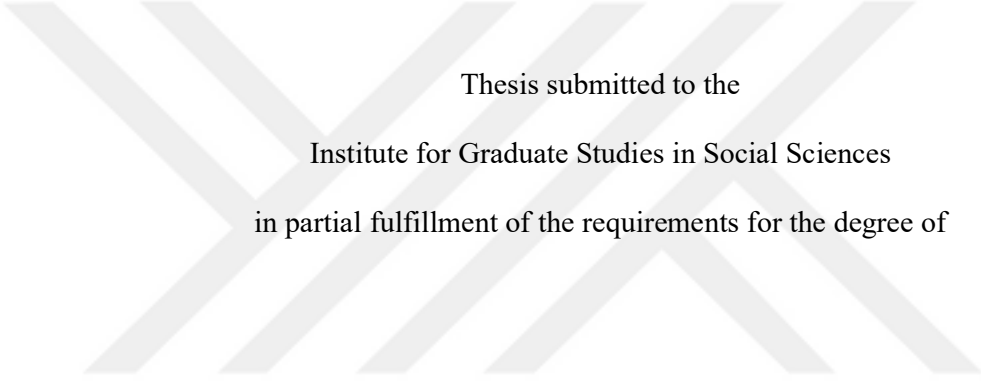ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF BRAND LOVE:

THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN THE SELF, ENGAGEMENT AND

ATTACHMENT CONSEQUENCES

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BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

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ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF BRAND LOVE:

THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN THE SELF, ENGAGEMENT AND

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Antecedents and Consequences of Brand Love:

The Interplay Between the Self, Engagement and Attachment Consequences

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;

- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;

- this is a true copy of the thesis approved by my advisor and thesis committee at Boğaziçi University, including final revisions required by them.

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ABSTRACT

Antecedents and Consequences of Brand Love:

The Interplay between the Self, Engagement and Attachment Consequences

The current study contributes to research and theory in marketing by presenting a
holistic framework to analyze the effects of brands' hedonic, functional, and
symbolic resources on brand love and its complex mechanisms with brand
engagement, loyalty, word-of-mouth and willingness-to-price-premium using a large
array of product categories and a large sample of consumers. In terms of consumer–
brand relationships we extend theory by identifying two routes for brand love
creation based on the type of primary benefit consumers associate with the brand:
one goes through a cognitive consumer-brand identity evaluation and integration
leading eventually to love; and here the hedonic positioning of the brand plays a role.
The second way is when consumers develop feelings towards brands directly through
symbolic and functional experiences. Product category differences influence the
effects' strengths. As a second contribution, our findings indicate that cognitive brand
engagement and brand love are closely linked to each other. We also find a
moderate connection between affective engagement and brand love, but not for
behavioral engagement. Lastly, we observe that considering the influence of brand
love and engagement on word-of- mouth, loyalty, and willingness-to-price-premium,
brand love is a stronger predictor for word-of-mouth and loyalty, whereas it is
behavioral engagement for willingness-to-price-premium. Our findings enhance both
theory on consumer-brand relationships over the delineated holistic framework and
provide implications for practitioners to create and maintain strong, committed
relationships with their consumers.

ÖZET

Marka Aşkının Öncülleri ve Sonuçları:

Benlik İmajı, Adanmışlık ve Bağlılık Sonuçları arasındaki İlişkiler

Bu çalışma sunulan kapsamlı kuramsal model doğrultusunda hedonik, fonksiyonel ve sembolik marka faydalarının müşterinin marka aşkına etkisini ve marka aşkının marka adanmışlığı, tavsiye, bağlılık ve prim fiyat ödeme isteği ile olan karmaşık ilişkisini geniş ürün kategorisi ve örneklem kullanarak inceleyerek müşteri-marka ilişkilerine kuramsal olarak katkıda bulunmayı hedeflenmektedir. Çalışma sonucunda müşterilerin marka ile ilişkilendirdikleri farklı faydaların marka aşkı yaratabileceği iki yol belirlenmiştir. Birincisi, hedonik faydalar ile desteklenen zihinsel marka-müşteri kimliği değerlendirmesi sonucunda müşteri-marka bütünleşmesi ve marka aşkının oluşması. İkinci yol ise, sembolik ve fonksiyonel faydaların marka aşkına direkt etkileridir. Buna ek olarak, sonuçlar marka aşkının duygusal ya da davranışsal adanmışlıktan ziyade bilişsel adanmışlık üzerinde daha etkili olduğunu göstermektedir. Marka aşkı ve marka adanmışlığının tavsiye, bağlılık ve prim fiyat ödeme isteği üzerine tesirini incelediğimizde ise marka aşkının tavsiye ve bağlılığı yüksek oranda etkilediği; davranışsal adanmışlığın ise prim fiyat ödeme isteği üzerinde etkili olduğu görülmüştür. Ürün kategorisi bazında ilişkilerin gücü açısından farklılıklar saptanmıştır. Sonuçlarımız sunduğumuz kapsamlı model neticesinde müşteri-marka ilişkisini inceleyen literatürü kuramsal olarak güçlendirmiş ve müşterileri ile güçlü ilişkiler kurmak isteyen marka yöneticilerine katma değer sağlamıştır.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Gülseren Tolunay and Kayahan

Tolunay. Thank you both for being always so supportive and so proud of me...

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> *"One word frees us of all the weight and pain of life:*
> *That word is love."*
> *----Sophocles*

Brands serve various important functions for consumers and marketers (Keller and Lehmann, 2006) and the role of branding in stimulating demand has been acknowledged for some time (Murphy, 1992). As Wheeler (2003) states, "People fall in love with brands, trust them, and believe in their superiority. How a brand is perceived affects its success, regardless of whether it's a start-up, a non-profit, or a product" (p. 2). Brands reside in consumers' minds (Keller, 2003) and are among the main reasons for strong relationships between consumers and marketers. In fact, consumers develop strong bonds in the form of attachments with brands that produce rewarding outcomes both for consumers and marketers. These strong relationships not only create steady cash flows to companies in the form of repeat purchase and recommendations from consumers, consumers also forgive and forget more easily in case of any product failures or company wrong doings when they truly develop a bond with the brand (Heinrich, Allbrecht,& Bauer, 2012). Just like in interpersonal relationships, they view their relationship so valuable that they not want to break it over a mistake or replace it with any substitute in the market. Moreover, consumers benefit from the relationship, as it enables them to provide shortcuts for their decision-making process by decreasing both the time for evaluating the alternatives and the risks associated with other products in the market. When that relationship grows, it eventually leads to positive marketing outcomes such as recommendations and sales or to affective as well as conative loyalty, which are highly desired effects

from the marketers' side. Accordingly, brands are among the valuable intangible assets of any business (Aaker, 2014; De Chernatony & McWilliam, 1989) and an understanding of not only how to create but also how to maintain the bonds between the consumer and the brand is extremely valuable for brand managers, which has motivated a significant amount of research focusing on this particular phenomenon.

Specifically, beginning in the mid 90's, research analyzing consumer-brand relationships started to gain great importance and demonstrated that relationships with brands resemble relationships with individuals, where brands and consumers are actually viewed as relationship partners (Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004; Aggarwal, 2004; Fournier, 1998). As knowledge progressed, research on consumer-brand relationships became more "multi-disciplinary, complex and dynamic" (Fetscherin, Boulanger, Filho, & Souki, 2014; Fetscherin & Heinrich, 2014), and researchers developed models to test different types and strengths of relationships experienced between consumers and brands. Those models revolved around various concepts such as brand trust (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001), brand commitment, brand loyalty (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978), brand passion (Bauer, Heinrich, & Martin, 2007), brand attachment (Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisengerich, & Iacobucci, 2010; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005), and brand identification (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006), but it focused particularly on close and strong relationships, since, although they are not common (Thomson et al., 2005), they matter most to both parties (Keller, 2003).

These types of strong relationship are characterized by strong attachment bonds and resemble interpersonal attachments that are mainly motivated by simple human instinct and motivations (Park, MacInnis, & Priester, 2009). Accordingly, researchers of consumer-brand relationships work on theories and models such as the Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) and the Self-Expansion Model (Aron & Aron,

1986) to explain consumers' strong attachments to brands and to analyze motivational and behavioral implications of the attachments between brands and consumers (Park, MacInnis, & Priester, 2006; Reiman, Castaño, Zaichkowsky, & Bechara, 2012).

Among that research, particularly brand love is considered an important marketing topic in the form of passionate, affectionate attachments (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) and is believed to lead to enhanced loyalty, commitment and word of mouth (WOM) intentions among consumers (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2009). Unfortunately, though we can sense the consequences of brand love to some extent, researchers ironically — just as in cross-gender relationships— have little or less insight on the causes of brand love. Often we hear someone say "Oh! I love that brand" but just as in interpersonal relationships that person struggles when you ask the underlying reasons of that intense affection. Hence, a deeper understanding of how to create and maintain strong relationships between brands and consumers, which is a state where both parties equally commit to the relationship and are "high in love", is especially valuable.

Brand engagement appears as another attachment display among consumers and brands. It is defined as "the consumers' brand related affective, cognitive, and behavioral activity during or related to focal consumer-brand interactions" (Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014, p.155) and is referred to as "the strongest affirmation of loyalty that occurs when consumers are willing to invest time, energy, money and other resources into the brand beyond those expended during purchase or consumption " (Keller, 2001, p.15). It encompasses a strong commitment to the brand, so the consumer is even ready to sacrifice on behalf of the relationship

3

partner, where one can also talk about an enduring state of loyalty (Bowden, 2009). For some cases, engagement and love may even inosculate, where brand love asserts itself as a self-centered display of engagement (Schmitt, 2012). Hart, Nailling, Bizer, and Collins (2015), given the fact that highly engaged individuals display the same type of behaviors as highly attached ones, suggest Attachment Theory as a basis to study engagement. However, there is only one study (Sprott, Czellar, and Spangenberg, 2009) that partially takes this stance and view engagement as a personal propensity to an affectional integration linking the brand and the consumer that helps the consumer to reflect a desired self-concept. They propose that consumers high in "brand engagement in self-concept" are more capable of forming more and stronger attachments with brands. Nonetheless, although that study concentrates on engagement from the attachment motivated relationship aspect, it only reflects a human tendency and does not provide a holistic point of view on brand engagement.

Although consumers develop bonds with a vast number of products and brands, only a small portion of these specific consumer-brand relationships reach those extreme heights (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). In such a state, consumers become advocates of the brand, display all their resources and even forego their own interests in favor of this relationship (Alba & Lutz, 2013;Thompson, MacInnnis, & Park, 2005). Unfortunately, not all positive relationships result in brand engagement (Keller, 2001), which, like brand love, is also among the reasons for the recent popularity of the concept.

Hence, while scholars are still not united on the conceptualization, antecedents and consequences and most of the research concentrates on the highly visible aspects of brand engagement, it receives significant attention, mostly because

it reflects a genuine interaction between the consumer and the brand that cannot be captured by other concepts related to consumer-brand relationships such as commitment or involvement (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas (2016); Hollebeek et al., 2014). Yet research has been called on to define the concept and to develop comprehensive models of measurement

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND OUTLINE

Despite the aforementioned work, prior research does not provide an agreement on what brand love and brand engagement terms constitute overall. These concepts need more refinement not only on the relationship between each other but also on the relationship to other consumer-brand relationship strength indicators such as loyalty, word of mouth (WOM), or willingness to pay a price premium (WTPP). Hence, this doctoral research follows the footsteps of the scholars working on interpersonal and consumer-brand relationships and builds on various aspects of the Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) and the Self-Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986) to elucidate the possible relationships that evolve around brand love and brand engagement.

First, relying on the Self-Expansion Model, this research investigates whether consumers' evaluations of hedonic, functional, and symbolic resources of a brand lead to brand love over a self-expansion mechanism, where a positive evaluation leads to both actual and ideal consumer-self/brand integration and eventually to brand love (as suggested by Ahuvia, Batra, and Bagozzi, 2009).

Second, as mentioned before, engagement is one of the brand management-related concepts that has recently received increased attention from both practitioners and academics and is believed to be influenced by high arousal emotions (Franzac, Makarem, & Jae, 2014). That point of view suggests that brand love might create brand engagement, while others such as Moutinho, Bigné, & Manrai (2014) argue just the opposite (i.e. brand love being an engagement consequence). In terms of the relationship between love and engagement, only three studies investigate empirically

the influence of one on the other (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Sarkar & Sreejesh, 2014; Wallace, Buil, & de Chernatony, 2014). Unfortunately, however, these studies do not consider the multidimensional nature of brand engagement and focus only on the behavioral manifestations. As a result, the interplay between these two attachment displays in relationship development and maintenance needs further investigation.

And lastly, both displays of attachment are suggested to be central in leading to various consumer-brand relationship strength indicators such as loyalty, word of mouth (WOM), or willingness to pay a price premium (WTPP). However, to the researchers' knowledge, no study so far has investigated a conceptual framework by taking various types of positive relationships and their differences in possible outcomes into consideration. Thus, the results of this study will help scholars as well as practitioners to have a deeper understanding of overall consumer-brand relationships.

Accordingly, the objective of the current research is to elucidate consumer-brand relationship mechanisms over a proposed holistic framework to answer the following research questions:

- What factors lead to brand love?

- How is brand love related to brand engagement?

-What roles do they play in consumer-brand relationships in creating attachment-related outcomes?

Initially, the theoretical background on interpersonal relationships, the Attachment Theory, the Self-Expansion Model, love, and brand love are described in Chapter 3, followed by the research model and hypotheses, research design and methodology in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 outlines the testing and validation of the

research model with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Chapter 5 outlines the

testing and validation of the research model with data obtained from consumer

surveys using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). We use SEM because we have

many constructs that are conceptually and empirically connected to each other in

various ways. After performing preliminary analyses and carrying out the

measurement model validation, a structural model was developed and the hypotheses

were tested. The results of these analyses are discussed in Chapter 6, followed by

implications and conclusions in Chapter 7, where the theoretical contribution and

implications of the dissertation are discussed, along with implications for

practitioners. The limitations of the study and future research suggestions are also

outlined in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Attachment and self-expansion model

Attachment is defined by McCall (1974) as the "incorporation of ... (the other's) actions and reactions ... into the content of one's various conceptions of the self" (p. 219). Attachment Theory is one of the most important conceptual frameworks related to affect regulation (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005; Mikulincer, Shaver, & Pereg, 2003) and is used heavily in literature that studies romantic relationships (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). According to Shaver and Hazar (1988) "attachment theory addresses a broad array of research questions concerning the functions, emotional dynamics, evolutionary origins, and developmental pathways of love" (p. 498). Drawing on clinical, developmental, social and cognitive psychology and psychoanalysis, the Attachment Theory was originally developed by Bowlby (1969) to understand the bond between infants and their caregivers. As maintained by Baumeister and Leary (1995), "… the desire for interpersonal attachment is one of the most far-reaching and integrative constructs currently available to understand human nature" (p. 522). Attachment relationships are regarded as one of the closest and intimate relationships (Collins & Feeney, 2004). According to Bowlby (1969), emotional attachment is an important part of human experience and infants form attachments to their caregivers, or attachment figures in general, to primarily protection and survival. Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) works as a basis for many theories that explain interpersonal relationships, one of them being the Self-Expansion Model by Aron and Aron (1986).

The Self-Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986) was developed based on attraction and arousal and Motivation Theory and helps to describe how individuals think, feel, and act in close relationships. The model has two main and one sub-principle. As the first main principle, which can be referred to as the motivational principle, one of the primary motives of human beings is self-expansion. The self-expansion motive plays a significant role in exploration, competence, or self-improvement (Bandura, 1977; Deci & Ryan, 2000), as well as (although not being directly expressed) in the Attachment Theory, as self-expansion motivated individuals seek attachment figures and thus self-expand (Aron et al., 2004). According to the second main principle, the inclusion-of-other-in-the-self principle, one way individuals may self-expand via close relationships is by including others into one's own self. Individuals evaluate others based on their resources, identities and perspectives and if they perceive a significant overlap or a chance to expand themselves, they include those into their own selves in close relationships (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991). And finally, the third principle, which is closely linked to the other two, states that individuals look for situations and encounters that have become associated with experiences of expansion of the self.

The Self-Expansion Model was studied in interpersonal relationship literature particularly to explain how romantic love evolves, dissolves, and to understand love's influence on individuals' self-concepts as well as on overall interpersonal relationship satisfaction and continuation (Aron & Aron, 2006). The Self-expansion model is in line with the Attachment Theory, as attachment relationships are considered as one of the closest and intimate relationships (Collins & Feeney, 2004) and the need to have strong attachments to significant others is one of the basic human desires that

begins with the attachment of the child to the caregiver (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1973).

Infants try to assure and maintain proximity and to have a safe haven and finally a secure base. The motives for such attachment are determined by an innate motivational system, which Bowlby called as "the attachment behavioral system" (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, p. 56) and include the need to have a secure and close individual that the infant can turn to for comfort or protection in case of an unpleasant or threatening event. As an integration of the Self-Integration Model to the Attachment Theory, Aron and Aron (1986) propose that self-expansion motivated individuals continuously try to attain a secure base to include into themselves (Aron & Aron, 2006). Accordingly, the literature on attachment suggests that strong attachment feelings result in proximity seeking, separation distress and a strong orientation towards being attached to an individual (Bowlby, 1979; Hazan & Shaver, 1994), which are reflected in commitment and willingness to invest in the relationship (Van Lange, De Bruin, Otten & Joireman, 1997). Strong attachments by including other party's resources, identities, and viewpoints help individuals to shape, discover and, in some cases, to re-discover or re-design themselves (Aron, 2002). These attachment-based reflections are hence ways used by individuals to show commitment to their partners and are termed as love in interpersonal relationships (Fletcher & Kerr, 2010).

3.2 Love

Research on love started quite early, and many scholars from various disciplines have studied the concept of love, leaving aside an exhaustive debate on its conceptual structure and operationalization. Love is considered either as an emotion

(Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Spearman, 1927; Sternberg & Grajec, 1984), as a biological process leading to commitment (Stanley, 1986 cited in Hazan and Shaver, 1988), as a motivational state to preserve and promote the loved one (Rempel & Burris, 2005), as a complex tendency toward another person accompanying a long-term relationship (Pope, 1980; Shaver & Hazan, 1988), as an "attitude/belief system that includes an emotional core" (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2006, p.150) or as a way of commitment forcing men and women to have an offspring (Gonzaga & Haselton, 2008).

One the earlier theorists who studied love, Freud (1910), views it as sublimated sexuality in terms of human nature to unconscious desires, whereas Spearman (1927) conceptualizes it as a one-dimensional, highly positive an emotion-charged affect. Love is also discussed by Maslow (1962) in the hierarchy of needs, where he states that love arises from self-actualization needs and that only those who reach that level are capable of love. Other theorists associate positive as well as negative affects and cognitions with love to emcompass all experiences that are part of a love relationship. For instance, Thurstone (1938) and Thomson (1939) argue that interpersonal love is multi-dimensional, comprising affections, cognitions, and motivations. Similarly, Fromm (1956) identifies cognitive and affective aspects of love as "care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge." Rubin (1970) adds a behavioral part and views love as "an attitude held by a person toward a particular other person, involving predispositions to think, feel, and behave in certain ways toward that other person" (p. 265). All these different views on love add to the complexity of the concept.

Berscheid and Hatfield (1969) differentiate between two forms of love: (1) passionate and (2) companionate love. Companionate love is characterized as "the

affection and tenderness we feel for those with whom our lives are deeply entwined"
(Berscheid & Hatfield, 1969, p. 9). It refers to the experienced attachment,
commitment, and intimacy between the partners. On the other hand, passionate love
is a "state of intense longing for union with another" (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993, p.5)
and has several cognitive, affective, and behavioral parts that are manifested both by
strong positive emotions such as "arousal, intensity, intimacy, excitement" and
negative emotions like "emptiness, anxiety, and self-doubt." Passionate love, as the
name implies, involves passion and is more deeply felt and lived in extremes. When
we consider the components of passionate love, constant thinking or obsession,
idealization of the lover or of the relationship, and the desire to know the other and to
be known are among the cognitive components. Emotionally passionate lovers are
attracted to each other, experience feelings that can turn positive or negative, based
on how the relationship continues, a longing for reciprocity, and desire for a
complete integration and physiological excitement. The behavioral components are
actions that are directed to determine the other's feelings and to maintain physically
closeness with the lover.

