

# **An Examination and Theorisation of Consumer-Brand Relationship and its Link to Customer-Based Brand Equity**

by

**Naser Pourazad**

*Thesis  
Submitted to Flinders University  
for the degree of*

**Doctor of Philosophy**

College of Business, Government and Law  
5th of October, 2018

---

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

*Naser Pourazad*

## **Abstract**

Over the past decades, scholars have shown great interest in understanding the way consumers develop personal connections with brands. In fact, consumer-brand relationship has been a topical focus of published works in branding and consumer research. In addition, managers of many globally known brands have incorporated strategies to nurture strong bonds with their consumers. However, it is still not clear how brand relationships unfold. In particular, there is a need for research to understand how to strike a balance between the emotional and cognitive factors, which drive consumer-brand relationships. Therefore, the primary goal of this thesis is to improve understanding of consumer-brand relationships, with a particular focus on the role of emotions as a key contributing facet, in addition to the cognitive elements as crucial drivers. In doing so, the thesis draws upon the literature on consumer-brand relationships and relational concepts as well as the seminal studies on the customer-based brand equity (CBBE) to conceptualise and test relevant frameworks. In more detail, the primary objectives of this thesis are (i) to identify and critically review the existing conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationships (i.e., relational concepts); (ii) to outline and test a parsimonious framework for consumer-brand relationship; (iii) to extend the conceptualised consumer-brand relationship framework with respect to its effects on brand-related outcomes; and (iv) to investigate the synergy between consumer-brand relationship and customer-based brand equity (CBBE). These objectives address prominent issues in the literature, as follows. First, there is no agreement on the dimensionality of the consumer-brand relationship. That is, some researchers have conceptualised consumer-brand relationship using brand satisfaction and brand trust (Esch, Langner, Schmitt, & Geus, 2006); while others have used interdependence, intimacy, self-connection, love/passion, partner quality/trust and commitment (Fournier, 1998; Francisco-Maffezzolli, Sempredon, & Prado, 2014); or emotional connection and the strength of the intended communication with the brand (Veloutsou, 2015). Accordingly, there is a need for a critical revision of the concepts related to the theorisation of consumer-brand relationship. Second, while studies (e.g., Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2013; Langner, Schmidt, & Fischer, 2015) have confirmed some implications of consumer-brand relationship, other outcomes that go beyond transactional purposes (e.g., brand advocacy) require further investigations. Third, while recent research has highlighted that the interactions between brand equity dimensions

could be used to explain the process of building strong brands (Chatzipanagiotou, Veloutsou, & Christodoulides, 2016; Christodoulides, Cadogan, & Veloutsou, 2015; Stocchi & Fuller, 2017), there is still a wider scope for examination with respect to the overall effects of CBBE (and its components) on the development of consumer-brand relationships. In fact, the existing works did not incorporate a wide range of dimensions into the conceptualisation of CBBE (e.g., So, Parsons, & Yap, 2013; Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012; Vlachos & Vrechopoulos, 2012). This is an issue because it limits the generalisability of the results due to failing to include brand associations that are triggered by brand characteristics with a strong bearing on consumer-brand relationships. In addition, the majority of published studies do not include comprehensive conceptualisations of brand relationships concepts (Japutra, Ekinci, & Simkin, 2016; Veloutsou, 2015). Addressing these issues is important as it allows designing strategies that help develop, sustain and leverage consumer-brand relationships and drive positive brand implications.

The thesis addresses the above objectives via three empirical quantitative studies using sports apparel brands and luxury brands as gauging contexts, by means of primary online and face-to-face survey data from Iran and Australia. The data are analysed using structural equation modelling (including Covariance-based and Variance-based approaches). In more detail, **Study 1** primarily focuses on a key concept in the literature of consumer-brand relationship (i.e., brand passion) and investigates the mechanisms through which passionate bonds can be channelled into attitudinal loyalty and subsequently into brand-related outcomes. **Study 2** incorporates four key concepts (i.e., brand love, brand attachment, brand passion and brand identification) towards the conceptualisation of emotional consumer-brand relationship and testes the effects of a range of brand associations (i.e., brand image, hedonic attributes, prestigious values and uniqueness) on emotional consumer-brand relationship. It also examines the predicting power of emotional consumer-brand relationship on consumer evaluation of brand extensions. **Study 3** focuses on both emotional and cognitive aspects of brand relationships, through examining the synergy between CBBE and consumer-brand relationship. It also investigates the influence of consumer-brand relationship on price insensitivity, purchase intentions, and positive word-of-mouth (WOM).

Accordingly, the thesis offers important theoretical contributions. First, it explains the theoretical link between the components of CBBE and consumer-brand relationship and confirms that key concepts such as brand knowledge, perceived quality and hedonic attributes act as the force behind the establishment of consumer-brand relationships. Specifically, the thesis provides insights for the theoretical advancement of two inter-related areas of existing research: consumer-brand relationship and CBBE. The link between these areas reflect a crucial stage of the *process* of building strong brands (Keller, 2001, 2009; Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016; Christodoulides et al., 2015). Second, the thesis confirms that consumer-brand relationships have the power to become an important part of consumers' lives (Schmitt, Joško Brakus, & Zarantonello, 2015; Kessous, Roux, & Chandon, 2015). This yields implications that extend beyond transactional goals and include relational aspects such as attitudinal loyalty, brand advocacy and WOM, sense of community, price insensitivity, social media support and alternative devaluation. Third, the thesis validates two new frameworks for consumer-brand relationship (i.e., emotional consumer-brand relationship in **Study 2** and consumer-brand relationship in **Study 3**), incorporating established concepts of brand relationship literature.

The thesis also offers valuable insights for brand managers. First, the thesis posits that strengthening consumer-brand relationships offers a fundamental managerial benefit, and a sustainable and strategic competitive advantage (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Webster Jr, 1992). Specifically, the thesis offers recommendations regarding how managers can leverage relational aspects such as self-identification, love, passion, attachment and hedonic values to create positive relationships with their consumers. Second, the findings of the empirical studies offer specific implications for the managers of sports apparel brands. Accordingly, the outcomes of the thesis imply that managers should profile and identify passionate and emotionally connected consumers; build strategies to leverage passion to encourage pro-brand attitudes and intentions; and devise strategies that strengthen consumers' interest in the brand's social community. Third, the findings of the thesis leads to the recommendation that recommends luxury brand managers should leverage consumer-brand relationship by focusing on specific characteristics of the brand (e.g., hedonic and symbolic benefits, uniqueness and image) to strengthen the presence of the brand in the minds of consumers.

## **Acknowledgements**

Firstly, I am forever thankful to Flinders University for granting me the opportunity to pursue my PhD aspirations and generously offering the Flinders International Postgraduate Research Scholarship to fund my studies in Australia. This thesis would not have existed without their support and sponsorship.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors Dr Vipul Pare and Dr Lara Stocchi for their continuous support throughout my PhD, and for their patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge. Their guidance assisted me greatly in my research and writing of this thesis.

In addition to my supervisors, I would like to thank my examiners Professor Cleopatra Veoutsou and Associate Professor Polymeros Chrysochou for their encouragement, insightful comments, and constructive feedback.

My sincere thanks also goes to Dr Maria Flutsch for her generous and kind assistance in editing my thesis. Last but not least, I would like to thank my lovely partner Sarah Randall-Smith for her patience and encouragement, and my family for supporting me spiritually throughout my life.

*Naser Pourazad*

# Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	7
LIST OF TABLES.....	12
LIST OF FIGURES.....	13
LIST OF APPENDICES .....	14
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>15</b>
1.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW .....	15
1.2 KEY AREAS OF RESEARCH.....	15
1.3 THESIS RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES.....	18
1.3.1 <i>Issues with concepts related to brand relationship</i> .....	18
1.3.2 <i>Issues with consumer-brand relationship frameworks and relevant outcomes</i> .....	19
1.3.3 <i>Issues with the link between CBBE and consumer-brand relationship</i> .....	22
1.3.4 <i>Issues with the contexts and markets</i> .....	24
1.4 METHODOLOGIES.....	27
1.5 THESIS ORGANISATION .....	28
<b>CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>33</b>
2.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW .....	33
2.2 RELEVANT PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES .....	35
2.2.1 <i>Triangle of Love</i> .....	35
2.2.2 <i>Attachment Theory</i> .....	39
2.2.3 <i>Self-Expansion Theory</i> .....	42
2.2.4 <i>Social Exchange Theory</i> .....	45
2.2.5 <i>Theory of Relational Cohesion</i> .....	48
2.3 INTERPERSONAL LOVE/RELATIONSHIPS.....	51
2.4 INDIVIDUAL-OBJECT RELATIONSHIPS .....	53
2.5 KEY UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS IN RELATION TO INDIVIDUAL-OBJECT RELATIONSHIPS .....	55
2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	62
<b>CHAPTER THREE: CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIPS.....</b>	<b>64</b>
3.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW .....	64
3.2 CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIPS.....	65
3.3 RELATIONAL CONCEPTS .....	70
3.3.1 <i>Brand love</i> .....	72

3.3.2	<i>Limitation of brand love research</i>	78
3.3.3	<i>Brand attachment</i>	80
3.3.4	<i>Limitation of brand attachment research</i>	83
3.3.5	<i>Brand passion</i>	85
3.3.6	<i>Limitations of brand passion research</i>	89
3.3.7	<i>Relational concepts: overall relevance to this thesis</i>	90
3.4	CUSTOMER-BASED BRAND EQUITY (CBBE)	92
3.4.1	<i>CBBE: Definitions and implications</i>	92
3.4.2	<i>CBBE components</i>	93
3.4.3	<i>CBBE: Relevance to the thesis</i>	101
3.5	CHAPTER SUMMARY	105
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: OVERVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES</b>		<b>107</b>
4.1	CHAPTER OVERVIEW	107
4.2	THE THEORETICAL LINK BETWEEN THE THREE STUDIES	107
4.3	RELEVANCE OF THE THREE STUDIES TO THE THESIS OBJECTIVES	110
4.3.1	<i>Relevance to <b>objective 1</b></i>	112
4.3.2	<i>Relevance to <b>objective 2</b></i>	114
4.3.3	<i>Relevance to <b>objective 3</b></i>	116
4.3.4	<i>Relevance to <b>objective 4</b></i>	118
4.4	STUDY 1: THE POWER OF BRAND PASSION	119
4.4.1	<i>Purpose</i>	119
4.4.2	<i>Design/methodology/approach</i>	120
4.4.3	<i>Main findings</i>	120
4.4.4	<i>Theoretical implications</i>	121
4.4.5	<i>Practical implications</i>	122
4.5	STUDY 2: THE LINK BETWEEN BRAND ASSOCIATIONS AND EMOTIONAL CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIPS IN BRAND EXTENSIONS	122
4.5.1	<i>Purpose</i>	122
4.5.2	<i>Design/methodology/approach</i>	124
4.5.3	<i>Main findings</i>	125
4.5.4	<i>Theoretical implications</i>	125
4.5.5	<i>Practical implications</i>	126
4.6	STUDY 3: SYNERGIES BETWEEN CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIP AND CUSTOMER BASED BRAND EQUITY	127
4.6.1	<i>Purpose</i>	127
4.6.2	<i>Design/methodology/approach</i>	129
4.6.3	<i>Main findings</i>	130
4.6.4	<i>Theoretical implications</i>	130



4.6.5 Practical implications.....	132
4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	133
<b>CHAPTER FIVE (STUDY 1): THE POWER OF BRAND PASSION .....</b>	<b>134</b>
5.1 ABSTRACT .....	134
5.2 INTRODUCTION .....	135
5.3 CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND.....	139
5.3.1 Brand passion.....	139
5.3.2 Outcomes of brand passion.....	141
5.4 HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT .....	143
5.4.1 Attitudinal loyalty.....	143
5.4.2 Brand advocacy.....	145
5.4.3 Social media support .....	148
5.4.4 Sense of community.....	150
5.4.5 Price insensitivity.....	152
5.4.6 Alternative devaluation .....	154
5.5 METHODOLOGY .....	157
5.5.1 Sampling and data collection .....	157
5.5.2 Measurement items and survey structure.....	159
5.5.3 Data analysis methods .....	161
5.5.4 Model analysis .....	162
5.6 RESULTS.....	165
5.7 DISCUSSION.....	169
5.7.1 Theoretical implications.....	169
5.7.2 Managerial implications.....	173
5.8 CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS .....	176
APPENDIX.....	178
<b>CHAPTER SIX (STUDY 2): THE LINK BETWEEN BRAND ASSOCIATIONS AND EMOTIONAL CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIPS IN BRAND EXTENSIONS .....</b>	<b>179</b>
6.1 ABSTRACT .....	179
6.2 INTRODUCTION .....	180
6.3 CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND.....	185
6.3.1 Brand associations.....	185
6.3.2 Emotional consumer-brand relationship .....	186
6.4 HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT .....	191
6.4.1 Brand association and brand extension evaluation .....	191
6.4.2 Emotional consumer-brand relationships and brand extension evaluation .....	193

6.4.3 Brand association and emotional consumer-brand relationship .....	195
6.4.4 The mediating role of emotional consumer-brand relationship .....	197
6.4.5 The mediating role of perceived fit .....	199
6.5 METHODOLOGY .....	201
6.5.1 Sampling and data collection .....	201
6.5.2 Measurement items and survey structure .....	203
6.5.3 Data analysis methods .....	206
6.6 RESULTS.....	206
6.6.1 Preliminary analysis .....	206
6.6.2 Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) .....	208
6.7 DISCUSSION.....	214
6.7.1 Theoretical implications.....	214
6.7.2 Managerial implications.....	216
6.8 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS .....	218
APPENDIX.....	220

**CHAPTER SEVEN (STUDY 3): SYNERGIES BETWEEN CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIP AND CUSTOMER BASED BRAND EQUITY ..... 222**

7.1 ABSTRACT .....	222
7.2 INTRODUCTION .....	223
7.3 CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND.....	226
7.3.1 Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE).....	226
7.3.2 Consumer-brand relationship.....	230
7.3.3 CBBE as a driver of consumer-brand relationship .....	232
7.3.4 CBBE and consumer-brand relationship: What we know so far.....	234
7.4 HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT .....	236
7.4.1 The impact of brand knowledge on consumer-brand relationship .....	236
7.4.2 The impact of perceived quality on consumer-brand relationship .....	237
7.4.3 The impact of hedonic benefits and consumer-brand relationship.....	238
7.4.4 Outcomes of consumer-brand relationship .....	239
7.4.5 Product category involvement and past purchase: Moderating effects .....	242
7.4.6 Consumer-brand relationship: Mediating role .....	244
7.5 METHODOLOGY .....	247
7.5.1 Sampling and data collection .....	247
7.5.2 Measurement items and survey structure.....	250
7.5.3 Data analysis methods .....	251
7.6 RESULTS.....	252

7.6.1 <i>The measurement model</i> .....	252
7.6.2 <i>The structural model</i> .....	254
7.7 DISCUSSION.....	258
7.7.1 <i>Theoretical implications</i> .....	258
7.7.2 <i>Managerial implications</i> .....	261
7.8 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS .....	262
APPENDIX.....	264
<b>CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS.....</b>	<b>269</b>
8.1 CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	269
8.2 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS.....	270
8.2.1 <i>Major contributions</i> .....	270
8.2.2 <i>Minor contributions</i> .....	276
8.3 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS .....	281
8.3.1 <i>General managerial implications</i> .....	281
8.3.2 <i>Managerial implications for sports apparel brands</i> .....	293
8.3.3 <i>Managerial implications for luxury brands</i> .....	297
8.4 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS .....	301
8.4.1 <i>Limitations related to methodology</i> .....	302
8.4.2 <i>Limitations related to theoretical development</i> .....	304
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>307</b>

## List of tables

<i>Table 3.1 Thesis objectives</i> .....	65
<i>Table 4.1 Thesis objectives</i> .....	110
<i>Table 4.2 Thesis studies and their relevance to the objectives</i> .....	111
<i>Table 4.3 Proposed hypotheses for Study 1</i> .....	119
<i>Table 4.4 Proposed hypotheses for Study 2</i> .....	123
<i>Table 4.5 the proposed hypotheses for Study 3</i> .....	128
<i>Table 5.1 Demographic profile</i> .....	159
<i>Table 5.2 Measurement items and underpinning literature</i> .....	160
<i>Table 5.3 Properties of measurement items</i> .....	162
<i>Table 5.4 HTMT discriminant validity results</i> .....	164
<i>Table 5.5 Common method bias results</i> .....	165
<i>Table 5.6 Structural model results</i> .....	167
<i>Table 5.7 Mediation interaction results</i> .....	168
<i>Table 6.1 Demographic profile</i> .....	202
<i>Table 6.2 Measurement items included in the main survey</i> .....	205
<i>Table 6.3 Cross tabulation analysis: Emotional consumer-brand relationship</i> .....	207
<i>Table 6.4 Cross tabulation analysis: Brand associations</i> .....	207
<i>Table 6.5 Cross tabulation analysis: Brand extension evaluation</i> .....	208
<i>Table 6.6 Measurement items, factor loadings, and descriptive analysis</i> .....	209
<i>Table 6.7 CFA and validity measurements</i> .....	211
<i>Table 6.8 Common method bias analysis results</i> .....	211
<i>Table 6.9 Fit indices of the structural and measurement models</i> .....	212
<i>Table 6.10 Path analysis results</i> .....	212
<i>Table 6.11 Mediation roles analysis</i> .....	213
<i>Table 6.12 Moderation roles analysis</i> .....	213
<i>Table 7.1 Demographic profile</i> .....	248
<i>Table 7.2 CFA, validity measurements and descriptive measures</i> .....	253
<i>Table 7.3 Common method bias analysis results</i> .....	254
<i>Table 7.4 First order structural modelling and moderation analysis results</i> .....	256
<i>Table 7.5 Mediation interaction analysis results</i> .....	258

## List of figures

<i>Figure 1.1</i> the organisation of chapters .....	30
<i>Figure 2.1</i> Organisation of Chapter 2 .....	34
<i>Figure 2.2</i> The Triangle of Love .....	36
<i>Figure 3.1.</i> Chapter 3 structure .....	64
<i>Figure 4.1</i> The theoretical focus of the studies .....	108
<i>Figure 5.1</i> Resulting research model for testing .....	156
<i>Figure 6.1</i> Research model.....	200
<i>Figure 7.1</i> The hypotheses proposed in this study .....	247
<i>Figure 7.2</i> First order structural equation modelling results .....	255
<i>Figure 8.1</i> Dove's self-esteem project, inspiring young people to raise their self-esteem .....	283
<i>Figure 8.2</i> McDonald's 'Love is Endless' campaign.....	285
<i>Figure 8.3</i> Revlon's 'Love is on' campaign .....	285
<i>Figure 8.4</i> BT Sport and OgilvyOne 'pub signs' campaign .....	287
<i>Figure 8.5</i> Starbucks' #RedCupContest.....	287
<i>Figure 8.6</i> Weet-Bix's 'Aussie Kids are Weet-Bix Kids' singing competition .....	289
<i>Figure 8.7</i> Coca Cola's 'Share a Coke' campaign .....	290
<i>Figure 8.8</i> Pandora's 'charms' allow consumers to personalise their purchase .....	291
<i>Figure 8.9</i> Priceline's Sisterhood Foundation .....	292
<i>Figure 8.10</i> Nike's community of Nike+ users .....	295
<i>Figure 8.11</i> Under Armour's #IAMPRETTY campaign .....	296
<i>Figure 8.12</i> Sydney.com's 'A day out on the town' promotion.....	298
<i>Figure 8.13.</i> Chivas' rooftop sessions: Conversations about success .....	299
<i>Figure 8.14</i> Tiffany and Co.'s use of their iconic blue colour in their brand extensions .....	300
<i>Figure 8.15</i> Aston Martin's brand experience boutique in London .....	301

## List of appendices

<i>Appendix 5.1 Sports apparel brands included in the survey</i> .....	178
<i>Appendix 6.1 Luxury brands included in the survey of Study 2</i> .....	220
<i>Appendix 6.2 Mock-up brand extensions included in Study 2</i> .....	221
<i>Appendix 7.1 Measurement items included in the pilot study</i> .....	264
<i>Appendix 7.2 Measurement items of the main study</i> .....	267

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Chapter overview

This chapter sets the scene for the following chapters of the thesis. Accordingly, the chapter first provides a brief overview of the research literature on the key concept relevant to this thesis: the consumer-brand relationship. The chapter also outlines the link between consumer-brand relationship and cognitive concepts such as customer-based brand equity (CBBE) and the effect of consumer-brand relationship on brand-related outcomes (such as positive word-of-mouth (WOM) and purchase intentions). The chapter then presents the rationale behind the selection of the key areas of research, reflecting on existing issues in the literature with respect to (i) concepts related to brand relationship, (ii) brand relationship frameworks, (iii) the link between brand relationship and customer-based brand equity (CBBE), and (iv) gauging contexts and markets. The chapter, then, outlines the key objectives of the thesis, followed by an overview of the methodologies used. Finally, the chapter clarifies the organisation of the thesis by briefly outlining the content of each chapter.

## 1.2 Key areas of research

The focus of this thesis is to provide insights towards a better understanding of consumer-brand relationships and related theoretical concepts (e.g., brand love and brand passion), representing the bonds consumers develop over time with their favoured brands. Over the past decades, researchers have shown significant interest towards investigating the way consumers connect with brands on a personal level. Studies have highlighted the meaningful roles that brands play in consumers' lives (Escalas, 2004; Tuškej, Golob, & Podnar, 2013). Seminal studies on consumer-brand relationship (e.g., D. A. Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Aggarwal, 2004; Fournier, 1998) contend that consumers think deeply about certain brands; they grow feelings for brands, and subsequently, they develop relationships with those brands. Other studies argue that consumers see brands as a key component of their self-

concept (Belk, 1988; Escalas & Bettman, 2005), as a love-like relationship partner (Fournier, 1998; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005), or as an entity with personality (J. L. Aaker, 1997). Globally known brands such as Nike, McDonald's, Google, Rolex and Adidas are among the successful corporations that have prospered in nurturing strong bonds with their consumers. For example, Apple users are distinguished by their strong loyalty towards the Apple products, to the extent that they cherish the brand as a part of their personal and social selves (Belk & Tumbat, 2005, p. 205; Stratton & Northcote, 2014).

The development of consumer–brand relationships has been a focus of branding theory (Blackston, D. A. Aaker, & Biel, 1993; Fournier, 1998), relationship marketing (H.-C. Chiu, Hsieh, Li, & Lee, 2005; Christopher, Payne, & Ballantyne, 1993) and brand equity building (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016; Keller, 2001, 2009). Accordingly, brands are expected to offer more than just a core product in order to satisfy the long-term value needs of their customers (Anker, Sparks, Moutinho, & Grönroos, 2015; Grönroos, 2000, 2004). Studies refer to this as a 'paradigm shift' in the marketing research—i.e., a shift from the classic concentration on the marketing mix, to creating brand loyalty through the development of consumer-brand relationships and engaging with consumers at individual and social levels (Grönroos, 1994; C. W. Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010; Tsai, 2011a; Veloutsou, 2015). Researchers have shown particular interest in studying the components of brand relationships (D. A. Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012; Gurviez & Korchia, 2003). More specifically, studies have validated the significant roles of love, passion, emotional attachment, consumer self-identification with the brand, and positive attitudes as the encompassing components of consumer brand relationships (e.g., see Albert & Merunka, 2013; Belaid & Behi, 2011). These aspects are discussed throughout the chapters of the thesis, but predominantly in **Chapter 3**, **Chapter 6** and **Chapter 7**. In addition, researchers have shown interest in the forms that brand relationships take. Accordingly, some scholars have discussed brand relationships with respect to their quality (e.g., Fournier, 1998; H. K. Kim, M. Lee, & Y. W. Lee, 2005), whereas others have discussed brand relationships through relational concepts such as brand attachment (e.g., Thomson et al., 2005), brand love (e.g., Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), brand-self connection (e.g., Escalas, 2004), brand romance (e.g., Patwardhan & Balasubramanian, 2011) and brand passion (e.g., Bauer, Heinrich, & Martin, 2007). The thesis discusses these areas of research in **Chapter 3** and **Chapter 5**. Researchers have also



shown interest in examining whether and how these concepts would influence purchase-related decisions (e.g., Sallam, 2014). Outcomes such as brand loyalty (So et al., 2013), positive WOM (Wallace, Buil, & de Chernatony, 2014), and willingness to pay premium price (Albert & Merunka, 2013) have been widely examined in the literature. The thesis discusses these outcomes in **Chapter 5**, **Chapter 6** and **Chapter 7**.

Scholars have also drawn upon various psychological theories to discuss the relationship between consumers and brands. For example, existing research (e.g., Albert & Merunka, 2013; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; C. K. Yim, Tse, & Chan, 2008) has used notions of the Triangle of Love (Sternberg, 1986, 1997); and the Attachment Theory (Ainsworth, 1969; Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bowlby, 1958, 1960) to investigate important dimensions of consumer-brand relationships, including emotional attachment, emotional connections and passionate bonds. The thesis (in **Chapter 2**) reviews the above theories together with the Self-Expansion Theory (A. Aron & E. N. Aron, 1996), Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1960, 1964; Ekeh, 1974; Emerson, 1976; Homans, 1958; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997), and Theory of Relational Cohesion (Lawler, Thye, & Yoon, 2000; Lawler & Yoon, 1996), and discusses their relevance and contribution to the objectives of the thesis.

As another area of research interest, studies have investigated the factors that may trigger and/or determine brand relationships. Accordingly, researchers have further argued that the consumer-brand relationship is in fact the final phase of consumers' brand-driven mental and emotional responses (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016; Keller, 2009), formed through interactions between consumers' existing knowledge and perceptions about the brand and their emotional bond with the brand (Japutra et al., 2016; Vlachos, Theotokis, Pramataris, & Vrechopoulos, 2010; Wallace, Buil, & De Chernatony, 2012). More specifically, the successful development of consumer-brand relationships depends largely on the effective establishment of brand meanings in consumers' minds —i.e., brand associations, brand values, brand attitude, and brand image (Keller, 2001; Swaminathan, Page, & Gürhan-Canli, 2007). These meanings can be shaped as an outcome of consumers' direct experience with the brand (Keller, 2003) and are often based on consumers' perceptions and psychological evaluations about the brand (Keller, 2001; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). While consumers' direct experience relates to their purchases and actual behaviours, their perceptions and

psychological evaluations reflect the psychological process through which they decide to love or like a brand over others. This psychological process is the focus of this thesis and the purpose of this dissertation is, in fact, to examine the mechanisms through which consumers' cognitive evaluations (e.g., components of CBBE including perceived quality, brand image or symbolic benefits) shape the way consumers feel about a brand (see **Chapter 6** and **7**).

Drawing on the above, the following section discusses the theoretical rationale of the thesis, by outlining the underpinning issues in the existing literature with respect to the development of brand relationships, the concepts related to brand relationships, the link between consumer-brand relationship and CBBE, and gauging context and target market selected by the past studies.

## **1.3 Thesis rationale and objectives**

### *1.3.1 Issues with concepts related to brand relationship*

Existing studies have examined various concepts to address aspects of brand relationships. Specifically, there are significant studies on brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Fetscherin, 2014), brand attachment (Belaid & Behi, 2011; Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011; C. W. Park, MacInnis, & Priester, 2006), brand passion (Albert et al., 2013; Bauer et al., 2007), brand-self connection (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; D. Moore & Wurster, 2007), and brand romance (Kusume & Gridley, 2013; Patwardhan & Balasubramanian, 2011, 2013; Petzer, Mostert, Kruger, & Kuhn, 2014). The growth of strategic areas of research such as relational marketing (Clark & Melancon, 2013; Hütten, Salge, Niemand, & Siems, 2017) and experiential marketing (Chang & Chieng, 2006; Ding & Tseng, 2015) has a strong link with the popularity of the afore-mentioned concepts in brand management theory and practice. The core premise behind the research on these concepts is that consumers have a tendency to relate to brands at an emotional level (Fournier, 1998; Keller, 2012). Accordingly, consumers become emotionally attached to brands or passionate about brands in order to fulfil intangible needs such as self-esteem, obtaining social status or self-identification (e.g., see

Astakhova, Swimberghe, & Wooldridge, 2017; Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2010; J. R. Smith et al., 2008). Despite the rising appreciation of these concepts in the marketing literature, there are still a wide scope for further exploration. In fact, recent studies (e.g., see Moussa, 2015; Pare, Pourazad, & Jevons, 2015) have highlighted various elements that are common across these concepts, but more research is required to provide a better understanding on the aspects of brand relationships that these concepts represent. To address these issues, the thesis focuses on three selected concepts: brand love, brand attachment, and brand passion. The justification for selecting these constructs is that they have strong theoretical significance in the development of brand relationships (see Jiyoung Hwang & Kandampully, 2012; Loureiro, Ruediger, & Demetris, 2012). These concepts continue to receive attention in brand relationship literature (e.g., see recent studies of (Astakhova et al., 2017; Bagozzi, Batra, & Ahuvia, 2017; Japutra & Molinillo, 2017). Finally, these concepts have crucial relevance for this thesis, as they are incorporated in the development of emotional consumer-brand relationship (**Chapter 6**) and consumer-brand relationship (**Chapter 7**).

In light of the above discussion, the thesis sets the following first objective:

***Objective 1: to identify, critically review and conceptualise existing concepts related to consumer-brand relationship (i.e., relational concepts)***

In order meet this objective, the thesis identifies and reviews three well-established concepts in the literature of consumer-brand relationship. These relational concepts are brand attachment, brand love, and brand passion. Studies have examined and conceptualised these concepts as either second-order dimensions (e.g., brand passion in Batra et al., 2012), or as first-order constructs representing consumer-brand relationship (e.g., brand attachment in Thomson et al., 2005). Through the achievement of this objective, the thesis establishes relevant theoretical frameworks of consumer-brand relationship featured in the three empirical studies (**Chapter 5, 6, and 7**) that are examined in various brand contexts.

### *1.3.2 Issues with consumer-brand relationship frameworks and relevant outcomes*

Existing studies have presented various frameworks to examine the theoretical foundations of brand relationships. However, the majority of published studies do not include comprehensive conceptualisations of brand relationships. However, there are two main issues with the existing conceptualisations of brand relationships. Firstly, past studies have not included all key emotional components of brand relationships. In fact, most studies have placed great emphasis on examining individual concepts of brand love (e.g., Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Fetscherin, 2014) and brand attachment (e.g., C. W. Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005) as representatives of the consumer brand relationship. However, drawing on the notions of the Triangle of Love (Sternberg, 1986, 1997), studies have posited that a comprehensive conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationship requires coexisting inclusion of the key emotional concepts of brand love and brand attachment. (e.g., Jiyoung Hwang & Kandampully, 2012; Loureiro et al., 2012). To address this issue, the thesis includes both these concepts in the conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationship in **Study 2** and **Study 3**.

Secondly, the studies that include all key emotional components (e.g., Jiyoung Hwang & Kandampully, 2012; Loureiro et al., 2012) have not included the cognitive aspects of brand relationships. This is problematic because cognitive aspects have been noted equally as significant as emotional aspects in the development of brand relationships. For example, C. W. Park et al. (2006) and C. W. Park et al. (2010) believed that brand relationships should incorporate two pivotal aspects, emotional brand-self connection and the cognitive bond between the consumer and the brand, whereby the latter evokes consumers' readiness to allocate resources toward maintaining the brand. Other studies (e.g., Dunn & Hoegg, 2014; Japutra et al., 2016; Langner et al., 2015; Wallace et al., 2014) have confirmed this line of thought and have suggested that strategies that tap into cognitive and emotional aspects are equally required for an effective and strong brand relationship. Failure to include these concepts may hinder a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between consumers and brands, which subsequently hinders theoretical realisation of various types of brand relationships depending on the significance of emotional or cognitive aspects (e.g., Batra et al., 2012; Roderick J. Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013; Hollebeek, 2011b; Mollen & Wilson, 2010). Therefore, the thesis addresses this issue by including cognitive elements such as

attitude strength (Batra et al., 2012) in the conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationship (**Study 3**).

Based on the above discussion, the thesis puts forward the following objective:

***Objective 2: to conceptualise a parsimonious framework for consumer-brand relationship***

Accordingly, the thesis develops a conceptual framework for the consumer-brand relationship, drawing on the outcomes of **Objective 1** (discussed in **Chapter 3**). The framework incorporates three relational concepts as the encompassing dimensions of the emotional consumer-brand relationship (see **Chapter 6**). Moreover, drawing on the theoretical underpinnings of the emotional consumer-brand relationship and seminal brand relationship framework developed by Batra et al. (2012). **Chapter 7** conceptualises and refines a comprehensive, yet parsimonious, framework for consumer-brand relationship.

In addition, existing studies have investigated different frameworks, which show how brand relationships and various relational concepts (e.g., brand love and brand passion) lead to brand-related outcomes, such as the likelihood to engage in WOM (Ladhari, 2007; Nyer, 1997) and positive product evaluation (Gorn, Goldberg, & Basu, 1993; Monga & John, 2010).

However, the majority of published studies show theoretical limitations that warrant further investigation. For instance, despite the growing interest in brand passion, research has not investigated the implications of this concept in a way that addresses consumers' perceptions and intentions. Importantly, extant research (e.g., Albert et al., 2013) has not considered brand-related outcomes that go beyond transactional purposes, and has not examined concepts that can convey the strength of the bond and desire that consumers develop for brands (e.g., brand advocacy and social media support). Therefore, following the argument of Albert et al. (2013) and Ahuvia (2005), there is a need for more empirical investigation to provide insight on this key relational concept.

With respect to the brand-related outcomes of consumer-brand relationships, existing studies have examined key concepts such as positive WOM (e.g., Batra et al., 2012) and brand loyalty (Fournier & Yao, 1997). However, existing works have used conceptualisations of brand relationship that did not incorporate key emotional concepts (e.g., brand love, brand attachment and brand passion) and neglected crucial cognitive aspects (e.g., attitude strength). Therefore, more empirical research is required to uncover direct outcomes of consumer-brand relationship such as purchase intentions, positive WOM and price insensitivity.

Therefore, the thesis set the following objective:

***Objective 3: to examine the conceptualised consumer-brand relationship framework with respect to its effects on brand-related outcomes***

Accordingly, the thesis builds on the findings relevant to **Objective 2** and examines the consumer-brand relationship frameworks developed in **Chapter 6** and **Chapter 7**, with respect to their power to drive a series of brand-related outcomes. More specifically, the thesis first discusses emotional consumer-brand relationship in the context of brand extensions (i.e., the use of established brand names to launch new products, D. A. Aaker & Keller, 1990; Völckner & Sattler, 2006) and then examines its predicting power over consumers' evaluation of brand extensions. Finally, in **Chapter 7**, the thesis, finally, investigates how the consumer-brand relationship influences a series of purchase-related outcomes such as purchase intentions, price insensitivity and positive WOM.

### ***1.3.3 Issues with the link between CBBE and consumer-brand relationship***

Previous studies on consumer-brand relationship have mainly focused on relationship development (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2008; Giovanis, 2016; Kemp, Jillapalli, & Becerra, 2014; Reimann, Castaño, Zaichkowsky, & Bechara, 2012), brand relationship quality (K. Kim, J. Park, & L. Kim, 2014; Papista & Dimitriadis, 2012), and brand relationship implications (Clark & Melancon, 2013; Wallace et al., 2014). Although these studies have

recognised the importance of brand relationship, the mechanisms through which brand relationships are developed (i.e., the process through which relationship between the brand and its consumers are built) is still an under-explored area of research (Grönroos, 2004; Hütten et al., 2017; J.-W. Park & Kim, 2001). In a recent study, Chatzipanagiotou et al. (2016) argued that the process of the development of brand relationships starts with *brand building*—i.e., positioning the brand in the minds of consumers using functional and experiential ‘imagery’ brand attributes. The process progresses with the establishment of *brand understanding*, where consumers respond to brand activities, and ends with the development of consumer-brand relationships. A similar pattern is evident in Keller’s (2001, 2009) framework, which suggests that the brand building process starts with the creation of brand identity, then moves to the development of brand meanings, followed by consumer responses, and concluded with the establishment of brand relationship. The process clearly demonstrates the important role of CBBE and its components as drivers of the formation of brand relationship. However, there is still a wider scope for investigation with respect to the overall effects of CBBE (and its components) on the development of consumer-brand relationships. This is because the majority of these studies did not incorporate a wide range of CBBE dimensions (Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012; So et al., 2013; Vlachos & Vrechopoulos, 2012) such as the important concepts of perceived quality, uniqueness and hedonic benefits. The failure to include these concepts may have a strong bearing on how customer-brand relationships are formed and maintained. Attending to this issue would provide clear insights into the cognitive processes through which consumers might develop long-term relationships with brands (Aggarwal & Law, 2005; Lynch & De Chernatony, 2004). Therefore, the thesis addresses this issue by examining an extensive range of CBBE components as drivers of consumer-brand relationship (see **Study 3**).

In light of the afore-mentioned discussion, the thesis puts forward the following objective:

***Objective 4: to investigate the theoretical and synergic link between consumer-brand relationship and CBBE***

Accordingly, building on the findings relevant to **Objective 2**, and upon reviewing the existing literature of CBBE (e.g., Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016; Christodoulides et al., 2015; Keller,

2001, 2009), the thesis (in **Chapter 6** and **Chapter 7**) examines the cognitive concepts (e.g., brand knowledge, and brand image) that could determine the development of consumer-brand relationships. This objective is based on the existing frameworks (Keller, 2001, 2012), which have highlighted the significant role of brand relationships in the process of building strong brands. This process involves a direct link between consumers' evaluation of the brand (and the subsequent formation of brand perceptions such as brand associations, perceived quality and brand benefits) and the development of the brand relationship. The identification and examination of this link provides valuable insights towards understanding the role of a consumer's pre-established perceptions and associations towards the brand in the development of individualised consumer-brand relationships.

#### *1.3.4 Issues with the contexts and markets*

Existing studies on consumer-brand relationship have used various brand categories as the gauging contexts, such as consuming and grocery products (Fournier, 1998; K. Kim, Park & L. Kim, 2014), hotel services (Xie & Heung, 2012) and durable products (Pentina, Gammoh, Zhang, & Mallin, 2013). However, there are some inherent issues with the selection of such contexts when investigating consumer-brand relationships. Primarily, most studies have considered low involvement products which lack various aspects that are essential for the development of brand relationships, such as the perceived importance of brands (Keller, 2003) and low level of commoditisation (Madden, Fehle, & Fournier, 2006). Furthermore, these product categories may not include brands with significant roles in consumers' lives (Fournier, 1998; McEwen, 2005). This is particularly important, because brands that are qualified as a relationship partner typically enable their consumers to leverage the brand's image to shape or improve their personal and social identities (Underwood, Bond, & Baer, 2001; Vernuccio, Pagani, Barbarossa, & Pastore, 2015). They also help their consumers to gain intangible benefits such as prestige and uniqueness (Jinsoo Hwang & Hyun, 2012; W.-Y. Wu, Lu, Y.-Y. Wu, & Fu, 2012); and they allow their consumers to develop a sense of belonging to a community of like-minded individuals. In order to overcome these issues, the thesis selects



two high involvement brand categories as the gauging analytical contexts of choice: sports apparel brands (**Study 1**) and luxury brands (**Study 2** and **Study 3**).

Sports apparel brands often implement branding strategies that are built upon the development of strong emotional bonds with consumers (Frank & Watchravesringkan, 2016; Tong & Hawley, 2009), such as highlighting personal accomplishments (Dubois & Czellar, 2002) and empowering individuals (Cova & Pace, 2006). For example, Under Armour has developed popular fitness apps such as MapMyFitness and MyFitnessPal in order to create a platform for the cultivation of personal connections with consumers. Using these strategies, sports apparel brands have been able to become well established in the minds and hearts of consumers (Dubois & Czellar, 2002) and to trigger the development of consumer-brand relationships.

Luxury brands typically entail high levels of expressive and hedonic characteristics (H. J. Choo, Moon, Kim, & Yoon, 2012; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009; Okonkwo, 2016; Tsai, 2005a; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004), which allow for a broad manifestation of consumer-brand relationships. These brands offer many emotional benefits to their consumers, such as closeness and involvement with the brand at the time of the purchase experience (So et al., 2013). Moreover, due to inherently high levels of consumer involvement, luxury brands offer a suitable platform for examining how (or whether) thoughts and feelings about a brand lead to actual purchase-related attitudes and intentions. In fact, by offering strong tangible and intangible benefits, luxury brands often allow stronger emotional attachments and loyalty to be built, to the point of becoming irreplaceable to consumers (So et al., 2013). For example, Aston Martin (the British sports luxury car manufacturer) highlights the emotional aspects of their products using the words: 'Just as an artist might be inspired to paint, or a musician to write a tune, beautiful inspires us to craft the most beautiful cars in the world' (A. Martin, 2018).

To examine the consumer-brand relationship in the two gauging contexts of sports apparel and luxury goods, the thesis gathers consumer data from two markets, Iran and Australia. Specifically, for **Study 1**, the thesis chooses Iranian consumers of sports apparel brands as its target population, which provides two important advantages. Firstly, Iranian consumers have been showing a growing interest and high levels of brand loyalty towards global sports

apparel brands (Shirdelian, 2017; Khoei, 2014). However, while existing studies have taken a research interest in Iran's retail market (e.g., Hanzaee & Andervazh, 2012), there is a shortage of empirical research on sports apparel brands using data from Iran (Karami, Olfati, & Dubinsky, 2017). The second advantage lies in the fact that studies on brand relationship typically have been conducted in Western contexts such as the USA (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; C. W. Park et al., 2010; Swaminathan et al., 2007), Western Europe (Ismail & Spinelli, 2012) or in Asia-Pacific countries such as Malaysia (So et al., 2013) and China (Chang & Chieng, 2006). In contrast, Iran and other countries in the Middle East have been considerably less investigated. This becomes a prominent limitation given that researchers have reported significant investments from sports apparel brands in the Middle East (Cornwell, 2016; News, 2017). The thesis also uses data from Iran for **Study 2**, as Iranian consumers' interest in luxury brands and the 'luxury lifestyle' is constantly growing, and they show novel behavioural consumption patterns that are worth understanding for many global brands and investors (Teimourpour & Heidarzadeh Hanzaee, 2011). This is made evident in businesses offering consumers in Iran a wide range of internationally prestigious luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton, Versace, Calvin Klein and Prada (Jafari & Süerdem, 2012; Teimourpour & Heidarzadeh Hanzaee, 2014). Despite this, to the best of the thesis author's knowledge, no empirical research has examined consumer-brand relationships using the data from Iranian luxury consumers. Finally, while there are several studies on luxury brands that have used data from Australia (e.g., F. Liu, Li, Mizerski, & Soh, 2012; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004), no published study has used Australian data to investigate consumer brand relationships. This is important because Australia is witnessing a significantly increasing consumer interest in global luxury brands, with European-based luxury corporations such as Richemont, Kering and LVMH all looking to grow their bricks-and-mortar retail presence in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane (Schlesinger, 2017). For example, research indicates an increasing interest in luxury fashion brands (Gentina, Shrum, & Lowrey, 2016; Tong, Su, & Xu, 2017), with the overall luxury retail industry predicted to grow annually by 7.6% until 2023, bringing AUD 2.1bn revenue (IBISWorld, 2017). Therefore, the thesis addresses this issue by using data from Australian luxury consumers for the examination of CBBE components as drivers of consumer-brand relationship (see **Study 3**).

## 1.4 Methodologies

This thesis surveys, analyses, and interprets consumers' opinions and intentions with respect to the concepts of interest—i.e., consumer-brand relationships, CBBE and brand-related outcomes. The thesis predominantly adopts a quantitative approach—i.e., it uses self-administered questionnaires to survey consumers' understandings and perceptions about the thesis's constructs. With respect to the measurement scales, the thesis reviews, selects and validates existing measurement items (although tailored and validated to fit the targeted gauging contexts—i.e., sports apparel brands and luxury brands) respective to the variables involved in the three empirical studies conducted. These studies are presented in **Chapters 5, 6 and 7** respectively. Regarding the target population, the thesis uses samples from Iran and Australia. The method of data collection includes online and face-to-face questionnaires, distributed to sports apparel brand and luxury brand users in Iran, and luxury brand users in Australia. Further, this thesis employs a series of techniques and methods to analyse the collected data for each study. Specifically, **Study 1 (Chapter 5)** deploys a Partial Least Square (PLS) path modelling method (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011), using the SmartPLS (Ver. 2) path modelling package (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005). **Study 2 (Chapter 6)** uses cross-tabulation analysis to examine the association among the study variables (including brand associations, emotional consumer-brand relationship, brand extension evaluation, and perceived fit). Further, **Study 2** uses Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test the validity and reliability of the measurement items, and Covariance-based structural equation modelling (SEM) to test the hypotheses, using Amos SPSS version 23.0 statistical tool. **Study 3 (Chapter 7)** conducts an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to confirm the study scale's dimensionality, then a CFA to test the reliability of the measurement items returned from EFA, and finally a PLS-SEM to test the hypotheses (Hair et al., 2011; Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013; Ringle, Sarstedt, & Straub, 2012).

## 1.5 Thesis organisation

This thesis comprises of eight chapters. Figure 1.1 illustrates the organisation of chapters, as well as their logical flow and the primary aspects discussed in each one.

**Chapter 1** (this chapter) provides an overview of the thesis and its objectives, and introduces the rationale of the three empirical studies. The chapter outlines the main methodological approaches of the thesis, and outlines the organisation of the thesis.

