketing context, several theories underpinning perceived fit are discussed in the next section.

2.5.2 The Theoretical Background

This section covers the theoretical foundations of the role of perceived fit in a co-marketing alliance. It discusses categorization theory, cognitive consistency theory, and match-up theory.

**Categorization Theory.** Categorization theory, which was proposed by Fiske and Pavelchak in 1986, suggests that individuals build a cognitive structure that involves the evaluation of an object (e.g., a product, a place), and this cognitive structure is called a schema. When responding to a new stimulus (i.e., a new product), it may be easier for individuals to draw a connection between the new stimulus and the existing schema if this new stimulus is similar to or congruent with the schema (e.g., Aaker & Keller, 1990; Ahn & Sung, 2012). There are two modes of consumer evaluation processing: the category-based mode and the piecemeal-processing mode (Fiske & Pavelchak, 1986). If the attributes of the new stimulus are consistent or congruent with the existing schema, the category-based mode is adopted and the knowledge or evaluations of the existing schema directly transfer to the new stimulus. In other words, when responding to a new stimulus, consumers categorize their beliefs about the new stimulus into the existing schema or category to better understand it (Boush & Loken, 1991). If the new stimulus is believed to belong
to the existing schema (i.e., if it fits well with the schema), individuals can easily and immediately understand the new stimulus, leading to an efficient affect transfer. In this case, consumers who make less effort to understand these relationships are likely to develop favourable evaluations (e.g., Ahn, Kim, & Sung, 2020; Netemeyer, Heilman, & Maxham, 2012). Some authors have called this situation schema congruity, indicating the level of congruity between the attributes of a product and its associated product category schemas (e.g., Mander, 1982; Meyers & Tybout, 1989).

If the new stimulus is incongruent with the schema, the piecemeal-processing mode is adopted. In this mode, consumers evaluate the new stimulus attribute by attribute, because the attributes of the new stimulus are separate from the schema. In this situation, the consumer may need to expend time and effort to comprehend the linkages between the new stimulus and the schema, thus inhibiting natural affect transfer from the schema to the new stimulus (Fiske & Pavelchak, 1986). The demand for more cognitive effort may generate frustration, leading to unfavourable evaluations (Simonin & Ruth, 1998).

In light of the assumptions of categorization theory, the evaluations of the partners in a co-marketing alliance represent two schemas. If two partners are perceived as having a closer fit, the attributes of one partner are more easily transferred to the other. In this situation, consumers can more efficiently evaluate and easily understand the connection between the partners and are more likely to integrate them, generating favourable evaluations (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Similarly, a poor fit involves a weak link between partners, which results in unfavourable evaluations, because consumers must expend additional cognitive effort to understand the link (Becker-Olsen & Hill, 2006).
**Cognitive Consistency Theory.** Cognitive consistency theory was developed between the 1940s and the 1960s (Simon et al., 2014). Theories such as cognitive dissonance theory are built on the concept of cognitive consistency (Heider, 1946). Cognitive dissonance theory was originally introduced by Festinger (1957) and describes the condition in which the cognitive elements of two entities (i.e., thoughts, attitudes, and behaviour) are inconsistent or incongruent with each other. Individuals construct their cognitive knowledge on the basis of their surrounding environments (Oshikawa, 1968). Festinger (1957) argued that individuals make an effort to achieve cognitive consistency. Inconsistent cognitions cause individuals tension and psychological discomfort, a situation referred to as dissonance. When individuals experience dissonance, they are motivated to seek relief to reduce or eliminate this unpleasant tension by changing their beliefs to make their cognitions consistent with or well-suited to each other (Bell III, 2010).

As individuals value cognitive consistency, they generally respond favorably if two objects are perceived to fit together (Becker-Olsen & Hill, 2006; Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989). In a co-marketing alliance, if partners are consistent with each other, consumers experience cognitive consistency. This cognitive consistency can result in favourable evaluations of the co-marketing alliance. In contrast, if partners are not consistent with each other, individuals are likely to question the underlying motive for the pairing, arousing negative responses (e.g., Ahn, Kim, & Sung, 2020; Yoon & Gurhan-Canli, 2003).

**Match-up Theory.** Match-up theory, which was proposed by Kahle and Homer in 1985 and discussed in the early advertising literature, helps explain the perceived match-up or fit between endorser and products/brands. According to match-up theory, if the image of an endorser matches the endorsed product image, the image of the product is strengthened and the endorsement is more effective (Kamins, 1990). Early research in this area examined the fit between the endorser and a
product based on physical attractiveness (e.g., Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamin, 1990). For example, Kahle and Homer (1985) found that consumers showed more favourable attitudes toward an attractiveness-enhancing product when it was paired with an attractive endorser than when it was paired with a non-attractive endorser. Other research has included match-up factors such as trustworthiness and expertise and found that the greater the match or fit between the endorser and product, the more positive the consumer’s attitude toward the product and the stronger the consumer’s purchase intention (e.g., Kamins, 1990; Kim, Wang, & Ahn, 2013; Koernig & Boyd, 2009; Till & Bulster, 2000).

The above-discussed theories help explain the role of perceived fit in a co-marketing alliance. The next section elaborates on the various types of perceived fit and discusses the relationship between perceived fit and image transfer. The positive outcomes of perceived fit are then discussed.

2.5.3 Types of Perceived Fit

Building on the main idea of perceived fit, which concerns the consistency or congruity between two entities (Tauber, 1981), entities can have different representations, such as products, brands, and/or persons. Therefore, there are various types of perceived fit, including product category fit, brand image fit, and self-congruity, which are discussed below.

Prior research has indicated that there are two main fit aspects, namely product category fit and brand image fit (e.g., Bhat & Reddy, 2001; Park, Milberg, & Lawson, 1991). Product category fit, referring to the perceived similarity or compatibility of two product categories, evaluates whether two products complement or substitute for each other and whether they share the same physical attributes (Keller & Aaker, 1990; Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Unlike product category fit,
brand image fit is assessed at an abstract or superordinate level, usually referring to consistency in terms of brand concept (Park, Milberg, & Lawson, 1991).

Indeed, perceived fit can be built on image associations, including any attributes of or benefits related to each partner in a cooperative relationship (Bridges, Keller, & Sood, 2000). As discussed in Section 2.2.1, image associations include three major aspects: functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits (Keller, 1993). Accordingly, perceived fit can be represented as functional fit, symbolic fit, and experiential fit. Functional fit describes the comparability or compatibility of alliance partners’ functional image aspects (i.e., physical attributes or benefits) (Liu et al., 2019). Symbolic fit refers to the matching of alliance partners’ symbolic images (i.e., luxurious features or style). Experiential fit is the match between the aesthetic, experiential, and enjoyment-related image aspects (i.e., fun to use) of alliance partners.

The above discussion of perceived fit concerns the congruity between two objects. However, congruity may also exist between a person and an object, which is known as self-congruity.

**Self-congruity.** The concept of self-congruity was proposed by Sirgy (1982); it indicates the degree of congruity or incongruity between consumers’ perceptions of themselves (self-concept) and product image (e.g., Sirgy & Johar, 1999; Sirgy & Su, 2000). Self-concept (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 7) is the “totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object.” Sirgy (1982) proposed the concept of self-congruity by drawing on the congruence notion from early self-concept studies (Gardner & Levy, 1955). Gardner and Levy (1955) were among the first to discuss the congruence between a consumer’s self-concept and product image. They found that consumers were driven to choose products that matched their self-concepts.
Grubb and Grathwohl (1967) argued that consumers purchase products not only to fulfill their utilitarian needs but also to fulfill their psychological needs or to express themselves. In this regard, consumers tend to make purchase decisions based on the match between their self-concept and product image, as the symbolic meanings of products can strengthen and verify individuals’ perceptions of themselves (Kang et al., 2015). For example, consumers who consider themselves to be affluent and of a high status usually prefer fine dining restaurants to show off their luxury lifestyles (Kwun & Oh, 2006). Consumers usually choose a product or brand if it matches their self-concept or reflects their personality and lifestyle (e.g., Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy & Johar, 1999). Congruity theory, which is discussed in Section 2.5.1, also supports this notion. In addition, the important role that self-congruity plays in consumer behaviour intention has been well demonstrated (e.g., Ericksen, 1997; Ibrahim & Najjar, 2008; Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy et al., 1991).

**Self-Congruity in Tourism.** Chon (1992) was among the first to empirically apply the concept of self-congruity to the tourism industry. In the tourism context, self-congruity simply represents the degree of match or mismatch between a tourist’s self-concept and destination image (Hosany & Martin, 2012). Because self-concept has been suggested to be a function of product image (Sirgy, 1982), a tourist’s self-concept can be explained as a function of tourism place image. For example, tourists may attribute their decision to take an ecotourism trip to their environmental concerns. The self-concept of *concern about environment* may be influenced by the image of ecotourism (environmental consciousness). In this regard, self-concept/place image congruity (i.e., self-congruity) may increase. If tourists think that the image of a tourism place matches their self-concept, they are more likely to visit that place, as well demonstrated in prior research (e.g., Beerli, Meneses, & Gil 2007; Pratt & Sparks, 2014; Sirgy & Su, 2000).
2.5.4 Influences of Perceived Fit

**Perceived Fit and Image Transfer.** Based on the above-discussed theories, perceived fit is a key factor in the success of image transfer between two partners (e.g., Anh et al., 2009; Ahn & Sung, 2011). According to the above theories (e.g., categorization theory and schema congruity), if consumers perceive a close fit or a strong link between two partners in a co-marketing relationship, they will easily understand that relationship. In this situation, the image of one partner can more easily be transferred to another than in a situation in which the partners have no fit or a weak fit; consequently, new images of each partner are formed in consumers’ minds (e.g., Smith, 2004). In other words, image transfer can be created and/or improved based on whether two products or brands tend to fit together (e.g., James, 2006; Jongmans et al., 2019; Norman, 2017; Smith, 2004). The role of perceived fit in facilitating image transfer has been demonstrated in various contexts. For example, in a brand alliance, a high level of fit or similarity between partners leads to a natural concurrence; therefore, positive associations are easily transferred from one partner brand to another (e.g., Anh, Kim, & Forney, 2009; Ahn & Sung, 2012; Walchli, 2007).

Similarly, in the brand extension context, fit is often used to support the transfer of a brand’s associations to an extension of that brand (e.g., Aaker & Keller, 1990; Bhat & Reddy, 2001; Völckner & Sattler, 2006). Indeed, if an extended product is perceived to be extremely similar to the core brand, the image of the core brand is more easily transferred to the extended product, resulting in more favourable evaluations of the brand extension (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Bridges, Keller, & Sood, 2000; Grime, 2002). An early research project conducted by Park, Milberg, & Lawson (1991) found that brand extensions were evaluated more favorably when there was a closer conceptual fit between the extension product and the parent brand.
In the endorsement literature, perceived fit has been defined as the congruence between the image of a celebrity and the endorsed product (Kamin & Gupta, 1994). According to the match-up hypothesis discussed in Section 2.5.2, the meaning or image transfer process is determined by the match-up or fit between a celebrity and an endorsed product or brand (Kamins & Gupta, 1994). In other words, the greater the consumer-perceived similarity between a celebrity and an endorsed product or brand, the greater the likelihood that the celebrity’s positive image will transfer to the endorsed product or brand (e.g., Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Meenaghan, 2001; Smith, 2004). This notion has been empirically supported by many prior studies (e.g., Grohs & Reisinger, 2005; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Meenaghan, 2001). Moreover, successful image transfer leads to favourable evaluations, such as those expressed through brand/product attitude or purchase intention (e.g., He et al., 2019; Kahle & Homer, 1985; Liu & Brock, 2011; Misra & Beatty, 1990; Till & Busler, 2000). The next section discusses one of the potential outcomes of perceived fit: attitude.

**Perceived Fit and Attitude.** As discussed above, if consumers perceive a high level of fit between the partners in a co-marketing alliance, they are likely to generate favourable evaluations of the alliance (e.g., Ho et al., 2017; Simonin & Ruth, 1998; Thompson & Strutton, 2012; Walchli, 2007). For example, in a co-branding context, James et al. (2006) suggested that congruity between the functional aspects (reliability and technology) of two brands (i.e., Crest and Oral B) influenced the evaluation of the brand partnership. Ahn and Sung (2012) found that strong connections between the symbolic image aspects (i.e., sophistication and sincerity) of fictitious brands of clothing and wristwatches had a positive impact on consumer attitudes toward their co-branded products. Similarly, they demonstrated that experiential associations (i.e., finding the products exciting or interesting) also played a role in the evaluation of co-branding. In the endorsement
literature, a symbolic fit between the endorser and the endorsed product, such as in their popularity, prestigiousness, or attractiveness, positively influences consumer attitudes toward the endorsed product (e.g., Choi & Rifon, 2012; Grohs & Reisinger, 2005; Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010).

Consumer attitudes toward participating partners should be enhanced if the partners are perceived as well fitting. According to the context effect (Lynch, Chakravarti, & Mitra, 1991), consumers’ product evaluations are influenced by the characteristics of other products in the surrounding context. In a brand alliance, one brand exists in the context of the other brand; therefore, post-alliance attitudes toward each brand are influenced by this context. A brand alliance reveals a new brand association; therefore, consumers’ attitudes toward the partner brand are likely to be influenced by the new information presented in a brand alliance (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Therefore, if consumers perceive a high level of fit between partners, they are more likely to generate favourable attitudes toward the alliance, in turn enhancing their attitudes toward each object. The following section discusses another possible positive outcome of perceived fit: desire.

**Perceived Fit and Desire.** The influence of perceived fit on desire can be understood through the relationship between image and desire. The BDI model proposed by Bratman, Israel, & Pollack (1988) is an appropriate framework for exploring the influence of image on desire. According to the BDI model, desire is formed by beliefs, perceptions, and images (e.g., Han et al., 2014; Hwang & Lyu, 2020; Koo, Chung, & Kim, 2015). In other words, when consumers perceive a positive image of a place or a product, they are more likely to develop a desire to visit the place or purchase the product. For example, Hudson, Wang, & Gil (2011) argued that viewers who form a favourable image of a destination after watching a movie express a greater desire to visit that destination. This image–desire relationship has been theoretically and empirically supported by numerous studies (e.g., Hwang & Choe, 2019; Koo, Chung, & Kim, 2015; Koo et al., 2016).
Although the perceived fit–desire relationship has not been explored in prior studies, the image–desire relationship can help explain the perceived fit–desire relationship. In a place-product co-marketing alliance, if beliefs about a place are believed to be consistent with or fit beliefs about a product, successful image transfer may occur. As the result of a successful image transfer, an enhanced image or perception of a place or a product may be generated, which can stimulate consumers’ desire to visit a place or purchase a product.

The role of perceived fit in co-marketing alliances is not well understood. The current research attempts to fill this gap by exploring the roles of various types of perceived fit in a co-marketing alliance.

2.6 Summary of this Chapter

This chapter reviews the project’s background literature, including important theories and major constructs. More specific prior research is presented in the three papers that comprise Chapters 3–5. This chapter starts by summarizing the co-marketing alliance concept, including discussions of cross-category marketing and co-branding. After reviewing the co-marketing literature, this chapter reviews the literature related to image, which is a fundamental construct that determines the success of a co-marketing alliance. This discussion is followed by a review of the relationships between country image, place image, and product image, providing a theoretical background for Paper 1 (Chapter 3 in this thesis).

Next, this chapter provides a detailed review of the literature on various types of image transfer (i.e., endorser–product image transfer, product–brand image transfer, brand–brand image transfer, and product–place image transfer) that are relevant to Paper 2 (Chapter 4 in this thesis). Three theories, namely the brand leveraging model, information integration theory, and the theory of
learning, are used to explain the image transfer process. Finally, the literature relevant to perceived fit is discussed as a background for Paper 3 (Chapter 5 in this thesis), including a summary of related theoretical foundations (i.e., categorization theory, cognitive consistency theory, and match-up theory), followed by a thorough review of the concept of perceived fit and its potential customer outcomes (i.e., consumer attitude and consumer desire).
CHAPTER THREE

Connecting an ecotourism place and its local products: A co-marketing perspective

The paper entitled ‘Connecting an ecotourism place and its local products: A co-marketing perspective’ by Liu, J.Y., Liu, F., & Webb, D. is being submitted to a journal for review.

This chapter presents the first paper included in this PhD thesis.

3.1 Abstract

Place image is important to destination marketing, as it can help differentiate a place from others. Drawing on both the product and destination marketing literature, this study examines consumers’ image perceptions of an ecotourism place and its local products in a co-marketing context. Using a quasi-experimental approach, this study finds that place image positively affects consumers’ intentions to visit an ecotourism place as well as their intentions to purchase local products made in that place. Similarly, images of local products also positively affect consumers’ purchase intentions and their intentions to visit the ecotourism place. Advertising is also shown its important role in the image formation process. These findings suggest that valuable co-marketing opportunities exist for ecotourism and product marketers.

Key Words: Place marketing, Destination marketing, Co-marketing, Cross-category marketing, Product image, Destination image
3.2 Introduction

Recent years have witnessed growing interest in marketing a place (Foroudi et al., 2016). Place marketing refers to activities that use coordinated marketing tools to create, disseminate, deliver, and exchange a place’s offerings from which consumers or communities can gain value (Braun, 2008). This marketing approach seeks to promote a place’s value by identifying its distinctive image and other advantages (Rein, Kotler, & Haider, 1993).

The notion of ‘place branding’ applies when places are regarded as brands (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2010). Such branding is thus an aspect of place marketing, which generally focuses on marketing programs for the purpose of creating a unique identity associated with a place (Govers, 2011). Place branding includes several concepts, such as place image, which is similar to brand image in the branding literature (Cretu & Brodie, 2007). Place image is crucial to place branding; its main objective is to differentiate a place from others through image-building efforts (Foroudi et al., 2016). A positive place image often significantly influences the success of place marketing (e.g., through tourism, investment or product exports) (Govers, 2011). Therefore, having a clear understanding of place image as well as its consequences is essential for place marketers.

Place image comprises numerous image perceptions tied to a specific place; examples include a country, city (region), manufactured products, and place-based services or residents (Papadopoulos & Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2015). Studies on country-of-origin (COO) marketing were among the first to describe country image and its potential effects on consumers. Researchers in the 1960s (e.g., Schooler, 1965) initially examined the influence of ‘made in’ product labels (e.g., products manufactured in the United States or Mexico) on consumers’ purchase decisions. Two major concepts have since emerged in the COO literature, namely general country image and
product country image. General country image reflects perceptions of a country’s economic, social, cultural, or technological environment (Martin & Eroglu, 1993). Product country image involves image perceptions associated with a product category made in a specific country (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2003). Product country image has given way to other forms of country image, such as tourism place image (consumers’ perceptions of a country or place as a travel destination).

Papadopoulos and Heslop (1986) helped to pioneer explorations of relationships among types of image perceptions (e.g., product country image and tourism place image). They discovered that consumers who had previously visited a country held more positive perceptions of products made in that country than those who had not visited the country before. Although their study only considered product image and not place image, their research inspired greater interest in the latter concept (e.g., Bowe & Lockshin, 2011; Phillips et al., 2013).

More recently, Elliot et al. (2011) developed and empirically tested multiple image types, including cognitive country image (e.g., how developed a country’s economy is), affective country image (e.g., how friendly people from a country are), as well as product country image and tourism place image. They found that affective country image informed consumers’ destination image perceptions and destination-related product image perceptions along with consumers’ travel and purchase intentions. However, the authors simply considered tourism place image and product image in general, calling for additional research on specific tourism forms and product categories.

Ecotourism is a specific form of tourism, generally referring to nature-based tourism that aims to preserve the environment and maintain the welfare of local people (The International Ecotourism Society, 2019). Due to the increased environmental awareness, ecotourism has become a prevailing tourism form in many countries such as Australia. The core of ecotourism is green (i.e., nature-
based) (Bell, 2008), and this green image may have been carried over to local farm or agricultural products produced at the ecotourism place. As such, ecotourism and local agricultural products appear to be strongly connected (Burrell, 2014). Accordingly, the present work investigates place image from an integrative perspective based on a specific tourism format (ecotourism) and a particular agricultural product category (honey) associated with a place (Australia). The primary objective of this study is to reveal relationships among these images as well as their influences on consumers’ purchase and travel intentions.

An additional aim of this research concerns the role of advertising in place marketing. Put simply, advertising serves three functions when marketing products: 1) to increase product or brand awareness; 2) to inform consumers of product feature(s), price, and performance; and 3) to persuade consumers to make a purchase (Hem et al., 2003). Advertising is also vital for tourism marketing (Salehi & Farahbakhsh, 2014). Core functions of tourism advertising are to increase the appeal of destinations and to encourage visitation (Hem et al., 2003). Thus, a further goal of this study is to clarify the role of advertising in the relationships among multiple types of images.