Similarly, Tennov (1978) describes passionate love as a condition of
increased attention and obsession with a particular person. Passionate love evokes
deep longings for intimacy and bodily contact and opposition to separation.
Following a multi-dimensional structure of love, Sternberg (1986)'s Triangular
Theory of Love is also frequently cited in the literature on interpersonal
relationships. The theory identifies three dimensions of interpersonal love: "intimacy,
passion, and decision/commitment" (Sternberg, 1986, p.121). Intimacy refers to the
emotional investment, support, and intimate communication, whereas passion is the
physical and psychological drive from motivational involvement leading to romance,

bodily attraction, sex, and all activities associated with it. The third component reflects the cognitive and evaluative aspect of love. In Sternberg's own words: "Decision is the short term recognition that one loves someone else, whereas commitment is the long term intention to maintain that love" (p. 119). Hence, the third component encompasses cognitions on the perceived quality of the relationship today and tomorrow. Sternberg (1986) states that to create or to experience love, it is not necessary that all three proposed parts co-exist. The theory differentiates eight categories of love. These are nonlove, liking/friendship, infatuated love, empty love, romantic love, companionate love, fatuous love, and consummate love. As there might be differences in each unique relationship, the three aforementioned dimensions do or do not exist in different types of love; nevertheless, for consummate or, in other words, complete love, all components should be present.

In terms of the operationalization of love, Steffen, McLaney, and Hustedt (1982) used the defined dimensions of Tennov (1978)'s Limerence Theory of extreme romantic attachments to another individual and developed the Limerence Survey to measure the love experience. However, Rubin (1970) is the initial researcher who developed a Love Scale to measure aspects of both passionate and companionate love with three dimensions of "affiliative and dependent need", "predisposition to help", and "exclusiveness and absorption." Another highly cited effort on the measurement of love was designed by Hendrick and Hendrick (1986). Relying on the typology of six styles of love (Eros, Ludus, Storge, Pragma, Mania, and Agape) developed by Lee (1977), the authors adapted and validated a love scale to measure these six styles of love.

Apart from these conceptualizations and views on love, many researchers take the stance that love needs to be studied under the umbrella of the Attachment

Theory. From the interpersonal relationship literature perspective and relying on Bowlby (1969)'s Attachment Theory, love is considered an expression of numerous motivations such as attachment, caregiving, and sexual attraction (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; 1994). In Bowlby (1969)'s view, proximity seeking is an intuitive affect-regulation tool intended to protect human beings from physical and psychological dangers, which if successfully managed, results in attachment security and reflects the individual's affective engagement with other people. Bowlby (1979) portrayes the attachment bond as falling in love and, according to Shaver and Hazan (1988), love is more than just a feeling; it is actually an attachment process. Shaver and Hazan (1988) also believe that love can be conceptualized in terms of emotions and behaviors, which makes romantic love an attachment phenomenon (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). Love is regarded as an interpersonal attraction such as liking, admiration, and respect. Bartholomew and Perlman (1994) and Sternberg and Barnes (1988) also support this view. Hence, according to those authors, for love to exist, there has to be attachment. As Steinberg's theory of love falls short of explaining the true nature of love, many authors conclude that love can be understood and studied better through a lens of Bowlby (1969)'s Attachment Theory.

3.3 Brand love

According to Bowlby (1969), attachment is an affectional bond between an individual and a specific attachment figure. Although attachments to individuals may be different from attachments to objects in many aspects, the essential theoretical underpinnings and behavioral effects are similar. Hence, consumer-brand relationships are believed to follow patterns that are identical to interpersonal relationships and similar to interpersonal attachments, where individuals are

expected to build and continue affective bonds with brands (Belk, 1988). Consumers are found to form attachments to pets (Hirschman, 1994), to gifts (Mick & Demoss, 1990), to places (Rubinstein & Parmelee, 1992), to firms (Yim, Tse, & Chan, 2008), to activities (Ahuvia, 1992) and to various other objects including brands (Fournier, 1998; Schouten & Mcalexander, 1995). Accordingly, in the consumer-brand relationships domain, Fournier (1998) proposes that consumers develop emotional bonds to brands and that those relationships resemble interpersonal relationships and can take positive as well as negative forms. The author suggests that different types of relationships are created between consumers and brands with varying strengths such that "arranged marriages, casual friends/buddies, marriages of convenience, committed partnerships, best friendships, compartmentalized friendships, kinships, rebounds/avoidance-driven relationships, childhood friendships, courtships, dependencies, flings, enmities, secret affairs, and enslavements" are experienced by the consumers (Fournier, 1998, p.361).

That notion initiated a paradigm shift in the consumer-brand relationship literature. Following and extending Fournier (1998)'s seminal work, both academics and practitioners showed significant interest in studying consumers' level of attachment to brands. Several researchers identified, studied and discussed different types of consumer-brand relationships and relied heavily on the interpersonal relationship literature, mainly in the discipline of psychology by adjusting or adopting related concepts and constructs (Among those scholars: Ahuvia, 2005; Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012; Fournier & Alvarez, 2012; Keller, 2012; Kervyn, Fiske, & Malone, 2012; Park & MacInnis, 2006; Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Thomson, 2006). A brief summary of the related literature is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Related Literature Summary

Discipline	Context	Authors	Terms Used	What They Study
Psychology	Interpersonal relationships	Sternberg (1986); Tennov (1978); Bowlby (1969); Hazan and Shaver (1994); Fraley and Shaver (2000); Sternberg and Barnes (1988); Bartholomew and Perlman (1994); Berscheid and Hatfield (1969); Thurstone (1938); Thomson (1939)	child-caregiver attachment interpersonal attachment love	Human beings' affectional bonds towards others
Consumer Behavior	Consumer-brand relationships	Fournier (1998); Albert et al. (2008); Batra et al. (2012); Shimp and Madden (1988); Thomson et al. (2005); Park and MacInnis (2006); Yin et al. (2008) ; Keller (2001)	brand attachment emotional attachment brand love affectional bond brand engagement	affectional bonds between consumers and brands in long-term relationships

In consequence, Kleine and Baker (2004) define attachment in general as "a multi-faceted property of the relationship between an individual . . . and a specific material object that has been psychologically appropriated and singularized through person-object interactions" (p.1). This definition includes a psychological evaluation of the attachment object in terms of appropriateness, which requires deep and emotional bonds between the object and the self, leading to various degrees of self-extension. Accordingly, brand attachment is termed as the strength of the cognitive and emotional bond linking the brand with the consumer's self (Lacoueuilhe, 1997; Park, MacInnis, & Priester, 2006; Park et al., 2010; Thompson et al., 2005). Although some scholars (Loureiro, Ruediger, & Demetris, 2012; Park et al., 2006) support that brand love and brand attachment are two different constructs, the terms are generally used either interchangeably (Vlachos & Vrechopoulos, 2012; Vlachos, Theotokis, Pramatari, & Vrechopoulos, 2010) or as one of the dimensions of the other in literature (Batra et al., 2012; Rossiter & Bellman, 2012). The reason behind this is that not only are strong brand attachments indicated by brand love (Keller, 2010; Park et al., 2006; Thompson et al., 2005), brand attachment also stands out to

reflect consumers' strong bonds with the brands (Schmitt, 2012). Further evidence for the conceptualization of love as an attachment can be found in the interpersonal relationship literature (Fehr & Russell, 1991; Mikulincer, 2006), as scholars argue that for love to exist there should be attachment (Carter, 1998). As a result, when studying consumers' love towards brands, the literature regarding brand attachment is also quite relevant, even though in this particular research, this strong, attachment-initiated and affect-laden bond is termed as brand love.

Consistent with the Attachment Theory, this bond may be illustrated by a memory network (or mental representation) (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007), reflecting cognitions and affects related to the brand and the brand's connection to the consumer's self (Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011). Eventually, when individuals are personally attached or close to a brand, they are also more likely to be in love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Park, Eisingerich, & Park, 2013). Particularly, in the context of brand love, the self is closely connected to various components of love, since loving an object requires an affective evaluation of the self-object distance (Alba & Lutz, 2013). In a similar fashion, Park et al. (2013), referring to the Self-Expansion Model, emphasize the role of brand-self integration in the transformation of strong consumer-brand relationships into love. In the authors' own words:

> . . . one may love a consumer electronics brand, a chocolate brand, or the Mona Lisa painting because of its great performance for its price, its great taste, or her enigmatic smile but may not necessarily perceive a high degree of personal connection with these. When one feels personally attached or close to a brand, such a feeling is likely to be accompanied by love (p. 232).

Within the brand love research stream, as it was with the love concept, the complexity of the brand love construct led to little agreement (Albert, Merunka, & Valtte-Florence, 2008; Batra et al., 2012) and thus to a conceptual diversity and

debate between the opponents of "love as a single emotion" (i.e. Albert et al., 2008: Richins, 1997; Whang, Allen, Sahoury, & Zhang, 2004) and those of "love as a relationship or as an emotion withinin a continuing relationship" (i.e. Batra at al., 2012; Shimp & Madden, 1988). According to Ahuvia, Bagozzi, and Batra (2013), this distinction is quite important since both views direct to different conceptualizations and eventually to different research paths. A member of the "love is a feeling" school of thought, Richins (1997) suggests that love is a single, specific emotion very similar to affection. Similarly, Roy, Eshghi, and Sarkar (2013, p.327) define brand love as an "emotional and passionate feeling for a brand that might lead to commitment or loyalty in due course" and Rossiter (2012) states that highly intense feelings of affection and of separation anxiety are needed for brand love. On the other hand, researchers in the second stream view brand love as similar to love among people and rely on terms or theories of individual-to-individual relationships. Nonetheless, there are also inconsistencies and disagreements among those scholars. Whang et al. (2004) use "the colors of love" typology by Lee (1973) to study romantic love that a biker has towards his bike. According to the authors, the love feeling consists of different types of love, namely eros (passionate love), mania (possessive love), and agape (altruistic love). Study of the notion of brand love further results in identification of 11 dimensions by Albert et al. (2008). The authors suggest several aspects such as passion, long duration of the relationship, self-image-congruity, dreams, memories (evoked by brand), pleasure, attraction, uniqueness (of the brand or of the relationship), beauty, trust, and declaration of affect as important dimensions of love.

Among the researchers that approach brand love similarly to love in interpersonal relationships, as one of leading work, Shimp and Madden (1988)

modify Sternberg's (1986) Triangular Theory of Love and define eight types of uni-directional consumer-object relationships based on three components that were previously identified by Sternberg (1986) in the interpersonal relationships realm: yearning (motivation), liking (emotion), and decision/commitment (cognition). The scholars modify suggested dimensions of Sternberg from the consumer-object relationship partner viewpoint and propose eight relationship types that are based on different combinations of these three components and are named as non-liking, liking, infatuation, functionalism, inhibited desire, utilitarianism, succumbed desire, and loyalty. Nevertheless, although the researchers base their discussion on a theory that describes different types of love, they did not name the most passionate, intimate and committed type of relationship between the consumer and the object as love. Rather, they named it loyalty. Types such as non-liking (the consumer is loyal to another brand or is not involved in the category), infatuation (there is no particular liking, but the consumer buys this product due to hedonic benefits), functionalism (an emotional attachment does not exist, but the product is helpful in solving problems), and succumbed desire (external sources create a strong motivation for the product) reflect a negative emotion. On the other hand, liking (the consumer feels an affinity, but no passion towards the brand), inhibited desire (the consumer desires the product due to inability to buy or use the product), utilitarianism (the consumer is attached and committed to the product, but passion does not exist) are on the positive emotional side of the relationship. The eighth type of relationship is called loyalty, where all three components exist, and the consumer is emotionally and cognitively attached and committed to the product. As mentioned, although the scholars do not refer to this type as love, their work helps to define the boundaries of love and to identify motivation and cognition — not just emotion — as important parts of love.

Sternberg's Eight Kinds of Love[a]

Kind of love	Component		
	Intimacy	Passion	Decision/ commit- ment
1. Nonlove	-	-	-
2. Liking	+	-	-
3. Infatuated love	-	+	-
4. Empty love	-	-	+
5. Romantic love	+	+	-
6. Companionate love	+	-	+
7. Fatuous love	-	+	+
8. Consummate love	+	+	+

[a]Cell entries represent the presence (+) or absence (-) of each concept-defining component.

Eight Kinds of Consumer-Object Relations[a]

Kind of relation	Component		
	Liking	Yearning	Decision/ Commit- ment
1. Nonliking	-	-	-
2. Liking	+	-	-
3. Infatuation	-	+	-
4. Functionalism	-	-	+
5. Inhibited desire	+	+	-
6. Utilitarianism	+	-	+
7. Succumbed desire	-	+	+
8. Loyalty	+	+	+

[a]Cell entries represent the presence (+) or absence (-) of each concept-defining component.

Fig. 1 Depiction of Sternberg (1986) and Shimp and Madden (1988)

Source: [Shimp and Madden, 1988]

In one of the prominent pieces of research on brand love that relies on the Self-Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986), Ahuvia (1992; 1993) combines all aspects discussed before and studies consumers' love towards objects as a single construct, where differences are reflected in the way people experience it. He postulates that love toward an object is similar in many ways to interpersonal love and refers to the physical and spiritual excellence and uniqueness of the love object that is reflected by intrinsic value and positive experiences. Among the antecedents of love, according to Ahuvia (1993), hedonic experiences in particular play a significant role, along with various needs identified by Maslow (1962) such as survival, social, esteem, existential, and self-actualization. By satisfying those consumer needs, brands are believed to be viewed as an extension of the consumers' selves leading to love, where "both the desired and the actual level of integration are

high" (Ahuvia, 1993, p. 87). According to Ahuvia (1992), love takes place in a relationship where the love object is seen as an extension of the self and the lover would even make sacrifices for the love object. The consumer-brand love relationship is considered as deep and enduring, and consumers perceive the brand that they love as irreplaceable (Albert & Merunka, 2013). Similarly, Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) believe that one of the basic tenets of love is that it takes place in an on-going relationship between the brand and the consumer and define brand love as "the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name" (p.81). The authors suggest that brand love is a uni-dimensional construct consisting of several components such as having feelings of passion and attachment or evaluating and feeling positively for the brand. Consumers' announcements on their love for the brand are included into their conceptualization as well. Love is also distinguished from loyalty and satisfaction as an extreme emotional experience leading to strong forms of loyalty. As a result, brand love is experienced by consumers who integrate a specific brand into their identities and are extremely satisfied with their relationships, such that they are even willing to express their love towards that brand.

In sum, consumers become emotionally attached to some brands because they are close, dependable, consistent and "always there" when they need them. Accordingly, similarities between brand and human relations were consistently supported when we considered consumers' self expansion motivations (Fournier & Alvarez, 2013). Consumers relax in a known, secure and safe relationship (Albert et al., 2008; Batra et al., 2012; Shimp & Madden, 1988; Thomson et al., 2005) which is rich in self-expansion opportunities (Aron & Aron, 2006). They experience passionate brand loyalties towards brands that bear a resemblance to marriages

(Fournier & Yao, 1997; Oliver, 1999), or even "have flings" with them (Fournier & Alvarez, 2013, p.182).

Having discussed the conceptual complexity of appraising brand love, one must unfortunately note that the literature exhibits a paucity of theoretical suggestions as well as empirical demonstrations of the antecedents and the consequences of the concept. Appendix A lists some of the suggestions on the antecedents and consequences of brand love and that of brand attachment suggested in the literature so far. Overall, as can be seen from the table, although there are diversified views on almost every aspect related to the conceptualization of the constructs, most of the researchers agree that identification is an important antecedent, leading us to the idea that an evaluation of brand-self distance in the form of a self-expansion might be the primary root in building strong, committed relationships between brands and consumers.

3.4 Brand engagement

As mentioned in the introduction section, the engagement concept has attracted attention from the scholars and studied in different literature streams, including educational psychology, as "student engagement" (Bryson & Hand, 2007; Skinner & Belmont, 1993;), in social psychology as "social engagement" (Achterberg et al., 2003) and in organizational behavior as "employee engagement" (Saks, 2006; Wellins & Concelman, 2005), not to mention "role engagement" (Watkins, Tipton, Manus, & Hunton-Shoup, 1991), "employment engagement" (Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2007) and "work engagement" (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Though there is increased interest in the concept, as cited in Porter, Donthu, MacElroy, and

Wydra (2011), "Engagement is like love. Everyone agrees it's a good thing, but everyone has a different definition of what it is" (p. 83).

In psychology, Kahn (1990) is the first researcher describing personal engagement as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's preferred self in task behaviors promoting connections to tasks and others, personal presence and active, full role performances, which may serve to enhance an individual's motivation" (p.700). Other highly significant definitions of engagement are provided by Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002) in organizational behavior "as a positive, fulfilling and work-related affective-cognitive state of mind that was characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (p.74) and by Rothbard (2001) as a psychological existence with attention and absorption as the two critical components. Vigor and attention in the above definitions refer to mental energy and time allocated to thinking about the role; dedication stands for the felt enthusiasm and inspiration regarding the role; and absorption means how much concentrated and engrossed one is towards the role. The concept is generally studied as a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral manifestation that is stimulated by psychological antecedents (Kahn, 1990; Maslach et al., 2001), and is regarded in terms of how much cognitive, emotional and physical resources an employee is prepared to dedicate to a specific assignment or role (Saks, 2006); giving rise to personal development and employee morale, motivation, satisfaction, as well as organizational commitment and citizenship behavior (Kahn, 1990; Hardaker & Fill, 2005; Saks, 2006).

Based on the engagement conceptualization in different disciplines, it has lately begun to be viewed as a recent aspect in marketing to initiate and enhance accurate predictions on loyalty outcomes (Bowden, 2009). Particularly, customer

engagement attracts recent interest both from the practitioner and academic side in marketing. From the practitioner side, a number of consulting companies, such as Nielsen Media Research, the Gallup Group, and IAG Research tried to come up with metrics to properly measure and define the concept (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilıc, 2011). For instance, The Gallup Group indicate that customer engagement consists of both rational evaluations on customer loyalty assessed through the consumers' overall content with the brand, repurchase intention, brand recommendation (attitudinal loyalty), and emotional attachment, that are quantified by the factors of brand confidence, perceived brand integrity, brand-related pride, and passion for the brand (Appelbaum, 2001).

From the academic side, the terms "consumer/customer engagement", "consumer/customer brand engagement" emerge initially in the academic literature of relationship marketing and service research streams (Brodie et al., 2011a) with more specific forms such as engagement in advertising, media or even consumer-to-consumer auction sites or community engagement following. Within consumer behaviour, it is now acknowledged with a broader conceptual lens as reflecting close and extremely loyal relationships concerning consumers and brands in online and in traditional environments. Yet, research has been called to define the concept and to develop comprehensive models of measurement. Customer engagement or customer brand engagement are used prominently (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010) to encompass the overall engagement of a customer towards a company, brand, product or community. It reflects a consumer's willingness to stay in a strong and durable relationship with a specific brand (Lastovicka & Gardner, 1979; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). As such, it is believed to fit in the broader relationship marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) and service-dominant logic (Brodie et al., 2011a; Brodie, Ilıc, Juric, &

Hollebeek, 2011), as well as in social exchange theory (Hollebeek, 2011a), emphasizing the importance of value-generating customers in dynamic, interactive, and continuous relationships. Along with the new technologies as well as the transformation of the dominant view from a goods-dominant to a service-dominant one, giving rise to customers' co-creation activities in various aspects (Vargo & Lusch, 2008), the concept of engagement became central. Commonly, customer engagement enhances the traditional customer role and incorporates them in the value-creation process, transforming consumers to brand advocates (Sashi, 2012). This is a new perspective where transactions are no longer valued, but non-transactional customer behavior is more important (Verhoef, Reinartz, & Krafft, 2010) to create not only stronger but also longer, persisting and more meaningful customer-brand relationships (Kumar et al., 2010).

Active engagement is one of the most central facets of brand relationships and occurs when consumers are emotionally attached to a specific brand (Keller, 2001; Sashi, 2012). Keller (2013) identify brand engagement as "the extent to which consumers are willing to invest their own personal resources – time, energy, money – on the brand, beyond those resources expended during purchase or consumption of the brand" (p. 320). Hence, according to Keller (2010), brand loyalty is strongly confirmed when consumers are enthusiastic to forgo their own interests, and are affectively as well as cognitively engaged with the brand. Consequently, leading consumers from a state of just "liking" or "loving" a brand to being highly involved and supportive to that brand in front of the public has become one of the major concerns of many brand managers. This also would help them to distinguish themselves from the clutter.

When we consider literature regarding brand engagement, we notice that authors provide various definitions of brand engagement, taking different aspects and different dimensions of the concept into account (Schulz & Peltier, 2013). Lack of agreement on the boundaries of this promising notion is observed with very few empirical studies to thoroughly capture and operationalize customer engagement, leaving most of the scattered work on the construct exploratory and theoretical. Although most of the papers agree that engagement is a motivational state which involves experiences or interactions between the consumer and the company in different settings (Vivek, Beatty, Dalela, & Morgan, 2014), the call for additional research is particularly attributed to the lack of a multi-dimensional conceptualization, operationalization, as well as of empirical research on the engagement concept (Brodie & Hollebeek, 2011; Brodie et al., 2011a; Schultz & Peltier, 2013).