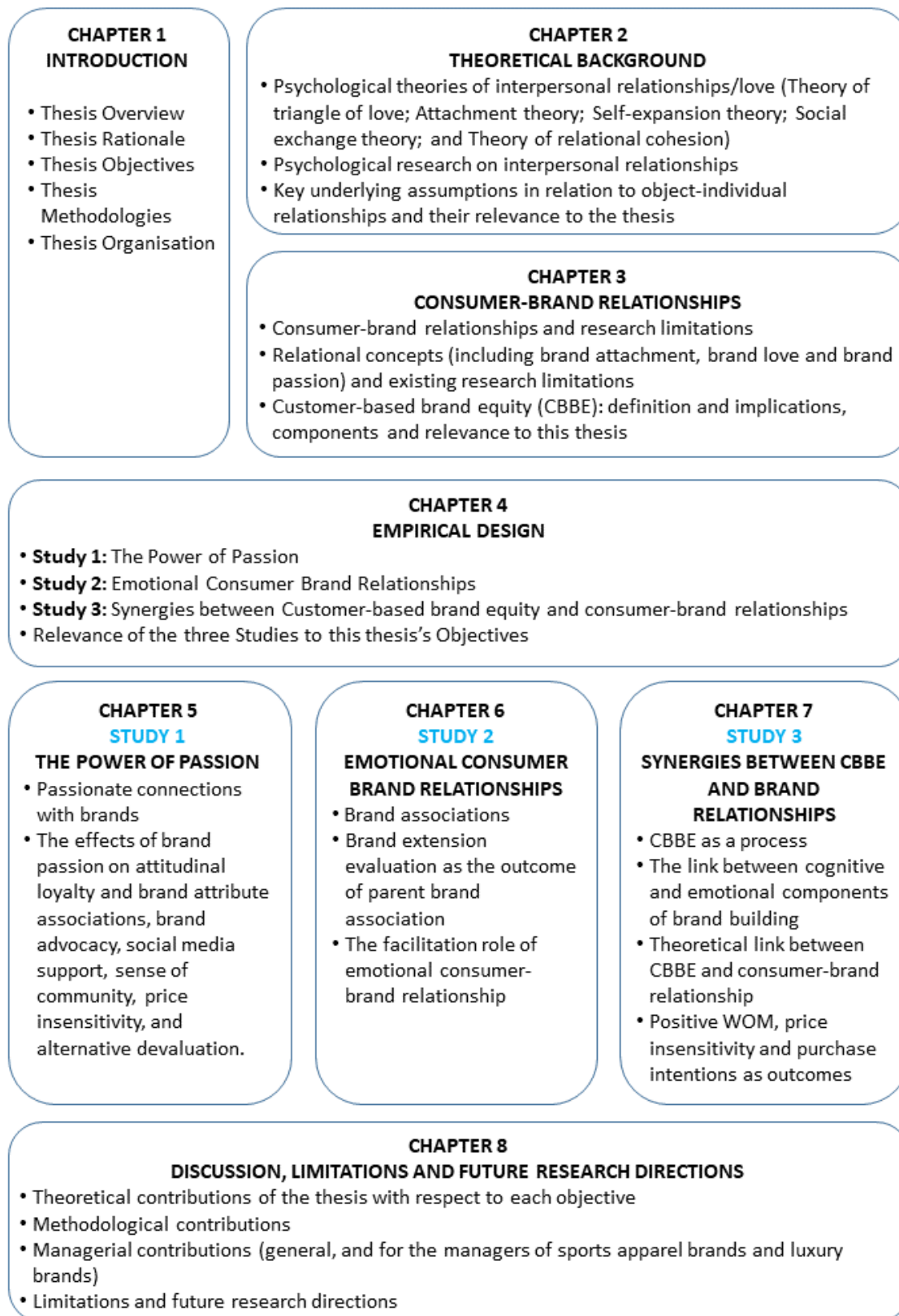
**Chapter 2** first draws on the psychological theories and research to provide support for the frameworks and constructs that are developed and examined in **Chapters 5, 6, and 7**. These theories include the Triangle of Love (Sternberg, 1986, 1997), Attachment Theory (Ainsworth, 1969; Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bowlby, 1958, 1960), Self-Expansion Theory (A. Aron & E. N. Aron, 1996), Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1960, 1964; Ekeh, 1974; Emerson, 1976; Homans, 1958; Wayne et al., 1997) and Theory of Relational Cohesion (Lawler et al., 2000; Lawler & Yoon, 1996). Second, the chapter outlines the seminal psychological research on interpersonal relationships and highlights some concepts relevant to this thesis. The chapter then reviews the existing concepts and frameworks regarding emotional connection that goes beyond the interpersonal context, encompassing both individual-object and consumer-product love. Finally, the chapter introduces the key underlying assumptions in relation to individual-object relationships and differences between interpersonal relationships and relationships between people and objects, including brands.

**Chapter 3** provides a critical review of the existing literature on consumer-brand relationship, leading to the introduction of the key relational concepts (i.e., brand love, brand attachment and brand passion), which the thesis proceeds to incorporate in the frameworks of the three empirical studies. The chapter also provides an overview of relevant brand equity literature in order to highlight the theoretical link between consumer-brand relationships and widely used brand equity frameworks such as Keller (2001, 2009) and Chatzipanagiotou et al. (2016). Importantly, **Chapter 3**, together with **Chapter 2**, present the theoretical underpinnings for the conceptualisations and frameworks of consumer-brand relationship that are explored and validated in the three empirical studies.

**Chapter 4** outlines the theoretical link between the three empirical studies, clarifies the rationale of each study, and discusses the link between the thesis' objectives and the studies. The chapter provides an extended abstract for each study, which outlines the purpose, methodological approach, main findings, and relevant theoretical and practical implications. The chapter connects the findings of each study to the corresponding hypotheses and concludes with a section highlighting the key theoretical and managerial implications that each study offers.

**Chapter 5 (Study 1)** introduces a new framework for brand passion. The study then examines the way in which brand passion drives attitudinal loyalty, and other brand-related outcomes (i.e., brand advocacy, social media support, sense of community, price insensitivity, and alternative devaluation). In addition, drawing upon the known effect of attitudinal loyalty on purchase behaviours (Bandyopadhyay & Martell, 2007; Mechinda, Serirat, & Gulid, 2009), the study tests the mediating role of attitudinal loyalty in the relationship between brand passion and brand-related outcomes. The results provide insight into how the outcomes of brand passion extend beyond transactional purposes and reflect the power of passion (in sports apparel brand context) in influencing consumer attitudes.

**Figure 1.1** the organisation of chapters



**Chapter 6 (Study 2)** attains the following goals: it theorises and validates the concept of emotional consumer-brand relationship; ii) it examines the link between brand associations and emotional consumer-brand relationship; and iii) it assesses the influence of brand associations and emotional consumer-brand relationship on consumer evaluation of brand extensions. In doing so, the study incorporates the elements taken from the CBBE literature (e.g., D. A. Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2003; Netemeyer et al., 2004; Yoo & Donthu, 2001) including brand image, hedonic attributes, prestigious values, and brand uniqueness to conceptualise brand associations. In addition, this study examines the mediating role of the emotional consumer-brand relationship in the relationship between brand associations and consumer evaluation of brand extensions. Finally, the study proposes and examines a moderating and mediating role for perceived fit in the relationships between brand associations, emotional consumer-brand relationship, and brand extension evaluation. Accordingly, the study provides insight into the importance of the symbolic and intangible brand associations of the luxury parent brand to the success of brand extensions, as well as the significant and positive role of consumer's emotional connections with a luxury parent brand in influencing the evaluation of the brand extensions.

**Chapter 7 (Study 3)** examines how cognitive elements such as the components of CBBE (i.e., brand knowledge, perceived quality, and hedonic benefits) influence the development of the consumer-brand relationship, and how this then leads to positive brand-related outcomes (i.e., price insensitivity, purchase intentions, and positive WOM). The study also examines the mediating role of the consumer-brand relationship in the link between CBBE components and brand-related outcomes, as well as the moderating role of product category involvement and past purchase in the relationship between CBBE components, consumer-brand relationship and brand-related outcomes. Therefore, the study provides valuable insights into the dynamic and synergic link between CBBE and consumer-brand relationship, and offers a conceptual framework that maps the chain of effects underpinning the link between desired consumer perceptions such as CBBE and relationship-developing strategies. Moreover, the study sheds light on the role of CBBE as a cognitive 'platform' for the development of the psychological mechanisms that determine the development of consumer-brand relationships.

**Chapter 8** provides a comprehensive overview of the thesis' findings and links these back to the planned objectives. Additionally, the chapter outlines the theoretical and managerial implications of the thesis, and summarises the potential limitations identifiable across the three empirical studies. The chapter ends with a set of valuable directions for future research development.



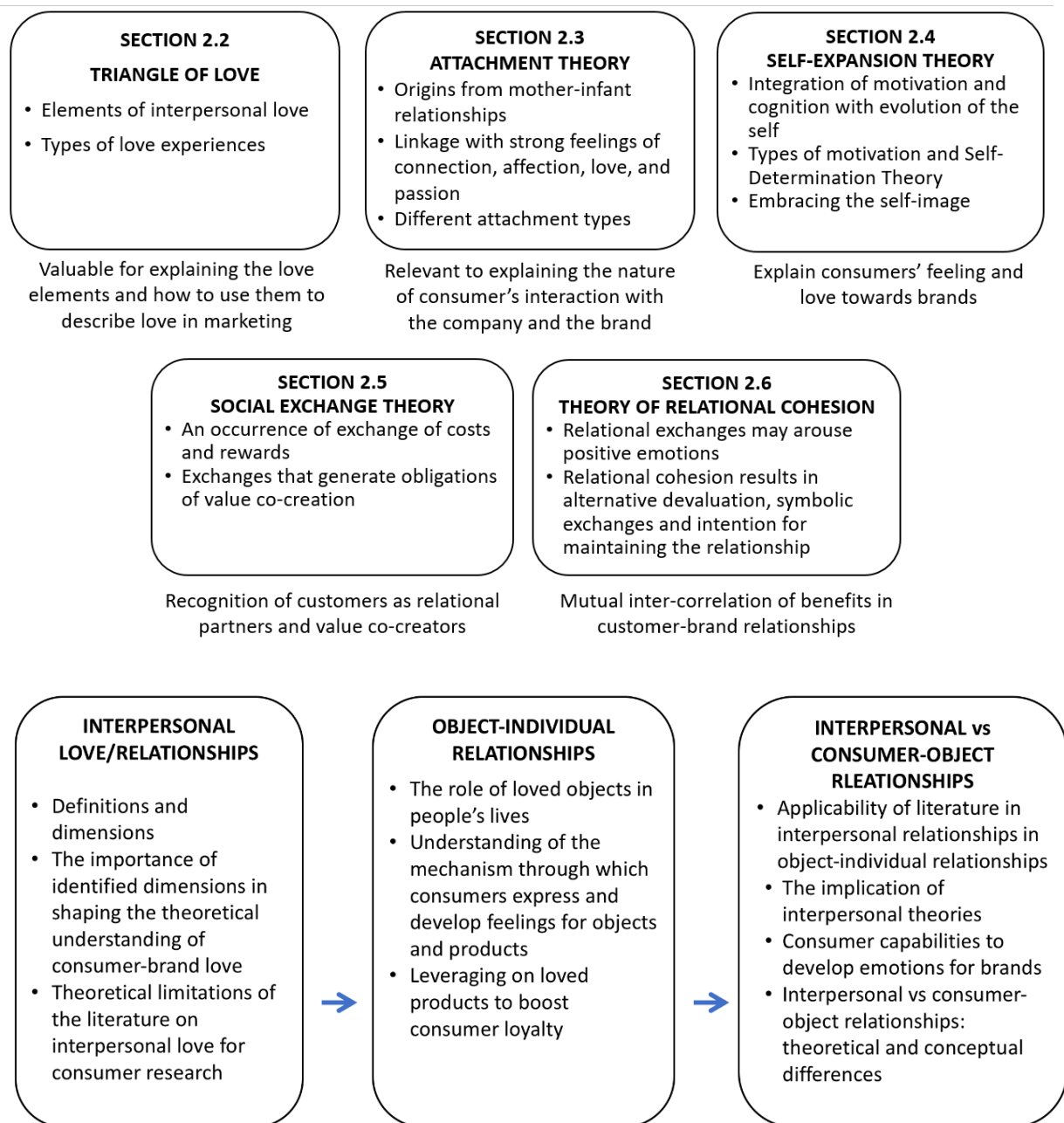
## CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Chapter overview

This chapter has two key aims. First, it presents a series of psychological theories that support the frameworks and constructs that the thesis develops and examines in **Chapters 5, 6 and 7** (see Figure 2.1 for a breakdown of the sections in this chapter). In more detail, this chapter reviews five selected psychological theories and discusses their contribution to this thesis. These theories include the *Triangle of Love* (Sternberg, 1986, 1997); *Attachment Theory* (Ainsworth, 1969; Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bowlby, 1958, 1960); *Self-Expansion Theory* (E. N. Aron & A. Aron, 1996); *Social Exchange Theory* (Blau, 1960, 1964; Ekeh, 1974; Emerson, 1976; Homans, 1958; Wayne et al., 1997); and *Theory of Relational Cohesion* (Lawler et al., 2000; Lawler & Yoon, 1996). These theories were selected on the basis of their individual relevance to the objectives of this thesis. While two theories share significant theoretical grounds with this thesis (i.e., Self-Expansion Theory and Triangle of Love), the other three (i.e., Attachment Theory, Social Exchange Theory and Theory of Relational Cohesion) provide foundational support for a number of key theoretical propositions tested across the three empirical studies of the thesis. With respect to the latter, this chapter only reviews and discusses the relevant aspects of the selected theories; thus it clarifies, contextually, the aspects of these theories that fall outside of the scope of the thesis.

Second, the aim of this chapter is to outline the seminal psychological research on interpersonal relationships and to highlight the key underpinning notions relevant to this thesis. Specifically, the chapter reviews the existing concepts and frameworks regarding emotional connection beyond the interpersonal context, encompassing both individual-object and consumer-product love. This is followed by an outline of the key underlying assumptions in relation to individual-object relationships, and the differences between interpersonal relationships and relationships between people and objects (including brands).

**Figure 2.1** Organisation of Chapter 2



## 2.2 Relevant psychological theories

### 2.2.1 Triangle of Love

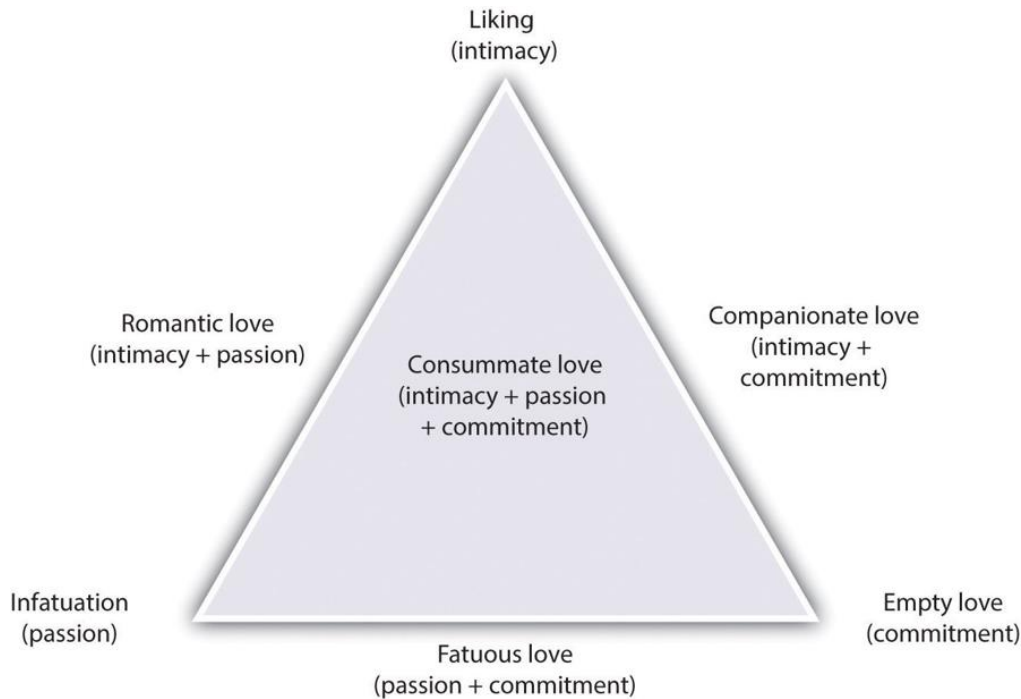
*The Triangle of Love* was introduced and developed by Sternberg and colleagues (Sternberg, 1986, 1997; Sternberg & Barnes, 1988). In brief, the theory identifies three components as the comprising elements of interpersonal love: *intimacy*, *passion*, and *commitment*. Intimacy represents the feelings of attachment, closeness and connectedness, whereas passion encompasses extreme physical attraction. Commitment, in contrast, relates to the corresponding decisions individuals make to stay in an interpersonal relationship (Sternberg, 1986). Placing these components on the vertices of a triangle (see Figure 2.2), this theory illustrates the (possible) different types of love that may arise between individuals, depending on the various interactions occurring amongst the components of the triangle.

This theory further denotes that each of the components of love has a 'differing temporal course' that 'results in changes in the nature of a given loving relationship over time' (Sternberg, 1986, p. 126). For instance, commitment tends to be high in love towards children, but relatively low in love for 'those friends that come and go throughout the span of one's lifetime' (p. 120). In addition, Sternberg (1986) proposed that the component of passion peaks early in a relationship and then experiences decline, whereas intimacy and commitment may grow over the course of an interpersonal relationship. Acevedo and A. Aron (2009) later provided evidence for this notion. The authors illustrated that *romantic love* (consisting of intensity, engagement and sexual interest) was strongly correlated with satisfaction in both the short and long-term. In contrast, *obsessive love* (consisting of passion and uncertainty, in line with the Passionate Love Scale [PLS], see Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986) was positively correlated with satisfaction in newly developed relationships, and negatively correlated in long-term relationships.

Overall, the Triangle of Love has provided important theoretical grounds regarding the dynamic nature of love and the importance of differentiating the various components of love (Graham, 2011). In particular, the measurement scales developed by Sternberg (1997) have

consistently produced highly reliable scores across various studies and disciplines (e.g., Graham, 2011)

**Figure 2.2** The Triangle of Love



(source: Sternberg & Barnes, 1988)

The Triangle of Love has provided researchers across different disciplines with a theoretical foundation that deepens the understanding and conceptualisation of 'love'. Importantly, this theory has challenged the one-dimensional view of the interpersonal love construct, which was originally proposed in seminal works such as Spearman (1927).

A multi-dimensional love construct enables the identification of various types of love, based on the presence of each dimension. For example, Sternberg (1986) referred to the presence of intimacy, passion and decision/commitment as *consummate love*, whereas intimacy and passion without decision/commitment represent *romantic love* (see Figure 2.2).

In relation to this thesis, this theory provides essential insights towards understanding the foundational dimensions of love in the context of consumer-brand relationships. For instance, in consumer research, while the presence of 'hot' components (intimacy and passion) lead to

a strong but possibly short-lived consumer-company or consumer-product relationship, identification of decision/commitment ('cold' component) will allow for a development of a more robust and long-lasting relationship with the consumer (Bauer, Heinrich, & Albrecht, 2009; Heinrich, Albrecht, & Bauer, 2012). In fact, existing research has used this theory to advance the research relating to customers' love towards brands and products (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Long-Tolbert & Gammoh, 2012), attaining customer loyalty through consumer intimacy and passion (C. K. Yim et al., 2008), and consumer-firm relationships (Bügel, Verhoef, & Buunk, 2011).

The following section explains the relevance of this theory to this thesis in greater detail.

### *2.2.1.1 Triangle of Love: Relevance to this thesis*

Through understanding the Triangle of Love components, this thesis offers a more inclusive conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationships. Prior studies have developed and validated constructs such as brand attachment, brand love and brand passion. Accordingly, these constructs independently (Albert et al., 2013) and/or linked with one another (Batra et al., 2012) have the power to predict the consumer's purchase decisions. **Chapters 5, 6 and 7** incorporate these constructs into conceptual frameworks, with the purpose of examining their links with other relevant concepts such as: attitudinal loyalty (**Chapter 5**), brand associations (**Chapter 6**), customer-based brand equity (CBBE) and its sub-components (**Chapter 7**), and purchase-related outcomes (**Chapter 5, 6 and 7**).

Using the theoretical foundations of the Triangle of Love, this thesis leverages the existing knowledge of the multi-dimensional conceptualisation of love experiences to: i) incorporate a multifaceted approach to the study of brand relationships; and ii) identify, hypothesise and examine the associations between the various comprising elements of consumer-brand relationships. Particularly, in line with this theory, the thesis uses the concepts of passion and love (conceptually similar to intimacy) as the pivotal dimensions of emotional brand relationship, along with attachment. In line with this theory, this thesis also assumes that these concepts interact with one another to create an inclusive brand relationship construct.

§6.3.2 in **Chapter 6** examines and explains these concepts and the interactions amongst them in greater detail.

The different types of love experiences stipulated in the Triangle of Love also provide the foundation to conceptualise and develop unique relational concepts. For example, the combination of intimacy and commitment may resemble a relatively stable feeling of love towards a brand. However, the combination of passion (being 'relatively unstable') and love may represent consumer-brand relationships that 'fluctuate unpredictably' and may depend upon physical arousal (Sternberg & Barnes, 1988, p. 49). This knowledge can help clarify the various dimensions of relational concepts (e.g., brand attachment, brand passion and so forth), and informs the measurement items required. **Chapter 6** (particularly §6.5) discusses the measurement items of the relational concepts in greater detail.

The Triangle of Love emphasises the development and growth of interpersonal relationships over time. Several studies have included this assumption in their arguments. For example, Fournier (1998) and Smit, Bronner, and Tolboom (2007) argued that consumer-brand relationship is 'process phenomena', since it evolves and changes over time during a series of interactions between the consumer and the brand, and in response to variations in the environment. Fournier (1998) specifically suggested a five-phase model for the evolvement of consumer-brand relationships, including initiation, growth, maintenance, deterioration and dissolution. Each stage represents a sequence of changes in the relationship type; for example, the evolution from a friend-like relationship to a lover-like relationship, or the changes in the relation intensity, such as a change in emotional involvement. Ravald and Grönroos (1996) and Grönroos (2004) argued that studying the consumer-brand relationship as a dynamic process that evolves over time is necessary in acquiring an in-depth understanding of how consumer-perceived value in a relationship with the brand changes during the relationship development. In a recent study Hütten et al. (2017) stated that marketing theory must explore relationships through a 'process-centric framework', revealing the prevalence of 'life-cycle conceptions' with respect to the relationship marketing process.

The concept of evolvement of brand relationships over time identifies different relational concepts with respect to their conceptual position throughout the stages of consumer-brand

relationships. While this aspect is outside of the scope of this study, its importance is highlighted in §.3.3 and §6.3.2.

### *2.2.2 Attachment Theory*

Bowlby and Ainsworth conducted early studies in the 1950s and 1960s, which eventually led to the development of the *Attachment Theory* (Ainsworth, 1969; Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bowlby, 1958, 1960). The Attachment Theory lays the foundation for explaining how inherent biological tendencies toward emotional attachment may act as a motivational and behavioural trigger. This theory also describes how and why infants seek proximity with an acquainted caregiver (attachment figure), seeking ‘closeness’ in order to obtain security, comfort and emotional support (Bowlby, 1958, 1960, 1979). Building on the Attachment Theory’s notions, further research has expanded the concept of attachment to all include individuals (not just infants-parents), describing it as an emotion-laden, target-specific bond among people (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bowlby, 1979; Pistole, 1989). Stronger attachment has been linked to powerful feelings of connection, affection, love, passion and interpersonal comfort (see Feeney & Noller, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1996; Fehr & Russell, 1991; Hazan & Shaver, 1987), where partners offer proximity maintenance in times of need, and provide an emotional ‘safe haven’ (Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Mikulincer, Shaver, & Pereg, 2003).

Furthermore, in the Attachment Theory, attachment is exemplified by a rich and accessible memory network, which includes both thoughts and feelings about the attachment figure (Mikulincer, Shaver, Gillath, & Nitzberg, 2005). More specifically, in an attachment system, the person assesses the progress towards achieving the proximity/protection goals; then, if needed, corrects the behaviour (Mikulincer et al., 2005). This goal-oriented behaviour requires several cognitive processes including processing the attachment figure’s responses to proximity-seeking endeavours and monitoring the accordance between the chosen behaviours and contextual factors (Bowlby, 1979, 1982). Overall, an individual’s attachment-related strategies have specific cognitive and affective processes that are shaped to enable goal achievement (Mikulincer et al., 2003).

### *2.2.2.1 Attachment Theory: Relevance to this thesis*

The Attachment Theory yields many invaluable implications for consumer research. For example, based on this theory, marketing research has validated that individuals are capable of developing feelings of attachment towards objects. These objects can include products (Page, 2014; Schifferstein & Zwartkruis-Pelgrim, 2008), places (Hernández, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace, & Hess, 2007; Rubinstein & Parmelee, 1992), gifts (Mick & DeMoss, 1990), collectables (Slater, 2001), and even mobile technologies such as applications (C. K. Kim, Jun, Han, Kim, & Kim, 2013). Furthermore, consumer research has advocated that consumers may develop attachment towards intangible marketing entities such as firms (Vlachos et al., 2010; C. K. Yim et al., 2008) and brands (C. W. Park et al., 2010; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Thomson et al., 2005). These entities can become irreplaceable for consumers, ceasing other brands or products to be seen as alternatives (C. W. Park et al., 2010).

Consumers' attachment towards a certain brand reflects the overall nature of their interaction with the brand (Thomson et al., 2005). As in the interpersonal context (i.e., when emotionally attached individuals are willing to make sacrifices for their relationships and are committed to staying loyal to one another, see Hazan & Shaver, 1994), consumer-brand attachment is a significant predictor of a consumer's willingness towards repurchasing the brand (C. W. Park et al., 2010; So et al., 2013). The thesis incorporates the implications of the Attachment Theory concerning its role in predicting loyalty in interpersonal relationships to: i) validate the robustness of brand attachment; and ii) explain the variation in brand outcomes such as willingness to pay a price premium or positive WOM (discussed in detail in §6.3.2 and §7.3.2).

In line with the Attachment Theory, individuals take correctional actions to facilitate their progress towards attachment goals (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). As a positive outcome of these goal-oriented behaviours, consumers develop a self-connection with the attachment figure (Stovall-McClough & Dozier, 2016). In consumer research, the attachment system may involve a cognitive and emotional connection between the brand and the consumer's perception of 'self', often referred to as 'brand-self connection' (Chaplin & John, 2005; Escalas, 2004; Escalas & Bettman, 2003b). When describing a brand as part of the self, a



consumer may then develop a bond and sense of oneness with that brand; and while this bond is cognitively presented, it is inherently emotional (C. W. Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005). This bond and its implications for researchers and practitioners is the focus of **Chapter 7**, and contributes to the achievement of **Objective 3** and **Objective 4** of this thesis. In particular, this thesis leverages this bond to generate insights concerning the psychological mechanisms that sustain brand relationship development (Greifeneder, Bless, & Pham, 2011; Laros & Steenkamp, 2005). §7.3 will explain this aspect in greater detail.

The Attachment Theory considers attachment as a key element in the overall development and growth of interpersonal relationships (Cassidy & Shaver, 2002; Collins & Feeney, 2000; Mikulincer et al., 2005; Simpson & Rholes, 1998). Accordingly, to achieve **Objective 2**, this thesis follows the same line as seminal existing research (Batra et al., 2012; Belaid & Behi, 2011; C. W. Park, MacInnis, & Priester, 2007) and includes brand attachment as a primary dimension of consumer-brand relationship conceptualisations (further discussed in **Chapter 6**, §6.3.2 and **Chapter 7**, §7.3.2).

According to the Attachment Theory, the feeling of attachment is an emotion-laden bond that provides individuals with the desire to keep each other's company and feel 'safe' (Bowlby, 1982). In a branding context, through brand attachment, consumers experience a deep desire to preserve the sense of security felt in their connection with the brand. This deep desire drives an emotionally rooted purchase intention and a strong willingness to avoid switching to another brand (Mugge, Schifferstein, & Schoormans, 2010; C. W. Park et al., 2010). Accordingly, when developing measurement scales of consumer-brand relationships (**Objective 2**), this thesis includes concepts such as sense of attachment, emotional bond and personal connection (see §6.5.2)

Finally, similar to the Triangle of Love (discussed in §2.2.1), the Attachment Theory has substantial implications for this thesis, as it clearly outlines the importance of attachment in evaluating the extent of 'intimacy' between consumers and brands. Arguably, the emotional attachment between the consumer and a brand will act as a 'binding' factor which compels the consumer to feel 'close' to the brand (Thomson et al., 2005). Accordingly, this thesis uses these insights to explain the strength and significance of emotional connections between

consumers and brands, which is measured using the survey items described in §6.5.2 and §7.5.2, all of which are linked to **Objective 2** and **Objective 3**.

### *2.2.3 Self-Expansion Theory*

The *Self-Expansion Theory* posits that the ‘motivation to expand the self’ drives the development of various interpersonal attractions and close relationships, ranging from romantic relationships to friendship, sibling and parent-child relationships (A. Aron & E. N. Aron, 1986; A. Aron & Westbay, 1996; E. N. Aron & A. Aron, 1996). More specifically, individuals demonstrate an intrinsic motivation to expand their selves through building interpersonal relationships and through seeking resources and characteristics that empower them to achieve higher order life goals (E. N. Aron & A. Aron, 1996; Deci & Ryan, 1975; Reimann & A. Aron, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Through self-expansion, individuals tend to associate themselves with those whose personal and social characteristics they would like to embody as their own (A. Aron, Mashek, et al., 2005; Reimann & A. Aron, 2009; Reimann et al., 2012). This allows them to grow and expand to new territories, while attaining joy and excitement (A. Aron, Norman, E. N. Aron, McKenna, & Heyman, 2000). In addition, self-expansion relates to the motivation to acquire resources, identities and perceptions (e.g., material, social and knowledge assets) to accomplish goals in life (A. Aron, Mashek, et al., 2005; A. Aron et al., 2000; Reimann & A. Aron, 2009; Reimann et al., 2012).

The Self-Expansion Theory offers important implications for the research in consumer relationships, hence why it has informed the theoretical work presented in this thesis. Firstly, the self-expansion process (and more specifically the motivation to self-expand) is associated with the development of positive emotions towards the other individual involved in the relationship (Ahuvia, 2005; Strong & A. Aron, 2006). The early stages of the relationship between a consumer and the brand are typically fuelled by the acquisition of a brand's resources, perspectives and identities for self-improvement purposes. Then, as the relationship grows, the inclusion of the other in the self creates an overlap between the

consumer and the brand. Reimann et al. (2012) and A. Aron and E. N. Aron (1986) referred to this overlap of 'selves' as the determining factor of the growth of consumer emotions towards the brand. The intensity of these emotions is correlated with the intensity of self-expansion and may vary during the growth of the relationship (A. Aron, Lewandowski Jr, Mashek, & E. N. Aron, 2013; Fournier, 1998). Accordingly, while in the early stages of relationships individuals are typically motivated by a rapid self-expansion (i.e., a rapid 'acquisition of resources, perspectives and identities that enhance one's ability to accomplish goals'), the opportunities for further expansion decrease over time, given that individuals reach high levels of knowledge about one another (Reimann et al., 2012, p. 129). Similarly, the intensity of emotional arousal associated with self-expansion (indicating the intensity of closeness) decreases over time as the relationship develops (A. Aron, Fisher, et al., 2005; A. Aron et al., 2013).

The following section reviews the implications of the Self-Expansion Theory for this thesis in greater detail.

### *2.2.3.1 Self-Expansion Theory: Relevance to this thesis*

Recent studies in marketing research have incorporated the Self-Expansion Theory in the context of consumption, to examine the relationships between consumers and brands. For example, Reimann et al. (2012) showed that, in consumer-brand relationships, consumers' rapid self-expansion and the subsequent development of emotions towards the brand occur only in times of newly established brand relationships (e.g., recently purchased brands). This occurs much more intensely during the early relationship period, when consumers have 'just fallen in love' with the brand (p. 130). In line with this argument, the thesis contends that self-expansion, if accompanied by the development of positive emotions towards the brand, may result in strong and long-lasting brand relationships. Furthermore, studies (e.g., Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Thomson et al., 2005) have shown that emotional elements such as surprise, excitement and positive affect could trigger self-expansion motivations and subsequently the development of love and attachment towards brands. This thesis incorporates these

elements when conceptualising the consumer-brand relationship construct, especially when generating the measurement items detailed in §6.5.2 and §7.5.2.

This thesis also utilises the notion of rapid self-expansion and emotional arousal to conceptualise brand passion (see also §5.3.2 and §5.5.2). Existing research has described brand passion as a psychological state that involves consumer's extremely positive desire and excitement towards the brand (Bauer et al., 2007; McEwen, 2005), which at times may reflect the obsessive and dedicative nature of brand relationships (Albert et al., 2013; Swimberghe, Astakhova, & Wooldridge, 2014). The time it takes to develop brand passion is believed to be short in comparison to feelings of love or attachment (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Shimp & Madden, 1988). Although the development time of brand relationships is not directly linked with the objectives of the thesis, it has possible implications for examining brand passion. Therefore, the thesis includes a discussion in **Chapter 5**, §5.7.1 and **Chapter 6**, §6.7.1 of the development and maturity of the various motivations and emotions involved in consumer-brand relationships, in line with the different stages of the consumer-brand relationship lifecycle (Reimann et al., 2012).

The duality of motivation-emotion core in the Self-Expansion Theory (A. Aron, Fisher, et al., 2005; Reimann & A. Aron, 2009) reflects the dynamic character of close interpersonal relationships. In line with the theoretical underpinnings of this duality, it is argued that consumer perceptions about a brand (i.e., psychological associations with the brand and its offerings, Keller, 2001), trigger the development of feelings of self-expansion (Reimann et al., 2012). Accordingly, this thesis takes into consideration the implications of this duality in the development of brand relationships (see §7.3.3 and §7.3.4).

The notions of the Self-Expansion Theory support the formulation and conceptualisation of brand attachment. Based on this theory, consumers may be encouraged by self-expansion motivation to see their favoured brands as entities that 'reflect who they are' and 'are part of themselves', resulting in the development of an emotional attachment towards the brand (C. W. Park et al., 2010). Furthermore, this role of brands is evident in the inherent link between emotional attachment and a consumer's self-concept (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). This means that the more the brand is incorporated in the consumer's self-concept, the stronger the relationship, and the higher the consumer's

willingness to develop a positive feeling of ‘oneness’ with the brand (C. W. Park et al., 2010; A. Aron, E. N. Aron, & Smollan, 1992). Consumers are also willing to embrace brands as ‘resources’ actively investing their own resources such as time and money towards the relationship (Reimann & A. Aron, 2009), and making mindful attempts to view the brand as ‘theirs’ (Q. Bian & Forsythe, 2012; Jillapalli & Wilcox, 2010; Mittal, 2006). In line with this, the thesis considers the notions of self-reflection and self-connection when developing the brand attachment concepts, particularly when generating the measurement items. The thesis also incorporates ‘self-connection’ (e.g., §6.5.2) and feeling of ‘oneness’ (e.g., §6.5.2 and §7.5.2) into the conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationship frameworks, as described in **Chapter 6** and **Chapter 7**.

Based on the Self-Expansion Theory, past research has suggested that when consumers develop relationships with certain brands that are particularly well-known and prestigious, they tend to see the world from the perspective of that brand (Reimann & A. Aron, 2009). C. W. Park et al. (2006) pointed out that expressions such as ‘mine’, ‘part of me’, ‘expressing me’ or ‘emotionally relating to me’ are terms that consumers may use to describe their relationships with loved brands. This argument has clear implications for this thesis, as follows. First, this thesis uses similar expressions when generating measurement items to examine relational concepts, especially brand attachment. Second, this thesis aims to provide a clearer understanding of the psychological mechanisms through which consumers perceive the brands and their significance to their lives. This allows for a better understanding of the development of brand relationships, in addition to a more effective description of the strategies that practitioners can adopt to leverage those relationships. **Chapter 6** and **Chapter 7** (particularly §6.7.1 and §7.7.1) discuss these aspects in greater detail.

#### *2.2.4 Social Exchange Theory*

*The Social Exchange Theory* (Blau, 1960, 1964; Ekeh, 1974; Emerson, 1976; Homans, 1958; Wayne et al., 1997) refers to the exchange behaviours that occur in interpersonal relationships. The theory was first developed to assess human behaviour (Homans, 1958) and was later applied in research on organisational behaviour (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976) and

consumer behaviour (Bagozzi, 1975). The Social Exchange Theory argues that in interpersonal exchange interactions, the overall purpose is to maximise benefits and minimise costs (Salam, Rao, & Pegels, 1998). Through engaging in interactions, individuals exchange tangible (e.g., safety) and intangible (e.g., personal image) values, in order find a balance between what they offer and what they receive (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Homans, 1958). Social exchanges also include obligations of value co-creation and require mutual respect and trust from all parties involved (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Emerson, 1976). Over time, the involved parties may introduce and improve exchange norms in order to maintain the trust and welfare of the interaction (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Lambe, Wittmann, & Spekman, 2001; Luo, 2002). Social exchanges also involve a comparison of the current exchange offerings to those who are proposing alternatives (Lambe et al., 2001).

Since early seminal studies (e.g., Bagozzi, 1975; Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987; Hunt, 1976, 1983; Kotler, 1972), the Social Exchange Theory and its implications have been prominent in marketing research. In particular, the theory has been extensively employed to interpret exchange behaviours between consumers, companies and brands (Alford, 2002; Bagozzi, 1974, 1975; Lambe et al., 2001; Luo, 2002). In more detail, social exchanges are shown to be evident and dynamic in the services context, due to the scale of interactions between consumers and the service provider (e.g., see Bendapudi & Berry, 1997; H. Choo & Petrick, 2014; J. J. Lee, Capella, Taylor, & Gabler, 2014). Sierra and McQuitty (2005) concluded that social exchanges develop a sense of shared responsibility between consumers and the service providers, resulting in emotional arousal and consequently greater loyalty. In marketing relationships, besides shared responsibility, reciprocal obligations, trust and commitment, relationships are characterised by social exchange norms (Kingshott, 2006). Moreover, studies on corporate social responsibility (Homburg, Stierl, & Bornemann, 2013; Lii & M. Lee, 2012) and consumer communities (Chan & Li, 2010; Cheung & M. K. Lee, 2012; Sashi, 2012) have also drawn upon the Social Exchange Theory.

An examination of all the underlying models and subsequent variations of the Social Exchange Theory is outside of the scope of this thesis. However, this theory has some implications for research on consumer-brand relationships, which are discussed in the following section.

#### *2.2.4.1 Social Exchange Theory: Relevance to this thesis*

Drawing upon the Social Exchange Theory, existing research has confirmed that in exchange interactions, consumers make proactive contributions towards the relationship with the brand, rather than merely acting as passive recipients of brand-related cues (Grönroos, 2004; Hollebeek, 2011b; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). These contributions typically involve a transactional exchange of cognitive, emotional and physical resources, on the basis of the perceived values and benefits (Bagozzi, 1975, 2006; Higgins & Scholer, 2009). In addition, prior research has stated that consumers can independently engage in activities that create value for the consumer-brand relationship. These values include positive WOM and brand recommendation (Kwon & Mattila, 2015; Ladhari, 2007; Wallace et al., 2014), brand advocacy (Wallace et al., 2012) and the formation of brand communities (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Stratton & Northcote, 2014). In turn, consumers reciprocate with positive thoughts, feelings and behaviours towards the brand, enabling their relationship with the brand to grow stronger (Anker et al., 2015). Therefore, this thesis takes into account these aspects and considers them to be the outcomes of consumer-brand relationships (e.g., consumer support for the brand over social media, the willingness to advocate for the brand, willingness to spread positive WOM about the brand, and so on). This approach facilitates the achievement of **Objective 3** and is discussed in greater detail in §5.3.2, §6.4.2 and §7.4.4.

Building upon the Social Exchange Theory, Lawler and colleagues (Lawler, 2001; Lawler & Thye, 2006) argued that emotions are a core feature of social exchange interactions. These emotions take various forms, ranging from pleasure and satisfaction to pride and gratitude (Lawler & Thye, 2006). Exchange emotions vary in intensity and can be either positive or negative (Sierra & McQuitty, 2005). Upon the development of positive emotions, the individual's intention for exchange increases, which consequently leads to development of a stronger relationship (Lawler & Thye, 2006; Sierra & McQuitty, 2005). The theory proposes that the greater the shared responsibility (i.e., all parties involved in the exchange interaction sharing the accountability towards the outcome of the exchange interaction), the stronger the emotions developed towards the exchange process and the stronger the relationship

(Lawler, 2001; Lawler & Thye, 2006). This thesis draws upon this assumption when evaluating the relationship between brands and customers and assumes that the development of emotions in the relationship between consumers and brands is the result of exchange interactions. This assumption is paramount to understanding the process involved in the development of emotions in consumer-brand relationships and assists in the achievement of **Objective 2**. In particular, §6.3.2 and §7.3.2 further discuss the development emotions related to consumer-brand relationships as a result of benefits exchanged in the relationship.

### *2.2.5 Theory of Relational Cohesion*

The *Theory of Relational Cohesion* (Lawler et al., 2000; Lawler & Yoon, 1996) was built upon the foundations of the Social Exchange Theory and was developed to predict how and when individuals become committed to their exchange relationships. According to this theory, positive emotions in exchange relationships become the binding value, and create relational cohesion among the parties involved (Thye, Yoon, & Lawler, 2002). Relational cohesion is defined as the valence of the individual's perception of the exchange relationship (Lawler & Yoon, 1996). Higher relational cohesion brings several positive outcomes, such as: (i) an enhanced inclination to ignore and devalue threatening alternatives and stay in the exchange relationship; (ii) improved levels of exchange of intangible and symbolic offerings; and (iii) increased interest in contributing to new joint activities (Lawler & Yoon, 1996).

The adoption of this theory in marketing research has been very limited. A rare exception is the work of Sierra and McQuitty (2005), who utilised this theory to confirm the positive influence of the strength of emotions towards a service provider on service brand loyalty. Nonetheless, this theory has important implications for this thesis, including: i) the identification of a cognitive process through which the consumer associates exchanged emotions to the brand relationship; ii) the clarification of the fact that consumer-brand relationships imply a cohesive exchange of benefits; and iii) the identification of the devaluation of alternatives and of the perception of a sense of community as significant implications of strong brand relationships. The following section discusses these aspects in greater detail.



### *2.2.5.1 Theory of Relational Cohesion: Relevance to this thesis*

The Theory of Relational Cohesion proposes that exchange outcomes can generate positive and negative emotions, based on whether a bond between the individuals involved can be formed and sustained (Lawler, 2001; Lawler & Yoon, 1996). In the context of consumption, Sierra and McQuitty (2005) argued that establishing a consumer-brand relationship upon relational cohesion can enhance the unity and harmony of the relationship itself. The authors further highlighted that the reason behind the formation of this bond lies in the fact that emotions stimulate a rational process whereby the consumer associates the developed emotions to the source of those emotions, which is the relationship itself. Consequently, the relationship becomes the object of value for the consumer and the consumer is cognitively encouraged to re-purchase the products of the brand (Sierra & McQuitty, 2005). In line with these notions, this thesis incorporates emotions as the pivotal element in the development of consumer-brand relationships. In particular, the thesis incorporates statements with a high degree of emotional connotation in the scale items measuring relational concepts such as brand love, brand attachment and brand passion. The theoretical prominence of emotions in the development of brand relationships is further discussed in §6.3.2 and §7.3.2.

The Theory of Relational Cohesion denotes that an integrated exchange relationship prompts the growth of the relationship (Lawler et al., 2000; Lawler & Yoon, 1996). Accordingly, this thesis posits that consumers are more willing to establish long-lasting relationships with brands when the relationship is based upon 'cohesive' relational exchanges (i.e., when the consumer perceives the relationship's benefits and values as fairly balanced and reciprocal for the consumer and the brand). Therefore, when conceptualising consumer-brand relationship frameworks, this thesis includes concepts that represent the benefits exchanged by both the brand and consumers. For example, benefits such as self-identification, self-expression and social status are included in the brand relationship construct, whereas elements such as positive WOM and advocacy intentions are included as the outcomes of brand relationships. §5.4 and §7.4.4 discuss these aspects in greater detail.

Based on the Theory of Relational Cohesion, having a cohesive relationship positively influences the willingness of the involved parties to maintain the developed emotional bond, even when there is an alternative choice offering comparable value and benefits (Butler, 2001; Kollock, 1994; Kollock, Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1994; H. J. Lee, D. -H. Lee, Taylor, & J. -H. Lee, 2011). In line with **Objective 3**, this thesis draws on this assumption and includes devaluation of alternative as a concept linked with strong consumer relationships, especially given the likely existence of other alternatives. §6.4.6 expands upon the concept of the devaluation of alternatives in further detail.