This study also intends to advance knowledge about co-marketing alliances. These alliances involve two or more independent businesses collaborating strategically to accomplish a mutually desirable goal (Bucklin & Sengupta, 1993). A co-marketing strategy is believed to expand market share and to serve as an efficient repositioning tool (Smarandescu et al., 2013). Although co-marketing alliances have become increasingly common, limited empirical evidence demonstrates their effectiveness. By examining ecotourism and its local products in a single context, this study will enrich the understanding of co-marketing in a tourism context. Beyond these contributions, findings are expected to help tourism and agriculture industries better determine how to coordinate
their marketing efforts and develop more effective programs to target diverse domestic and international market segments.

3.3 Literature review

3.3.1 Co-marketing

Co-marketing alliances have received substantial attention in past decades due to helping companies or firms gain a strong competitive advantage in the marketplace (Grieco & Iasevoli, 2017). Co-marketing alliances typically refer to strategically complementary alliances between two or more independent firms working toward a common goal (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Firms can benefit from these alliances by enhancing consumer awareness, expanding market share, and/or avoiding risks (Thompson & Strutton, 2012). A co-marketing alliance involves associations between two or more entities, such as brands or categories (Ahn et al., 2020). A co-marketing alliance undertaken between two categories is called a cross-category marketing alliance and encompasses marketing activities that offer consumers more than one product category at the same time (Yao, 2014). Cross-category marketing alliances can hence exist between tourism places and products. Marketing research remains thin in this domain (Phillips et al., 2013). The current study thus endeavors to extend knowledge in this area by scrutinizing the relationship between a product and a tourism place. The following section discusses relationships among various image types as well as their impacts on consumer behavior.

3.3.2 Image Formation in Co-marketing

Every place has an image, and more accurately, more than one image. COO research represents an early attempt in the marketing arena to comprehend place image. The ‘COO’ label indicates the
home country in which a product is produced or manufactured (Samiee, 1994). COO was found significantly affects consumer purchase behavior (Lin & Chen, 2006). General country image and product country image are two of the most examined marketing constructs arising from COO (Liu et al., 2017).

General country image refers to perceptions that consumers hold toward a particular country’s overall political, social, economic, and technological environment (Martin & Eroglu, 1993), which contains two dimensions: cognitive image and affective image (Elliot et al., 2011). Cognitive country image captures consumers’ overall beliefs about a country; affective country image conveys consumers’ generic feelings toward a country (Orbaiz & Papadopoulos, 2003). When consumers form an image perception about a country, they do so in a hierarchical manner drawing first on cognitive cues and then on affective cues (Orbaiz & Papadopoulos, 2003). More precisely, consumers evaluate cognitive information about a country first, after which they develop feelings about that country (Phillips et al., 2013). Cognitive country image hence influences affective country image (Elliot et al., 2011).

Product country image is another key construct discussed in the COO literature. This type of image embodies consumers’ overall perceptions of specific product categories made in a particular country (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2003). For example, consumers generally see products made in Germany as reliable and durable with good workmanship (Wang et al., 2012). The HALO model proposed by Han (1989) partly elucidates the relationship between general country image and product country image. As per this model, if consumers are not familiar with a product, they tend to rely on stereotypical beliefs about a country to assess the item; that is, they may consider cognitive information about that country to form perceptions of products originating from there.
(Han, 1989). Cognitive country image therefore affects product country image as demonstrated previously (Elliot et al., 2011).

Alongside consumers’ cognitive beliefs about a country, their affective evaluations of a country also shape product country image (Elliot et al., 2011). According to the affect-as-information model, affect (e.g., pleasant feelings) is important in information processing and serves as a basis for consumers’ object-related judgments (Wyer et al., 1999). People might form opinions about an object by analyzing their emotions at a particular moment (Clore et al., 2001). In this case, consumers’ feelings act as persuasive cues in belief formation (Clore et al., 2001). Affect therefore plays a central role in one’s beliefs (Wang et al., 2012). As such, when consumers develop affective feelings about a country, these emotions become an information source shaping beliefs about a product originating from there (Wang et al., 2012). Affective country image hence influences product country image (Elliot et al., 2011).

Similar to product country image, tourism place image—a form of specific country image—entails consumers’ perceptions of a place as a travel destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). General country image has been discussed in tourism; its positive association with tourism place image (Elliot et al., 2011) is especially salient for this study’s purposes. Building on the above review of the relationships among general country image and product country image, cognitive country image and affective country image have each been found to influence tourism place image as well (e.g., Ayyildiz & Turna, 2013; De Nisco et al., 2016). Furthermore, and within the same context, studies have revealed positive relationships among cognitive country image, affective country image, product country image, and tourism place image (e.g., De Nisco et al., 2016; Elliot et al., 2011). Given these associations, the following hypotheses are proposed:
H1: A positive relationship exists between cognitive country image and affective country image (H1a), between cognitive country image and product country image (H1b), between cognitive country image and tourism place image (H1c).

H2: A positive relationship exists between affective country image and product country image (H2a) and between affective country image and tourism place image (H2b)

3.3.3 Role of Advertising in Image Formation

In addition to exploring relationships among multiple types of images, this study considers how to effectively cultivate these images. Advertisements are one such avenue. Advertising is widely regarded as a pivotal communication tool in both tourism and product marketing: ads can help consumers form perceptions about an advertised product or tourism image (Xu & Pratt, 2018). In product marketing, firms or companies typically promote products by adopting an advertising strategy that showcases an item’s appeal to raise consumer awareness (Hem et al., 2003). Consumers who are unfamiliar with a product usually depend on advertisements to construct their evaluations (Machleit & Wilson, 1988). Advertisements also afford consumers an opportunity to connect with the objects featured in ads (Brosius et al., 1996). When consumers are exposed to an ad, they will become more connected with the pictured product through their emotions; their perceptions of that item may change in kind (Sallam & Algammash, 2016). A tourism destination’s attractiveness could be enhanced through an advertisement and in turn reinforce consumers’ perceptions of this place (Xu & Pratt, 2018). Given the crucial role of advertising in image formation, advertisements themselves cannot be ignored.

Attitude toward an advertisement is a popular construct in the advertising literature, capturing consumers’ overall evaluations (whether favorable or unfavorable) of an advertisement (Lutz,
Favorable attitudes towards advertisements are often associated with positive perceptions of advertised objects (Faircloth et al., 2001): if consumers hold positive attitudes toward an advertisement, they are more likely to develop favorable perceptions of the included brand or product (Sallam & Algammash, 2016). Thus, as a place is often regarded as a brand (e.g., a tourism destination) (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2010), this effect should also apply in the tourism context—one’s attitude toward an advertisement is expected to positively influence tourism place image.

The influence of one’s attitude toward an advertisement on general country image has received scant academic attention. However, this impact can be understood from a COO perspective. Based on the summary construct model described by Han (1989), country image can be viewed as a summary of product-related beliefs. In other words, once consumers are familiar with a product, they will likely form perceptions about a country by drawing on information about products originating from that country (Laroche et al., 2005). As argued, favorable attitudes toward an advertisement could arouse consumers’ positive evaluations of the showcased product (Sallam & Algammash, 2016).

\[ H3: \] Attitude toward an advertisement is positively related to product country image \((H3a)\) and tourism place image \((H3b)\), cognitive country image \((H3c)\) and affective country image \((H3d)\).

### 3.3.4 Role of Consumer Knowledge in Image Formation

In addition to the role of attitude toward an advertisement on image formation, consumer knowledge can inform product country image and tourism place image. Consumers’ knowledge about a product is critical in understanding the product’s image (Orbaiz & Papadopoulos, 2003). Consumers with different levels of product knowledge hold distinct views on products (Laroche et
al., 2003). If a person is highly knowledgeable about a product, they normally possess a well-developed mental knowledge structure (Marks & Olson, 1981). This knowledge structure is automatically activated when assessing a product and can guide corresponding perceptions (Bian & Moutinho, 2011). It could then be assumed consumers are more likely to develop positive product perceptions if their product knowledge tends to be positive (Phillips et al., 2013). In essence, consumers’ product knowledge influences their product-related beliefs (e.g., product country image) (Orbaiz & Papadopoulos, 2003). Consumer knowledge is frequently examined in tourism (i.e., consumer place knowledge) and has a similar impact: consumers whose destination-related knowledge tends to be positive are likely to develop favorable perceptions of that location (Hu & Ritchie, 1993).

Just as Han’s HALO model demonstrated, tourism place knowledge and product knowledge are expected to be strongly related (Han, 1989). Expanding on this model, when consumers are unfamiliar with a product, place-based perceptions can lead to product perceptions (Han, 1989). If consumers are knowledgeable about a country as a tourism destination, this understanding will help them develop perceptions of the country and, by extension, of products manufactured there (Bowe, 2013). Consumers’ knowledge about a product created in that country may then be enriched. Intuitively, if consumers possess some knowledge about a place, then their knowledge of products originating from that place can be strengthened. The following hypotheses are put forth accordingly:

\[ H4: \] Consumer product knowledge is positively related to product country image \((H4a)\) and tourism place image \((H4b)\) and consumer place knowledge \((H4c)\).
3.3.5 Image and Intention

Having discussed image formation, this section addresses image outcomes, including consumers’ purchase intentions and visit intentions. Purchase intention refers to one’s likelihood of making a purchase (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1972) and is regularly considered with respect to product branding (Liu et al., 2006). In tourism, one’s intentions to visit a destination suggest the extent to which a person would be willing to travel there (Kim & Kwon, 2018).

3.3.5.1 Affective Country Image and Intention

How one evaluates a country seemingly determines their attitudes and behavioral intentions related to that country or products associated with it. Han’s (1989) summary construct model, described in Section 3.3.3, implies that country image can be viewed as a summary attribute of a product that may directly influence consumers’ attitudes or behavioral intentions toward the product. Compared with the cognitive component of country image, affective country evaluations are more apt to drive consumers’ behavioral intentions around products (Elliot et al., 2011). This notion is consistent with advertising studies suggesting that emotions can elicit stronger reactions than pure thought (Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008). Scholars have also reported that affective country image positively influences one’s intention to purchase a product (Orbaiz & Papadopoulos, 2003) and to visit a place (Bertoli, 2013). The following hypotheses thus apply:

\[ H5: \text{Affective country image is positively related to product purchase intention (}H5a\text{) and place visit intention (}H5b\text{).} \]

3.3.5.2 Product Country Image, Tourism Place Image, and Intention
Consumers routinely refer to a product’s image to infer product quality when making purchase decisions (Wang et al., 2012). If consumers hold positive perceptions of a product, they will presumably be inclined to take steps to purchase it (Diamantopoulos et al., 2011). Product country image is therefore influenced product purchase intention (Liu et al., 2017). In the tourism context, the importance of tourism place image in predicting travel behavior has been acknowledged since the 1970s (Hunt, 1975). Consumers who hold favorable perceptions of a destination are more likely to visit it (Elliot et al., 2013). Tourism place image thus shapes tourists’ visit intentions (Kim & Kerstetter, 2016). In this vein, the following hypotheses are formulated:

\( H6: \) Product country image is positively related to product purchase intention \((H6a)\) and tourism place image is positively related place visit intention \((H6b)\).

While relationships between product country image and place image have been examined (i.e., as discussed in Section 3.3.2) (Han, 1989), the interaction or cross-over effect between these two images has not been fully considered (Elliot et al., 2011). Whether tourism place image inspires consumers’ intentions to purchase a product originating from that place, or whether product country image stimulates tourists’ intentions to visit that place, remains underexplored.

Papadopoulos and Heslop (1986) were among the first to contemplate a place’s impact on a product. They found that tourists who had already been to a country held more positive opinions of its goods than those who had never been. In this case, tourists’ perceptions of a country could help them develop perceptions of its products. In brief, if consumers hold positive perceptions of a destination such as Australia, these perceptions may prompt favorable views of products originating from that country (i.e., Australian wine) while simultaneously enhancing product purchase intention (Bowe & Lockshin, 2011).
Other studies have assessed the influence of product image on place visit intention. Elliot et al. (2011) discovered that, in the case of the United States and Japan, a positive relationship exists between product country image and place visit intention. A country’s products, such as food, can factor heavily into people’s travel decisions (Quang & Wang, 2004). Some tourists’ visit intentions are even predicted by the country’s product (e.g., food) image (Phillips et al., 2013). Perceptions of a country’s products likely play a part in forecasting travel intention as contended:

\[ \text{H6: Product country image is positively related to place visit intention (H6c) and tourism place image is positively related to product purchase intention (H6d).} \]

The relationships suggested by the foregoing hypotheses are depicted in Figure 3.1.
3.4 Research Method

3.4.1 Research Stimulus, Place, and Product Selection

Advertisements are acceptable survey stimuli, especially when consumers are new to a product or service (Andrews & Shimp, 2017). As such, a print advertisement was designed and used as a stimulus at the start of the survey. Two key decisions were made regarding design: choosing an appropriate ecotourism location and an appropriate agricultural project.

Multiple ecotourism sites in Australia (e.g., Walpole, the Margaret River region) were considered as candidates. Walpole, a town in the southwestern forest belt of Western Australia, was selected after extensive deliberation. This town is home to the Tree-Top Walk, an award-winning ecotourism attraction in Western Australia (Ecotourism Australia, 2015).

Jarrah honey was chosen as the focal agricultural product. Jarrah honey is a well-known type of Australian honey made from the flowers of Jarrah trees, one of several Eucalypt species in Western Australia’s ‘Forest Belt’. Roughly 300 tons of Jarrah honey are produced annually; approximately 50 tons are sold to the Chinese market (Medlen, 2016). Wescobee, a long-standing producer of Jarrah honey in Western Australia, was chosen as the brand to be featured in the advertisement.

Several print advertisements featuring the Walpole Tree-Top Walk and Wescobee honey were collected as examples. Based on these, a designer was employed to design a suitable advertisement that combined the Tree-Top Walk and Wescobee Jarrah honey in one ad. Multiple versions were shown to a group of Chinese students at a university in Western Australia until one that satisfied all research criteria was unanimously agreed upon (see Appendix 3.1)
3.4.2 Sample Selection

This study involved a sample of Chinese consumers living in China who had neither been to Australia nor tried Australian honey at the time of the survey. China was considered a suitable context for multiple reasons. First, an increasing number of Chinese tourists have expressed interest in traveling overseas from China (Wu & Nan, 2018). Australia ranks about 16th among the top 20 most popular overseas destinations for Chinese travelers (Ctrip, 2017). China is also one of Australia’s most important markets: Chinese tourists rank first in terms of actual visitor numbers and per capita spending, with total spending of AU$8.3 billion in 2015 (Tourism Australia, 2019).

Second, Chinese visitors’ interest in ecotourism has gradually risen over the past decade as air quality and the eco-environment have become central components of these tourists’ overseas destination choices (Outbound Tourists Report, 2017). Around 30% of tourists traveling overseas have cited ecotourism as a prime motivator (Outbound Tourists Report, 2017). Tourism Australia (2014) additionally reported that, among all Chinese tourists coming to Australia, 77% indicated having participated in ecotourism-based activities.

Third, Chinese consumers prefer products or brands from foreign developed countries (e.g., Australia) due to quality and safety perceptions (Liu et al., 2007). For example, Chinese consumers are highly interested in buying Australian products (either while visiting Australia or online) given the belief that these products are green, clean, and trustworthy (Lim, 2016).

3.4.3 Survey Development

A structured questionnaire, designed to include all constructs in the conceptual model, was developed for hypothesis testing. To ensure the instrument’s linguistic accuracy, all items were
translated from English to Chinese (Standard Mandarin) and back again using the back-to-back translation method (Chen & Boore, 2010). All measures were adopted in part or in full from earlier studies. Items were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale anchored by 1 = completely disagree and 5 = completely agree.

Measures of cognitive (nine items) and affective (eight items) country image were adopted from Li et al. (2013). Both tourism place image and product country image included six items, adapted from Mohamad and Ab Ghani (2014) and Liu et al. (2017) respectively. A 3-item measure on place visit intention was adopted from Elliot et al. (2013). Three items were also used to measure product purchase intention. Place and product knowledge were both adopted from Steenkamp et al. (2003). Finally, attitude toward the advertisement was assessed with Liu et al. (2006) 5-item scale. The full instrument is shown in Appendix 3.2.

3.5 Data Collection, Analysis, and Results

3.5.1 Data Collection

Data collection was conducted in Nanjing, one of China’s most prosperous cities. Nanjing was chosen for a number of reasons. First, Nanjing is one of the top 10 cities with the fastest growing number of outbound tourists (Ctrip, 2017). In addition, the climbing number of imported supermarkets in Nanjing indicates that local consumers are generally interested in foreign products of premium quality (Nanjing Daily, 2015). Second, tourists who are keen on ecotourism vacation in China reportedly possess a relatively high education level given their greater concerns about environmental quality, environmental protection, and environmental education (Cheng & Zhou, 2006). About 25% of people in Nanjing have received a Bachelor degree or higher (Xinhua, 2011). Third, residents of Nanjing have a relatively higher average monthly income (RMB 6,000) versus
the country’s monthly average (RMB 4,600) (Xu, 2015). This income enables consumers to focus on product quality and safety more than price (Cheng & Zhou, 2006).

Consumers were randomly approached at a shopping mall and asked two screening questions: ‘Have you been to Australia before?’ and ‘Have you tried Australian honey before?’ If they responded ‘no’ to both questions, they were invited to fill out the questionnaire with a small box of chocolates upon survey completion. A total of 180 responses were collected in 2018.

3.5.2 Data Cleaning and Basic Descriptive Analyses

After data cleaning, 147 valid responses remained for analysis. This sample size is relatively small but is acceptable given that it exceeds the minimum required sample size (N = 100) for a quantitative study (Fellner & Nitsche, 2022). After conducting frequency analyses, the sample showed a good balance in terms of gender (50% males and females respectively), age (18-30: 54%; 31-40: 20%, 40 above 26%), income (low to medium including medium 52%, medium to high, 48%) and education (High School: 24%; Bachelor: 34%, Bachelor above: 42%).

3.5.3 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed to uncover the structure of the data. Two items from the measures of cognitive country image and affective country image were deleted due to low factor loading (<0.4). Convergent validity was achieved with all factor loadings were greater than 0.7, and each factor’s average variance extracted (AVE) was greater than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010), except cognitive country image. While it would be ideal to have an AVE score of 0.5 or higher, an AVE between 0.36 to 0.5 is considered to be acceptable (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). However, given the low AVE, findings related to cognitive country image need to be interpreted with extra caution.
Discriminant validity was confirmed because all AVE values surpassed the maximum shared squared variance values. Construct reliability (CR) was also tested to determine each measure’s internal consistency. As listed in Table 3.1, all CR values were higher than 0.7, further reflecting constructs’ reliability (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 3.1: Descriptive Statistics and Measurement Properties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th># items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Country Image</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Country Image</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Country Image</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Place Image</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Intention</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Intention</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Knowledge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Knowledge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the ad</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.4 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Using the maximum likelihood method, a structural (or full) model was established to test the significance of the hypothesized relationships. The initial model (specified as Model 1) achieved a good model fit (CMIN/df = 1.664, CFI = 0.920, RMSEA = 0.067). The Bollen–Stine bootstrap p value (0.050) was not ideal; however, this outcome was expected given the small sample size. Table 3.2 summarizes the standard regression weights and p values for each relationship in the hypothesized model. Most of the hypothesis were supported except H1b, H3d, H4b, H5a, and H5b.

Table 3.2: Hypotheses Testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1a</td>
<td>CogCIM -&gt; AffeCIM</td>
<td>β=0.661</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1b</td>
<td>CogCIM-&gt; ProdImage</td>
<td>β=0.084</td>
<td>p=0.502</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1c</td>
<td>CogCIM -&gt; PlaceImage</td>
<td>β=0.289</td>
<td>p=0.022*</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2a</td>
<td>AffeCIM -&gt; ProdImage</td>
<td>β=0.285</td>
<td>p=0.016**</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2b</td>
<td>AffeCIM -&gt; PlaceImage</td>
<td>β=0.348</td>
<td>p=0.003**</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3a</td>
<td>AtAd -&gt; ProdImage</td>
<td>β=0.351</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3b</td>
<td>AtAd -&gt; PlaceImage</td>
<td>β=0.169</td>
<td>p=0.026*</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3c</td>
<td>AtAd -&gt; CogCIM</td>
<td>β=0.271</td>
<td>p=0.006**</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3d</td>
<td>AtAd -&gt; AffeCIM</td>
<td>β=0.116</td>
<td>p=0.26</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4a</td>
<td>ProdKnow -&gt; ProdImage</td>
<td>β=0.190</td>
<td>p=0.009**</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4b</td>
<td>PlaceKnow -&gt; ProdKnow</td>
<td>β=0.856</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4c</td>
<td>PlaceKnow -&gt; PlaceImage</td>
<td>β=0.000</td>
<td>p=0.997</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5a</td>
<td>AffeCIM -&gt; ProdInt</td>
<td>β=0.073</td>
<td>p= 0.470</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5b</td>
<td>AffeCIM -&gt; PlaceInt</td>
<td>β=0.081</td>
<td>p= 0.392</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6a</td>
<td>ProdImage -&gt; ProdInt</td>
<td>β=0.485</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6b</td>
<td>PlaceImage -&gt; PlaceInt</td>
<td>β=0.651</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6c</td>
<td>ProdImage -&gt; PlaceInt</td>
<td>β=0.186</td>
<td>p=0.018*</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6d</td>
<td>PlaceImage -&gt; ProdInt</td>
<td>β=0.289</td>
<td>p=0.003**</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CMIN/DF</th>
<th>1.664</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bollen-Stine bootstrap p</td>
<td>p = 0.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>0.920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>0.067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.6 Discussion and Conclusion

#### 3.6.1 Summary of Findings

This study provides compelling evidence that product country image positively affects visit intentions to an ecotourism place. This finding suggests that products (especially local food offerings) are important to consider when consumers are thinking about traveling to a specific ecotourism place. The image of an ecotourism place is shown to positively influence purchase intentions of local products from the ecotourism place. Therefore, when consumers decide to buy a product, its place of origin is salient. This finding suggests that the green or sustainable aspect of
an ecotourism place certainly adds value to local products from this place. Vice versa, local products also enhance the visit intention to an ecotourism place.