Some scholars define engagement as a uni-dimensional construct taking either cognitive, affective/emotional, or behavioral dimensions into account (Porter, Donthu, MacElroy, & Wydra , 2011; Sprott et al., 2009; Van Doorn et al., 2010). For instance, Van Doorn et al. (2010), taking a behavioral stance, delineate customer engagement as "the behavioral manifestation from a customer toward a brand or a firm which goes beyond purchase behavior, trust, satisfaction, or commitment, resulting from motivational drivers" (p. 254). The authors include a large set of co-creational positive behaviors into the domain including WOM, customer suggestions, help to other customers, managing blogs, writing reviews, posting messages, and as well as negative behaviors such as engaging in legal action. According to them, the behavioral nature of customer engagement can be captured by valence, form/modality, scope, nature of its impact, and customer goals. Valence refers to

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whether the engagement is positive or not, giving rise to form and modality referring to diverse possibilities of how it can be manifested by the customers. By scope, the researchers intent to identify whether it is momentary or ongoing, affecting immediacy, intensity, breadth, and the longevity of the impact. Since the authors view customer engagement as a goal-directed behavior, goals in terms of to whom the engagement is aimed, how much planned the engagement is, and how much the customer's goals are in-line with the firm's objectives, all play a significant role.

Although providing a cognitive viewpoint to engagement as "a positive state of mind that is characterized by high energy, commitment, and loyalty to the firm" (p.83), Porter et al. (2011) also take a behavioral stance and define engagement as "a class of behaviors that reflects community members' demonstrated willingness to participate and cooperate with others in a way that creates value for themselves and for others – including the community sponsor" (p. 83). According to the authors, both emotional and cognitive forces motivate the behavioral manifestations of engagement.

On the other hand, still having a uni-dimensional stance, Sprott et al. (2009) emphasize the affective/emotional part of engagement. Building on self-schema and Attachment Theory and with a personality point of view, they define engagement as "an individual difference representing consumers' propensity to include important brands as part of how they view themselves" (p. 92). Similarly, Bowden (2009) and Mollen and Wilson (2010) consider customer engagement as a psychological bonding practice having both emotional and cognitive parts. Cognitive evaluations regarding the instrumental value and affective evaluations taking the schema congruence into consideration both play a significant role in engagement.

Even though defining engagement only by the behavioral dimension dominates the literature, according to some authors that work inadequately captures the whole domain of engagement and needs refinement (Brodie et al., 2011a; Malthouse & Calder, 2011; Sashi, 2012). Accordingly, a prominent number of scholars acknowledge the bi- or multi-dimensional nature of this rich construct (Brodie et al., 2011a; Bowden, 2009; Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010; Hollebeek, 2011; Mollen & Wilson, 2010; Patterson, Yu, & de Ruyter, 2006; Vivek, 2009; Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2012; Vivek et al., 2014). Engagement is believed to be a goal-directed behavior, which is motivated by consumers' needs (Porter, Donthu, MacElroy, & Wydra, 2011; Van Doorn et al., 2010), that goes beyond behavior (Brodie et al., 2011a; Brodie et al., 2011b; Kumar et al., 2010; Van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2012; Sachi, 2012). It is also a psychological state that takes place due to interactive and co-creative customer experiences, encompassing cognitive and emotional elements such as an emotional connection between the engagement object and the customers (Bowden, 2009; Hollebeek, 2011; Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 2012; Sprott et al., 2009; Vivek, 2009; Vivek et al., 2012).

As literature on engagement progress, a similar pattern to conceptual development of brand loyalty emerge, where researchers adopt the three sub-dimensional structure of employee engagement identified in organizational behavior and provide more comprehensive definitions of the concept that constitute the cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions. As such, its measurement incorporated cognitive, emotional and behavioral elements, which are also supported by other disciplines that study engagement. According to those authors, engagement has a rich multidimensional conceptual domain, contingent to contexts' and/or stakeholders' demonstration of respective cognitive, emotional and behavioral

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aspects at differing levels. Among those scholars, adding behavioral manifestations to psychological ones, Vivek et al. (2014) define consumer engagement as "the intensity of an individual's participation and connection with the organization's offerings and activities initiated by either the customer or the organization" (p. 406). According to the authors, engagement may be expressed in a cognitive, affective, behavioral or social way and has several consumer-brand relationship-related outcomes such as value, trust, affective commitment, WOM, loyalty, and brand community involvement. Customer brand engagement is also defined in specific online contexts by Mollen and Wilson (2010) as "the cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as personified by the website or other computer mediated entities designed to communicate brand value" (p. 12). The authors further distinguish between involvement and engagement, stating that engagement is influenced by the involvement of the consumer. They suggest "sustained cognitive processing", "perceived instrumental value" (utility and relevance), and "experiential value" (consumers' affective congruence level with the online representation) as important online engagement dimensions. Relying on the organizational behavior research stream, Patterson et al. (2006) also put forward an understanding to customer engagement with the multiple dimensions of vigorousness, dedication, and absorption. Each of these dimensions corresponds to the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects of engagement. Within the services setting, the authors' definition on engagement is "the level of a customer's physical, cognitive and emotional presence in their relationship" (p. 6). Again in the specific services setting, Brodie et al. (2011b) provide a description of customer engagement over five fundamental propositions and propose that engagement is actually a

psychological response that takes place due to interactive and co-creative experiences with a specific object in specific service encounters.

Unfortunately, even though these definitions emphasize the three dimensional structure, they either lack the brand focus or are too narrow. More broadly and in the scope of this research, Hollebeek (2011) define brand engagement as "the level of a customer's motivational, brand-related, and context-dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity in brand interactions" (p. 565). This definition is later expanded by Hollebeek and Chen (2014) and Hollebeek et al. (2014) to include positive as well as negative brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioral investments or activities associated with consumer/brand interactions. According to the authors, immersion or cognitive processing refers to the level of positive or negative brand related thoughts, elaboration and cognitive processing, whereas affection or passion is the degree of positive or negative brand related affect, and activation reflects the level of energy, effort or time dedicated towards the brand.

Overall, the majority of the tri-pod conceptualizations agree that customer engagement extends beyond involvement and encompasses a proactive and interactive customer relationship with a specific engagement object such as a brand and is manifested cognitively, emotionally and behaviorally, leading to stronger consumer-object relationships. As there are many definitions and thus many conceptualizations of engagement, the different definitions and dimensions as well as suggested antecedents and consequences provided in the literature are presented in Appendix B. In the current study we base our conceptualization on Hollebeek (2011)'s view of brand engagement as comprising of cognitive, emotional and

behavioral brand interactions. We believe that this view is more prosperous in covering all aspects of consumer-brand encounters.

3.4.1 Behavioral brand engagement

Behavioral brand engagement is defined as "a behavioral manifestation toward the brand or firm that goes beyond transactions" (Verhoef et al., p. 247), and consists of all possible transactions concerning consumers and firms that are in relation with the brand (Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, & Pihlström, 2012). Thus, it refers to the level of energy and interaction between the brand and the consumer (Patterson et al., 2006) and cannot be captured simply by traditional behavioral manifestations such as purchase or WOM. Behavioral engagement goes beyond those demonstrations and works as an important measure of consumer-brand relationship strength, reflecting a consumers' willingness to employ behavioral acts based on his/her relationship or interaction with the brand. Hence, according to Van Doorn et al. (2010), the behavioral nature of customer engagement can be captured by several dimensions such as valence (positive/negative), form/modality (type of act), scope, the nature of impact, and customer goals. As a result, the behavioral aspect of engagement can be experienced and expressed overall by customers either positively or negatively, reflecting a wide array of possibilities.

This extensive array of possibilities of behavioral manifestations and the ease of their unique corresponding measurement, gives rise to a rich literature dealing with the behavioral aspect of engagement. In different contexts, researchers use different metrics to define and measure behavioral engagement. For instance, Gummerus et al. (2012) measure customer behavioral brand engagement in an Internet gaming site as the frequency of brand community visits, content liking,

commenting, and news reading, frequency of playing, and money spent on the site. In online social networks, Pöyry, Parvinen, and Malmivaara (2013) define behavioral engagement as browsing and participating in a travel agency's Facebook page. Lee, Kim, and Kim (2012) measure engagement in an online community by the amount of information supplied to other consumers and recommendations regarding the brand, as well as by support to other members and active participation in the activities of the community. Also in the context of Facebook, Hoffman and Fodor (2010) suggest that brand engagement can be measured by the number of comments, active users, likes, and user-generated content. Hence, each researcher defines behavioral engagement in its own context and captures it accordingly.

Apart from the studies analyzing online behavioral brand engagement, the offline counterpart is called as activation, referring to a "consumer's positively/negatively valenced level of energy, effort and time spent on a brand in particular brand interactions" (Hollebeek et al., 2014, p.155), capturing all aspects of behavioral engagement from advocating the brand in public and spending all resources such as money, time or energy to support the brand, to rejection, avoidance or sharing negative feedback. Hence, it is not only in an online environment, where behavioral engagement can be assessed through the recognition of negative and positive e-wom In a traditional consumer-company setting, the behavioral aspect of brand engagement also receives significant attention from several researchers particularly in the emergence of the service-dominant logic, where a relational perspective is supported, generating specific consumer behavior outcomes due to interactive and co-creative experiences between consumers and brands (Brodie et al., 2011b).

3.4.2 Cognitive brand engagement

Cognitive engagement is a widely used term in education and the learning literature, representing learners' uninterrupted and constant attention to a task necessitating a mental energy directed towards it (Corno & Mandinach, 1983). The amount of cognitive effort is a direct result of motivation of the individual while concentrating on the learning assignment with a strong sensation of personal efficiency (Schunk, 1989). Motivations were found to play a central role in students' cognitive engagement in science activities (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988) through constructing meaning, monitoring comprehension and evaluation of responses, as well as thinking strategically. Additionally, Corno and Mandinach (1983) state that intrinsic motivation has a significant influence on students' cognitive engagement along with the teacher's encouragement and discussion facilitation. And according to Zhu (2006), cognitive engagement entails "seeking, interpreting, analyzing, and summarizing information, as well as critiquing and reasoning through various opinions and arguments and making decisions" (p.455).

In the context of customer-brand relationships, Lovelock (2011) states that the cognitive aspect of engagement again reflects the degree to which a person can perform a job, though in this type it is related to what it is expected from the consumer in the consumer-object relationship. According to the author, cognitive engagement is reflected by the calculative commitment, representing an information-processing bias. In a similar vein, as maintained by Bowden (2009), customers' cognitive engagement is actually consumers' calculative commitment toward the brand. This view is also in line with Mollen and Wilson (2010), defining consumers' engagement as "the cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as personified by the website or other computer mediated entities

designed to communicate brand value" (p. 12). Hence, when a consumer encounters any kind of information about the brand, their interest and enthusiasm in the presented knowledge and the cognitive effort expended in analyzing it can be captured by the cognitive part of engagement.

Past research suggests that brand loyalty is stronger in consumers who are cognitively committed to a brand (Howard & Sheth, 1969), especially when it is followed by an emotional commitment (Bowden, 2009). When consumers are connected to a brand at a cognitive level, their knowledge, information, and learning about the brand increases, promoting consumer loyalty (Shang, Chen, & Liao, 2006). Accordingly, Appelbaum (2001) postulates that fully engaged customers are the most valuable customers since they are also emotionally attached and rationally loyal to the brand. Moreover, a recent study by Hollebeek et al. (2014) show empirically that consumers' cognitive engagement mediates the relationship between their involvement and their brand usage intention.

3.4.3 Affective/emotional brand engagement

Brand engagement is either defined solely as an affect-laden association between a brand and its consumers (Rieger & Kamins, 2006), or affective brand engagement is regarded as one of the dimensions of the multi-dimensional brand engagement construct. Hence, affective or emotional dimension of brand engagement is acknowledged as one of the main aspects of engagement to be studied, although this has not been sufficiently tested empirically.

Heath (2007) postulates that engagement is entirely about feelings and emotions. It is totally subconscious and affective; for instance, the feelings that are triggered when an individual consumes any content related to the brand, such as an

advertisement, may generate consumer's engagement towards advertising. Calder,
Malthouse, and Schaed (2009) also state that engagement, which comprises the
overall experiences of the consumers, results in affective responses. Similarly, Vivek
(2009), accepting the multi-dimensional nature of engagement, suggests five
dimensions, one of which is "enthusiasm", referring to the emotional side of the
concept as a "strong excitement or zeal about the focus of engagement" (p. 60).

In terms of brand engagement, the emotional part emerges as an affective
attitude directed towards a specific brand (Brodie et al., 2011b). It refers to the
emotional bond (Heath, 2007; Rappaport, 2007; Wang 2006) and to the emotional
congruence (Mollen & Wilson, 2010) a consumer has with that brand. Some scholars
such as Lovelock (2011) and Bowden (2009) report that affective engagement is
similar to affective commitment, which is "the emotional expression of a customer's
psychological closeness to a brand and consists of a holistic or aggregate judgment
of the brand independently from its functional or instrumental attributes" (Amine,
1998, p. 313 cited in Bowden, 2009). Affective commitment reflects the emotional
value of being in a working relationship and is not only a measure of loyalty, but also
a measure of the willingness to work hard and to potentially make sacrifices for the
relationship (Hennig-Thurau & Klee, 1997 cited in Lovelock, 2011). Rappaport
(2007) states that consumers experience an emotional bond with the brand when they
share meaning and identify with it, and that can be achieved through experiences that
either enlighten, teach or amuse them.

Consumers differ in their tendency to contain schemas associated with
brands. Hence, where some consumers become brand advocates and develop
emotional bonds with some brands (Kanthavanich, 2011), some are against any
contact with brands. Nevertheless, overall consumers are believed to integrate their

own identities with the brands and use them to express their selves and increase or fulfill their self-esteem. As a result, consumers differ in their inclination to add brands in their own selves and therefore are also different in their behaviors that link their self-concepts to the brands. Sprott et al. (2009) call this emotional variance "brand engagement in self-concept" and define it as "an individual difference representing consumers' propensity to include important brands as part of how they view themselves" (p. 92). Hence, affective engagement in particular signifies a central aspect of consumer-brand relationships, reflecting the emotion-laden connection between the consumer and the brand.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESEARCH MODEL AND THE HYPOTHESES

In the previous chapter we described the overall theoretical foundation leading to the research model and corresponding hypotheses, which will be portrayed in detail in this chapter.

4.1 Factors leading to self-expansion and brand love

The Self-Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986) states that individuals seek expansion and achieve it through close relationships, where they include others to their own selves. Close relationships result in positive emotions such as "… feeling understood, validated, cared for, and closely connected with another person …" (Reis & Shaver 1988, p. 386), where individuals start to view partners' resources or identities as their own (Aron et al., 1991) and thereby contribute to the integration of the relationship partners. Based on the model, individuals consciously or unconsciously evaluate others on their resources, perspectives, and identities and if they perceive themselves close to that individual and feel a significant overlap, they include them into themselves (Aron et al., 1991). This further helps them develop and shape their own selves (Aron, 2002) and creates a basis for strong bonds, particularly love, as relationships that are regarded as close are complemented with love feelings and further commitment and loyalty (Brewer, 1999). While some people may be consciously aware of it, self-expansion motivation is usually not a conscious motive, but it involves a cognitive evaluation, which asserts itself in closeness and eventually in affection. As Ben-Ari (2012) mentions, closeness refers to not only to physical–spatial proximity, but also to psychological and emotional

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aspects, as well as to behavioral strategies used to enhance it and is strongly linked to love.

Ahuvia et al. (2009) suggest that consumers undergo a similar cognitive evaluation when it comes to their relationship with brands. Positive outcomes of these evaluations result in lower levels of self-brand distance reflected in the integration and extension between the self and the object (i.e. the brand) (Alba & Lutz, 2013) and may serve as a psychological basis for the creation of love. Ahuvia et al. (2009) also posit that for brand love to occur and be distinguishable from other feelings such as passion or warmth experienced through resource evaluation and self-expansion, both desired and actual integration of the identities (the consumer and the brand) should be high. In the interpersonal relationship domain, Aron et al. (2004) find the same pattern across a wide range of measures that reflect the quality of a relationship such as satisfaction, commitment, and passionate love. Sullivan and Venter (2007) and Rusbult, Kumashiro, Stocker, Kirchner, Finkel, & Coolsen (2005), using the Self-Expansion Model, similarly explain how individuals expand themselves by including their heroes or ideals into their own selves and construct identities where heroes/ideals are viewed as a source of one's possible ideal self by the self-expansion motivated individuals. This type of desired self-inclusion is even found to positively influence individuals' overall relationship evaluation and development of a satisfying and stable relationship (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996). This view is also in line with the literature analyzing why consumers prefer particular brands over others and states that one of the primary reasons why consumers employ those brands is to reveal either their own or idealized selves and to construct an identity to the public (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Levy, 1959; Sirgy, 1982).

Hence, at this point one must also talk about the importance of self-concept in relationship building and in the continuation of that relationship between a consumer and a brand. Though there is no precise conceptualization of self-concept, it is defined by Rosenberg (1979) cited in Sirgy (1982) as "the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object" (p. 297). According to Swaminathan, Page, and Gurhan-Canli (2007, p. 248), self-concept reflects an "individual-level unique identity", and springs from the individuals' need for autonomy. Schouten (1991) further argues that self-concept includes a large assortment of things that individuals use for the purpose of self-creation and self-understanding.

The nature of self-concept is complex (Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998) and there are many conceptualizations used for self-concept. Some are listed in Jamal and Goode (2001) as "the actual self, ideal self, social self, and the ideal social self" (p. 483). Previous research concluded that preferred brands/products are viewed as more similar or closer to the self-concepts of the individual than less preferred brands/products (Grubb & Stern, 1971). Particularly the actual self and the ideal self are found to be important in this process (Malär et al., 2011). Although marketers try to attract consumers by creating images that are in congruence with their ideal selves, research suggests that consumers actually make decisions based on their actual self-concepts (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Ross, 1971), and these decisions are better antecedents for satisfaction (Jamal and Goode, 2001). The direct effect of actual self congruence (Kressmann et al., 2006) and ideal self congruence (Han & Back, 2008; Samli & Sirgy, 1981) on loyalty has also been empirically demonstrated.

As mentioned earlier, love is considered an emotion fueled by the fulfillment of the attachment need (Djikic & Oatley, 2004). Accordingly, brand love is defined

as "the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name" (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006, p. 81). The Self-Expansion Model states that individuals' self-expansion motivation is satisfied when, in close relationships, a noteworthy overlap between individuals' own selves and that of their significant one is experienced (Aron et al., 1991). Hence, in consumer-brand relationships self-expansion refers to a cognitive evaluation of the self and the brand. The outcome of these evaluations is referred to either as congruence or closeness/integration or as self-brand integration. As both positive actual and ideal self-congruence lead to emotional brand attachment (Malär et al., 2011), we posit the following hypotheses:

H1: Actual self-brand integration positively leads to brand love
H2: Desired (ideal) self-brand integration positively leads to brand love

The self-expansion model posits that inclusion of others into the self involves evaluation of resources, perspectives, and identities. Resources refer to the material, knowledge (conceptual, informational), and social assets (social status and roles) that facilitate the achievement of goals. Perspective refers to the extent to which one experiences the world from the partner's point of view. And finally, identity refers to the qualities, memories, and other traits that distinguish one person from another (Aron et al., 1991). As Aron and Aron (1986) suggest, individuals enter and maintain interpersonal relationships to achieve goals through the exchange of resources; as a result, resources are particularly important sources of this cognitive evaluation. The application of this paradigm to consumer-brand relationships is supported by Franzac et al. (2014), Park et al. (2006) and Reimann and Aron (2009), as consumers achieve

their self-related objectives through brands' hedonic, functional, and/or symbolic utilities by pleasing their both rational and emotional concerns (Keller, 2001; 2012) and thereby leading a brand closer to the self and creating stronger attachments between the two entities in the form of love.

Brands, just like individuals, can put forward various different resources (made available by marketers) to assist consumers in attaining their aims (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993; Schultz, Kleine, & Kernan, 1989). Motivations that are activated by the needs of the consumers to achieve some benefits play an important role in consumer behavior (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004) and are identified primarily as utilitarian or hedonic based on the cognitive/informational or sensory stimulation consumers experience or expect to experience (Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 1996; Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994; Hirschman, 1980). In the literature, different terms such as intrinsic/extrinsic (Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura, 1989) or functional/non-functional (Sheth, 1983) are assigned to denote utilitarian versus hedonic dichotomy. In addition to hedonic-utilitarian benefits associated with products, scholars also mention symbolic benefits of the brands (Belk, 1988). Thus, three kinds of resources — hedonic, symbolic and functional — are predominantly applicable in the consumer-brand attachment framework. When consumers appreciate and positively evaluate the instrumental, hedonic and symbolic functions of brands in accomplishing their objectives, they start to acknowledge those brands as having a personal and considerable meaning and become personally and affectively tied to these brands leading to self-expansion (Park et al., 2013).