Building upon the notions of the Theory of Relational Cohesion, prior research has offered several theoretical implications relating to the cohesive network of consumer relationships, including: i) the creation of a community of consumers who contribute to the flow of brand values among members (H. J. Lee et al., 2011); and ii) an increased psychological willingness to stay within the network and share information (Lawler & Yoon, 1996). Accordingly, when consumers share a perceived common cohesion in their relationship with their mutually favoured brand, they are likely to develop a psychological sense of community towards the brand (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; H. J. Lee et al., 2011; McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002). The sense of community can be defined as the psychological benefit that individuals wish to acquire from the community itself, which is obtainable through being surrounded by like-minded people who share a similar interest in the brand (McMillan, 1996). The sense of community is believed to be strongly linked to the development of brand relationships (Roderick J Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, 2011; Grönroos, 2000). Therefore, the thesis includes sense of community as a primary concept that is potentially linked to the development of strong consumer-brand relationships (see §5.4.4 for a more in-depth discussion).

While these theories are not directly linked (with the exception of Social Exchange Theory and Theory of Relational Cohesion), there is a subtle connection between them, which confirms that, if combined, they can explain *why* and *how* brand relationships are developed. Accordingly, the Triangle of Love (Sternberg, 1986) offers three key components of interpersonal love (i.e., intimacy, passion and commitment), which mirror the three main relational concepts examined in this thesis (i.e., attachment, love and passion - see §3.3).

Furthermore, while love and passion arguably prompt the development of brand relationship (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Fournier, 1998), in line with the Attachment Theory, attachment activates consumers' willingness to stay in the relationship with the brand. While the above theories explain the components involved in the development of brand relationships, the Self-Expansion Theory (E. N. Aron & Aron, 1996) provides the crucial reasoning behind consumers' interest in developing relationships with brands, which is to expand (improve) their self-perceptions by associating themselves with a brand's symbolic characteristics (A. Aron, Mashek, et al., 2005; Reimann et al., 2012). While Self-Expansion Theory can explain why brand relationships are 'triggered', the Social Exchange Theory contributes by revealing the reason why consumers and brands may opt to 'maintain' the developed relationship—i.e., the exchange of cognitive, emotional and physical resources. That is, while brands provide consumers with benefits such as functional quality or symbolic values (Tan & Ming, 2003; Trudeau H & Shobeiri, 2016), consumers can benefit brands by offering positive WOM or brand recommendations (Kwon & Mattila, 2015; Wallace et al., 2014). Furthermore, the Theory of Relational Cohesion offers another reason for consumers to maintain their developed relationship with their favoured brand—i.e., the positive and pleasant emotions that are associated with the relationship (Sierra & McQuitty, 2005).

So far, the chapter has clarified the relevance of psychological theories for the development of this thesis's frameworks and constructs. However, in order to fully understand the nature of consumer-brand relationships, it is essential to understand what components are involved in the development of a consumer-brand relationship. Accordingly, the following sections (§2.3, §2.4 and §2.5) review the existing research concerning interpersonal/love relationships and outline the differences between these relationships and the relationships between people and objects. These sections also point out the relevance of the research in interpersonal and consumer-object relationships to this thesis's conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationship.

## **2.3 Interpersonal love/relationships**

Interpersonal love is a state of positive emotional attraction that is present between individuals (Plutchik, 1980, 2000; Richins, 1997) and is considered to capture/signify the deepest and most meaningful relational connections that the majority of people will typically experience (Rubin, 1970). A. Aron, Paris, and Aron (1995) described interpersonal love as the merging of two persons, in which a partner's 'sense of self' develops to include the other partner (also supported by Belk, 1988). In examining the comprising dimensions of interpersonal relationships, past research (e.g., Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000; Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, & Giles, 1999; C. Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986, 1991; S. S. Hendrick, 1988; S. S. Hendrick, Dicke, & Hendrick, 1998; S. S. Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988; Rubin, 1970; Sternberg, 1986, 1997; Sternberg & Barnes, 1988) have offered valuable findings. The next paragraphs touch briefly on some of the most important findings that have emerged from this area of research.

S. S. Hendrick et al. (1998) suggested seven dimensions for interpersonal relationships, including: quality of meeting needs; overall satisfaction with the relationship; perceived quality of the relationship compared to other relationships; frequency of thoughts with regards to feeling regretful about the relationship; quality of meeting original relationship expectations; the extent of love towards the partner; and the number of problems in the relationship. Building on this, Fletcher et al. (2000) suggested a simplified set of dimensions for interpersonal relationships, which include: relationship satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, trust, love and passion. The authors further argued that individuals are relatively consistent when assessing their relationships across different domains (e.g., being high on commitment and trust but low on passion or being high on love but low on trust). This consistency places emphasis on the important link amongst these dimensions, as well as the overall significance of the relationship as a multidimensional construct. The identification of these dimensions (especially intimacy, love, passion, possessive love and logical love) has provided researchers in marketing with a set of foundational elements that shaped the theoretical understanding of how consumer's emotions towards brands are developed (e.g., see Albert & Merunka, 2013; Batra et al., 2012; Fournier, 1998). For example, the quality of partner intimacy as an interpersonal dimension is linked to a brand's overall reliability in delivering what is desired (Smit et al., 2007). Similarly, love and passion as important dimensions of human relationships, have been similarly conceptualised to reflect the affective

bond between consumers and products, objects or brands (Ahuvia, 1993; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Gapper, 2004). Also, the understanding of relationship-dimensions such as frequency of thoughts, commitment and meeting expectations and needs – all supported by the Attachment Theory (Ainsworth, 1969; Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bowlby, 1958, 1960) – has contributed to the conceptualisation of attachment-like bonds between consumers and brands (e.g., see Mende, Bolton, & Bitner, 2013; C. W. Park et al., 2010). Furthermore, the identification of intimacy as a key element of relationships (Smit et al., 2007) has improved the understanding of consumer-brand relationships, where emotions (e.g., love and passion) and cognitive thoughts (e.g., quality perceptions, prestige) both play important roles. For example, C. W. Park et al. (2006) referred to brand relationships as a connection between the brand and the consumer's sense of self, which is reflected in a 'cognitive and emotional bond' (p. 3).

Nonetheless, whilst the dimensions proposed by psychology studies provide vital foundations, they do not offer an inclusive framework to examine the underlying dimensions of relationships, especially in the context of consumption and branding context. In particular, the dimensions identified in the interpersonal literature stream describe only one specific set of relationship dimensions, largely missing the unique characteristics of the relationship that consumers develop with objects and marketing entities, such as a passionate loyalty towards a certain brand. Accordingly, the following section highlights the characteristics of consumer-object relationships (both tangible and intangible objects) and presents some reflections on the differences between interpersonal relationships vis-à-vis the relationship between consumers and brands.

## **2.4 Individual-object relationships**

Researchers have developed various concepts and frameworks to extend the concept of love and emotional connection beyond the interpersonal context (e.g., Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Langner, Bruns, Fischer, & Rossiter, 2016). Specifically, a significant stream of research has focused on the love/bond between consumers and possessions, experiences and products

(e.g., Lastovicka & Sirianni, 2011). The importance of love as a common consumption-related emotion has been highlighted quite consistently in existing research. For example, S. E. Schultz, Kleine, and Kernan (1989) found that love is the second most commonly experienced feeling towards consumer objects (second only to happiness). The following paragraphs review some of the most relevant works and reflect on their implication for this thesis.

The majority of existing studies have acknowledged that loved objects play a significant role in people's lives. For instance, Ahuvia (2005) showed that from the array of products and possessions, individuals tend to 'love' 'only a handful' of items. However, 'loved' items 'play a special role in consumers' understandings of who they are as people'; and 'help resolve conflicts and tensions in the consumer's identity narrative' such as 'tensions between the consumer's past identity versus the person the consumer wants to become' or 'conflicts between ideals of who the consumer should be, which are advocated by socializing agents' (p. 182). Similarly, Belk (1988) implied that 'possessions, incorporated in extended self, serve valuable functions to healthy personalities' (p. 159), as they are able to 'make a positive contribution to our identities' (p. 160). Nonetheless, Ahuvia (2005) argued that self-extension and love are not identical, meaning that 'there are inevitably aspects of oneself that one does not love, so love objects are only a subset of the things that make up a consumer's identity' (p. 182). Whang, Allen, Sahoury, and Zhang (2004) confirmed that consumers' love towards their favoured product is akin to interpersonal love, as it is 'passionate, possessive and selfless in nature'. The authors offered examples such as Harley Davidson motorbikes or Coca-Cola soft drinks, arguing that consumers see these products as entities with which they are 'in love'. Similar claims concerning consumer emotions towards products can be found in studies that focus on community of 'brand admirers' (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 412), such as Harley-Davidson consumers (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995) and Star Trek fans (Kozinets, 2001).

Consumers' emotions towards products and brands offer many important benefits, including helping consumers to extend and improve their self-image (Kleinc & Baker, 2004; C. K. B. Yim, Chan, & Hung, 2007); increasing the compatibility with consumer needs and wellbeing (Belk, Ger, & Askegaard, 2003; Shimp & Madden, 1988); and catering for a range of symbolic meanings (Tan & Ming, 2003). Consideration of these associated benefits often leads to a deeper understanding of the mechanism through which consumers express and develop their

feelings, and build emotional connections with the company behind the product (Ahuvia, 2005; Kleinc & Baker, 2004). Accordingly, understanding which factors influence this mechanism can enable brand managers to develop strategies that boost loyalty and other important outcomes that can yield economic returns (Slater, 2001). In this thesis, it is also assumed that an investigation of these mechanisms allows uncovering the possible antecedents and outcomes of consumer-brand feelings (in line with thesis **Objective 2** and **Objective 3**).

The following section discusses the important foundational aspects that interpersonal and individual-object relationships share, and the aspects that differentiate individual-object relationships from interpersonal relationships. These aspects are presented as a series of assumptions, which have informed the three empirical studies that are presented in this thesis. The next section examines three key assumptions about individual-object relationships and their relevance to this thesis, which are: (i) consumers are capable of developing emotions (and emotional relationships) towards a marketing entity, such as a brand; (ii) interpersonal and consumer-based relationships share theoretical and conceptual foundations; and (iii) consumers may view and express their relationships with brands in ways that are different from what they would do in interpersonal relationships.

## **2.5 Key underlying assumptions in relation to individual-object relationships**

***→ Consumers are capable of developing emotions (and emotional relationships) towards a marketing entity, such as a brand.***

Past research has come to the overall agreement that consumers have the ability to love a marketing entity (i.e., tangible objects such as a product or a service, or intangible objects such as a company or a brand) in a similar way that they love another human (e.g., see Ahuvia, 2005; Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Fournier, 1998; Whang et al., 2004). This

assumption yields significant relevance to this thesis, and leads to two specific theoretical assumptions, as follows.

First, the present thesis recognises the significance of the use of the word 'love' when a consumer describes his or her feelings towards a brand. Various recent studies have provided empirical support for this. For example, Rossiter (2012) argued that consumers use the term 'love' in the 'quasi-romantic sense' when describing their emotions towards certain products or brands (p. 915). Similarly, Langner et al. (2015) confirmed that the level of emotional arousal induced by an expressively 'loved' brand significantly exceeds that which is induced by an expressively 'liked' brand. Furthermore, Rossiter and Bellman (2012) reported that the incidence of consumers who love/have loved a brand was 17% for laundry detergent, 18% for coffee and 26% for computers, peaking at 45% in the fashion clothes category. However, it is important to acknowledge that consumers may choose not to use the same expressions to describe their relationships with their partners and their favourite brands. For example, Bengtsson (2003) advised that some consumers 'can't even imagine using the word relationship' when describing their relationship with a brand (p. 155). In this regard, this thesis recognises the importance of being particularly cautious in selecting expressions when developing measurement items to investigate concepts related to consumer-brand relationship, as they may convey meanings incongruous to the intended connotation. The thesis discusses these provisions in **Study 1**, §5.5.2, **Study 2**, §6.5.2 and **Study 3**, §7.5.2.

Second, this thesis recognises that a consumer's capability to love a brand originates from the important roles that the brand play in the consumer's life. For the consumer, a specific brand might become more than just a marketing entity; rather, it might become an outlet for the construction and improvement of their own self-identity and self-image (A. Aron & E. N. Aron, 1986; A. Aron et al., 1995; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Branden (2008) advised that a consumer's desire to love emerges from his or her 'profound need to value' and to 'find things in the world' to 'care for' (p. 56). This reflects the consumer's aspiration to develop attachments towards certain brands and to recognise the need to 'nurture' those (Lastovicka & Sirianni, 2011). These 'nurturing' activities may include consumers 'giving of their time, energy and financial resources' (p. 323) 'to foster beloved possessions and their relationship' (p. 324). Accordingly, the more a consumer nurtures the brand, the more significant the role for the



brand in the consumer's life, and the more the development of emotions towards the brand (Fournier, 1998).

→ ***Interpersonal and consumer-based relationships share theoretical and conceptual foundations***

Drawing upon two theories, Fournier (1998) offered theoretical support for the conceptual fit between consumers' psychological understanding of interpersonal relationships and their understanding of individual-object relationships. First, the author drew on the *Theory of Animism* (Stocking Jr, 1971, introduced to branding research by Blackston et al., 1993; D. A. Aaker, 1997), which posits that individuals often feel a need to *personify* objects in order to facilitate their interactions with the nonmaterial world. Accordingly, consumers show a tendency to see a brand's communicational messages (e.g., advertisements) as the attempt to 'humanise' the brand (Fournier, 1998). This tendency triggers consumer interest in assigning personality qualities to the brand, which ultimately bolsters the overall consumer willingness to consider it as a relationship partner (p. 345). However, not all brand personalities trigger brand relationships. In fact, brands with 'unique' or 'exciting' personalities are more likely to be selected by consumers as a relationship partner (Smit et al., 2007, p. 628). Considering the role of personification in the development of brand relationship (R. Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014b), it is reasonable to argue that the fundamentals of the Theory of Animism are embedded in the Self-Expansion Theory (see §2.2.3).

Second, Fournier (1998) also drew on the *Theory of Impression Formation*, which posits that individuals translate observed behaviours into traits to be used to evaluate characteristics of the person (Belk, 1988; Srull & Wyer, 1989). When applied to consumer research, this theory implies that consumers use the brand's behaviours (e.g., interaction with consumers) to make *brand impressions* (i.e., inferences about its traits) and to form a personality for the brand. Therefore, through behaviours, brands have the opportunity to demonstrate a personality that 'contributes to the initiation, maintenance and destruction of consumer-brand relationship bonds' (Fournier, 1998, p. 345). However, it is plausible to argue that the aforementioned opportunity is in fact part of the benefits that are exchanged between the brand and the consumer in order to maintain the relationship. Therefore, the fundamentals of the

Theory of Impression Formation are reflected in the notions of the Social Exchange Theory (see §2.2.5).

On the basis of Fournier (1998)'s arguments, Smit et al., (2007) introduced three notions as the common foundations across both relationships contexts (i.e., interpersonal and consumer-brand). These notions are (i) *interdependence*: both relationships comprise of 'a reciprocal exchange' between interdependent partners; (ii) *temporality*: both relationships involve a series of repeated actions (from both partners) and change over time in response to the environment; and (iii) *perceived commitment*: both relationships include providing meanings to the partners involved, which then corresponds to the partners' loyalty towards one another. Other studies have supported similar notions as shared the same foundations (e.g., Ahuvia, 2005; Lastovicka & Sirianni, 2011; Whang et al., 2004).

In line with the above, this thesis assumes that all these notions, although rooted in interpersonal relationship research, can be incorporated in the conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationships. More specifically, this thesis uses the notion of brand personification to conceptualise self-brand identification and emotional consumer-brand relationship; brand impressions and interdependence in the formation of brand symbolic benefits; and perceived commitment in the conceptualisation of emotional love and emotional attachment (see §6.5.2 and §7.5.2).

**→ Consumers may view and express their relationships with brands differently from how they view and express their interpersonal relationships.**

Existing research has suggested that, in comparison to interpersonal love, consumers can love brands, but in a somewhat more limited way. More specifically, brand relationships are argued to be limited with respect to *richness*, *depth* and *overall importance* (Aggarwal, 2004). For example, brand relationships do not include selfless concern for the other in the same way interpersonal relationships do (Fournier, 1998). Furthermore, the concept of commitment holds a different meaning in the branding context, compared to the interpersonal context. For instance, Whang et al. (2004) showed that consumers might exhibit 'openness to multiple partners' and 'acceptance of a breakup' (e.g., selling the product, or switching brands), which represent a significantly different dynamic in comparison to

interpersonal relationships. In the context of this thesis, these insights highlight the importance of selecting the right expressions when examining the level of consumers' emotions towards brands. In addition, by understanding the differences between interpersonal and individual-object relationships when conceptualising the construct of consumer-brand relationship, the thesis include the concepts that take into consideration the expected depth and importance of consumer-brand relationships when attaining **Objective 2** and **Objective 3**.

Furthermore, not all brands are likely to be nominated by consumers for a long-term relationship. This is because of the differences between interpersonal love and consumer-object love with respect to the way the brain perceives and assesses both types of love (their origin in the human body). For example, Reimann et al. (2012) identified a unique brain system that underpins the development of brand relationships. In this brain system, the development of brand relationships is linked to a 'self-expansion' and 'inclusion' mechanism (i.e., the inclusion of a brand into the self). Accordingly, certain brands offering attributes such as *improved personality*, *self-indulgence* and *uniqueness* are more suitable for relationships than other brands (e.g., Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Smit et al., 2007). These findings carry important implications for this thesis. First, they provided support for the thesis's utilisation of the Self-Expansion Theory (discussed in §2.4) and the Theory of Relational Cohesion (discussed in §2.6) by explaining the ways consumers expand their 'selves' through the development of brand relationships (useful for the achievements of **Objective 1** and **Objective 2**). Second, the importance of a brand's symbolic benefits and the resulting ability to trigger positive and lasting consumer emotions informed the selection of analytical contexts in this thesis (relevant to the achievement of **Objective 2**).

Furthermore, while interpersonal relationships typically involve the development of emotions from both partners, the relationship between consumers and brands is always unidirectional and is somewhat less dynamic (Whang et al., 2004). That is, while consumers may develop emotional feelings and a connection with a certain brand, the brand does not return the 'love' (Fetscherin, 2014; Shimp & Madden, 1988). This has broad implications for research and is particularly relevant to this thesis. The unidirectional nature of brand relationships indicates the importance of the benefits brands can or should offer to make up for the missed chance

of returning the 'love'; hence the use of the Social Exchange Theory (Emerson, 1976; Lawler & Thye, 2006) to identify the elements to be considered when examining the dynamic consumer-brand relationships and to determine the balance of benefits exchanged. This means that consumers may shift their expectations in terms of benefits sought, and focus on psychological and intangible pay-offs instead. Whang et al., (2004) offered support for this idea and argued that the unidirectional characteristic of consumer-brand relationships puts the consumer in 'total control' of the benefits exchanged and 'reduces the anxiety about not being loved in return' (p. 325). Therefore, in addressing **Objective 2**, the thesis puts emphasis on identifying the key benefits that could influence the development of brand relationships. As suggested in the literature, brands are relationship worthy if they offer hedonic and symbolic benefits (as opposed to utilitarian benefits, Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Tan & Ming, 2003); if they offer emotional benefits (e.g., Knight & Young Kim, 2007; Thompson, Rindfleisch, & Arsel, 2006); if they present unique values (e.g., Albert et al., 2008; Batra et al., 2012); or if they enable consumers to express themselves (e.g., Ruane & Wallace, 2015; Wallace et al., 2014). §6.3.1 and §7.3.3 discuss these benefits in further detail.

In addition to the differences highlighted so far, while interpersonal relationships are primarily driven by emotional values (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Lazarus & Smith, 1988), relationships between consumers and brands are driven by both cognitive and emotional values (Batra et al., 2012; Blackston et al., 1993; Nyer, 1997). In fact, previous studies have highlighted the crucial role of cognitive deliberation in consumer-object relationships. For instance, Shimp and Madden (1988) argued that motivation, emotion and cognition 'interact in various combinations to determine the nature of consumers' relations with consumption objects' (p. 163). Similarly, Blackston et al. (1993) and Fournier (1998) described brand relationship as a multi-dimensional construct, encompassing cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects. That is, while emotional aspects involve 'affective and socio-emotive attachments' (Fournier, 1998, p. 363) such as love/passion and self-connection, cognitive aspects represent 'supportive/cognitive beliefs' (p. 363) such as intimacy and brand partner quality, and behavioural aspects are reflected in various 'behavioural ties' (p. 363), such as interdependency and commitment. In another study, Fetscherin and Heinrich (2015) presented two taxonomies to structure consumer-brand relationships into functional-based (thinking/cognitive aspects) and emotional-based (feeling/affective aspects) connections.

Their research, although exploratory, concluded that compared to interpersonal relationships that are primarily driven by emotional values, relationships between consumers and brands are driven by both cognitive and emotional benefits. In particular, Fetscherin and Heinrich (2015) drew on the *Hierarchy of Effects Model* (Lavidge & Steiner, 2000) to imply that consumers buy the product only when the cognitive and emotional aspects exist. The authors, however, argued against the ‘hierarchy’ of effects of the two aspects noting that they occur concurrently. This thesis is in favour of the hierarchy, and assumes that cognitive aspects drive emotional elements, as argued also in recent studies (see also §3.8.3).

In a recent study, Langner et al. (2015) showed that brand relationships are partly driven and sometimes even initiated by a brand’s cognitive advantages and benefits, such as the perceived or expected functional quality of a brand. In fact, studies have suggested that through a combination of quality perceptions and favourable brand experiences, brands can obtain the capacity to evoke emotional ties with the consumer (e.g., Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016; Kemp et al., 2014). Similarly, research that has examined the concept of attachment (i.e., the psychological bond between an individual and an object, Bowlby, 1979) highlights how strong attachment to a person or an object can prompt a state of emotion-laden mental readiness that affects consumer’s allocation of emotional, cognitive and behavioural resources towards the person/object and the bond (Holmes, 2000; C. W. Park & MacInnis, 2006). These aspects, combined, offer two key underlying assumptions that are particularly relevant to this thesis. First, they highlight the importance of including cognitive elements in the conceptualisation of brand relationship. The thesis addresses this aspect in **Study 3** (particularly §7.3.3) through the incorporation of attitude strength and brand self-identification as relational elements of consumer-brand relationship (drawing on Batra et al., 2012). Second, **Study 3** (§7.3.1) also draws on the important studies of brand equity (e.g., Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016; Keller, 2001, 2009) to acknowledge and discuss this link and its implications for research and practice. Specifically, through cognitive elements of brand awareness and brand salience (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2004), brands offer a perceptive ‘platform’ for the development of a psychological mechanism that assists the consumer in generating quality related values (DeVecchio, 2001; H.-b. Kim, Gon Kim, & An, 2003) and meaning-based images about the brand (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Fournier, 1998). This mechanism eventually

defines the relationships that consumers develop with brands over time (Esch et al., 2006; Keller, 2012, p. 187).

## 2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter presented a series of psychological theories that offer theoretical support for the frameworks and constructs that the thesis examines in **Chapters 5, 6 and 7**. The theories included the Triangle of Love, the Attachment Theory, the Self-Expansion Theory, the Social Exchange Theory and the Theory of Relational Cohesion. In more detail, with respect to the Triangle of Love, the thesis leverages the existing knowledge of the multi-dimensional conceptualisation of love experiences to develop a multifaceted conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationship and to identify relevant relational concepts as components of consumer-brand relationship. Using the notions of Attachment Theory, the thesis incorporates brand attachment as a key relational concept in the conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationships. Moreover, drawing on the implications of interpersonal attachment, the thesis explores the power of consumer-brand relationship in driving brand-related outcomes such as positive WOM. Building on the Self-Expansion Theory, the thesis incorporates consumers' self-expansion and relevant emotional elements such as surprise, excitement and positive affect towards the conceptualisation of love and attachment towards brands. Furthermore, this thesis takes into account the notions of Social Exchange Theory and considers several concepts as the outcomes of consumer-brand relationships (e.g., brand advocacy and social media support). Finally, the thesis draws upon the notions of the Theory of Relational Cohesion and incorporates statements with a high degree of emotional connotation in the scale items measuring relational concepts (e.g., brand love and brand passion). In addition, this theory highlights the significant role of symbolic benefits in the establishment of strong consumer-brand relationships.

The chapter then introduced relevant insights from psychological research regarding interpersonal love and relationships. Finally, the chapter discussed key underlying assumptions in relation to individual-object relationships. These assumptions included: i)

consumers are capable of developing emotions (and emotional relationships) towards a marketing entity, such as a brand; and ii) consumers may view and express their relationships with brands in ways that are different from how they would express their interpersonal relationships.

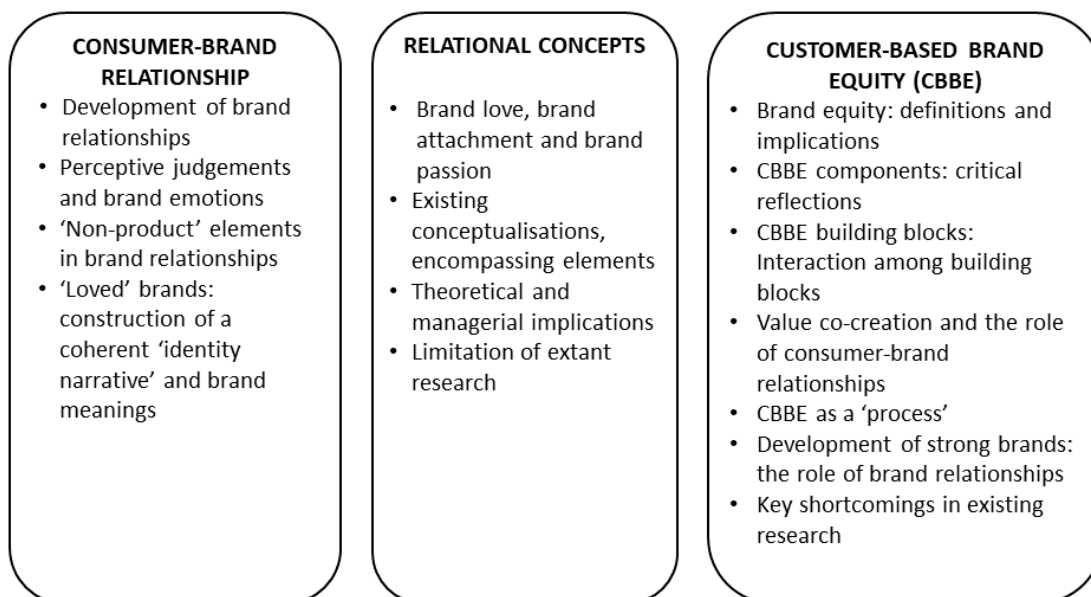
In the following chapter (**Chapter 3**), the thesis reviews and discusses the theoretical and conceptual foundations of consumer-brand relationships, which support the frameworks and constructs of all the empirical studies that the thesis presents and describes in full in **Chapter 5, 6 and 7**.

# CHAPTER THREE: CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIPS

## 3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter reviews and discusses the theoretical and conceptual foundations of consumer-brand relationships, which support the frameworks and constructs of the three empirical studies that the thesis presents and describes in full in **Chapters 5, 6 and 7**. The chapter begins with a critical review of the existing literature on brand relationship and discusses the role of emotions in the development of brand relationships, leading to the introduction of the key relational concepts that were incorporated in the frameworks of the three empirical studies. The relational concepts are brand love, brand attachment and brand passion. The chapter further highlights the implications of these concepts for the thesis. Finally, the chapter provides an overview of relevant brand equity literature in order to highlight the theoretical link between consumer-brand relationships and widely used brand equity frameworks such as Keller’s consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) framework (Keller, 1993, 2003). The aim is to shed light on how CBBE theory can be drawn upon to conceptualise the psychological mechanism characterising how consumers might use brand knowledge and perceptions about brands to develop consumer-brand relationships. Figure 3.1 presents the connections between the areas of literature considered and Table 3.1 reprises the thesis objectives.

**Figure 3.1.** Chapter 3 structure





**Table 3.1** Thesis objectives

Objective number	Objective statement
1	To identify and critically review the existing conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationships (i.e., relational concepts)
2	To outline and test a parsimonious framework for consumer-brand relationship
3	To extend the conceptualised consumer-brand relationship framework with respect to its effects on brand-related outcomes
4	To investigate the synergy between consumer-brand relationship and customer-based brand equity (CBBE)

### 3.2 Consumer-brand relationships

Over the past two decades, marketing research has investigated extensively consumer-brand relationships (see Fetscherin & Heinrich, 2015 for a comprehensive literature review). Specifically, researchers have developed a variety of concepts, frameworks and theories to study consumers' relationships with their favoured brands. Existing research has focused on brand relationships (e.g., J. L. Aaker & Fournier, 1995; Blackston et al., 1993; Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009), brand self-connections (Escalas, 2004; Escalas & Bettman, 2003b; Sprott, Czellar, & Spangenberg, 2009), brand relationship quality (Fournier, 1998; Hudson, Roth, Madden, & Hudson, 2015; K. Kim et al., 2014; D. E. Schultz, Barnes, Schultz, & Azzaro, 2015; Smit et al., 2007), brand relationships and brand identification (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003), brand relationship norms (Aggarwal & Law, 2005), and relationship with loved brands (Fetscherin, 2014; Langner et al., 2016; Langner et al., 2015). The following paragraphs review and critically evaluate some of the most influential studies, which are also highly relevant to this thesis.

Blackston et al. (1993) argued that a brand and its consumers are co-equivalent parts of a single relationship system, which yields marked similarities with interpersonal relationships. The authors further noted that consumer-brand relationships are richer than consumer overall brand evaluations, as they reflect consumers emotional and motivational investment in developing a long-term connection with the brand. The underlying reason can be found in consumers' tendencies to personify their beloved products and brands. In fact, a brand can be transformed into a legitimate relationship partner if it surpasses the personification stage

and behaves as a contributing member of the relationship dyad (Berry, 2000; Fournier, 1998). Similarly, J. L. Aaker and Fournier (1995) highlighted the implications of personifying brands towards stronger brand relationships, addressing the need for a theoretical concept that is capable of showcasing the brand as a 'relationship partner' (p. 394). The authors argued that personifying a brand involves the construction of a personality for the brand on the basis of the brand's exhibited behaviours or characters, as seen by the consumer. In other words, consumers assign 'attributions of personality to a brand'; hence, it is assumed that the brand 'performs intentional behaviours' and 'must be alive' (p. 394).

Arguably, Fournier (1998) conducted the most influential study on brand relationships, to date. The author analytically discussed the relational phenomena with respect to consumer products and validated the relationship proposition in the consumer-brand context. Importantly, Fournier (1998) viewed consumers' relationships with brands as individually crafted bonds that consumers use in powerful ways to authenticate and improve their 'selves'. Accordingly, the author explored 'how the projects, concerns and themes that people use to define themselves can be played out in the cultivation of brand relationships' and 'how those relationships, in turn, can affect the cultivation of one's concept of self' (p. 359).

A key implication of Fournier's (1998) work is the assumption that consumers can become involved in relationships with brands to gain value and benefits from the meanings those brands offer for consumers to improve their lives. These meanings are psychosocial and emotional in nature, and they are positive and 'ego centred'; hence, they are 'of great significance to the persons engaging them' (p. 361). Furthermore, Fournier (1998) argued that brand relationships are holistic phenomena, which are developed solely around the consumer's perceived significance of the brand; they are not based on the symbolic or functional attributes associated with the brand. This means that, in reality, consumers build relationships with brands based on their personal brand-related experiences, which could be different from the image and values assumed and proposed by brand managers. However, Fournier (1998) admitted that this is an incomplete picture of the dynamism involved in brand relationships, particularly in relation to understanding the different development processes on the basis of symbolic consumption. Another important implication arising from the work of Fournier (1998) is the fact that the emphasis on brand relationships might arise from

sequences of consumer interactions with the brand. For example, the author described some relationships as 'best friendships', some as 'committed partnerships' and some as 'flings'. This assumption further suggests that consumers' relationships with brands closely mirrors their social interactions (see Aggarwal, 2004).

Fournier (1998) ultimately identified three factors (and their encompassing elements) responsible for maintaining a relationship. These factors were: i) affective and socio-emotive attachments (love/passion and self-connection), ii) behavioural ties (interdependence and commitment), and iii) supportive cognitive beliefs (intimacy and brand partner quality). Combined, these factors lead to strength and durability of the relationship over time. Further studies examined these factors across different contexts. For example, Ekinci, Yoon, and Oppewal (2005) found that partner quality, nostalgic connection, self-concept connection and intimacy are the most significant indicators among restaurant brands. In another study, H. K. Kim et al. (2005) concluded that while self-connection and commitment were the most prominent indicators of brand relationships quality in product brands, trust was the strongest indicator in service brands. More recent studies (Hudson et al., 2015; Jiyoung Hwang & Kandampully, 2012; Loureiro et al., 2012) have further confirmed the validity of Fournier's (1998) brand relationship quality factors.

Despite the undoubtedly valuable implications of Fournier's (1998) study, it had some limitations, which nonetheless pave the way to important areas for further investigation and validation. For instance, more research is required to examine the determinant of Fournier's (1998) brand relationship elements, especially in relation to the consumer's pre-existing knowledge about the brand, and evaluative perceptions about brand's overall reliability. Overlooking these aspects might hinder a comprehensive understanding of how cognitive factors could influence the development of the emotional relationship and future purchase decisions. To shed light on this aspect, in **Study 3**, this thesis considers self-identification with the brand (Alnawas & Altarifi, 2015; J. R. Smith et al., 2008) and attitude strength (C. W. Park et al., 2010) as the encompassing elements of consumer-brand relationships (see §7.5.2). In addition, the element of interdependence (i.e., the assumption of a relationship 'history' between the consumer and the brand, see Fournier, 1998) has seldom been included in empirical extensions of Fournier's (1998) conceptualisation (see Papista & Dimitriadis, 2012;

Smit et al., 2007). This oversight hinders the understanding of the perceptions and actions of brand relationships, both from the consumer's perspective and the brand's perspective. To address this issue, in **Study 3**, this thesis includes long-term relationship as an element that captures the length of the relationship in the conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationship (see §7.5.2).

Escalas (2004) explored consumer narrative processing through which certain brands become connected to consumers' self-concepts. More specifically, the author emphasised that consumers construct stories around companies and brands in order to 'make sense of what goes on in the world' (p. 176). These stories provide meaning for consumers by connecting elements that aid the consumer towards a goal or conclusion. In looking at the meaning-making process, Escalas (2004) argued that consumers find some brands to be more important and meaningful than others, leading to a connection between the brand and the consumer sense of self. Escalas' (2004) work is particularly relevant to this thesis, because, by developing the narrative self-brand connection framework, he offered a theoretical explanation of the mechanism through which brand narratives, by engaging consumers in narrative processing (i.e., consumers 'attempting to map incoming narrative brand information onto stories in memory', p. 169), create meaning for consumers. This further highlights the psychological mechanism through which consumers develop meaningful information about the brand (Keller, 2003; Romaniuk & Sharp, 2004; Sprott et al., 2009; Yoo & Donthu, 2001) and subsequently use this information to generate brand-related perception (DelVecchio, 2001; Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; H.-b. Kim et al., 2003). Importantly, these cognitive and psychological mechanisms determine and sustain the relationships that consumers form with brands over time (Greifeneder et al., 2011; Keller, 2012; Laros & Steenkamp, 2005; Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 1987). The thesis discusses these mechanisms in more depth in §7.3.2.

In another piece of research, Veloutsou (2007) argued that brand relationships are built upon a two-way communication process between the brand and the consumer. That is, consumers like to hear news about the favoured brands and provide feedback to the brand if required. This two-way process presumes an interaction between consumers and the brands and implies that consumers engage in an emotional exchange with their chosen brand, whereby

they ‘develop feelings towards the brands’, ‘value the brand’, ‘sense a closeness’ to the brand, and ‘feel that they benefit from their interaction’ with the brand (p. 22). This thesis takes into consideration these aspects in **Study 3**, in the conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationship (i.e., in the measurement of brand love and brand attachment, see §7.5.2).

Subsequently Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009) used the dimensions advanced by Veloutsou (2007) to measure the strength of the brand relationship. In more detail, the authors examined the effects of brand reputation—i.e., the collective perception of outsiders on the salient characteristics of a company (Fombrun & Rindova, 2000), and brand tribalism—i.e., a community of consumers’ shared emotion and passion towards a brand (see Cova & Cova, 2002) on brand relationship. The authors, however, found that brand tribalism is more important than brand reputation in the formation of relationships (see also Jurisic & Azevedo, 2011). This is in contrast to findings regarding the role of the brand in the development of relationships, giving more power to consumer’s tribalism tendencies and the interaction between brand fans in brand communities, in the formation brand relationships. Hence, while Veloutsou (2007) and Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009) offered great insights towards the understanding of the development of brand relationships, their works focused primarily on appraising the role of communication in examining the strength of the brand relationship (drawing on the importance of communication in the relationship, as discussed in social psychology - see Auhagen & Hinde, 1997; Hinde, 1997).

Following the work of Veloutsou and colleagues, Alba and Lutz (2013) built upon the research on brand attachment (C. W. Park, Eisingerich, & J.-W. Park, 2013; C. W. Park et al., 2010) to present a typology of Attachment–Aversion (AA) relationship model and discuss the scope of brand relationship. The authors stressed the importance of the following factors in the creation of a brand relationships: i) *valence* of the relationship—i.e., positive and negative relationships, whereby an example of negative relationships could be brand hate (see Zarantonello, Romani, Grappi, & Bagozzi, 2016), or anti-branding (see Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009); ii) *brand self-distance*—i.e., close and far; similar to brand-self connection, though counting for the effect of brand valence; and iii) *elaboration*—i.e., memory accessibility and/or salience of the brand or the degree of elaboration in consumer memory, which is similar to the concept of brand prominence (Han et al., 2010). Their model further

highlighted the link between emotional attachment and personal-relevance, and the various roles that consumer emotions (Alba & Lutz, 2013) and the 'self' (Belk, 1988, 2013) play in purchase decision-making. While Alba and Lutz's (2013) work on brand-self distance and elaboration goes somewhat beyond the scope of this thesis, this chapter (in §3.8) takes into account the elements of elaboration by considering how the various components of brand equity (especially brand associations and hedonic attributes) contribute to brand elaboration and subsequently the development of brand relationships.

Although some of the key works studying brand relationships mentioned so far focused on different theoretical facets, there is an underlying assumption common to all these works. That is, consumer-brand relationship is theorised as a complex and multi-dimensional concept that lends itself to multiple perspectives, and that involves several other areas of research, such as the psychology of emotions and attachment, brand equity and context-specific factors (Keller, 2012; Fournier, 1998). In addition, researchers have stressed that brand relationships can fall into a continuum 'having as extremes the lower-order relationships and in the other the higher-order (loyal) relationships' (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009, p. 315). As a result, further research is required to investigate brand relationship as a holistic construct, and to uncover the multiple constructs involved as well as how they relate and interact with one another (Fetscherin & Heinrich, 2015). **Chapter 5 (Study 1), Chapter 6 (Study 2) and Chapter 7 (Study 3)** explore and discuss these aspects in greater detail.

The following section outlines research that has explored brand relationships in the form of emotional bonds, utilising established relational concepts, such as brand attachment (C. W. Park et al., 2010), brand love (Albert & Merunka, 2013) and brand passion (Albert et al., 2013; Matzler, Pichler, & Hemetsberger, 2007).

### **3.3 Relational concepts**

Researchers have developed various constructs to examine theoretical foundations of brand relationships. Specifically, studies on *brand love* (Albert et al., 2008; Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Fetscherin, Boulanger, Gonçalves Filho, & Quiroga Souki, 2014; Heinrich et

al., 2012), *brand attachment* (Belaid & Behi, 2011; Malär et al., 2011; C. W. Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005) and *brand passion* (Albert et al., 2013; Bauer et al., 2007; Matzler et al., 2007) have been significant. Other studies have investigated *brand relationship orientation* (Aurier & Séré de Lanauze, 2012), *brand affective commitment* (Amine, 1998; Iglesias, Singh, & Batista-Foguet, 2011) and *brand romance* (Kusume & Gridley, 2013; Patwardhan & Balasubramanian, 2011, 2013; Petzer et al., 2014).

Based on the review of the literature on consumer-brand relationship presented so far, this thesis focuses on brand love, brand attachment, and brand passion, with respect to their role in the development of brand relationships. The justification for selecting these constructs is threefold. First, these concepts have strong theoretical significance in the development of brand relationships (See Jiyoung Hwang & Kandampully, 2012; Loureiro et al., 2012). Particularly, several important studies have incorporated items reflecting the feelings of love, passion and attachment when measuring emotional connection between brands and consumers, albeit under different conceptual constructs such as brand love (e.g., Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Batra et al., 2012; Albert & Merunka, 2013) or brand attachment (e.g., C.W. Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005). Second, brand love, brand attachment and brand passion continue to receive attention in brand relationship literature (e.g., see Astakhova et al., 2017; Bagozzi et al., 2017; Japutra & Molinillo, 2017). Third, these concepts have crucial relevance for this thesis—i.e., the development of emotional consumer-brand relationship for **Study 2**, and the development of consumer-brand relationship for **Study 3**. In these studies, the thesis incorporates multiple previous research on the afore-mentioned relational concepts (e.g., Albert et al., 2008; Albert & Merunka, 2013; Batra et al., 2012) for a more inclusive conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationships. Specifically, the previous studies have identified robust measurement items to examine the role of each relational concepts in influencing consumers' brand-specific attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, the present thesis adds to the body of research on brand relationships by combing the existing research on brand love, brand attachment and brand passion towards a comprehensive formulation of consumer-brand relationship (see further details in §6.3.2 and §7.3.2).

The following paragraphs review the most important studies on these constructs and highlight their theoretical relevance for this thesis.

### *3.3.1 Brand love*

Brand love is the most widely researched relational concept. Ahuvia (2005) conducted one of the first and most influential studies dedicated to consumer's love for products and possessions, which contributed towards the development of brand love as a relational concept. Specifically, Ahuvia (2005) discussed consumers' 'loved' possessions and their role in the 'construction of a coherent identity narrative' (p. 171), as well as the ways consumers seek loved possessions that help them in resolving identity-related conflicts. For example, loved possessions may help consumers symbolically resolve conflicts between their ideal identities and current identities (p. 182). Therefore, consumers who develop feelings of love for a brand may do so to express their ideal or actual selves through the brand.

The work of Ahuvia (2005) is particularly relevant to this thesis, given that it provides theoretical and empirical evidence of the fact that self-identification is an emotional pathway towards achieving identity-related goals. As such, the thesis includes brand self-identification as a contributing dimension of emotional consumer-brand relationships (see §6.3.2 for a more in-depth discussion). Additionally, this thesis examines brand self-identification as a dimension of consumer-brand relationships. **Chapter 7** and particularly §7.3.2 further discuss this aspect.

In another important study, Carroll & Ahuvia (2006) defined brand love as 'a satisfied consumer's degree of passionate emotional attachment' towards a brand name, which is characterised by several elements including 'positive evaluations of the brand', 'positive emotions in response to the brand' and 'declarations of love for the brand' (p. 81). The authors supported the usefulness of the brand love construct to assess the differences in 'satisfied consumers' emotional responses to brands' (p. 86). More specifically, the authors confirmed that brand love is a meaningful mode of consumer satisfaction that is 'linked to desirable post-consumption behaviour' (p. 86).



Drawing upon Carroll & Ahuvia's (2006) findings, Albert et al., (2008) expanded the underlying dimensions of brand love and included several other dimensions—i.e., passion, a long duration relationship, self-brand, dreams, memories, pleasure, attraction, uniqueness, beauty, trust, satisfaction and a willingness to declare the love. The authors, however, did not confirm the significance of attachment and commitment in the formation of brand love, two elements that were found to be significant in prior studies (e.g., Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Heinrich et al., 2012; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012). In contrast, Albert et al., (2008) confirmed that different cultures could perceive the concept of love towards brands and products differently. For instance, Albert et al., (2008) showed that while French consumers love brands that they fully trust and have good memories of (e.g., childhood memories), American consumers do not place any significance on trust and good memories. More recent studies have also incorporated the brand love conceptualisation developed by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) to examine the determinants and implications of love-like relationships between brands and consumers. For example, Drennan, Bianchi, Cacho-Elizondo, Louriero, Guibert, and Proud (2015) concluded that in the wine industry, brand trust and brand satisfaction are antecedents of brand love, where brand loyalty was found to be a consequence of brand love. In another study, Vernuccio et al. (2015) drew upon the work of Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) and revealed a positive impact of consumer's social-interactive engagement in social media over brand love, which was, in turn, mediated by the psychological effects related to how members perceive their self-concept in terms of belongingness to the social community of brand's fan page. In addition, Islam and Rahman (2016) measured brand love using the items developed by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), and confirmed that brand love in the context of luxury fashion brands has the power to mediate the influence of brand image on consumer engagement and loyalty towards the brand.

Heinrich et al. (2012) developed a scale for measuring brand love using Sternberg and Barnes (1988) Triangle of Love dimensions (i.e., intimacy, passion and commitment – see §2.2.1). The authors confirmed the existence of these dimensions in the consumer context by validating the effect of brand love over consumers' willingness to forgive mistakes made by the brand, which were confirmed by the findings of J. Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel (2004). However, Heinrich et al. (2012) did not include factors that could determine the development of brand love. As a result, their research only focused on a small number of brands with strong brand

image and did not include brands that may not have a strong global image yet might still be loved by a group of consumers. Furthermore, Heinrich et al. (2012) did not examine the interaction between brand love and other well-established concepts, such as brand attachment or brand trust. They did not consider how these interactions might influence certain outcomes such as positive WOM or brand loyalty. Albert and Merunka (2013) addressed some of the limitations of Heinrich et al. (2012) by investigating the importance of trust in the development of brand love. Specifically, the authors referred to the overall importance of trust in interpersonal love (Fehr, 1988) as a determinant of an individual's feelings toward their partner. In the consumer context, this indicates that trust facilitates the development of a love feeling (Hess & Story, 2005). Similarly, Albert and Merunka (2013) highlighted the significant role of brand identification in the development of love (also supported by Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). This reflects the importance of self-identification with the loved partner, as highlighted in numerous psychological theories such as the Triangle of Love (Sternberg & Barnes, 1988 - see § 2.2.1) and the Theory of Relational Cohesion (Lawler, 2001; Lawler & Yoon, 1996 - see §2.2.5).