This study also finds that the overall affective country image affects the image of an ecotourism place of this country and the image of a product made in this place. This result is consistent with the HALO model in that consumers usually refer to general country image to evaluate a country’s products when unable to detect product quality directly (Han, 1989).

However, the overall cognitive country image was not found to have a significant impact on the image of a product made in this country. This result contradicts Baloglu and McCleary (1999) in the contexts of Turkey, Greece, Italy, and Egypt as well as Orbaiz and Papadopoulos (2003) regarding the United States, Germany, Japan, and Korea. These disparities may be due to cognitive country image calling for more specific beliefs about a country. Respondents in the present study had not been to Australia before and might have been unfamiliar with this place. Their cognitive perceptions of the country could have been weak as a result, hence the negligible effects of these perceptions on other forms of country image.

Another objective of this study was to investigate the role of attitude toward an advertisement on image formation. This attitude was found to positively affect ecotourism place image and product image, aligning with Sallam and Algammash’s (2016) assertion that consumers with more positive attitudes toward an advertisement will display a more positive brand image of either a place or a product brand. These patterns reflect the importance of advertisements in image formation. Attitude toward an advertisement also positively influenced cognitive country image but had no impact on affective country image. These trends may be explained by advertising contents. Advertisements can arouse consumers’ cognitive and affective (emotional) responses
during exposure (Biehal et al., 1992). Rather than merely presenting a picture, the content of advertisements in this study provided cognitive information related to attributes of the featured product or tourism place (Bojanic, 1991). Consumers in such cases more readily exhibit cognitive responses versus affective responses. Additionally, the effect of advertising can be delayed; that is, an ad may not immediately generate consumers’ affective perceptions of a country as a tourism destination (Andrews & Shimp, 2017).

In a departure from past efforts (e.g., Elliot et al., 2011; Orbaiz & Papadopoulos, 2003), affective country image was found to have no significant relationship with either product purchase intention or place visit intention. This result implies that some general country images (e.g., affective country image) may have no direct influence on consumers’ behavioral intentions related to either a product or a tourism place. Together with the COO literature (e.g., Liu et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2012), product country image positively affected product purchase intention in this study. Results also reinforced the claim that tourism place image positively influences place visit intention (Elliot et al., 2013). Accordingly, in contrast to general country image, specific country image (e.g., product country image, tourism place image) more heavily molds consumers’ behavioral intentions.

3.6.2 Theoretical Implications

This work makes several theoretical contributions. First, the study provides empirical evidence on the relationship between a product and a tourism place. The effects of various image types were investigated in the unique aspects of ecotourism and honey. All image types were interrelated. Furthermore, at least in the context of Australian ecotourism and honey, these images influenced consumers’ willingness to travel to a specific destination and/or purchase a product from that
location. For example, a positive product image shaped consumers’ intentions to purchase the product as well as their willingness to travel to the location where the product originated. In the same way, the positive image of a tourism place informed consumers’ willingness to visit that place along with their intentions to purchase products made there. These results contribute to the wider body of ecotourism research. For instance, ecotourism travel predictions were shown to be enhanced not only by ecotourism place image but also by the image of products made in that place.

Second, Han (1989) emphasized the relationship between place knowledge and product knowledge. In supporting that view, this study revealed tourism place knowledge to be positively related to product knowledge. Consumers who are knowledgeable about a place may be better equipped to obtain knowledge about products made there. This finding is noteworthy given the implication that consumer knowledge can inform place perceptions which may then transfer to products.

This study further demonstrated that consumers’ product knowledge (such as in honey) positively influences product country image. This outcome echoes work by Laroche et al. (1996) and Orbaiz and Papadopoulos (2003): consumers who are familiar with the advertised product tend to develop more favorable perceptions of it. Meanwhile, in contrast to Fridgen (1987), this study showed that consumers’ place knowledge does not influence tourism place image. A possible explanation is that when consumers have not been to a place before, their image of that place is based on information from the media among other sources (Bowe & Lockshin, 2011). Compared with physical products, many consumers struggle to acquire knowledge from the experiences of visiting other similar tourism places. Consumers’ place knowledge thus may not be strong enough to help them build perceptions of a tourism place.
Third, this study explored multiple types of image formation by addressing the effects of advertisements and consumer knowledge. Advertising was found to contribute to a positive general country image, product country image, and tourism place image. Meanwhile, consumer knowledge (i.e., product knowledge) could elicit a more specific country image (i.e., product country image). Consumers’ willingness to purchase or travel could then be influenced by these enhanced image perceptions.

Last but not least, this study adds to the understanding of co-marketing alliances (i.e., cross-category marketing). Limited research has empirically investigated the effectiveness of co-marketing alliances between two categories or industries. The current work demonstrates a strong link between tourism and agricultural products. More scholarly effort should be devoted to this area in the future.

3.6.3 Practical Implications

In addition to theoretical guidance, several practical implications from this work could amplify the prosperity of the ecotourism and local agricultural product sectors in Australia and elsewhere. First, several opportunities for cross-sector collaboration are evident. Co-marketing efforts can be established between categories such as ecotourism and local agricultural food products as well as others. Cross-category marketing should become more efficient when stakeholders acknowledge the effects of collaborative efforts on consumer behavior. This impact could extend beyond tourism and agriculture to sectors such as education. Marketers outside of Australia could presumably benefit as well.

Second, COVID-19 influenced the entire global tourism sector. Useful marketing strategies have become indispensable to strengthening this industry during and after the pandemic.
Recognizing the effectiveness of co-marketing between the tourism and agriculture industries will promote tourism growth in Australia and potentially elsewhere. Advertising represents one platform for cross-category marketing (e.g., integrating tourism and a product in a single advertisement as was done in this research). Advertising agencies could consider potential linkages between industries and harness these connections in creative advertising design and overall media planning. Relevant collaboration partners are varied. Parties to consider include advertising agencies; national, regional, or local tourism offices; organizations in the agriculture sector; and non-government agencies.

Individuals will also likely benefit from collaborative marketing because such efforts will expand the range and value of offerings for consumers. Combining ecotourism and local products in single advertisements will provide consumers who wish to travel the chance to get close to local products, and vice versa, through ad exposure. Finally, a firmer grasp of how Chinese consumers perceive Australian ecotourism and honey is helpful for other product manufacturers and for tourism organizations in other countries for whom the Chinese consumer segment is important. Although Chinese consumers were the focus of this study, the findings could also apply to consumers from other regions.

3.6.4 Limitations and Future Research

This study’s outcomes provide researchers and marketing practitioners with a deeper understanding of various types of place image and associated effects. Even so, this work is not without limitations which can be addressed in future research. First, due to time constraints experienced overseas with respect to data collection, the final sample was relatively small; only 147 valid responses remained after data cleaning and may have affected results’ statistical significance. Constructs nevertheless
displayed sound validity and reliability, suggesting that the sample and associated data were robust. Larger samples should still be employed in the future to overcome potential restrictions.

Second, data were gathered via a semi-randomized sampling approach and in a specific environment (i.e., an upmarket shopping mall). The sample representativeness (e.g., to all consumers in China) may have suffered as a result and diminished findings’ generalizability. Researchers should adopt a fully randomized sample in subsequent work.

Third, this study considered ecotourism, a single tourism type and honey, a single local product. Findings need to be interpreted with caution in relation to other tourism or product categories (e.g., adventure tourism, milk) which may or may not have similar findings. Scholars should likewise explore different types of tourism and product categories to improve the generalizability of results.

Fourth, data were acquired prior to the pandemic. Outbound tourism has been largely affected by COVID-19 due to international travel restrictions (Khalid et al., 2021). Consumers’ perceptions of foreign tourism destinations and products may have changed due to this crisis (e.g., Li et al., 2021; Liu & Mair, 2023). The relationships between image types (i.e., general country image, product image, and tourism place image) and consumers’ intentions may have shifted as well. This study’s findings can be extended by comparing data before and during the pandemic (e.g., in 2018 and 2022) to contextualize the product–place relationship vis-à-vis the COVID-19 outbreak.

Finally, the role of advertising was examined in a narrow manner here. As discussed earlier, advertising has several key functions (Andrews & Shimp, 2017), such as building awareness, informing, and convincing. This study only addressed attitude toward an advertisement, which is a persuasion measure. Results should thus be interpreted with care given that other advertising functions were not taken into account. Follow-up work should include advertising measures such as awareness to offer a richer sense of advertising’s role in a co-marketing context.
3.7 Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to delineate relationships among multiple types of images along with their impacts on consumers’ evaluations of ecotourism places and products originated from these places. Besides this goal, this research explored advertising and consumer knowledge as well as their impacts on various image types. Findings solidify the understanding of how an inclusive image colors consumers’ evaluations. The results also help to clarify the link between the tourism and local agricultural food industries, providing marketers in both sectors with valuable insights to craft effective marketing programs.
CHAPTER FOUR

Can agrifood products generate tourist desire to visit a place? An empirical study of image transfer and self-congruity

The paper entitled ‘Can agrifood products generate tourist desire to visit a place? An empirical study of image transfer and self-congruity’ by Liu, J.Y., Liu, F., & Webb, D. (2022) has been accepted for publication at Journal of Destination Marketing & Management.

This chapter presents the second paper included in this PhD thesis.

4.1 Abstract

Tourism relates to many other industries, such as hospitality, transport, and agriculture. In practice, a tourism destination or place has often been promoted together with local products, especially agrifood products. The co-marketing practice between tourism and agrifood products has faced challenges and one of them is consumer acceptance. Although the importance of local agrifood products in promoting a tourism place has been acknowledged in prior literature, little research has empirically examined the establishment of a strong product-place relationship. Using experimental designs, this study empirically investigated how image transfer and self-congruity influence tourists’ evaluations of a co-marketing initiative between the tourism (place) and the agrifood (products) sectors. The study collected a sample of 662 potential tourists from China and data was analysed using Structural Equation Modelling. Results showed that an agrifood product’s symbolic images can be directly transferred to a tourism place and subsequently generate stronger tourist desire to visit the place than any other product images. Functional images of an agrifood product can also be transferred to a place, but only indirectly through the process of self-congruity. Experiential images were unable to be transferred in a product-place context. Both theoretical and
practical implications are discussed with limitations and future research outlined.

Keywords: Destination Marketing, Tourism Marketing, Product Marketing, Agrifood, Co-marketing, Image Transfer, Self-congruity, Tourist Desire

4.2 Introduction

Local products (i.e., agrifood items) have received increasing attention in tourism marketing in recent years (Azevedo, 2004). Several reasons may explain this trend. First, local products facilitate memorable travel experiences, which can influence tourists’ revisit intentions and word of mouth (e.g., Altintzoglou, Heide, & Borch, 2016; Mossberg, 2007). Second, many tourists purchase local products as take-home souvenirs—a must-do travel activity (Sthapit & Björk, 2019). Local products therefore help tourism destinations establish a unique “sense of place” in comparison to other locations (Haven-Tang & Jones, 2005; Kivela & Crotts, 2006). Third and more practically, tourists’ spending on local products boosts local economies (Griggio, 2015). Local products’ roles in tourism marketing cannot be underestimated given their importance.

Research examining the relationship between products and places has mostly focused on places’ effects on products (e.g., Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005; Lee & Lockshin, 2011; Ranasinghe, Thaichon, & Ranasinghe, 2017). For example, drawing on the country-of-origin literature, Papadopoulos and Heslop (1986) demonstrated how a positive place image could influence products originating from that place. They suggested that compared with tourists who have not previously visited a country, tourists who have been to a country before are apt to hold more positive image perceptions of products made there. Marketing a product from a place-of-origin perspective (i.e., a place’s attributes may benefit a product’s image) is also common; examples include the Swiss watch, French perfume, or Porto wine (Ranasinghe, Thaichon, & Ranasinghe,
The opposite relationship (i.e., marketing a place from a product’s perspective) has been largely neglected.

In fact, only a handful of studies have attempted to address this issue in a tourism marketing context. Azevedo (2004) pointed out that a particular product (i.e., glass arts) may contribute to a place’s destination image. Elliot, Papadopoulos, and Kim (2011) found that tourists’ favourable product perceptions piqued travellers’ interest in visiting the place where a product was made. Although these studies have provided useful insights into the product-place relationship, theoretical substantiation is absent. Indeed, to the best of our knowledge, little is known about how products influence places in tourism marketing.

The image transfer literature (Yang & Ha, 2014) may serve as a theoretical foundation from which understanding can be advanced. Image transfer occurs when information associated with one entity (e.g., attributes or benefits) is conveyed to another entity (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999). Advertising scholars have long recognized the possibility of image transfer from an endorser to a product or a brand based on attribute transfer (e.g., Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001; James, 2006). Image transfer may also transpire between one product (or a brand) and another product (or a brand) based on attributes (e.g., Smarandescu, Rose, & Wedell, 2013) and benefits (e.g., Keller, 1993; Orth & Marchi, 2007). It therefore seems plausible to suggest that image transfer can occur between a product and a place in a tourism marketing context.

Self-congruity is an important image consideration in consumer or tourist research. Self-congruity refers to a match/mismatch between consumers’ perceptions of themselves (self-concept) and product/brand image or tourism destination image in the tourism domain (Sirgy & Johar, 1999; Sirgy & Su, 2000). Based on the assumption that images can be transferred from products to places
in a product-place co-marketing context, it would seem reasonable to infer that self-congruity related to a tourism place could likewise increase thanks to advantages arising when the image of a product transfers to that of a place. Given that self-congruity is a key predictor of consumer behaviour (e.g., Ibrahim & Najjar, 2008), it is logical to explore the role of self-congruity with respect to a tourism place.

The co-marketing literature (e.g., Cherubini & Canigiani, 1999) also provides theoretical support for image transfer between products and places. Experts tend to believe that prosperous co-marketing strategies (i.e., product and product, brand and brand) are grounded in successful image transfer between two entities (e.g., Azevedo, 2004; Seno & Lukas, 2007; Smarandescu, Rose, & Wedell, 2013). Most co-marketing research has shown that effective image transfer promotes purchase intention (e.g., Kahle & Homer, 1985; Liu & Brock, 2011). However, without downplaying the significance of purchase intention, it is worth ascertaining whether other consequences (e.g., desire) also follow from image transfer.

In summary, the present study seeks to examine the roles of products in promoting places for tourism and travel purposes. Specifically, we empirically investigate the transferability of various images between an agrifood product and a tourism place. Findings are expected to enrich empirical knowledge and to assist tourism and agricultural marketers in developing targeted co-marketing campaigns linking tourism and agrifood offerings. This study provides valuable insights for DMOs or tourism marketers. For example, when marketing a tourism place, they could consider bundling a tourism place with a local agrifood product. In particular, by understanding the transferability of images from local products to related tourism places, practitioners can more comprehensively understand how the effectiveness of a tourism-agrifood product collaboration can be achieved through a successful image transfer.
4.3 Conceptual Background and Hypothesis Development

4.3.1 Types of Image Perceptions

Image generally refers to the “total impressions an entity makes on the minds of others” (Dichter, 1985). As one of the most studied image types in the consumer literature, product image refers to the sum of impressions, beliefs, and/or attitudes regarding a product (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Images are typically derived from attributes and benefits (Wang, Li, Barnes, & Ahn, 2012). In brief, product attributes refer to physical features or specific aspects describing a particular good or service (Wu, Day, & MacKay, 1988). Product benefits are values consumers gain from these attributes which are closely related to consumers’ needs and wants and are thus highly pertinent when scrutinizing consumers’ image perceptions (Andrews & Shimp, 2019).

Product benefits fall into two major categories: utilitarian and hedonic (e.g., Batra & Ahtola, 1991; Carpenter & Fairhurst, 2005; Loebnitz & Grunert, 2018). Utilitarian (or functional) benefits refer to the functional, practical, or instrumental values that consumers receive from product consumption (Liu, Kanso, Zhang, & Olaru, 2019); hedonic (or experiential) benefits are aesthetic, experiential, and enjoyment-related, such as fun or excitement (e.g., Chitturi, Raghunathan, & Mahajan, 2008; Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000; Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998). Hedonic benefits reflect a broad concept and can cover experiential and/or emotional value (Liu, Kanso, Zhang, & Olaru, 2019).

Functional and experiential benefits are both considered dominant predictors of consumer behaviour. For example, functional benefits positively influence consumer evaluations of products and services, such as acceptance (Liu, Kanso, Zhang, & Olaru, 2019), satisfaction (Chitturi, Raghunathan, & Mahajan, 2008), purchase intention (Loebnitz & Grunert, 2018), and loyalty...
(Bashir et al., 2020). Experiential benefits have also been found to encourage purchase behaviour (Carpenter, 2008) and loyalty (i.e., positive word of mouth and repurchase intention) (Chitturi, Raghunathan, & Mahajan, 2008).

Besides functional and experiential benefits, symbolic benefits are another key type of product benefit examined in the literature (e.g., Liu, Li, Mizerski, & Soh, 2012). Symbolic benefits capture a product’s ability to satisfy consumers’ needs for social identification (i.e., social status, prestige, or achievement) or other symbolic needs related to the self or social images (Aqueveque, 2016). Similar to functional and experiential benefits, symbolic benefits positively influence consumers’ attitudes and behaviour as evidenced by product acceptance (Kim & Jang, 2017), purchase intention (Zhou and Hui 2003), and positive word of mouth (Gilal, Zhang, & Gilal, 2018).

Put simply, functional, experiential, and symbolic benefits are three major product image components (e.g., Keller, 1993). They are integral to consumers’ attitudes (e.g., Riley, Charlton, & Wason, 2015; Wu & Wang, 2014), loyalty (e.g., Huang, Fang, Fang, & Huang, 2016; Neupane, 2015), and/or purchase intentions (e.g., Batra & Homer, 2004; Hsieh, Pan, & Setiono, 2004). Although these benefits have been examined in some marketing settings, they have not been addressed in a co-marketing context. In other words, when two entities are marketed together, will the perceived benefits of one entity influence the perceived benefits of the other or vice versa? As benefits are image perceptions, it is expected that benefit transfer (functional, symbolic, or experiential) should occur via co-marketing between products and places.
4.3.2 Image Transfer

Image transfer has been investigated in various co-marketing settings. The possibility of image transfer from an endorser to an endorsed brand or product is well recognized in advertising (McCracken 1989). Successful image transfer is a main antecedent of successful endorsement, which in turn produces favourable consumer attitudes and/or purchase intentions (e.g., Kim, Wang, & Ahn, 2013; Liu & Brock, 2011; Misra & Beatty, 1990; Till & Busler, 2000; Tian et al., 2021).

Image transfer has also been considered in a product-to-brand context. The country-of-origin literature (i.e., Essoussi & Merunka, 2007; Han, 1989) has revealed that if consumers positively perceive a product category made in a specific place, they are inclined to possess positive image perceptions of that place. In other words, product-place image transfer occurs. As an example, the strong symbolic benefits (e.g., reputation) of German cars are likely to transfer to Germany as a country (Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, & Paliwawadana, 2011).

In a similar manner, branding research has confirmed image transfer from brands to products or from products to brands (Le, Cheng, Lee, & Jain, 2012; Keller, 1993). Image transfer can also take place in a brand-to-brand context (i.e., brand alliance) (Uggla, 2004). Smarandescu, Rose, and Wedell (2013) found that in a collaborative effort between Apple and Gatorade, the prominent image aspects of Apple (i.e., high quality, appeals to the young) were transferred to Gatorade. Image transfer has also been deemed productive in the brand alliance between Dell and Intel (Blackett & Russell, 2000). Two partner brands’ positive image perceptions are expected to be further enhanced in the event of an effective image transfer (Boronczyk & Breuer, 2021). Other image transfer outcomes, if fruitful, include positive attitudes and purchase behaviour (e.g., Allman, Fenik, Hewett, & Morgan, 2016; Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, & Paliwawadana 2011).
The preceding overview of image transfer scenarios supports arguments around product-place image transfer, although the latter has not been adequately addressed. Research has not focused on the transfer direction. Yet authors have either assumed or indicated that, when marketing a physical product associated with a place, the positive image of the product and place can be transferred to each other (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005). Han (1989) was among the first to propose that product images could help consumers form images of a country or a destination. Numerous studies thereafter (e.g., Azevedo, 2004; Elliot, Papadopoulos, & Kim, 2011; Phillips, Asperin, & Wolfem, 2013; Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020) reported that a favourable product image can be transferred to a product-producing place and stimulate tourists’ intentions to visit. However, a knowledge gap persists in that these studies did not examine exactly how product images transfer to place images. To more fully determine how a product influences a place, it is necessary to explore the role of image transfer in a product – place co-marketing context. The following section discusses theoretical foundations for a clearer understanding of image transfer.