The functional resources of products available to consumers are well known and documented in the literature (Chitturi, Raghunathan, & Mahajan, 2008; Reimann & Aron, 2009; Voss, Spangenberg, & Grohmann 2003). Utilitarian benefits enable

consumers achieve their rational and task-related goals (Batra & Ahtola, 1991; Chitturi, Raghunathan, & Mahajan, 2007). In general, utilitarian motivations are centered on the supposition that consumers approach problems in a rational manner (Bettman, 1979) and relate to functional, economic or extrinsic benefits that are based on logical and rational evaluations (Bell, Raiffa, & Tversky, 1988; Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1993). Functional benefits are found to be influential in shaping consumers' satisfaction (Chitturi et al., 2008), attention (Hoegg & Alba, 2011), as well as emotional arousal and engagement (Franzac et al., 2014).

On the other hand, hedonic motivations are intrinsically satisfying and providing pleasure and fun, and are appealing to emotional or experiential senses of the consumers and even in some cases help them to forget their problems (Babin et al., 1994). Hedonic consumption is defined as "multi-sensory, fantasy, and emotive aspects of one's experience with products" (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982, p. 92) and is believed to be a visual or sensory appeal leading to relaxation, self-indulgence and most importantly, pleasure. In a similar fashion, hedonic benefits are related to the aesthetic and attractive qualities of the brand and refer to experiential and sensory aspects that generate enjoyment (Batra & Ahtola 1991; Chitturi et al., 2007), lead to strong emotional responses (Franzac et al., 2014), delight (Chitturi et al., 2008) and particularly to brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

As the third aspect related to our research, all consumption acts entail, in fact, whether knowingly or unknowingly, an associated symbolic meaning (Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Reed & Forehand, 2003), and an important aspect of branding is that it conveys symbolic meaning not only to the individual but also to the society (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967). People see themselves through the eyes of others and form self-concepts via the reactions of others based on these meanings. By

associating themselves with specific brands, consumers gain not only self-enhancement (Grubb & Grathwahl, 1967) but also approval, acceptance and status in the social environment, which significantly affects a person's social behavior (Jackson & Smith, 1999). According to Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998), the whole system of consumption is actually the utilization of the symbolic denotation of brands which help an individual to create and preserve an identity in the social environment. Thus, beyond rational decision-making, people use signs and symbols as tools to communicate the self to others, and each consumer puts another meaning into the use of the specific brand (Schembri, Merrilees, & Kristiansen, 2010). Because the self-concept is maintained and enhanced by positive responses from significant others (Grubb & Stern, 1971; Rosenberg, 1979), the social identity and the self-concept of the individual, which are created through the symbolic resources of the brand, are closely linked to each other.

Hence, overall, when consumers' positive evaluations regarding a brand's symbolic, functional and hedonic resources reflect a personal connection, which, according to the Self-Expansion model, works over a self-integration mechanism, intense feelings such as love may be evoked. Accordingly, we posit the following hypotheses:

H3: Hedonic (a), functional (b), and symbolic (c) brand resource evaluation
    positively leads to brand love.

H4: Hedonic (a), functional (b), and symbolic (c) brand resource evaluation
    positively leads to desired self-brand integration.

H5: Hedonic (a), functional (b), and symbolic (c) brand resource evaluation
    positively leads to actual self-brand integration.

H6: The effect of hedonic (a), functional (b), and symbolic (c) brand resource

   evaluation on brand love is mediated by actual self-brand integration

H7: The effect of hedonic (a), functional (b), and symbolic (c) brand resource

   evaluation on brand love is mediated by desired self-brand integration

4.2 Love and engagement

Previous research on the relationship between brand love and engagement implies

two possible directions and thus two competing hypotheses, both of which can be

explained under the Self-Expansion Model framework. The first is with love creating

engagement, where personal relevance due to existing self-expansion triggers

consumers' interest in relationship continuation and in cognitive, affective, and

behavioral activities related to the brand, and the second with the opposite direction,

where engagement with the brand further creates self-expansion and leads to brand

love.

The third principle of the Self-Expansion Model states that people hunt for

situations that have become linked with experiences of self-expansion. Not only do

loving individuals crave to share discoveries, feelings, and opinions (Shaver &

Hazan, 1988) and an attachment bond indicates the tendency of an individual to stay

in close contact with an attachment figure (Fraley & Shaver, 2000), scholars by

definition propose passionate love as having several cognitive, affective, and

behavioral components (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993). Also, again relying on the Self-

Expansion Model, the literature suggests that when attachment to others is high,

individuals start to see others' outcomes as if they are their own (Aron et al., 2011)

and agree to make sacrifices and personal endowments in order to support the other

for the sake of the relationship's continuation (Van Lange et al., 1997).

In a similar vein, Park et al. (2010) suggest that highly attached consumers are not just passively accepting a brand's resources but that they also invest their own social, financial, or, in some cases, time resources in the relationship, as they want to expand more and connect with the brand at a deeper level. As previous research shows, those consumers experience the highest level of attachment (Park et al., 2006), defend the brand when it is attacked, are willing to pay more for its products, or more generally, are highly involved in anything that has to do with the brand (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Thomson et al., 2005). This particular distinction is actually what distinguishes those consumers from just loyal ones. Their emotions towards the brand are so strong that they don't switch to another brand in case of any misconduct or dysfunction, rather they choose to suggest improvements to support the brand further. Thus, high emotional arousal leads to higher levels of engagement (Franzac et al., 2014), where brand love is found as a direct and important source of active engagement (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Sarkar & Sreejesh, 2014; Wallace et al., 2014).

As the second possible direction of the relationship, one may also assume that brand love is strengthened by brand engagement. In adult attachment, research on the Self-Expansion Model show that partners who share unique experiences undergo an expansion of the self, and these feelings manifest positively in the relationship (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2014). In other words, couples who engage in exciting or physiologically arousing activities together further experience self-expansion and thus relationship satisfaction and passionate love (Aron, Norman, McKenna, & Heyman, 2000; Lewandowski & Aron, 2004). Consumers, when actively engaged with a brand, feel a deep connection with that brand (Hollebeek et al., 2014) and those high functional and emotional connections result in consumers' loving a brand

leading to various desirable consequences such as positive word of mouth, brand evangelism or high brand loyalty. Similarly, Vivek et al. (2014) refer to self-expansion motivated consumers interacting with the company as part of their engagement. This view is in line with Alba and Lutz (2013)'s categorization of consumer brand relationships, showing love as a high elaboration positive relationship, where consumers extend themselves by favoring specific brands close to themselves. Hence, relying on the Self-Expansion Model, consumers who are cognitively, affectively and behaviorally engaged with a brand are also believed to develop a stronger attachment to the brand.

All of this discussion leads to two competing hypotheses on the brand love and engagement relationship.

H8: Brand love positively leads to brand engagement

H9 (competing hypothesis of H8): Brand engagement positively leads to brand love

Relying on previous research which suggests that couples who share novel experiences and engage in exciting or physiologically arousing activities together will further experience relationship satisfaction and passionate love (Aron et al., 2000; Lewandowski & Aron 2004), Ben-Ari (2012) mention that closeness refers to not only to physical–spatial proximity, but also to psychological and emotional aspects. Extending the same analogy to consumer-brand relationships, one may argue that consumers in engagement with a brand would eventually develop a stronger attachment. Moreover, Fetscherin and Heinrick (2014) and Moutinho et al. (2014) suggest that when consumers are fully invested in brands, they view brands as either family or as part of themselves; just as it is in a strong interpersonal relationship.

This notion is empirically supported by Hollebeek et al. (2014), specifically for the behavioral part of engagement. Thus, we hypothesize

H10: Brand engagement positively leads to actual-self brand integration

4.3 Attachment-related consequences

Fetscherin and Heinrick (2014) argue that consumers' love towards brands can be classified based on a combination of strong functional and emotional connections. As engagement expands between consumers and brands, consumers start to develop stronger bonds (Sashi, 2012). Those high functional and emotional connections result in consumers' loving a brand, which further leads to various positive consequences such as word of mouth, brand evangelism or high brand loyalty. This view is also in line with Alba and Lutz (2013)'s categorization of consumer brand relationships, showing love as a high elaboration positive relationship, where consumers extend themselves by favoring specific brands close to themselves. Strong attachments evoke needs for closeness that enhance individuals tendencies for being strongly supportive for the attachment-object and not being willing to be separated from (Bowlby, 1979).

As proposed by Park et al. (2006), similar needs derived from attachments to brands may reveal commitment-related behaviors in consumers. Hence, it is highly expected that consumer brand engagement results in having elevated involvement (Langerak et al. 2003 cited in Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrman, 2005), commitment, trust and loyalty to the company and to the brand (Brodie et al., 2011b) and also WOM influencing other consumers (Vivek et al., 2014). Moreover, and more specifically, affective brand engagement is found to be a significant contributor

to positive outcomes such as higher commitment, loyalty, purchase, and positive WOM (Lovelock, 2011) and brand usage intentions (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

4.3.1 Word of mouth (WOM)

Arndt (1967) defines word of mouth as "oral, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver concerning a brand, a product, or a service offered for sale" (p. 190). Positive WOM is among the most important desired effects of consumer-brand relations as it involves "all informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services or their sellers" (Westbrook, 1987, p. 261). Today, due to technological developments, we can talk about two types of WOM: offline and online. Although there are differences between traditional offline WOM and its online counterpart e-WOM in terms of the execution due to medium differences, they are similar in their effect on consumer behavior and decision-making (Karjaluoto, Munnukka, & Kiuru, 2016).

WOM may be in the form of product-related discussions or recommendations and has a huge effect on other consumers' product awareness (Mahajan, Muller, & Sharma, 1984) and/or decisions regarding which products to use or even which places to visit (Berger, 2014). Hence, marketers put great emphasis on creating positive WOM to influence consumers (Godes et al., 2005) and to create an "improved opinion of the firm" (Sweeney, Soutar, & Mazzarol, 2008). Researchers have analyzed several aspects of WOM such as the motivations of sharing WOM and types of WOM consumers share (Berger, 2014), as well as the reasons for seeking WOM (Sweeney et al., 2008). Accordingly, Matos and Rossi (2008) suggest that the literature is not scarce in suggesting antecedents for this concept and mention perceived value, loyalty, quality, commitment, trust, or satisfaction among many

others. Commitment, which is reflected in positive emotional attachment and high identification, is found to be a particularly significant contributor to WOM (Matos & Rossi, 2008). Moreover, individuals are found to share WOM not only for impression management but also for emotion regulation purposes (Berger, 2014). In this vein, Chitturi et al. (2008) provide empirical confirmation that highly provocated emotions enhance both positive word of mouth and repeat purchase behavior. The literature also identifies social bonding and persuasion as motivators for WOM (Berger, 2014). In that sense, one would also argue that consumers, who are highly occupied and identify with a brand, may be more likely to engage in WOM to help other consumers or to share their experiences.

4.3.2 Loyalty

Loyalty is defined by Oliver (1997) as a "deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior" (p. 392). This definition features two types of loyalty, attitudinal and behavioral, both of which are highly discussed in previous literature (Aaker, 1991; Jacoby & Chestnut 1978). Briefly, behavioral loyalty is the tendency of consumers to purchase routinely from the brand, whereas attitudinal brand loyalty refers to a favorable attitude towards a specific brand. Overall, brand loyalty constitutes the most important part of brand equity (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000), where consumers display more favorable responses than non-loyal consumers and purchase frequently from the same brand without switching now and then to other brands. Hence, brand loyalty is a significant indication of consumer-brand relationship strength, as it reflects not

only current and future purchase but also a consumer's overall positive tendency towards the products of the brand. In that sense, loyalty is closely related to, yet is conceptually distinct from brand love and brand engagement. The main difference between brand loyalty and brand love is that loyalty on top of emotion and passion entails further commitment (Oliver, 1999). Moreover, the previous literature associates strong affective responses (Thomson et al., 2005) in the form of brand affect (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001) and brand love (Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) with brand loyalty. In a similar fashion, all aspects of brand engagement are found to create future loyalty intentions (Fetscherin, 2014; Goldsmith, Flynn, Goldsmith, & Stacey, 2010) in consumers for the sake of keeping their rewarding relationships with the brand alive (Dwivedi, 2015). Thus, stronger relationships create stronger loyalty (Bolton, 1998; Verhoef, 2003), as cognitive, affective and particularly behavioral brand engagement further entail co-creation of the brand promise (Verhoef et al., 2010), customer loyalty is enhanced by the value gained by the engagement (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

4.3.3 Willingness to price premium (WTPP)

Willingness to price premium (WTPP) is "the amount a customer is willing to pay for his/her preferred brand over comparable/lesser brands of the same package size/quantity" (Netemeyer et al., 2004, p. 211). WTPP is not only one of the indicators of purchase intention and actual purchase (Keller, 1993), it also is a key predictor for brand loyalty and brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Netemeyer et al., 2004). Various factors such as perceived quality, value, or uniqueness may lead to WTPP (Netemeyer et al., 2004), but the literature generally suggests that when consumers love brands and form strong attachments in the form of affective loyalty (Aaker,

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1991), they are likely to accept a price increase in order not to lose the loving relationship and not to experience separation distress (Ahuvia, 1993; Thomson et al., 2005). WTPP reflects such a dedicated and strong interaction between the consumer and the brand that the consumer continues to use the brand despite knowing that s/he is paying more than the price of the competitor brands. Hence, previous literature demonstrates that brand passion (Thomson et al., 2005; Bauer et al., 2007) and brand love (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Batra et al., 2012) are likely to result in WTPP. One of the main significant differences between other types of consumer-brand relationship strength indicators and brand engagement is that brand engagement entails a willingness to invest one's financial resources on behalf of the consumer-brand relationship. Hence, brand engagement is conceptually characterized by the tendency to be willing to spend more for that specific brand.

H11: Brand love positively leads to loyalty (a), WOM (b), and WTPP (c)

H12: Brand engagement positively leads to loyalty (a), WOM (b), and WTPP (c)

4.3.4 Moderating effect of product category

Although there is research concerning the influence of product category on consumer-brand relationships (Fetscherin et al., 2014), controversy still exists. Several researchers point out the importance of product category on different factors such as the feeling of brand love or relationship quality (Albert et al., 2009; Kressmann et al., 2006), whereas others find no specific effect on the overall relationship between consumers and brands (Fetscherin et al., 2014; Valta, 2013). Moreover, researchers outline the significant role of product categories in WOM (Allsop, Bassett, & Hoskins, 2007), WTPP (Sethuraman & Cole, 1999) and loyalty

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(Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Most of the research suggests a positive effect of hedonic value, and consequently, single category brands that are high in hedonism were employed as the unit of analyses (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). However, for different product categories, different priorities may play a role in affect creation and consequently consumers may find different resources attractive. Furthemore, when it comes to the influence of product category on the relationship between brand love and expected relationship outcomes, Fetscherin et al. (2014) find some category-specific differences for purchase intention, whereas no difference seems to exist for WOM. These mixed and insufficient results on category differences in consumer-brand relationships lead to the following hypothesis.

H13: There will be differences on the effect of brand love on loyalty (a), WOM (b), and WTPP (c) generated by product category

H14: There will be differences on the effect of hedonic (a), functional (b), and symbolic (c) brand resource evaluation on brand love generated by product category

Control variables such as age, gender, and education are added to the model in order to ensure that the variation in the dependent variables is indeed due to the effect of the independent variables and moderators, and not due to the effect of the demographics.

The research model and the corresponding hypotheses are depicted in Figure 2.
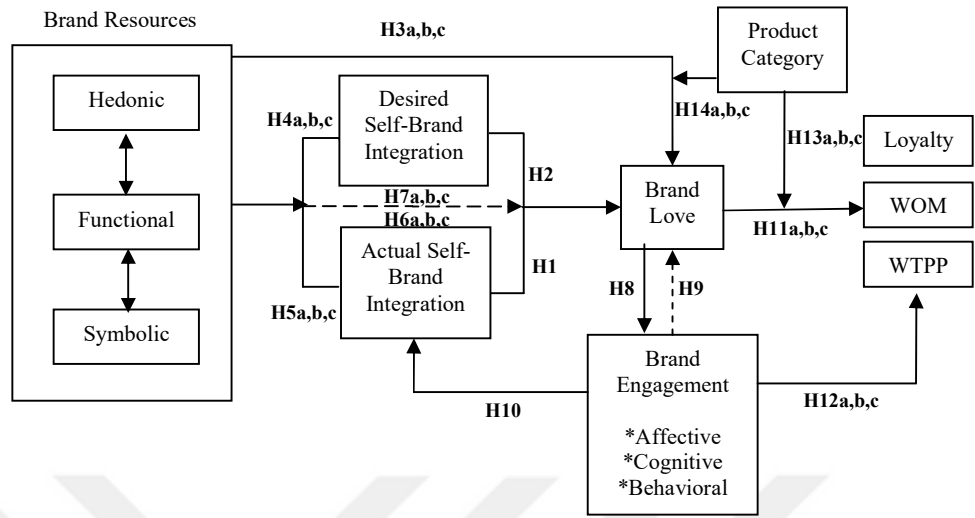
Fig. 2 Research framework

CHAPTER 5

TESTING AND VALIDATION OF THE MODEL

This chapter consists of the testing and validation of the research model shown in Figure 2. As discussed earlier, the main objective of this research was to understand how consumers' love towards a specific brand is created as well as how brand engagement and brand love are connected to each other and to other consumer-brand relationship strength indicators. Accordingly, this chapter discusses the research development phase leading to the answers to these main research questions.

5.1 Research design and methodology

5.1.1 Measurement instrument and questionnaire design

The data was collected face-to-face using a survey. Following Fetscherin et al.'s (2014) unaided brand recall methodology, respondents were initially requested to name three brands for which they feel "brand love" in any product category, and then to choose one among the three to provide answers based on the brand that they "love the most". Respondents then indicated the category of this brand and proceeded with the rest of the survey questions. This method not only screens out consumers who are not strongly attached to any brand but also helps researchers to create a meaningful level of involvement among the respondents.

Measurement items were adapted mainly from previously used scales with acceptable levels of validity and reliability, as reported in the literature. Minor adaptations and additions were made so as to fit to the specific requirements of the current research to the cultural setting. Additionally, some items were specially developed by the researcher, based on in-depth interviews with consumers who

stated that they were brand advocates and were in a strong relationship with a brand, or through a review of the literature on consumer-brand or interpersonal relationships. All items were assessed on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). All sub-scales had at least three items to establish an identified model, with the exception of actual and desired self-brand integration. To measure these two constructs, we included single-item measures adapted from the Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) scale of Aron, Aron, and Smollan (1992). The IOS scale is an illustrative measure (See Appendix C) reflecting individuals' (in our study, consumers') cognitive evaluation of the identities of the partner (in our study, of the brand) and themselves. As circles come closer and eventually overlap, they reflect the unity/closeness or integration (in our study) between the consumer and the brand. Although using single-item measures in SEM analyses is not recommended due to predictive validity and concerns about underidentification of the model and possibility of Heywood cases (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010), there are cases where researchers have done so and gained meaningful results (Petrescu, 2013), especially when other constructs in the model are measured with multiple item scales that have high loadings (Diamantopoulos, Sarstedt, Fuchs, Wilczynski, & Kaiser, 2012) and the model is not tested with a small sample (Hair et al., 2010). Further, the IOS scale has proved to be a successful measure in predicting distance in diverse categories of personal relationships (Aron, Lewandowski, Mashek, & Aron, 2013). Respondents initially evaluate the overlap between their identities and the perceived identity of the brand, reflecting their actual integration with the brand. Secondly, respondents answer the adapted version of the same scale for the desired integration, where the idealized identity of the respondent with the brand's identity is assessed.

The questionnaire includes multi-item measures to capture the constructs in our study, which are brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), affective brand engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014), cognitive brand engagement (Vivek et al., 2014), willingness to price premium (Netemeyer et al., 2004), word of mouth (Alexandrov, Lilly, & Babakus, 2013), and loyalty (Yoo et al., 2000). There are unfortunately not many reliable and conceptually and nomologically valid scales to measure brand love. Albert et al.'s (2009) second-order brand love scale is one of the few with affection and passion having seven first-order sub-dimensions, where the authors extend their previous work (Albert et al., 2008) with a nomological validation and come up with a 22 item scale to measure brand love. Other important work in measuring love includes Batra et al.'s (2012) higher-order scale, comprising 56 items and Carroll and Ahuvia's (2006) one-dimensional conceptualization. In this study we use Carroll and Ahuvia's (2006) scale that reflects a combination of all aspects of love, i.e. feeling, attachment and passion, and therefore was chosen to capture brand love rigorously yet parcimonously. Items that measure behavioral engagement and hedonic, symbolic, and functional brand resources reflect a combination of self-construction or borrowing from previous scales. For instance, for behavioral engagement we used some items from Batra et al.'s (2012) brand love scale as well as items that were specially created with the insight captured from in-depth interviews and a literature review. These items reflected consumers' tendency to defend and support the brand in various aspects of the relationship. Items for hedonic, symbolic, and functional brand resources were similarly derived from the scales of Sweeney and Souter (2001) and Stockburger-sauer, Ratneshwar, and Sen (2012). Table 2 displays a list of all the items used in the study, along with their corresponding sources. The final questionnaire can be found in Appendix C.