The role of self-identification in the development of feelings for a brand has been investigated in other studies, where it was argued that, through a self-identification process, consumers are able to integrate their favoured brand's identity with that of their own, which subsequently leads to brand-related emotions (A. Aron & Aron, 1986; Belk, 1988; Wallace et al., 2014). In more detail, Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) and Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) confirmed that consumer self-identification with a brand has a clear influence on the formation of brand love. Other studies examined whether self-identification towards the brand's community of members could also influence the development of love towards that brand. For example, Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) confirmed that consumers' sense of community (i.e., a psychological state that represents a benefit individuals wish to acquire, which becomes available by being around like-minded individuals - see McMillan, 1996) contributes to the development of brand love. Specifically, Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) argued that sense of community 'applies to consumers in general; not only to those who are members of a brand club or belong to an informal niche brand community' (p. 515). This matter was also considered in the work of Albert and Merunka (2013), who argued that brand love depends on the consumer identification with other consumers, which highlights the

importance of a psychological 'fit' between the consumer and the 'typical brand customers, opinion leaders or influential consumers in brand communities' (p. 263).

Interestingly, Rossiter (2012) argued against existing frameworks of brand love and their measurement items, particularly those of Carroll & Ahuvia (2006) and Batra et al., (2012). Rossiter suggested that a single item offers a more accurate reflection of consumer love towards a brand, specifically, the item: 'I would say I feel deep affection, like love, for this brand and I would be really upset if I couldn't have it'. The author also highlighted the presence of two components when measuring brand love: passion and separation anxiety. Rossiter's (2012) approach, however, did not include other important aspects such as attachment (C. W. Park et al., 2010), self-identification (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, & Sen, 2012) and positive attitudes (Batra et al., 2012; F. Liu et al., 2012). Furthermore, Rossiter (2012) concluded that influential experiences in the development of brand love are 'unpredictable, personal and private in nature and therefore largely outside a marketer's control'.

Batra et al. (2012) expanded the construct of brand love and suggested a more inclusive 'prototype' of love to capture 'how consumers actually experience this phenomenon' (p. 1). As a primary theoretical contribution, the authors further validated the existence and significance of love-like feelings in the consumer context (originally asserted by Ahuvia, 1993; Fournier, 1998; Whang et al., 2004). Specifically, Batra et al. (2012) conducted a large-scale qualitative study, where out of 70 structured telephone interviews, 96% of the respondents noted that they 'love' something other than another person; and 72% considered loving at least one object or activity 'in the strictest, most literal sense of the word' (p. 2). The authors investigated these concepts using 18 unstructured interviews, during which 100% of the interviewees declared that they 'love' or 'sort-of-love' a brand. The authors also acknowledged the distinction between brand love and 'love as an emotion', detailing that while love as an emotion is a single feeling analogous to affection, brand love is episodic and involves numerous affective, cognitive and behavioural experiences. Importantly, Batra et al. (2012) confirmed that quality perceptions are an important cognitive antecedent of brand love. That is, certain aspects of the loved brand that are characterised by great quality (e.g., attractive design, outstanding perceived performance, and trustworthiness) could determine

the significance of brand love. Hence, while high-perceived brand quality significantly facilitated the influence of brand love towards outcome variables, Batra et al.'s (2012) results showed a lesser effect for more-loved brands, referring to the higher effects of self-brand integration and positive emotional connection. These notions are discussed in §7.4.2 in greater detail.

To the best of the thesis author's knowledge, Batra et al. (2012) has offered, thus far, the most comprehensive brand love conceptualisation. Their conceptualisation included the following elements (p. 1):

- The brand's attractive qualities
- The brand's meanings and values
- Symbolic and intrinsic rewards that the brand offers
- Extrinsic benefits that the brands delivers
- Self-identification with the brand
- Positive emotions triggered by the brand
- A sense of 'rightness' about the relationship with the brand
- A passionate desire for owning the brand
- Emotional bonding and attachment
- Anticipated distress in the absence of the brand
- Willingness to invest resources in the relationship with the brand
- A shared long history with the brand
- Frequent interactive thoughts about and behaviours towards the brand.

These elements were represented by seven higher-order factors, including (1) self-brand integration, (2) passion-driven behaviours, (3) positive emotional connection, (4) long-term relationship, (5) anticipated separation distress, (6) attitude valence and (7) attitude strength; all of which were captured through 56 items measurement items. Therefore, this thesis uses Batra et al.'s (2012) framework to conceptualise consumer-brand relationship (see §7.5.2 for a more in-depth discussion).

Another important aspect that existing literature on brand love has, at times, considered, is the examination of cognitive and evaluative determinants of brand love. For example, Batra

et al. (2012) revealed that a consumer's perception of quality determines the development of brand love. However, the authors only focused on functional and practical quality, and did not include the symbolic and hedonic aspects as suggested by several past studies (e.g., see Subodh Bhat & Reddy, 1998; Chitturi, Raghunathan, & Mahajan, 2008; R. Elliott & Davies, 2006). Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) considered brand identification and sense of community as the antecedents of brand love. However, the authors focused on brands of consumer packaged-goods (e.g., Vegemite and Colgate). Such brands, although capable of hedonic and emotional arousal, due to their low-involvement nature, are less likely to be selected as target brands for long-term emotional relationships (Rossiter, 2012). In addition, their conceptualisation and measurement of brand identification and sense of community were centred on consumer's perceptions. That is, they used the scale of self-identity congruency (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000) to assess brand identification, including measurement items such as 'feeling like belonging to a club of other brand users' and 'seeing other brand users like yourself for sense of community', instead of cognitive aspects related to the brand.

Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) discussed how certain capabilities of a brand, such as offering hedonic benefits (being pleasurable, affording enjoyment and being viewed as a sensory experience) and matching with consumers' inner and social self, i.e., self-expressive attributes, make them more likely to be loved by their consumers. However, similar to the work of Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010), the focus was on consumer packaged-goods (soft drinks, soaps and cereals), which again limit the development of the love that Rossiter (2012) suggested is more prevalent in durable products and high involvement brand purchases. Albert and Merunka (2013) also examined the impact of brand identification and brand trust on the development of brand love. The authors particularly referred to the seminal works of Aron and Aron (1986) and Ahuvia (1993), arguing that love and identification both strongly depend on the integration with the self, and even claimed that 'perhaps love and identification are the same concept'. Accordingly, this thesis conceptualises and validates brand identification as an integral dimension of emotional consumer-brand relationship and assumes that it yields predictive power in relation to consumer evaluations of the brand (see §6.3.2 for further discussion).

In another study, Langner et al. (2015) compared the emotional nature of brand love against interpersonal love and brand liking. The authors revealed emotional differences and similarities between the two love constructs. Particularly, using qualitative research, they showed that unlike interpersonal love, brand love was driven by rational benefits, such as product quality. The authors also offered empirical evidence uncovering that brand love is less arousing than interpersonal love, yet it embodies more positive valence than interpersonal love.

More recently, Langner et al. (2016) investigated and drew the trajectories of brand love. The authors showed that the paths toward brand love followed five distinct trajectories, labelled as “slow development,” “liking becomes love,” “love all the way,” “bumpy road,” and “turnabout.” However, they argued that the individual, personal, and private experiences determining these trajectories are largely outside marketers’ control. Alnawas and Altarifi (2015) used the items generated by Sternberg (1997) to measure brand love. They concluded that Customer-Hotel Brand Identification (CHBI) is a significant contributor to the development of brand love, and it only affects brand loyalty through brand love.

Finally, Karjaluoto, Munnukka and Kiuru (2016) concluded that self-expressiveness, trust and hedonic values of a brand drive brand love, improving the limited support from the previous studies (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Drennan et al., 2015).

### *3.3.2 Limitation of brand love research*

Overall, brand love is a pivotal concept in the consumer-brand relationship (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Langner et al., 2015; Sarkar & Sarkar, 2016), with confirmed implications for researchers and practitioners (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Alnawas & Altarifi, 2015; Kaufmann, Loureiro, & Manarioti, 2016). This thesis incorporates brand love into the conceptualisation of emotional consumer-brand relationship in **Study 2 (Chapter 6)**. Furthermore, the thesis uses Batra and colleagues’ (Batra et al., 2012) brand love framework to conceptualise a parsimonious framework for consumer-brand relationship in **Study 3 (Chapter 7)**. The following paragraphs

outline the main existing limitations of research on brand love and discuss the contributions of this thesis towards overcoming these limitations.

Existing frameworks (e.g., Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) have largely overlooked the association between brand-specific characteristics, such as uniqueness and hedonic attributes, and brand love. In **Study 2**, the thesis investigates how brand associations (consisting of brand image, hedonic attributes, prestigious values and uniqueness as its dimensions) predict the variations in emotional consumer-brand relationship, which includes brand love as a conceptual element. Existing studies have also argued that there is wider scope for the conceptualisation of brand love that distinguishes the concept of love in the consumer context from love in the interpersonal context (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Langner et al., 2015; Langner et al., 2016). This thesis contributes towards overcoming this limitation by including brand identification—discussed by Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012) and Tuškej et al. (2013)—as a core element that differentiates brand love from interpersonal love in the conceptualisation of emotional consumer-brand relationship (**Study 2**) and in consumer-brand relationship (**Study 3**).

Furthermore, extant studies have focused on brands for which consumers explicitly declare love (e.g., Ahuvia, 1993, 2005; Fournier, 1998; Heinrich et al., 2012). However, respondents may fail to correctly characterise the dimensions of love towards the brand because they are likely to formulate their responses in reference to a feeling of love for an individual such as a partner, parent, sibling, etc. (Albert et al., 2008). Therefore, when measuring brand love (conceptualised in the overall emotional consumer-brand relationship—in **Study 2**—or consumer-brand relationship—in **Study 3**), this thesis uses the term ‘most favourite brand’ and asks research-participants to select a brand to be used for the examination of emotional consumer-brand relationships (**Study 2**) or consumer-brand relationships (**Study 3**).

Moreover, the existing studies have generally neglected to investigate the wider role of cognitive elements in the development and formulation of brand love. While studies such as Batra et al. (2012) and Langner et al. (2015) confirmed the significance of concepts such as quality and performance perceptions in affecting brand love, there is wider scope for research with regards to the role of brand knowledge, brand image and symbolic attributes in the advancement of consumers’ love towards brands. Accordingly, this thesis places strong emphasis on the examination of the afore-mentioned concepts with respect to their role in

driving the development of brand relationships, as explained in more detail in §3.4.3. Specifically, the thesis (in **Study 3**) conceptualises CBBE to include dimensions such as brand knowledge, perceived quality and hedonic values and subsequently examines how CBBE affects the development of consumer-brand relationship.

Finally, academic research on brand love has also often highlighted important implications from a brand management perspective by means of detecting and appraising the effects of brand love on important outcomes such as: i) brand loyalty (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Drennan et al., 2015; Fournier, 1998; Thomson et al., 2005), ii) positive WOM (Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012; Sallam, 2014), iii) increased willingness to pay a price premium (Heinrich et al., 2012; Thomson et al., 2005), and iv) forgiveness of brand failures (Bauer et al., 2009; Heinrich et al., 2012). Although valuable, these findings are characterised by important shortfalls. Above all, there are significant contradictions across existing studies regarding the significance of these outcomes. For example, while Batra et al. (2012) validated loyalty, WOM and resistance as outcomes of brand love, Karjaluoto et al. (2016) did not confirm WOM as an outcome of brand love. Therefore, further empirical examinations are required with respect to the possible outcomes of consumers' love for the brand (see §6.3.2 and §7.3.2).

### *3.3.3 Brand attachment*

Literature has developed the concept of brand attachment by drawing upon the findings of Attachment Theory—see §2.2.2 (Bowlby, 1979, 1982; Mikulincer et al., 2003). In particular, Belk (1988), Kleine et al. (1993), Ball and Tasaki (1992), and Mehta and Belk (1991) argued that attachments can be extended beyond the interpersonal relationship context to marketing entities including brands.

Lacoeuilhe (2000) defined brand attachment as 'a psychological variable that refers to a long-lasting and inalterable (the separation is painful) affective reaction towards the brand' (p. 66). Subsequently, C. W. Park et al. (2006) presented brand attachment as a concept that explains the various degrees of intensity of consumer responses to brand activities. The authors



defined brand attachment as 'the strength of the cognitive and emotional bond connecting the brand with the self', which involves two pivotal elements: 'connectedness between the brand and the self' and a 'cognitive and emotional bond, the strength of which evokes a readiness to allocate one's processing resources toward a brand' (p. 3). While insightful, C. W. Park et al.'s (2006) work introduced brand attachment as a construct similar to attitude to explain 'relationship-based behaviours relevant to marketing exchange,' and not as an emotional connection between the brand and its consumers (p. 26). Subsequently, C. W. Park et al. (2010) validated *brand-self-connections* and *the prominence of brand thoughts and feelings* as the dimensions of brand attachment.

In contrast, Thomson et al.'s (2005) conceptualisation of brand attachment emphasised the prominence of emotions instead. Specifically, according to Thomson et al., (2005) brand attachment consists of three emotional components: (i) affection (reflected by the emotion items affectionate, loved, friendly, and peaceful); (ii) passion (reflected by the items passionate, delighted, and captivated); and (iii) connection (reflected by the items connected, bonded, and attached). The authors hypothesised that, over multiple interactions between these components, consumers can develop senses of emotional attachments towards the brand. While Thomson et al.'s (2005) conceptualisation had a strong focus on the emotional aspects of attachment, it did not capture the cognitive aspects of the attachment bond that represent consumers' thoughts and brand memories (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Sperling & Berman, 1994). Further studies have somewhat addressed this shortcoming. For example, drawing upon Lacoeuilhe's (2000) attachment definition and the foundations of Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1979, 1982), Belaid and Behi (2011) posited that brand attachment expresses the consumer's desire to maintain the bond with the brand when the brand is based on psychological similarity and enhances consumer's self-identity (see also Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Fournier, 1998).

Like C. W. Park et al. (2010), Thompson et al. (2006) raised the risks of relying on emotional-branding strategies, highlighting that they may undermine the perceived authenticity of the emotional value and weaken the cognitive identity value the brand intends to provide for its consumers. This was also made evident by Malär et al. (2011), who highlighted emotional attachment strategies pertaining to both consumer's 'actual self' and 'ideal self'. Based on

Malär et al.'s (2011) findings, it became clear that it is important to place an emphasis on emotional bonds with consumers who look for aspirations in a brand to create an 'ideal self', i.e., as a means of self-improvement (Kemp, Childers, & Williams, 2012; Sirgy, 1986; Wallace et al., 2014). However, research must also take into account: i) the cognitive bonds that consumers create with brands; ii) the fact that consumers might want to develop bonds with brands through their 'actual self' (Malär et al., 2011); and iii) that consumers look for reality and authenticity in marketing messages (Leigh, Peters, & Shelton, 2006; Ruth, Brunel, & Otnes, 2002; Sirgy, 1982).

Vlachos et al. (2010) referred to brand attachment as a psychological state of mind in which both cognitive and emotional factors play a role in bonding the brand to a consumer, so that the brand becomes an extension of consumers' self. Malär et al. (2011), Dunn and Hoegg (2014) and Japutra, Ekinci, and Simkin (2014) and Japutra et al. (2014) have extended this line of thought and argued that strategies that tap into cognitive and emotional aspects are equally required for an effective and strong brand attachment. Specifically, Japutra et al., (2016) showed that the perceptions that consumers hold about the sensory brand experiences (particularly familiarity and pleasure-based experiences) have the power to predict the development of brand attachment. The authors built upon the works of Zarantonello and Schmitt (2013) and Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) and confirmed that, in the long-term, more positive brand experiences evoke positive memories and increased salience. This, in turn, increases the likelihood that the consumer will develop a sense of attachment towards the brand.

More recent studies have also incorporated the brand attachment conceptualisation developed by Thomson et al. (2005) to investigate the role of brand attachment. For example, Dunn and Hoegg (2014) concluded that consumers who experience fear in the presence of a brand feel greater emotional brand attachment than consumers who experience other emotions (e.g., happiness or excitement). He, Zhu, Gouran, and Kolo (2016) revealed that emotional brand attachment positively moderates the relationship between consumer moral identity centrality and intention to purchase cause-related marketing (CRM) sponsor brands. In another study, Levy and Hino (2016) incorporated Thomson et al.'s (2005) items to measure brand attachment. The authors confirmed a significant, direct and positive relationship

between the customer's emotional attachment and bank loyalty, as well as an indirect positive relationship through customer satisfaction.

Dennis, Papagiannidis, Alamanos, and Bourlakis (2016) drew upon Park et al.'s (2010) work and revealed that brand meaning is the main antecedent of brand attachment strength that affects satisfaction, trust, commitment and brand equity. Hew, Badaruddin, and Moorthy (2017) used five items (sourced from various past studies including C. W. Park et al., 2010; Pedeliento, Andreini, Bergamaschi, & Salo, 2016; Swaminathan et al., 2007) to measure brand attachment. The results suggested that brand attachment is the most influential and the most relevant driver of consumers' intention to repurchase smartphones.

In another study, Japutra and Molinillo (2017) examined the relationships between actual and ideal brand congruence, brand attachment and two dimensions of compulsive buying behaviour (i.e., impulsive and obsessive-compulsive buying). The authors confirmed that both actual and ideal self-congruence impact brand attachment, which corroborates the importance of consumer self-identification with the brand in the development of emotional consumer-brand bond. Japutra and Molinillo (2017) also detected the mediating role of brand attachment in the relationship between actual and ideal self-congruence and impulsive buying. This provided support for the previous claims (e.g., Francisco-Maffezzoli et al., 2014; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012; Wallace et al., 2012) that cognitive evaluations influence purchase decisions, albeit only in the presence of strong consumer-brand bonds. **Study 3** (§7.4.3) discusses these aspects in more detail. In a recent study, Yen, Chen, Cheng and Teng (2018) incorporated Park et al.'s (2010) items to measure brand attachment and showed that brand attachment has an indirect effect on behavioural intentions through perceived value.

### *3.3.4 Limitation of brand attachment research*

The literature has consistently highlighted that brand attachment refers to an emotional connection with the brand and has included the aspect of self-concept in their conceptualisations. Nevertheless, there is large inconsistency with respect to determining which specific role brand attachment plays in the development of consumer-brand

relationships. This issue is caused by some of the basic assumptions that existing research has made in relation to brand attachment. For example, as C. W. Park et al. (2006) argued, brand relationship is an outcome of brand attachment. Put simply, through a psychological state of mind filled with 'strong self-brand linkages and automatic retrieval of thoughts and feelings about the brand', consumers feel committed 'to engage in behaviours that maintain a brand relationship' (p. 26-27). This conceptualisation of brand attachment, if viewed as a representation of brand relationship, fails to incorporate the important affective elements of love and passionate feelings. Similarly, if viewed as a relational concept leading to brand relationship, it deprives brand relationship of the necessary elements of emotional attachment. Finally, if considered as a psychological antecedent of brand relationship, it omits the cognitive facets of self-identification (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012) and brand-specific attributes (Esch et al., 2006).

In line with the critical reflections presented so far, this thesis (in **Study 2**, see §6.3.2) includes the emotional aspects of brand attachment in the conceptualisation of emotional consumer-brand relationship. The thesis (in **Study 3**, see §7.3.2) takes into consideration the perceptual and psychological aspects of brand attachment—reflected in brand attitude strength and consumer self-identification with the brand—as drivers of consumer-brand relationship. Furthermore, this thesis assumes that there are some inconsistencies with respect to what constitutes as expressions of 'emotional attachment' or 'psychological bond' when developing measurement scales for brand attachment. For example, terms and phrases such as 'deep seated-passion' (Tsai, 2011a), 'consumer-firm affection' (C. K. Yim et al., 2008) and so forth, might be subject to varied interpretations and may not be relevant. Accordingly, further empirical verifications are required to develop valid expressions for brand attachment. In **Study 2**, the thesis builds upon the measurement items of brand attachment based on the works of C. W. Park et al. (2010) and Thomson et al., (2005) and validates three items that parsimoniously represent brand attachment. These items include 'I feel that I am attached to this brand', 'I feel personally connected to this brand', and 'I feel emotionally bonded to this brand' (see §7.5.2).

Finally, similar to the implications and outcomes considered and validated with respect to brand love, studies have shown that brand attachment has the power to impact: i) brand

purchase intentions (Fedorikhin, C. W. Park, & Thomson, 2008; Vlachos & Vrechopoulos, 2012), ii) brand loyalty (Thomson et al., 2005; Vlachos, 2012; Vlachos et al., 2010), iii) willingness to pay a premium price (Thomson et al., 2005), iv) positive WOM (Vlachos et al., 2010), and v) willingness to forgive brand mishaps (Fedorikhin et al., 2008). C. W. Park et al. (2010) further demonstrated that brand attachment is a strong predictor of brand purchase share (defined as 'the share of a brand among directly competing brands', p. 5). More importantly, the authors concluded that the inclusion of affective (self-brand connection) and cognitive (prominence of brand in consumer's mind) elements leads to greater predictive power in relation to a brand's share of purchase (or market share) than affective elements alone; a conclusion that somewhat undermines the argument that Malär et al. (2011) and Dunn and Hoegg (2014) presented. Some inconsistencies, however, exist regarding the outcomes of brand attachment. For example, Belaid and Behi (2011), following the findings of C. W. Park et al. (2006), supported brand commitment as an outcome of brand attachment, while failing to support the effect of brand attachment on loyalty. Hence, further empirical examinations are needed to validate the outcomes of brand attachment. **Chapter 6** (especially §6.4.2) and **Chapter 7** (particularly §7.4.4) examine several concepts such as brand extension evaluation, purchase intention, positive WOM and price insensitivity as the outcomes of brand relationship frameworks that incorporate brand attachment as a key dimension.

### *3.3.5 Brand passion*

In psychology, *passion* is described as a state involving strong senses of attraction to and desire to be united with another person, which are usually characterised by physiological excitement (see Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999; Djikic & Oatley, 2004; Hatfield, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978). In consumer research, brand passion has been mainly investigated using Sternberg's Triangle of Love (see §2.2.1). The theory denoted that 'love experience' includes intimacy, decision/commitment and passion as its contributing components, with passion defined as 'the drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, sexual consummation and related phenomena in loving relationships' (Sternberg, 1997, p. 315). Accordingly, brand

passion has been often described and theorised as a psychological state through which consumers develop a primarily affective, extremely positive attitude towards a certain brand (Bauer et al., 2007; McEwen, 2005). It is, however, important to acknowledge that passionate feelings could also have negative connotations. Importantly, recent studies have discussed the role of strong, negative feelings that consumers experience toward brands (e.g., Hegner, Fetscherin, & van Delzen, 2017; Zarantonello et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the author of this thesis places the focus on positive passionate feelings, and the concept of brand passion is approached as having a positive valence. Two reasons have prompted this decision. Firstly, the thesis follows the well-received stream of research interested in examining the positive benefits of focusing on the development of affective connections with consumers, such as WOM (Albert et al., 2013), strong brand loyalty (Hemsley-Brown & Alnawas, 2016) and brand commitment (Das, Agarwal, Malhotra, & Varshneya, 2018). The present thesis shares the same interest. Second, the specific focus of the thesis (in Study 2) is on investigating six brand-related concepts (all with positive implications for the brand), including attitudinal loyalty, brand advocacy, social media support, sense of community and alternative devaluation, as the direct and indirect outcomes of brand passion (see §5.4). This necessitates assumption of a positive valence for brand passion.

Accordingly, Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence (2009) refer to passion as an aspect of brand relationship that is reflected in consumer's idealisation (measured by items such as 'there is something almost magical about my relationship with this brand') and pleasure (measured using items such as 'I take a real pleasure in using this brand'). As discussed by Pimentel and Reynolds (2004), passionate consumer-brand relationships go beyond simple positive attitudes and behaviours. For example, Rozanski, Baum and Wolfsen (1999) described 'brand zealots' as individuals whose emotional connection with a preferred brand goes well beyond the fulfilment of immediate needs, and can even encourage them to commit extreme acts. The authors gave examples in terms of how a vocal minority of established Coca-Cola lovers 'took to the airwaves to condemn the reformulated Coca-Cola movement with the fervour of an antiwar demonstration' (p. 51). Aggarwal (2004) also mentioned examples of consumers' passionate acts such as owners of the Volkswagen Beetle giving personal names to their cars, or Apple's Mac users campaigning against Bill Gates (the founder of Microsoft) or tattooing the brand's logo on their chest 'next to their hearts' (p. 87).

Other studies have provided more examples of enthusiastic and highly passionate forms of consumer-object relationships (see Muniz & Schau, 2005; Sarkar & Sarkar, 2016). For example, Muniz Jr and Schau (2005) reported 'supernatural', 'religious' and 'magical' among the narratives which fans of Apple Newton used to describe their beloved product. Sarkar and Sarkar (2016) reported narratives such as 'I am a blind fan of Nike', 'I cannot imagine my world without Apple', and 'I am a diehard fan of Cadbury ... to me, chocolate means Cadbury since my childhood' as examples of words that consumers might use to describe passion and devotion to their beloved brand.

In comparison to other relational concepts, brand passion is characterised by deeper and more distinct levels of brand connection. This aspect is driven by consumers' self-identification with the brand (Albert et al., 2013; Bauer et al., 2007), consumer trust for the brand (Delgado-Ballester & Luis Munuera-Alemán, 2005; Veloutsou, 2015), as well as consumer desire for the brand's prestige, uniqueness, and hedonic benefits (Bauer et al., 2007). These aspects can be overpowering, to the point of dominating consumers' thoughts, feelings and actions (Belk et al., 2003). Accordingly, Pichler and Hemetsberger (2007) referred to the desire-led bond between consumers and brands as consumer devotion, whereby the brand contributes to consumers' 'intensified sense of self', drawing 'extreme attention and devotion' (p. 197). For instance, Whang et al., (2004) referred to bikers' love toward their motorcycles as a bond resembling interpersonal love that is 'passionate, possessive and selfless in nature' (p. 320).

Drawing on the desire-led nature of brand passion, studies have suggested a shorter development and lifetime for brand passion, compared to other consumer-brand feelings such as love, engagement or attachment, which psychologically require longer development time (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Shimp & Madden, 1988). Brand passion is also arguably stronger when the relationship is in its early stages and will decline as the relationship progresses (Ahuvia, Batra, & Bagozzi, 2009). This can be explained by drawing upon psychological research, which assumes passion to typically correspond to a time in interpersonal relationships when partners have limited knowledge of one another (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999; Vallerand et al., 2003). Similarly, consumer research has argued that relationship progression leads to greater brand-self experiences and deeper

brand relationship, which, upon waning passion, leads to enhanced emotional attachment and love (Fournier, 1998).

Swimberghe et al. (2014) highlighted two types of brand passion: harmonious and obsessive. To do so, the authors drew upon the concept of passion in psychology, particularly the works of Vallerand et al. (2003), Mageau et al. (2009) and Vallerand et al. (2007). In more detail, Swimberghe et al., (2014) argued that brand passion is not always obsessive in nature; rather, it has 'harmonious' connotations as well, and is much more commonly experienced by consumers than previously suggested (e.g., Matzler et al., 2007). Combined, these characteristics allow consumers 'keep their brand passion in balance with other facets of their lives' (Swimberghe et al., 2014, p. 8). From a theoretical perspective, Swimberghe et al.'s (2014) framework increased the scope of research on brand passion, especially in relation to examining instances in which passionate feelings are derived from consumer's personal identification and connection with the brand (i.e., without the interference of other marketing stimuli), such as through social-references (Astakhova et al., 2017; Herrando, Jiménez-Martínez, & Martín-De Hoyos, 2017). However, Swimberghe et al. (2014) did not examine brand passion with respect to its branding implications, especially when freely interacting with other relational concepts such as brand love and brand attachment. This is important given that psychological theories (Bowlby, 1979, 1982; Sternberg, 1986, 1997) and consumer research (e.g., Albert et al., 2008; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Fournier, 1998) have consistently highlighted the need to use multi-dimensional consumer-brand relationship frameworks in order to identify and test concrete implications for theory and practice.

Hemsley-Brown and Alnawas (2016) found that, in the hotel industry, brand passion mediates the relationship between service quality and service brand loyalty. In another study, by conducting 18 semi-structured in-depth interviews, Rohra and Sharma (2016) proposed that in addition to brand identification and trust, brand admiration and brand experience are determinants of brand passion. They also revealed that sensory, intellectual brand experiences and brand loyalty were positively related to brand passion. In a recent study, Herrando et al. (2017) drew upon the work of Baldus, Voorhees, and Calantone (2015) on online brand communities and developed the concept of sPassion (i.e., the consumer passion that occurs on social commerce websites). The authors revealed that the cognitive experience



and emotions derived from the consumption process boost user participation and positively affects the spread of WOM over social media.

Extant studies have examined several well-established concepts as the outcomes of brand passion. Particularly, researchers have shown interest in developing a brand passion framework that predicts consumer loyalty (e.g., Rohra & Sharma, 2016; Whang et al., 2004), willingness to pay premium price and positive WOM (Albert et al., 2013; Bauer et al., 2007), and brand evangelism (i.e., engaging in extreme acts such as actively convincing others about the favoured brand (Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004; Rozanski et al., 1999). However, various limitations exist with respect to existing research on the implications of brand passion, as discussed next.

### *3.3.6 Limitations of brand passion research*

In existing literature, there are several inconsistencies with respect to the encompassing elements of brand passion as an independent construct. That is, there are studies that have conceptualised brand passion using elements that previous literature used to conceptualise other relational concepts (e.g., brand attachment and brand love). Accordingly, studies have used elements such as psychological importance and frequent thoughts (Matzler et al., 2007), passionate bond (Matzler et al., 2007), excitement (Albert et al., 2013), idealisation and pleasure (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2009), desire to own and/or use the brand, tendency to incorporate the brand into their identity, and willingness to invest resources towards maintaining the bond with the brand (Swimberghe et al., 2014). Of these elements, some match the theoretical foundations of brand passion—including desire to own/use a brand (Belk et al., 2003), passionate bond (Albert et al., 2013), and excitement (Bauer et al., 2007). Other elements (including incorporation of the brand into consumer's identity and consumer's willingness to invest resources) reflect a better conceptual fit with brand attachment (C. W. Park et al., 2010). In addition, elements such as psychological importance and idealisation suggest a closer fit with brand love (Albert & Merunka, 2013, also discussed earlier in §3.3.1 and §3.3.3). Hence, there is a need for identifying passion-specific conceptual and measurement elements, and for testing consumer-brand relationship conceptualisations,

whereby relational concepts can interact with one another to better represent aspects of consumers' relationships with brands. Accordingly, this thesis addresses this limitation by conceptualising and validating a brand passion concept (in **Study 1**, drawing on the work of Albert et al., 2013) that includes the following measurement items: 'My relationship with this brand is very passionate', 'I desire this brand' and 'Just seeing this brand is very exciting for me' (see §5.3.1 for a detailed relevant discussion).

With respect to the outcomes of brand passion, extant research (e.g., Albert et al., 2013) does not consider outcome concepts that extend beyond transactional purposes, and has not examined concepts that can convey the strength of the bond and desire that consumers develop for their favoured brands (e.g., social media support or brand advocacy). This oversight is important as prior studies have emphasised the role of brand-specific emotions in improving consumers' attitudes towards the brand (C. W. Park et al., 2010), ultimately leading to brand loyalty (Pichler & Hemetsberger, 2007; Sarkar & Sarkar, 2016). To resolve this limitation, this thesis (in **Study 1**) investigates the power of brand passion in driving the following brand-related outcomes (directly and through attitudinal loyalty): social media support, sense of community, brand advocacy, price insensitivity, and devaluation of alternatives (see §5.4 for more details).

Research on relational concepts shares one further key limitation that is central to this thesis: the omission of cognitive elements in the conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationship. The next section discusses this limitation in greater detail.

### *3.3.7 Relational concepts: overall relevance to this thesis*

Research on brand love, brand attachment, and brand passion have offered valuable theoretical implications towards understanding the conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationship. Using the reviewed literature, the thesis includes the three relational concepts to establish the dimensions of emotional consumer-brand relationship (**Chapter 6**, §6.3.2) as conceptual elements of the new parsimonious consumer-brand relationship framework that will be outlined and tested in one of the empirical studies presented (**Study 3**, **Chapter 7**).

With respect to brand love, this thesis considers the concepts representing consumer's overall emotional affection towards the brand to be characterised by 'positive evaluation of the brand' and 'declarations of love for the brand' (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006, p. 81). Similarly, brand attachment, in this thesis, embodies the psychological state of strong willingness to allocate resources to the relationship that characterises an 'emotional attachment' between the consumer and the brand (Thomson et al., 2005; C. W. Park et al., 2010). Finally, this thesis emphasises the importance of passionate emotions towards the brand as a theoretical pillar of consumer-brand relationships, which explains the formation of relationships based on desires and self-expressive intentions—reviewed in Bauer et al. (2007), Belk (1988) and Swimberghe et al. (2014).

In addition to the afore-mentioned relational concepts, the thesis examines the important role of cognitive aspects in the conceptualisation of brand relationships. As discussed in §3.2, previous studies have narrowly discussed the role of elements such as CBBE components including brand awareness and brand salience (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2004), in offering a perceptive 'platform' for the development of a psychological mechanism that assists the consumer to generate quality related values (DeVecchio, 2001; H.-b. Kim et al., 2003) and meaning-based images about the brand (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Fournier, 1998), leading to the development of brand relationship (Esch et al., 2012; Keller, 2012, p. 187). However, the direct link between cognitive elements, particularly the CBBE components, and consumer-brand relationships requires further investigation. This is because findings that existing works have offered are, in part, not generalisable as they do not provide a comprehensive view of the link (e.g., Allaway, Huddleston, Whipple, & Ellinger, 2011; Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012). Specifically, existing studies have not included comprehensive conceptualisations of the brand relationship (e.g., Giovanis, 2016; Hanslin & Rindell, 2014; Veloutsou, 2015). Consequently, the potential ramifications (both theoretically and managerially) include a narrower understanding of the brand-building process, which overlooks the synergic link between CBBE and brand relationship (i.e., the dynamic process of brand relationship development through the interrelated sequences of cognitions, responses and emotional bonds). For brand managers, an in-depth understanding of this link is also crucial as it provides insights on the outcomes that they can obtain via strategies aimed at the development of strong consumer-brand relationships.

The following section reviews the current literature on CBBE and its components, and discusses its relevance to this thesis and its objectives.

### **3.4 Customer-based brand equity (CBBE)**

#### *3.4.1 CBBE: Definitions and implications*

Brand equity can be theorised as the intangible assets a brand obtains through its brand-building efforts (Ambler et al., 2002). Specifically, brands invest in market-positioning strategies to build linkages towards the functional and symbolic attributes in the minds of consumers and to differentiate their offerings against those of their competitors (Cheng-Hsui Chen, 2001; Kocak, Abimbola, & Özer, 2007; Veloutsou, Christodoulides, & de Chernatony, 2013). Brand equity is a concept that is generalisable across different types of markets, and one that is both theoretically and practically significant in services and goods (Berry, 2000; Stocchi & Fuller, 2017). As such, brand equity offers scholars and brand managers a ‘platform’ which generates important theoretical and practical insights that help to explain the driving forces and mechanisms behind purchase decisions and consumer behaviour (Christodoulides & De Chernatony, 2010; Srivastava & Sharma, 2011).

Keller (1993, 2003) conceptualised brand equity from a consumer perspective and defined CBBE as a dynamic consumer response resulting from brand knowledge. Brand knowledge encompasses the overall strength of a brand and manifests itself across a wide range of consumer perceptions and behaviours towards the brand, which often results in differential responses to marketing activities (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003). Building upon Keller’s (1993, 2003) seminal CBBE framework, Christodoulides and De Chernatony (2010) defined CBBE as ‘a set of perceptions, attitudes, knowledge and behaviours on the part of consumers that results in increased utility and allows a brand to earn greater volume or greater margins than it could without the brand name’ (p. 48). More recently, Chatzipanagiotou et al., (2016) asserted that CBBE is ‘a process with discrete evolutionary stages that include closely interrelated brand concepts and contribute through a “branding ladder” to create a strong brand’ (p. 5480).

### *3.4.2 CBBE components*

With respect to CBBE components, there is limited agreement, especially among the majority of the early studies which took place in the early 1990s and originated from the US (Veloutsou et al., 2013). To summarise, prior studies on brand equity have revealed a strong focus on the perspective of cognitive psychology (Christodoulides & De Chernatony, 2010). For example, in early research, D. A. Aaker (1991), Keller (1993, 2003), and Yoo and Donthu (2001) introduced the most prominent and widely cited components of CBBE. D. A. Aaker (1991) identified four perceptual/cognitive variables of brand equity, including brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty. Keller (1993), in contrast, defined CBBE from the consumer psychology perspective, as ‘the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand’ (p. 2). According to Keller (1993, 2003), CBBE occurs when the consumer is aware of the brand and holds positive, and unique associations about the brand in their memory. Keller (1993, 2003) also notes that there are two distinct types of brand knowledge: brand awareness and brand image.

The conceptualisations of CBBE offered by Aaker and Keller have been the most notable and widely accepted frameworks to measure CBBE (Datta, Ailawadi, & van Heerde, 2017). These conceptualisations have particularly been incorporated across various consumer products and services such as internet brands (Christodoulides et al., 2015), technology, household, and personal care products (Abbey, Meloy, Guide, & Atalay, 2015) and luxury hotel branding (Liu, Wong, Tseng, Chang, & Phau, 2017). Therefore, in line with the foundational works by Aaker and Keller, the present study conceptualises CBBE using four primary components, including brand knowledge, brand loyalty, perceived quality and hedonic and symbolic attributes. Brand knowledge (following Keller’s conceptualisation, 1993) encompasses brand awareness, brand image and uniqueness as its recurring dimensions. In addition, while some previous studies refer to symbolic attributes as building components of brand image (e.g., see Padgett & Allen, 1997), this study follows the previous work of Pauwels Delassus and Mogos Descotes (2012) and Mourad, Ennew, and Kortam (2011) and conceptualises these attributes as primary components of CBBE.

### *3.4.2.1 Brand knowledge*

Brand knowledge is defined as the collection of consumer's perceptions, thoughts and impressions about a specific brand (D. A. Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993), which characterise the image of a brand in consumers' memory (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Extant studies have revealed that brand knowledge has the power to validate a brand as a relationship partner in the mind of consumers (Chang & Chieng, 2006; Fournier, 1998; Franzen & Bouwman, 2001) by strengthening the establishment and development of consumer emotions (D. A. Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Blackston, 1995; Farquhar, 1989). Despite this, the literature is yet to offer an explicit examination of the link between brand knowledge and consumer-brand relationships. This shortcoming will be discussed in detail in §3.8.3. In the literature, the main recurring dimensions of brand knowledge are brand awareness, brand image and brand uniqueness, as discussed below.

**Brand awareness.** Brand awareness refers to a state of consumer knowledge about a brand (D. A. Aaker, 1991; Hoyer & Brown, 1990; R. Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014a; Mandler, 1980) and the cognitive processes underpinning that knowledge (Keller, 2003; MacInnis, Moorman, & Jaworski, 1991). These processes include identifying and recognizing the brand (D. A. Aaker, 2012; Hoyer & Brown, 1990; Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014a) or viewing the brand as being previously encountered (Hoyer & Brown, 1990; Mandler, 1980). Keller (2009) assumed that brand awareness relates to 'the strength of the brand node or trace in memory as reflected by consumers' ability to recall or recognise the brand under different conditions' (p. 143). Despite its significance, several studies have excluded brand awareness from their CBBE framework (e.g., X. Bian & Moutinho, 2011; Erdem et al., 1999; Lassar, Mittal, & Sharma, 1995). As Stocchi and Fuller (2017) argued, this is primarily because such studies considered brand awareness to be a rather simplistic facet of brand knowledge, likely to be embedded in more complex dimensions such as brand image (discussed next). Nonetheless, the inclusion of brand awareness as a component of brand knowledge can be justified if one considers its significance as heuristic or a 'mental shortcut' assisting consumers during the decision-making process. That is, consumers may rely on brand awareness to simplify complex decisions,

reducing time and effort respective to the process and minimising the perceived risk (R. Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014a; Nedungadi, 1990; Stocchi & Fuller, 2017). Brand awareness is also considered to be essential for knowledge perception from the product category to the brand, i.e., recognition instead of information retrieval (Nedungadi & Hutchinson, 1985). Finally, brand awareness strengthens the likelihood that the brand will be included in the consideration set—i.e., the sub-set of alternatives that the consumer considers for purchase (see Hoyer & Brown, 1990; E. K. MacDonald & Sharp, 2000), which helps brands achieve greater performance (G. L. Gordon et al., 1993). While existing studies have heavily focused on the role of brand awareness in the enhancement of market outcomes (e.g., Homburg, Klarmann, & Schmitt, 2010; R. Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014a) and buying behaviour (e.g., Stocchi & Fuller, 2017; Xuehua Wang & Yang, 2010), there is a shortage of studies that utilise brand awareness in the context of consumer-brand relationship.

**Brand image.** Keller (2003) describes brand image as the network of brand-related information consumers retain in memory. Brand image merges the cognitive and psychological aspects of how consumers perceive brands (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Stocchi, Driesener, & Nenycz-Thiel, 2015). As such, it reflects ‘consumer perceptions of and preferences for a brand, as reflected by the various types of brand associations held in consumers’ memory’ (Keller, 2012, p. 143). Brand image and the memory association that it comprises are pivotal in the creation of strong and favourable points-of-difference for the brand (e.g., price premiums, price elasticity responses, or communication channel effectiveness), all of which serve as sources of brand equity (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003; Keller, 2003). Additionally, brand image creates superior brand messages (Hsieh & Li, 2008) and evokes quality and value (Richardson, Dick, & Jain, 1994). Brand image has also been utilised in the context of brand performance measurement practices (Romaniuk, 2013; Romaniuk & Sharp, 2016; Stocchi & Fuller, 2017; Stocchi, Pare, Fuller, & Wright, 2017; Stocchi, Wright, & Driesener, 2016). Despite the characteristics of brand image discussed above, to date, only limited research has explicitly examined its impact on brand relationships and relational concepts. Also, extant research has arguably produced inconclusive results with respect to the link between brand image and purchasing behaviours (cf. Christodoulides & De Chernatony, 2010).

**Brand uniqueness.** Brand uniqueness is defined as ‘the degree to which customers feel the brand is different from competing brands—how distinct it is relative to competitors (Netemeyer et al., 2004, p. 211). Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012) drew upon the theory of uniqueness (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977) to argue that uniqueness encourages people to strive to distinguish themselves from others in social contexts and acts a driving force for consumers to feel good about themselves. Similarly, Tian, Bearden, and Hunter (2001) defined the need for uniqueness as consumers’ search for distinctiveness through the acquisition of consuming goods in order to enhance their personal and social identities.

When considering brand equity theory, uniqueness implies that the brand is the one (among other alternatives) that consumers associate with a characteristic (Romaniuk & Gaillard, 2007). For example, consumers may associate electric cars only with Tesla. Brands can create a degree of perceived uniqueness among consumers by offering diagnostic information that helps them differentiate the brand from others, through differentiating advertising approaches or via consumer direct experience with the brand (Romaniuk & Gaillard, 2007). Brand uniqueness reflects the scarcity value of a brand (W.-Y. Wu et al., 2012), allowing consumers to differentiate themselves from others (H.-J. Park, Rabolt, & Sook Jeon, 2008; Tian & McKenzie, 2001). In addition, by offering distinct benefits, unique brands make the decision process easier for consumers (Knight & Young Kim, 2007). Importantly, improving perceived brand uniqueness among consumers is supported as a viable and important strategy for improving a brand’s equity and performance (Romaniuk & Gaillard, 2007).

Despite the benefits discussed thus far, the role of brand uniqueness in the development of brand relationships is considerably under-examined. This is important because studies have highlighted the existence of a clear link between unique features of a brand, and a consumer's desire to identify with that brand (Berger & Heath, 2007; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012), which is a key underlying component of the development of the consumer-brand relationship (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Fournier, 1998; Kressmann et al., 2006). Furthermore, Thompson et al. (2006) acknowledged that consumers actively seek to uphold their self-identities through bonding with brands that are perceived to possess unique characteristics—i.e., being the opposite of mass-consumption brands.



### 3.4.2.2 Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty is described as a two-dimensional concept, consisting of behavioural and attitudinal aspects (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). While behavioural loyalty reflects repeated purchases of a certain brand or the tendency to buy the brand as a primary choice (see Yoo & Donthu, 2001), attitudinal loyalty echoes the degree to which a consumer shows dispositional commitment towards the unique values associated with the brand (see Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

To achieve loyalty from consumers, scholars have emphasised that both cognitive and affective aspects of purchases are paramount. For example, Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) argued that brands with high levels of consumer trust and emotions achieve greater market performance, leveraging both attitudinal and purchase loyalty. In fact, D. A. Aaker (1991) defines brand loyalty as ‘the attachment that a customer has to a brand’ (p. 39), which highlights the importance of the individualised link between the brand and the consumer in obtaining loyalty. However, Chaudhuri and Holbrook’s (2001) description of loyalty essentially refers back to the notion of brand affect (capturing only the attitudinal nature of loyalty), which is described as ‘a brand’s potential to elicit a positive emotional response in the average consumer as a result of its use’ (p. 82). These emotions could trigger deeper bonds towards the brand itself and not just the experience of using the brand. This is an aspect that Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) did not touch on, but that this thesis considers.