4.3.3 Meaning Transfer Theory

According to the Theory of Meaning Transfer (McCracken, 1989), the meaning associated with an endorser’s personality, lifestyle, and status can be transferred first to an endorsed product and then to consumers. Keller (2003) extended this theory in his “brand knowledge” model. The model illustrates a brand leveraging process in which a brand’s total image can be enhanced by endorsers, employees, collaborating brands, and other actors. Prior work (e.g., Aaker & Keller, 1990; James, 2006; Vaidyanathan & Aggrawal, 2000) described this process from a theoretical perspective as well.
The brand leveraging process suggests that a brand can establish or elevate its image by “borrowing” meanings from other entities (Keller, 2003). Keller’s model maintains that any attribute, benefit, or experience among linked entities can be transferred to the brand itself (Bergkvist & Taylor, 2016). However, the transfer outcome is context-dependent; for example, Keller (2003) noted that the rationale behind the leveraging process is knowledge transferability, where only “meaningful” knowledge about one linked entity can be transferred to another.

4.3.4 Consumer Desire

Desire is a positive mental state associated with a consumer’s motivation to implement an action (e.g., Gollwitzer, 1996; Malle & Knobe, 1997; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2004). Past research (e.g., Hunter, 2006; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001, 2004) highlighted the roles of desires as motivations that drive the formation of any consumer decision. Desire is even regarded as the initial step of consumers’ decision-making process (e.g., Gollwitzer, 1996; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2004; Japutra, Loureiro, Molinillo, & Ekinci, 2019). The concept of desire is particularly relevant in the current study as it contextualizes consumer decision making with regards to product-place co-marketing.

More specifically, desire is widely believed to be a direct consequence of cognitive and affective evaluations such as images (e.g., Han, Baek, Lee, & Huh, 2014; Hwang & Lyu, 2020). The relationship between image and desire has received careful attention across many settings. Bratman, Israel, and Pollack (1988) made an initial attempt to explain how image stokes desire. Their belief – desire – intention model posits that consumers’ beliefs (i.e., perceptions or images) critically influence desire (e.g., Koo, Chung, & Kim, 2015). The significant role an image plays in one’s desire to purchase a product/service has been confirmed across diverse contexts (e.g., Han, Baek, Lee, & Huh, 2014; Hudson, Wang, & Gil, 2011; Hwang & Kim, 2020).
The tourism advertising literature further substantiates the image-desire relationship. Numerous studies have shown that when tourists are exposed to an advertisement of a destination or place, their desire to visit may be stimulated prior to any behavioural intention (e.g., Chen, Shang, & Li, 2014; Hudson, Wang, & Gil, 2011; Koo, Chung, & Kim, 2015; Pujiastuti, Utomo, & Novamayant, 2020). The image-desire relationship has also been empirically supported in cases, such as consumers’ desire to shop (Hunter, 2006), desire to take an environmentally friendly airline (Hwang & Lyu, 2020), or desire to use drone food delivery services (Hwang & Choe, 2019).

Based on the above discussion, it can be theorised that the image of a place in a product-place co-marketing alliance may be amplified if a product’s benefits (i.e., functional, symbolic, and experiential) are successfully transferred to the place. As such, positive place images should spark prospective tourists’ desire to visit that place. The following hypotheses are formulated accordingly:

**H1a:** The more successful functional benefit transfer from a product to a place, the greater one’s desire to visit that place.

**H1b:** The more successful symbolic benefit transfer from a product to a place, the greater one’s desire to visit that place.

**H1c:** The more successful experiential benefit transfer from a product to a place, the greater one’s desire to visit that place.

4.3.5 Self-congruity

Self-congruity is another concept that has been frequently addressed in the relationship between image and travel-related behaviour (Sirgy & Su, 2000). The concept of self-congruity embodies the compatibility between the image of a brand and that of a consumer (a notion also known as
“consumer self-concept”) (Sirgy, Johar, Samli, & Claiborne, 1991). Sirgy (1982) explained selfconcept as a function of product or brand image. For instance, a consumer may attribute their consumption of a luxury bag to a desire to express their social status. The self-concept “desire to express social status” is influenced by the product image associated with luxury bag consumption. In this vein, self-concept/product-image congruity could become high (Sirgy, 1982).

Within tourism, self-congruity generally refers to the match/mismatch between consumers’ perceptions of themselves (self-concept) and the image of a tourism destination/place (Sirgy & Johar, 1999; Sirgy & Su, 2000). When a consumer selects (or is preparing to choose) a travel destination, they usually undergo an identification process in which they construct a self-image in which they express their symbolic identities (Wu & Lai, 2022). This process explains why interrelations often emerge among place image (i.e., perceptions of a place), self-concept (i.e., how people see themselves), and consumer behaviour.

In a co-marketing context involving an agrifood product and a tourism place, a place-product image transfer shapes a tourist’s self-concept related to that place. Specifically, due to the possibility of image transfer between a product and a place, the image of a tourism place is expected to be enhanced when marketed together with a product, as the positive product image could be transferred to the place. As such, it would seem reasonable to infer that if the perceptions of a place are enhanced, tourists are likely to identify more strongly with the place (i.e., believe more strongly that the place could reflect who they are). Therefore, more successful image transfer may lead tourists to identify more strongly with the place (i.e., to feel that the place is more compatible with their self-concept), thus heightening their desire to visit. Several studies (e.g., Beerli, Meneses, & Gil, 2007; Sirgy & Su, 2000) have documented that self-congruity is strongly associated with consumers’ motivations to visit a destination. Stated formally:
**H2a:** The more successful functional benefit transfer from an agrifood product to a tourism place, the greater one’s self-congruity associated with that place.

**H2b:** The more successful symbolic benefit transfer from an agrifood product to a tourism place, the greater one’s self-congruity associated with that place.

**H2c:** The more successful experiential benefit transfer from an agrifood product to a tourism place, the greater one’s self-congruity associated with that place.

**H3:** One’s self-congruity associated with a tourism place is positively related to one’s desire to visit that place.

4.3.6 Sociodemographics

Numerous studies have demonstrated that sociodemographic characteristics, such as gender (e.g., Beerli & Martin, 2004), age (e.g., Chen & Kerstetter, 1999), and income (e.g., MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997), significantly affect image formation. These variables can also partly elucidate consumer desire (e.g., Choo, Collantes, & Mokhtarian, 2005; Han, Meng, & Kim, 2017; Zimmer, Brayley, & Searle, 1995). As sociodemographics shape image and desire, they will presumably inform the relationship between image transfer and desire.

Sociodemographics may also influence self-congruity: income, gender, and age affect how people see or evaluate themselves, leading to varying levels of self-image congruity (e.g., Loughnan et al., 2011; Pinquart & Sorensen, 2001; Moons, De Pelsmacker, & Barbarossa, 2020). Income, for example, is often considered a contributing factor to consumers’ purchases of products congruent with their self-concept (Landon, 1974). These characteristics should therefore
be considered when studying the relationships among image transfer, desire, and self-congruity. Figure 4.1 depicts the conceptual model guiding this study.

![Figure 4.1: The Conceptual Model](image)

### 4.4 Research Method

#### 4.4.1 Context Selection

Promoting a tourism place with the help of local products represents a prominent marketing challenge for countries such as Australia. Australia’s tourism and agricultural sectors are key industry pillars; each greatly contributes to the national economy, totaling 100 billion Australian dollars and 60 billion Australian dollars, respectively (Ecotourism Australia, 2015; National Farmers’ Federation, 2019). The Australian government has recognized the potential for product-place collaboration and is aiming to promote both industries (Cciwa.com, 2017). Related research has thus been deemed urgent due to limited understanding of accompanying industry demands. In
addition, consumers are increasingly concerned about the country of origin of the products in recent years, especially food products (Scholl-Gриссеманн, 2017). Australian products are usually perceived as green, clean, and trustworthy (Lim, 2016). We accordingly considered Australia an appropriate research context.

4.4.2 Tourism Place and Agrifood Product Selection

The current study selected ecotourism as the focal tourism format because it is a main tourism sector in Australia. Around five million international tourists have visited Australia over 2016 for ecotourism purposes (TTF, 2017). Australian ecotourism industry also significantly contributes to the national economy. For example, in 2019, it contributed nearly two billion Australian dollars to the economy (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). In terms of a specific ecotourism location, we chose the town of Walpole in Western Australia’s southwest ‘forest belt.’ Walpole is home to the Tree-Top Walk, an award-winning Western Australia ecotourism attraction, and is popular among both domestic and international tourists alike.

Agrifood refers to any food product that is made through an agricultural process (Agrifood, 2018). Honey, one of the most important Australian agrifood products, is selected as the focus of the current study. This product brings more than 90 million Australian dollars per annum into the Australian economy (Webcache, 2014), with 25% to 30% of earnings coming from exporting (Benecke, 2003). Jarrah honey was chosen as the agrifood product for the study, because it is a unique type of honey only available from Western Australia’s ‘forest belt,’ including Walpole (Jarrah Honey Information WA, 2017).
4.4.3 Tourist Sample Selection

This study recruited a sample of mainland Chinese consumers who resided in China and had never visited Australia. China is one of Australia’s main source markets for both tourism and agrifood offerings. According to Tourism Research Australia (2019), Chinese tourists ranked second in terms of the number of visitors and first in terms of per capita spending to the country (Tourism Australia, 2019). China is also one of the largest international markets for Australia’s ecotourism sector (Liu, Wei, & Soutar, 2015): around 80% of all Chinese tourists who visited Australia reported having taken part in ecotourism-based activities (Tourism Australia 2014).

Chinese consumers are fond of Australian agrifood products given confidence in these products’ quality and safety standards (Lim, 2016). China is hence an essential market for Australian agrifood products—not only because Chinese tourists to Australia buy these products during their travels, but also because a substantial number of businesses export agricultural products from Australia to China (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2017). For instance, approximately 15% of the annual production of Jarrah honey is sold to the Chinese market (Medlen, 2016). The Chinese market is seen as an appropriate study context for these reasons.

4.4.4 Stimuli Design

Priming was employed in this study. This approach is generally used to activate consumers’ mental representations subconsciously and then elicit subsequent behaviour (e.g., Belei, Geyskens, Goukens, Ramanathan, & Lemmink, 2012; Harris, Bargh, & Brownell, 2009). Priming asserts that activation of a priming stimulus can positively or negatively affect people’s judgments of a person, product, or object (e.g., Janiszewski & Wyer, 2014; Tulving & Schacter, 1990; Yi, 1990). In essence, priming can manipulate consumers’ attitudes, desires, or behaviour (Sela & Shiv, 2009).
Advertisements are popular priming agents due to their capacity to alter viewers’ attitudes or behaviour toward the pictured product (Harris, Barghm, & Brownell, 2009). We used advertisements to acquire participants’ perceptions of the selected agrifood product (i.e., Jarrah honey) and the tourism place (i.e., Walpole). Furthermore, given our primary objective to examine how a product influences a place (location), participants were exposed to product information first so they could develop early product perceptions. They therefore became aware of the product before learning about the place.

This study adopted a quasi-experimental design (Lynn & Lynn, 2003). Two advertisements were constructed as stimuli: a product-only advertisement and an advertisement involving both the product and the place. Multiple print advertisements featuring Walpole Tree-Top Walk (place) and Wescobee Jarrah honey (product) were pre-tested. A professional designer was then hired to create two basic advertisements: one for Wescobee Jarrah honey (product) alone and another for Wescobee Jarrah honey (product) and Walpole Tree-Top Walk (place) combined (see Appendix 4.1). Three slogans were designed to reflect the focus of functional, symbolic and experiential benefit, respectively.

4.4.5 Scale Development

All measures in this study were drawn from existing scales and were translated from English to Chinese (Standard Mandarin) using a back-to-back translation method (Chen & Boore, 2010). Items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale (1=completely disagree; 7=completely agree). The full instrument is shown in Appendix 4.2.

In terms of the product, the functional benefit measure included four items. Two were adopted from Orth and Marchi (2007), and the remaining two were adopted respectively from Hsieh, Pan,
and Setiono (2004) and Chen, Leask, and Phou (2016). *Symbolic product benefits* were assessed with four items: one from Orth and Marchi (2007) and three from Belaid, Mrad, Lacoeuilhe, and Petrescu (2017). As for *experiential product benefits*, three items were adopted from Chen, Leask, and Phou (2016), and one was adopted from Belaid, Mrad, Lacoeuilhe, and Petrescu (2017).

The modified measures of functional benefits (4 items), symbolic benefits (4 items), and experiential benefits (4 items) constituted evaluation of the *place image* construct. *Self-congruity* with the place was measured using four items adopted from Liu, Li, Mizerski, and Soh (2012). Three items suggested by Perugini and Bagozzi (2004) were adopted to measure *desire to visit*.

As consumers were provided with product information first, image transfer was assessed by calculating a discrepancy score between the product and the place (i.e., place minus product). The more positive the value, the more successful the transfer. Similar methods involving discrepancy scores have been used elsewhere (e.g., Liu, Li, Mizerski, & Soh, 2012). Details appear in Appendix 4.2.

### 4.4.6 Pre-Tests

A structured questionnaire was designed to test our hypotheses. The questionnaire for “place only” contained questions on respondents’ perceptions of the ecotourism destination as well as their travel desire. The survey for “place+product” covered items for Jarrah honey and the ecotourism destination.

Two pre-tests were conducted prior to the main survey. The purpose of the pre-tests was to elicit a basic understanding of whether Jarrah honey and Walpole could be marketed together and what an appropriate underlying mechanism for this joint marketing might look like. Pre-test 1 was
carried out at a major Australian university with two basic advertisements: Ad 1, including only the product (Jarrah honey); Ad 2, including both Walpole and Jarrah honey. Participants were international Chinese students who had stayed in Australia for less than six months. Participants responded favourably (albeit with statistical non-significance) to all ads. Pre-test 2 was completed upon addressing feedback from Pre-test 1 that descriptions should be provided about the product and the place. Pre-test 2 thus presented details about the product and the place before respondents were exposed to the research stimuli. Advertisement descriptions were finalised after Pre-test 2.

4.5 Data Collection and Analyses

4.5.1 Data Collection and Descriptive Findings

The main data collection phase took place in the city of Chongqing. Chongqing was chosen for several reasons. First, Chongqing is one of the top 5 cities in China with the fastest growing number of tourists who have travelled abroad, including to Australia (Ctrip, 2018). Furthermore, residents in Chongqing are increasingly interested in purchasing foreign food products of premium quality (Science and technology, 2022). As such, residents of Chongqing have been considered as potential tourists/consumers who may be interested in visiting Australia and purchasing Australian products. Therefore, they may be more receptive to a product-place co-marketing initiative, which will make them appropriate for the current study.

A mall-intercept (or onsite) method was adopted in order to obtain more reliable consumer responses (Bush & Hari, 1985). Hence, the first 100 valid responses were collected through mallinterceptions with every participant receiving a gift that was equivalent to ten Australian dollars. Due to the pandemic, the mall-intercept method was no longer accessible. Consequently, a research company was approached for recruiting an online panel. The online panel initially
included 800 subjects, but only 562 valid responses were received in the end. Thus, a total of 662 valid responses were collected for this study. The online participants received cash rewards of ten Australian dollars each.

After data cleaning, 267 responses remained from the main (or experimental) groups and 286 responses remained from the control groups. Therefore, a total of 553 respondents were used for further data analyses. After conducting frequency analyses, the sample showed a relatively good balance in terms of gender, age, education, and income (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Profile of the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>18-30</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor Above</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>45.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low to Median</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Median to High</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.2 Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA) were first conducted in SPSS in order to examine each construct included in the study. The analyses indicated that items for each of the main constructs loaded on a single factor with each of the main constructs satisfactorily explaining greater than 70%
of the total variance. Functional image transfer was calculated via a discrepancy score between product (first exposure) and place (second exposure) (i.e., a functional place image item minus the same functional product image item). The more positive the discrepancy value, the more successful the functional image transfer. Similar methods (e.g., using discrepancy scores for a first and second exposure) have been used in prior consumer literature (e.g., Liu, Li, Mizerski, & Soh, 2012). Reliability testing (using Cronbach’s alpha) was conducted, and the results showed that each construct except for Desire to Visit has acceptable reliability with Cronbach’s alpha greater than 0.8 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010) (See Table 4.2).

Congeneric factor analyses were performed in AMOS to further examine the data. A measurement model with all constructs included in the hypotheses was established to check for convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was achieved as all factor loadings were greater than 0.7 and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) score of each factor was higher than 0.5 (See Table 2). To identify the internal consistency of each measure, construct reliability (CR) was examined. The results showed that the CR value was greater than 0.7 for all constructs, indicating that all tested constructs were reliable (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Discriminant validity was also achieved in each construct, as the square root of AVE values were greater than the Maximum Shared Squared Variance (MSV) (Shadfar & Malekmohammadi, 2013). Accordingly, the data were considered acceptable for further analyses.

The means of the key constructs were compared between control group (286 respondents) and the main experimental group (267 respondents). Results showed these two groups were nonsignificant on general country image (See Table 4.3). Thus, the main relationships tested in the hypotheses have controlled for general country image towards Australia. However, the main and
control group showed some significant differences on attitude toward the advertisement, which suggests that some findings will need to be interpreted with caution.

Table 4.2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th># items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
<th>AVE Score</th>
<th>MSV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Func_Product (main group)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.86</td>
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<td>FuncProd1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FuncProd2</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.92</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FuncProd3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.92</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FuncProd4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symb/Product (main group)</td>
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<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.24</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.91</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Experi/Product (main group)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.81</td>
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<td>ExperiImageTrans2</td>
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<tr>
<td>SelfCong (main group)</td>
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<td>4.72</td>
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<td>0.94</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct</td>
<td># items</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Cronbach Alpha</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Factor Loading</td>
<td>AVE Score</td>
<td>MSV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire_Visit (main group)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>1.21</td>
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<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.71</td>
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<td>DesVisit3</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Comparisons between Control Group and Main Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control Group (place only) (286 subjects)</th>
<th>Main Group (product to place) (267 subjects)</th>
<th>t-value (independent)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>-1.11</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>-1.27</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Congruity</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to travel</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards Ad</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>-2.16</td>
<td>0.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Country Image</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.3 The Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was performed using the Maximum likelihood method to investigate the significance of relationships in each hypothesis. Results indicated that the model achieved a good
level of model fit with CMIN/DF=2.479 CFI=0.964, RMSEA=0.075. The Bollen-Stine bootstrap
p values (p=0.005) were accepted given the sample size.

Hypothesis testing revealed that four of the regression paths were significant (See Table 4.4). Specifically, both functional image transfer and experiential transfer showed no significant impact on desire to visit; thus, rejecting H1a (β =-0.176; p=0.309) and H1c (β =-0.121; p=0.461). Symbolic image transfer positively influenced visit desire; therefore, supporting H1b (β =0.164; p=0.026*). The results revealed that functional image transfer had a positive impact on self-congruency; therefore, supporting H2a (β =0.374; p=0.013*). The relationship between symbolic image transfer and self-congruency was found positive and significant; therefore, H2b was supported (β =0.129; p=0.045*). However, experiential image transfer was found to have no significant effect on self-congruency; thus, H2c was rejected (β =0.146; p=0.312). Lastly, self-congruency had a significant positive impact on the desire to visit; therefore, H3 was supported (β =0.454; p<0.001***).

To acquire a deep insight of the impact of consumer characteristics (i.e., gender, age, income) on each of the main relationships, multigroup analysis was conducted in AMOS. Results showed that only income had an impact on main relationships (See Table 4.5 & Table 4.6). The sample was recruited based on five income groups, including low, low-to-median, median, median-to-high and high. Using the median as a classification parameter, two groups were developed: a low median income group (containing 168 people) and a high median income group (containing 99 people). Specifically, the relationship between symbolic image transfer and desire to visit was significantly higher for the low median income group (β = 0.13, p < 0.01) than for the high median income group (β = -0.02, p > 0.05). The relationship between symbolic image transfer and self-congruency
showed similar results (low median income group: $\beta = 0.21, p < 0.001$; high median income group: $\beta = -0.04, p > 0.05$).