Table 2. Items in the Study and Their Corresponding Sources

Construct	Source	Scale Item (abbreviation)
Cognitive Brand Engagement	Vivek et al. (2014)	I like to learn more about (brand) (ce_1)
		I pay a lot of attention to anything about (brand) (ce_2)
		I keep up with things related to (brand) (ce_3)
		Anything related to (brand) grabs my attention (ce_4)
Behavioral Brand Engagement	Hollebeek et al. (2014) Batra et al. (2012)	I spend a lot of time using (brand), compared to other brands in the category (be_1)
		I am willing to spend a lot of money improving and finetuning a product from (brand) (be_3)
		I am willing to spend a lot of time improving and finetuning a product from (brand) (be_4)
	self-constructed	I will immediately contact (brand) if I detect something wrong with (brand) (be_5)
		I try to support (brand) in every aspect (be_6)
		I defend this brand when anything negative is said (be_7)
		I am willing to spend a lot of effort improving and finetuning a product from (brand) (be_2)
Affective Brand Engagement	Hollebeek et al. (2014)	I feel very positive when I use (brand) (ae_1)
		Using (brand) makes me happy (ae_2)
		I feel good when I use (brand) (ae_3)
		I'm proud to use (brand) (ae_4)
Brand Love	Carroll and Ahuvia (2006)	This is a wonderful brand (bl_1)
		(brand) makes me feel good (bl_2)
		(brand) is totally awesome (bl_3)
		I have neutral feelings about (brand) (bl_4)
		(brand) makes me very happy (bl_5)
		I love (brand) (bl_6)
		I have no particular feelings about (brand) (bl_7)
		(brand) is a pure delight (bl_8)
		I am passionate about (brand) (bl_9)
		I'm very attached to (brand) (bl_10)
Functional Resources	Sweeney & Soutar (2001)	(brand) is reasonably priced (fnc_1)
		(brand) has consistent quality (fnc_2)
		(brand) is well made (fnc_3)
		(brand) offers value for money (fnc_7)
	self-constructed	(brand) is beautiful (fnc_4)
		(brand) is cute (fnc_5)
		(brand) is functional (fnc_6)
Hedonic Resources	Sweeney & Soutar (2001)	(brand) is one that I would enjoy (hed_1)
		(brand) would give me pleasure (hed_2)
	Stokburger-sauer et al. (2013)	Thinking of (brand) brings back good memories (hed_3)
		I have had a lot of memorable experiences with (brand) (hed_4)
		I have fond memories of (brand) (hed_5)
Symbolic Resources	Sweeney & Soutar (2001)	(brand) helps me to feel acceptable (sym_1)
		(brand) improves the way I am perceived (sym_2)
		(brand) makes a good impression on other people (sym_3)
		(brand) gives me social approval (sym_4)
Willingness to Price Premium	Netemeyer et al. (2004)	The price of (brand) would have to go up quite a bit before I would switch to another brand (wtpp_1)
		I am willing to pay a higher price for (brand) than for other brands (wtpp_2)
		I am willing to pay a lot more for (brand) than other brands (wtpp_3)
WOM	Alexandrov et al. (2013)	How likely would you be to do any of the following …
		Recommend (brand) to others (wom_1)
		Recommend (brand) to someone else who seeks my advice (wom_2)
		Say positive things about (brand) (wom_3)
Loyalty	Yoo et al. (2000)	I consider myself to be loyal to (brand) (l_1)
		(brand) would be my first choice (l_2)
		I will not buy other brands if (brand) is available at the store (l_3)

The survey instrument also included demographic questions as well as those that enabled the identification of participants' overall relationship with the specific brand and with brands in general. All items were translated into Turkish and then backtranslated to English by two expert judges and were initially subjected to pre-testing with a student sample to eliminate redundant and ambiguous items, which led to revisions on the phrasing of some questions to increase face validity. This phase was followed by exploratory factor and reliability analyses to test for the proposed item structure and to eliminate items with double and/or low loadings.

5.1.2 Sampling and data collection

The data was collected face-to-face via an outsourced market research company service. Although there were no theoretical restrictions on the sample, a quota followed by a convenience sampling was utilized to collect data. Quotas were identified based on the Turkish Statistical Institute's categorization on gender, age, education and city for the year of 2014. We identified the three largest cities of Turkey, namely Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, for two reasons. First, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute, 30.6 % of the overall Turkish population live in these cities (Tuik, 2015). And secondly, those cities reflect a mixture of Turkish people owing to high migration rates from almost all cities in country (Göregenli, Karakus, & Gökten, 2016). As a result, those cities highly reflect the characteristics of the Turkish population.

5.1.3 Sample characteristics

The data from 1,250 survey participants was collected and, after cleaning of the data,

a total of 744 questionnaires were left for further analysis. The demographic

categorization of the respondents can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Demographics of the Participants

Age			Gender		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
20-29	237	31.9	Female	378	50.8
30-39	204	27.4	Male	366	49.2
40-49	173	23.3	Total	744	100
50-59	130	17.4	Education level		
Total	744	100		Frequency	Percent
City of residence			Elementary	150	20.2
	Frequency	Percent	Secondary	158	21.2
Ankara	155	20.8	High school	295	39.6
Istanbul	474	63.7	College or university degree	135	18.2
Izmir	115	15.5	Graduate degree	6	0.8
Total	744	100	Total	744	100

We observed that the samples' demographic characteristics were consistent

with the Turkish Statistical Institute's 2015 data. Hence, there is an almost even

distribution of males and females and the age, city of residence and education

distribution of the sample were also consistent with the percentages of the respective

groups reflected in the whole sample, with the age distribution ranging from 20 to 59

with a standardized mean of 32.9.

Aside from demographic information, respondents further provided the

category of their loved brands and depth and length of their relationship with the

loved brand they specified. Out of 744 responses, 379 respondents (50.9%)

mentioned brands in the categories of clothing and shoes, 167 respondents (22.5%) consumer durables and electronics, 111 respondents (14.9%) food and beverages, and 54 respondents (7.2%) cars. The rest (4.5%) belongs to consumers who stated that they love brands in the service industry such as airlines, banks or in consumer products but very few beauty products.

5.2 Data analysis and results

5.2.1 Data analysis method: Structural equation modeling

The preferred method for data analysis was the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Since the research model involves multiple constructs that are conceptually connected to each other in a complex way, with some of them, such as brand engagement, being multi-dimensional, SEM was preferred over other methods of analysis. While there is no agreement on the required sample size of SEM in the literature, Hair et al. (2010) suggest employing sample sizes of larger than 500 for models that contain large numbers of observed and unobserved variables and with constructs that have fewer than three measured items. It is also generally accepted that larger sample sizes and degrees of freedom result in a more powerful SEM analysis (McQuitty, 2004). On the other hand, an excessively large sample size tends to cause a poor fit of the measurement model. Hence, there is a possibility that with our sample of 744 respondents, we may get a poor fit; nevertheless, a larger sample was used for the analyses, mainly because we had two single-item constructs in our model, which may have caused underidentification.

The data analysis was initially conducted using exploratory factor (EFA) and reliability analyses with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics Version 22 software, followed by SEM by a measurement model and then a structural model using AMOS

Graphics Version 22 software. The measurement model was identified through a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and shows the relationship between the observed and latent variables. Once the measurement model was constructed and analyzed, the structural model was built to estimate the casual relationships among latent variables (Byrne, 2010). The SEM assumes normal distribution, so we performed tests to investigate the skewness and kurtosis of the data. Though minor deviations from normality were detected, moderately non-normal data can be handled with maximum likelihood estimation, as suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). Hence, we continued with further analysis, as all items also had absolute index values of less than 3 for skewness and 10 for kurtosis assessments, as recommended by Chou and Bentler (1995). Please see Appendix D.

5.2.2 Exploratory factor and reliability analyses

Initially, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed by using the Varimax rotation to assess whether the items reacted in the hypothesized way. As brand engagement is aggregated by affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement components, all items were assessed together as a single measure for brand engagement constituting of sub-dimensions. Each construct's item structure was examined separately using the explanatory factor and later Cronbach's Alpha reliability analyses. When communalities are checked, they provide information on how much of each item's variance is elucidated by the factor solution. Low values (e.g. less than 0.5) designate that an item does not belong in its respective set with the other items (Hair et al., 2010). A closer look at the communalities of all items (See Appendix E) showed that there is only one item (wtpp_1) which was below the threshold while two items — bl_4r and bl_7r — were close to 0.5. This might

indicate that we needed to have a closer look at these items and consider Cronbach's Alpha values while analyzing each construct individually before deciding to take any action.

When the rotated component matrix was examined, it was seen that five items out of a total of 15 that make up the overall engagement scale, namely items be_1; be_5; be_6; be_7; ae_4, double-load on more than one dimension and they were eliminated from further analysis as their deletion also resulted in an increase in the respective Cronbach's Alpha values. Similarly, when the item structure of the brand love scale was examined, bl_4r and bl_7r were found to decrease the internal validity of the scale as their communality values were below 0.5, which is the cut-off point recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). As a brief note: in the original scale, Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) also had problems with reverse-coded items but no problems with neutral feelings. Consistent with the factor analysis results, the deletion of both items promised an increase in Cronbach's Alpha from 0.857 to 0.943. The EFA of the functional resources also necessitated the deletion of one item (fnc_1) due to low communalities. The item had a value of 0.302, which is lower than the cut-off value 0.5. As anticipated in overall communalities table, wtpp_1 had a low yet acceptable loading during the EFA. The reliability analysis also indicated that deleting this item would increase Cronbach's Alpha reliability from 0.760 to 0.874. Nevertheless, as a SEM model is more likely to be under-identified with multiple constructs having less than three items, this item was kept for further analysis.

In accordance with our expectations, the rest of the items loaded on their factors and had factor loadings above 0.50. Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs in our model were calculated using SPSS and we found all to be greater

than 0.75, which is above the commonly acceptable cut-off point (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1967). The results of the EFA and Cronbach's Alpha reliability analyses are shown in Appendix F.

5.2.3 The measurement model

Next, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), which offers a more rigorous test of internal consistency and an overall evaluation of the measurement model, was performed with maximum likelihood estimation by using AMOS 22. CFA judges how realistically the underlying proposed structure of the factors complements the actual data (Byrne, 2001). In this regard, CFA performs as a vigorous statistical instrument that allows the formation and assessment of construct validity. The visual diagram of CFA is shown in Figure 3.
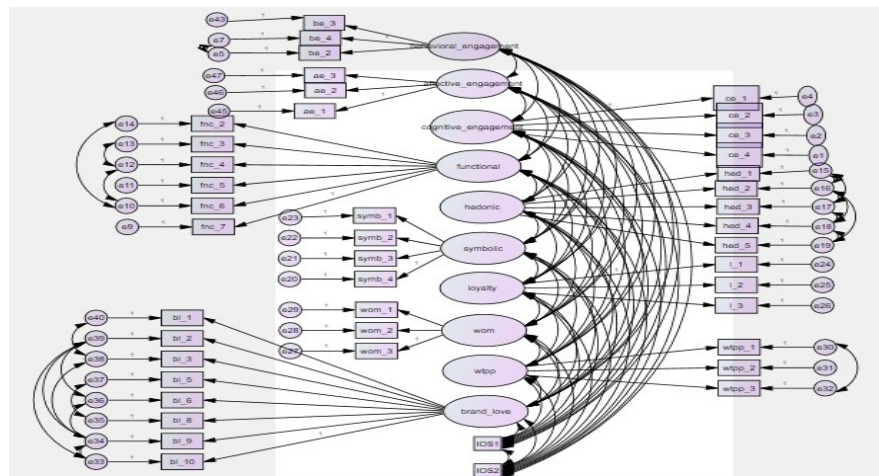
Fig. 3 Visual depiction of the measurement model

Construct validity captures how well a measure gauges the construct it is supposed to estimate. It comprises four components: (1) reliability, (2) convergent validity, (3) discriminant validity and (4) nomological validity (Peter, 1981).

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Reliability is the extent to which a measure is subject to random error. It is determined in two ways: either by evaluating the degree of consistency between measurements conducted at different points in time, or by internal consistency, which estimates the correlation of each measurement item with the overall measure. Convergent validity is the degree to which a measure of a construct correlates with other scales that measure theoretically related constructs. Additionally, discriminant validity evaluates the degree of uniqueness of each construct, in other words, whether it is related to other constructs in the model that are not supposed to be correlated with it. And finally, nomological validity is concerned with how well the relationships between summated scales in a measurement theory are explainable and reasonable by theory (Hair et al., 2010). To have a meaningful analysis, researchers also need to discuss face validity, which is achieved thorough the examination of the meaning of each item to be able to express the theory behind the measurement correctly. This is usually done prior the testing phase, when items have been translated and backtranslated and tested initially. Hence, at this point of the analysis it is assumed that the items possess face validity. In CFA, convergent validity is determined through the examination of factor loadings and variance extracted values, whereas reliability is calculated by using the CFA output. Similarly, the determination of discriminant validity employs CFA output. Nomological validity and face validity, on the other hand, need to be achieved through theory development and be supported by establishing correlations with other constructs in the measurement model.

The initial measurement model (CFA) was significant. After some minor modifications based on the information obtained from the modification indices as part of the Amos output, the CFA yielded a normed chi-square value of 1.899 (Chi-

square/df = 1595.390/840 = 1.899), which is less than 2, reflecting a very good fit

(Hair et al., 2010). The fit indices also supported an acceptable fit with values above

the threshold of 0.9 (Comparative Fit Index (CFI)=0.936; Tucker Lewis Index

(TLI)=0.927) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) being less

than 0.08 (RMSEA=0.053). When the CFA output was further analyzed, all critical

ratios were significant and above 1.96, ranging from 13.657 to 33.340. Among the

indicators of the convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), all item loadings

were positive, significant ($p < .01$) and greater than 0.5, and all composite

reliabilities (CR) were higher than 0.7 with the exception of WTPP (0.67), which can

be attributed to the low loading of the first item measuring the construct (the

standardized path estimate for wtpp_1 is 0.53). Nevertheless, values between 0.6 and

0.7 are acceptable if other constructs' values are good (Hair et al., 2010). CR was

calculated with the formula below, using the squared sum of factor loadings (λi) and

the sum of the error variance terms (δi).

$$\text{Composite Reliability} = \frac{\left(\sum_{i=1}^{n} \lambda i\right)^2}{\left(\sum_{i=1}^{n} \lambda i\right)^2 + \left(\sum_{i=1}^{n} \delta i\right)}$$

In addition, all values were above 0.5 for average values extracted (AVE), as

suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981), which is again an indication of convergent

validity. AVE is calculated for each construct by dividing the sum of squared

standardized loadings to the number of items assigned for the construct. Standardized

path estimates, CR and AVE of all constructs in the study are presented in Appendix

G. CFA also re-assures discriminant validity, as the AVE values were higher than the

squared correlation estimates (SQE) between factors (Hair et al., 2010), indicating

that corresponding indicators were truly elucidating the latent construct better than

other constructs. Appendix H shows the AVEs for each construct and the SQEs in the diagonal. As seen from the table, most of the AVE values are higher than the SQE values providing evidence for discriminant validity. There are only four exceptions, which are marked as bold. Nevertheless, as the majority of the values obeyed the rules for discriminant validity, those exceptions were not a major concern. Nomological validity was gauged by analyzing whether the correlations among the constructs were acceptable and reasonable (Hair et al., 2010), which was also supported by the model (See Appendix H).

5.2.4 Structural model and hypotheses testing

The proposed model, with brand resources and brand engagement as the exogenous variables and brand love, actual/ideal integration, WTPP, loyalty, and WOM being the endogenous variables, was subjected to SEM to estimate its validity and to test the hypotheses by examining the causal relationships proposed among the latent variables. But first, multivariate assumptions of linearity and multicollinearity, as well as common method bias in the constructs were tested. In order to ensure linearity, curve estimation was employed, using regression analysis for all relationships in the model and it was visually determined that all relationships were sufficiently linear. Next, multicollinearity was tested again through linear regressions. All VIF values were discovered to be less than the conservative threshold value of VIF=4, while some were close, confirming that we had minor multicollinearity issues in our measurement model. Finally, we ran Harman's single factor test for common method variance in order to see whether any type of common method bias affected our model. We ran a factor analysis by forcing all items into a single factor, and found that the single factor accounted for 42.9 % of the total

variance explained, indicating that there may have been some common method bias (Podsakoff , MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Scholars note that method variance can distort observed relationships between constructs, giving rise to Type I and Type II errors (Bagozzi & Yi, 1990; Podsakoff et al., 2003); nevertheless, as the threshold for common method bias is 50 %, we decided to continue with our analysis.

Heeding the advice of Hair et al. (2010), a recursive SEM was undertaken with the valid structural model, without fixing the construct loading estimates and the error variance terms to their values. Iteratively, multiple versions of the proposed model were tested, taking modification indices as well as theory support into consideration. The final structural model had an acceptable fit with a significant Chi-square/df value 3.16 and fit the data with CFI=0.942, IFI=0.942, GFI=0.938, SRMR=0.097 and RMSEA = 0.054. In the case of models with more than 30 observed variables and more than 250 observations, Hair et al. (2010) suggest a threshold value of 0.90 for GFI and IFI and 0.08 or less for SRMR with CFI above 0.90. While RMSEA values lower than 0.08 are considered as acceptable, an RMSEA value lower than 0.06 indicates a very good fit (Byrne, 2001). Hence, one can assume that the model had an acceptable fit with SRMR slightly above the suggested acceptable range.

The results and the standardized path estimates of hypothesized relationships are depicted in Appendix I. Though not stated as a formal hypothesis, the relationships evolving around cognitive, affective, and behavioral brand engagement were investigated separately so as to be able to have a better understanding of each type of engagement and to have a deeper understanding on brand love-engagement and brand engagement-attachment consequences relationships in particular. Hence,

although overall twelve hypotheses were developed, 50 related relationships were tested. For the mediation analyses, we followed the suggestion of Cheung and Lau (2007) and estimated bias-corrected confidence intervals (90%) for indirect, direct and total effects via bootstrapping.

As described in the methodology section, respondents, when they provided their answers, were free to choose their loved brand from any category. This gave us the opportunity to have a deeper understanding of the hypothesized relationships as well as generalizability. Out of 744 responses, 379 (50.9%) mentioned brands in the clothing and shoes category, 167 (22.5%) in consumer durables and electronics, 111 (14.9%) in food and beverages, and 54 (7.2%) in the car category. The rest of the brands mentioned (4.5%) belonged to categories such as services and consumer products. As we had allowed our respondents to choose any brand from any category, in the hypothesis development section we were not able to provide specific category difference hypotheses, and therefore only suggested that there might be differences due to category differences. Nevertheless, we tested category difference hypotheses on the relationship between brand love and relationship consequences, i.e. loyalty, WOM, and WTPP, and on the relationship between resources and brand love, using multi-group SEM analysis by taking only the first three categories into consideration, as the other two categories were too small to provide any meaningful outcomes in SEM. Hence, we ran a chi-square difference test on the structural model with three categories, by freely estimating the model but constraining the relationships that were believed to be equal. For the resources-brand love investigation, only functional and symbolic resources were found to be significant in the original structural model, so only the results of these relationships are reported in Appendix I.

We were not able to test simultaneously the influence of brand engagement on brand love over the final SEM model. A second SEM model suggesting a reverse relationship did not yield any acceptable fit. As a result, we ran a stepwise regression analysis, where brand love was the dependent variable and affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement were the independent variables in the model. We first developed summated variables based on previous analyses for all variables in the regression. The results of the statistically significant stepwise regression are presented in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4. Model Summary of Regression Analysis

Model Summary[d]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
					Change Statistics				
1	.516[a]	.266	.266	.63408	.266	1475.412	1	742	.000
2	.567[b]	.321	.319	.54636	.055	258.409	1	741	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), COGENG

b. Predictors: (Constant), COGENG, AFFENG

c. Dependent Variable: BRANDLOVE

Table 5. Regression Analysis Results

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.001	.094		21.232	.000		
	COGENG	.376	.018	.416	38.411	.000	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)	.939	.105		8.973	.000		
	COGENG	.215	.020	.238	22.634	.000	.559	1.790
	AFFENG	.125	.024	.158	16.075	.000	.559	1.790

As can be seen from the Appendix I, out of 14 main hypotheses and an overall number of 53 hypotheses, six hypotheses are not supported, which refer to the influence of hedonic resources on brand love (H3a) to the relationship between symbolic resources and actual integration (H4c), and the relationship between

functional/symbolic resources and brand love mediated by the actual integration (H6b & H6c) and desired integration (H7b) and to the product category-related difference on brand love-WTPP relationship (H13c). Moreover, hypotheses 7c, 9, 10, 12a, 12b, 12c, 14a and 14b were partially supported. Explained variances (R2) of the endogenous constructs were also calculated by the AMOS software, using squared correlations of dependent variables. Overall, the factors that have an influence on brand love explained 47% of the variance in brand love, whereas 10% of actual integration, 15% of desired integration, 56% of loyalty, 57% of WOM, 62% of WTPP were explained by the factors associated with them.