Brand loyalty is also an important element in Keller’s (2009, 2001) CBBE framework. Specifically, Keller considered loyalty as a dimension of *brand resonance*, which reflects ‘the nature of the relationship’ and ‘the intensity or depth of the psychological bond’ customers have with the brand (2009, p. 144). Interestingly, Keller (2009) included both behavioural loyalty and attitudinal loyalty as influential elements in the creation of brand resonance. Attitudinal loyalty, in particular, is described as ‘when customers view the brand as being something special in a broader context’, pertaining to expressions such as ‘loving’ the brand, describing the brand a ‘favourite possession’ and a ‘little pleasure’ to ‘look forward to’ (p. 145).

Despite the importance of brand loyalty in CBBE research, inconsistencies still exist with respect to its conceptual position in CBBE formation. That is, while seminal works (e.g., D. A. Aaker, 1991) have viewed brand loyalty as a component of CBBE (i.e., a core component that signifies the attachment that consumers have established with brands), other bodies of research (e.g., Krystallis & Chrysochou, 2014; Romaniuk & Nenycz-Thiel, 2013) have considered brand loyalty as an outcome of CBBE. Nonetheless, Stocchi and Fuller (2017) recently showed that the strength of CBBE differs across different segments of consumers who display different levels of behavioural loyalty, and across markets that show different inherent levels of brand loyalty such as repertoire and subscription markets.

Furthermore, there are limited studies that focus on the significance of attitudinal loyalty in brand relationship research. Attitudinal loyalty allows consumers to develop emotions and affective bonds with brands without demonstrating actual purchase behaviours (Hawkins & Vel, 2013; Mechinda et al., 2009). That is, attitudinal loyalty represents the emotional obligation that goes beyond brand functionality and even satisfaction, and entices the consumer to purchase the brand (Loureiro et al., 2012). Attitudinal loyalty often acts as a motivation to purchase the brand's products, especially if they are 'icons and badges' offered by a 'friend or even a religion' (Rozanski et al., 1999). Importantly, attitudinal loyalty resonates with the brand relationships that reflect consumers' attitude strength (C. W. Park et al., 2010) and bonding (Arruda-Filho, Cabusas, & Dholakia, 2010; Pichler & Hemetsberger, 2007; Sarkar & Sarkar, 2016). In contrast, behavioural loyalty is often studied as a direct outcome of strong brand relationships (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Dick & Basu, 1994; Wallace et al., 2014). However, studies such as Srivastava and Sharma (2011) and Bandyopadhyay and Martell (2007) have implied that attitudinal loyalty precedes behavioural loyalty. This means that, in order to achieve behavioural loyalty, a brand must first trigger an emotion-driven attitude in the mind of the consumer, obliging the consumer to consider purchasing only a certain brand in a given category. A few studies have also demonstrated that attitudinal loyalty is the immediate outcome of the development of strong emotional consumer-brand relationships (e.g., see Fournier, Dobscha, & Mick, 1998; McEwen, 2005). Therefore, one might argue that attitudinal loyalty should be expected to mediate the effect of brand relationship on behavioural loyalty. In fact, Albert et al. (2013) suggested a facilitating role for attitudinal loyalty with respect to the behavioural implications of brand

passion. Furthermore, attitudinal loyalty typically involves a range of positive emotions and attitudes towards the brand that is rooted in the strong consumer-brand bond (e.g., see Baloglu, 2002; D. I. Gilliland & Bello, 2002).

### *3.4.2.3 Perceived quality*

Perceived quality is a consumer's overall perceptions about the quality of the offering of a brand in comparison with other competing offerings (D. A. Aaker, 1991; Pappu, Quester, & Cooksey, 2005). Zeithaml (1988) and Woodruff (1997) asserted that perceived quality is a key factor in determining a consumer's brand decisions. Greater perceived quality also motivates consumers to choose a certain brand over competing brands (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991; Netemeyer et al., 2004). In line with Keller's (2003) framework, perceived quality can also be categorised as an element of thoughts and perceptions linked to the brand in the minds of consumers. Keller (2001) noted that a well-perceived brand begins with consumer judgement about the positive quality and credibility, and initial brand feelings that are typically either experiential (i.e., affect and excitement) or inward (i.e., status, social approval, or self-respect), possibly leading to brand consideration.

Recent existing literature has scarcely investigated the role of perceived quality as a component of CBBE. In relevant studies, researchers have not explicitly examined the role of quality perceptions and beliefs towards buying behaviour (Buil, de Chernatony, & Martinez, 2008; Washburn & Plank, 2002). Such studies have focussed primarily on services (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Pike & Bianchi, 2016; Pike, Bianchi, Kerr, & Patti, 2010; Taylor, Hunter, & Lindberg, 2007), or have reported insignificant effects (Tong & Hawley, 2009; Yoo, Donthu, & S. Lee, 2000). Moreover, although prior research has suggested that a link between quality perception and brand self-identification (C. W. Park et al., 2010) leads to self-expressive intentions and the development of personal consumer-brand bonds (Fournier, 1998; Japutra et al., 2014), perceived quality as a component of CBBE over consumer-brand relationship and relational concepts has not been considered so far.

#### *3.4.2.4 Hedonic and symbolic attributes*

Hedonic and symbolic attributes refer to experiential, symbolic and emotion-driven values essential for the development of strong brand equity (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016). Hedonic attributes are described as the benefits and appropriate values brands offer consumers, which may take the form of experiences, sensory values (e.g., aesthetics, design, ambiance, feel) and emotions (e.g., pleasure, enjoyment, fun, excitement, adventure and humour, Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009; J. B. Smith & Colgate, 2007; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Consumers seek to obtain these attributes for self-enhancement (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Kunda, 1999) in order to pursue the 'maintenance and affirmation of positive self-views' and 'increased levels of self-esteem' (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012, p. 408). Symbolic attributes are appreciated to 'the extent to which customers attach or associate psychological meaning to a product' (Smith & Colgate, 2007, p. 10). In fact, Keller (1993) referred to brand symbolic benefits as extrinsic advantages of a brand, which include an underlying need for social approval or personal expression.

The underlying influence of hedonic and symbolic attributes in the creation of strong brands is justifiable if one considers Self-Expansion Theory (Aron & Aron, 1986, 1997, see §2.2.3) and the notion of the extended self (Belk, 1988; Kleine et al., 1993). That is, the possession of a brand's attributes that reflect positively on consumers' self-perception subsequently allows them to see themselves in a positive light, which eventually leads to increased levels of self-esteem (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012; Vigneron & Johnson, 2017).

The role of hedonic and symbolic brand attributes in the development of brand relationships has only been narrowly discussed. For instance, studies have confirmed that the self-enhancement and self-identification outcomes of brand symbolic attributes for consumers are the driving force behind consumers' affinities to develop relationships with brands (Escalas & Bettman, 2003b; Thomson et al., 2005). However, only few studies have investigated these attributes, focussing primarily on enjoyment and self-expressive attributes (Vlachos et al., 2010) or on context-specific values (Vlachos et al., 2010; Vlachos & Vrechopoulos, 2012).

### 3.4.3 CBBE: Relevance to the thesis

From a conceptual perspective, CBBE is shaped when consumers are aware of and familiar with the brand and hold positive memory associations towards it (Esch et al., 2006). Therefore, in order to build strong brands, marketers must generate positive thoughts, feelings and perceptions about their brand in the minds and hearts of consumers (Keller, 2001). In fact, it is assumed that the overall CBBE concept is comprised of three sets of blocks: *cognitive blocks* (salience, imagery, and judgments), *behavioural blocks* (performance) and *emotional blocks* (feelings and resonance, Keller, 2001, 2003, 2009). The interactions amongst these three blocks lead to the creation and development of brand equity (e.g., Biedenbach & Marell, 2010; Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016; G. L. Gordon et al., 1993).

Drawing upon Keller's (2001, 2003, 2009) seminal works and assumptions concerning the establishment of CBBE-building blocks, Chatzipanagiotou et al., (2016) and Christodoulides and De Chernatony (2010) described CBBE as the value that is co-created by consumers and the brand. Nowadays, consumers are empowered and connected, which encourages marketers to view the co-creation of brand experiences as effective branding strategies (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2003). In fact, scholars have argued that consumers play a central role in the process of value co-creation (e.g., S. Baron & Harris, 2008; Heinonen, Strandvik, & Voima, 2013). In practical terms, brands such as Disney, Virgin Airlines and Apple offer exceptional brand experiences with the purpose of emotionally engaging with consumers in multisensory and hedonic ways, whilst remaining competitive in the marketplace. Memorable and engaging experiences are believed to enhance consumer loyalty (Carù & Cova, 2003; LaSalle & Britton, 2002; Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Schmitt, 1999; S. Smith & Wheeler, 2002), even in the case of less involving consumption contexts (Ding & Tseng, 2015). Given the role of consumer experiences in the development of consumer-brand relationships (Chang & Chieng, 2006; Evrard & Aurier, 1996; C. L. Martin, 1998), it seems plausible to consider consumer-brand relationship as an influential element of CBBE development. Such an assumption incidentally addresses the limitations that have emerged from studies (e.g., Keller, 2001, 2009; Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016) that consider the consumer-brand relationship as a crucial asset to the creation of strong brands, as discussed later on.

In addition to the above, drawing upon previous research (i.e., findings by Biedenbach & Marell, 2010; Ding & Tseng, 2015; Keller & Lehmann, 2006), Christodoulides et al. (2015) argued that researchers must revisit the conceptualisation of CBBE as a ‘construct’ and consider alternative conceptualisations including that of brand equity as a ‘process’. In line with this assumption, CBBE can also be considered as the array of changes that occur in the brand's value as seen by consumers, such as the development of positive attitudes or improved purchase intentions (see also Yoo & Donthu, 2001), which can be theorised as the outcome of consumers' responses to the dynamic CBBE components. Crucially, this assumption highlights the importance of looking at CBBE components individually, as they each contribute to the process of CBBE, and to the consumer response to marketing and branding activities (see also Grohs, Raies, Koll, & Mühlbacher, 2016; Stocchi & Fuller, 2017). The same assumption has also informed the work of Chatzipanagiotou et al., (2016), who theorised CBBE as an overall system comprising three main sub-systems: *brand building*, *brand understanding* and *brand relationship*. Specifically, the authors argued that the CBBE process begins with brand building, which is the construction of functional and experiential ‘imagery’ brand attributes—i.e., position the brand in the consumer’s mind. It then progresses with the establishment of an understanding sub-system, where consumers respond in a cognitive-affective-conative sequence (exemplified in components such as brand awareness, associations, reputation and self-connection). It concludes with a brand relationship sub-system, where consumer-brand relationships are formed (reflecting elements such as partner quality, intimacy, trust and relevance). CBBE is considered as the ultimate outcome of this progression of sub-systems (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016); yet, the blocks can also individually influence CBBE (Stocchi & Fuller, 2017).

Understanding the connection between these steps sheds light on the development of the psychological mechanisms that ‘determine the relationships that consumers form with brands over time’ (Keller, 2012, p. 187). Interestingly, the blocks that Chatzipanagiotou et al., (2016) used were derived from Keller’s (2001, 2009) ‘brand-building blocks’, i.e., *consumer brand resonance*, *consumer judgement*, *consumer feelings*, *brand performance*, *brand imagery* and *brand salience* (p. 7). Keller (2001, 2009) categorised these blocks into three sets: *cognitive blocks* (salience, imagery and judgments), *behavioural blocks* (performance) and *emotional blocks* (feelings and resonance). The links between these blocks lead to the

development of strong brands through four logical steps: Step (1) the creation of brand associations; Step (2) the establishment of brand meaning in the consumer's mind; Step (3) consumer responses to brand-related initiatives (e.g., advertising and promotions); and Step (4) the establishment of lasting brand relationships. Comparing these steps with Chatzipanagiotou et al.'s (2016) framework, it is clear that *brand building* is equivalent to Keller's Steps (1) and (2); *brand understanding* is equivalent to Step (3), and *brand relationship* is equivalent to Step (4).

Considering Chatzipanagiotou et al.'s (2016) CBBE theorisation, the *brand building* sub-system is based on notions that are derived from the main body of brand equity research (e.g., D. A. Aaker, 2012; Cheng-Hsui Chen, 2001; A. Y. Lee & Labroo, 2004; Romaniuk & Sharp, 2004). In contrast, the *brand relationship* sub-system essentially draws upon existing research on consumer-brand relationships (e.g., Ahuvia, 2005; Fournier, 1998; C. W. Park et al., 2010), relational concepts (e.g., Albert & Merunka, 2013; Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman, & Yague-Guillen, 2003; Louis & Lombart, 2010) and self-brand connection (e.g., Chaplin & John, 2005; Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Kemp et al., 2012). Finally, the link between *brand building* and *brand understanding* can be interpreted, in part, by looking at the literature on consumer responses to brand equity (e.g., Keller, 1993; Pitta & Katsanis, 1995; Sloat, Verhoef, & Franses, 2005). However, existing research is yet to fully explore and investigate the theoretical link between the *brand building* process and the connection between *brand understanding* and *brand relationship*. Interestingly, this omission largely reflects the under-explored implications of the links between Keller's (2001, 2009) CBBE cognitive and emotional blocks.

Some studies have examined the impact of some brand equity dimensions on the development of brand relationships. Accordingly, based on the research on CBBE, strengthened brand knowledge provides psychological benefits for consumers such as social approval, self-esteem and self-expression (Keller, 1993; Tuškej et al., 2013). These benefits trigger consumer desires to be close to the brand (i.e., purchase the brand, Belk, 1988; Belk et al., 2003; Fournier, 1998), resulting in the development of brand-related emotions, self-expressive values and brand relationships (Fournier, 1995, 1996, 1998). For example, Esch et al. (2006) confirmed that brand image and brand awareness might affect current and future purchases through brand relationships. More recently, Loureiro and Kaufmann (2012)

highlighted a significant effect of brand image on brand love. Similarly, So et al. (2013) concluded that corporate association, functional benefits and symbolic benefits had significant impacts on the development of emotional attachment. Vlachos and Vrechopoulos (2012) also reported that brand image, brand perceived value and brand associations (based on corporate social responsibility [CSR] activities) all yield positive influences on the development of consumer-retailer love. Japutra et al., (2016) showed that the perceptions that consumers hold about the sensory experiences that a certain brand might offer (particularly familiarity and pleasure-based experiences) and CSR activities have the power to predict the development of brand attachment.

Ding and Tseng (2015) emphasised the mediating role of hedonic emotions in enhancing brand consumer loyalty. The authors drew upon the foundations of the appraisal theory of emotion (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Lazarus & Smith, 1988) and examined the mediation roles of the cognitive dimensions of brand equity and hedonic emotions in the theoretical relationship between brand experience and loyalty (Ding & Tseng, 2015). However, the authors focussed on hedonic emotions that are generated as an outcome of hedonic brand experiences (Palmer, 2010). Consequently, the authors assumed that brand equity is created because consumers want to re-experience the pleasurable experiences and feelings. This omits the role of overarching consumer-brand bonds formed because of triggered hedonic emotions.

While the above studies have offered valuable insights, there is still a wider scope for investigation with respect to the overall effects of cognitive elements (including components of CBBE) on the development of consumer-brand relationships. This is due to the following reason. Existing works have not incorporated an extensive range of CBBE dimensions (e.g., see Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012; So et al., 2013; Vlachos & Vrechopoulos, 2012), overlooking key concepts such as uniqueness, hedonic benefits and perceived quality, which are brand associations with a strong bearing on consumer-brand relationships. This limitation somewhat impedes the generalisability of existing works (e.g., Allaway et al., 2011; Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012).

Another limitation is that existing studies have not included comprehensive conceptualisations of the brand relationships concept (e.g., Giovanis, 2016; Hudson et al.,



2015). Such an oversight has most certainly hindered the possibility to explain and understand the dynamic and synergic link between CBBE and brand relationship, ultimately inhibiting the possibility to 'map' the chain of effects that underpins the link between relationship-developing strategies and desired brand outcomes such as brand equity (see also Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016). Besides yielding theoretical significance, such a 'map' is crucial to brand management practices, because it could offer a greater understanding of the outcomes that can be obtained by pursuing strategies aimed at developing of a strong consumer-brand relationship. **Study 3** (particularly §7.2) discusses and addresses this fundamental limitation in greater detail.

### 3.5 Chapter summary

This chapter reviewed the important theoretical and conceptual foundations of consumer-brand relationships. First, the chapter presented a review of seminal studies that developed and validated a conceptual framework representing brands as relationship partners. Second, the chapter critically reviewed current literature on three key relational concepts, brand love, brand attachment and brand passion, highlighting the relative theoretical implications for this thesis. These three concepts represent the distinct aspects of consumer-brand relationships that the thesis considers and uses to develop a parsimonious conceptualisation for emotional consumer-brand relationship (further discussed in **Chapter 6**, §6.3.2). Third, the chapter touched on the concept of CBBE, its conceptual definition and overall implication for research in brand management, clarifying the importance for the thesis of recent approaches that consider CBBE in terms of its process linking specific dimensions. Emphasis was placed on the research by Keller (1993, 2003) and Chatzipanagiotou et al., (2016), which theorise CBBE as a process through which cognitive, emotional and behavioural brand-building blocks interact to co-create values for consumers, leading to strong brands. Finally, the chapter emphasised the need for further research that investigates in more detail the psychological mechanisms that enable the establishment and development of consumer-brand relationships, ultimately clarifying the theoretical link between consumer cognitive evaluations about the brand and

consumers' consequential emotional responses. Accordingly, the chapter referred to the three empirical studies (discussed in **Chapters 5, 6, and 7**) that this thesis presents.

In the following chapter (**Chapter 4**), the thesis provides an overview of the three empirical studies, their purpose, design/methodology/approach, key findings, and theoretical and managerial implications. Importantly, **Chapter 4** outlines the chain of thought relevant to each of these three studies, and details how each study helps the thesis to achieve a number of its objectives.

## CHAPTER FOUR: OVERVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

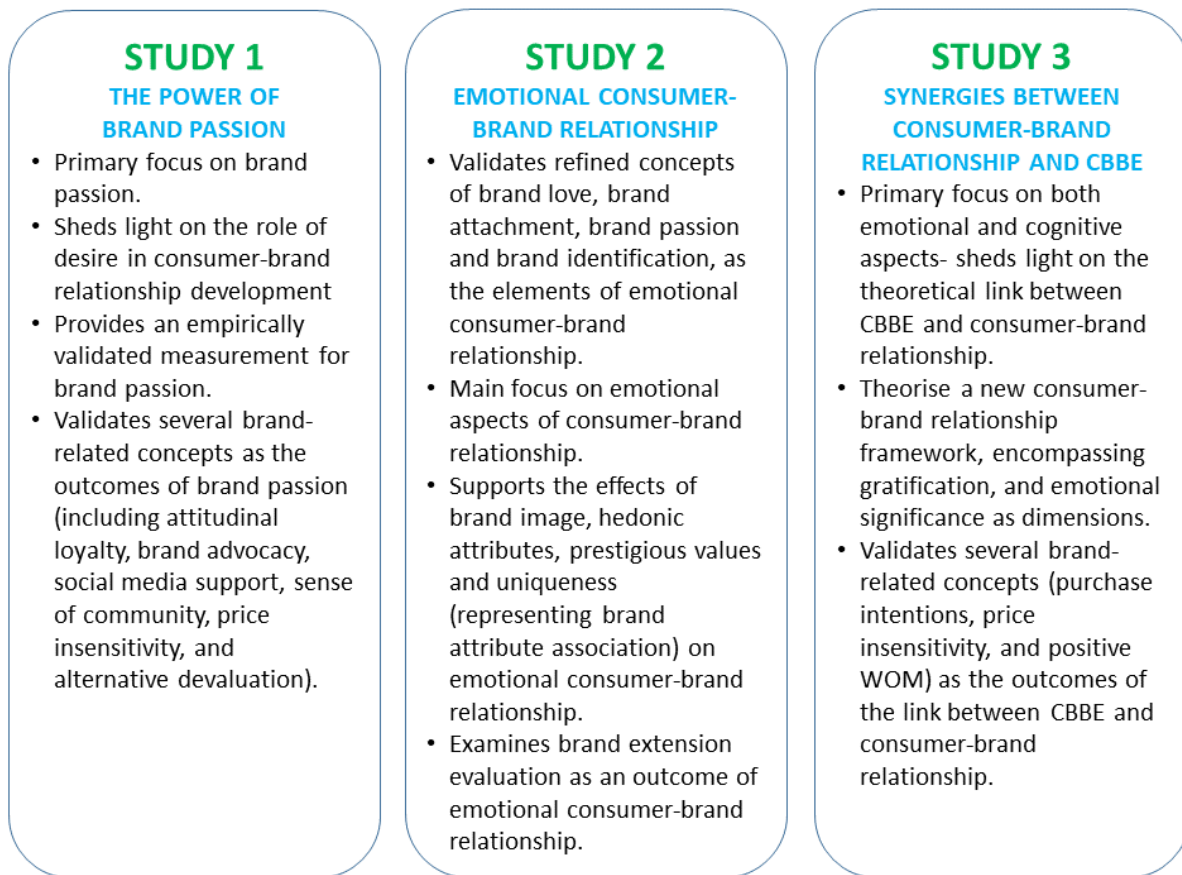
### 4.1 Chapter overview

This chapter presents an overview of the empirical studies of this thesis, which discussed in full in **Chapters 5, 6 and 7**. The chapter begins with an introductory section that clarifies the theoretical link between the three studies, providing a detailed explanation of the rationale of each study. Following this, the chapter discusses the link between the thesis' objectives, the studies and the related hypotheses to be tested. Then, the chapter outlines the design of the study, including: i) an overview of the selected methodological approach; ii) an explanation of the chosen context of the analysis (i.e., to gauge the theoretical mechanisms explored); iii) a description of the study population and sample; and iv) a clarification of the approaches for data collection and analysis, methods and tools. Afterwards, the chapter outlines the main findings of each study in a concise manner and connects them to the corresponding hypotheses. Finally, the chapter concludes with a section summarising the key theoretical and managerial implications that each study offers.

### 4.2 The theoretical link between the three studies

Figure 4.1 illustrates the theoretical focus of each study. With respect to brand relationship research, **Study 1** focuses on one of the main relational concepts (brand passion), whereas **Study 2** and **Study 3** take a broader perspective and investigate all relational concepts (brand passion, brand attachment and brand love). More specifically, while the scope of **Study 1** is limited to conceptualising brand passion, **Study 2** and **Study 3** incorporate the existing theoretical understanding of all three relational concepts to develop separate conceptual frameworks that reflect and explain consumer-brand relationships.

**Figure 4.1** The theoretical focus of the studies



There are several theoretical and conceptual links between **Study 1** and the other two studies. **Study 1**'s focus is on the overarching role of passionate emotions in the development of consumer-brand relationships. This informs **Study 2** and **Study 3** as it sheds light on the role of emotions in the creation of consumer-brand bonds, especially passion and desire. As previously discussed in §3.8.5, consumers' desires for the hedonic and symbolic benefits of brands (e.g., prestige and uniqueness) may dominate consumers' thoughts, feelings and actions (Bauer et al., 2007; Belk et al., 2003), which often leads to the brand contributing to the improvement of consumer's 'sense of self' (Pichler & Hemetsberger, 2007). In addition, **Study 1** introduces and empirically validates a robust conceptualisation of brand passion that encompasses three elements: passion, desire and excitement. **Study 2** and **3** subsequently draw on these findings to conceptualise consumer-brand relationship frameworks inclusive of brand passion. More specifically, **Study 2** expands upon the construct of brand passion to also include other elements such as the importance of the brand, a 'romantic' bond between

the brand and the consumer, adoring the brand, the importance of the relationship to the consumer, and feelings of happiness. Further, **Study 2** conceptualises a higher-order consumer-brand relationship framework that includes elements of passion, together with attachment, love, and self-identification, all of which collectively represent the concept of emotional consumer-brand relationship. **Study 3** further extends the construct of brand passion by adopting Batra et al.'s (2012) framework and including elements such as magical bonds, harmony with consumer's life, obsessive nature of passion, memorable experiences, and investment of resources (especially time) in the relationship. Like **Study 2**, **Study 3** leads to the development of a higher-order consumer-brand relationship framework, which includes extended elements of passion, together with elements of attachment, attitude strength, emotional connection and long-term relationship, collectively representing the concept of consumer-brand relationship.

Additionally, **Study 1** reveals a series of direct and indirect outcomes for brand passion: (attitudinal loyalty, brand advocacy, social media support, sense of community, price insensitivity, and alternative devaluation) to further validate the empirical power of the construct of brand passion. Through these, **Study 1** provides further insight on the theoretical significance of brand passion as an independent relational construct, revealing its explanatory power in relation to the mechanisms that turn brand-related emotions into concrete outcomes that extend beyond transactions. Some of the outcomes discussed in **Study 1** (including price insensitivity and brand advocacy), together with purchase intentions, are then included in **Study 3**'s research model to demonstrate the predicting power of the consumer-brand relationship framework, and the effects on these outcomes of the link between customer-based brand equity (CBBE) and consumer-brand relationship.

In addition to the above, the conclusions of **Study 2** inform **Study 3** in two ways. First, from a consumer-brand relationship perspective, the concepts examined in **Study 2** (i.e., brand love, brand attachment, brand passion and brand identification) are integrated into a framework for consumer-brand relationship. In addition, while **Study 2** includes four concepts (i.e., brand love, brand attachment, brand passion and brand identification) that reflect emotional consumer-brand relationship; **Study 3** expands upon this and includes attitude strength and long-term relationship. Accordingly, it can be argued that while **Study 2** mainly focuses on

emotional aspects of consumer-brand relationships, **Study 3**'s framework goes beyond these emotional aspects. Second, from a CBBE perspective, **Study 2** confirms the effects of brand image, hedonic attributes, prestigious values and uniqueness (collectively representing brand associations) on emotional consumer-brand relationships. **Study 3** builds on these confirmed effects and presents an even more inclusive framework, aiming to assess the link between CBBE and consumer-brand relationship. In more detail, **Study 3** expands **Study 2**'s brand associations and includes the concepts of brand awareness, brand uniqueness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, hedonic attributes and symbolic benefits, conceptualised as components of CBBE. **Study 3** further discusses the predicting power of this link over brand-related outcomes including purchase intentions, price insensitivity, and positive WOM.

### 4.3 Relevance of the three studies to the thesis objectives

The three empirical studies presented in this thesis each allow the achievement of the thesis objectives, which are recapped in Table 4.1 for convenience.

**Table 4.1** Thesis objectives

Objective number	Objective statement
1	To identify and critically review the existing conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationships (i.e., relational concepts)
2	To outline and test a parsimonious framework for consumer-brand relationship
3	To extend the conceptualised consumer-brand relationship framework with respect to its effects on brand-related outcomes
4	To investigate the synergy between consumer-brand relationship and customer-based brand equity (CBBE)

Table 4.2 charts the relevance of each study and the links between them with respect to achieving the thesis objectives.

**Table 4.2** Thesis studies and their relevance to the objectives

Study number	Relevance to thesis objectives
<p>Study 1: <b>The Power of Brand Passion</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Study 1</b> facilitates the achievement of <b>Objective 1</b> by conceptualising brand passion.</li> <li>• <b>Study 1</b> facilitates the achievement of <b>Objective 3</b> by investigating the relationship between brand passion and various brand-related attitudinal and behavioural outcomes, examined in the context of sports apparel brands.</li> </ul>
<p>Study 2: <b>Emotional Consumer Brand Relationships</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Study 2</b> facilitates the achievement of <b>Objective 1</b> by conceptualising brand attachment, brand love, brand passion, and brand identification.</li> <li>• <b>Study 2</b> facilitates the achievement of <b>Objective 2</b> by advancing the conceptualisation of emotional consumer-brand relationship, through the theorisation of a framework, which encompasses brand attachment, brand love, brand passion, and brand identification.</li> <li>• <b>Study 2</b> facilitates the achievement of <b>Objective 3</b> by examining the influence of emotional consumer-brand relationship on brand extension evaluation in the context of luxury brands.</li> <li>• <b>Study 2</b> facilitates the achievement of <b>Objective 4</b> by investigating the relationship between a range of brand associations (i.e., brand image, hedonic attributes, prestigious values and uniqueness) and emotional consumer-brand relationship's dimensions (i.e., brand attachment, brand love, brand passion and brand identification).</li> </ul>
<p>Study 3: <b>Synergies between consumer-brand relationship and CBBE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Study 3</b> facilitates the achievement of <b>Objective 2</b> by theorising a new framework for consumer-brand relationship, encompassing gratification and emotional significance as dimensions.</li> <li>• <b>Study 3</b> facilitates the achievement of <b>Objective 3</b> by investigating the influence of consumer-brand relationship on price insensitivity, purchase intentions, and positive WOM, in the context of luxury brands.</li> <li>• <b>Study 3</b> facilitates the achievement of <b>Objective 4</b> by examining how CBBE underpins the development of consumer-brand relationships through testing the impact of CBBE's sub-components, i.e., brand knowledge, hedonic benefits and perceived quality on consumer-brand relationship.</li> </ul>

The following sections provide detail with respect to the research areas that the thesis studies discuss, and how they align with thesis objectives.

#### 4.3.1 Relevance to *objective 1*

Overall, there are some significant gaps in the research on consumer-brand relationship. Specifically, research is required to identify and conceptualise the relevant relational concepts (i.e., brand love, brand attachment, and brand passion), in order to provide insights on the aspects of consumer-brand relationship that each concept could represent.

In terms of brand love, as discussed in §3.8.2, the following limitations suggest that there is wider scope for investigation with respect to further advancing its conceptualisation. Firstly, the majority of existing studies have focused on brands for which consumers explicitly declare love (e.g., Ahuvia, 1993, 2005; Fournier, 1998; Heinrich et al., 2012). This creates a potential bias in the way that respondents characterise the elements of brand love. As a result, additional research is needed to examine this construct with respect to a brand for which consumers do not assume or declare feelings of love. **Study 3** particularly emphasises the importance of this approach (see §7.5). Secondly, existing studies (e.g., Wallace et al., 2014) have often failed to include in the conceptualisation of brand love elements that distinguish it from the corresponding conceptualisation in interpersonal contexts (albeit with a few exceptions, such as Batra et al., 2012; Langner et al., 2015). Those exceptions highlighted fundamental differences among consumer-brand and interpersonal contexts with respect to the concept of love (e.g., compared to interpersonal love, brand love is more limited in richness, depth and overall importance, see §2.5 for more discussion). However, further search is required to investigate these differences. Lastly, seminal studies on brand love, especially Albert and Merunka (2013) and Albert et al., (2008) have not adequately explored the interactions between the conceptual elements of brand love, such as connectedness, oneness and affection. These interactions may shed light on identifying different types of brand love that might occur.

With respect to brand attachment, despite the existence of some insightful works (e.g., Thomson et al., 2005; C. W. Park et al., 2010), further empirical research is required to investigate the role of attachment in the development of consumer-brand relationship, especially in situations where consumers' self-identification and self-expansion are simultaneously involved. This is because existing research has highlighted that consumer



attachment towards brands goes beyond mere emotions and reflects consumers' psychological representations including thoughts and brand image associations (see Sperling & Berman, 1994; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

With regard to brand passion, there are still important research areas that remain underexplored. For instance, seminal works by Swimberghe et al. (2014) and Albert et al. (2013) have examined brand passion with respect to its association with consumers' self-identification and self-connection with the brand. However, in line with psychological theories (e.g., the Triangle of Love by Sternberg, 1986, 1997, and the Attachment Theory by Bowlby, 1979, 1982 - see §2.2), further research is needed to support the implications of brand passion when it is considered in connection with other types of consumer emotions, such as particular feelings of love and attachment.

In addition to the above, more research is required to refine the existing conceptualisations of relational concepts. More specifically, existing studies have raised potential issues relating to whether the existing measurement items clearly represent the characteristics of each construct (Moussa, 2015; Pare et al., 2015). Importantly, with respect to brand passion, there are inconsistencies in its conceptualisation as a stand-alone construct. That is, while seminal works (e.g., Thompson et al., 2006) include passion as a sub-dimension of brand love, some works (e.g., Matzler et al., 2007; Swimberghe et al., 2014) insist on the distinctiveness of brand passion, and other works (e.g., Albert et al., 2013) have simply borrowed items from brand love to measure brand passion. To resolve these issues, **Study 1** presents a refined set of measurement items for brand passion, which focus on its distinctive characteristics, including being desire-led, and filled with excitement, passion and enthusiasm.

Similar issues exist for brand attachment, which has been included in important studies (e.g., Batra et al., 2012; Thompson et al., 2006) as a sub-dimension of brand love. However, such an approach potentially overlooks the independent role that brand attachment might play in the development of consumer-brand relationships, and the individual effects it might have on brand-related outcomes. In addition, while seminal works (e.g., Thomson et al., 2005) have emphasised the feelings associated with attachment (i.e., affection, passion, and connection), other influential studies (e.g., C. W. Park et al., 2010) presented brand attachment scales that focus more on cognitive aspects such as accessibility and integration into a consumer's

identity (Dunn & Hoegg, 2014). These analytical and conceptual assumptions could have arguably led to discrepancies in consumers' interpretations of the measurement phrases (Bengtsson, 2003). Thus, further studies are required to validate the distinct emotional aspects that characterise brand attachment. Additional research is also required to provide insight into the possible need for simplification and differentiation across various constructs of theoretical and managerial relevance. **Study 2** and **Study 3** shed light on these issues by offering refined conceptualisations for brand attachment and brand identification that incorporate unique characteristics of each construct in order to understand and measure them accordingly.

Finally, a recurring issue in existing studies on relational concepts concerns the assumption that consumers' emotions towards brands are equivalent to interpersonal emotions (e.g., Heinrich et al., 2012). This assumption may contribute to various theoretical problems. Specifically, as some studies (e.g., see Aggarwal, 2004; Richins, 1997) have highlighted, the feelings of love and attachment between consumers and brands are not analogous to the assumptions of interpersonal love theories (e.g., the Theory of Triangle of Love and Attachment Theory - see §2.2). Further discussion of the theoretical and conceptual differences between the two types of relationships appears in §3.5. Moreover, the thesis (in **Study 2** and **Study 3**), when examining consumer-brand relationship, incorporates measurement items to address the aspects of brand relationships dissimilar to interpersonal bonds (see §6.5.2 and §7.5.2).

#### **4.3.2 Relevance to *objective 2***

Overall, there are issues with regard to the existing consumer-brand relationship frameworks. Specifically, while previous works have provided valuable insights on the significant role of consumer emotions (e.g., Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evans, 2006; Palmatier, Jarvis, Bechhoff, & Kardes, 2009) and relational concepts (e.g., Albert & Merunka, 2013; Bauer et al., 2007) more empirical investigations are needed to understand the development of consumer-brand relationships and the resulting brand-related outcomes (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; C. W. Park et al., 2010). In particular, there is a need for a framework that embraces the array of constructs

that represent consumer-brand relationships (including brand love, brand attachment, brand passion and brand identification). Such a framework could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the diversity of the emotions that consumers develop towards brands, and which could then take various forms—i.e., from fast-developed desire-led passionate feelings, self-connection and strongly-held attachment feelings to dynamic, self-identifying and deeply affectionate love. Through conceptualising emotional consumer-brand relationship that encompasses brand love, brand passion, and brand attachment, the thesis provides insights on this under-explored research area.

Furthermore, the existing consumer-brand relationship frameworks have other inherent issues. Firstly, these frameworks are developed on the basis of complex conceptualisations of numerous elements. For example, Batra et al.'s (2012) framework encompasses seven core elements and eleven first-order dimensions. Frameworks developed by Albert and Merunka (2013) and Albert et al. (2008) include six first-order dimensions (idealisation, intimacy, dream, pleasure, memories and unicity) and two second-order components (passion and affection), respectively. From a theoretical perspective, the significant number of dimensions included in these frameworks leads to complex conceptualisations that are susceptible to discriminant validity issues, due to potential conceptual overlap and methodological cross-correlations amongst the dimensions included (Rossiter, 2012). More specifically, recent researchers have raised concerns about the conceptualisation of numerous relational concepts that might encompass similar core elements (Moussa, 2015). This further highlights the important issues that complex consumer-brand relationship frameworks might face when they include conceptually close relational concepts (such as passion, love and attachment) in their higher-order conceptualisation. From a managerial viewpoint, complex consumer-brand relationship frameworks threaten the generalisability of the research across different markets and restrict the practical use of the findings (see Fetscherin & Heinrich, 2015).

In addressing some of these issues, **Study 2** presents a modified and more parsimonious framework of emotional consumer-brand relationship that encompasses four concepts as its dimensions, namely brand attachment, brand love, brand passion and brand identification. Similarly, **Study 3** develops an inclusive but parsimonious conceptualisation for consumer-brand relationship that incorporates gratification and emotional significance as dimensions.

### 4.3.3 Relevance to **objective 3**

More research is required to investigate the effects of consumer-brand relationship and relational concepts as they correspond to brand-related outcomes. Specifically, despite the existence of studies revealing the outcomes and implications of relational concepts such as brand love (e.g., Batra et al., 2012; Sallam, 2014) and brand attachment (e.g., Belaid & Behi, 2011; C. W. Park et al., 2010), there is scope for further exploration of other underlying factors. For example, further studies are needed to investigate the effects of consumer-brand relationship as a comprehensive construct on important brand-related outcomes such as purchase intention and brand advocacy. This is vital because, while past research has linked consumer-brand relationships with potential positive brand outcomes (e.g., positive WOM: Fournier, 1998; Loureiro et al., 2012), some scholars have raised concerns about the effectiveness of the consumer-brand relationship (e.g., see East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013; Ehrenberg, Uncles, & Goodhardt, 2004). For instance, some scholars believe that regardless of whether consumers have strong emotional bonds with a brand, they may not demonstrate a robust level of purchase loyalty towards that specific brand; instead, they may follow a repertoire pattern, buying from a number of brands more often than other brands (Sharp, Wright, & Goodhardt, 2002). This can be explained by the fact that, as past research has posited, the immediate consequence of the development of brand relationship is often attitudinal, where consumers develop positive intentions towards the brand, such as willingness to pay premium price for the brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012). However, while brand-related intentions may lead to actual purchase behaviours, there is empirical evidence showing that higher brand-related intentions increase the likelihood of purchase behaviours (e.g., see Wee et al., 2014). Therefore, it is worthwhile to explore a wider range of variables as possible attitudinal and intention-related outcomes of brand relationships, to extend the scope of possible attitudes that could lead to purchase behaviours. Accordingly, **Study 1** investigates the effects of brand passion on attitudinal loyalty and other brand related-outcomes, including brand advocacy, sense of community, price insensitivity, social media support and alternative devaluation (see §5.4). Additionally,

**Study 3** investigates the impact of the consumer-brand relationship on price insensitivity, purchase intentions, and positive WOM (see §7.4.4).

In addition to the above, further implications of consumer-brand relationships and relational concepts should be examined in detail, especially for product categories about which consumers tend to be highly involved with purchase decisions, such as categories where the symbolic and hedonic benefits of the brands are the main driving force behind purchase decisions (e.g., sports apparel brands and luxury brands). In such contexts, consumers, when evaluating a brand against competitors, put extra emphasis on whether and how the brand could deliver emotional and experiential benefits (Belk, 1988, 2013; Fournier, 1998). Thus, **Study 1** verifies the effects of brand passion on the above-discussed brand related outcomes in the context of sports apparel brands (see §4.4). Similarly, **Study 3** investigates the impact of consumer-brand relationship on price insensitivity, purchase intentions, and positive WOM, using luxury brands as the gauging context (see §4.6).

Besides examining brand-related outcomes as the implications of consumer-brand relationship and relational concepts, existing research (Esch et al., 2006; Fedorikhin et al., 2008) has advanced the assumption that a brand's emotional bond with consumers might impact the evaluation of brand extensions—i.e., new products or services that use an established brand name (D. A. Aaker, 1990). However, limitations do exist within existing studies that assess this effect. For example, Yeung and Wyer (2005) viewed emotions as attributes of the product (a feature that can be stimulated depending on what the 'product' means for the user), rather than the brand. It is important to investigate brand-specific emotions, as they are often associated with the symbolic meanings a consumer seeks in consumption and may vary across consumers, even towards the same brand. Additionally, while existing studies have explored the influence of individual relational concepts such as brand love (Yeung & Wyer, 2005) or brand attachment (Fedorikhin et al., 2008), to the best of this thesis author's knowledge, no empirical study has examined the role of the overall consumer-brand relationship framework on brand extension evaluation. In order to shed light on this issue, **Study 2** examines the influence of emotional consumer-brand relationship (involving all relational concepts) on brand extensions' evaluation, in the context of luxury brands.

#### 4.3.4 Relevance to **objective 4**

Generally, more research is required to investigate the theoretical link between consumer-brand relationship and customer-based brand equity (CBBE). In more detail, as discussed in §3.9.3, existing studies (e.g., D. A. Aaker, 2012; Cheng-Hsui Chen, 2001; A. Y. Lee & Labroo, 2004; Romaniuk & Sharp, 2004) have examined the link between brand building (i.e., establishing a wide-reaching functional and experiential brand attributes) and brand understanding (i.e., generating and maintaining robust and positive brand associations as well as brand awareness in the consumer's mind). However, there is an opportunity for further investigation with respect to understanding the link between brand understanding and creating a dynamic brand relationship (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016; Keller, 2001, 2003, 2009). Overlooking this link might hinder the ability to fully understand the psychological mechanisms that enable the development and maintenance of brand relationships. This possibility is justifiable if one considers that the pathway towards establishing consumer-brand relationships often starts in the mind of consumers (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016; Keller, 2009). Additionally, failure to investigate this link may limit the ability to fully understand how cognitive elements can influence the development of emotional bonds between consumers and brands, and/or how this link leads to brand-specific attitudes, intentions and behaviours.

**Study 2** provides valuable insights on these issues by investigating the relationship between a range of brand associations (i.e., brand image, hedonic attributes, prestigious values and uniqueness, reflecting several cognitive elements of CBBE) and the dimensions of the emotional consumer-brand relationship (i.e., brand attachment, brand love, brand passion and brand identification). Furthermore, **Study 3** provides insights on the existing issues with the current literature by investigating how the dimensions of CBBE (e.g., brand knowledge, hedonic benefits and perceived quality) underpin the development of the dimensions of consumer-brand relationship (i.e., gratification and emotional significance).

In the following sections, the chapter presents an overview of the empirical studies of this thesis, which are developed in full detail in **Chapters 5, 6 and 7**.

## 4.4 Study 1: The power of brand passion

### 4.4.1 Purpose

**Study 1** introduces and validates a research model for brand passion. **Study 1** also examines the way in which brand passion drives attitudinal loyalty, highlighting an attitudinal obligation that precedes purchase behaviour (see Table 4.3). **Study 1** further examines the effects of brand passion and attitudinal loyalty on brand-related outcomes including brand advocacy, social media support, sense of community, price insensitivity, and alternative devaluation (see Table 4.3). In addition, drawing upon the known effect of attitudinal loyalty over purchase behaviours, **Study 1** tests the mediating role of attitudinal loyalty in the relationship between brand passion and brand-related outcomes (see Table 4.3). Accordingly, **Study 1** addresses a key research question of theoretical and practical importance: *What outcomes are deemed to be a result of this passion?*

**Table 4.3** Proposed hypotheses for **Study 1**

Hypothesis	Statement
H1	Brand passion has a positive impact on attitudinal loyalty.
H2a	Brand passion has a positive impact on brand advocacy.
H2b	Attitudinal loyalty has a positive impact on brand advocacy.
H2c	Attitudinal loyalty mediates the relationship between brand passion and brand advocacy.
H3a	Brand passion has a positive impact on social media support.
H3b	Attitudinal loyalty has a positive impact on social media support.
H3c	Attitudinal loyalty mediates the relationship between brand passion and social media
H4a	Brand passion has a positive impact on the sense of community.
H4b	Attitudinal loyalty has a positive impact on the sense of community.
H4c	Attitudinal loyalty mediates the relationship between brand passion and sense of community.
H5a	Brand passion has a positive impact on price insensitivity.
H5b	Attitudinal loyalty has a positive impact on the price insensitivity.
H5c	Attitudinal loyalty mediates the relationship between brand passion and price insensitivity.
H6a	Brand passion has a positive impact on alternative devaluation.

<b>H6b</b>	Attitudinal loyalty has a positive impact on alternative devaluation.
<b>H6c</b>	Attitudinal loyalty mediates the relationship between brand passion and alternative devaluation.

#### *4.4.2 Design/methodology/approach*

**Study 1** takes a quantitative approach to outline and validate a conceptual framework for brand passion. **Study 1** uses sports apparel brands as the gauging context, as they offer symbolic and hedonic benefits to their consumers, including:

- Highlighting personal accomplishments (Dubois & Czellar, 2002) and empowering individuals (Cova & Pace, 2006),
- Providing highly engaging consumption experiences (Im, Bhat, & Y. Lee, 2015), including affiliation and social recognition (Moutinho, Dionísio, & Leal, 2007),
- Deploying brand-specific attributes that can encourage WOM and/or consumer engagement (Venter, Chuchu, & Pattison, 2016).

