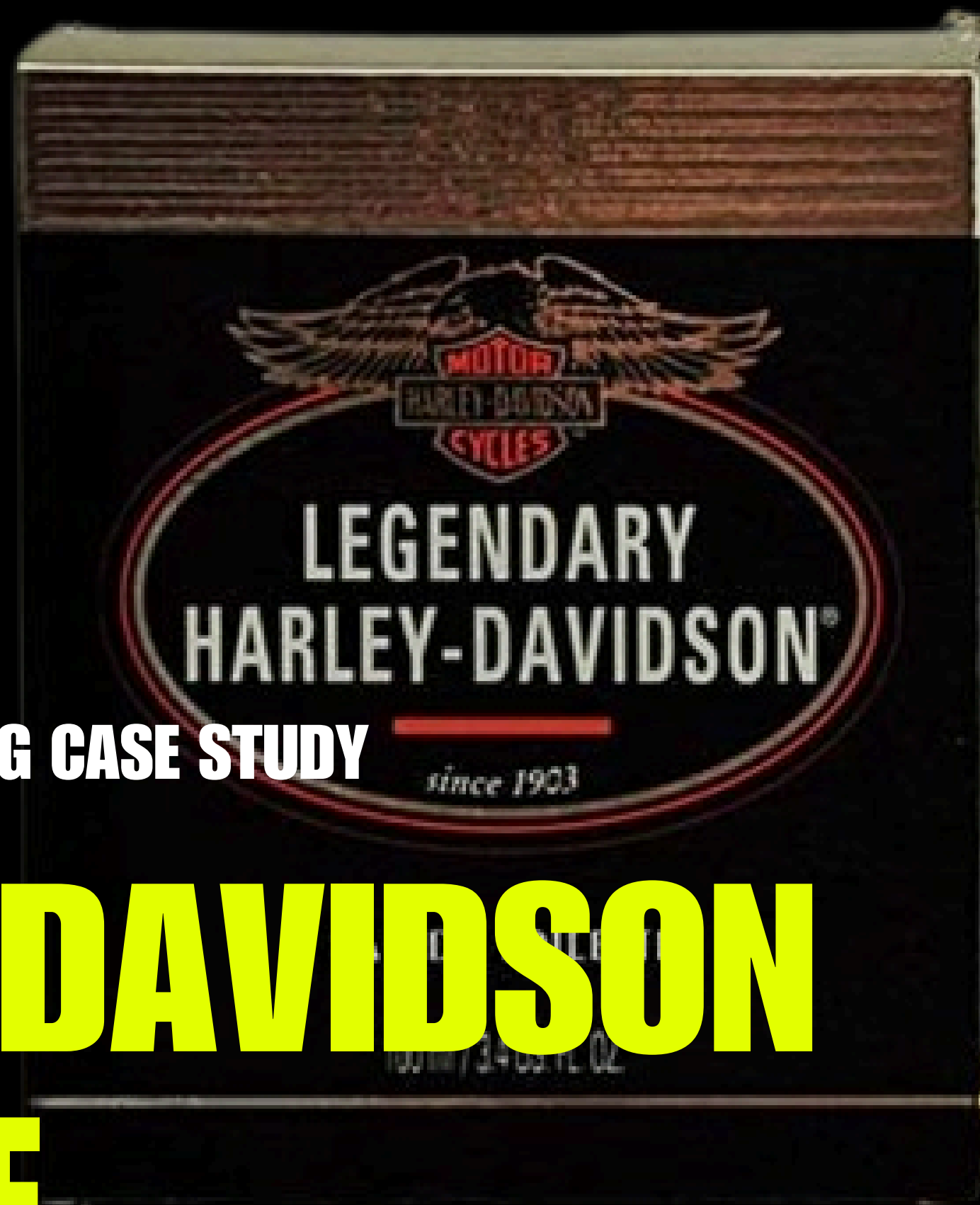


FAILED BRAND POSITIONING CASE STUDY

HARLEY-DAVIDSON PERFUME

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BRAND BACKGROUND



Founded in 1903, USA

One of the most iconic motorcycle brands in the world

Known for strong brand community and loyal customers.

Core Brand Identity :

- **Freedom**
- **Rebellion**
- **Rugged biker lifestyle**

Masculine and adventurous personality

Represents power, independence, and American biker culture.

BRAND POSITIONING

Harley-Davidson positioned itself as

- Symbol of American biker culture
- Brand representing freedom and independence
- Emotional connection with motorcycle riders
- Customers buy Harley motorcycles not only as vehicles but as a lifestyle and identity symbol.



PRODUCT LAUNCH

In the 1990s, Harley-Davidson launched a fragrance line. (The Scent Of Failure)

PRODUCT RANGE INCLUDED

Perfume

Cologne

Grooming products

The fragrance line was marketed under – Hot Road,
Legendary and Black fire

OBJECTIVE

To expand Harley-Davidson into a lifestyle brand beyond motorcycles.
However, the product was discontinued by 1997 due to poor sales.