The results of the overall analyses are depicted in Figure 4. The supported hypotheses are shown in black. Partially supported hypotheses are reflected in italics, and the rejected ones in grey. Please see Appendix I for the estimates of product category hypotheses.
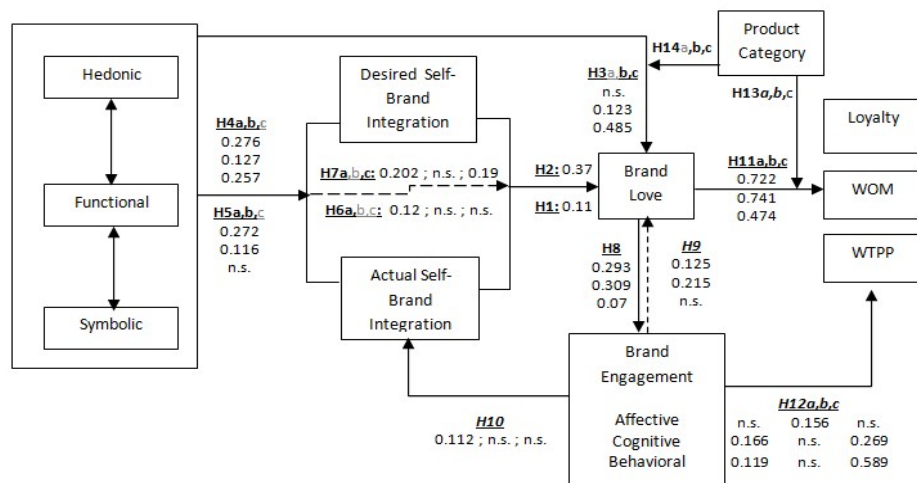
Fig. 4 Visual depiction of the structural model estimates and hypotheses results

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Overall, the results of this study not only support previous findings but also provide a holistic view of positive consumer-brand relationships that revolve around consumers' strong positive attachments towards brands.

While most of our hypotheses were supported, six hypotheses were rejected (see Appendix I). These six are related to the influence of hedonic resources on brand love (H3a), the relationship between symbolic resources and actual integration (H4c), to the relationship between functional/symbolic resources and brand love mediated by the actual integration (H6b & H6c) and desired integration (H7b) and to the product category-related difference on brand love-WTPP relationship (H13c). On the other hand, relationships from brand engagement to brand love (H9), actual integration (H10), loyalty (H12a), WOM (H12b) and WTPP (H12c) were partially supported, along with the partial confirmation of Hypotheses 14a and 14b, suggesting differences between product categories for brand love-WOM and brand love-loyalty and Hypothesis 7c for the influence of symbolic resources on brand love mediated by the desired integration. Control variables such as age, gender, and education were added to the model in order to ensure that the variation in the dependent variables was indeed due to the effect of the independent variables and moderators, and not due to the effect of the demographics. Some of the previous literature has identified gender differences in attachment style (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) and in the consequences of attachment (Collins & Read, 1990; Hazan & Shaver 1994). However, Bowlby (1969) states that attachment-related phenomena is not age-dependent and can be studied equally across all age groups

(Proksch, Orth, & Berthge, 2013). As expected, none of the control variables had any effect on the hypothesized relationships and no significant group differences were observed when we compared the structural model findings of any of the groups categorized according to control variables.

This chapter begins with the discussion of resources, self-brand integration and their relationship with brand love through the suggested self-inclusion mechanism. We then examine the two-way relationship between brand love and brand engagement. And finally, we look at the factors affected by brand love and brand engagement.

6.1 Discussion of brand resources, brand-self integration and brand love

As Aron and Aron (1986, 1996) suggest, based on a value-expectancy approach, individuals enter and maintain relationships to achieve goals through the exchange of resources. Consumers undergo a similar evaluation regarding the hedonic, functional and symbolic functions of brands to help them attain their self-associated goals by appealing to consumers' both rational and emotional interests (Keller, 2001; 2012). Positive outcomes of these evaluations result in lower levels of self-brand distance reflected both in the actual and desired self-brand integration and thus expansion of the self through the brand (Alba & Lutz 2013) and may serve as a psychological basis for the creation of love. In addition, Ahuvia et al. (2009) posit that for love to occur and be distinguishable from passion or warmth, which are also experienced through resource evaluation and self-expansion, both desired and actual integration should be high. This suggests that consumers' resource evaluation may influence brand love. However, there will be an indirect effect through a self-inclusion mechanism, reflected in actual and desired self-brand integration.

Our results, first of all, indicate that hedonic and functional resources lead to both desired and actual integration, whereas symbolic resources only influence desired integration. Contrary to the suggestions of Franzak, Makarem and Jae (2014), who mention functional benefits providing the "essence of the brand," and Karjaluoto et al. (2016), who find no connection between hedonic products and brand love among the three types of resources that we consider, hedonic resources reflecting consumers' memories on brand experiences (Chitturi et al., 2008) seem to be influential in both aspects of integration (0.272 for actual and 0.276 for desired integration), confirming that self-actualization needs are extremely prominent in love creation (Maslow, 1962) and life themes help to form a strong brand-self connection (Fournier & Yao, 1997). Hedonic experiences are followed by functional resources (0.116) when we consider overall effects on actual integration, and symbolic resources (0.257) in the case of the effects on desired integration. Functional resources are the least effective contributor to desired integration with 0.127. These results indicate that when consumers associate with the brand at the actual-self level, they initially appraise experiential aspects of the relationship, and then evaluate the usage performance of the brand in solving their problems. Symbolic related assessments that reflect personality and group membership of the consumer (Aaker, 1991; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) do not play a role here. On the other hand, consumers' evaluations of hedonic, symbolic, and functional benefits all determine their desire to connect with the brand at an idealized entity level. We also test the influence of brand engagement on actual integration (leading further to brand love) and find that affective brand engagement leads to actual integration (0.112), but this effect is not evident for behavioral or cognitive engagement.

The results of the mediation hypotheses analysis, which suggests that consumers' evaluations of the brand resources lead to brand love over the assessment of consumers' and brands' actual and ideal identity overlap, show that, particularly for hedonic resources, the path to brand love is mediated by both actual and desired integration. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) find a rather weaker direct influence from hedonic brands to brand love. Our results add to their findings and suggest that the path for hedonic products to create brand love lies in a brand's ability to integrate itself with both the consumer's actual and ideal self. As we refer to the experiential aspect of hedonic products, this integration can be achieved by creating several different experiences for the consumer. Hence, it may be suggested that a coherent omni-channel strategy is particularly useful for hedonic products. On the contrary, the path from functional resources to brand love is strong and significant over a direct path. Similarly, symbolic resources directly and strongly influence brand love rather than a mediated route through actual integration and this effect is as strong as the one found by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006). Nevertheless, for the symbolic resources, we also find a rather weak indirect effect on brand love through ideal integration, suggesting that different resources have different routes for love creation.

We further find that the relationships between functional/symbolic resources and brand love are category-dependent. Accordingly, the functional resources-brand love relationship is stronger for food and beverages (0.291), followed by clothing and shoes (0.198) and lastly by consumer durables and electronics (0.113). On the other hand, for the symbolic resources-brand love relationship, the clothing and shoes category displays the strongest impact (0.488), followed by consumer durables and electronics (0.334) and finally food and beverages (0.156), which is contrary to previous research that indicates that consumer-brand relationships are consistent not

only across product but also across involvement categories (Huang, 2012). Yet our results confirm our expectations, as we would anticipate the influence of symbolic resources on brand love to be most profound for highly visible product categories such as clothing and shoes.

We discovered a slightly weaker relationship between actual integration and brand love (0.11), while a more profound (0.37) effect of desired integration on love was assessed. Accordingly, we conclude that for love to exist, consumers to a higher extent need to admire the brand so that they desire to be united with that ideal brand. This finding is enhanced by the strong influence of hedonic and symbolic resources on desired integration, which Park et al. (2006) refer to as enriching the self, which refers to providing the consumer the opportunity to add value to the self through close contact with the brand. Hence, we can confidently infer that for love to occur, both aspects of integration are important, where inspirational images of the brands in positioning the brand, as an idealized entity, are more prominent. As stated earlier, Ahuvia et al. (2009), relying on one of the main tenets of the Self-Expansion Model, posit that love prevails when both aspects of integration are high, which also distinguishes love from other feelings such as simple brand affect or liking (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Hung (2014) finds evidence that brand-self-congruence enhances the brand attachment process, but his study takes only actual congruence into consideration. Our results extend previous studies and demonstrate that even though evaluation over the actual images is important, in assessing a brand's identity and one's selves, consumers adopt a "self-expressive uncertainty" approach (Lam, Ahearne, Mullins, Hayati, & Schillewaert, 2012) and hence are expected to develop deeper feelings for the brands that they regard as an idealized identity.

To have a deeper understanding on the perceived integration levels of our respondents, we ran descriptive analyses on actual and ideal integration. In terms of actual integration, 89% of our respondents responded higher than 3 out of 7 with a standard deviation of 1.263 and a variance of 1.595. Similarly, for desired integration, 97.5% respondents had scores higher than 3 out of 7 with a standard deviation of 1.19 and a variance of 1.417. Hence, the majority of our respondents declared high levels for both actual and desired integration. Yet it is also evident that the desired integration levels are higher than actual integration levels in general. Our results confirm that consumers associated both current and anticipated uniteness with the brand influence feelings of love; nevertheless, it is further demonstrated that in the case of love, desired closeness reflecting one's self-concept in the social environment is more important.

As a summary, our findings on the resources-brand love relationship suggest that, particularly for the evaluation of hedonic resources in terms of image integration linking the consumer and the brand, consumers need to evaluate their subjective experiences with the brand, where positive experiences over a cognitive evaluation lead to the development and maintenance of love (Langner, Bruns, Fischer, & Rossiter, 2014). On the other hand, for symbolic evaluation, there is no need for the consumer to particularly have an actual image related experience and later evaluation with the brand. This reflects the perceptions of consumers as incidental sources of the integration evaluation, so they do not follow a cognitive pattern; instead, they result in a more affective state, namely love. For the functional resources, as the lowest level of customer-product contact, positive instrumental experiences directly lead to brand love, without the consumer going over an identity evaluation. Overall, contrary to the recent findings of Trudeau and Shobeiri (2016)

who emphasize the influence of experiential benefits over self-expression on the strength of consumer-brand relationships, among all factors hypothesized in our model leading to love, symbolic resources were found to be significantly more important than the others. Adding to the effect of symbolic resources, consumers also put great emphasis on the social roles of the brands, so particularly the brands idealized images play a noteworthy role in brand love creation.

Our results further demonstrate that love occurs when all elements of consumer-brand relationship experiences are present. Yet they may follow different routes in creating brand love. Consequently, when we consider the route over actual integration between the brand and consumer to brand love, we observe that consumers, when cognitively evaluating the state of their current identity with a brand's identity, put greater emphasis on hedonic benefits gained from the relationship, followed by functional and symbolic ones. On the other hand, for idealized identity assessments, functional benefits are seen as the least important. As the path from ideal consumer-brand integration to love is considerably stronger than the one between actual integration to love, this finding adds to the importance of emotional memories and experiences in the formation of love. Hence, contrary to the general belief that brands need to perform at least at the basic level to fulfill consumer expectations to develop relationships, as Langner, Bruns, Fischer, and Rossiter (2014) over consumer interviews conclude, that more personal and particularly more emotional experiences may become points of differentiation in evoking feelings of love rather than just product usage satisfaction. These experiences further may provide an additional desire to preserve the relationship. These findings extend the discussion and controversy on the importance of symbolic versus instrumental drivers to create identification (Lam et al., 2012) by adding

hedonic resources into the equation and by acknowledging the effect of each driver on both actual and desired integration. Moreover, our findings support that brand love is distinct from its antecedent satisfaction (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), with love having a more major affective focus rather than a cognitive judgment.

Another important additional finding of this dissertation is that product categories have an effect on the impact of resources on brand love. More specifically, clothing and shoes are found to have stronger symbolic resources-brand love relationships, whereas for the functional part, it is food and beverages. Hence, even though both resources directly influence consumers' love feelings, for different product categories, consumer-brand relationships would display different strengths and therefore have different levels of importance, contradicting the findings of Fetscherin et al. (2014) and emphasizing the importance of positioning in brand love creation.

6.2 Discussion on brand love and brand engagement relationship

In this study the interplay concerning brand love and brand engagement is analyzed by taking both aspects of the relationship into consideration: first, brand love influencing engagement and second, a relationship in the opposite direction, where engagement displays an effect on brand engagement. Therefore, we developed two competing hypotheses under the umbrella of the Self-Expansion Model.

When individuals are in love with a brand, they regard this brand as their own (Aron et al., 2011) and show the highest level of attachment (Park et al., 2006). They are willing to make sacrifices and personal investments in the relationship (Park et al., 2010; Van Lange et al., 1997), where high emotional arousal leads to higher levels of engagement (Franzac et al., 2014). Just like in interpersonal relationships,

they try to stay in close contact with that brand (Fraley & Shaver, 2000) by either sharing their feelings/experiences with others or by being more involved with the brand than compatible brands in the market (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Thomson et al., 2005) in order to expand and to connect with the brand at a deeper level. Though not relying on the Self-Expansion Theory, Kaufmann , Loureiro, and Manarioti (2016) also suggest that, conceptually, loving consumers would be more likely to co-create with the brand. Hence, we expect that existing self-expansion would trigger consumers' interest in relationship continuation and in cognitive, affective, and behavioral activities related to the brand, and our results confirm this effect.

Brand love in particular is found to have a stronger influence on cognitive engagement (0.309) rather than a slightly weaker affective engagement (0.293) and an almost insignificant behavioral engagement (0.070). Our results indicate that when consumers are in love with a product, they like to hear more information about the product, follow the product's latest news and are particularly cognitively involved with it. This finding is in line with Kaufmann et al.'s (2016) expectations on the impact of brand love on the co-creative brand engagement that may be enhanced by brand representatives' brand related communications. This interest is even stronger than the positive emotional experiences associated with using the brand, despite the conceptual similarities between brand love and affective brand engagement. Moreover, for consumers, being in love apparently does not mean they also invest their various different resources on behalf of their relationship. Consequently, what consumers experience can still be practically explained in the Self-Expansion Theory. Consumers look for self-expansion opportunities and find the easiest way to do so by cognitively engaging with the brand. This finding emphasizes the

importance of brand communications in creating awareness among the prospect consumers and among the consumers who are already strongly bonded with the brand, signaling that highly attached consumers are still curious about the brand and welcome brand communications. On top of that, although Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2009) demonstrate empirically that brand love is an important contributor to brand engagement, they do not analyze the effect on the sub-dimensions of engagement. Our results acknowledge the relationship between the two displays of strong and committed relationships; we also extend their work by emphasizing that theoretical and practical investigations that only take the behavioral aspect of engagement and leave particularly the cognitive part aside fall short of a complete understanding.

The reverse hypothesis stating that brand engagement would have a positive effect on brand love is only partially supported. The results confirm the influence of cognitive (0.215) and affective brand engagement on brand love (0.125) but not its relationship with behavioral engagement. Again, we can conclude that when it comes to the relationship of brand love and brand engagement, the cognitive part plays an important role in generating love, which is also in-line with the high involvement hierarchy-of-effects model, where cognition is followed by affect and then conation. As this relationship could not be tested over a structural model, the proposed path where cognitive engagement is followed by brand love and later by loyalty could also not be tested and is therefore not stated as a formal hypothesis.

6.3 Discussion of factors affected by brand love and brand engagement

In strong consumer-brand relationships, consumers' needs for closeness are evoked by strong attachments leading to commitment-related behaviors (Park et al., 2006).

Both brand engagement and brand love are displays of the consumer attachments to brands and are believed to lead to these behaviors. High emotional connections result in consumers' loving a brand, which further leads to various positive consequences such as positive WOM, brand evangelism and high brand loyalty. Out of many behaviors in consumer-brand relationships that reflect consumers' commitment towards brands, we identify the most frequently mentioned and most important ones; namely loyalty, WOM, and WTPP.

Our results confirm that brand love is highly correlated with all identified attachment outcomes: WOM (0.741), loyalty (0.722) and WTPP (0.474). On the other hand, differences exist for the effect of cognitive, affective and behavioral brand engagement on the identified consequences, leading to partially supported hypotheses. More specifically, cognitive engagement and behavioral engagement influence both loyalty (0.166; 0.119) and WTPP (0.269 ; 0.589), whereas WOM is enhanced only by affective engagement (0.156). In particular, we take notice of the particularly strong influence of behavioral engagement on WTPP. The results further shed light on the fact that acknowledging all sub-dimensions of brand engagement leads to a deeper understanding of the concept, with different types of engagement leading to different consumer-brand relationship outcomes.

Previous scholars have mentioned that product category differences may not have an influence on consumer-brand relationships. Our results with respect to brand love and its expected outcomes partially support this. The relationships between love and WOM, loyalty, and WTPP are significant and strong for all product categories, but particularly for loyalty and WOM there are category-induced differences in the strengths. For instance, the brand love-loyalty relationship is stronger for consumer durables and electronics (0.842), whereas for the brand love-WOM relationship, it is

the strongest for food and beverages (0.770). In contrast, the brand love-WTPP is similarly strong for all categories (See Appendix I for the reported structural model estimates). Previous studies analyzing consumer-brand relationships concentrate mostly on hedonic products, as these are more closely related to emotional responses (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) and find no differences in terms of product category. On the other hand, the present study employs a large array of product categories providing the consumer all hedonic, symbolic and functional benefits and we can conclude that although consumer-brand relationships are not category-specific in terms of significance, there are differences in the magnitude of the relationships due to product categories. Nevertheless, we see very minor differences for WTPP, most likely because it is also closely related to other factors such as involvement or consumers' quality perceptions (Steenkamp, Van Heerde, & Geyskens, 2010).

Overall, when we analyze the influence of brand engagement and brand love on the outcomes, the findings emphasize the importance of the love felt by the consumers generating all attachment consequences, but specifically loyalty and WOM, whereas WTPP is particularly enhanced by behavioral engagement. The findings give rise to the acknowledgement of the different roles of brand love and brand engagement played in consumer-brand relationships in generating different attachment related outcomes.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Summary and conclusions

Branding and the power of strong brands are inevitable in today's environment. With numerous choices in the market, consumers are confronted with various challenging decision-making scenarios, even in their everyday shopping. The market is full of information about the benefits of or differences between several products and services in marketing communications, indicating that branding has become a major strategic tool for companies to differentiate themselves.

Brands help companies to create a superior product/service image in the minds of consumers and in stealing a place in their shopping routine. These aspects of brands further enable consumers to rely on decision shortcuts and hence make their purchasing decisions easier. In a way, branding puts a label on all of the usage benefits associated with products or services and marketers are aware that positioning offerings on unique benefits adds to strong relationships. Nevertheless, while marketers take for granted that branding will have a positive effect on their sales figures, they have recently started to realize that consumers develop strong bonds only for a limited number of brands and stay loyal to those brands no matter what. Within the consumer-brand relationship framework, this bond is referred to as "brand love", resembling interpersonal love in many aspects: it is very difficult to create, and most of the time the relationship partners do not know the reasons for their deep feelings and attachments. The anticipated consequences are also quite similar: making sacrifices for the continuation of the relationship, deep commitment and loyalty. Relevant for both consumers and marketers, this dissertation aimed to

gain a deeper understanding of brand love, with its antecedents and consequences, and tries to answer questions such as which type of brand resources are used and to what extent do these lead to brand love; how brand love is related to brand engagement; and what the consequences are of brand love and brand engagement. Hence, our overall research objective was to have a better understanding of consumer-brand relationships that revolve around brand love. With this aim, we constructed an exhaustive research model and validated it through SEM with a large data set so as to obtain generalizable results.

Existing studies suggest direct effects of consumers' evaluations on brand love, but to our knowledge, there are no studies analyzing their interplay with love over a holistic framework that incorporates hedonic, functional and symbolic resources. In addition, most of the studies that deal with relationships concerning love concentrate on products of a particular category. Another shortcoming of previous studies is that although they notice the influence of love on engagement, most of them define engagement as a unified phenomenon without taking into consideration the literature on engagement that identifies it with three dimensions. Accordingly, this study contributes to consumer-brand relationship research and theory in marketing by developing a generalizable model that defines the relationship between the hedonic, functional, and symbolic resources of the brands and consumers' love as well as the interaction between the suggested dimensions of brand engagement and brand love. We constructed our final research model after a rigorous exploratory phase, tested it by a survey-based pilot study followed by the testing of the final model with a large sample using structural equation modeling (SEM) as the preferred data analysis method. In order to do that, as one of the side accomplishments of the study, by combining items from previously validated scales

with items from literature and interviews, we developed scales to measure three types of brand resources and behavioral brand engagement and conceptually validated those scales.