**Study 1** is based on primary consumer data from the population of sports brand consumers in a metropolitan city in Iran, gathered via online and face-to-face questionnaires. Out of 235 collected responses in **Study 1**, a sample of 186 responses is used. With respect to the data analysis, **Study 1** first explores and describes the collected data using descriptive analysis (via SPSS statistical tool). It then tests the hypotheses using a Partial Least Square (PLS) method of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), with principal component analysis and Promax rotation, performed with the SmartPLS tool.

#### *4.4.3 Main findings*



**Study 1** offers a newly developed and validated conceptualisation of brand passion, consisting of three items that reflect the consumer's passionate relationship with the brand, the consumer's desire for the brand and the consumer's excitement towards the brand. **Study 1** also confirms the role of brand passion in predicting attitudinal loyalty. Moreover, **Study 1** confirms that brand passion and attitudinal loyalty explain the variance in all of the brand-related outcomes (i.e., brand advocacy, social media support, sense of community, price insensitivity, and alternative devaluation). Furthermore, **Study 1** confirms that attitudinal loyalty facilitates (mediates) the impact of brand passion on brand advocacy, sense of community, price insensitivity, and alternative devaluation. However, **Study 1** does not support the mediation influence of attitudinal loyalty in the relationship between brand passion and social media support.

#### *4.4.4 Theoretical implications*

Overall, **Study 1** contributes to the theory in several ways. Firstly, it enhances the understanding of how brand passion unfolds in the theoretical relationship between feelings, attitude and actions (see §5.3.1 for a detailed discussion). This facilitates the achievement of **Objective 1**. Secondly, **Study 1** adds to the literature by examining brand passion in a context in which feelings towards brands are the product of overall admiration for and excitement about the brand. These feelings can be developed even if the consumer has not purchased the brand, or has not had any social interaction with brand patrons. This is because it is fuelled by psychological and attitudinal facets of loyalty, brand community and alternative devaluation (see §5.7.1 for a detailed discussion). This facilitates the achievement of **Objective 1**. Lastly, by confirming the effect of brand passion on brand-related outcomes, either directly or through attitudinal loyalty (See §5.7.1 for a detailed discussion), **Study 1** contributes to the existing literature by explaining on the mechanism through which brand-related emotions can be developed into positive brand outcomes (W. Chiu & Won, 2016; Jahn & Kunz, 2012)—i.e., by leveraging a significant presence of the brand in consumers' aspirations and accomplishments (Bouwman, 2008; Dubois & Czellar, 2002; Hobbs, 2016). This facilitates the achievement of **Objective 3**.

#### *4.4.5 Practical implications*

**Study 1** offers brand managers valuable insights pertaining to how they can leverage passion-laden consumer emotions for effective sports apparel brands' branding strategies, thus contributing towards achieving **Objective 3**. These implications are as follows. Firstly, based on the confirmed effects of brand passion on consumer willingness to act as an advocate on behalf of the brand and to support the brand on social media, **Study 1** suggests that managers of sports apparel brands could leverage the power of WOM and rely on loyal consumers to spread positive messages about the brand. Secondly, **Study 1**'s findings indicate that sports apparel brand managers could obtain long-lasting benefits by encouraging consumers to participate in brand communities, both online and face-to-face. Lastly, **Study 1** highlights implications for sports apparel brand managers concerning the importance of developing strategies to leverage the emotional bond between the brand and consumers. **Study 1** also highlights the importance of identifying and profiling passionate consumers in order to enhance affective and attitudinal loyalty, and to reinforce the development of strong consumer-brand relationships.

### **4.5 Study 2: the link between brand associations and emotional consumer-brand relationships in brand extensions**

#### *4.5.1 Purpose*

**Study 2** has three aims: i) to theorise and validate the concept of emotional consumer-brand relationship; ii) to examine the link between brand associations and emotional consumer-brand relationship; and iii) to assess the influence of brand associations and emotional consumer-brand relationship on consumer evaluation of brand extensions. To address these aims, **Study 2** incorporates the elements taken from the CBBE literature (e.g., Jinsoo Hwang & Hyun, 2012; Knight & Young Kim, 2007; Lye, Venkateswarlu, & Barrett, 2001; Netemeyer et

al., 2004; K. P. Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2009) including brand image, hedonic attributes, prestigious values and brand uniqueness to conceptualise brand associations. In addition, **Study 2** uses the relational concepts of brand attachment, brand love, brand passion and brand identification to develop the concept of emotional consumer-brand relationship. It also examines the influence of emotional the consumer-brand relationship on consumer evaluations of brand extensions. Following prior studies (e.g., see Francisco-Maffezzolli et al., 2014; C.-C. Huang, Fang, Huang, Chang, & Fang, 2014; S.-Y. Park & E. M. Lee, 2005) and drawing upon the Self-Expansion Theory (A. Aron & Aron, 1997, discussed in §2.2.3) and Theory of Relational Cohesion (Lawler et al., 2000; Lawler & Yoon, 1996, discussed in §2.2.5), **Study 2** examines the mediating role of the emotional consumer-brand relationship. Similarly, building on the important role of consumers' perception of the level of fit between the parent brand and the extension in assisting the transferal of positive parent brand attributes into the brand extension (Fedorikhin et al., 2008; Fiske & Pavelchak, 1986), **Study 2** proposes a moderating and mediating role for perceived fit in the relationships between brand associations, emotional consumer-brand relationship and brand extension evaluation. Table 4.4 proposes an overview of all research hypotheses for Study 2, which are designed with the aspects mentioned so far.

Overall, **Study 2** answers two key RQs of theoretical and practical relevance:

- I. *Does the combined effect of brand associations and emotional consumer-brand relationship influence brand extension evaluation?*
- II. *Does emotional consumer-brand relationship mediate the effect of brand association of brand extension evaluation?*

**Table 4.4** Proposed hypotheses for **Study 2**

Hypothesis	Statement
H1	Brand associations positively influence consumers' evaluations of a brand extension.
H1a	Perceived fit mediates the relationship between brand associations and consumers' evaluations of a brand extension.
H1b	Perceived fit moderates the relationship between brand associations and consumers' evaluations of a brand extension.
H2	Brand associations positively influence emotional consumer-brand relationship.
H3	Emotional consumer-brand relationships positively influence consumers' evaluations of a brand extension.
H3a	Perceived fit mediates the relationship between emotional consumer-brand relationship and consumers' evaluations of a brand extension.
H3b	Perceived fit moderates the relationship between emotional consumer-brand relationship and consumers' evaluations of a brand extension n.
H4	Emotional consumer-brand relationship mediates the relationship between brand associations and consumers' evaluations of a brand extension.

#### 4.5.2 Design/methodology/approach

**Study 2** uses a quantitative method to examine its main objectives utilising Iran's luxury brands market as the gauging context. Luxury brands are an ideal context for **Study 2** for the following reasons:

- Luxury brands provide consumers with highly symbolic and hedonic benefits, filled with positive feelings and thoughts (Fionda & Moore, 2009; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009). They also often have a strong presence in consumers' hearts (Reddy, Terblanche, Pitt, & Parent, 2009)
- Luxury brands leverage on brand extension strategies to promise their consumers attributes that go beyond one single product category and extend into the brands' future offerings (Albrecht, Backhaus, Gurzki, & Woisetschläger, 2013; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009, p. 608; Reddy et al., 2009).
- Luxury brands are increasingly popular in the Iranian market, due to the country's growing interest in luxury and in luxury lifestyles (Jafari & Süerdem, 2012; Takali,

Hamidi, Khabiri, Sajjadi, & Alhani, 2012; Teimourpour & Heidarzadeh Hanzaee, 2011, 2014).

**Study 2** is based on data gathered using online and face-to-face questionnaires, featuring 189 responses from a population of luxury brand consumers. With respect to data analysis, **Study 2** first utilises cross tabulation analysis to gain an overall understanding of the level of association amongst the constructs included in the conceptual framework. Then, it employs a covariance-based Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) approach using Amos SPSS version 23.0 to test the hypotheses.

#### *4.5.3 Main findings*

**Study 2** confirms the role of emotional consumer-brand relationships and its comprising elements (i.e., brand attachment, brand love, brand passion, and brand identification) as drivers of consumer evaluation of brand extensions. In addition, **Study 2** confirms the influence of brand associations on emotional consumer-brand relationship and on brand extension evaluation. The results also support the mediating role of emotional consumer-brand relationship and perceived fit in the relationship between brand associations and brand extension evaluations. However, **Study 2** does not support the mediating role of perceived fit in the relationship between emotional consumer-brand relationship and brand extension evaluation.

#### *4.5.4 Theoretical implications*

**Study 2's** findings provide valuable insights into the theoretical significance of the link between the brand associations and emotional consumer-brand relationship. These insights are discussed as follows. Firstly, as discussed in §4.2, **Study 2** theorises a consumer-brand relationship framework, representative of the emotions of consumers involved in brand relationships. **Study 2** therefore facilitates the achievement of **Objective 1** and **Objective 2** by refining the existing conceptualisations of brand passion, brand attachment, brand love and

brand identification, which are included in the higher-order construct of *emotional consumer-brand relationship*. Secondly, by highlighting the effects of brand image, hedonic attributes, prestigious values and uniqueness (collectively representing the higher order construct of brand associations) on emotional consumer-brand relationship, **Study 2** offers greater insights into the importance of the symbolic and intangible attributes of the parent brand in the development of emotional consumer-brand relationships. That is, this study reveals that strengthening the hedonic and prestigious values of brand leads to the enhancement of feelings of attachment, love, passion and self-identification towards the brand. This finding adds to the existing knowledge regarding the psychological mechanisms occurring in the mind of the consumer that enable the development and maintenance of brand relationships.

**Study 2** therefore facilitates the achievement of **Objective 4**. **Study 2** also builds upon and extends the research of Bhat and Reddy (2001) and Broniarczyk and Alba (1994) by examining the link between brand associations and emotional consumer-brand relationship, and the influence of this link on the success of brand extension. More specifically, the results of **Study 2** adds to the existing knowledge by providing insights into the ways in which consumers' perceptive evaluation of a core brand (i.e., brand associations) influences the development of emotional consumer-brand relationships, and explains brand extension evaluations through the mediation role of emotional consumer-brand relationship. This facilitates the achievement of **Objective 3** and **Objective 4**.

#### *4.5.5 Practical implications*

**Study 2** offers important implications for marketers, particularly luxury brand managers. Firstly, brand managers can leverage the emotional bond with their consumers and convert positive thoughts and perceptions about the brand into positive evaluations of brand extensions (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009). In managing their brands, luxury marketers must pay particular attention to the creation of emotional bonds with their consumers, as opposed to traditional luxury strategies that place greater emphasis on perceptive evaluations of brand image, prestige or uniqueness (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009; J.-W. Park, Kim, & Kim, 2002). Secondly, luxury brand managers should improve the aspects of their marketing

communication strategy that highlight the perception of hedonic benefits and pleasure towards their brand. This is due to the fact that the concept of luxury is now stretching beyond its traditional limits (e.g., jewellery and fashion) into a luxurious lifestyle (Patrick & Hagtvedt, 2015, p. 218). This implication emphasises the importance of creating a brand that offers more than what is expected from the product, and can be achieved through placing an emphasis on excitement, positive experiences and well-perceived public status (Patrick & Hagtvedt, 2015).

## **4.6 Study 3: Synergies between consumer-brand relationship and customer based brand equity**

### *4.6.1 Purpose*

**Study 3** aims to provide insights as to how cognitive elements of CBBE influence consumer-brand relationship, and how this then leads to positive intentions and purchase behaviour. To achieve this, **Study 3** evaluates the impact of CBBE's components (brand knowledge, perceived quality, and hedonic benefits) on consumer-brand relationship (see Table 4.5). **Study 3** further tests the power of the consumer-brand relationship in predicting brand-related outcomes (i.e., price insensitivity, purchase intentions, and positive WOM). In response to the arguments discussed in §4.3.1, **Study 3** also examines the mediating role of consumer-brand relationship in the theoretical relationship between CBBE's components and brand-related outcomes. Through testing these theoretical relationships, **Study 3** empirically supports the newly conceptualised consumer-brand relationship (**Study 2**), and presents an inclusive framework that takes into account the emotional, attitudinal and perceptual elements. The framework is nonetheless parsimonious, as it includes two main components of consumer-brand relationship (i.e., gratification and emotional significance). Finally, following the recommendations of existing studies (Albrecht et al., 2013; Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Malär et al., 2011; C. W. Park et al., 2010; D.-H. Park, J. Lee, & Han, 2007; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012), **Study 3** tests the moderating role of product category

involvement and past purchase in the relationship between CBBE's components, consumer-brand relationship and brand-related outcomes (see table 4.5).

In line with the above, **Study 3** addresses two key RQs of theoretical and practical relevance:

- i. *Do CBBE components explain how consumer-brand relationships are formed?*
- ii. *If so, how does the underlying connection between the cognitive and relational dimensions of brands and their influence on brand-related decisions work?*

**Table 4.5** the proposed hypotheses for **Study 3**

Hypothesis	Statement
<b>H1</b>	Brand knowledge has a positive influence on consumer-brand relationship.
<b>H2</b>	Perceived quality has a positive influence on consumer-brand relationship.
<b>H3</b>	Hedonic benefits have positive influence on consumer-brand relationship.
<b>H4</b>	Consumer-brand relationship positively influences price insensitivity.
<b>H5</b>	Consumer-brand relationship positively influences customer's purchase intentions.
<b>H6</b>	Consumer-brand relationship positively influences customer's positive WOM.
<b>H7a,b,c</b>	Product category involvement moderates the relationship between consumer-brand relationship and brand knowledge, perceived quality and hedonic benefits.
<b>H7d,e,f</b>	Product category involvement moderates the relationship between consumer-brand relationship and price insensitivity, purchase intention and positive WOM.
<b>H8a,b,c</b>	Past purchase moderates the relationship between consumer-brand relationship and brand knowledge, perceived quality and hedonic benefits.
<b>H8d,e,f</b>	Past purchase moderates the relationship between consumer-brand relationship and price insensitivity, purchase intention and positive WOM.
<b>H9a,b,c</b>	Consumer-brand relationship mediates the relationship between brand knowledge and price insensitivity, purchase intention and positive WOM.
<b>H10a,b,c</b>	Consumer-brand relationship mediates the relationship between perceived quality and price insensitivity, purchase intention and positive WOM.
<b>H11a,b,c</b>	Consumer-brand relationship mediates the relationship between hedonic benefits and price insensitivity, purchase intention and positive WOM.



#### *4.6.2 Design/methodology/approach*

**Study 3** employs a quantitative approach to accomplish its objectives, using luxury brands as the gauging context. As discussed in §4.5.2, due to the hedonic and symbolic benefits that luxury brands offer, they are ideal for gauging consumer-brand relationships. They are also considered to be a suitable context to examine the link between CBBE and consumer-brand relationship as they have certain characteristics, including:

- Allowing a broader manifestation of consumer-brand relationships, due to the highly symbolic and emotion-laden nature of luxury consumption (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009; Tynan, McKechnie, & Chhuon, 2010).
- Differentiating through the establishment of brand identities linked to prestige and high-status images (H. J. Choo et al., 2012; Fionda & Moore, 2009).
- Offering many emotional benefits, such as closeness and involvement with the brand at the time of purchase experience (So et al., 2013). Through offering tangible and, more importantly, intangible benefits, luxury brands encourage consumers to think of and feel differently towards brands (Shukla, Banerjee, & Singh, 2016; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004).
- Offering a suitable platform for examining how (or whether) thoughts and feelings about a brand lead to actual purchase-related attitudes and intentions (Q. Bian & Forsythe, 2012; X. Bian & Moutinho, 2011; Tsai, 2005b), due to inherently high levels of consumer involvement in luxury consumption.

**Study 3** comprises a pilot survey and a main survey. The pilot survey intended to confirm that the statements included in the questionnaire were appropriately worded and easy to understand for respondents, and to confirm that the length of the final questionnaire was appropriate. The pilot survey involved 55 undergraduate students from a Bachelor of Business degree at a public university based in South Australia (convenience sample). The main survey involved 253 samples from students from business degrees at the same public university in South Australia (collected using face-to-face convenience sampling), as well as non-student samples collected using an online questionnaire (created using Qualtrics). The measurement items included in the main survey questionnaire was based on existing studies (see Appendix

7.2 for further detail). **Study 3** utilises a Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach to analyse the collected data. In more detail, it first examines the convergent and discriminant validity to assess the psychometric attributes of the used constructs and their respective measurement items. Then, **Study 3** uses a bootstrapping approach to obtain 5,000 resampled estimates leading to path coefficients estimate, to be used in testing the proposed hypotheses.

#### *4.6.3 Main findings*

Overall, **Study 3's** results confirm the positive influence of the CBBE's components, brand knowledge and hedonic benefits, on consumer-brand relationship. However, surprisingly, the data did not support this influence for perceived quality. **Study 3** further confirms the influence of consumer-brand relationship on brand-related outcomes (i.e., positive WOM, purchase intentions, and price insensitivity). **Study 3** also partially supports the moderating role of product category involvement and past purchases in the relationships between CBBE's components and consumer-brand relationship. Finally, results confirm the mediating role of consumer-brand relationship in the relationships between brand knowledge and hedonic benefits and the majority of brand-related outcomes. However, results do not support the mediating role of consumer-brand relationship in the link between perceived quality and brand-related outcomes.

#### *4.6.4 Theoretical implications*

**Study 3** delivers valuable insights in the form of theoretical contributions towards the literature of consumer-brand relationship and CBBE. These insights are as follows. Firstly, **Study 3** introduces an inclusive framework for consumer-brand relationship. As discussed in §4.2, this framework includes various facets of brand relationships, from attitude strength, to brand attachment, passion and long-lasting relationships (drawing on Batra et al.'s framework, 2012). However, utilising exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, **Study 3** offers a more parsimonious consumer-brand relationship framework that encompasses only

two dimensions (gratification and emotional significance). This sheds light on the issues raised by Rossiter (2012), concerning the theoretical problems of complex consumer-brand relationship conceptualisations (see §3.10.2 for a detailed discussion) and facilitates the achievement of **Objective 2**.

Secondly, **Study 3** verifies the effects of the consumer-brand relationship framework on three brand-related outcomes, including price insensitivity, purchase intentions and positive WOM. These findings confirm the existing assumptions concerning: i) the fact that certain luxury traits (e.g., rarity) strengthen the consumer-brand relationship, resulting in consumers' lower sensitivity to price increases (Fionda & Moore, 2009; Thomson et al., 2005; Yoo et al., 2000); ii) the influence of strong consumer-brand bonds on the willingness to purchase or repurchase the brand (Esch et al., 2006; Ilicic & Webster, 2011; McAlexander, Kim, & Roberts, 2003); and iii) supporting WOM as a key outcome of an emotional brand relationship (Ismail & Spinelli, 2012; Kwon & Mattila, 2015). Together, these findings facilitate the achievement of **Objective 3**.

Lastly, **Study 3** provides insights on the theoretical link between CBBE and brand relationship by confirming the positive influence of CBBE components on consumer-brand relationship. As discussed in §3.10.4, explaining this relationship expands the understanding of the theoretical link between Keller's (2001, 2009) cognitive and emotional blocks—i.e., the development of brand-related knowledge and characteristics in consumer's mind and the facilitation of consumer emotional responses through dynamic relational bonds with brands. More generally, **Study 3's** results lend support towards the theoretically important link between Chatzipanagiotou et al.'s (2016) brand understanding and brand relationship sub-systems. The link between these two sub-systems provides important understandings on how brands can achieve the ultimate aim, which is to reach the pinnacle of the CBBE pyramid, i.e., a state where a harmonious relationship exists between the consumer and the brand as resonance (Keller, 2001, 2009). This finding provides valuable insights towards a better understanding of the synergies between CBBE and consumer-brand relationship, offering a conceptual framework that maps the chain of effects that bind consumer perceptions inherent to CBBE and the development of lasting relationships between the brand and the consumer. Moreover, the study reveals that, by reflecting the importance of the creation and

establishment of tangible (e.g., perceived quality) and intangible brand associations (hedonic attributes) in the minds of consumers, strengthening CBBE offers a cognitive 'platform' for the development of the psychological mechanisms that determine the development of consumer-brand relationships (Keller, 2012). These implications facilitate the achievement of **Objective 4**.

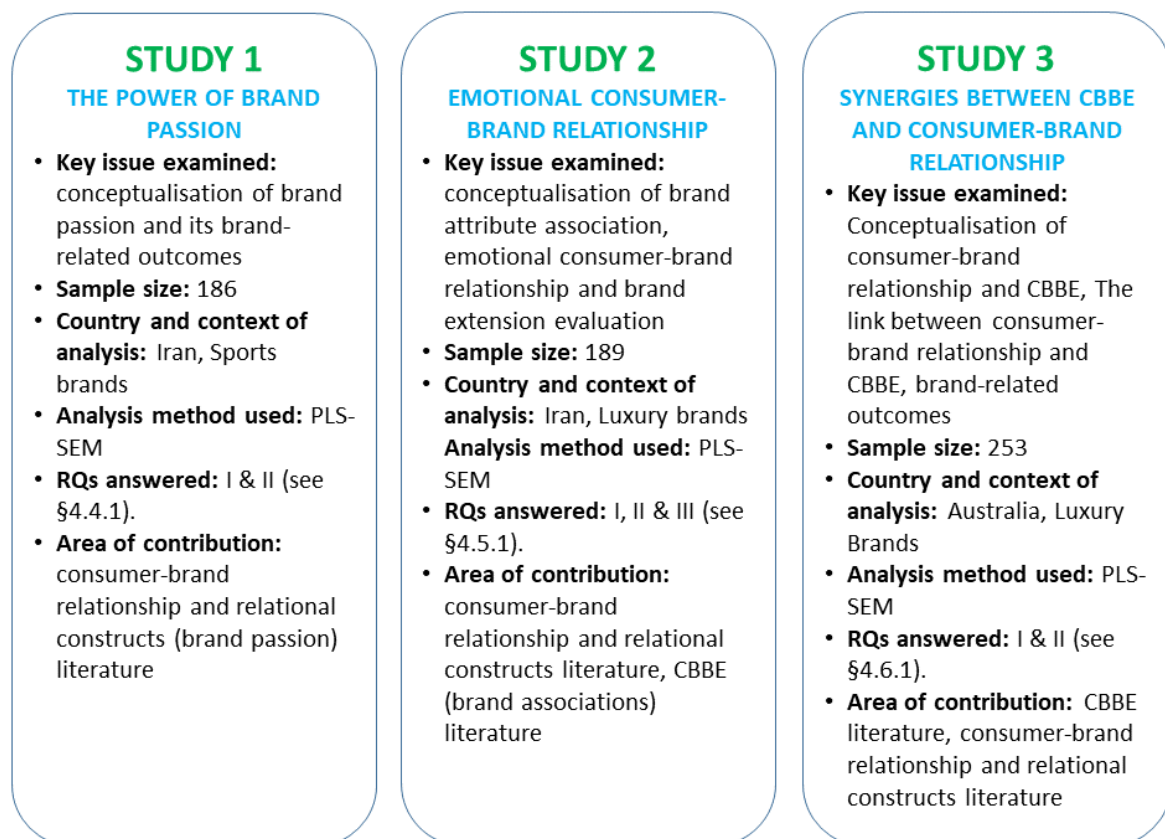
#### *4.6.5 Practical implications*

**Study 3** offers important practical implications for marketers and brand managers, as follows. Firstly, **Study 3** confirms that strengthening consumer perceptions of a brand's unique attributes, particularly uniqueness, existing brand loyalty, symbolic values and hedonic benefits, can improve the development of a strong consumer relationship. For brand managers, this finding conveys that enabling the consumer to understand a brand's unique attributes could enhance brand recall, and may further entice brand loyalty. Secondly, **Study 3** confirms that luxury brands managers can leverage the emotional bond with their consumers (see Barsky & Nash, 2002) by developing effective branding strategies that focus on the symbolic benefits for the consumer and positive evaluation of the brand. In particular, **Study 3** shows that hedonic benefits have the strongest influence on consumer-brand relationship. Therefore, **Study 3** suggests that, when developing marketing communication plans, luxury brand managers could incentivise future purchase intentions and consumer WOM by placing a greater emphasis on the aesthetics and pleasure-inducing aspects of their brand (Atwal & Williams, 2009; H. J. Choo et al., 2012; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009). Lastly, the significant moderation effects of product category involvement in the relationship between consumer-brand relationship and all brand-related outcomes, show that the extent to which consumers are involved in the luxury category strengthens the role of consumer-brand relationships in shaping purchase intentions (positive effect), positive WOM (negative effect) and price insensitivity (negative effect). Therefore, **Study 3** suggests that luxury marketers must measure the varied levels of the luxury brands' importance for different consumers, and develop appropriate strategies to trigger WOM intentions and price insensitivity amongst consumers, showing high levels of involvement with luxury brands.

## 4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter sought to provide an overview of the empirical studies of this thesis. Figure 4.2 reviews a number of important aspects regarding each study discussed in this chapter, such as key issues examined, the gauging context, method of analysis and the areas of contribution. Importantly, this chapter has also clarified the link between the three empirical studies. To achieve this the chapter first discussed the main aims of each study, the corresponding research questions and hypotheses. Following this, the chapter outlines the methodological design of each study, paying particular attention to the gauging context, the study population and sample, and the data collection and analysis methods. The chapter then outlined the main findings and implications (theoretical and managerial) of each study.

**Figure 4.2** Summary of the key aspects of the three empirical studies



The next chapters (**Chapters 5, 6 and 7**) present the three studies in a journal article format.

## CHAPTER FIVE (STUDY 1): THE POWER OF BRAND PASSION

### 5.1 Abstract

**Study 1** examines the way in which brand passion drives attitudinal loyalty and other brand-related outcomes including: brand advocacy, social media support, sense of community, price insensitivity, and alternative devaluation. In addition, drawing upon the known effect of attitudinal loyalty on purchase behaviours, the study tests the mediating role of attitudinal loyalty in the relationship between brand passion and the afore-mentioned outcomes. These aspects are examined in the specific context of sports apparel brands, using primary data from a population of Iranian consumers (gathered via online and face-to-face questionnaires). Partial Least Square (PLS) method of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) confirms the role of brand passion in predicting attitudinal loyalty, brand advocacy, social media support, sense of community, and price insensitivity. The analysis also confirms that attitudinal loyalty mediates the impact of brand passion on brand advocacy, sense of community, price insensitivity, and alternative devaluation. However, it does not support the indirect influence of attitudinal loyalty in the relationship between brand passion and social media support. Accordingly, this study contributes to theory by showing how the outcomes of brand passion extend beyond transactional purposes, reflecting the power of passion in influencing consumer attitudes. This study also offers recommendations for sports apparel brand managers with respect to profiling passionate consumers and leveraging this passion to obtain stronger advocacy, willingness to pay premium price, psychological closeness with the brand community, willingness to support the brand on social media and devaluation of competitors.

**Keywords:** Brand passion, Consumer-brand relationship, Attitudinal loyalty, Sports apparel brands

## 5.2 Introduction

Brand passion is defined as consumers' avid desire to own a particular brand, which arises from the development of feelings of aspiration (Albert et al., 2013). Importantly, brand passion can be described as a longing which drives behaviour (e.g., Batra et al., 2012; Bauer et al., 2007), and manifests itself in a number of ways including: *brand evangelism* (Matzler et al., 2007; P. Becerra & Badrinarayanan, 2013); *brand cults* (Belk & Tumbat, 2005; McAlexander et al., 2002; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001); *brand devotion* (Arruda-Filho et al., 2010; Ruane & Wallace, 2015; Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009); and enthusiasm towards the brand (Keh, Pang, & Peng, 2007). Brand passion is a concept of theoretical and practical relevance, as it is at the core of any emotional connection between brands and consumers (Bauer et al., 2007; Sternberg, 1997). It also represents a type of consumer-brand relationship in which consumers are personally invested (McEwen, 2005). This can be better appraised by examining brand passion as an independent construct, as opposed to examining it through higher order constructs such as brand love (Batra et al., 2012; Heinrich et al., 2012) and brand attachment (Japutra et al., 2014; Thomson et al., 2005).

Although the interest in brand passion among academics and practitioners is undoubtedly growing, research has not investigated the implications of the concept in a way that addresses consumers' perceptions and intentions. Following the argument of Belk et al. (2003), Albert et al. (2013), and Ahuvia (2005), there is a definite need for more empirical research to provide insights on this key relational concept. In particular, there is a need for concrete advancements through the formal examination of the passionate relationships between brands and consumers, and the possible outcomes of these relationships. The present study contributes to resolving this issue by addressing a key research question: *What outcomes are deemed to be a result of brand passion?*

This study aims to provide insight on these theoretical aspects by examining the link between brand passion and attitudinal loyalty, theorised as a deeply held commitment that encourages patronage of a preferred brand (see Oliver, 1999). This link reflects a unique and novel aspect of brand passion. That is, brand passion contains lesser perceptual knowledge about the brand, and greater desires and positive attitudes towards the brand (Bauer et al., 2007).

Therefore, it is plausible to argue that these attitudes and aspirations are stimulated by strong consumer emotions, and are subsequently different to longer-lasting 'love-like' feelings. Furthermore, while passionate feelings are primarily emotion-led and triggered in a shorter period of time (Albert et al., 2013), love-like feelings are developed over a longer period of time and are primarily established upon (or as a result of) rational or cognitive evaluation of the brand. The framework also includes five brand-related outcomes that are proposed to result from brand passion. These outcomes include brand advocacy, social media support, sense of community, price insensitivity, and alternative devaluation, all of which are theoretically and practically relevant. This is particularly important when looking at the specific characteristics of passionate consumer-brand bonds, because previous research has showed that due to the establishment of these bonds consumers expectation of the brand often goes well beyond the desire to fulfil immediate needs (Rozanski et al., 1999). For these consumers, the bond with the brand could take a dedicative nature (Swimberghe et al., 2014), filled with devotion (Matzler et al., 2007) and strong pro-brand attitudes (Bauer et al., 2007; McEwen, 2005). Finally, the framework examines the direct effect of attitudinal loyalty on these brand-related outcomes, as mediator of the link between brand passion and the outcomes considered. This is because extant studies (e.g., Fullerton, 2005b, 2011) have suggested a similar role for affective commitment, a concept that is defined and conceptualised closely with attitudinal loyalty.

In addition to the above, this study is based on a key underlying assumption. That is, passion-driven consumer bonds are likely to occur in product categories that demand high consumer involvement (Sirgy, D.-J. Lee, Johar, & Tidwell, 2008). These categories are often highly embedded in consumers' lives (Belén del Río, Vazquez, & Iglesias, 2001; Moutinho et al., 2007). For example, consumers might develop a unique connection with their favoured brands to a point where they treat the brand (or its products) as 'partners' in their daily lives (W. Chiu & Won, 2016, p. 245). Accordingly, this study chose sports apparel brands as the gauging context, based on the following justifications. Compared to other types of brands, sports apparel brands often implement branding strategies that are built upon the development of strong emotional bonds with consumers (Frank & Watchravesringkan, 2016; Tong & Hawley, 2009). These include: offering highly symbolic and hedonic benefits (Ahuvia, 2005; McCracken, 1986; Moutinho et al., 2007), highlighting personal accomplishments



(Dubois & Czellar, 2002), empowering individuals (Cova & Pace, 2006), providing highly engaging consumption experiences (Im et al., 2015), and deploying brand-specific attributes that can encourage WOM and/or consumer engagement (Venter et al., 2016). In fact, managerial strategies for sports apparel brands often focus on engaging with consumers on personal and social levels (Hobbs, 2016), with more than 95% of sports apparel brands having an active presence on Facebook and Twitter, and 97% promoting their social media presence on their website (DigitalIQIndex, 2016). Brands such as Nike, Under Armour and Puma also enable consumers to connect to other consumers via mobile apps and/or through the establishment of online communities. For example, by acquiring popular fitness apps such as MapMyFitness and MyFitnessPal, Under Armour has generated a community of 165 million users (Hobbs, 2016). Similarly, Nike+ apps have attracted millions of active members (Nike, 2014). In implementing these strategies, sports apparel brands have become well established in the minds and hearts of consumers (Dubois & Czellar, 2002) and have formed relationships with them (Frank & Watchravesringkan, 2016) by promoting feelings of personal achievement (Dubois & Czellar, 2002). Accordingly, sports apparel brands leverage the strong presence they have in consumers' lives to remain competitive (Bouwman, 2008; Tong & Hawley, 2009).

Existing studies have examined various aspects that relate to sports apparel brands and the emotional connections they have with their consumers, such as brand relationship quality (Y. K. Kim, Trail, Woo, & Zhang, 2011), affective commitment (W. Chiu & Won, 2016), and club fan communities (Vallerand et al., 2008). However, the majority of past studies have emphasised the relationship between sports clubs' brands or sports' brands with their audiences (e.g., Soccer clubs and their fans, Vallerand et al., 2008). For instance, the work of Srivastava and Sharma (2011) examined trust, commitment, intimacy, self-connection and reciprocity as dimensions of consumer-team relationship, while Funk and James (2001) and Neale and Funk (2006) considered the effects of the psychological relationship between fans and sports teams on attitudinal loyalty and behaviour. Study 1 shifts the focus from sports clubs and sports in general to another form of consumption: branded sports products and argues that there is wider scope for investigation with respect to sports apparel brands, especially in relation to brand passion.

This study makes an important theoretical contribution by offering new insights in relation to the strategic implications of brand passion, and by providing insights on whether feelings of passion for a brand can be turned into positive brand outcomes (W. Chiu & Won, 2016; Jahn & Kunz, 2012). This study also expands on the existing knowledge about brand passion, given that previous research has focused on either the drivers of brand passion (Bauer et al., 2007; Matzler et al., 2007) or the relationship between brand passion and other relational concepts (Batra et al., 2012). In contrast, this study validates the role of brand passion as a predictor of attitudinal loyalty, adding to the existing research that has explored the effects of brand passion as a driver of consumer behaviour (e.g., Swimberghe et al., 2014; Yim et al., 2008). That is, existing research shows a clear link between consumers' emotional response to certain brands, purchase related behaviours and positive intentions towards those brands (e.g., D. A. Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Batra et al., 2012; Farquhar, 1989; Fournier, 1998; Thomson et al., 2005). However, the range of outcomes that are driven by passionate consumer-brand bonds are often limited, especially in relation to non-transactional outcomes (e.g., Albert et al., 2013; Bauer et al., 2007; Matzler et al., 2007). This study contributes, in some capacity, to this issue by clarifying how brand passion directly leads to positive intentions relating to social media support, sense of community, brand advocacy, willingness to pay premium price and alternative devaluations, and indirectly via the establishment of attitudinal loyalty. Finally, unlike previous studies that allowed participants to select a brand of their own choice across multiple industries (e.g., Albert et al., 2013; Heinrich et al., 2012; Sarkar & Murthy, 2012; Swimberghe et al., 2014; Thomson et al., 2005), this study focuses exclusively on sports apparel brands, which allows for a more consistent examination of brand passion.

From a practical perspective, this study provides managers with insights on how to design brand strategies in a way that leverages the passionate bond consumers have with the brand (Fill & Turnbull, 2016; Hemsley-Brown & Alnawas, 2016). More specifically, it explains how sports apparel brands can enhance consumers' sense of community towards the brand; pursue online and offline support; trigger WOM and brand advocacy among users; increase consumers' willingness to pay premium price for the brand; and leverage users' devaluation tendencies towards other brands. Furthermore, this study also illustrates how practitioners can achieve attitudinal loyalty by leveraging the passionate bond between brands and

consumers, which is a valuable insight particularly relevant to brand positioning and advertising strategies (see also Laros & Steenkamp, 2005; Nyer, 1997).

## 5.3 Conceptual background

### 5.3.1 Brand passion

*Brand passion* has been described as an emotional state (C. W. Park et al., 2010) characterised by a high level of enthusiasm about the brand (Albert et al., 2013, p. 2; Bauer et al., 2007; Keh et al., 2007). Brand passion reflects the distinctive consumer-brand bond that is obsessive and dedicative in nature (Albert et al., 2013; Swimberghe et al., 2014). This aspect is driven by desires for the brand's prestige, uniqueness, and hedonic benefits (Bauer et al., 2007). These desires are often so powerful that they dominate consumers' thoughts, feelings and actions (Belk et al., 2003). While this study places the focus on passionate feelings with positive valence, as mentioned in §3.3.5, passion could also have negative connotations, which are generally portrayed in the form of brand hate (e.g., see Zarantonello et al., 2016; Hegner et al., 2017).

Research in psychology supports the existence of deep emotions in passionate relationships (Belk & Tumbat, 2005). For example, brand passion has been investigated in the context of the theory of the Triangle of Love (Sternberg, 1986, 1997 - see §2.2.1), which asserts that 'love experience' includes intimacy, decision/commitment and passion as its contributing components. In the Triangle of Love, passion is defined as 'the drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, sexual consummation and related phenomena in loving relationships (Sternberg, 1997, p. 315). Building on these notions, studies have included brand passion as an encompassing element of consumer-brand relationships (see Fournier, 1998).

It has been argued that brand passion adds a 'magical' element to consumer-brand relationships (Albert et al., 2009; Huber, Meyer, & Schmid, 2015). For instance, C. W. Park et al. (2010) argued that relationship progression leads to greater brand-self experiences and the development of consumer-brand bonds. This, upon waning passion, leads to enhanced

emotional attachment and love. Studies have also conceptualised brand passion as a dimension of other relational concepts. For example, brand passion is often conceptualised as a component of higher-order constructs such as brand love (Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) and brand attachment (Thomson et al., 2005).

Nonetheless, brand passion has some distinctive features, which warrant its appraisal as an independent construct, as follows. First, although brand passion, like other relational brand constructs (e.g., brand love, brand engagement or brand attachment), focuses on consumers' emotions towards brands (C. W. Park et al., 2010) and a sense of self-identification with the brand (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003), it is somewhat more complex. Specifically, brand passion implies a deeper connection with the brand (Albert et al., 2013; Swimberghe et al., 2014), which is driven by the desire for the brand's prestige and uniqueness (Bauer et al., 2007). Brand passion also relates to a stage of consumer-brand relationships during which the two 'partners' involved (the consumer and the brand) have limited knowledge of each other (Albert et al., 2013). Consequently, brand passion requires shorter development-time in comparison to other concepts such as brand love (Albert et al., 2013; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Shimp & Madden, 1988). Second, unlike brand love and brand attachment, brand passion does not require cognitive consistency (Awa & Nwuche, 2010; Rauschnabel & Ahuvia, 2014). That is, it does not require beliefs and attitudes to 'fit together in a coherent way' (Rauschnabel & Ahuvia, 2014, p. 378), p. 378). For example, while loving a brand requires consumers to see the brand as a person (Ahuvia, 1993), consumers can still develop a sense of passion towards a brand without it having to resemble a person. Thus, brand passion provides a greater scope for the investigation of consumer-brand relationships, requiring fewer assumptions. Third, brand passion is a longing that drives behaviour (Batra et al., 2012; Bauer et al., 2007) and manifests itself in various ways, such as extreme acts of advocacy (Aggarwal, 2004; Rozanski et al., 1999), devotion (Arruda-Filho et al., 2010) and evangelism (P. Becerra & Badrinarayanan, 2013). As such, brand passion holds considerable explanatory power in explaining how feelings held towards the brand can underpin relevant outcomes. This last point is particularly important for this study, as it is an aspect that existing research has not examined in great depth, and therefore represents an opportunity for further investigation.

Research on brand passion has been substantial, with key contributions being Albert et al. (2013), Matzler et al. (2007), Bauer et al. (2007) and Swimberghe et al. (2014). In summary, brand passion warrants further investigation in relation to the identification of passion-specific conceptual and measurement elements, and the examination of brand passion outcomes that extend beyond transactional purposes. These studies are critically reviewed in §3.3.6.

As a type of consumer-brand bond, brand passion is expected to yield certain brand-related outcomes. For example, consumers' personal connections with brands could result in them talking favourably about the brand to friends and family (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2007), and could impact current purchase and usage of brands (Esch et al., 2006). Interestingly, existing research has not considered outcomes that extend beyond transactional purposes (Japutra et al., 2014; Pourazad, Pare, & Saniee, 2015). In particular, existing works have neglected potential outcomes of brand passion that take into account consumers' perspectives towards the favoured brand (i.e., the brand, towards which they have developed a passionate bond), beyond intentions and attitudes. These aspects are considered next.

### *5.3.2 Outcomes of brand passion*

A key outcome of brand passion that warrants more investigation is *attitudinal loyalty*. Studies have suggested that brands, through strong consumer bonds, develop an emotional commitment in the minds of consumers that motivates them to strongly consider purchasing the brand over competitors (Rozanski et al., 1999). In addition, drawing on the studies that examine consumer passion through investigating brand devotion (e.g., see Füller, Jaweck, & Mühlbacher, 2007; Matzler et al., 2007; Ortiz, Reynolds, & Franke, 2013) this study argues that attitudinal loyalty could be an important outcome of brand passion. More specifically, devoted consumers tend to show strong 'attitudinal bonding' with the brand (Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli, & Friedmann, 2009; Sarkar & Sarkar, 2016) as a result of their passionate dedication to it (Ortiz et al., 2013). *Attitudinal bonding* can be described as a phase of devotion during which the value of the brand extends beyond utilitarian and commercial value, and becomes a superior experience that strongly affects consumer's attitudes

(Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004; Schouten, McAlexander, & Koenig, 2007). I. Gordon (1998) suggested that attitudinal bonding occurs when consumers develop an affinity towards the brand's values, customer-focus and professionalism. Attitudinal bonding could also be described as the stage where a consumer has developed emotions towards the brand, but has no aspiration to purchase the brand (Shimp & Madden, 1988). This emphasises the significance of attitudinal loyalty as an immediate outcome of consumer emotional bonds (see §5.4.1).

Another possible outcome of brand passion that warrants investigation is brand advocacy. Becoming an advocate for a brand is described as a psychological state, in which consumers willingly promote the brand to others, and act as an advocate for the brand in social settings (Wallace et al., 2012). Ahearne et al. (2005) referred to this as the 'extra role' that consumers tend to play when they strongly identify themselves with the brand. The author believed that these extra roles go 'beyond the realm of formal memberships' (i.e., transactional interaction between consumers and brands) and reach a 'relationship realm' (p. 580). Furthermore, studies have suggested that social media offer a platform for consumers to directly engage with their favourite brands (Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014). That is, based on their interactive nature, social media allow consumers to take ownership of brand-related content (Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins, & Wiertz, 2013). This could be linked to passionate consumers' willingness to support and follow the brand on social media. In addition, while studies have suggested that greater sense of community (i.e., a psychological benefit individuals wish to acquire, which becomes available by being around like-minded individuals, see McMillan, 1996) is linked with consumer-brand emotional closeness (Roderick J Brodie et al., 2011; Grönroos, 2000), one could argue sense of community to be an outcome of brand passion.

Besides attitudinal loyalty and brand advocacy, an additional likely and important outcome of brand passion is price insensitivity. Brand passion is often associated with consumers' self-identification with the brand, so that they can improve their social status (Albert et al., 2013). The notion that status consumption drives consumers' price insensitivity has been well documented in the literature (Goldsmith, Flynn, & Kim, 2010). Therefore, it could be argued that being less sensitive towards price changes is an outcome that represents a relational

stage in which consumers are passionate about the values and benefits that the brand offers. Furthermore, based on the literature of interpersonal love (D. J. Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993; Van Lange et al., 1997), individuals who are involved in a strong relationship (characterised by high levels of mutual commitment) tend to devalue (and even reject) alternative partners. Similarly, Sung and Choi (2010) confirmed that the presence of less attractive brands ultimately leads to a higher level of consumers' commitment to their relationship with their favoured brand.

## **5.4 Hypotheses development**

### *5.4.1 Attitudinal loyalty*

Attitudinal loyalty is generally described as 'the tendency to be loyal to a focal brand as demonstrated by the intention to buy it as a primary choice' (Yoo & Donthu, 2001, p. 3). It has also been defined as 'consumer's predisposition towards a brand as a function of psychological processes. This includes attitudinal preference and commitment towards the brand' (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978). Keller (2009) has described attitudinal loyalty to occur whenever 'customers view the brand as being something special in a broader context', pertaining to expressions such as 'loving' the brand, describing the brand a 'favourite possessions' and a 'little pleasure' to 'look forward to" (p. 145).

~~In the context of sports apparel brands,~~ Attitudinal loyalty has been confirmed as a key component of building brand equity (Tong & Hawley, 2009), due the shift in consumers' preference from better prices, to brands with a better image and stronger global presence (Anselmsson, Vestman Bondesson, & Johansson, 2014; Economist, 2013; Sasmita & Mohd Suki, 2015). Moutinho et al. (2007) described the true 'fans' or 'supporters' of sports apparel brands and clubs as passionate consumers who grow a strong attitude towards remaining loyalty to the brand, which is manifested 'in the form of tribal recognition, acceptance and preference' (p. 674). Neale and Funk (2006) focused on Australian football fans and argued that the nature of sports marketing has made it imperative for marketers to leverage

consumers' knowledge (such as team interest) to 'create profiles of attitudinal difference and behaviour towards teams, as well as towards advertised products' (p. 14). Gladden and Funk (2001) returned similar results in the context of professional sport in the US. Also, Venter et al. (2016) argued that the more brands gain exposure on social media (which is often associated with higher chances of brand relationship development), the greater positive attitudes towards the brand, and subsequently, the greater the consumer's intention to purchase the brand. Although the authors did not specifically focus on loyalty, they argued that greater exposure to a community of consumers typically drives brand preference (i.e., brand choice, related to behavioural loyalty) for sports apparel brands. This, in turn, predicts purchase intentions and behaviours. Further, Levin, Beasley, and Gamble (2004) found that NASCAR fans show significantly stronger attitudinal loyalty to brands sponsoring NASCAR, albeit they defined attitudinal loyalty in terms of the consumer commitment and willingness to pay a higher price for the brand. As a major limitation, these studies have discussed sports apparel brands in the form of sports (e.g., football) or sports clubs or teams, rather than branded products (e.g., Nike, Under Armour and Adidas). Consequently, this presents an opportunity to investigate attitudinal loyalty amongst consumers.