**Table 4.4: The Hypothesized Path Coefficients**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1a</td>
<td>functional image transfer -&gt; desire to visit</td>
<td>-0.176</td>
<td>0.309</td>
<td>Not support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1b</td>
<td>symbolic image transfer -&gt; desire to visit</td>
<td>0.164</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1c</td>
<td>experiential image transfer -&gt; desire to visit</td>
<td>-0.121</td>
<td>0.461</td>
<td>Not support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2a</td>
<td>functional image transfer -&gt; self-congruity</td>
<td>0.374</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2b</td>
<td>symbolic image transfer -&gt; self-congruity</td>
<td>0.129</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2c</td>
<td>experiential image transfer -&gt; self-congruity</td>
<td>0.146</td>
<td>0.312</td>
<td>Not support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>self-congruity -&gt; desire to visit</td>
<td>0.454</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.5: Results of Multigroup Analysis_Income**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low to Median</th>
<th>MediantoHigh</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SelfCong</td>
<td>FuncImageTransfer</td>
<td>0.235</td>
<td>0.673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SelfCong</td>
<td>SymbImageTransfer</td>
<td>0.223</td>
<td>-0.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SelfCong</td>
<td>ExperiImageTransfer</td>
<td>0.196</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire_Visit</td>
<td>FuncImageTransfer</td>
<td>-0.321</td>
<td>0.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire_Visit</td>
<td>SymbImageTransfer</td>
<td>0.321</td>
<td>-0.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire_Visit</td>
<td>ExperiImageTransfer</td>
<td>-0.025</td>
<td>-0.403</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.6: Results of Multigroup Analysis_Age and Gender**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>\textit{p\text{-value}}_{\text{Age}}</th>
<th>\textit{p\text{-value}}_{\text{Gender}}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SelfCong &lt;--- FuncImageTransfer</td>
<td>0.508</td>
<td>0.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SelfCong &lt;--- SymbImageTransfer</td>
<td>0.851</td>
<td>0.672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SelfCong &lt;--- ExperiImageTransfer</td>
<td>0.587</td>
<td>0.321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire_Visit &lt;--- FuncImageTransfer</td>
<td>0.289</td>
<td>0.702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire_Visit &lt;--- SymbImageTransfer</td>
<td>0.531</td>
<td>0.365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire_Visit &lt;--- ExperiImageTransfer</td>
<td>0.556</td>
<td>0.694</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\subsection{4.6 Discussion and Conclusion}

\subsubsection{4.6.1 Summary of Findings and Theoretical Implications}

In light of increasing attention for locally produced products in tourism marketing, the aim of this study was to explore the roles of agrifood (e.g., honey) in promoting a place for tourism purposes (e.g., Western Australian ecotourism). Various scholars (e.g., Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005; Ranasinghe, Thaichon, & Ranasinghe, 2017) explored the product-place relationship by contemplating how place marketing affects product marketing. This study extends knowledge of this relationship in a much-neglected area by flipping it to determine how a product influences a place. Findings overall suggest that three agrifood product image aspects (i.e., functional, symbolic, and experiential benefits) can be transferred to an identified place under effective priming and subsequently enhance tourists’ desire to visit.

In a product-and-brand context, most prior research has centred around a singular benefit transfer, such as functional benefit transfer (e.g., Smarandescu, Rose, & Wedell, 2013), symbolic benefit transfer, or experiential benefit transfer (e.g., Bengtsson & Servais, 2005; Blackett & Russell, 2000). This study is the first to jointly investigate the potential consequences of several types of image transfer in a collaborative product-place marketing context. Findings of the functional and experiential benefit transfers are consistent with those of Azevedo (2004) and
Phillips, Asperin, and Wolfem (2013) which investigated these two benefits separately. Furthermore, the current study finds that symbolic benefit transfer produced a significantly stronger desire to visit than the other two types of benefit transfer, which highlights the role of symbolic benefit transfer in consumers’ desire to travel under a product–place co-marketing context.

More specifically, compared with functional benefits, symbolic benefits are normally tied to intangible attributes such as reputation and uniqueness, which tourists can more easily consider when developing a connection between a product and a place. Functional benefits pertain to more concrete characteristics; therefore, when tourists have not previously visited a place or consumed a certain product, they may struggle to envision image transfer between these two objects. Similar to functional benefits, experiential benefits relate to consumers’ feelings during consumption (Orth & Marchi, 2007). In this regard, under the condition that participants have neither been to a given place nor consumed an affiliated product, experiential benefits are relatively hard to imagine or develop. These findings imply that, in a product-place co-marketing context, intangible image aspects of local products (i.e., symbolic benefits) can enhance a tourism place’s image.

Another important finding is that self-congruity contributes to the relationship between image transfer (i.e., functional image transfer and symbolic image transfer) and consumers’ desire to visit. Even though functional image transfer does not have any direct effect on one’s desire to visit, it has an indirect impact on desire to visit through self-congruity. This trend suggests that when image aspects are more tangible, tourists can more readily connect with a place and further have a desire to visit. However, experiential image transfer has no effect on self-congruity, which might be due to the fact that experiential transfer is difficult to envision. These findings advance our understanding of self-congruity from an image transfer perspective.
Finally, the main relationships varied significantly across demographic segments (e.g., income) (see Table 4.5). Interestingly, the relationship between symbolic image transfer and desire to visit was significantly higher for people earning below the median income than for the median higher-income group. Prior studies (e.g., MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Zimmer, Brayley, & Searle, 1995) indicated that income contributes to place image formation as well as to tourists’ desire to travel. This study also identifies the importance of income in the relationship between image transfer and the desire to visit a destination. Relationally, the relationship between symbolic image transfer and self-congruity appear to be significantly stronger for the below median income group than for the median higher-income group. This result also confirms the role of income in consumers’ self-congruity.

Income additionally affected the relationship between image transfer and travel desire. This factor (e.g., in terms of discretionary funds) usually represents a person’s ability to make a purchase (Landon, 1974). Travel-related purchase decisions may be less feasible for the lower medium income people versus the higher medium income groups. For example, the lower medium income groups may travel less frequently than those earning a higher income. Therefore, when making travel decisions, people in the low medium income group demonstrate more motivation but less action.

Psychological considerations could partly explain this result as well. Higher-income individuals are often more confident than people earning a lower income and might perceive a greater sense of control over their decisions (Bagozzi, Dholakia, & Basuroy, 2003). Accordingly, their decision making (e.g., travel decisions) may not be easily influenced by other elements (i.e., place image in this case). Higher income thus had no significant impact on the relationship between
place image and travel desire. These people’s self-concept may also be robust to other characteristics (place image in this case) with little demonstrable impact on self-concept/place image congruity. Conversely, when lower-income people perceive a favourable place image, they are more apt to want to visit that place and to express higher self-congruity than people with a higher income.

This study is the first to explore sociodemographic differences in product-place co-marketing. Addressing such variation through an overarching theoretical framework is imperative for acquiring a richer understanding of image transfer effectiveness in collaborative marketing; in a word, successful image transfer is contingent on market demographics. Our work contributes meaningfully to the image transfer literature in tourism marketing. The results of this study also furnish practical guidance for the tourism and agricultural industries.

4.6.2 Practical Implications

The results of this study present several practical implications for the tourism and agrifood sectors in Australia and potentially elsewhere. First, DMOs or tourism marketers now have a new lens through which their place marketing efforts can be enhanced from a product perspective; for example, they can decide on what image transfer may need to be strengthened through collaborative efforts between tourism places and local agrifood products. If the positive image of a local product can be transferred successfully to the tourism place through advertising or other marketing communication efforts, more target tourists can be reached and positively influenced. Through communications, DMOs or tourism marketers and agriculture producers can better know each other, and how they collaborate.
More specifically, by understanding the differential impacts the three image transfer types (i.e., functional, symbolic, and experiential) on tourist behaviour, DMOs or tourism marketers can strategically tailor their marketing communications to aim at tourists of different nature. For example, for potential tourists that have not had good knowledge of the place, emphasising functional or symbolic benefits of the products may attract them more in visiting a place. For tourists who have a good knowledge of the place, the marketing communications may need to be focused on the experiential image transfer from products to places, which may help potential tourists develop stronger visit intentions to the tourism place.

Third, by understanding the influence of sociodemographics on the effectiveness of image transfer, DMOs or tourism practitioners can develop more effective segmentation and targeting strategies. For example, when targeting the middle-income group who are more conscious of costs, marketing campaigns could focus on more on the symbolic benefits (e.g., social status or prestige) of the products which can subsequently enhance the place image.

4.6.3 Limitations and Future Research

As is true for any research, this study has a number of limitations that can be addressed in future work. First, participants were initially presented with product information to develop place-based perceptions. Other local aspects apart from products (e.g., residents) may influence these perceptions as well. Scholars should thus explore additional ways to develop prospective tourists’ place perceptions to expand our findings’ generalizability.

Second, the current study used agrifood products to represent local products, which might limit the generalisability. Future study can examine other types of local products, such as art or cultural products, in order to enhance our understanding of the place-product relation.
Furthermore, the data of this study were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period in which consumers may be more conscious about certain aspects of the product or the place (e.g., the safety aspect) (Li et al., 2021; Liu & Mair, 2023). Although the overall product-place relationship may be stable and hence somewhat robust to pandemic-induced impacts, research should be conducted once the pandemic has concluded.

Lastly, data collection at the beginning were collected through the face-to-face format, but due to the COVID-19 outbreak, majority of the data (around 85%) had to be collected online. Statistical tests were conducted to check any difference between the online and offline responses and no significant difference was identified. Having said this, findings may still need to be interpreted with caution.

In conclusion, the current study sought to explore the roles of locally produced agrifood products in marketing of a tourism place. Findings suggest that including a local agrifood product can evoke strong symbolic perceptions of a place which subsequently enhance tourists’ desire to visit that place. These results bolster the limited understanding of the co-marketing collaboration between products and places.
CHAPTER FIVE

Examining the effectiveness of a tourism–agriculture co-marketing alliance: An empirical study of fit and fit priming

The paper entitled ‘Examining the effectiveness of a tourism–agriculture co-marketing alliance: An empirical study of fit and fit priming’ by Liu, J.Y., Liu, F., & Webb, D. (2022) has been submitted to Tourism Recreation Research and is currently under revision.

This chapter presents the third paper included in this PhD thesis.

5.1 Abstract

The relationship between places and products has been acknowledged in tourism and marketing. Nonetheless, limited empirical research has sought to understand this association from a co-marketing perspective. Based on categorization, meaning transfer and consistency theories, this study focuses on three types of benefit-based fit to assess fit’s role in a tourism–agriculture co-marketing context. Using a quasi-experimental approach with a sample of 1,000 potential tourists, this study found that functional, symbolic, and experiential fit positively influenced both place and product attitudes. Furthermore, functional and symbolic fit directly informed tourists’ desire to visit a place or purchase a product; experiential fit only affected product desire through favorable product attitudes. This study also explored the impact of fit priming within a co-marketing context and indicated that symbolic fit played significant roles in tourists’ attitudes and desires when primed. Implications for tourism co-marketing practices are discussed.

Keywords: Co-marketing, Tourism (place) marketing, Product marketing, Image transfer, Perceived fit, Fit priming
5.2 Introduction

The concept of place marketing has garnered interest within tourism marketing (Ranasinghe et al., 2017). This form of marketing refers to activities completed to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange place-based offerings meant to enhance value for consumers or communities (Braun, 2008). Researchers and practitioners have striven to market a place by differentiating it from elsewhere in emphasizing its uniqueness or strengths (Rein et al., 1993). Some places establish a distinct image based on local products (Azevedo, 2004); these products can add value and enable comparison to other places.

Tourism and agricultural products can depict the place–product relationship. Research on this proposition has mostly focused on marketing products from a place-of-origin perspective (i.e., place attributes may benefit a product’s image). The early country-of-origin literature revealed that the image of the country from where a product originated shapes product evaluation (Han, 1989). Many examples of this phenomenon exist, such as Porto wine or Chanel from Paris (e.g., Azevedo, 2004; Ranasinghe et al., 2017). Research has also outlined the advantages of marketing a product from a place standpoint: an inimitable product can build a positive image of the place from which the product originates (Azevedo, 2004). A place and its products can additionally be marketed simultaneously. This combined effort introduces the potential of co-marketing a place together with local products (Ranasinghe et al., 2017). Co-marketing can occur at the brand level as well (Gabriele et al., 2022), such as when two or more independent businesses strategically cooperate to realize a shared goal (Bucklin & Sengupta, 1993).

An effective co-marketing alliance hinges on successful transfer of the image of one partner to the other (Yang & Ha, 2014). Image transfer is hence important for place–product co-marketing
initiatives. For instance, positive perceptions of Switzerland as a country (i.e., reliability) are likely to be transferred to Swiss-made watches (Ranasinghe et al., 2017). The opposite also applies, such that the attributes of German cars (i.e., reputation) are likely to be transferred to perceptions of Germany overall (Diamantopoulos et al., 2011). These scenarios pertain to a country at the place level. Yet a country is also a tourism destination (Phillips et al., 2013). Numerous studies (e.g., Aydin et al., 2021; Azevedo, 2004) have demonstrated that image transfer can apply between a tourism place and its local products.

Given that image transfer supports a fruitful co-marketing alliance, it is possible to facilitate the transfer process. Related work (Anh et al., 2009) has indicated that, if consumers perceive a strong alignment or “fit” between partners in a co-marketing alliance, the image of one partner may transfer to the other more easily (vs. for partners with poor or no fit). Image transfer can thus be accomplished and/or enhanced depending on whether products or brands appear to associate with each other (Jongmans et al., 2019). A weak fit may lower the probability of a positive image being transferred between partners (Aaker & Keller, 1990). The role of fit in promoting image transfer has been documented in situations, such as brand extension (Kalamas et al., 2006), co-branding (Ahn et al., 2009), and endorsement and sponsorship (Smith, 2004). Accordingly, perceived fit is imperative for a productive co-marketing alliance.

In light of the importance of perceived fit, which can manifest from image associations (i.e., any linked attributes in a partnership), it is crucial to recognize the types of benefits that exist (Bridges et al., 2000). The image literature (Keller, 1993) has highlighted three main product benefits: functional, symbolic, and experiential. Specific fit types correspond to these advantages, namely functional fit, symbolic fit, and experiential fit. Various fit perceptions has been separately examined in different studies (Ahn & Sung, 2012). For example, the functional fit between partner
associations (e.g., quality and reliability) was found to predict a favorable co-marketing alliance (e.g., between, automotive and IT industries) (Van der Lans et al., 2014). Similarly, symbolic fit (i.e. stylish) had a greater impact on successful co-branding activities (e.g., between clothes and watches) (Ahn et al. 2009). Experiential fit (i.e. exciting) also positively influenced attitudes toward a co-marketing alliance (e.g., between mobile phones and watches) (Riley et al., 2015). Aside from the aforementioned examples, scant research has failed to offer a more comprehensive picture of the role of perceived fit in co-marketing alliances. It is vital that partners consider multiple types of fit when forging a marketing alliance. Entities will be better positioned to choose advantageous alliance partners upon understanding the unique effects of these three types of fit on co-marketing alliances (Newmeyer et al., 2014).

This study examines the impacts of three types of fit in a tourism–agriculture co-marketing context. By clarifying the key benefits of these alliances, marketers in the tourism and agricultural industries will be able to devise more useful strategies to create successful co-marketing alliances. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. First, a review of relevant literature informs the development of several hypotheses for testing. The results of a quasi-experimental study are then presented. We conclude with suggestions for future research.

5.3 Conceptual Background and Hypotheses Development

5.3.1 Co-marketing and image

Co-marketing alliances reflect “strategically complementary alliances between two or more firms or brands who share an equal but independent business” and have become increasingly popular in recent decades (Ahn et al., 2009). Adler (1966) was among the first to analyze the mutual gains
that firms can derive from a co-marketing alliance. These relationships can benefit co-marketing partners, for example, developing favorable brand images (Baumgarth, 2004).

The notion of image generally refers to the “total impressions an entity makes on the minds of others” (Dichter, 1985). Myriad image types exist, including product image (Hampton et al., 1987), brand image (Keller, 1993), endorser image (Seno & Lukas, 2007), and place image (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). Product image encompasses the overall impressions, beliefs, and/or attitudes associated with a product (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Consumers usually develop beliefs about a product from its physical features (Wang et al., 2012). Perceived product attributes can also be tied to consumers’ lifestyle preferences, such as in terms of fulfilling functional needs (e.g., product quality) or hedonic needs (e.g., enjoyment) (Baltas et al., 2017).

Image can be based on benefits as well. As an example, product or place benefits embody the value consumers glean from product or place characteristics (Wu et al., 1988). Two principal consumer benefits are utilitarian (functional) and experiential (hedonic) (Batra & Ahtola, 1991). Functional benefits consist of practical values that consumers obtain from using a product (Liu et al., 2019). Experiential benefits are the aesthetic and enjoyment-related advantages that consumers gain from consumption (Chitturi et al., 2008). Symbolic benefits constitute a third benefit type (Aqueveque, 2016); these benefits are grounded in consumers’ evaluations of whether a consumption satisfies the need for social identification (i.e., social status). Functional, experiential, and symbolic benefits have been deemed central components of product or place image. These benefits also play major parts in consumers’ product- or place-related attitudes and behavior (Orth & Marchi, 2007; Zhou & Hui, 2003).
The significance of co-marketing alliances calls for an explicit sense of the steps necessary to develop a successful relationship. Image transfer is a key determinant of an effective co-marketing alliance (Smarandescu et al., 2013). This transfer occurs when information associated with one entity is conveyed to another entity (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999). Image transfer can motivate partners to enter into an alliance; they may wish to be perceived differently by acquiring new meanings through this process (Pinello et al., 2022).

Advertising and branding scholars have long acknowledged the potential for a positive image transfer from an endorser (i.e., via perceived trustworthiness) to an endorsed product (e.g., Erdogan et al., 2001; James, 2006). Image transfer can also arise between two brands or between a product and a brand. In a brand alliance between Apple and Gatorade, consumers’ perceptions of Apple (i.e., appealing to the young) were transferred to Gatorade (Smarandescu et al., 2013). This transfer happens in a brand extension context: a parent brand’s functional images (e.g., high quality or good taste) is likely to be transferred to product extensions under the same parent brand (James, 2006). Azevedo (2004) claimed that a favorable product image can transfer to a specific place where the product is created. However, this image transfer may depend on the perceived fit between the two parties in a co-marketing alliance (Anh et al., 2009). Perceived fit captures the degree of congruity between two product categories or brands and is often used interchangeably with terms such as “congruence” or “similarity” (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). The following sections address how certain fit types function in a place–product co-marketing alliance.

5.3.2 Perceived fit

Previous section established that image associations of products and places carry functional, symbolic, and experiential benefits (Keller, 1993). Perceived fit therefore includes functional fit,
symbolic fit, and experiential fit. Functional fit reflects the compatibility of functional image aspects (i.e., physical attributes or benefits) between two participating partners (Liu et al., 2019). Boush (1993) found that “spiciness” and “high quality” could connect a core product (canned soup) and an extension product (steak sauce). Symbolic fit refers to the alignment between the symbolic image (i.e. prestige or styling) of two partner products in an alliance. In a marketing alliance between Louis Vuitton (a luxury fashion brand) and BMW (a luxury car brand), both brands were associated with prestige and sophistication (Ahn et al., 2020). Experiential fit entails the match among aesthetic, experiential, and enjoyment-related image aspects of a brand or a product, such as being pleasant to use (Riley et al., 2015).

Research suggests that the perceived fit between partners heavily molds consumers’ evaluations of a co-marketing alliance (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Perceived fit based can powerfully predict consumers’ assessments of a co-marketing alliance (Ahn et al., 2009). Theories such as categorization theory, consistency theory, and meaning transfer theory substantiate the role of perceived fit. The ensuing subsections present an overview of each theory.

5.3.2.1 Categorization theory

Categorization theory (Fiske & Pavelchak, 1986) posits that schema, a knowledge structure, is associated with the evaluation of an object (e.g., a product or place). If two schemas share commonalities (i.e. in object attributes), a person may more feasibly establish a link between these schemas. A co-marketing alliance includes two stimuli representing a pair of knowledge structures. If the stimuli share similar knowledge structures, consumers can immediately understand the stimulus, leading to efficient image transfer. Conversely, if the stimuli are inconsistent in some way, consumers might question how these objects are related. More cognitive effort then becomes
necessary and may provoke frustration. A poor fit may ultimately lower the transferability of an association and produce undesirable perceptions of co-partners (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). If the knowledge structures of a pair of objects are believed to fit in a co-marketing context, consumers can more readily understand the relationships between these objects and will be more apt to develop favorable feelings toward the co-marketing alliance than if the two objects appear misaligned (Ahn et al., 2020).

Categorization theory supports the impact of fit in a co-marketing context between a place and a product. Put simply, consumers’ evaluations of a place–product co-marketing alliance depend on the congruence between the schema of the place and the product. These schemas contain information about their associations. A product’s schema usually covers functional benefits (Elliot et al., 2011) along with symbolic benefits (Aqueveque, 2016) and experiential benefits (Huang et al., 2016). Similarly, a place’s schema involves functional (e.g., Elliot et al., 2011), symbolic (Chen et al., 2016), and experiential (Lee & Lockshin, 2011) advantages. Perceived place–product fit also includes these three concerns. Functional fit, symbolic fit, and experiential fit are thus expected to shape consumers’ assessments of a place–product co-marketing alliance.