The proposed model performed well and we found that, for love to exist, idealized identity assessments reflected in desired identity overlap between the brand and the consumer should be strong. It even plays a more important role than the comparison of the real reflections. Moreover, desired identity integration was particularly enhanced by the hedonic benefits. We also found that the direct influence of symbolic resources on brand love is very strong, overcoming the indirect effect through integration, which is also true for functional benefits. Among the main objectives of the study, we intended to understand the relationship between engagement and brand love. Basically, the question that we wanted to answer was whether there is a connection between the consumer loving a brand and making sacrifices for the brand. We defined brand engagement as having three dimensions — cognitive, affective and behavioral— and reflecting consumers' corresponding actions and reactions in brand interactions. Based on this conceptualization and on in-depth interviews with brand advocates, combined with a literature review on brand engagement, we developed a scale to capture the dimensions of brand engagement.

The results of our analysis show that brand love has a more robust influence on cognitive engagement than affective and behavioral engagement, which is close to insignificant. Hence, as we identified cognitive engagement in terms of consumers' interest on the latest news or information of the brand, our results underline the importance of brand communication as being one of the main tenets of consumer-brand relationships. Based on these findings, one can conclude that when consumers

are in love with a brand, they rely on brand communication to further their relationship but are rather hesitant to make sacrifices such as defending the brand in public. However, we also find a link between affective engagement and actual integration, indicating that when consumers are happy and proud to use a brand, they feel strongly unified with it, which also creates another route towards feelings of love.

We further observed that when it comes to the influence of brand love and brand engagement on the anticipated relationship outcomes such as WOM and loyalty, brand love is a strong contributor, whereas for WTPP it is behavioral engagement, which implies that consumers' willingness to forgo their time and energy resources implies strongly that they are also ready to pay more, that is, to forgo their financial resources on behalf of the relationship. We also test for the influence of category differences on two main types of relationships: firstly on the resources and brand love and secondly on the brand love and outcomes. Our results point to the fact that that there are no category differences in terms of the direction or type of the relationships, but product categories make a difference in the magnitude.

Overall, in this dissertation we present a holistic and generalizable view of the relationship between consumers and brands, using a large array of brands and a large sample of consumers. Our findings first of all signify that there are two ways consumers may love brands: one goes through a cognitive identity evaluation of themselves and the brand, leading to identity integration and eventually to love; and here the hedonic positioning of the brands seem to be quite significant in creating a love feeling. The other way is when consumers develop feelings towards brands directly through symbolic and functional experiences with the brand, where symbolic resources of the brands play a more important role. Secondly, our findings indicate

that brand engagement — more specifically the cognitive aspect of engagement and brand love — are closely linked to each other. Even more specifically, we find that consumers who are high in love are generally more willing to elaborate and cognitively process information about the brands, that is, consumers are more curious about the latest news or information about the brand. This reverse interaction is also true, where more intense cognitive engagement leads to higher levels of love. We also find a moderate connection between affective engagement and brand love, but not for behavioral engagement, indicating that loving consumers enjoy being with the brand, but are not so willing to make physical or financial sacrifices on behalf of their relationship. Lastly, loving consumers talk positively about the brand, are loyal to it and to some extent are willing to spend more for the brand, which was true for all product categories in the study. However, consumers who are affectively engaged only talk about the brand, whereas cognitively and behaviorally engaged consumers are both loyal and are willing to spend more. Hence, our findings support brand love as an important factor in consumer brand relationships leading to desired outcomes, but for consumers to be willing to spend more for the brand, they also must be willing to sacrifice other resources.

7.2 Contributions to theory and implications for researchers and practitioners

This research provides important contributions to the literature on consumer-brand relationships. First, the self-inclusion mechanism suggested by the Self-Expansion Model of interpersonal relationships seems to apply fully for hedonic benefits. On the other hand, we find that even though there are ways for consumers to love symbolic and functional brands, particularly over an idealized self-integration path, the direct effects of creating brand love are so strong that suggesting that there are

two routes for brand love creation where the type of the benefit makes a distinction. Hence, in terms of the theory on consumer-brand relationships, not only do we reconcile findings in prior research over a holistic framework, we also extend theory in identifying two routes for brand love creation based on the type of primary benefit consumers associate with the brand.

In this dissertation, we also provide a deeper analysis on the brand love–brand engagement interaction. In order to do that, we validated a scale to capture three dimensions of brand engagement and demonstrate that brand love is highly correlated with the cognitive dimension rather than the moderate affective and almost insignificant behavioral dimensions. While we acknowledge that it requires a further analysis on the contingency situations between love and engagement relationship, the effective measurement of all dimensions of brand engagement and their interplay with love serves as the second contribution of this dissertation. Yet another contribution of the study is the acknowledgement that love is better at creating loyalty than brand engagement, WOM and WTPP. We extend previous research by analyzing the effects of the dimensions of brand engagement and by finding that different types of engagement lead to different outcomes. In addition to the provision of a large holistic model on consumer-brand relationships, another significant contribution is the demonstration that most of the relationships are category independent in terms of their nature and direction. However, product category may have an influence on the magnitude of the relationships.

Our findings have also implications for brand managers. Current research is overtly involved with how much each brand's symbolic, hedonic and functional assessments relate to generating brand love. We find that, depending on the type of perceived benefit, consumer identification of true or ideal self with the brand is not

the only route to brand love. Hence, brand managers should begin their positioning strategy by carefully assessing their brand's primary benefits and making strategic investments to facilitate actual and idealized identification, especially when they are dealing with a hedonic-focused brand rather than the general belief of symbolic brands. However, managers must still focus on symbolic benefits, as they are effective in creating brand love over their idealized integrated images and are also directly and strongly related to love. This may be particularly relevant to luxury brands, as they create high levels of idealized worlds. Our findings suggest that having a single positioning runs counter to today's consumer decision-making; hence, brand managers need still be concerned about the symbolic messages they distribute by focusing on the hedonic benefits at the same time. In a similar fashion, the functional benefits may create satisfaction among the users of the brand. Nevertheless, for brand managers who are aiming to create brand love among their consumers, functional benefits should be the last focus. Managers should also consider the primary product category of their brands and position their products accordingly.

Lately, mainly due to recent developments in technology that enable a more interactive and co-creative environment between consumers and brands, most marketing professionals are concerned about the engagement their brands are creating with the consumers. It is also a fact that most managers, though they anticipate positive and over-achieving results from these encounters, are blind-sighted in this new world reality, mainly focusing on behavioral site metrics, such as clicks, likes and so on, as they provide measureable indicators. Our results indicate that brand love is still the major factor that creates loyalty, and that WOM, along with WTPP, are also generated by love, though to a lesser extent. On the other hand,

cognitive engagement, in terms of consumers' interest in the content generated, seems to be of paramount importance in generating brand love, loyalty, and WTPP. This is a warning sign for brand managers, encouraging them not to concentrate solely on the analytics to justify investment. Consequently, managers should first and foremost concentrate on creating strong and committed relationships between consumers and their brands. In terms of engagement, we suggest that brand managers initially identify their main objectives on consumer outcomes and focus on the suitable type of engagement, while including all three dimensions into their strategies and aim to measure not just behavioral engagement. This requires a strategic approach to engagement, not only with respect to the content but also in terms of the medium, and leads scholars and practitioners to re-consider and re-apply the rules of marketing communications to engage consumers.

7.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Despite our efforts in building a holistic theoretical framework to shed light on strong and committed consumer-brand relationships, this dissertation has several limitations, which may give rise to future research possibilities. Our main limitation lies in the conceptual complexity of the tested model and the similarity of most of the constructs in the model. Most of the items in the survey intended to capture constructs related to strong and committed consumer-brand relationships that are conceptually strongly linked with each other, which adds to the general reasons for the existence of common method biases such as common rater effect or measurement context effect (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Consequently, we believe that although we have done all the procedural solutions suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003), such as

separating the items measuring dependent and independent variables and anonymity of the respondents, it gave rise to a common method bias of 42.9%.

Though our aim was to create a parsimonous model reflecting a holistic view, our model is rather complex, as there are many relationships connecting many aspects of consumer-brand relationships with each other. Hence, it is very difficult to interpret the model, which constitutes the second major limitation of the study. A third limitation is that the study has a cross-sectional design and therefore lacks a demonstration of causality between brand love and brand engagement, which can be better demonstrated through an experimental setting to test specifically in-depth whether significant changes are observed on the dimensions of brand engagement and needs to be addressed as a future study. In order to gain a deeper knowledge on the brand love-brand engagement relationship, future researchers may identify contingency situations by relying on previous research regarding interpersonal relationships, the Attachment Theory and the Self-Expansion Theory. For instance, different attachment styles such as avoidant, secure and anxious (Paulssen & Fournier, 2007; Swaminathan et al., 2009) may play a role, where particularly secure base schema primed individuals are more inclined to attachment and more likely to build stronger bonds with the brands and to engage with them in a more profound way.

According to previous research on interpersonal relationships, the length of the relationship may also have an influence on the speed of falling in love and feelings of passion (Langner, Bruns, Fischer, & Rossiter, 2014), where brand flings are found to display deep engagement and investment (Alvarez & Fournier, 2012). Moreover, the Self-Expansion Theory emphasizes that emotions and their corresponding motivations may change as the relationship matures (Reimann et al.,

2012), so the length of consumer-brand relationship may also have an effect on the love-engagement relationship. Although that influence has not been investigated in this study, we asked our respondents to indicate the depth and length of their relationship with the brand they had specified. Future researchers may either use that information as a criterion in experimental settings or develop longitudinal models to demonstrate the effect of relationship-maturity on love and engagement.

Product category indications serve as another limitation, which also leads to a new research path. We allowed our respondents to indicate a product category of their choice and to name a love brand and answer the survey questions accordingly. This gave us the opportunity to test the robustness of the model in different product categories. But data on product categories such as the services industry (e.g. airlines, banks) were too small to be included for a separate analysis. As a result, we encourage future researchers to concentrate on brand love in service industries and test the model with possible similarities and/or differences.

ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF BRAND LOVE AND BRAND ATTACHMENT

Author (Year)	Dimensions	Antecedents	Consequences
Ahuvia (1993) Ahuvia, Batra, & Bagozzi (2009)		1. Desired level of integration: perceived intrinsic value: pleasure; survival&security; social needs; esteem&achievement; self-actualization; existential meaning and perceived quality 2. Actual level of integration: physical incorporation; cognitive incorporation investiture of social meaning; creation; contamination & boundary breaking experiences	loyalty commitment missing the LO if lost altruistic interest in LO
Ahuvia (2005)		identity congruence	
Carroll & Ahuvia (2006)		hedonic brand ; self-expressive brand	loyalty
Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi (2012)	self-brand integration ; passion-driven behaviors ; positive emotional connection long-term relationship ; positive attitude valence ; anticipated separation distress	brand quality	loyalty WOM resistance to negative information
Albert & Merunka (2013)		brand global identification ; brand trust	willingness to pay a premium commitment WOM

Author (Year)	Dimensions	Antecedents	Consequences
Albert , Merunka, & Valette-Florence (2008)	First order: idealization ; intimacy ; pleasure ; dream ; memories ; unicity Second order: passion ; affection		loyalty WOM trust
Albert & Valette-Florence (2010)	affection ; passion		
Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen (2010)		brand identification	loyalty ; active engagement
Sarkar & Sreezish (2013)		self-expressiveness	brand jealousy
Wallace, Buil, & de Chernatony (2014)		brand engagement	WOM ; brand acceptance
Fetscherin (2014)			
Fetscherin, Boulanger, Filho, & Souki (2014)			loyalty ; purchase intention ; WOM
Heinrich, Albrecht, & Bauer (2012)	brand intimacy ; brand passion brand commitment		willingness to pay a premium ; forgive mistakes made by the brand
Japutra, Ekinci, & Simkin (2014)		self-congruity; experience; responsiveness quality; reputation; trust	intention to recommend; purchase; revisit; resilience to negative information; act of defending the brand
Esch, Langner, Schmitt, & Geus (2006)		brand satisfaction; brand trust	current purchase; future purchase
Belaid & Behi (2011)			brand commitment; brand trust
Thompson, MacInnis, & Park (2005)	affection ; passion ; connection		
Park, MacInnis, & Priester (2006)	brand-self-connection brand prominence		proximity maintenance; emotional security; safe haven; separation distress; loyalty; satisfaction; price premium
Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisengerich,& Iacobucci (2010)	brand-self-connection brand prominence		separation distress; actual purchase; purchase share; need share

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Author (Year)	Dimensions	Antecedents	Consequences
Grisaffe & Nguyen (2011)		emotional memory (people, places, situations) ; socialization(family, social group) ; superior marketing characteristics(4 ps, services) ; traditional customer outcomes(value, satisfaction, differentiation) ; user-derived benefits(sensory-pleasure, self-oriented & social-oriented goals)	
Park, Eisengerich, & Park (2013)	brand-self-connection brand prominence	enriching; enticing; enabling resources of the brand	purchase share; need share

DEFINITIONS, DIMENSIONS, ANTECEDENTS, AND CONSEQUENCES SUGGESTED IN THE LITERATURE

Author(s)	Concept	Definition	Dimensions	Suggested Antecedents	Suggested Consequences
Patterson et al. (2006)	Customer engagement	The level of a customer's physical, cognitive and emotional presence in their relationship with a service organization	Multidimensional: Absorption (C), dedication (E), vigor/interaction (B)		
Van Doorn et al. (2010)	Customer engagement	Customers' behavioral manifestation towards a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers such as word-of-mouth activity, recommendations, helping other customers, blogging, writing reviews	One-dimensional: Behavioral (B) manifestation in the form of valence, form or modality, scope, nature of its impact, and customer goals.	commitment, trust, goals, resources, firm-based, PEST, identity	customer, firm, economic, social and consumer welfare related ; The behavioral manifestations, other than purchases, can be both positive (i.e., posting a positive brand message on a blog) and negative (i.e., organizing public actions against a firm).
Brodie et al. (2011)a	Customer engagement	A psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships. It encompasses the customer's interactive experiences with the brand, is context-dependent and enhances consumers' experienced brand value	Multidimensional: (C), (E), (B)		commitment, trust, self-brand connections, consumers' emotional brand attachment, and brand loyalty
Brodie et al. (2011)b	Online consumer engagement	Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community involves specific interactive experiences between consumers and the brand, and/or other members of the community	Multidimensional: (C), (E), (B)		consumer loyalty, satisfaction, empowerment, connection, commitment and trust.
Sprott et al. (2009)	Brand engagement in self-concept	An individual difference representing consumers' propensity to include important brands as part of how they view themselves	One-dimensional , (E)		
Vivek (2009)	Customer engagement	The intensity of consumer's participation and connection with the organization's offerings, and/ or organized activities	Multidimensional: Enthusiasm (E), Conscious Participation (C), Social Interaction	Involvement, customer participation	Value, trust, affective commitment, WOM, Loyalty, brand community involvement

Author(s)	Concept	Definition	Dimensions	Suggested Antecedents	Suggested Consequences
Vivek et al. (2012)	Customer engagement	The intensity of an individual's participation and connection with the organization's offerings and activities initiated by either the customer or the organization	Multidimensional: (C), (E), (B)		
Vivek et al. (2014)	Customer engagement	The level of the customer's (or potential customer's) interactions and connections with the brand or firm's offerings, often involving others in the social network created around the brand/offering/activity	Multidimensional: Conscious attention (C), Enthused participation (E), Social Connection		
Hollebeek (2011)	Customer brand engagement	The level of a customer's motivational, brand-related, and context-dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity in brand interactions.	Multidimensional: (C), (E), (B)	Involvement, Interactivity, flow, satisfaction, Trust, Commitment	Rapport, Co-created value, Brand experience, Perceived quality, Satisfaction, Trust , Commitment, Customer value, loyalty
Hollebeek (2012)	Customer engagement			expected customer value (in the form of utilitarian and hedonic value)	actual customer value (in the form of utilitarian and hedonic value
Bowden (2009)	Customer engagement process	Psychological process" comprising cognitive and emotional aspects.	Multidimensional: (C), (E)	previous customer experience	emotional and calculative commitment resulting in trust and loyalty
Mollen and Wilson (2010)	Online brand engagement	The customer's cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as personified by the website or other computer-mediated entities designed to communicate brand value.	Multidimensional: Sustained cognitive processing (C), instrumental value (utility and relevance) (C), experiential value (emotional congruence with the narrative schema encountered in computer-mediated entities) (E)		
Wirzt et al. (2013)	Online brand community engagement	An identification with the OBC that results in interactive participation in the OBC	Multidimensional: (C), (E), (B)		
Porter et al. (2011)	Customer engagement	Class of behaviors that reflects community members' demonstrated willingness to participate and communicate with others-including the community sponsor, motivated by intrinsic needs.	One-dimensional: (B)		

Author(s)	Concept	Definition	Dimensions	Suggested antecedents	Suggested consequences
Ili´c (2008)	Consumer engagement	A contextual process that consists of interactions with 'engagement object(s)' over time and may exist at different levels.	Multidimensional: 1. Cognitive (C) 2. Emotional (E) 3. Behavioral (B) 4. Aspirational (A) 5. Social (S)		
Heath (2007)	Engagement with an ad	The amount of subconscious feeling occurring when an ad is being processed	One-dimensional: (E)		
Algesheimer et al. 2005	Brand community engagement	Positive influences of identifying with the brand community through the consumer's intrinsic motivation to interact/cooperate with community members. Community engagement results from the overlaps that members perceive between their own unique self-identity and their group-based identity	Multidimensional (stated in the discussion part for further analysis)		
Gambetti and Graffigna (2010)	Customer brand engagement		Multidimensional: relational and behavioral dimensions	psychological, social, interactive, relational, experiential and context-based factors	
Wang (2006)	Advertising engagement	A measure of the contextual relevance in which a brand's messages are framed and presented based on its surrounding context.	one-dimensional (C)		
Kumar et al. (2010)	customer's engagement value	CEV has 4 components: customer lifetime value, customer referral value, customer influencer value, customer knowledge value	multidimensional: (B), (A) and network		
Calder et al. (2009)	Consumer engagement with a website		two types of engagement with online media — personal and social-Interactive Engagement	experiences	
Hollebeek et al. (2014)	Consumer brand engagement	A consumer's positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions	Multidimensional: cognitive processing (C), affection (E), activation (B)		

Author(s)	Concept	Definition	Dimensions	Suggested antecedents	Suggested consequences
Hollebeek and Chen (2014)	Consumer brand engagement	Cognitive, emotional, behavioral investment in specific brand interactions	immersion (C) , passion (E) , activation (B)		positively-valenced CE : favorable or affirmative cognitive, emotional and behavioral brand-related expressions (e.g. consumers' purchase of a brand, brand usage-related enjoyment or distributing positive word-of-mouth) negatively-valenced CE: focal brand-related denial, rejection, avoidance and negative word-of-mouth
Goldsmith and Goldsmith (2012)	Brand engagement	The emotional tie that binds the customer to the brand and consequently to the company			loyalty, brand advocacy, brand equity, price insensivity
Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas (2016)	Consumer engagement	'the state that reflects consumers' individual dispositions toward engagement foci, which are context-specific. Engagement is expressed through varying levels of affective, cognitive, and behavioral manifestations that go beyond exchange situations'.	Multidimensional: cognitive, affective, behavioral (second-order) Enjoyment Enthusiasm Attention Absorption Sharing Learning Endorsing (first order)		

APPENDIX C

SURVEY ITEMS USED IN THE STUDY

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Pazarlama Doktora Programı kapsamında "Türkiye'de müşterilerin markalar ile olan ilişkisi"ni ölçmeyi hedefleyen bu çalışma bilimsel amaçlı olup araştırmada yer alan soruları eksiksiz olarak cevaplamanızı rica eder, katkılarınızdan dolayı teşekkür ederiz.

Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ettiğiniz takdirde ekteki formda istenen bilgileri sağlamanızı rica ediyoruz. İsminiz ve bilgileriniz tamamen gizli tutulacaktır. Çalışmaya katılmanız tamamen isteğe bağlıdır. Araştırmadan çekilmeniz durumunda verileriniz yok edilecektir. Sizden ücret talep etmiyoruz ve size herhangi bir ödeme yapmayacağız. Yapmak istediğimiz araştırmanın size herhangi bir risk getirmesi beklenmemektedir.

Bu formu imzalamadan önce, çalışmayla ilgili sorularınız varsa lütfen sorun. Daha sonra sorunuz olursa, Xxxx xxxx (Telefon: xxxxxxxxx) sorabilirsiniz. Araştırmayla ilgili haklarınız konusunda yerel etik kurullarına da danışabilirsiniz.

Bana anlatılanları ve yukarıda yazılanları anladım. Bu formun bir kopyasını aldım.

Çalışmaya katılmayı kabul ediyorum.

Katılımcı Adı-Soyadı:……………………………..

İmzası:…………………………………………

Tarih (gün/ay/yıl):........./.........../..............

SECTION 1

Please indicate three brands that you are in love with?

1.   ....

2.   ....

3.   ....

Please indicate which one of these three brands do you love the most: ....