In considering loyalty as an outcome of consumer-brand relationships, prior research has predominantly focused on behavioural loyalty. For example, studies have confirmed behavioural loyalty as a consequence of brand love (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Wallace et al., 2014), or brand attachment (Dick & Basu, 1994; Japutra, Ekinci, & Simkin, 2018). Few studies, however, have raised the important role of attitudinal loyalty in brand relationship literature. For example, Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) found that attitudinal loyalty includes a degree of dispositional commitment, originating from the consumer's emotional outlook or mood, and can drive behavioural loyalty. The authors particularly argued that brands that generate positive emotions amongst consumers (e.g., feeling 'happy' or 'joyful' or 'affectionate') are likely to prompt greater attitudinal loyalty. Moreover, studies have argued that attitudinal loyalty resonates with the emotion-driven brand relationships. For example, Fournier (1998) considered attitudinal loyalty as a committed and affect-laden partnership between consumers and their favoured brands.



In regards to brand passion, studies have noted that passionate consumers may feel an emotional obligation that goes beyond brand functionality and even satisfaction (Loureiro et al., 2012). That is, they might experience a loyalty that allows them to express their aspirations, and motivates them to stay loyal to the brand (Rozanski et al., 1999). Some studies have further built on this assumption, arguing that acquiring emotional loyalty from consumers depends upon establishing strong emotional relationships with them (Fournier et al., 1998; McEwen, 2005). Similarly, Albert et al. (2013) suggested a facilitating role for attitudinal loyalty with respect to the behavioural implications of brand passion.

While these studies imply the existence of a strong connection between brand passion and attitudinal loyalty, no published research has empirically tested this relationship. Therefore, in light of these considerations, the present research proposes and tests the following hypothesis:

**H1:** Brand passion has a positive impact on attitudinal loyalty.

#### *5.4.2 Brand advocacy*

Brand advocacy refers to a consumer's inclination to try new products from a particular brand, to talk about the brand and promote it to others, as well as an overall willingness to accept the brand's mishaps (Du et al., 2007). Brand advocacy is widely studied in brand relationship research, as it provides useful knowledge on the ways in which businesses can cultivate behaviours that may benefit the brand (Keller, 2012; McAlexander et al., 2002). Importantly, brand advocacy and brand loyalty are identified as the consequences of consumer brand identification, which is 'a consumer's perceived state of oneness with a brand' (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012, p. 407). When consumers reach such a state, they might be willing to voluntarily promote the brand (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003), recommend the brand to others, buy its merchandise or collect its memorabilia (Wallace et al., 2014). According to Ahearne et al. (2005), the act of willingly promoting the brand is essentially the 'extra role' that consumers can play when identifying themselves with a brand. That is, those consumers who value and develop positive feelings for the brand tend to talk positively about the brand (D.

A. Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2003) to the extent that they may defend and promote the brand in social settings and essentially become spokespersons for the brand (Fullerton, 2005b; Harrison-Walker, 2001).

Previous research has recognised the existence of a link between emotional connections to brands and the desire to advocate for brands. For instance, Kemp et al. (2012) argued that consumers that have developed a connection to the branding efforts could become 'evangelists for the brand and promote the brand to others' (p. 510). Wragg (2004) also suggested that the development of an emotional bond between the brand and consumers creates a platform for consumer to develop a higher involvement with the brand, and to advocate the brand. In addition, strong connections with brands arguably leads to favourable brand recommendations, given that consumers find information from people who are 'connected' to the brand to be more reliable (E. W. Anderson, 1998), as it originates from less biased sources (Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991; C. K. Kim, Lavack, & Smith, 2001). Matzler et al. (2007) explained that 'extravert consumers' who develop a passionate feeling towards a certain brand are the most important and effective brand advocates.

With respect to sports apparel brands, Wallace et al. (2012) confirmed that brands that allow consumers to express their inner and social selves on social media enjoy higher levels of brand advocacy by their consumers. However, the authors did not specifically discuss the emotional bonds or passionate relationships that could result from the self-expressive brands. In addition, the authors focused only on a limited number of sportswear brands (i.e., Adidas, Adidas Originals, Nike and Puma).

Sports apparel brands are suitable fit for the investigation of brand advocacy. For example, consumers of Nike mix their passion for sports and music in the Nike+ virtual club. In this club, consumers tend to spread positive WOM about the brand and talk up the brand in virtual and social settings, and also become a part of Nike's co-creation platform (Ramaswamy, 2008). Similarly, Spary (2015) believed that as Adidas's passionate consumers listen to their peers on social and other brand-centered social settings, they often become in charge of the selection of content for Adidas's social media communication (e.g., featured posts on social media), which subsequently creates strong advocacy for the brand. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H2a:** Brand passion has a positive impact on brand advocacy.

Moreover, existing research has implicitly suggested a link between brand loyalty and brand advocacy. For example, Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012) considered both concepts to be the significant consequences of consumer-brand identification, and suggested a conceptual association between the two concepts. They also proposed that 'consumers will act as reference customers for a brand to which they feel psychologically attached', as 'they want the organisation to succeed' (p. 101). Furthermore, while there is a general consensus that loyal consumers tend to show higher willingness to spread positive WOM about the brand to others (Albert et al., 2013; Dick & Basu, 1994), there is wider scope to explicitly examine how loyalty subsequently triggers pro-brand intentions that go beyond WOM. Sasmita and Mohd Suki (2015) suggested that for sports apparel brands, consumer's loyalty extends to advocating for the brand and recommending its products, especially online. For example, Roberts (2005) argued that Nike is a 'Lovemark' that has the power to inspire a 'loyalty beyond reason'. Therefore, it is plausible to consider that consumers who have high levels of emotional bond with a brand, are more willing to recommended the brand to others, and show their loyalty towards the brand by advocating on behalf of the brand. Put formally:

**H2b:** Attitudinal loyalty has a positive impact on brand advocacy.

In addition, one may also consider a mediating role for attitudinal loyalty in the relationship between brand passion and brand advocacy. Extant studies have provided some arguments for such a proposition. For example, Fullerton (2005a) confirmed that affective commitment fully mediates the relationship between feelings of satisfaction with the brand (including satisfaction and pleasant feelings), and advocacy intentions. In addition, Rauyruen and Miller (2007) proposed relationship quality as a predictor of attitudinal loyalty, whereby attitudinal advocacy was conceptualised as a comprising element of attitudinal loyalty. However, the authors failed to support this relationship at the second-order level, as only overall satisfaction and service quality (dimensions of brand relationship quality) significantly impacted attitudinal loyalty. Accordingly, this study hypothesises that attitudinal loyalty influences brand advocacy and further mediates the relationship between brand passion and brand advocacy.

**H2c:** Attitudinal loyalty mediates the relationship between brand passion and brand advocacy.

### *5.4.3 Social media support*

The role of social media in brand relationship development has gained significant interest in the literature in the past few years (e.g., Hollebeek et al., 2014; Labrecque, 2014). Specifically, studies have drawn upon the fact that social media enables brands to directly engage with consumers (Hollebeek et al., 2014) more effectively than traditional mass media strategies (Neff, 2012). This specifically corresponds to the interactive nature of social media, which allows consumers to take ownership of brand-related content (Gensler et al., 2013). Social media also promote a passion for certain brands by facilitating interactions between like-minded consumers (Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2014a, 2016; Labrecque, 2014). The quality of consumers' engagement in brand activities echoes the strength of their relationship with the brand (Heller Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Wallace et al., 2012). This justifies the examination of the effect of brand passion on brand-specific support and engagement through social media, including 'liking' and/or 'following' the brand's social media channel or 'sharing' brand-related content with other consumers.

In the context of sports apparel brands, marketers view social media and the subsequent interaction with their consumers as an opportunity to receive invaluable feedback. For example, Spary (2015) noted that passionate consumers of Adidas use social media to support the brand and give feedback to the managers. The managers then use this feedback to generate more engaging content, and to attract more fans to their social media. Furthermore, Hoffman and Fodor (2010) gave the example of Target, who created an online environment on Facebook using an application called 'Circle of Moms', allowing mothers to 'post messages, arrange carpools, set up back-to-school checklists and click through to promotions on the Target site' (p. 46). The authors reported that as a result of these campaigns, Target has generated significant buzz on social media involving user-generated content. This reinforces positive attitudes towards the brand itself, together with consumer loyalty, ultimately

increasing the likelihood of consumers committing more effort to support the brand over social media in the future.

Campaigns have been built and successfully run by sports apparel brands, such as Nike's 'Equality' campaign (News, 2017), Under Armour's 'Unlike Any' global campaign (Richards, 2017), and Adidas Original's ultimate social media focus on 'cementing its position as a truly cult lifestyle brand', which placed emphasis on 'continuously reinforcing the core topic of originality and creative and artistic expression' (N. Gilliland, 2017). Based on these reflections, the study proposes the following:

**H3a:** Brand passion has a positive impact on social media support.

Existing studies have showed that attitudinal loyalty is linked to consumers' engagement with brands through social media. For example, Rapp, Beitelspacher, Grewal, and Hughes (2013) proposed that loyal consumers have greater interactions with the brand on social media, which creates positive feelings of excitement, and generates affection towards the brand. However, the focus of Rapp et al. (2013) was limited to three aspects: i) consumer-retailer interactions (as opposed to higher emotional bonds such as brand passion); ii) facets of retail service that may not trigger deep psychological interactions; and iii) social media usage. Hence, the authors did not consider deeper and more purposeful interactions and social media support. Hawkins and Vel (2013) also suggested that a combination of social media initiatives and consumer-brand emotional bonds are a requirement of brand loyalty, based on the assumption that the on-going relationships with consumers built over social media contribute to brand loyalty. However, the authors did not conceptualise the resulting support that loyal and emotionally bonded consumers may show for the brand. Furthermore, Wallace et al. (2012) studied consumers' engagement with sports apparel brands on social media and noted that loyal consumers spread comments about the brand on social media to reduce dissonance, and to help other consumers. These consumers are then participants in a social system, influencing others about their brand choices, and in so doing, expressing their strong interest towards the brand (Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010). Based on the literature considered, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H3b:** Attitudinal loyalty has a positive impact on social media support.

In addition to the above, it is reasonable to expect that attitudinal loyalty mediates the relationships between brand passion and social media support. For example, Fullerton (2005a) suggested that consumers' psychological connection with and affective commitment (a concept close to attitudinal loyalty, see Evanschitzky, Iyer, Plassmann, Niessing, & Meffert, 2006) towards the brand turn into favourable references on social settings for the brand. Studies have also implied that consumers who have strong affective attachment to a brand are willing to support the brand and engage in pro-social behaviours (Fullerton, 2005b; Harrison-Walker, 2001). Put more formally:

**H3c:** Attitudinal loyalty mediates the relationship between brand passion and social media support.

#### *5.4.4 Sense of community*

A *brand community* is defined as a 'specialised, non-geographically bound community based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand' (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 412). Members of a brand community share a sense of belonging, not only with the brand, but also with other members of the community (Carlson, Todd Donovan, & Cumiskey, 2009; Keller, 2003; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Correspondingly, sense of community has been described as a psychological state and subsequent benefit individuals wish to acquire, which becomes available by being around like-minded individuals (McMillan, 1996). Sense of community involves strong feelings of consciousness and obligation towards the brand (Cova, 1997; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Schau, Muniz, & Arnould, 2009).

Existing literature has posited that sense of brand community is strongly linked with consumer-brand emotional closeness (Roderick J Brodie et al., 2011; Grönroos, 2000). In fact, studies have proposed that the emotional bond between brands and their consumers has a power that extends beyond loyalty, and can trigger a sense of community that leads to consumers psychologically ruling out competitive brands (Fournier et al., 1998; Fraering & S. Minor, 2013). Similarly, researchers have suggested that brand passion activates consumers' willingness to engage in discussions about the brand (Muniz & Schau, 2005), and initiatives in

favour of the brand (Füller, Matzler, & Hoppe, 2008). From a psychological perspective, brand passion positively relates to consumer identification with the brand community (Füller et al., 2008), triggering a sense of enthusiasm in consumers to stay connected with other like-minded consumers (McMillan, 1996).

Accordingly, this study proposes that feeling passionate about a brand could trigger a sense of community, which leads to the following hypothesis:

**H4a:** Brand passion has a positive impact on sense of community.

Furthermore, existing research has suggested that loyalty can impact the integration of fellow consumers in the community (Oliver, 1999), in addition to strengthening the perceived sense of community (Rosenbaum, Ostrom, & Kuntze, 2005). However, there is very limited research that has examined the effect of attitudinal loyalty on sense of community. For instance, Shen and Chiou (2009) highlighted the existence of a positive link between consumer's loyalty and their perceived similarity with other brand community members, as reflected in behaviours such as seeing members like family and showing commitment to the community and its mission. Similarly, Marzocchi, Morandin, and Bergami (2013) highlighted the existence of a positive link between attitudinal loyalty and consumer-to-company and consumer-brand community identification. However, the authors focussed on one single motorbike brand and the brand's actual community festival, two analytical decisions that hinder the generalisability of their findings.

In the context of sports apparel brands, Gladden and Funk (2001) suggested experiential benefits as an important implication of sports apparel brand loyalty. Accordingly, the authors implied that sports apparel brands offer a sense of belonging to their fans by providing 'a source of nostalgia (fond memories of the past)' and 'a source of pride for a community' (p. 61). However, given that the focus of Gladden and Funk (2001) was on sports teams, their findings may not be generalisable to sports apparel brands specifically. Accordingly, this study proposes a direct relationship between attitudinal loyalty and sense of community, as follows:

**H4b:** Attitudinal loyalty has a positive impact on sense of community.

Extending from the reflections introduced thus far, it is also relevant to examine whether attitudinal loyalty mediates the relationship between brand passion and sense of community. Existing studies have provided some support for this proposition. For example, Jang, Olfman, Ko, Koh, and Kim (2008) argued that attitudinal commitment (defined as similar to attitudinal loyalty) derived from consumers' emotional attachment to the brand may lead to a strong sense of community membership. Furthermore, Kang, K. C. Lee, S. Lee, and Choi (2007) posited that when consumers demonstrate their loyalty to the brand through interactive communication about the brand in social settings, it enhances positive and strong attitudes towards the brand. This attitude, in turn, improves the level of belonging to the community.

In the context of sports apparel brands, it is reasonable to assume that perceiving a sense of belonging to the community of passionate consumers is a benefit that individuals could enjoy by spreading the pro-brand attitudes in the brand community. For example, in the case of Nike, consumers are reported to gain community-related benefits (e.g., the psychological sense of belonging, in addition to actual promotional benefits) from their passion for the brand, as a result of being part of the network of likeminded passionate fans (Ramaswamy, 2008). Accordingly, the present study proposes that:

**H4c:** Attitudinal loyalty mediates the relationship between brand passion and sense of community.

#### *5.4.5 Price insensitivity*

Research has showed that consumers actively pursue and develop personal connections with brands that offer higher values to their consumers in comparison to their competitors, as well as with brands that offer values with which they can personally and socially identify (e.g., Thomson et al., 2005). These values go beyond the functional benefits that brands deliver, to include psychological and sensorial fulfilment that enable consumers to enjoy emotional and hedonic experiences (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). Extant studies have showed that, in exchange for those non-functional benefits, consumers are willing to pay a price higher than competing



brands (Allsopp, 2005; Bauer et al., 2007; Keller, 2003). This 'willingness' ultimately leads to lower price sensitivity (Thomson et al., 2005; Yoo et al., 2000).

More recently, Bıçakcıoğlu, Ögel, and İlter (2017) drew on the literature on interpersonal romantic relationships (Sharpsteen, 1993) and argued that when consumers are passionate about a brand, and they see it being owned by someone else, they become 'jealous' and feel even more desire to own this brand, to the extent that they are willing to pay a premium price. Although they did not focus exclusively on sports apparel brands, Bıçakcıoğlu et al. (2017) included Nike as one of the brands that they examined.

If one considers sports apparel brands such as Nike and Under Armour, it is believed that emotionally involved consumers (those 'who care passionately about their activity or products') have an extensive knowledge about the brand and are well and truly willing to pay premium price for their loved brand (Matt, 2014). Based on these reflections, this study proposes the following:

**H5a:** Brand passion has a positive impact on price insensitivity.

With respect to the influence of attitudinal loyalty on price insensitivity, prior research has showed that attitudinal loyalty results in consumers engaging in 'extensive problem-solving behaviour involving brand and attribute comparisons, leading to strong brand preferences' (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000, as cited in Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2002, p. 195). These strong brand preferences can lead to consumers not realising that the price of the brand, to which they are loyal, is comparatively higher than competing brands (Yoo et al., 2000). This suggests that a lower price sensitivity for consumers with attitudinal loyalty towards a certain brand is to be expected (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

In the context of sports apparel brands, there are certain characteristics offered by brands that trigger consumers to pay a premium price. For example, sports apparel brands that are associated with fitness (e.g., Nike, Under Armour) create pro-brand positive attitudes and loyalty among their consumers, by means of creating an environment that supports consumers' lifestyle choices (Forte, 2016). For instance, Under Armour (through their fitness Apps including MyFitnessPal and MapMyRun) has created a community of consumers who

are emotionally committed to their goals. These consumers are passionately loyal to the brand to the point of becoming insensitive to price increases (Mirabella, 2015). Put more formally:

**H5b:** Attitudinal loyalty has a positive impact on price insensitivity.

Nonetheless, some scholars have argued that passionate consumers may not be ready for major changes to the brand's characteristics (e.g., price increases) unless certain loyalty and commitment measures have already been established (Albert et al., 2013). This suggests a facilitating role for attitudinal loyalty on the connection between brand passion and price insensitivity. Therefore, this study also proposes that:

**H5c:** Attitudinal loyalty mediates the relationship between brand passion and price insensitivity.

#### *5.4.6 Alternative devaluation*

Alternative devaluation stems from psychological studies on interpersonal relationships, whereby a strong commitment to the partner and to maintaining the relationship could result in negative assessments of existing attractive alternatives (Lydon, Fitzsimons, & Naidoo, 2003). In other words, individuals who are more committed to their romantic relationships tend to view other alternatives less favourably (D. J. Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Lydon et al., 2003). In marketing research, Sung and Choi (2010) have defined the quality of alternatives as 'a consumer's judgment or evaluation of the attractiveness of available alternative brand choices or options' (p. 1056). Based on this judgement or evaluation, consumers form brand assessments by making comparisons with reference points, i.e., alternative brands (C. K. B. Yim et al., 2007). Accordingly, studies have implied that when consumers are emotionally attached to a brand, they are less likely to rely on alternative brands, even in product categories where the alternatives could fulfil the same need (e.g., C. W. Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005). Similarly, Fournier (1998) inferred that consumers' emotional bond with a brand gives them 'continual affirmation of the meaning of the brand' to the extent that each brand is viewed as unique and cannot be replaced by competitors. In fact, Chaudhuri &

Holbrook (2001) argued that consumers are more willing to commit to their relationship, and therefore devalue other alternatives if they receive unique values and benefits from their relationship with their favoured brand.

Nonetheless, some studies have suggested that consumers only devalue low quality alternatives (Khan & Ahmed, 2016; Rubio, Oubiña, & Villaseñor, 2014). This means that in the presence of high quality alternatives, consumers are less likely to show commitment to their relationship with the brand (e.g., Sung & Choi, 2010). In fact, Consiglio, Kupor, Gino, and Norton (2015) confirmed that consumers are willing to show a temporary interest towards a high quality alternative of one of their favoured brand's competitors. Yet, this interest ultimately leads to an increased commitment to their favoured brand.

In the context of sports apparel brands, Do, Ko, and Woodside (2015) showed that the ties consumers have with a sports brand with which they have developed a relationship, involve a shared and mutually beneficial existence that motivates the consumer to not use other brands. Importantly, the authors confirmed the role of consumer-brand congruity (including self-identification with the brand and consistency of brand-self) as a driver of brand relationships and the resulting behavioural outcomes. Hence, it is plausible to hypothesise the following:

**H6a:** Brand passion has a positive impact on alternative devaluation.

In addition to the above, it is important to examine the impact of attitudinal loyalty on alternative devaluation. Specifically, studies have suggested that consumers who feel committed to a certain brand are likely to view positive information about a competitive brand unfavourably, and to systematically underrate competitive offerings (Raju, Unnava, & Montgomery, 2009). When driven by affect and emotions, commitment is described as being close to attitudinal loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; X. Li & Petrick, 2010; Oliver, 1999). Therefore, a similar effect could be hypothesised for attitudinal loyalty.

In the context of sports apparel brands, studies have highlighted the presence of a highly loyal group of consumers among globally recognised brands such as Nike and Adidas (Dawes, 2009). However, there is no existing work to demonstrate that these groups of loyal

consumers would actively devalue other competing brands. In fact, researchers have suggested that, where numerous brands are available to the consumer, 'even most loyal consumers are exposed to positive information about attractive alternatives, and may even find themselves appreciating other products and brands that compete with their favoured brands' (Consiglio et al., 2015, p. 263). Hence:

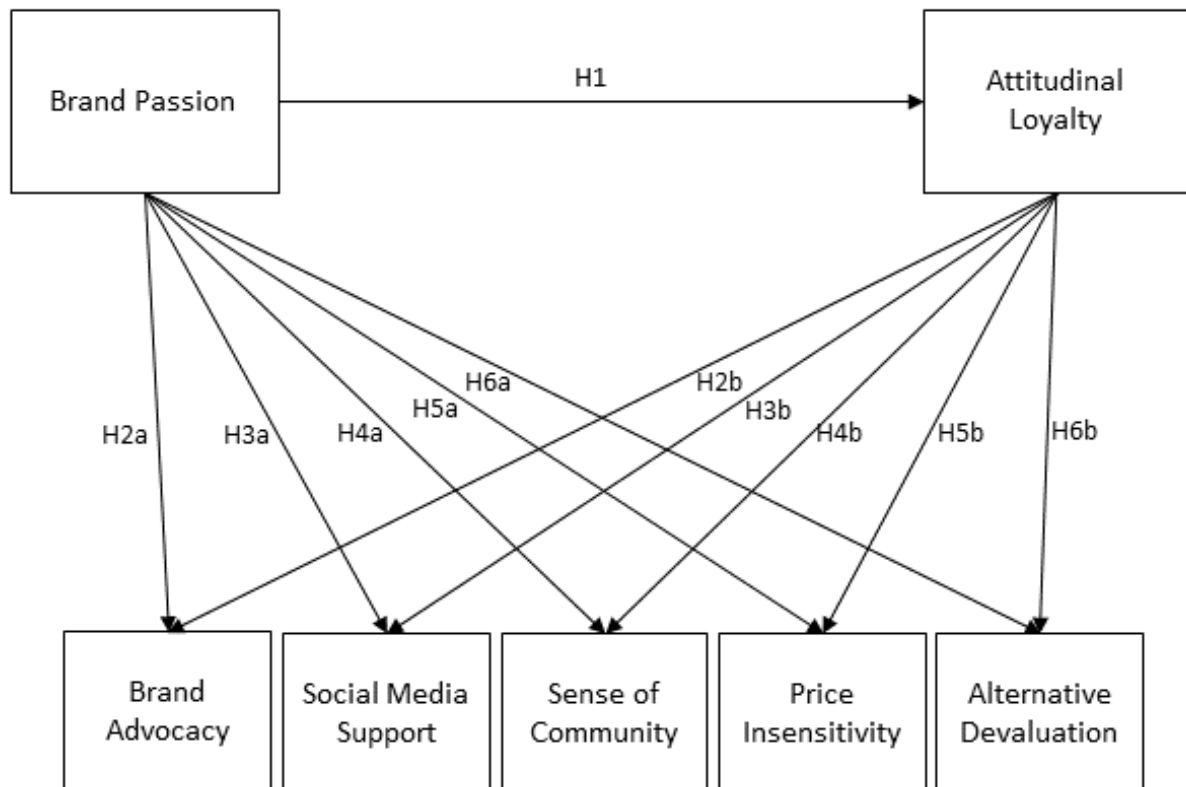
**H6b:** Attitudinal loyalty has a positive impact on alternative devaluation.

Past research has illustrated that consumers build on their loyalty towards a brand to represent the strength of their relationship with the brand and to showcase their commitment to maintain the relationship (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Moreover, researchers have suggested a central role for affective commitment in the formation and strength of brand relationships. For example, Albert et al. (2013) argued that there is a strong link between brand passion and consumer commitment to the brand relationship. The authors also implied that consumers' commitment enables them to rely on their passionate bond with the brand and consequently stay committed to their relationship with that brand. Furthermore, Tsai (2011a, 2011b) showed that when consumers develop relationships with certain brands, attitudinal commitment and loyalty towards the brand are among the key elements that lead to resistance to other alternatives. Finally, when considering the conceptual similarity between emotion-driven commitment and attitudinal loyalty, it is reasonable to consider a mediating role for attitudinal loyalty in the relationship between brand passion and alternative devaluation. Thus:

**H6c:** Attitudinal loyalty mediates the relationship between brand passion and alternative devaluation.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the research model resulting from all the proposed hypotheses discussed so far, which this study tests empirically via structural equation modelling.

**Figure 5.1** Resulting research model for testing



## 5.5 Methodology

### 5.5.1 Sampling and data collection

With respect to the target population, this study targeted Iranian consumers of sports apparel brands. In recent years, Iranian consumers have been showing a growing interest (Shirdelian, 2017) and high levels of brand loyalty towards global sports apparel brands (Khoei, 2014). For example, Affianian (2016) addressed the latest interest towards e-commerce retailing, which is believed to boost Iranian's desire to access brands and products from designers and manufacturers globally. Other studies (albeit limited) have taken a research interest in Iran's retail market (e.g., Hanzae & Andervazh, 2012; Karami et al., 2017). In appreciating the importance of researching consumerism in the context of global brands, it could be argued that there has not been enough research conducted on Iranian consumers. Furthermore, another advantage of focusing on Iran as the target population lies in the fact that studies on brand relationship typically have been conducted in Western contexts (Albert et al., 2013;

Matzler et al., 2007) or in Asia-Pacific contexts (So et al., 2013). In contrast, Iran and other countries in the Middle East are considerably less investigated. This becomes a prominent limitation given that researchers have reported significant investments from sports apparel brands in the Middle East (Cornwell, 2016; News, 2017).

This study utilised a purposive sampling approach, with responses being gathered using online and face-to-face surveys. To gather online responses, a web link directing participants to the online version of the questionnaire (created using Qualtrics) was sent via email and/or social media websites (including Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn), reaching out to the personal and professional network of all individuals involved in this study (thesis author and the principal supervisor). Targeted respondents were also encouraged to distribute the link further to their own networks, in order to maximise the reach of the questionnaire across various demographics.

To gather responses face-to-face, hard copies of the questionnaires were distributed and compiled through intercepting passers-by in various locations in Mashhad, with the purpose of increasing the likelihood of attracting respondents interested in sports apparel brands. Mashhad is Iran's second most populated multiethnic city (metro population of 3,372,660 individuals, based on 2016 census) with a strong economy based on manufacturing, trade and services (Britannica, 2017). As such, this large metropolitan city provided a suitable context where it was possible to gather a sample representative of Iranian consumers. The locations chosen for intercepting respondents included sports products stores, active wear shops, sports brand outlets in major shopping malls, sports complexes, and various buildings situated throughout Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, a large public university in Iran.

Overall, 235 responses were gathered, out of which 186 were retained for the analysis. The removed responses were either incomplete (i.e., more than 50% of questions unanswered) or invalid (e.g., all items with a similar response, or illogical/inconsistent responses). Nevertheless, the sample size was adequate for a partial least squared (PLS) modelling (Chin, 1998). While the author acknowledges that a larger sample size would have provided a more accurate representation of the targeted population, limited resources and time constraints, as the known limitations of convenience sampling approach, did not allow for further sample collection.

Data collection took place between April and June 2015. The demographic profile of the characteristics of respondents who returned the questionnaire is shown in Table 5.1. Accordingly, although the sample is skewed towards males and the younger generation, it is in line with the characteristics of the demographic profile of the Iranian consumers of sports apparel brands (e.g. see Nasirabadi & Bokaei, 2013; Azadi, Yousefi, & Eydi, 2016).

**Table 5.1** Demographic profile

Profile	Characteristic	Count	%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	139	75
	Female	47	25
<b>Age</b>	18 to 24	56	30
	25 to 34	97	52
	35 and over	33	18
<b>Annual household income</b>	< AUD 7,500	63	34
	Between AUD 7,500 and AUD 12,500	67	36
	> AUD 12,500	56	30

### 5.5.2 Measurement items and survey structure

Drawing upon the existing literature, the study incorporates measurement items from the existing literature in the questionnaire, which were then tailored to fit the context of sports apparel brands. The items were then translated into Persian. Table 5.2 displays the items with respect to each construct. The items used to measure brand passion were adapted from Batra et al. (2012) and Albert et al. (2013). Attitudinal loyalty measurement items were adapted from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), Netemeyer et al. (2004) and D. J. Johnson and Rusbult (1989), respectively. The items regarding social media support were adapted from Wallace et al. (2014). Sense of community was measured using the items adapted from Keller (2003) and Netemeyer et al. (2004), whereas brand advocacy and price insensitivity were measured using items adapted from Wallace et al. (2012) and Netemeyer et al. (2004). Finally, D. items developed by J. Johnson and Rusbult (1989) were used to measure alternative devaluation.

The questionnaire began with demographic questions, focusing on respondents' age, gender, and estimated annual income. Then, it showed respondents a list of existing sports apparel brands. The brands were included based on a list of 'the best top sports brands', as voted by consumers from around the world (Ranker). In order to ensure brand recognition (in case a respondent had possibly forgotten the name of the brand), this component of the questionnaire presented all of the brands' logos (see appendix 5.1). Subsequently, the survey asked respondents to identify, out of the list, one brand as their 'most favourite brand' of all. Respondents were also given the option to name their own brand of choice, if their favourite brand was not on the list. Research supports the use of the term 'most favourite' when examining brand relationships. For example, Deppe, Schwindt, Kugel, Plassmann, and Kenning (2005) concluded that 'most favourite' or 'first-choice' brands arouse increased levels of activity in areas of the brain related to emotions, compared to the areas responsible for cognitive processes.

Following this, respondents completed various scale-item questions, where they were asked to state their level of agreement with a series of statements with respect to the selected brand. For example, if a respondent selected 'Nike' as his/her favourite brand, the questionnaire asked the respondent to identify to what extent he/she agrees with a some of the following statements: 'My relationship with Nike is very passionate'. The respondents could select one value from a 7-point Likert range, whereby 1 indicated 'completely disagree'; 2 indicated 'disagree to a great extent'; 3 indicated 'somewhat disagree'; 4 indicated 'neutral'; 5 indicated 'somewhat agree'; 6 indicated 'agree to a great extent'; and 7 indicated 'completely agree'.

**Table 5.2** Measurement items and underpinning literature

Construct	Items adapted from	Item	Item Statement
-----------	--------------------	------	----------------



<b>Brand passion</b>	Batra et al. (2012), Albert et al., (2013)	PA01	My relationship with this brand is very passionate
		PA02	I desire this brand
		PA03	Just seeing this brand is very exciting for me
<b>Attitudinal loyalty</b>	Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001)	LO01	I am committed to this brand
		LO02	I would be willing to pay a higher price for this brand over other brands
<b>Brand advocacy</b>	Wallace et al. (2012)	AD01	I would recommend this brand to lots of people.
		AD02	I would try to spread the good-word about this brand
<b>Price insensitivity</b>	Netemeyer et al. (2004)	PR01	I would stay with this brand even if the price were to increase
		PR02	I am willing to pay premium price for this brand
<b>Alternative devaluation</b>	D. J. Johnson and Rusbult (1989)	AD01	In terms of the rewards and costs related to this brand, other brands are not exciting for me
		AD02	Getting involved in a relationship with another brand other than this brand is difficult for me
<b>Social media support</b>	Wallace et al. (2014)	SM01	I would 'Like' this brand's Facebook page in order to talk up the brand to my friends
		SM02	I would 'Like' this brand's Facebook page as it enhances my Facebook profile
		SM03	I would 'follow' this brand on Instagram in order to talk up the brand to my friends
		SM04	I would 'follow' this brand on Instagram as it enhances my Instagram profile
<b>Sense of community</b>	Keller (2003), Netemeyer et al. (2004)	COM01	I feel a sense of motivation to participate in this brand's social community to support other members
		COM02	I feel a sense of motivation to participate in this brand's social community to reach my personal goals

### 5.5.3 Data analysis methods

In order to test the hypothesised relationships, this study utilised a PLS path modelling method (Hair et al., 2011), using the SmartPLS (Ver. 2) path modelling package (Ringle et al., 2005). The rationale behind using a PLS-SEM approach was threefold. First, PLS path modelling is suitable for marketing studies as it does not require the normality of employed constructs (Hair et al., 2011). Second, in comparison to covariance-based SEM, PLS-SEM takes into account measurement errors, and delivers meticulous estimations for mediation effects (Hair et al., 2011). Third, PLS-SEM is more effective for estimating path models when working with small sample sizes (Chin & Newsted, 1999). Nonetheless, as a further precaution, this

study also included principal component analysis with Promax rotation to analyse each construct.

This study tested all the proposed research hypotheses via estimating the path coefficients and statistical significance (T-statistics), which was done using a bootstrapping method (Hulland, 1999). Overall, 5,000 samples generated from the 186 cases replaced the original data set for each parameter in the model (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2011). This is a common approach used in many studies (e.g., see Giovanis & Athanasopoulou, 2017; Giovanis, 2016; Karjaluoto et al., 2016; Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012; Peng, Chen, & Wen, 2014).

#### 5.5.4 Model analysis

Table 5.3 shows the results of the reliability analysis performed through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliabilities. The results indicated that Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs were greater than the suggested value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2011). Furthermore, with regard to composite reliability, all values exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.6, thus confirming the overall reliability of the measurement items used (Hair et al., 2011).

**Table 5.3** Properties of measurement items

Constructs and measurement items								
	Factor Loadings	Composite Reliability		Cronbach's Alpha	Communality	Mean	Std. Deviation	Redundancy
		CR	R <sup>2</sup>					
<b>Brand passion</b>		0.86		0.75	0.67	3.46	1.20	0.00
My relationship with this brand is very passionate	0.70							
I desire this brand	0.89							
Just seeing this brand is very exciting for me	0.85							
<b>Attitudinal loyalty</b>		0.91	0.55	0.81	0.84	3.22	1.38	0.46
I am committed to this brand	0.91							
I would be willing to pay a higher price for this brand over other brands	0.92							
<b>Brand advocacy</b>		0.91	0.51	0.81	0.84	3.73	1.29	0.24
I would recommend this brand to lots of people.	0.91							

I would try to spread the good-word about this brand	0.91							
<b>Social media support</b>		0.92	0.27	0.89	0.75	2.98	1.31	0.09
I would 'Like' this brand's Facebook page in order to talk up the brand to my friends	0.82							
I would 'Like' this brand's Facebook page as it enhances my Facebook profile	0.88							
I would 'follow' this brand on Instagram in order to talk up the brand to my friends	0.89							
I would 'follow' this brand on Instagram as it enhances my Instagram profile	0.86							
<b>Sense of community</b>		0.95	0.23	0.90	0.91	3.18	1.33	0.14
I feel a sense of motivation to participate in this brand's social community to support other members	0.95							
I feel a sense of motivation to participate in this brand's social community to reach my personal goals	0.94							
<b>Price insensitivity</b>		0.93	0.40	0.84	0.86	3.42	1.35	0.27
I would stay with this brand even if the price were to increase	0.92							
I am willing to pay premium price for this brand	0.93							
<b>Alternative devaluation</b>		0.88	0.35	0.73	0.78	2.91	1.21	0.26
In terms of the rewards and costs related to this brand, other brands are not exciting for me	0.90							
Getting involved in a relationship with another brand other than this brand is difficult for me	0.86							

In terms of convergent validity, Table 5.3 shows that all items yielded significant loadings (values were all greater than 0.7 and less than 0.95) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Moreover, Table 5.4 shows the positive results in relation to the HTMT ratio (a superior criterion to Fornell-Larcker, which is also useful for reducing estimation-bias and limiting the chances of inaccurate conclusions), given that all constructs were within the given threshold limit of 0.90 (Gold & Arvind Malhotra, 2001; Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015).

In terms of discriminant validity, all the AVE values exceed the squared inter-construct correlations, confirming the independency of all constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2011). In line with Tenenhaus, Vinzi, Chatelin, and Lauro (2005), redundancy indices and communalities were both positive, confirming the quality of structural relations (see Table 5.3). Furthermore, as a single indicator of the global quality of PLS path modelling, the goodness of fit index (GoF) exceeded the minimum recommended value of 0.5 (Tenenhaus et al., 2005; Wetzels, Odekerken-Schröder, & Van Oppen, 2009). Lastly, the collinearity statistics (VIF and tolerance level) for all the latent exogenous constructs (brand passion and attitudinal loyalty) were also within the acceptable thresholds (tolerance level=0.572; VIF statistic=1.749, Grewal, Cote, & Baumgartner, 2004). In summary, the results of these tests confirmed that the proposed model was both appropriate and robust in nature.

Table 5.3 also reveals the descriptive measures of the study’s main constructs. As is evident across all constructs, respondents are consistently ranged and distributed with respect to the extent of intensity of each construct (mean measures are around 3 out of 7 and standard deviation averages around 1.20). This indicates that there is no response bias with respect to any of the included constructs.

**Table 5.4** HTMT discriminant validity results

Constructs	HTMT						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Brand passion</b>	1.00						
<b>Attitudinal loyalty</b>	0.89	1.00					
<b>Brand advocacy</b>	0.78	0.71	1.00				
<b>Price insensitivity</b>	0.62	0.66	0.73	1.00			
<b>Alternative devaluation</b>	0.64	0.76	0.66	0.71	1.00		
<b>Social media support</b>	0.40	0.35	0.36	0.38	0.60	1.00	
<b>Sense of community</b>	0.46	0.43	0.46	0.38	0.56	0.70	1.00

Using the recommendations proposed by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff (2012) and MacKenzie and Podsakoff (2012), the thesis author also incorporated an unmeasured latent method factor technique to check for Common Method Variance. The results (see Table 5.5) revealed non-significant differences between the standardized regression weights (differences were less than 0.2), therefore confirming the study model is free from common method bias.

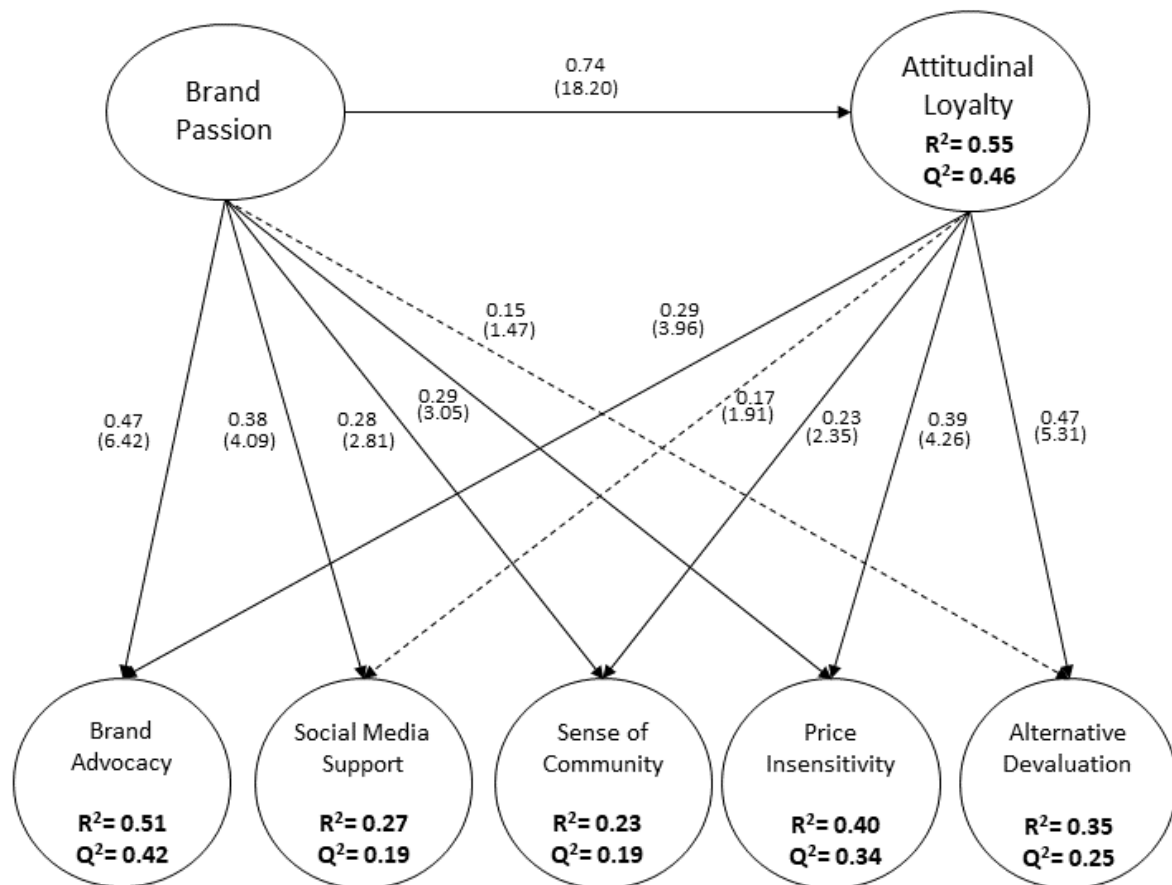
**Table 5.5** Common method bias results

Constructs	Indicators	Standardized Regression Weights (With a Common Latent Factor)	Standardized Regression Weights (Without a Common Latent Factor)	Differences
Brand Passion →	PA01	0.718	0.807	0.089
Brand Passion →	PA02	0.743	0.869	0.126
Attitudinal Loyalty →	LO01	0.711	0.816	0.105
Attitudinal Loyalty →	LO02	0.759	0.835	0.076
Social Media Support →	SM01	0.915	0.936	0.021
Social Media Support →	SM02	0.885	0.905	0.02
Sense of Community →	COM01	0.846	0.889	0.043
Sense of Community →	COM02	0.866	0.915	0.049

## 5.6 Results

Figure 5.2 shows the main outcomes derived from the PLS modelling procedure.

**Figure 5.2** Partial least square analysis for the hypothesised paths



The proposed research model explained over 50% of the variance in attitudinal loyalty ( $R^2 = 0.55$ ). The  $R^2$  value for brand advocacy was also significantly high ( $R^2 = 0.51$ ). In looking at the  $R^2$  values for other dependent variables in the model (i.e., brand advocacy, social media support, sense of community, price insensitivity, and alternative devaluation), it is evident that brand passion and attitudinal loyalty yielded good explanatory powers for the variance in all dependent variables. Overall, all the  $R^2$  values exceeded the recommended cut off-value of 0.10 (Falk & Miller, 1992). However, in terms of predictability power of the PLS model, while the  $R^2$  values for attitudinal loyalty, brand advocacy and price insensitivity were moderate, the  $R^2$  values for alternative devaluation, social media support, and sense of community were considerably lower (Hair et al., 2011). Nonetheless, overall the research model explains reasonably well the variance in all endogenous variables considered.

In order to examine the model's predictive relevance, this study utilised the blindfold approach (Chin, 1998). In accordance with this approach, when a PLS model exhibits predictive relevance, it accurately forecasts the data points of the items that reflect all

endogenous constructs. According to Tenenhaus et al. (2005), this demonstrates the global quality of the measurement and structural model. As Figure 5.2 shows, the Q2 values for all constructs yielded predictive relevance, as they stood above zero for all reflective endogenous variables (the average was 0.31) and exceeded the recommended minimum standard of 0.3 (see Tenenhaus et al., 2005). These outcomes confirmed the adequate explanatory power of the proposed structural model. Table 5.6 exhibits the specific results of the PLS path modelling and hypotheses testing. It shows the path coefficients of the structural equation model ( $\beta$ ), the T-statistic values (t), as well as the effect sizes ( $f^2$ ).

**Table 5.6** Structural model results

HPs	Hypothesised Paths	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	Effect sizes ( $f^2$ )	Outcomes
H1	Brand passion → Attitudinal loyalty	0.74	18.20	1.229	Supported
H2a	Brand passion → Brand Advocacy	0.48	6.42	0.208	Supported
H3a	Brand passion → Social media support	0.38	4.09	0.086	Supported
H4a	Brand passion → Sense of community	0.28	2.81	0.046	Supported
H5a	Brand passion → Price insensitivity	0.29	3.05	0.061	Supported
H6a	Brand passion → Alternative devaluation	0.15	1.47	0.015	Not Supported
H2b	Attitudinal loyalty → Brand Advocacy	0.29	3.96	0.075	Supported
H3b	Attitudinal loyalty → Social media support	0.17	1.91	0.018	Not Supported
H4b	Attitudinal loyalty → Sense of community	0.23	2.35	0.031	Supported
H5b	Attitudinal loyalty → Price insensitivity	0.39	4.26	0.112	Supported
H6b	Attitudinal loyalty → Alternative devaluation	0.47	5.31	0.155	Supported

In order to test for the significance of the paths, their effect sizes ( $f^2$ ) are compared against the suggested threshold of 0.02 (Chin et al., 2003). These statistics reveal that the main hypothesised effect, i.e., the positive impact of brand passion on attitudinal loyalty (H1) was statistically significant ( $f^2 = 1.229$ ). Furthermore, the coefficient between brand passion and brand advocacy ( $f^2 = 0.208$ ); brand passion and social media support ( $f^2 = 0.086$ ); brand passion and sense of community ( $f^2 = 0.046$ ); and brand passion and price insensitivity ( $f^2 =$

0.061) were all significant. This leads to the acceptance of the respective research hypotheses (H2a, H3a, H4a, and H5a). However, the path between brand passion and alternative devaluation (H6a) was not confirmed ( $f^2 = 0.015$ ).