5.3.2.2 Meaning transfer theory

The theory of meaning transfer, proposed by McCracken (1989), asserts that the meanings associated with an object, such as a celebrity, can be transferred to another object, such as a product, and then transferred from that product to consumers. Meanings can be rooted in the properties or associations of an object (McCracken, 1989). When a celebrity is chosen as an endorser, this endorser’s characteristics can be transferred to the brand or the product. For example, Tiger
Woods’s perceived attributes (i.e., pre-eminence and glamour) could be transferred to his endorsed brand, Nike (Smith, 2004).

Co-marketing studies have shown that the associations (i.e. quality) of an object (i.e. brand) are transferrable (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005). When two objects display a strong fit, the associations of one object are more effortlessly transferred to the other (Osorio et al., 2022). A shared set of associations can then be merged, enhancing partners’ brand-related perceptions and eliciting favorable evaluations of a co-marketing alliance (Becker-Olsen & Hill, 2006). On the contrary, if two objects are thought to have a poor fit, unfavorable responses will follow in the absence of apparent alignment; fewer shared associations apply compared with a high-fit situation.

In a place–product co-marketing context, if consumers perceive a close fit between a place and a product, the meanings or associations of a place or a product can be transferred to each other. This process results in consumers’ positive evaluations of the co-marketing alliance (Azevedo, 2004). As indicated, the meanings or associations of a place or a product can include functional, symbolic, and experiential benefits. Perceived fit in turn entails functional fit, symbolic fit, and experiential fit. These three types of fit are hence assumed to evoke positive reactions to a place–product co-marketing alliance.

5.3.2.3 Cognitive consistency theory

Cognitive consistency theories originated with Gestalt theory in the 1920s and expanded between the 1940s and 1960s (Simon et al., 2004). Under this theory, Festinger (1957) specified that two cognitive elements (i.e., knowledge) are incongruent if one element follows from the opposite of the other. People experience tension when two elements are perceived as inconsistent. Individuals’
natural inclination to alleviate stress compels them to try to make these cognitive elements align (Festinger, 1957).

Consumers normally prefer mental consistency and respond negatively to violations (Becker-Olsen & Hill, 2006). Consistency or inconsistency usually involves relations between attitudes or beliefs represented in one’s mind (Kruglanski et al., 2018). Attitude is a “psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). In other words, attitude represents an in-depth evaluative response to products or services that is instinctively activated upon encountering these offerings (Fazio, 1995).

Consumers tend to display favorable attitudes toward a co-marketing alliance if they view the partners as aligned (i.e., if consumers can cognitively merge them and see them as one) (Ahn et al., 2020). By contrast, if two partners are thought to have a low fit, consumers experience cognitive inconsistency (Becker-Olsen & Hill, 2006); more cognitive effort is needed to understand the motives underlying the alliance. Consumers’ difficulty integrating these partners can inspire negative evaluations (Ahn et al., 2020).

Consumers’ attitudes toward participating partners can also shift when processing new information or associations present in the alliance (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). When an extension is perceived positively, consumers’ attitudes toward the core brand typically improve (Keller & Aaker, 1992). Consistent beliefs about two objects, or an evidently high fit between them, can prompt positive evaluations of the alliance and thus favorable attitudes toward the partners.

In a place–product co-marketing alliance, if consumers’ beliefs (i.e., reliability) about a place (i.e., Switzerland) and a product (i.e., watches) are congruent, cognitive consistency follows. Consumers’ attitudes toward Swiss watches are then enhanced (Ranasinghe et al., 2017). No
studies seem to have investigated the impacts of inconsistent beliefs between a place and a product. However, consequences can be inferred from inconsistent beliefs about two brands in a co-marketing alliance. For example, the poor fit between Mercedes-Benz and Coca-Cola would presumably arouse unfavorable attitudes toward the alliance (Ahn & Sung, 2012) and may compromise consumers’ beliefs about these partners.

The preceding review insinuates that a strong place–product fit (i.e., functional fit, symbolic fit, and experiential fit) could induce favorable attitudes toward a place–product co-marketing alliance, thus heightening consumers’ attitudes toward a place or a product. The next section discusses another possible constructive outcome of perceived fit.

5.3.3 Desire

Desire represents a positive mental state related to one’s motivation to implement action; this element also conveys one’s wish to make something happen (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001). Desire is a fundamental aspect of socio-psychological research: it provides the force for a consumer to engage in a given behavior (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2004). Scholars generally concur that desire helps to explain consumers’ decision making (e.g., Han et al., 2014; Hunter, 2006). More specifically, desire is thought to be a direct outcome of cognitive or affective evaluations such as images (Han et al., 2014). The belief–desire–intention model (Bratman et al., 1988) posits that consumers’ favorable beliefs (i.e., image) can spark the desire to accomplish certain goals (Koo et al., 2015). Studies have documented the poignant influence of image on human desire (e.g., Hudson et al., 2011; Koo et al., 2016). Hudson et al. (2011) contended that viewers who saw a destination favorably after watching a film expressed a greater desire to visit. In other words, when consumers
possess a positive image of a place or a product, they are more likely to want to visit the place or purchase the product.

This relationship between image and desire can be extended to clarify the role of perceived fit on desire. In a place–product co-marketing alliance, if beliefs about a place and a product are thought to be consistent, positive images of both may be generated due to successful image transfer between them. These favorable images are therefore expected to stimulate subsequent consumers’ desire to visit a place or to purchase a product as postulated below:

H1: Perceived functional fit has a positive effect on consumer attitude toward the place (H1a) and the product (H1b).

H2: Perceived functional fit has a positive effect on consumer desire in visiting the place (H2a) and purchasing the product (H2b).

H3: Perceived symbolic fit has a positive effect on consumer attitude toward the place (H3a) and the product (H3b).

H4: Perceived symbolic fit has a positive effect on consumer desire in visiting the place (H4a) and purchasing the product (H4b).

H5: Perceived experiential fit has a positive effect on consumer attitude toward the place (H5a) and the product (H5b).

H6: Perceived experiential fit has a positive effect on consumer desire in visiting the place (H6a) and purchasing the product (H6b).
5.3.4 Relationship between attitude and desire

*Perceived fit* described the positive impacts of perceived fit on consumers’ attitudes toward a place (product) and desire to visit (purchase). Attitude can bridge perceived fit and desire. Besides image-based evaluations, desire is a prime outcome of attitudinal evaluations (Han et al., 2014). Perugini and Bagozzi’s (2001) model of goal-directed behavior revealed that one’s attitudes toward a behavior are positively related to their desire to execute this behavior. In essence, consumers are more likely to be driven to complete an action if it is associated with optimistic attitudes. These attitudes can pertain to products/services (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993) or to a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Consumers’ favorable attitudes toward a certain object (i.e., a product or service) are thus anticipated to inform their desire to use it (Hwang & Lyu, 2020).

Consumers’ attitudes toward an object can foster desire as well (Han et al., 2014). Japutra et al. (2019) found that the more favorable one’s attitudes were toward a tourism destination, the more eager the person was to visit. Hwang and Lyu (2020) more recently determined that consumers with favorable attitudes toward an environmentally friendly airline wished to fly on that airline. Highly favorable attitudes toward a place or a product are thus expected in this study to evoke a stronger desire to visit the place or purchase the product.

The present research also scrutinizes potential product–place interactions, namely whether place-related attitudes influence purchase desire and vice versa. Elliot et al. (2011) observed that consumers who favored products originating from a tourism destination may develop favorable attitudes toward that place, which may also amplify their desire to travel. In a similar manner, consumers’ favorable place-based perceptions could enhance their desire to purchase a product made in that place. Bowe and Lockshin (2011) explored this cross-over effect and noted that
favorable evaluations of a place (i.e., Australia) helped consumers positively evaluate products (e.g., Australian wine) produced there. Conversely, Phillips et al. (2013) stated that product-related favorability spurred consumers’ willingness to visit the area of production. An interaction effect seems to exist between a place and a product. Having elucidated the attitude–desire link, consumers’ favorable attitudes toward a place could plausibly arouse their desire to purchase a product originating from this place and vice versa. The following hypotheses are proposed:

H7: Consumer attitude toward the place has a positive effect on consumer desire in visiting the place (H7a) and purchasing the product (H7b).

H8: Consumer attitude toward the product has a positive effect in consumer desire in purchasing the product (H8a) and visiting the place (H8b).

Figure 5.1 illustrates the conceptual model guiding this work.
5.4 Research method

5.4.1 Research design

5.4.1.1 Place and product selection

Australian tourism and a local agricultural product were adopted as stimuli partners for a place–product co-marketing alliance in this study. Tourism and agriculture are key industries in Australia—both significantly contribute to the national economy (Ecotourism Australia, 2015;
National Farmers’ Federation, 2019). The Australian government has recognized the potential of cooperation between the tourism and agricultural sectors and has endeavored to connect them (Cciwa.com, 2017). Research regarding this collaboration can unveil intriguing insights for Australia and other nations interested in exploring joint efforts between these industries.

Ecotourism, a prevailing tourism form in Australia, was selected as the study context. This type of travel attracts millions of international visitors to the country (Ecotourism Australia, 2016, 2019). We focused on Walpole in the southwest “forest belt” of Western Australia. An award-winning regional ecotourism attraction, Tree-Top-Walk, is popular with domestic and international tourists (Ecotourism Australia, 2015). Honey was chosen as the focal product in this case; it is an agricultural emblem for Australia and is of particular interest to overseas consumers (Benecke, 2007; Webcache, 2014). Jarrah honey is produced from Jarrah trees which grow in Western Australia’s forest belt, including Walpole (Jarrah Honey Information WA, 2017). Walpole’s Tree-Top-Walk and Jarrah honey were thus deemed an appropriate tourism place and agricultural product to consider.

5.4.1.2 Sample selection

The sample consisted of potential Chinese tourists who resided in China and who had never visited Australia. China is one of Australia’s top foreign markets: it ranked second in the total number of visitors (899,760) and first in per capita spending, contributing around 8.4 billion dollars in 2019 (Tourism Australia, 2020). China was also the largest importer of Australian agricultural exports in 2015 by far, accounting for 21% of all such exports (DFAT, 2017). Chinese consumers with middle or above incomes (e.g., monthly disposable income of 4,000RMB or above) prefer to purchase Australian products, especially agricultural products, while visiting Australia and when shopping
online (Lim, 2016; Wang, 2018). As such, participants in the current study will be over 25 years of age and with more than 4,000 RMB or above as monthly disposable income (representing the middle- or upper-income groups in China).

5.4.1.3 Stimuli design

Priming was employed as a manipulation approach. This strategy can influence customers’ judgments of an object and inform subsequent behavior (Sela & Shiv, 2009). An advertisement served as a prime thanks to its ability to shape viewers’ attitudes and behavior regarding the displayed object (Harris et al., 2009). Selected advertisements were intended to reveal participants’ perceptions of the fit between a place (i.e., ecotourism in Western Australia) and its local product (i.e., Jarrah honey). The advertising literature has shown that fit perceptions vary depending on the information presented in an advertisement (Bridges et al., 2000). Establishing an explanatory link (i.e., slogan) that captures salient or common attributes between two partners in an advertisement can help consumers connect the partners, therefore improving fit perceptions (Bridges et al., 2000).

Directly emphasizing “fit” in an advertising slogan can also enhance the perceived alignment between co-partners (Bambauer-Sachse et al., 2011). By underscoring shared attributes between partnering products or brands in a co-marketing advertisement, consumers can begin to understand such relations, which colors evaluations of a co-marketing alliance (Smarandescu et al., 2013). A fit prime can hence act as a linking stimulus that prompts consumers to grasp the relationship between collaborative partners (Bambauer-Sachse et al., 2011).

A quasi-experimental design was used for hypothesis testing. Three comparison groups were assembled: Group 1, with a slogan about functional fit priming; Group 2, with a slogan about symbolic fit priming; and Group 3, with a slogan about experiential fit priming. One control group
(Group 4) with no fit priming was also included. In sum, four advertisements bearing four different slogans were designed (see Appendix 5.1). A professional designer was employed to create a main advertisement featuring a specified tourism place and a product. Subsequent advertisements were identical apart from the slogan.

The items used to measure focal constructs were adapted from prior studies and scored on a 7-point Likert type scale (1 = completely disagree; 7 = completely agree; see Appendix 5.2). Measures include functional fit (4 items), symbolic fit (4 items), experiential fit (4 items), place attitude (3 items) and product attitude (3 items), travel desire (3 items), and purchase desire (3 items).

5.4.2 Pre-test

A structured questionnaire was designed to test hypothesized relationships. All questions were translated from English to Chinese (Standard Mandarin) using a back-to-back translation method (Chen & Boore, 2010). A pre-test was performed prior to the main survey to verify items’ readability, after which the wording of some questions was modified for clarity.

5.5 Data Collection and Analyses

5.5.1 Data collection and descriptive findings

Data was collected in Nanjing, the Capital City of Jiangsu Province. Nanjing is located in China’s eastern (or coastal) region, and the average monthly disposable income in Nanjing is around 5,000 RMBs (equivalent to 1,000 Australian dollars), with around half of the population being classified as middle- and high-income earners (Sohu, 2021). Residents in Nanjing have strong interests in overseas travels; this explains why Nanjing is among the top 10 cities with regards to outbound
tourism (Ctrip, 2017). Residents in Nanjing are also interested in purchasing high-end foreign products, including agricultural or food products (Nanjing Daily, 2015). As discussed in earlier section, the current study will select Chinese consumers with middle or upper incomes as they are the key market for both overseas travel and foreign/imported products (Lim, 2016; Wang, 2018). Therefore, residents in Nanjing are considered appropriate for the current study. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the data were collected online.

A total of 1,000 valid questionnaires were collected for four groups, with around 300 for each three main experimental groups and 100 for the control group. To recruit qualified samples, all the participants were asked to answer the screening questions about age and income, such that the age of participants being over 25 years of age and that the disposable income being higher than 4,000RMB (middle-income or above) were qualified to continue filling out the questionnaire. After conducting frequency analyses, the sample met the requirement for the current study (See Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Profile of the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Detailed Breakdowns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>50.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>High school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Level</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
5.5.2 Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted in first to explore whether the main model has a good fit. A measurement model with all constructs included in the hypothesis was then established. Results indicated that the model achieved a good level of model fit (e.g., CMIN/DF= 2.692, CFI= 0.97, RMSEA= 0.041).

Furthermore, the analysis indicated that all the items for each construct loaded on one factor. As shown in Table 5.2, convergent validity was achieved with all factor loadings being greater than 0.7 and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) score of each factor was higher than 0.5. Discriminant validity also reached the standard with the square root of AVE values greater than the Maximum Shared Squared Variance (MSV) values (Shadfar and Malekmohammadi, 2013). Construct reliability (CR) was then examined to identify the internal consistency of each measure. The results confirmed that all constructs were reliable as CR values were greater than 0.7. In this manner, the data was ready for further analysis.

Table 5.2: Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th># items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>Factor Loadings</th>
<th>AVE Score</th>
<th>MSV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FunctionalFit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>0.897</td>
<td>0.788</td>
<td>0.685</td>
<td>0.177</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FuncFit3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SymbolicFit</td>
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<td>4.85</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.875</td>
<td>0.808</td>
<td>0.637</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
<td># items</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Factor Loadings</td>
<td>AVE Score</td>
<td>MSV</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExperiFit</td>
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<td>4.67</td>
<td>1.52</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>ProductAttitude</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>0.860</td>
<td>0.821</td>
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<td>0.262</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PlaceAttitude</td>
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<td>1.45</td>
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<td>0.826</td>
<td>0.595</td>
<td>0.270</td>
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<tr>
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<td>PlaceAtt3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProdDesire</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.843</td>
<td>0.799</td>
<td>0.642</td>
<td>0.270</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.754</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5.5.3 Hypothesis testing

Before conducting the hypothesis testing, manipulation checks were first performed to ensure that the experimental design was effective. In specific, Independent t-test was performed between three main groups and one control group. The results showed that the constructs were significantly different among main groups and control group (see Appendix 5.3). Structural equational modelling (SEM) was then performed adopting the Maximum likelihood method in AMOS to
examine the significance of each hypothesized relationship. Multi-group analysis was then conducted in order to understand whether each main relationship was significantly different among the three stimuli groups. The results revealed that perceived functional fit had a positive impact on place attitude under Group 2 and Group 3; therefore, H1a was partially supported. The relationship of functional fit on place attitude was found significantly positive for all three groups; therefore, H1b was fully supported. Functional fit positively influenced place desire and product desire under Group 2; thus, H2a and H2b were partially supported. Further multi-group analysis showed no significant differences among the three groups on H1a (p=0.260), H1b (p=0.072, H2a (p=0.102), and H2b (p=0.187).

The study detected positive impacts of perceived symbolic fit on place attitude and product desire under Group 2 and Group 3; therefore, H3a and H4b were partially supported. Multi-group analysis showed that there is a significant difference among three groups on both H3a (p=0.05) and H4b (p<0.001). Specifically, the symbolic fit seemed to have a stronger influence on place attitude for Group 2 as compared to Group 1 ($\beta_1=0.086; \beta_2=0.295$). All of the three groups found a positive impact of symbolic fit on product attitude and place desire, fully supporting H3b and H4a. Multi-group analysis showed no significant differences among the three groups on H3b (p=0.110) and H4a (p=0.102).

Results showed that perceived experiential fit had a positive effect on place attitude and product attitude under all three groups; therefore, H5a and H5b were fully supported. Experiential fit positively influenced place desire under Group 1, but it did not impact product desire. Therefore, H6a was partially supported while H6b was rejected. The results of the multi-group analysis revealed that there is no significant difference among three groups on H5a (p=0.800), H5b (p=0.681), H6a (p=0.108), and H6b (p=0.110).
Place attitude was found to positively influence product desire under Group 2 (symbolic fit priming) and Group 3 (experiential fit priming), but it did not influence place desire. As such, H7b was supported while H7a was rejected. After conducting the multi-group analysis, the relationship between place attitude on product desire was significantly higher for Group 3 than for Group 2 and Group 1 (p<0.001; β1=0.060; β2=0.297; β3=0.574). However, the results indicated that relationships between place attitude and place desire were not significantly different among the three groups (p=0.319). With regard to product attitude, the results showed that product attitude had a positive impact on product desire under Group 1 and on place desire under Group 3; thus H8a and H8b were partially supported. Further, the relationship between product attitude and product desire was found significantly higher for Group 1 than for Group 2 and Group 3 (p<0.001; β1=0.457; β2=0.07; β3=0.027). However, there was no significant difference found among the three groups regarding the relationship between product attitude and place desire (p=0.07). Main results including regression weights and significances are shown in Figure 5.2.
Figure 5.2: Hypothesis Testing
5.6 Discussion and Implications

5.6.1 Summary of findings and theoretical contributions

The main purpose of the current study was to explore a way to achieve a successful co-marketing alliance between a tourism place and its local agricultural products. Numerous studies have demonstrated that favourable perceptions toward “fit” between the two sectors can generate favourable consumers’ responses toward a co-marketing alliance (Walchli, 2007; Ahn et al., 2009). However, the current study is the only reported study to have empirically tested the potential consequence of three major types of perceived fit in a place-product co-marketing context. Findings of the current study revealed that perceived functional fit, perceived symbolic fit, and perceived experiential fit can generate favourable attitudes toward both the place and the product. This finding is consistent with studies that have focused on a singular image fit, such as the functional fit (Ashton & Scott, 2011), symbolic fit (Chang et al., 2011), or experiential fit (Riley et al., 2015). These findings suggest that when consumers evaluate a co-marketing alliance, different types of fit perceptions between the collaborative partners may have differential impacts on consumer evaluations. For example, the results showed that experiential fit had the greatest impact on consumers’ attitudes toward both the place and the product. This finding emphasizes the role of experiential fit in a product-place co-marketing context. This finding also suggests that consumers may pay more attention to the experiential aspects of the product which may subsequently influence how consumers evaluate the tourism place.

In addition to consumer attitude, this study is among the first to explore another positive consequence of perceived fit, that is, consumer desire. This study provides empirical evidence that consumer desire in visiting a tourism place (or place desire) was influenced by all three types of
fit. However, consumer desire in buying a product (product desire) was found to be only influenced by functional fit and symbolic fit, but not by experiential fit. One plausible explanation could be that experiential fit tends to be related to intangible attributes, such as feelings, while consumers usually focus on tangible attributes, such as quality or reliability, to build their perceptions of a product (Onkvisit & Shaw, 1989). Therefore, compared to a place, experiential fit may not be strong enough to induce consumers’ desire to purchase a product.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), proposed by (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981) could also help understand the differential impacts of perceived fit on place desire and product desire. ELM is often used to understand how consumers process stimuli as well as the consequences of these processes on consumer attitude and changes in behavior (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). According to ELM, consumers are motivated to process messages that are relevant to them (Kitchen et al., 2014). Therefore, in a place-product co-marketing context, consumers who are motivated to visit a place tend to be concerned about functional, symbolic, and experiential connections between a tourism place and a local product. However, experiential-related aspects may not be directly relevant to consumers when they think of a product; therefore, consumers may not process the message regarding experiential fit. These findings advance our knowledge of consumer desire from the perspective of perceived fit.