STRATEGY USED

Brand Extension Strategy- Harley-Davidson attempted to use its strong brand reputation to enter new product categories.

GOAL

Use brand popularity
Enter fragrance and grooming industry
Build a broader lifestyle brand portfolio

ASSUMPTION

A powerful brand name could attract customers in completely new markets.

CONSUMER REACTION

Mostly confused and skeptical

Consumers strongly associated
Harley-Davidson with:

Motorcycles

Leather jackets

Road trips and biker culture

However perfume is usually
associated with

Fashion

Elegance

Grooming brands

Because of this difference, consumers
questioned the credibility of Harley perfume.





WHY THIS FAILED

Low Brand–Product Fit

Motorcycle brand entering fragrance category created a mismatch.

Weak Category Credibility

Customers prefer fragrance brands with expertise in perfumes.

Brand Personality Conflict

Harley's rugged biker image conflicted with perfume's elegant image.

Unclear Target Market

The product lacked a clearly defined audience.

ADDITIONAL FAILURE FACTORS

SEVERAL STRATEGIC ISSUES ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO FAILURE:

1. Weak market research about consumer expectations
2. Marketing misalignment with biker culture
3. Distribution limitations mainly through Harley showrooms
4. Fan backlash as loyal customers felt the product diluted Harley's tough brand image
5. These factors reduced both credibility and demand.

CORE ISSUES ANALYSIS

FURTHER ANALYSIS SHOWS DEEPER STRATEGIC PROBLEMS:

1. Fragrance profile (Lavender, Orange blossom, Tobacco note, Woody base notes) did not match the raw, powerful biker image
2. Product lacked a clear unique selling proposition
3. Marketing did not clearly connect perfume with the Harley lifestyle
4. Strong competition from established fragrance brands
5. As a result, the product struggled to build trust in the market.