Please indicate how many years you know this brand (Please give an exact number):

....

Please indicate number of different product categories you purchased from this brand

(Please give an exact number): ....

Age   :   ....

Gender :   ☐ Female   ☐ Male

Education level: ☐ Elementary school ☐ Secondary school ☐ High school
                     ☐ College or university degree ☐Graduate degree

City of residence: ....

SECTION 2

Considering the brand you mentioned as the brand you love the most and your relationship with that brand, please indicate how much you agree on the statements below on the scale of 1 (Absolutely disagree) to 7 (Absolutely agree)

1. This is a wonderful brand (bl_1)

2. (brand) makes me feel good (bl_2)

3. (brand) is totally awesome (bl_3)

4. I have neutral feelings about (brand) (bl_4)

5. (brand) makes me very happy (bl_5)

6. I love (brand) (bl_6)

7. I have no particular feelings about (brand) (bl_7)

8. (brand) is a pure delight (bl_8)

9. I am passionate about (brand) (bl_9)

10. I'm very attached to (brand) (bl_10)

11. I like to learn more about (brand) (ce_1)

12. I pay a lot of attention to anything about (brand) (ce_2)

13. I keep up with things related to (brand) (ce_3)

14. Anything related to (brand) grabs my attention (ce_4)

15. I spend a lot of time using (brand), compared to other brands in the category (be_1)

16. I am willing to spend a lot of money improving and finetuning a product from (brand) (be_3)

17. I am willing to spend a lot of time improving and finetuning a product from (brand) (be_4)

18. I will immediately contact (brand) if I detect something wrong with (brand) (be_5)

19. I try to support (brand) in every aspect (be_6)

20. I defend this brand when anything negative is said (be_7)

21. I am willing to spend a lot of effort improving and finetuning a product from (brand) (be_2)

22. I feel very positive when I use (brand) (ae_1)

23. Using (brand) makes me happy (ae_2)

24. I feel good when I use (brand) (ae_3)

25. I'm proud to use (brand) (ae_4)

SECTION 3

26. How would you express the degree of overlap between your own personal

identity and the identity of (brand)

27. How would you express the desired degree of overlap between your own ideal identity and the identity of (brand)
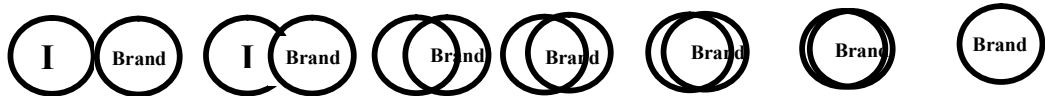
SECTION 4

Considering the brand you mentioned as the brand you love the most and your

relationship with that brand, please indicate how much you agree on the statements

below on the scale of 1 (Absolutely disagree) to 7 (Absolutely agree)

28. (brand) has consistent quality (fnc_2)

29. (brand) is well made (fnc_3)

30. (brand) offers value for money (fnc_7)

31. (brand) is beautiful (fnc_4)

32. (brand) is cute (fnc_5)

33. (brand) is functional (fnc_6)

34. (brand) is one that I would enjoy (hed_1)

35. (brand) would give me pleasure (hed_2)

36. Thinking of (brand) brings back good memories (hed_3)

37. I have had a lot of memorable experiences with (brand) (hed_4)

38. I have fond memories of (brand) (hed_5)

39. (brand) helps me to feel acceptable (sym_1)

40. (brand) improves the way I am perceived (sym_2)

41. (brand) makes a good impression on other people (sym_3)

42. (brand) gives me social approval (sym_4)

SECTION 5

Please indicate how likely you will do the following on the scale of 1(Never) to 7 (Most likely)

43. Recommend (brand) to others (wom_1)

44. Recommend (brand) to someone else who seeks my advice (wom_2)

45. Say positive things about (brand) (wom_3)

SECTION 6

Considering the brand you mentioned as the brand you love the most and your relationship with that brand, please indicate how much you agree on the statements below on the scale of 1 (Absolutely disagree) to 7 (Absolutely agree)

46. The price of (brand) would have to go up quite a bit before I would switch to
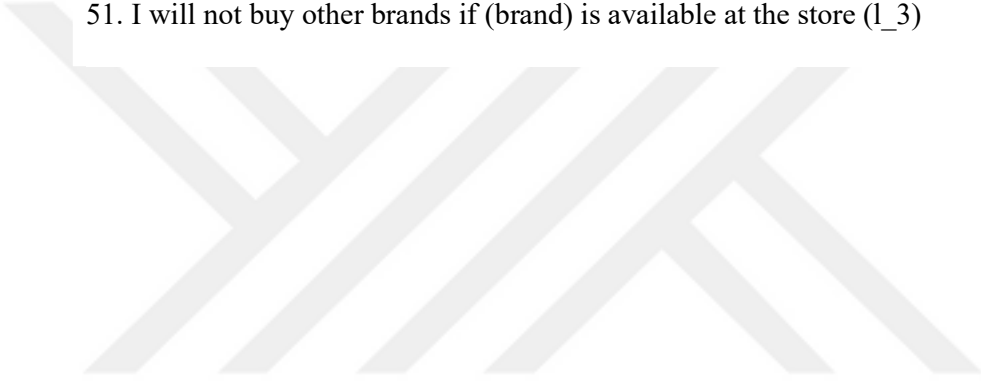
another brand (wtpp_1)

47. I am willing to pay a higher price for (brand) than for other brands (wtpp_2)

48. I am willing to pay a lot more for (brand) than other brands (wtpp_3)

49. I consider myself to be loyal to (brand) (l_1)

50. (brand) would be my first choice (l_2)

51. I will not buy other brands if (brand) is available at the store (l_3)

APPENDIX D

SKEWNESS AND KURTOSIS OF ITEMS IN THE STUDY

		bl_1	bl_2	bl_3	bl_4r	bl_5	bl_6	bl_7r	bl_8	bl_9	bl_10
N	Valid	744	744	744	744	744	744	744	744	744	744
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Skewness		-0.846	-1.146	-0.809	-0.173	-0.99	-1.014	-0.023	-0.748	-0.816	-0.702
Std. Error of Skewness		0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09
Kurtosis		0.153	1.37	0.321	-1.286	0.847	0.981	-1.268	0.052	0.185	-0.172
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179
		l_1	l_2	l_3	wom_1	wom_2	wom_3	symb_1	symb_2	symb_3	symb_4
N	Valid	744	744	744	744	744	744	744	744	744	744
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Skewness		-0.809	-1.032	-0.426	-1.103	-1.285	-1.123	-0.667	-0.665	-0.812	-0.579
Std. Error of Skewness		0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09
Kurtosis		0.033	0.798	-0.854	0.887	1.549	1.037	-0.355	-0.367	0.178	-0.466
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179
		fnc_1	fnc_2	fnc_3	fnc_4	fnc_5	fnc_6	fnc_7	wtpp_1	wtpp_2	wtpp_3
N	Valid	744	744	744	744	744	744	744	744	744	744
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Skewness		-0.714	-1.223	-1.277	-1.157	-1.093	-0.98	-1.134	-0.756	-0.53	-0.425
Std. Error of Skewness		0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09
Kurtosis		-0.176	1.592	2.041	1.265	1.125	0.624	1.366	-0.285	-0.374	-0.694
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179

		ae_1	ae_2	ae_3	ae_4	ce_1	ce_2	ce_3	ce_4
N	Valid	744	744	744	744	744	744	744	744
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Skewness		-1.288	-1.295	-1.206	-0.725	-0.802	-0.602	-0.506	-0.708
Std. Error of Skewness		0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09
Kurtosis		1.54	2.074	1.483	-0.138	0.042	-0.409	-0.547	-0.137
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179

		be_1	be_2	be_3	be_4	be_5	be_6	be_7
N	Valid	744	744	744	744	744	744	744
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Skewness		-0.949	-0.316	-0.215	-0.285	-0.623	-0.444	-0.66
Std. Error of Skewness		0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09
Kurtosis		0.693	-0.654	-0.955	-0.84	-0.362	-0.565	-0.248
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179

		hed_1	hed_2	hed_3	hed_4	hed_5	IOS1	IOS2
N	Valid	744	744	744	744	744	744	744
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Skewness		-1.146	-1.106	-0.734	-0.668	-0.676	-0.652	-0.581
Std. Error of Skewness		0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09
Kurtosis		1.249	1.241	-0.062	-0.155	-0.243	0.302	0.292
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179

COMMUNALITIES

Item	Extraction
I feel very positive when I use (brand) (ae_1)	0.718
Using (brand) makes me happy (ae_2)	0.724
I feel good when I use (brand) (ae_3)	0.737
I'm proud to use (brand) (ae_4)	0.707
I like to learn more about (brand) (ce_1)	0.688
I pay a lot of attention to anything about (brand) (ce_2)	0.686
I keep up with things related to (brand) (ce_3)	0.743
Anything related to (brand) grabs my attention (ce_4)	0.739
I spend a lot of time using (brand), compared to other brands in the category (be_1)	0.517
I am willing to spend a lot of effort improving and finetuning a product from (brand) (be_2)	0.715
I am willing to spend a lot of money improving and finetuning a product from (brand) (be_3)	0.725
I am willing to spend a lot of time improving and finetuning a product from (brand) (be_4)	0.755
I will immediately contact (brand) if I detect something wrong with (brand) (be_5)	0.578
I try to support (brand) in every aspect (be_6)	0.731
I defend this brand when anything negative is said (be_7)	0.681
This is a wonderful brand (bl_1)	0.688
(brand) makes me feel good (bl_2)	0.704
(brand) is totally awesome (bl_3)	0.66
I have neutral feelings about (brand) (bl_4)	0.507
(brand) makes me very happy (bl_5)	0.67
I love (brand) (bl_6)	0.67
I have no particular feelings about (brand) (bl_7)	0.503
(brand) is a pure delight (bl_8)	0.655
I am passionate about (brand) (bl_9)	0.727
I'm very attached to (brand) (bl_10)	0.707
IOS2	0.876

Item	Extraction
(brand) is one that I would enjoy (hed_1)	0.71
(brand) would give me pleasure (hed_2)	0.671
Thinking of (brand) brings back good memories (hed_3)	0.663
I have had a lot of memorable experiences with (brand) (hed_4)	0.688
I have fond memories of (brand) (hed_5)	0.704
I consider myself to be loyal to (brand) (l_1)	0.713
(brand) would be my first choice (l_2)	0.627
I will not buy other brands if (brand) is available at the store (l_3)	0.604
(brand) is reasonably priced (fnc_1)	0.52
(brand) has consistent quality (fnc_2)	0.656
(brand) is well made (fnc_3)	0.693
(brand) is beautiful (fnc_4)	0.711
(brand) is cute (fnc_5)	0.7
(brand) is functional (fnc_6)	0.596
(brand) offers value for money (fnc_7)	0.731
Recommend (brand) to others (wom_1)	0.72
Recommend (brand) to someone else who seeks my advice (wom_2)	0.727
Say positive things about (brand) (wom_3)	0.721
(brand) helps me to feel acceptable (sym_1)	0.787
(brand) improves the way I am perceived (sym_2)	0.749
(brand) makes a good impression on other people (sym_3)	0.743
(brand) gives me social approval (sym_4)	0.775
The price of (brand) would have to go up quite a bit before I would switch to another brand (wtpp_1)	0.479
I am willing to pay a higher price for (brand) than for other brands (wtpp_2)	0.772
I am willing to pay a lot more for (brand) than other brands (wtpp_3)	0.741
IOS1	0.862

APPENDIX F

RESULTS OF THE EXPLANATORY FACTOR AND

CRONBACH'S ALPHA RELIABILITY ANALYSES

Construct	Item	EFA Loading	Total Variance explained (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
Cognitive Brand Engagement	ce_1	0.77	29.94	0.92
	ce_2	0.80		
	ce_3	0.83		
	ce_4	0.76		
Behavioral Brand Engagement	be_2	0.79	24.81	0.87
	be_3	0.89		
	be_4	0.80		
Affective Brand Engagement	ae_1	0.85	26.57	0.89
	ae_2	0.86		
	ae_3	0.83		
Brand Love	bl_1	0.85	71.77	0.94
	bl_2	0.84		
	bl_3	0.85		
	bl_5	0.86		
	bl_6	0.82		
	bl_8	0.84		
	bl_9	0.87		
	bl_10	0.85		
Functional Resources	fnc_2	0.83	70.99	0.92
	fnc_3	0.86		
	fnc_4	0.87		
	fnc_5	0.85		
	fnc_6	0.79		
	fnc_7	0.84		
Hedonic Resources	hed_1	0.81	76.70	0.92
	hed_2	0.84		
	hed_3	0.88		
	hed_4	0.90		
	hed_5	0.90		
Symbolic Resources	sym_1	0.92	82.22	0.93
	sym_2	0.91		
	sym_3	0.91		
	sym_4	0.89		
Willingness to Price Premium	wtpp_1	0.66	68.91	0.76
	wtpp_2	0.91		
	wtpp_3	0.89		
WOM	wom_1	0.91	84.97	0.91
	wom_2	0.93		
	wom_3	0.93		
Loyalty	l_1	0.89	74.23	0.82
	l_2	0.87		
	l_3	0.83		

APPENDIX G

RESULTS OF CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

Construct	Item	EFA Loading	Path Estimates	Composite Reliability	AVE
Cognitive Brand Engagement	ce_1	0.77	0.85	0.91	0.74
	ce_2	0.80	0.86		
	ce_3	0.83	0.89		
	ce_4	0.76	0.86		
Behavioral Brand Engagement	be_2	0.79	0.83	0.77	0.72
	be_3	0.89	0.84		
	be_4	0.80	0.88		
Affective Brand Engagement	ae_1	0.85	0.79	0.85	0.62
	ae_2	0.86	0.77		
	ae_3	0.83	0.81		
Brand Love	bl_1	0.85	0.80	0.92	0.64
	bl_2	0.84	0.79		
	bl_3	0.85	0.79		
	bl_5	0.86	0.78		
	bl_6	0.82	0.73		
	bl_8	0.84	0.80		
	bl_9	0.87	0.85		
	bl_10	0.85	0.85		
Functional Resources	fnc_2	0.83	0.67	0.89	0.68
	fnc_3	0.86	0.78		
	fnc_4	0.87	0.77		
	fnc_5	0.85	0.81		
	fnc_6	0.79	0.68		
	fnc_7	0.84	0.80		
Hedonic Resources	hed_1	0.81	0.79	0.91	0.73
	hed_2	0.84	0.79		
	hed_3	0.88	0.87		
	hed_4	0.90	0.91		
	hed_5	0.90	0.90		
Symbolic Resources	sym_1	0.92	0.92	0.88	0.78
	sym_2	0.91	0.89		
	sym_3	0.91	0.86		
	sym_4	0.89	0.87		
Willingness to Price Premium	wtpp_1	0.66	0.53	0.67	0.61
	wtpp_2	0.91	0.86		
	wtpp_3	0.89	0.90		
WOM	wom_1	0.91	0.82	0.76	0.73
	wom_2	0.93	0.88		
	wom_3	0.93	0.87		
Loyalty	l_1	0.89	0.87	0.76	0.66
	l_2	0.87	0.75		
	l_3	0.83	0.81		

APPENDIX H

SQUARED CORRELATION COEFFICIENT MATRIX AND AVE'S

(DIAGONAL VALUES)

	CBE	BBE	ABE	BL	FNC	HED	SYM	WTPP	WOM	LOYAL	ACDIS	DESDIS
Cognitive Brand Engagement (CBE)	0.74											
Behavioral Brand Engagement (BBE)	0.59	0.72										
Affective Brand Engagement (ABE)	0.64	0.45	0.62									
Brand Love (BL)	**0.77**	0.46	**0.71**	0.64								
Functional Resources (FNC)	0.70	0.50	**0.71**	0.63	0.68							
Hedonic Resources (HED)	**0.75**	0.42	**0.66**	0.59	0.65	0.73						
Symbolic Resources (SYM)	0.61	0.51	0.59	0.61	0.54	0.69	0.78					
Willingness to Price Premium (WTPP)	0.43	0.47	0.43	0.53	0.47	0.52	0.53	0.61				
WOM	0.51	0.35	0.46	0.53	0.48	0.46	0.42	0.38	0.73			
Loyalty (LOYAL)	0.73	0.49	0.57	0.63	0.64	0.63	0.60	0.56	0.55	0.66		
Actual Distance (ACDIS)	0.07	0.09	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.06	0.03	0.07	0.05	0.10	1.00	
Desired Distance (DESDIS)	0.08	0.11	0.04	0.07	0.06	0.09	0.06	0.09	0.08	0.14	0.56	1.00

APPENDIX I

STRUCTURAL MODEL ESTIMATES AND HYPOTHESES TESTING

DIRECT RELATIONSHIP HYPOTHESES

Structural Relationship	Standardized Parameter Estimates	Conclusion
H1: Actual Integration → Brand Love	0.11**	Supported
H2: Desired Integration → Brand Love	0.37*	Supported
H3a: Hedonic Resources → Brand Love	n.s.	not supported
H3b: Functional Resources → Brand Love	0.123***	Supported
H3c: Symbolic Resources → Brand Love	0.485*	Supported
H4a: Hedonic Resources → Actual Integration	0.272*	Supported
H4b: Functional Resources → Actual Integration	0.116***	Supported
H4c: Symbolic Resources → Actual Integration	n.s.	not supported
H5a: Hedonic Resources → Desired Integration	0.276**	Supported
H5b: Functional Resources → Desired Integration	0.127***	Supported
H5c: Symbolic Resources → Desired Integration	0.257*	Supported
H8: Brand Love → Brand Engagement		Supported
Brand Love → Cognitive Brand Engagement	0.309*	
Brand Love → Affective Brand Engagement	0.293*	
Brand Love → Behavioral Brand Engagement	0.070***	
H9: Brand Engagement → Brand Love		Partially supported
Cognitive Brand Engagement → Brand Love	0.215*	
Affective Brand Engagement → Brand Love	0.125*	
Behavioral Brand Engagement → Brand Love	n.s.	
H10: Brand Engagement → Actual Integration		Partially supported
Cognitive Brand Engagement → Actual Integration	n.s.	
Affective Brand Engagement → Actual Integration	0.112**	
Behavioral Brand Engagement → Actual Integration	n.s.	
H11a: Brand Love → Loyalty	0.722*	Supported
H11b: Brand Love → WOM	0.741*	Supported
H11c: Brand Love → WTPP	0.474*	Supported
H12a: Brand Engagement → Loyalty		Partially supported
Cognitive Brand Engagement → Loyalty	0.166*	
Affective Brand Engagement → Loyalty	n.s.	
Behavioral Brand Engagement → Loyalty	0.119***	
H12b: Brand Engagement → WOM		Partially supported
Cognitive Brand Engagement → WOM	n.s.	
Affective Brand Engagement → WOM	0.156*	
Behavioral Brand Engagement → WOM	n.s.	
H12c: Brand Engagement → WTPP		Partially supported
Cognitive Brand Engagement → WTPP	0.269*	
Affective Brand Engagement → WTPP	n.s.	
Behavioral Brand Engagement → WTPP	0.589**	

EFFECT OF CATEGORY DIFFERENCE HYPOTHESES

Structural Relationship	Standardized Parameter Estimates	Conclusion
H14a: Category → Brand Love-Loyalty		Partially supported
clothing and shoes	0.707*	
consumer durables and electronics	0.842*	
food and beverages	0.817*	
H14b: Category → Brand Love-WOM		Partially supported
clothing and shoes	0.705*	
consumer durables and electronics	0.761*	
food and beverages	0.770*	
H13c: Category → Brand Love-WTPP		not supported
clothing and shoes	0.425*	
consumer durables and electronics	0.536*	
food and beverages	0.542*	
H13: Category → Symbolic Resources-Brand Love		Supported
clothing and shoes	0.488*	
consumer durables and electronics	0.334*	
food and beverages	0.156**	
Category → Functional Resources-Brand Love		Supported
clothing and shoes	0.178*	
consumer durables and electronics	0.113**	
food and beverages	0.291**	

MEDIATION HYPOTHESES

	Direct	Direct with mediator (sig value)	Indirect (sig value)	Conclusion
H6a: Hedonic Resources → AI → Brand Love	0.107***	n.s.	0.12(0.05)	Supported
H6b: Functional Resources → AI → Brand Love	0.211***	0.156(0.04)	(0.12)	not supported
H6c: Symbolic Resources → A1 → Brand Love	0.575*	n.a.	n.a.	not supported
H7a: Hedonic Resources → D I → Brand Love	0.107***	n.s.	0.202(0.05)	Supported
H7b: Functional Resources → DI → Brand Love	0.211***	0.158(0.05)	(0.205)	not supported
H7c: Symbolic Resources → DI → Brand Love	0.575*	0.485(0.01)	0.19(0.06)	Partially supported

* $p < 0.001$ **$p < 0.01$ ***$p < 0.05$ ****$p < 0.1$
n.s. = not significant
n.a. = not applicable

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