The results of the current study also showed that perceived experiential fit exerted the strongest impact on place desire, while product desire was most affected by symbolic fit. These findings suggest that when consumers are exposed to a place-product co-marketing alliance, they tend to be more motivated by symbolic aspects to make a purchase decision, while visit decisions are more motivated by experiential aspects (i.e., fun, comfortable).
Consistent with past research (Lee et al., 2017; Han et al., 2017), this study found that product attitude had a positive impact on product desire. However, place attitude does not seem to influence consumer desire to visit a place. This finding is unexpected. The COVID-19 outbreak may offer an explanation. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, many countries have closed their borders, which has seriously affected the tourism sector (Khalid et al., 2021). Indeed, tourists’ travel plans are often affected by unexpected restrictions and regulations (Humagain & Singleon 2021). According to the model of goal-directed behaviour (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001), consumer desire is also influenced by how much control consumers feel they have over their behavior (perceived behavior control) in any setting. Therefore, consumers may feel it difficult to make a visit decision, especially to a foreign tourism destination under the pandemic.

This study also found a cross-over effect between the place and the product. On the one hand, results showed that consumer’s desire to purchase a product is influenced not only by their attitude to the product but also by their attitude to the place. This suggests that place is an important consideration when people think purchasing a product made in this place. On the other hand, consumer’s desire to visit a tourism place is influenced by their attitude toward the product. This implies that favorable perceptions of a local product can enhance tourists’ motivations to visit a place that produces these products. This cross-over effect advances our knowledge of a place-product co-marketing alliance. For example, when there is collaboration between a tourism place and its local products, the benefits are symbiotic.

Consistent with prior research that has claimed the positive role of fit ‘priming’ in enhancing the performance of a co-marketing alliance (Bridges et al., 2000; Bambauer-Sachse et al., 2011), this study revealed, for the first time, the role of specific types of fit ‘priming’ in a place-product co-marketing context. In general, the main hypothesized relationships were found to be
significantly different among the three groups (i.e., under three fit ‘priming’ situations), suggesting that fit ‘priming’ can play a role in a co-marketing context. Specifically, results showed that the relationships between symbolic fit and place attitude and/or product desire were significantly higher for Group 2 (with symbolic fit ‘priming’) than for Group 1 (with functional fit ‘priming’). This finding indicates that a particular fit ‘priming’ (i.e., symbolic fit ‘priming’) could enhance a corresponding fit perception (i.e., symbolic fit), which can further enhance the performance of a co-marketing alliance.

Another interesting finding is that fit ‘priming’ also plays a role in the relationship between attitude and desire. First, the study found that the influence of product attitude on product desire was significantly stronger for Group 1 (functional fit ‘priming’) than for both Group 2 (symbolic fit ‘priming’) and Group 3 (experiential fit ‘priming’). This finding suggests that fit ‘priming’ that relies on concrete or tangible attributes (i.e., quality) can enhance consumers’ evaluations of a product. This is because when consumers evaluate a product, they usually focus on its functional attributes, such as product quality. Second, the cross-over effect on this relationship (i.e., attitude-desire) was found to be significantly different under different fit ‘priming’ situations. Specifically, the relationship between place attitude and product desire was significantly higher for Group 3 (experiential fit ‘priming’) than for both Group 2 (symbolic fit ‘priming’) and Group 1 (functional fit ‘priming’). If tourists expect a trip to be an “enjoyable” trip, their positive attitudes toward this destination will be enhanced (Jalilvand et al., 2012). Therefore, when participants were prompted to consider the experiential fit (e.g., enjoyment) between the place and the product, they were able to understand the experiential connection between the two (i.e., feel enjoyable when taking ecotourism or consuming honey). Thus, experiential fit ‘priming’ could enhance place attitudes, which subsequently enhance consumer desire to purchase a local product made in this place. This
finding implies that fit ‘priming’ that has focused on experiential aspects can be beneficial to a place-product co-marketing alliance.

5.6.2 Practical contributions

The findings of the current study provide several practical contributions for both tourism and agricultural sectors in Australia as well as for potentially elsewhere. First, the findings of the current study revealed that a place-product co-marketing alliance can provide mutual benefits for both tourism and agriculture industries. Specifically, when an agricultural product is associated with a tourism place, the consumers’ evaluations of a local product can be enhanced. And vice versa, collaborating with a local product can enhance tourists’ evaluations of a tourism place. In addition, consumers are also likely to benefit from a place-product co-marketing alliance. For example, tourists who consider visiting a place will have the chance to get close to local products and vice versa; therefore, such approaches will increase the value of offerings for consumers. This contribution can extend from tourism to other sectors.

Second, the current study provides new possibilities for enhancing the effectiveness of a co-marketing alliance, especially a place-product co-marketing alliance. By understanding the importance of the consistency of the key benefits between a tourism place and its agricultural products, marketers in both tourism and agriculture industries will gain a deeper understanding of how to achieve a successful co-marketing alliance by designing a more effective marketing strategy. For example, having a high level of consistency between functional benefits (e.g., good quality), symbolic benefits (e.g., uniqueness), and experiential benefits (e.g., excitement) of a tourism place and its associated local products is likely to result in more favourable responses towards a place-product co-marketing alliance. These findings are important for marketers to better understand the
key benefits of perceived fit that should be focused on marketing communications. By understanding that fit ‘priming’ can enhance fit perceptions correspondingly, marketers can develop a more effective marketing strategy by prompting consumers in the desired direction by nudging their perceptions toward a closer fit in advance. For example, if a symbolic fit ‘priming’ is an appropriate stimulus that may help consumers enhance the symbolic fit between a tourism place and its local products, marketers may consider symbolic connections, such as uniqueness, and reflect this connection in their advertisements through slogans.

5.7 Limitations and future research

The results of this study offer a rich understanding of how perceived fit affects evaluations of a place–product co-marketing alliance. However, several limitations illuminate avenues for future work. First, data was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis ravaged the tourism industry in many countries due to a sudden halt in international travel (Tourism Research Australia, 2021). Although attitudes are stable and hard to change (Ajzen, 1991), tourists’ attitudes toward foreign destinations may be more influenced by uncertainty and perceived risk due to the rising safety and health concerns during the pandemic (Tourism Research Australia, 2021; Liu & Mair, 2023). For instance, consumers may now be more concerned whether a product is produced in a safe place (Li et al., 2021). Future research may replicate this study when the pandemic is completely over. Additionally, further work may include one or more relevant health measures to account for the possibility of other disease outbreaks.

Second, our research context was limited to a single tourism format and one product type. Findings should be generalized with caution to other tourism forms or product categories (e.g., historical tourism, local food). Follow-up efforts should thus verify these findings within different
tourism and product categories. Resultant insights could uncover circumstances that may apply more broadly in a place–product co-marketing context.

Third, one advertisement element was addressed in this study: a slogan stressing a specific type of fit (i.e., to increase the impact of perceived fit on evaluations of a place–product co-marketing alliance). Researchers should consider other types of advertisement features, such as endorsers, which could further enhance fit perceptions in a co-marketing alliance. Fourth, this work built on the connection (i.e., fit perception) between a place and a product on the bases of functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits. Perceived fit can be operationalized in many ways; our results may not apply to other types of product associations (e.g., attitudes) in relation to fit.

In addition, the featured product associations were uniformly positive. Exploring perceived fit in terms of negative associations will bolster generalizability. For example, two products that are perceived to be boring would still be considered aligned. Perceived fit was based on benefit fit. Testing other forms of fit will improve generalizability. Finally, the current study exclusively addressed potential tourists’ motivations to visit a specific destination or to purchase a local product from that destination. More research on long-term effects on tourist behaviors would offer a deeper understanding of the role of perceived fit (e.g., how fit perceptions influence travel expectations).

Last but not least, data was collected in Nanjing, which was located in China’s eastern (or coastal) region. Regional disparities may influence Chinese consumers’ preferences and behaviors (Statista 2022); therefore, caution should be taken when interpreting the results of the current study. Future studies can include consumers from other regions (e.g., the western and middle region) to improve generalizability.
5.8 Conclusion

This study explored how a successful place–product co-marketing alliance can be achieved through enhanced fit perceptions. Findings demonstrate that, when evaluating a co-marketing alliance, consumers consider the fit between two partners on the bases of image associations. These perceptions subsequently influence consumers’ views of co-partners. Marketers should therefore pay greater attention to fit perceptions when embarking on collaborative efforts. Moreover, fit priming can strengthen a place–product co-marketing alliance. Tourism and agricultural industry practitioners should craft effective marketing campaigns accordingly.
CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Three individual papers make up the current Ph.D. research project (see Chapters 3, 4, and 5). This chapter synthesizes the three individual papers that collectively inform this PhD thesis, beginning with a summary of their key findings, followed by an overview of their theoretical and managerial implications. Finally, this chapter concludes with the key contributions of this thesis, discusses their limitations, and provides suggestions for future research.

6.1 Summary of the Three Papers

The main objective of this research project was to understand the general effectiveness of co-marketing alliances between tourism destinations and related local products. In particular, this project focused on understanding Chinese consumers’ responses to the marketing of Australian ecotourism and an Australian agricultural product, honey. The following sections respectively discuss the findings and implications of the three studies that comprise this PhD research project.

6.1.1 The First Paper (Paper 1 - Chapter 3): Connecting an ecotourism place and its local products: A co-marketing perspective

6.1.1.1 Research Objective

The research reported in Paper 1 empirically investigated the relationships between several types of marketing images (i.e., cognitive country image, affective country image, place image, and product image) and the effects of these relationships on consumer behavioural intentions, such as intentions to purchase tourism products and travel to tourism destinations. This research aimed to
explore any potential relationship(s) between consumers’ evaluation of an ecotourism place and its local products (e.g., agricultural products). Such relationships include whether consumers’ intention to visit a particular ecotourism place may be stimulated not only by place images but also by images of products from that place. In addition, the first paper reports on whether consumers’ intention to purchase products from a given ecotourism place can be enhanced not only by product images but also by the image of this tourism place. The results indicate the existence of a cross-over effect between consumers’ evaluation of an ecotourism place and products. A fuller understanding of this cross-over effect advances the potential for informed collaboration between related industries.

6.1.1.2 Key Findings and Theoretical Implications

The research reported in the first paper revealed that several types of marketing images (i.e., general country image, product image, and tourism place image) were related to each other, at least in the context of Australian ecotourism and Australian honey. These images influenced consumers’ destination choices and purchase behavioural intentions. The paper also demonstrates the roles of advertising and consumer knowledge in producing these various place images.

One of the major findings reported in this paper was that favourable place images enhanced not only tourists’ willingness to visit an ecotourism place but also their willingness to purchase local products originating from this place. Conversely, if consumers favored local products originating from a particular ecotourism destination, they were not only likely to purchase these products but also likely to visit this ecotourism place.

This major finding points to the presence of a cross-over effect between tourism place and local products, which indicates that the tourism and agricultural industries have a strong
relationship. When consumers consider visiting a tourism place, local products, especially local agricultural offerings, may be considered an important factor in their decision-making process. In this case, tourism travel predictions can be enhanced by images of the tourism place and agricultural products from the place. When consumers consider purchasing local agricultural products that originate from a particular tourism destination, their perceptions of the tourism destination may influence their purchase choices.

The empirical results also showed that both attitudes toward tourism advertisements and consumer knowledge had positive impacts on product and tourism place images, which is consistent with past research (e.g., Zhang & Hart, 2016). This finding suggested that advertisement and consumer knowledge could help to build better specific country images (i.e., product image and tourism place image), which may subsequently influence their behaviour intentions.

6.1.1.3 Managerial Implications

The first paper provides compelling evidence for the influence of tourism place images on product purchase intentions, and vice versa. Understanding this cross-over effect could help to realise the potential for fruitful collaborations between the tourism and agricultural industries. Thus, an appropriate win–win marketing strategy for both industries is to promote tourism destinations with local products simultaneously. Both tourism and agricultural industries can enter into a co-marketing alliance to help them access new markets and expand their target markets. In addition, industries from other sectors such as a combination of education industry and tourism industry could also benefit from this study by understanding the positive impact of collaborative efforts on consumer behaviour. This place–product co-marketing strategy could also be extended to many other countries with comparable tourism or product industries.
Individual consumers are also likely to benefit from this approach (i.e., a place-product co-marketing alliance). Such an approach increases the potential range and value of offerings for consumers. For example, consumers who are interested in a specific product may be offered the opportunity to become familiar with the particular location (i.e., tourism place) that produces this product. Similarly, tourists who want to travel to a particular tourism place may have the opportunity to enhance their knowledge of its local products.

By understanding the importance of advertisements in building positive images (i.e., general country image, product country image, and tourism place image), marketers working in these sectors could consider the potential relationships between different industries when marketing their goods or services. In addition, they can reflect these relationships in their creative advertising designs and overall media planning. For example, tourism marketers could include agricultural products in their tourism advertisements, while agricultural product marketers could include the local scenery (or tourism attractions) in their product advertisements.

By understanding the impact of consumer knowledge on forming images, tourism and agricultural marketers could provide information related to specific advertised products or tourism destinations in their marketing communication strategies. Therefore, consumers’ knowledge of the advertised products and tourism place would be increased, which would enhance their perceptions of the products and the location. In addition, understanding how Chinese customers see Australian tourism and honey products provides valuable guidance for building successful marketing strategies for other countries that consider Chinese consumers as a major market.
6.1.2 The Second Paper (Paper 2—Chapter 4): Can agrifood products generate tourist desire to visit a place? An empirical study of image transfer and self-congruity

6.1.2.1 Research Objective

The research reported in Paper 2 explored how local products promote tourism destinations for tourism purposes. Azevedo (2004) claimed that local products can help market tourism place. However, how this happens, in other words, how a local product can help market a place for a tourism purpose is not well understood. The second paper addressed this knowledge gap by investigating the transferability of key images between local products and tourism place. The findings make valuable contributions to the literature on place–product co-marketing alliances.

6.1.2.2 Key Findings and Theoretical Implications

Research has explored the relationship between local products and tourism destinations by focusing on the influence of the tourism destination on local products (e.g., Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005; Ranasinghe, Thaichon, & Ranasinghe, 2017). The second paper yielded novel insights by flipping this relationship (i.e., exploring the influence of a local product on a tourism place). Drawing from the literature (e.g., Keller, 1993), the research reported in the second paper investigated image transfers from a multidimensional perspective and suggested that three specific image aspects of local products (i.e., functional, symbolic, and experiential benefits) could be transferred to particular related tourism destinations.

Studies have focused on the benefits of image transfer between products. In a collaboration between Apple and Gatorade, for example, Smarandescu, Rose, and Wedell (2013) found that the functional benefits of Apple (i.e., high-quality products, youth appeal) could be transferred to its
collaborative business partner, Gatorade. Symbolic or experiential benefit transfers have also been demonstrated in the literature (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005; Blackett & Russell, 2000). This paper closed this knowledge gap by empirically investigating multiple image or benefit transfer types within a place–product co-marketing alliance.

In addition, self-congruity is an important predictor of consumer behaviour (e.g., Ibrahim & Najjar, 2008). The role of self-congruity toward a tourism destination was also explored in the second paper. Based on the assumption that images can be transferred from local products to tourism place in a place–product co-marketing context, it seems reasonable to infer that self-congruity with a tourist destination is expected to rise as a result of the image of a product transferring to that of a place.

The findings reported in the second paper revealed that only the transference of symbolic benefits generated consumer desire to visit a tourism place (i.e., visit desire). This finding emphasised the important role of symbolic benefit transfer in consumers’ desire to travel in a place–product co-marketing context. In a place–product co-marketing context, more intangible image aspects of a local product (i.e., symbolic benefits), can be beneficial to the image of a tourism place. While functional image transfer was not found to directly influence visit desire, functional image transfer was found to be indirectly influenced through self-congruity. This finding indicated the key role of self-congruity in the relationship between image transfer and consumer desire.

In addition, this study is the first attempt to understand the sociodemographic differences in the place–product co-marketing context. The relationships between image transfer, self-congruity, and visit desires were differentiated across demographic segments, such as income level (i.e., below medium income group, medium higher income group). The influence of symbolic image
transfer on consumers’ visit desire and self-congruity was significantly higher for people in the below medium income group than for people in the medium higher income group.

6.1.2.3 Managerial Implications

The findings reported in the second paper provide marketers with valuable insights into marketing a tourism place from a local product perspective. For example, when marketing a tourism place, marketers could consider bundling tourism places with local product offerings. The local product images could help to build a more favourable tourism place image, thereby increasing tourists’ visit desire. By exploring the transferability of images from local products to related tourism destination, tourism marketers can more thoroughly understand how the effectiveness of destination–product collaborations can be achieved through image transference.

By understanding the influence of three specific image types of image transfer (i.e., functional image transfer, symbolic image transfer, experiential image transfer) on consumers’ behavioural intentions, tourism destination marketers can recognise which aspects of images are crucial when collaborating with local products. Therefore, when tourism marketers work to market a tourism place and local products together, they must consider the key attributes of the local products. For example, Australian ecotourism marketers should consider appropriate local products with strong symbolic benefits (i.e., high reputation or uniqueness), such as Australian honey.

Last, understanding the influences consumer demographics have on the effectiveness of image transfer can help marketers develop a more effective segmentation and targeting strategies. For example, tourism and destination marketers can localize their marketing strategies when marketing their programmes to tourists in different countries/regions with different income levels.
6.1.3 The Third Paper (Paper 3—Chapter 5): Examining the effectiveness of a tourism–agriculture co-marketing alliance: An empirical study of fit and fit priming

6.1.3.1 Research Objective

The main objective of Paper 3 was to explore the role of perceived fit in consumers’ behaviour in the place–product co-marketing context. Perceived fit refers to the degree of congruity between two product categories or brands (Simonin & Ruth, 1998; Zdravkovic et al., 2010). If consumers perceive a strong fit between partners in a co-marketing alliance, the image of one partner can be easily transferred to the other. Therefore, image transfer can be created or enhanced, leading consumers to evaluate a co-marketing alliance favorably (e.g., Ahn, Kim, & Forney, 2009; Ahn & Sung, 2012; Walchli, 2007).

Given the importance of perceived fit, which could be built on image associations, including any attribute or benefit that can be linked to each other in a partnership (Bridges et al., 2000), it is important to understand the existing types of benefits. Keller (1993) highlighted three main benefits for products (i.e., functional, symbolic, and experiential); therefore, specific fit types could include functional, symbolic, and experiential fit types. The findings from Paper 3 can enrich our co-marketing alliance knowledge by examining new opportunities to improve its effectiveness. Accordingly, a deeper investigation of the roles of specific types of perceived fit within place–product co-marketing alliances can help marketers in both the tourism and agricultural industries to develop better informed and potentially more effective marketing strategies.

6.1.3.2 Key Findings and Theoretical Implications
Studies have widely examined the role of perceived fit in co-marketing alliances (e.g., Ahn, Kim, & Forney, 2009; Riley, Charlton, & Wason, 2015; Walchli, 2007). In addition, general fit perceptions can arouse consumers’ favourable responses toward co-marketing alliances (e.g., Ahn, Kim, & Forney, 2009; Riley, Charlton, & Wason, 2015; Walchli, 2007). However, the research reported in our third paper is the first study to have empirically investigated the potential consequences of three major types of perceived fit (i.e., functional, symbolic, and experiential) in the place–product co-marketing context.

The findings revealed that functional, symbolic, and experiential fit perceptions positively influenced consumers’ attitudes toward a tourism place and its local products. These findings are consistent with studies that have focused on the role of a singular image fit (e.g., Ashton & Scott, 2011; Chang & Yang, 2011, Riley, Charlton, & Wason, 2015). Moreover, the diverse fit perceptions between collaborative partners may have different effects on how consumers evaluate co-marketing alliances. Compared with functional fit and symbolic fit, for example, experiential fit had a greater impact on consumers’ attitudes toward a tourism place and a product.

In addition to consumers’ attitudes, this paper is the first to investigate another favourable outcome of perceived fit; that is, consumer desire (i.e., for tourism place or products). All three fit types positively influenced consumers’ desire to visit a tourism place (i.e., place desire). However, only functional and symbolic fit positively influenced consumers’ desire to purchase local products (i.e., product desire). Similarly, the three fit types had different impacts on consumer place and product desires. For example, experimental fit had the greatest influence on consumers’ desire to visit tourism place, while symbolic fit had the greatest impact on consumers’ desire to purchase local products. Therefore, the research in the third paper offers a more comprehensive understanding of the role of perceived fit in a co-marketing alliance.
Consistent with the literature (Lee et al., 2012; Lee, Bruwer, & Song, 2017; Han, Meng, & Kim, 2017), consumers’ product desire was influenced by product attitudes. However, place attitudes did not influence consumers’ place desire. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic may explain this finding. The tourism industry worldwide was seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, because many countries closed their borders (Khalid, Okafor, & Burzynska, 2021). In addition, unexpected travel restrictions and regulations related to COVID-19 often affected tourists’ travel plans (Humagain & Singleton, 2021). According to the goal-directed behaviour model (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001), consumers’ desire is determined by their perception of the level of control that they have over their behaviour in any situation (i.e., perceived behaviour control). Therefore, consumers experienced dilemmas when deciding whether to travel internationally during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, this study found a cross-over effect between a tourism place and related local products. Consumers’ desire to purchase a product was not only influenced by their attitudes toward the product but also influenced by their attitudes toward a place from where the product originates. This finding suggested that consumers take place into account when thinking whether to buy a locally-produced product. Meanwhile, consumers’ desire to visit a tourism place was influenced by their attitudes toward the product originating from this place. This finding implied that when consumers think about visiting a specific tourism place, products (especially local food offerings) are an important consideration.