MARKETING CONCEPT

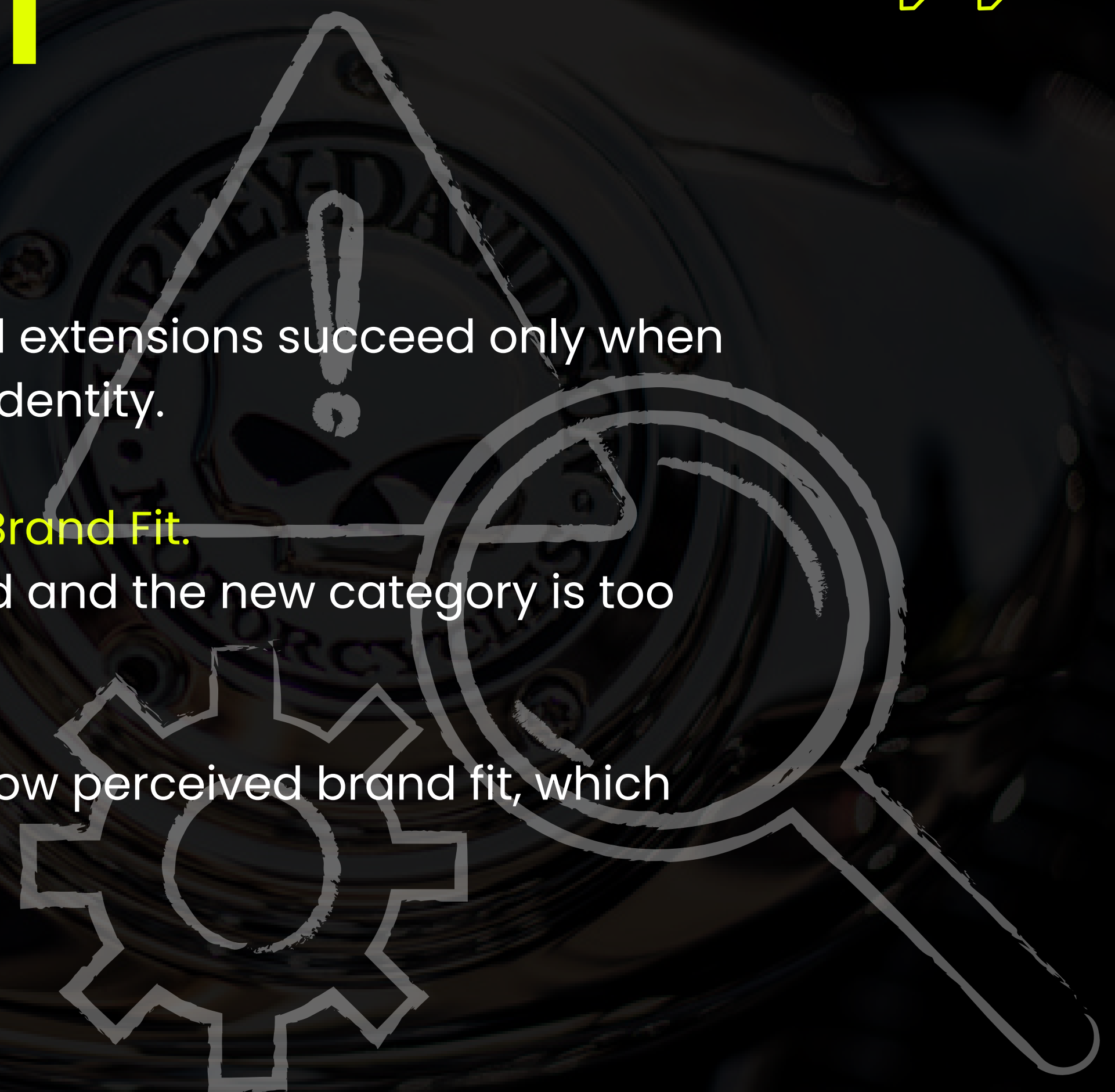
Brand Extension Risk

Marketing theory explains that brand extensions succeed only when the new product fits the core brand identity.

This concept is known as **Perceived Brand Fit**.

If the gap between the original brand and the new category is too large, consumers reject the product.

Harley-Davidson perfume had very low perceived brand fit, which led to failure.



COMPARATIVE EXAMPLE-

Ducati

Another motorcycle brand, Ducati, successfully launched fragrance products in 2010, such as:

Ducati Red

Ducati 1926

Ducati's brand image is associated with:

- Italian luxury design
- Stylish performance motorcycles
- Premium lifestyle branding

Because of this fashion-oriented lifestyle image, Ducati fragrances achieved niche acceptance.

This comparison shows the importance of brand personality alignment.

Key Fragrance Campaigns :

- Ducati (2010) – First fragrance, modern and dynamic style
- Fight For Me (2011–2012) – Energetic and masculine image
- Trace Me (2013) – Confident and mysterious personality
- Ducati 1926 (2017) – Strong “Ducati man” identity
- Ducati Sport (2018) – Young and sporty audience
- Ducati ICE (2019) – Fresh, bold fragrance inspired by speed



LESSON LEARNED

Brand Extension Must Fit the Brand Personality

- A new product should reflect the brand's core values like freedom, rebellion, and power.

Sell the Brand Identity, Not Just the Product

- The perfume should represent the Harley attitude and biker spirit, not just a fragrance.

Clear Positioning is Essential

- Instead of a luxury perfume, positioning it as "the smell of rebellion and freedom" makes it authentic.

Experiential Marketing Builds Connection

- Ideas like scented bike parking zones and stunt-launch events make the product feel connected to the Harley lifestyle.

Target the Right Audience

- Focusing on young, bold individuals (20–40) who relate to Harley's rebellious culture increases relevance.

POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY

HARLEY-DAVIDSON COULD HAVE IMPROVED SUCCESS BY:

- Partnering with an established fragrance company
- Positioning the scent as a rugged masculine biker fragrance
- Targeting existing Harley riders and brand community
- Marketing the perfume as part of the Harley lifestyle experience
- These strategies could have improved credibility and market acceptance.

OUR CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

HARLEY-DAVIDSON COULD HAVE IMPROVED SUCCESS BY:

REBEL AURA

FEEL THE HARLEY-DAVIDSON AURA
WITH REBEL AURA



BRAND POSITIONING STATEMENT

For bold young individuals who believe in freedom and individuality, Harley-Davidson Perfume is a fragrance that embodies rebellion, power, and confidence, unlike conventional perfumes that focus on glamour, it delivers the scent of the road and fearless spirit.

TARGET AUDIENCE

> AGE: 20–40

GENDER STRATEGY

EVEN THOUGH HARLEY IS MASCULINE, WE CREATE TWO SEGMENTS:

1. Rebel aura – men

- Strong
- Bold
- Dark fragrance notes

2. Rebel aura – women

- Fearless
- Confident
- Not traditionally “sweet”
- This breaks the stereotype of soft feminine perfumes.

LAUNCH EVENT IDEA

Launch at Bike Week Festival.

- Live stunt show.
- When bikes drift, smoke releases perfume fragrance mist.
- Then reveal the bottle.
- This will make the launch viral on social media.

Harley perfume should not sell fragrance.

It should sell identity.

Not:

“Luxury perfume”

But:

“The smell of rebellion”



CONCLUSION

The Harley-Davidson perfume case demonstrates that:

- Brand popularity alone cannot guarantee success
- Brand extensions must align with the core brand identity

KEY INSIGHT

SUCCESSFUL BRAND EXTENSION REQUIRES:

- Strong brand-product fit
- Clear positioning
- Consumer trust and credibility

WITHOUT THESE FACTORS, BRAND EXTENSIONS ARE LIKELY TO FAIL.