In addition, different results were obtained for the perceived fit–attitude–desire relationship under the various fit ‘priming’ situations. Symbolic fit priming increased the impact of symbolic fit on place attitudes and/or product desires, which suggested the important role of symbolic fit priming within place–product co-marketing alliances. In addition, functional fit priming had a
greater influence on the relationship between product attitudes and desires than that of both symbolic and experiential fit priming. However, experiential fit priming played a more important role than functional or symbolic fit priming in the relationship between place attitudes and product desires. These findings suggested that fit ‘priming’ plays an important role in the relationship between consumers’ attitudes and desires.

6.1.3.3 Managerial Implications

This study provided several insights for marketers in the tourism and agricultural industries in Australia and elsewhere. First, the findings advance our knowledge about the benefits of place-product co-marketing alliances. For example, both the tourism and agricultural industries benefit from place-product co-marketing alliances. Consumers’ evaluations of a tourism place improve when this tourism place collaborates with locally-produced product, and vice versa.

Second, the results related to the important influence of various perceived fit types on consumer behaviour provide marketers with new opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of co-marketing alliances (e.g., place-product co-marketing alliances). By understanding the impact of consistency of key benefits between a tourism place and a local product, marketers in either tourism or agricultural industries who enter into a marketing will have a deeper understanding of how to design more effective marketing strategies. For example, such marketers are aware which key shared benefits for the tourism place and the local products are desirable or need to be emphasised in their marketing communication strategies, such as advertising and other media planning activities.

Third, by understanding the role of fit ‘priming’ in enhancing the effectiveness of a place-product co-marketing alliance, marketers can develop a more effective co-marketing alliance by
prompting consumers in the desired path by influencing their thoughts of a closer fit in advance. This will help consumers strengthen the link between partners, and therefore, will result in favourable evaluations of this co-marketing alliance. For example, symbolic fit priming is an appropriate stimulus within a place–product co-marketing alliances and marketers could emphasise the symbolic connection by highlighting for example ‘uniqueness’ in their marketing strategies (i.e., advertising).

6.2 Summary of Contributions Built on the Three Papers

The central objective of this Ph.D. research project was to examine the effectiveness of co-marketing alliances between a tourism place and related local products. The findings of this project indicated the existence of a cross-over effect between a tourism place and its local products. On the one hand, tourists’ choices of a tourism place are based not only on their perceptions of this place but also on their perceptions of local agricultural offerings. On the other hand, when consumers think about buying local agricultural products, their purchase choices may also be influenced by their perceptions of a tourism place that produce these products. The first paper in this project reports compelling evidence for this cross-over effect, indicating a strong relationship between a tourism place and related local products. Thus, the first paper in this thesis serves as a foundation for further exploring the effectiveness of co-marketing alliances between a tourism place and a local product (i.e., place-product co-marketing alliance).

In exploring the effectiveness of place–product co-marketing alliances, this research project centred on image transfers, because a successful co-marketing alliance is often based on a successful image transfer (e.g., Azevedo, 2004; Seno & Lukas, 2007; Smarandescu, Rose, & Wedell, 2013). The research reported in the second paper of this project then focused on the
influence of local products on a tourism place and examined image transfer from local products to this tourism place and its impact on consumers’ behavioural intentions. Keller (1993) suggested three main image aspects: functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits. Specific image transfer types correspond to these three image benefits: functional image transfer, symbolic image transfer, and experiential image transfer. The results reported in the second paper showed that successful image transfer from local products to a tourism place can stimulate tourists’ desire to visit this tourism place. Understanding the impact of image transfers contributes to achieving successful co-marketing alliances. The second paper of this project not only cultivated a thorough understanding of image transfer processes but was also the first to empirically investigate the effect of image transfer on co-marketing alliances.

This project expanded our understanding of a successful co-marketing alliance by exploring new possibilities for increasing its effectiveness. The results suggested that perceived fit plays a key role in consumers’ evaluations of a co-marketing alliances. As functional benefit, symbolic benefit, and experimental benefit are three main image aspects (Keller, 1993), perceived fit in this project was therefore conceptualized as functional fit, symbolic fit, and experiential fit. All three types of fit were found to have positive impacts on consumers’ evaluations of a tourism place and a local product. These findings suggested that if consumers understand the relationships between partners in a co-marketing alliance, they may develop more favourable attitudes toward each partner within the alliance. The third paper of this project advanced the knowledge of the way to enhance the evaluations of a place-product co-marketing alliance. Indeed, this project was the first to empirically examine the role of various types of perceived fit in a co-marketing context.

Taken together, the findings reported in these three papers showed how a collaborative marketing effort between a tourism place and a local product can be achieved through image
transfer, and how to enhance the effectiveness of this collaborative marketing effort through perceived fit, which improved the understanding of a place–product co-marketing alliance.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

As with all studies, this research project had several limitations that need to be acknowledged and addressed in the future. First, the data in this research project were collected from a group with similar cultural backgrounds (i.e., Chinese consumers). Therefore, future studies should consider different cultural aspects. For example, individuals from Western cultures are inclined to adopt an analytical thinking style, viewing each element in the universe as independent (Choi, Koo, & Choi, 2007). As a result, they are likely to consider each element separately from its embedded context. In contrast, individuals from East Asian cultures tend to adopt a more holistic thinking style, assuming that everything is interrelated; consequently, they view each element according to its position in the whole (Choi, Koo, & Choi, 2007). Successful place–product co-marketing alliances depend on interrelationships between a place and a product; therefore, individuals who adopt a holistic thinking style should react more favorably to marketing alliances. Exploring various cultural backgrounds in future studies is expected to enhance overall understanding of the effectiveness of a co-marketing alliance.

Second, all of the data in the first paper and forty percent (40%) of the data for the second paper were collected before COVID-19. The tourism industries in many countries were subsequently massively affected by travel restrictions (Tourism Research Australia, 2021). Tourists may thus have perceived a high level of risk (i.e., financial, social, and/or time-related) and uncertainty in international travel, which may have affected their attitudes toward or perceptions of visiting foreign tourism destinations (Liu & Mair, 2023). In addition, consumers
may have become more health conscious and developed a preference for healthy products and lifestyles during the pandemic (Li et al., 2021). Therefore, consumers’ responses toward the co-marketing alliance between a tourism place and a local product may differ in the environment of the COVID-19 pandemic. Future research could replicate these two studies (Paper 1 and Paper 2) in the context of the pandemic (ongoing at the time of writing) to examine Chinese consumers’ responses to the co-marketing alliance between Australian ecotourism and Australian honey and compare the results from before and during the pandemic. The replication would benefit other countries with similar tourism or product offerings and that consider Chinese consumers to be among their main consumer segments of interest.

All of the data for the third paper were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic. As discussed in the preceding paragraph, consumers’ perceptions of foreign tourism destinations changed after the outbreak of the pandemic (Liu & Mair, 2023). Therefore, future research should replicate this study after the pandemic to compare the findings from during and after the pandemic. Similarly, consumers became more health conscious during the pandemic (Tourism Research Australia, 2021). Consumers may now be more concerned about whether local products are produced safely (Li et al., 2021). However, it is impossible to exclude the possibility of other population health challenges. Hence, future research should include one or more health measures relevant to the findings of this study.

Third, this study focused on the research context of one tourism format (Australian ecotourism) and one local product (Australian honey). While reasons were provided in this research project for choosing these two categories, future studies should consider replicating the results of this research by extending the findings to different tourism or product categories that may have some underlying connections. For example, heritage tourism and locally produced products are strongly related to
local culture (Tellström, Gustafsson, & Mossberg, 2006; Wijayanti & Damanik, 2019). Based on their underlying relationships (i.e., local culture), heritage tourism destinations and locally produced products could enter co-marketing alliances. Such replications could enhance the generalizability of findings and help to understand which scenarios can be applied to a place-product co-marketing context.

Fourth, this research project identified image transfer and fit perceptions between tourism and local products based on the three main brand/product benefits (i.e., functional benefit, symbolic benefit, and experiential benefit). However, these brand/product associations are not limited to these three benefits (Riley, Charlton, & Wason, 2015). Efforts to generalize findings may be made with caution when extending to other types of benefits (e.g., economic benefits). Further, the brand/product associations adopted in the current research were all positive (i.e., benefits). Future studies could explore image transfers and perceived fit types that build on negative associations between brands and products, which may help better explain the meaning of the two, and subsequently improve the generalizability of the findings. For example, if two products are both perceived to be boring, they show a perceived fit, albeit with negative connotations.

Fifth, as image transfer is a crucial factor in a co-marketing alliance, the current research project focused on the effectiveness of a co-marketing alliance from an image transfer perspective. However, when two partners enter a co-marketing alliance, consumers create a new image of the alliance or the co-marketed product. For example, Nike collaborated with Apple to develop a new co-marketed product, Apple Watch Nike+. Consumers could develop an overall perception of the Apple Watch Nike+ product based on their impressions of the co-marketing alliance, which subsequently impacted their evaluations of the participating partners (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). This impact is similar to the examples of attitudes toward a tourism place and the local product in this
research project. Future studies could benefit from measuring consumers’ overall perceptions of a place-product co-marketing alliance, which would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of co-marketing alliances.

Finally, the current research project considered only consumers’ desire and intention to visit a tourism place and purchase local products. Their actual behaviour in such situations would also be worth examining; follow-up research could track consumers’ actual behaviour to facilitate a richer understanding of their responses to a place–product co-marketing alliance.

6.4 Conclusion

This Ph.D. research project thoroughly examined the effectiveness of a co-marketing alliance between a tourism place and a product (honey) originating from that location (i.e., a place-product co-marketing alliance). In particular, the project considered at how Chinese consumers responded to a marketing effort set in the context of Australian ecotourism and Australian agricultural products.

The major findings of this Ph.D. research project indicated peoples' visitation intention toward a tourism destination is not only enhanced by the image of the location itself (tourism place image), but also by the image of a product coming from the same location (local product image). Furthermore, and vice versa, consumers’ intention to purchase a local product is enhanced by product image as well as tourism place image. This project then found that the image of the product could be transferred to a tourism place, and therefore, tourists’ desire to visit this tourism place could be enhanced. The results of this project also revealed that a high level of consistency in the key benefits existing between a tourism place and a local product could generate consumers’ favourable responses toward both the place and the product.
The above-discussed findings demonstrated a strong connection between the tourism and agriculture industries, which in turn indicates the potentially valuable strategic collaboration opportunities for both industries. A place-product co-marketing alliance is therefore a suitable tool for both industries to leverage their resources and revitalize themselves. More specifically, the results presented in this thesis provide marketers in both sectors with valuable insights that can guide them with aspects of their marketing strategy design (i.e., communication). Examples of what this could look like were discussed in greater detail in the previous section.

It is worth noting that in collaborating, businesses in both tourism and agriculture industries can expand their focus by acquiring access to a new market (i.e., in the case of tourism, access to agriculture, and in the case of agriculture, access to tourism). This is arguably not only directly beneficial for each, but in addition, by expanding the target market of businesses operating in these sectors, place-product co-marketing alliances may also help promote local economic development. In other words, a win-win-win scenario is evidenced. Moreover, by sharing customers and resources, two complementary businesses participating in a co-marketing alliance can lower their marketing costs by implementing campaigns that would be expensive alone.

The results of this research project also provided some important insights for tourism related government agencies in their policymaking and strategy development. For example, the important role of local products in promoting tourism places has been demonstrated. Therefore, when tourism policymakers decide the direction of the development of the tourism industry, or guide the implementation of tourism activities, they should take note of the benefits gained when collaborating with industries such as agriculture. The same of course is true in the reverse, in that agricultural policymakers should emphasise the importance of collaborating with industries such as tourism.
Finally, from a customer perspective, as a result of exposure to a co-marketed campaign, customers in both tourism and agriculture sectors benefit from access to a larger product/service range and offerings. In other words, as a consequence, customers arguably receive greater value. This aspect of enhanced customer value should also be noted and emphasised in appropriate ways by relevant organizations, whether at a business or industry level.
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LIST OF APPENDICES

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Appendix 3.2. Detailed Measures of Paper 1
Appendix 4.1. Research Stimuli of Paper 2
Appendix 4.2. Detailed Measures of Paper 2
Appendix 5.1. Research Stimuli of Paper 3
Appendix 5.2. Detailed Measures of Paper 3
Appendix 5.3. Independent T-test of Paper 3
## Appendix 3.1: Research Stimuli of Paper 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stimuli</th>
<th>English translations of the slogan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy the unique ecotourism and agriculture experience! Tree Top Walk and Jarrah Honey, Walpole, Western Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3.2: Detailed Measures of Paper 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Name</th>
<th># of Items</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Cognitive Country Image  | 9          | xxx’s economic environment is stable.  
xxx’s welfare system is good.  
xxx’s products are of a high quality.  
xxx’s living standard is high xxx has a high level.  
xxx’s products contain a high level of technology.  
xxx is a developed economy  
xxx is a rich country.  
xxx offers good education.  
xxx literacy rate is high. |
| Affective Country Image  | 8          | xxx is a nice country.  
xxx is a pleasant country.  
xxx is a peaceful country.  
xxx’s people are hard-working.  
xxx’s people are friendly.  
xxx’s people are creative.  
xxx’s people are honest.  
xxx’s people have a level of high income. |
| Tourism Place Image      | 6          | xxx has a clean environment.  
xxx has a lot of natural sceneries.  
xxx offers many opportunities to see wildlife animals.  
An ecotourism holiday in xxx would be good.  
There are many ecotourism places to visit in xxx.  
An ecotourism experience in xxx would be nice. |
| Product Country Image    | 6          | Honey made in xxx offers a good value.  
Honey made in xxx has a good reputation.  
Honey made in xxx is of good quality.  
Honey made in xxx tastes good.  
Honey made in xxx is sweet.  
Honey made in xxx has a lot of health benefits. |
| Place Visit Intention    | 3          | I am willing to visit xxx for ecotourism purposes.  
xxx is an ideal ecotourism place to visit.  
xxx is a good overall destination for ecotourism. |
| Product Purchase Intention| 3         | I welcome imports of xxx honey.  
I am willing to buy xxx honey.  
I intend to purchase xxx honey. |
<p>| Place Knowledge          | 3          | Very unaware - Very aware |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Name</th>
<th># of Items</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product Knowledge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Very unaware - Very aware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very unfamiliar - Very familiar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very unknowledgeable - Very knowledgeable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I like the advertisement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement</td>
<td></td>
<td>The advertisement appeals to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The advertisement is attractive to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The advertisement is interesting to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I think the advertisement is good.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 4.1: Research Stimuli of Paper 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Stimuli</th>
<th>English translations of the slogan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product-only</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Enjoy the unique WA agriculture experience! Jarrah Honey, Western Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product+Place</td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Enjoy the unique WA ecotourism and agriculture experience! Tree Top Walk and Jarrah Honey, Western Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 4.2: Detailed Measures of Paper 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Name</th>
<th># of Items</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FunctionalBenefit Product/Place</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>xxx is of good quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx is good for health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx is safe to consume/visit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx offers values for money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SymbolicBenefit Product/Place</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>xxx has good reputation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx is unique.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx makes me leave a good impression on other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx can help me improve social status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExperientialBenefit Product/Place</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>xxx provides me happiness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx provides me comfort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx provides me fun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx provides me enjoyment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Congruity - Place</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>xxx reflects who I am.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx is consistent with who I am.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx is a lot like me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx is exactly how I see myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to visit</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>I desire to visit…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I would like to go visiting…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My desire of visiting… is strong.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 5.1: Research Stimuli of Paper 3

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Stimuli</th>
<th>English translations of the slogan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>(Fit priming: Functional Benefit)</td>
<td>Experience good-quality ecotourism and agricultural products from Western Australia!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>(Fit priming: Symbolic Benefit)</td>
<td>Experience unique ecotourism and agricultural products from Western Australia!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>(Fit priming: Experiential benefit)</td>
<td>Experience enjoyable ecotourism and agricultural products from Western Australia!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>(control)</td>
<td>Experience ecotourism and agricultural products from Western Australia!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 5.2: Detailed Measures of Paper 3

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th># of Items</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional Fit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>xxx and xxx are related in terms of providing good quality.</td>
<td>Orth and Marchi (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx and xxx are related in terms of providing good health.</td>
<td>Hsieh et al. (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx and xxx are related in terms of providing safety.</td>
<td>Chen et al. (2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx and xxx are related in terms of providing value for money.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Fit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>xxx and xxx are related in terms of providing uniqueness.</td>
<td>Orth and Marchi (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx and xxx are related in terms of providing reputation.</td>
<td>Belaid et al. (2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx and xxx are related in terms of impressing others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx and xxx are related in terms of providing social status.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Fit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>xxx and xxx are related in terms of providing pleasure.</td>
<td>Chen et al. (2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx and xxx are related in terms of providing comfort.</td>
<td>Belaid et al. (2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx and xxx are related in terms of providing fun.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xxx and xxx are related in terms of providing enjoyment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td># of Items</td>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Attitude</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>xxx is good.</td>
<td>Simonin and Ruth (1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I react favourably to xxx.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I feel positive about xxx.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Attitude</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>xxx is good.</td>
<td>Simonin and Ruth (1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I react favourably to xxx.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I feel positive about xxx.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Desire</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>I want to visit xxx.</td>
<td>Choi and Park (2020) Perugini and Bagozzi (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I desire to visit xxx.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I would like to visit xxx.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I desire to purchase xxx.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I would like to buy xxx.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 5.3: Independent T-test of Paper 3

### Group 1 vs Control Group

#### Independent Sample Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Levene’s Test for quality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PerceivedFuncFitV</td>
<td>19.089</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variance assumed</td>
<td>\textbf{13.712}</td>
<td>\textbf{.000}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PerceivedSymFitV</td>
<td>32.840</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variance assumed</td>
<td>\textbf{6.403}</td>
<td>\textbf{.000}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PerceivedExperiFitV</td>
<td>31.259</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variance assumed</td>
<td>\textbf{8.015}</td>
<td>\textbf{.000}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProdAttV</td>
<td>58.561</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variance assumed</td>
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<td>\textbf{.000}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PlaceAttV</td>
<td>91.258</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variance assumed</td>
<td>\textbf{91.258}</td>
<td>\textbf{.000}</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Independent Sample Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tails)</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal variance not assumed</td>
<td>6.162</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>127.05</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.22360</td>
<td>.19856</td>
<td>.83070</td>
<td>1.61650</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProdDesireV</td>
<td>Equal variance assumed</td>
<td>97.611</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>8.626</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.35087</td>
<td>.15660</td>
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<td>6.819</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>.000</td>
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</tr>
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<td>398</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<td>.000</td>
<td>1.09070</td>
<td>.20101</td>
<td>.69286</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Group 2 vs Control Group

### Independent Sample Test

Levene’s Test for quality of Variances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tails)</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td><strong>PerceivedFunctionFitV</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equal variance assumed</td>
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<td>.000</td>
<td>8.578</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.60750</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.000</td>
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<td>1.60750</td>
<td>.15959</td>
<td>1.2931</td>
<td>1.92190</td>
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<td><strong>PerceivedSymmetryFitV</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower</td>
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</tr>
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<td>7.480</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<td>.16901</td>
<td>.93189</td>
<td>1.59644</td>
</tr>
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<td>.000</td>
<td>152.793</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.26417</td>
<td>.18058</td>
<td>.90741</td>
<td>1.62092</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PerceivedExperienceFitV</strong></td>
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<td>Lower</td>
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<td>.92416</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ProdAttV</strong></td>
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<td>Lower</td>
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<td>1.09633</td>
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219
### Independent Sample Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene’s Test for quality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>PlaceDesiV</td>
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</table>


Group 3 vs Control Group

**Independent Sample Test**

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<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal variance assumed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal variance not assumed</td>
<td>8.988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProdAttV</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Independent Sample Test

- **Levene’s Test for quality of Variances**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Equal variance not assumed</th>
<th>Equal variance assumed</th>
<th>Equal variance not assumed</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PlaceAttV</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.732</strong></td>
<td><strong>65.832</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.213</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ProdDesireV</strong></td>
<td><strong>54.484</strong></td>
<td><strong>56.454</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.434</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PlaceDesiV</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.213</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.434</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.533</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **t-test for Equality of Means**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>Sig.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tails)</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
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<td><strong>PlaceAttV</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.732</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.232</strong></td>
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<td><strong>.18824</strong></td>
<td><strong>.89519</strong></td>
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<td><strong>ProdDesireV</strong></td>
<td><strong>54.484</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>.92877</strong></td>
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