With respect to the relationships between attitudinal loyalty and brand-related outcomes, as indicated in Table 5.6, the coefficient between attitudinal loyalty and brand advocacy ( $f^2 = 0.075$ ); attitudinal loyalty and sense of community ( $f^2 = 0.031$ ); attitudinal loyalty and price insensitivity ( $f^2 = 0.112$ ), and attitudinal loyalty and alternative devaluation ( $f^2 = 0.155$ ) were all significant. This provides support for H2b, H4b, H5b, and H6b. Additionally, the path between alternative devaluation and social media support was not confirmed ( $f^2 = 0.018$ ); hence, H3b is rejected.

Table 5.7 illustrates the outcomes of the analysis of the mediation relationships using Sobel's (1982) test. In support for H2b, H4b, H5b, and H6b, attitudinal loyalty was found to mediate the effects of brand passion on brand advocacy, sense of community, price insensitivity, and alternative devaluation,. That is, out of all the mediation effects, only the impact of brand passion on alternative devaluation was fully mediated by attitudinal loyalty, and brand passion lost its significant impact on alternative devaluation when attitudinal loyalty was included as the mediator (Lowry & Gaskin, 2014). Last, there was no mediation effect of attitudinal loyalty in the relationship between brand passion and social media support, which leads to the rejection of H3b.

**Table 5.7** Mediation interaction results

HPs	Mediation paths	Sobel's Test		Goodman's test		Outcomes
		Test Stat.	Sig.	Test Stat.	Sig.	
H2b	Brand passion → attitudinal loyalty → brand advocacy	3.86	0.00	<del>3.87</del>	<del>0.00</del>	Partial mediation
H3b	Brand passion → attitudinal loyalty → social media support	1.90	0.05	<del>1.90</del>	<del>0.05</del>	Not supported
H4b	Brand passion → attitudinal loyalty → sense of community	2.33	0.02	<del>2.33</del>	<del>0.02</del>	Partial mediation
H4b	Brand passion → attitudinal loyalty → price insensitivity	4.14	0.00	<del>4.15</del>	<del>0.00</del>	Partial mediation



---

H6b	Brand passion → attitudinal loyalty → alternative devaluation	5.09	0.00	<del>5.10</del>	<del>0.00</del>	Full mediation
-----	---	------	------	-----------------	-----------------	----------------

---

## 5.7 Discussion

### 5.7.1 Theoretical implications

Overall, the results of this study confirmed that brand passion is an important driver of attitudinal loyalty. Furthermore, through attitudinal loyalty, brand passion strengthens brand advocacy, price insensitivity, social media support, sense of community, and alternative devaluation. Hence, this research confirmed these outcomes as the potential implications of brand passion, echoing consumers' strong pro-brand attitudes, and the significant presence of sports apparel brands in their lives. The study also showed that these outcomes extend beyond transactional purposes and reflect the nature of consumers' passion and its power in influencing their attitudes (Rozanski et al., 1999; Rohra & Sharma, 2016). Accordingly, from a broader theoretical perspective, this study extends existing knowledge with respect of the unique and novel aspects of brand passion. More specifically, the study confirmed that brand passion reflects recently established desires and positive attitudes towards the brand, as opposed to other relational concepts (e.g., brand love and brand attachment) that encompass established perceptual knowledge about and long-lasting feelings towards the brand (Drennan et al., 2015; Huber et al., 2015). In particular, brand passion resonates with a stage of consumer-brand relationship, where consumers have strong positive attitudes towards the brand (Bauer et al., 2007; McEwen, 2005; Herrando et al., 2017). This positive attitude then encourages consumers to ask more from the brand and to do more for it (Matzler et al., 2007; Rozanski et al., 1999).

The outcomes of this study confirmed that pro-brand attitudes mirror the importance of the brand for the consumer, as they are actively embedded in consumers' lives (Belén del Río et al., 2001; Moutinho et al., 2007). This importance is often reflected in consumers' devotion (Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004; Sarkar & Sarkar, 2016), obsession (Vallerand et al., 2003), and tribalism (Ruane & Wallace, 2015; Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). More specifically, the results of this study revealed that being passionate about a brand leads to the development of sense of community. This highlights the role of passion in influencing consumer's attitudes towards

the brand and its community of fans. In particular, this study showed that a passionate bond between a brand and its consumers has the power to drive a sense of psychological belonging to a community of followers (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; B. Anderson, 2006; Herrando et al., 2017). Brand passion also significantly influences consumers' willingness to act as advocates on behalf of the brand (i.e., brand advocacy). This can be explained by referring back to the literature on brand devotion (Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004; Sarkar & Sarkar, 2016), a concept that is argued to be largely dominated by passion (Ortiz et al., 2013). Accordingly, devoted consumers take their passion for the brand further than simply spreading positive WOM, often attempting to actively convince others about the greatness of the brand (Matzler et al., 2007; Rozanski et al., 1999; Martínez & Martín-De Hoyos, 2017).

The outcome of this study highlighted that passion for a sports brand leads to the act of supporting the brand through social media. This is in line with a stream of existing research which shows that social media provides a platform for brands to nurture strong relationships with their consumers (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013). In particular, the study showed that consumers' relationships with sports apparel brands in the form of passionate bonds trigger their attitudes towards the brand in a way that encourages them to show continued social media participation and support, including positive WOM over social media, in addition to referrals to the brand's social media pages (Pentina et al., 2013).

Moreover, the study supported the impact of brand passion on consumers' willingness to accept a higher price for the sports brand (i.e., price insensitivity). This is in line with existing studies which have highlighted that through the development of emotional bonds with brands, consumers receive benefits (both tangible and intangible benefits) that drive lower sensitivity towards price changes (Allsopp, 2005; Bauer et al., 2007). More specifically, price insensitivity can be rooted in the tangible benefits offered by the brand, such as superior functionality. As Matt (2014) asserted, passionate consumers have extensive knowledge about the brand that helps them see the true tangible benefits of the brand (functionality) and increases their willingness to pay premium price for the brand. Moreover, price insensitivity can be derived from intangible benefits offered by the brand towards which consumers feel passionate, such as hedonic and pleasure-based consumption (Sethuraman &

Cole, 1999) and brand prestige (G. Li, Li, & Kambele, 2012). These benefits, therefore, entice consumers to pay premium price.

Furthermore, this study showed that brand passion does not directly influence consumers' devaluation of alternative brands. This result can be explained as follows. From a marketing perspective, brand passion is believed to involve stronger emotions, but lower levels of commitment towards the brand (Fournier, 1998). In comparison, brand attachment is believed to reflect a significantly higher degree of commitment in the consumer-brand relationship (e.g., see Zhou, Zhang, Su, & Zhou, 2012). However, from a psychological perspective (see Bazzini & Shaffer, 1999; Lydon et al., 2003), it has been suggested that people who are moderately committed to their relationships (interpersonal), would not be expected to devalue all the alternatives, whereas those with high level of commitment (e.g., married participants) are expected to devalue all of the alternatives. Therefore, it is plausible to conclude that brand passion may not lead to alternative devaluation because it does not comprise a high level of commitment towards the relationship. This conclusion may not apply to other relational concepts. In fact, as past research (e.g., see C. W. Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005) has confirmed, emotionally attached consumers experience a high level of commitment towards the brand and, therefore, are willing to devalue alternative brands.

With respect to the role of attitudinal loyalty, the study confirmed that it predicts sense of community. This is in line with existing literature (e.g., see Algesheimer et al., 2005; Shen & Chiou, 2009), which has linked attitudinal loyalty to the perceived similarity with other like-minded brand-community members. Furthermore, the study confirmed a partial mediating role for attitudinal loyalty in the relationship between brand passion and sense of community. This finding contributes to the literature on brand loyalty and commitment due to the following reasons. While studies have predominantly focused on loyalty (both attitudinal and behavioural) as an outcome of sense of community (e.g., Marzocchi et al., 2013), this study provides evidence for a reverse effect and reveals that sense of community is, in fact, an enabling factor that binds attitudinal loyalty to behavioural loyalty. The effect of attitudinal loyalty on brand advocacy and the mediating role of attitudinal loyalty in the relationship between brand passion and brand advocacy both have important theoretical implications. First, in line with Fullerton (2005a), the study's findings showed that attitudinal loyalty could

lead to increased consumer willingness to act as a reference or an advocate on behalf of the brand. However, Fullerton (2005a) argued that if attitudinal loyalty is formed because of scarcity of alternatives, the consumer may not show advocacy behaviour. This study suggests an alternative explanation to this matter. That is, in light of the partial mediation of attitudinal loyalty in the relationship between brand passion and brand advocacy, it is plausible to conclude that when attitudinal loyalty is driven by passionate bonds between consumers and the brand, it can lead to advocacy and WOM intentions.

The study, however, did not support the effect of attitudinal loyalty on social media support. In fact, the results were rather contradictory to the findings of existing research. For example, Wallace et al. (2012) proposed that consumers who keenly support the brand on social media are true brand 'activists', as they demonstrate high levels of engagement and loyalty towards the brand (Hollebeek, 2011a, p. 797). This result can be explained by considering the work of Labrecque (2014), who implied that loyal consumers may not support a brand on social media if they perceive the brand's social media interactions as unfulfilling (e.g., if the brand's responses are automated).

The results also supported the direct influence of attitudinal loyalty on price insensitivity. This is in line with extant research that has supported the effect of attitudinal loyalty on brand preference, and the tendency to miss-perceive the brand's price relative to other competitors' prices, due to loyalty (e.g, see Fitzgibbon & White, 2005; Yoo et al., 2000). In addition, the study supported the mediating role of attitudinal loyalty in the relationship between brand passion and price sensitivity. Therefore, in scenarios where the consumer does not expect major price changes due to the possible conflict with the established self-identification with the brand, a positive attitude may facilitate an acceptance to price increases (Albert et al., 2013).

Finally, the study also provided support for the influence of attitudinal loyalty on alternative devaluation. Namely, attitudinal loyalty provides consumers with a psychological willingness to maintain their relationship with the brand, supporting the existing findings that values obtained from being loyal to a brand limits the number of reliable alternatives, as they may not offer comparable values (Albert et al., 2013). The results of the study also confirmed that attitudinal loyalty fully mediates the impact of brand passion on the devaluation of

alternatives. This confirms that if brand passion is matched with attitudinal loyalty, it is possible to predict consumers' intentions to devalue alternatives.

### *5.7.2 Managerial implications*

The outcomes of this study lead to various practical implications. First, the results show the importance of brand passion as a driver of relevant outcomes such as sense of community, brand advocacy, social media support, price insensitivity and alternative devaluation (albeit indirectly through attitudinal loyalty). Therefore, it is imperative for managers of sports apparel brands to monitor and profile passionate consumers. This could be achieved through a systematic exploration of the brand's social media analytics, with a particular focus on the quality of individual interactions with the brand (e.g., frequency of interactions, peer-to-peer interactions, and the scope of interactions over various platforms, etc.). In addition to this, managers are encouraged to develop strategies with the aim of targeting and retaining these consumers. For example, brand managers should encourage consumers to share their brand-centred stories and experiences with friends and other like-minded people on social media, and then feature this user-generated content on the brand's social media pages, giving credit to the user. Furthermore, in enhancing brand passion and leveraging attitudinal loyalty, managers of sports apparel brands could explore experiential marketing approaches (Schmitt, 1999) to build lasting passionate bonds between the customer and the brand. To do so, sports brand managers could introduce initiatives that leverage consumer's passion and encourage them to maintain their relationship with the brand, and even share their experience with other consumers. An example of such initiatives can be found in Under Armour's 'challenges' on their fitness application, MapMyFitness, whereby consumers are encouraged to record their workout and fitness progress, share them with friends, and then challenge them to share their progress as well (Pathak, 2015).

The link between brand passion and brand advocacy has important implications for managers of sport apparel brands, as it reveals the significant power of consumer-generated WOM and advocacy intentions in times when the brand faces strong competition (Ahluwalia, Burnkrant, & Unnava, 2000). These brands could rely on passionate consumers to spread positive

messages about the brand and, if necessary, defend the brand against negative information (Wong & Sidek, 2008). However, to do so, brand managers would need to conduct research and identify key opportunities to connect with their users on a regular basis. For instance, Adidas conducted a series of studies using innovative methods to study consumers' motivation to use exercise and sportswear. These methods included spending '24 hours with a customer to have breakfast, run and do yoga with them, and find out what made them exercise', in addition to 'mailing dozens of customers a disposable camera, asking them to photograph something that made them work out' (Economist, 2013).

Building on the findings of this study and drawing on the works of Rozanski et al. (1999) and Fournier (1998), it can be recommended that brand managers should actively engage with their passionate consumers and regularly interact in an authentic and meaningful way, in order to encourage advocacy. For example, building on the work of Wallace et al. (2012), in order to encourage advocacy, brand managers could emphasise the self-expressive nature of their brand. Additionally, through the use of social media, brand managers could encourage consumers to 'express yourself' through associations with the brand, and then ask them to share brand messages with friends and family. Examples of such implications can be identified in some of the tactics that Under Armour has already deployed. For instance, the brand recently launched a campaign using the hashtag #IWillWhatIWant, following the launch of the successful digital campaign with the same name (Hulting, 2014). Under Armour's main aim is to promote the message: 'We work for what we get, nothing is free, with the right will, anything is attainable' (Hulting, 2014). The effectiveness of this campaign lies within its focus on tapping into the cultivated community of brand advocates with a relatable message and a unique visual.

The impact of brand passion on sense of community illustrates how brand managers of sports apparel brands could experience certain benefits by leveraging consumers' passion towards the brand, making them feel as though they belong to the brand's community. However, employing such a strategy should be combined with one that is aimed at enhancing attitudinal loyalty. Such a strategy, in turn, could strengthen the effect of consumers' passion for the brand on the development of sense of community. To achieve this, sports brand managers should provide platforms (online in the form of social media and offline in the form of events)

for consumers to share their thoughts and feelings towards the brand with other like-minded consumers. Additionally, sports brand managers should focus on establishing communities that place a strong emphasis on creating a space that consumers feel like they belong, can find validation, and can play a central role in the brand's future; as all of these components help to grow consumer loyalty (L. Lee, 2009). An example of this strategy is represented by Nike's Community Impact website, where the brand promotes community-focused initiatives. For example, in the recent 'We Take a Stand' campaign, Nike supported partnerships to advocate for equality within communities (Nike, 2018).

Considering the finding in relation to the direct effect of brand passion on social media support, it is possible to infer that sports apparel brands managers should pay utmost attention to their responses to consumers on social media. This can be achieved by creating an environment where the brand enables direct communication with the consumer, listens to what the consumer has to say, is open to sharing information with the consumer and does not withhold information. Furthermore, in order to boost consumer social media support, sports brand managers should engage with passionate consumers using sports videos and user-generated content to motivate and inspire them to like, share and take pride in their relationship with the brand. For instance, in their latest campaigns to interact with consumers on social media, Puma worked with singer and official brand ambassador Selena Gomez and social media celebrity Kylie Jenner to engage with and gain support from consumers, especially among the young generations (Puma, 2018).

Moreover, considering the results on the influence of brand passion on price insensitivity, this study suggests that sports brand managers might benefit from investigating the reasoning that underpins consumers' willingness to pay a premium price for the brand – e.g., via conducting ad hoc market research. Finally, based upon the study's finding regarding the impact of brand passion on attitudinal loyalty and then on alternative devaluation, it seems plausible to conclude that sports brand managers need to develop strategies aimed at highlighting the values that the brand offers to consumers. This could be attained, for instance, by leveraging short-term and long-term brand-related benefits in the context of advertising messages, reminding consumers of the reasons why they should choose the brand over others.

## 5.8 Conclusions, limitations and future research directions

This study presented some important findings on how sports apparel brands could achieve significant outcomes (e.g., sense of community, brand advocacy, social media support, price insensitivity and alternative devaluation) by improving attitudinal loyalty and brand passion. To a great extent, implications of these findings extend beyond the context of sports apparel brands, and are likely to apply to any brand that triggers passionate feelings amongst consumers (e.g., brands of technological gadgets, cars, games etc.). Passion corresponds to the earlier phase in an emotional relationship between the brand and the consumer (Albert et al., 2013) and can create a strong and effective emotion-driven mindset which underpins consumer attitudes, and extends far beyond transactional outcomes. However, industry analysts suggest that very few brands (approximately less than 5%) are adequately leveraging consumers' passion to their own advantage (Social@Ogilvy, 2013). Therefore, there is a significant opportunity for managers not only of sports apparel brands, but brands in general, to invest in activities that facilitate and enhance brand passion. These activities will drive business value, and amplify positive outcomes via the establishment of attitudinal loyalty.

As with any research, this study is not exempt from limitations, although these can be turned into avenues for further research. First, although the study explores the effect of brand passion on several outcomes, it bases its results on a single set of data gathered from one single country, i.e., Iran. Moreover, the sample was skewed towards male consumers and younger generations, corresponding to the overall demographic profile of Iranian consumers of sports apparel brands. Therefore, it is desirable to conduct further replications of these studies against different cultural contexts. Second, the study does not consider possible antecedents of brand passion, such as self-expressive brand, brand identification and consumer extraversion and openness (Albert et al., 2013; Bauer et al., 2007; Matzler et al., 2007; Swimberghe et al., 2014). These aspects could be included in future research to draw more conclusive findings on the role of brand passion in the sports apparel brands industry.



Third, the study does not take into account possible moderating factors that could influence the relationship between brand passion and outcomes. For example, it would be worth considering the moderating effect of current purchasing behaviour (i.e., the brand that the respondents have purchased before, as opposed to their 'most favourite brand'). This is a limitation that even previous researches (e.g., Albert et al., 2013) have not controlled for, which warrants further attention in the future. Moreover, while the study argued that brand passion predicts social media support, research has suggested that this impact is effective only when consumers perceive the brand's social media interactions to be fulfilling (e.g., see Pentina et al., 2013). Therefore, future studies could control for the effects of social media interactions, or test whether the interaction moderates the impact of brand passion on social media support. In addition, this study did not account for any variations among the measured constructs at the brand level. Future studies could control for the brand-related variance for improved context generalisability. Furthermore, given the unique characteristics of sports apparel brands, by replicating the results using different contexts (e.g., other types of high-involvement brands, such as sports cars and fashion brands), future research could further explore the power of brand passion. Finally, recent findings have categorised brand passion into two types based on how consumers would internalise the brand into their self-identity: harmonious and obsessive (Swimberghe et al., 2014; Vallerand et al., 2003). Future research could examine these outcome variables in relation to both types of passion.

## Appendix

### Appendix 5.1 Sports apparel brands included in the survey

Nike		Spalding		Superga		Stiga	
Adidas		Hummel		Wilson		Nittaku	
New Balance		Adidas Originals		Jack Wolfskin		And1	
Skechers		Tommy Hilfiger		Molten		Merrell	
Reebok		Dexter		Isostar		Arena	
The North Face		Dockers		Etnies		Altis	
Converse		Scooter		Kinetix		Lumberjack	
Puma		Lafuma		Woly		Gutteri	
Asics		Harley Davidson		Selex		Donic	
Vans		Lotto		Sebago		Butterfly	
Jordan		Voit		Lacoste		Onitsuka Tiger	
Fox		Everlast		Mizuno		DC	
Salomon		Kettler		Cat		Dunlop	
Speedo		Natural World		Givova		Barbour	
Teva		Mc David		Emerica			

# CHAPTER SIX (STUDY 2): THE LINK BETWEEN BRAND ASSOCIATIONS AND EMOTIONAL CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIPS IN BRAND EXTENSIONS

## 6.1 Abstract

**Study 2** reveals that some of the key dimensions of brand associations drive the development of emotional consumer-brand relationships. In addition, the study indicates that brand associations and emotional consumer-brand relationships have a combined effect on consumers' evaluation of brand extensions. These aspects are examined in the context of luxury brands, using data from a population of Iranian consumers gathered via online and face-to-face questionnaires. In more detail, using Covariance-based structural equation modelling (SEM), the study confirms the predicting power of brand image, hedonic attributes, prestigious values and brand uniqueness over emotional consumer-brand relationship. The study also confirms the positive effect of brand associations and emotional consumer-brand relationship on brand extension evaluation. Moreover, the findings reveal the power emotional consumer-brand relationship in mediating the influence of brand associations on brand extension evaluation. The findings also indicate that perceived fit both mediates and moderates the afore-mentioned influence. Accordingly, this study contributes to theory by offering greater insights on the psychological mechanisms occurring in the mind of the consumer that enable the development and maintenance of brand relationships. The findings also indicate that strengthening the hedonic and prestigious values of a brand leads to the enhancement of feelings of attachment, love, passion and self-identification towards the brand, and positive evaluations of the brand extensions.

**Keywords:** Emotional consumer-brand relationship, Brand associations, Brand extension

## 6.2 Introduction

Nowadays, consumers are interested in owning products and brands that provide them with positive thoughts and feelings (Fionda & Moore, 2009; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009; Okonkwo, 2016). Accordingly, studies show that brands are more successful when they develop strategies that focus on establishing positive brand associations—i.e., attributes or benefits that differentiate a brand from competing brands (Bhat & Reddy, 2001)—in the minds of consumers (D. A. Aaker, 2012; Keller, 2001). Researchers have also highlighted the importance of developing personal bonds with consumers, leading to a number of positive implications for the brand (Alnawas & Altarifi, 2015; Fournier, 1998; Sallam, 2014). Namely, such strategies can improve consumer associations with the distinct attributes of the brand and enhance perceptions of the psychological benefits that the brand can offer, such as self-esteem and social approval (see Keller, 1993; Tuškej et al., 2013). The deployment of such strategies typically encourages consumers to become closer to the brand—i.e., purchase or own the brand (Belk et al., 2003; Fournier, 1998), and to develop emotional bonds with it (Esch et al., 2006; Fournier, 1995, 1998; Thomson et al., 2005).

Researchers have suggested that brand relationship and brand perceptions, two important aspects of brand building, are connected. Particularly, studies have shown that brand associations stored in the minds of consumers could potentially trigger the development of brand relationships (e.g., Bhat & Reddy, 2001; Esch et al., 2006). Nonetheless, only limited studies have empirically examined this theoretical link, particularly in the context of strategic brand development. One important example of such areas of research is brand extensions, i.e., the use of established brand names to launch new products (D. A. Aaker & Keller, 1990; Völckner & Sattler, 2006). Brand extensions are widely used to assist businesses in expanding their brands across similar or dissimilar categories, without being constrained by the limitations of organic growth (Hennigs, Wiedmann, Behrens, Klarmann, & Carduck, 2013; Pitta & Katsanis, 1995; Stankeviciute & Hoffmann, 2010). Examples of brand extensions include Virgin Insurance, Lamborghini Smartphones and Louis Vuitton's hotel in Paris. While researchers have shown great interest in certain aspects of brand extensions including their influence on the parent brand's image (Grime, Diamantopoulos, & Smith, 2002; Pina,

Martinez, De Chernatony, & Drury, 2006; Salinas & Pérez, 2009) or the role of perceived fit in brand extension success (Fedorikhin et al., 2008; Nkwocha, Bao, Johnson, & Brotspies, 2005; Yeung & Wyer, 2005), the existing literature is yet to fully investigate the role of brand associations and brand relationships and synergies between the two in the context of consumers' evaluations of brand extensions. In addition, existing studies have not offered insights on whether the emotional bond between consumers and brands could enable brand associations to drive positive brand extension evaluations. Therefore, there are two key questions of theoretical and practical relevance, which require further investigation, as follows: *Does the combined effect of brand associations and emotional consumer-brand relationship influence brand extension evaluation? Does emotional consumer-brand relationship mediate the effect of brand association of brand extension evaluation?*

Answering these questions contributes to advancing the knowledge in the area in two ways. First, existing research has showed that brand associations, such as brand awareness and perceived brand quality, have significant effects on the choices consumers make when evaluating brands (Bei & Chiao, 2001; Botonaki, Polymeros, Tsakiridou, & Mattas, 2006; Hoyer & Brown, 1990). Similarly, existing literature supports that the emotional bonds between consumers and brands, reflected in concepts such as emotional attachment and self-brand identification, play an important role in explaining consumer brand-related decisions (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Chi, Yeh, & Yang, 2009; E. K. MacDonald & Sharp, 2000; Papista & Dimitriadis, 2012; C. W. Park et al., 2010). However, the *combined* role of brand associations and brand-related emotions in the evaluation of brand extensions (and likely synergies of these two aspects) is still underexplored.

Nonetheless, some studies have highlighted that brand-specific factors can influence purchase intentions of brand extensions. For example, Bhat and Reddy (2001) remarked that the associations of the parent brand, and parent brand affect (i.e., consumers' global or overall favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the brand, see Keller, 1993) both play important roles in the evaluation of brand extensions. However, it is important to note that the concept of brand affect is different to emotional consumer-brand relationships. In more detail, brand affect is similar to brand attitude and is simply an outcome of membership in a product category, rather than the attributes of the brand itself (Boush & Loken, 1991; Fiske &

Pavelchak, 1986), whereas emotional consumer-brand bond reflects a consumer-driven positive affective relationship with the brand. Similarly, Czellar (2003) and S.-I. Wu and Lo (2009) only focused on the formation of primary attitudes and their links to brand knowledge. Broniarczyk and Alba (1994) demonstrated the link between brand associations and brand emotions when consumers consider characteristics in the brand extension. However, in their examination, the authors focused on measuring brand associations on the basis of being desired or non-desired. This is in contrast to this study, which conceptualises brand associations using sub components such as brand image and hedonic attributes (see §6.3.1).

A limited number of studies have actually examined the role of emotional consumer-brand bonds in the evaluation of brand extensions, albeit revealing some conceptual and empirical limitations. For instance, Fedorikhin et al. (2008) only focused on emotional attachment; Hagtvedt and Patrick (2009) study was limited to hedonic benefits of the parent brand (i.e., pleasure-based emotions); Hem & Iversen (2003) only focused on the loyalty aspects of 'affective commitment'; and Yeung and Wyer (2005) emphasised brand-elicited affects (i.e., feelings that consumers experience when they encounter a brand, which is different to the emotional bond between the consumer and the brand). Other studies have lacked generalisability due to limited validation of the findings (K. Kim et al., 2014) or the contextual focus (Abosag, Roper, & Hind, 2012).

In light of the above discussions, this study introduces and validates a new theoretical framework that allows a systematic investigation of the role of brand associations and emotional consumer-brand relationships with respect to consumer evaluations of brand extensions. In more detail, using Cross Tabulation analysis and Structural Equation Modelling (Covariance-based approach, J. C. Anderson & Gerbing, 1988), this study:

- i. Tests the power of brand associations (encompassing brand image, hedonic attributes, prestigious values and uniqueness as dimensions) and emotional consumer-brand relationship in explaining the evaluation of brand extensions.

- ii. Conceptualises a new model for emotional consumer-brand relationship, with the recognition of brand love, brand attachment, brand passion and brand identification as the dimensions.
- iii. Tests the mediating role of emotional consumer-brand relationship as well as the mediating and moderating roles of perceived fit in the relationship between brand associations and brand extensions evaluation.

The above aspects are tested in the context of luxury brands. Luxury brands have specific characteristics that make them ideal for the examination of the link between brand associations and emotional consumer-brand relationship. For example, brand extensions are a prevalent strategy in luxury brand marketing (Albrecht et al., 2013; Choi, 1998; Reddy et al., 2009). That is, luxury brands can be extended to a greater degree in comparison to other brands, because of the highly symbolic and hedonic nature of the benefits and values they offer—i.e., their ‘promise of pleasure’ (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009, p. 208). Luxury brands also provide consumers with benefits that are transferable across different product categories (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009, p. 608). Moreover, luxury brands typically entail high levels of expressive and hedonic characteristics (H. J. Choo et al., 2012; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009; Okonkwo, 2016; Tsai, 2005a; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). According to Atwal and Williams (2009, p. 345), luxury brands also offer a combination of ‘emotional’ and ‘cognitive’ values to their consumers, include aesthetics, experiences and entertainment.

In particular, this study focuses on a context in which consumers’ interest in luxury brands is constantly growing—i.e., Iran, and reveals interesting novel behavioural patterns that are worth understanding for many global brands and investors. To date, studies relevant to luxury brands have typically been conducted in Western contexts, such as the USA e.g., Tynan et al. (2010) and Europe (e.g., Hieke, 2010), or in South East Asian countries, such as Singapore (e.g., Phau & Prendergast, 2000) and South Korea (e.g., Jung Jung, Y. Lee, H. Kim, & Yang, 2014), whereas Iran and the Middle East are considerably less understood. Iran’s luxury brand market is worthy of examination given that luxury-brand marketing is more often than not an international practice, with brand managers investing globally. Specifically, in Iran there is an increasing consumer interest in ‘luxury’ and ‘luxury lifestyle’, which has given rise to the visibility of the luxury market as a whole (Takali et al., 2012; Teimourpour & Heidarzadeh

Hanzaee, 2011). This is made evident in businesses offering consumers in Iran a wide range of internationally prestigious luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton, Versace, Calvin Klein and Prada (Jafari & Süerdem, 2012; Teimourpour & Heidarzadeh Hanzaee, 2014).

Comprehensively, this study contributes to the existing theory in various ways. First, it sheds light on the importance of brand associations in the development of positive emotional consumer-brand relationships, and how the connection between these two aspects subsequently drives consumers' evaluations of brand extensions. Second, this study, building upon the works of Bhat and Reddy (2001) and Broniarczyk and Alba (1994), highlights the importance of the intangible attributes of brands in the success of brand extensions. More specifically, this study identifies a pathway through which emphasising the hedonic and prestigious values can lead to the enhancement of feelings of attachment, love, passion and self-identification towards the brand. Third, by examining the role of perceived fit (i.e., consumer's perceived fit between the brand extension and the brand's main products or services, DelVecchio & Smith, 2005), this study adds to the literature on perceived fit. That is, it reveals that consumers tend to see the brand extensions, that fit better into the parent brand's line of products, more positively, especially when they have an emotional bond with that parent brand.

Accordingly, this study contributes significantly to managerial practice by providing practical insights on how to pursue marketing objectives such as positive evaluation and quality beliefs of brand extensions (Bottomley & Holden, 2001). Additionally, this study contributes to the strategies that focus on leveraging the existing associations towards the parent brand for the purpose of reinforcing the development of brand relationships (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009; J.-W. Park et al., 2002). In particular, the study places emphasis on: i) the importance of showcasing the inherent hedonic and emotional characteristics of the brand to enhance the development of emotional consumer-brand relationships; ii) the significance of the brand's symbolic and hedonic resources (e.g., such as exclusivity, authenticity, and prestige) in the creation of cues for brand extensions strategies; and iii) the importance of researching the values consumers gain from the brand in the development of strong brand relationships.



## 6.3 Conceptual background

### 6.3.1 Brand associations

In this study, the conceptualisation of brand associations draws upon the seminal work of Bhat and Reddy (2001) to emphasise the dynamic role of these associations in the evaluation of brand extensions. It is important to note that while brand associations (as a general concept) might include positive and negative aspects (e.g., see Pitta & Katsanis), this study focuses on positive associations that are established in the minds of the consumers with respect to the parent brand. Brand association encompasses *brand image*, *hedonic attributes*, *prestigious values* and *uniqueness* as its dimensions. These dimensions, if successfully transferred from the parent brand to the brand extension, may enhance consumer's evaluation of the extension. A detailed discussion of the literature relating to the various components of brand association is provided in §3.9.2. The following paragraphs briefly review each component.

*Brand image* is the specific set of associations that allow the brand to differentiate itself from others (Bhat & Reddy, 2001). Similarly, Keller (2003) describes brand image as the network of brand-related information that consumers retain in memory that ultimately represent the 'perceptions and preferences for a brand' (Keller, 2012, p. 143). Brand image and the related memory associations are pivotal in the creation of strong and favourable points-of-difference for the brand (e.g., price premiums, price elasticity responses or communication channel effectiveness), all of which serve as sources of brand equity (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003; Keller, 2003).

*Hedonic attributes* refer to benefits such as the feelings of fun, pleasure, and enjoyment a consumer may gain through owning or consuming a brand (Chandon, Wansink, & Laurent,

2000). Hedonic attributes may take the form of experiences, sensory values (e.g., aesthetics, design, ambiance, feel) and emotions (e.g., pleasure, enjoyment, fun, excitement, adventure, and humour, Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999; Smith & Colgate, 2007). Studies have confirmed that some of the pleasure-seeking attributes and self-enhancing values that brands offer drive consumers to develop emotional bonds with brands (e.g., Escalas & Bettman, 2003b; Thomson et al., 2005).

*Brand prestige* relates to the hedonic and social aspect of brand values (Baek, Kim, & Yu, 2010; Steenkamp, Batra, & Alden, 2003). Existing research has showed that consumers may use the relatively high status of a brand's positioning to convey and improve their social status (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999; O'Cass & Frost, 2002; Steenkamp et al., 2003). The perception of brand prestige is also influenced by a specific set of attributes or qualities that a brand possess (e.g., Dubois & Czellar, 2002; Dubois, Czellar, & Laurent, 2005); a higher price (e.g., Lichtenstein, Ridgway, & Netemeyer, 1993; Truong, McColl, & Kitchen, 2009; K. P. Wiedmann et al., 2009); or the influence of reference groups (Bearden & Etzel, 1982). Studies have further confirmed that a high level of prestigious values (perceived by the consumer) positively impacts purchase intentions, especially when the brand's product category involves a high level of social value, as per the instance of luxury brands (Yin Wong & Merrilees, 2005).

*Uniqueness* is defined as 'the degree to which customers feel the brand is different from competing brands—how distinct it is relative to competitors' (Netemeyer et al., 2004, p. 211). Brand uniqueness represents the scarcity value of a brand (W.-Y. Wu et al., 2012), which consumers often use in order to differentiate themselves from others in social contexts (Fromkin & Snyder, 1980; C. W. Park, MacInnis, & Priester, 2008; Tian et al., 2001). While studies have confirmed the link between unique attributes, consumers' self-identification with the brand and consumer bonds (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Kressmann et al., 2006; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012), the explicit role of uniqueness in the development of consumer-brand relationships is under-examined.

### *6.3.2 Emotional consumer-brand relationship*

A detailed review of the existing literature on consumer-brand relationship appears in §3.7. In summary, seminal studies have shown that consumers ‘feel’ and ‘relate’ to brands differently (Blackston et al., 1993; Fournier, 1998). While these feelings have been previously studied and measured in the form of favourability or likability towards brands (Boush & Loken, 1991; Broniarczyk & Alba, 1994), existing research has also labelled these feelings as *brand relationships* (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Ding & Tseng, 2015; Fournier, 1998). Brand relationships and their significant role in consumer decision-making have shown to be pivotal in theory and practice. For instance, Fournier (1998) validated the relationship proposition in the consumer-brand context. Fournier (1998) drew upon the findings of the theory of *Triangle of Love* (Sternberg, 1986, 1997) and consumer self-image connections (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; C. W. Park, Jaworski, & MacInnis, 1986; Sirgy, 1982) and discussed brand relationships as individually crafted bonds that consumers use in powerful ways that serve to authenticate and create their ‘selves’. Fedorikhin and Cole (2004) demonstrated that these emotional bonds may go beyond perceptive consumer attitudes in determining purchase intentions, willingness to pay, WOM and forgiveness. Keller (2012) drew upon the notions of the brand building pyramid (Keller, 2001, 2009) and suggested ‘brand resonance’—i.e., ‘the intensity or depth of the psychological bond’ (Keller, 2009, p. 144) as an important outcome of brand loyalty and lasting consumer-brand relationships. Tsai (2011a) showed that brand relationships are a manifestation of the ‘holistic consumer experience’—i.e., a combination of utilitarian, emotional and symbolic values gained by owning the brand that drives brand loyalty (p. 521).

Comprehensive conceptualisations of brand relationships are often multi-faceted, and encompass cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects (e.g., Batra et al., 2012; Keller, 2001, 2009; C. W. Park et al., 2006). Considering that this study’s framework incorporates brand association as the cognitive perceptions about the brand, and brand extension evaluation as belonging to the behavioural responses of consumers, there is no need to theorise consumer-brand relationship in a tripartite way as it is more theoretically rigorous to focus only on the emotional aspects.

Existing research has taken a particular interest in the role of emotions in the strategies of consumer-brand relationship development (see §3.6.1 for a detailed discussion). In summary,

studies have proposed that effective brand-building approaches leverage the positive consumer emotions towards brands by incorporating interactive, consumer-centric and story-based branding strategies (Gobē, 2001; Leventhal & Papadatos, 2006; Roberts, 2005). Specifically, scholars have recommended the use of emotional narratives (i.e., a display of consumers' perceptions of an ideal life and achievable expectations) in the creation of strategies focused on engaging with consumers on an emotional level (Belk & Tumbat, 2005; Hanlon, 2006; Muniz & Schau, 2005; Thompson et al., 2006). Through these strategies, it is proposed that brands will be able to trigger brand-specific emotions in consumers such as: i) feelings of oneness with the brand (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012); ii) emotional attachment (Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011); and iii) excitement and passion towards the brand (Albert et al., 2013; Bauer et al., 2007). Studies have also incorporated these emotions in the conceptualisation of inclusive frameworks of brand relationships. For example, Hwang and Kandampully (2012) confirmed that Fournier's (1998) emotional elements of brand relationship quality (i.e., self-concept connection, emotional attachment and brand love) have the power to drive consumer's loyalty towards luxury brands. Among these elements, however, emotional attachment showed the strongest effect. In another study, Loureiro et al., (2012) employed three concepts (i.e., self-expressive brand, brand attachment and brand love) to examine whether the emotional connections between consumers and car brands would influence their brand commitment and brand loyalty. However, the authors did not incorporate these concepts into an inclusive concept of brand relationship. Rather, the authors conceptualised brand attachment and self-expressive brand as concepts reflecting brand-self connection, equally influencing brand love. Moreover, the authors' focus on car brands as the gauging context may not have truly captured the development of emotions and love towards a brand, considering the mostly non-hedonic nature of car brands and the low likelihood of consumers' self-identification with the brand, as suggested by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006).

More recently, Hudson et al., (2015) incorporated Fournier's (1998) concept of brand relationship quality in the context of festival music brands, and confirmed that brands, by placing emphasis on the emotional factors in their communications (i.e., love/passion and self-connection), can effectively enhance the development of emotional attachment with their consumers and consequently create higher quality brand relationships. In light of these

findings, it is reasonable to argue that four concepts collectively reflect the positive emotional aspects of brand relationships: *brand attachment*, *brand passion*, *brand love*, and *brand identification*. This conceptualisation of emotional consumer-brand relationship draws on the theory of *Triangle of Love* (Sternberg, 1986), *Attachment Theory* (Ainsworth, 1969; Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bowlby, 1958, 1960), *Self-Expansion Theory* (A. Aron & Aron, 1986; A. Aron & Westbay, 1996; E. N. Aron & Aron, 1996) and *Theory of Relational Cohesion* (Lawler et al., 2000; Lawler & Yoon, 1996). The following sections expands upon the theoretical significance of these dimensions.

*Brand love*, as discussed in §3.8.1, is defined as a consumer's emotional bond with a brand, characterised by the 'positive evaluation of the brand', and 'declarations of love for the brand' (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006, p. 81). Albert et al. (2008) and Albert and Merunka (2013) offered a more inclusive conceptualisation of brand love, involving concepts such as long-term relationship, self-brand connections, memories, pleasure, attraction, uniqueness, and willingness to declare the love. In theory, brand love is associated with important brand outcomes, such as loyalty (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Drennan et al., 2015), positive WOM (Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012; Sallam, 2014), and willingness to pay a price premium (Karjaluoto et al., 2016). In the context of luxury brands, Ismail and Spinelli (2012) revealed that brand love leads to strong WOM.

*Brand attachment*, as discussed in §3.8.3, is the psychological state of mind through which a strong connection is developed between a consumer and a brand, which leads to a strong willingness (from both parties) to allocate resources to the relationship (C. W. Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005). Belaid and Behi (2011) asserted that brand attachment expresses the consumer's desire to maintain the bond with the brand. Importantly, brand attachment has the power to influence: i) brand purchase intentions (Fedorikhin et al., 2008; Vlachos & Vrechopoulos, 2012); ii) brand loyalty (Thomson et al., 2005; Vlachos, 2012; Vlachos et al., 2010); iii) willingness to pay a premium price (Thomson et al., 2005); iv) positive WOM (Vlachos et al., 2010); and v) willingness to forgive brand mishaps (Fedorikhin et al., 2008). In the context of luxury brands, existing literature has validated the significant role of brand attachment (Brun et al., 2008; Hanslin & Rindell, 2014; Jean-Noël Kapferer & Bastien, 2009) in predicting consumer loyalty towards luxury brands (So et al., 2013).

In line with the discussions in §3.8.5 and §5.3, *brand passion* can be described as a consumer's affective and extremely positive attitude towards a brand (Bauer et al., 2007; McEwen, 2005). This positive attitude is typically expressed through feelings of 'excitation, infatuation and obsession' towards the brand (Albert et al., 2013, p. 2). It is also at the core of strong and high quality consumer-brand relationships (Fournier, 1998). From a theoretical perspective, brand passion concerns deeper and more distinct levels of brand connections, particularly in comparison to other relational concepts such as brand love and brand attachment. Specifically, brand passion embeds an obsessive and dedicative nature (Albert et al., 2013; Swimberghe et al., 2014), which is driven by desires for the brand's prestige, uniqueness, self-expressive and hedonic benefits (Bauer et al., 2007). Existing studies have revealed that brand passion drives several important outcomes, including brand loyalty (e.g., Rohra & Sharma, 2016; Whang et al., 2004), willingness to pay a premium price (Albert et al., 2013; Bauer et al., 2007), and brand evangelism (Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004; Rozanski et al., 1999).

*Brand identification* is described as 'a consumer's perceived state of oneness with a brand' (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012, p. 407). This psychological state consists of perceiving, feeling and valuing a psychosomatic connection with the brand (Lam, Ahearne, Mullins, Hayati, & Schillewaert, 2013). The importance of consumer self-identification with the brand in the development of brand relationship can be discussed by drawing on various areas of branding literature. For example, Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) drew on the theories of social identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Kleine et al., 1993) and determined that brands, by offering *identity similarity*, *identity distinctiveness* and *identity prestige*, satisfy consumers' self-definitional needs. The authors believed that these non-product aspects of the brand are necessary in the formation of consumer-brand relationships—a notion also supported by Brown, Barry, Dacin, and Gunst (2005).

Furthermore, Albert and Merunka (2013) implied that a consumer's tendency to self-identify with brands is a key element towards the development of brand relationship, as it indicates the consumer's trust in the brand. Other studies have argued that through the process of self-identification, consumers are able to integrate their favoured brand's identity with their own (A. Aron & Aron, 1986; Belk, 1988; Wallace et al., 2014), which ultimately prompts the development of brand relationships (Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Similarly, in

the context of luxury brands, Tsai (2005a) confirmed that consumers' personal orientation towards consumption of a luxury brand (which includes consumers' perception of the brand's congruity with their internal selves) affects the emotional values expected from the brand. Moreover, Hwang and Kandampully (2012) confirmed that when consumers perceive a luxury brand as an expression of important parts of their selves, it encourages them to form a strong feeling toward the luxury brand, as it is reflective of their self-image. More recent studies have yielded support for the important role of brand self-identification in the development of emotions towards brands (e.g., Astakhova et al., 2017; Japutra & Molinillo, 2017).

In light of the discussions in §6.3.1 and §6.3.2, the study utilises the two concepts of brand association (and its dimensions including brand image, hedonic attributes, brand prestige and uniqueness) and emotional consumer-brand relationship (including brand love, brand attachment, brand passion and brand identification as its dimensions) to develop a framework that explains how consumers' perceptions about a luxury brand, as stored in their memory, drive the formation of an emotional bond with the brand. The framework further examines how the combined effect of brand association and emotional consumer-brand relationship could affect consumers' evaluation of brand extensions.

## **6.4 Hypotheses development**

### *6.4.1 Brand association and brand extension evaluation*

The literature on brand extensions has highlighted the importance of the various cognitive and perceptual factors in the success of brand extensions. For example, Bhat and Reddy (2001) argued that when consumers encounter a new product, they are likely to evaluate it based on both their existing knowledge of the product category, as well as the attributes of the parent brand. In addition, brand associations have been found to be strongly effective when consumers evaluate brand extensions, especially when the consumer has a high level of knowledge about the parent brand (Broniarczyk & Alba, 1994; Keller, 1993; Krishnan, 1996). Therefore, brands often leverage their strong and positive position in consumers'

minds (e.g., established by the brand's previous well-known products), in order to expand the business into new product categories (Albrecht et al., 2013; Chadha & Husband, 2010). Existing literature on luxury and fashion brands has also suggested that consumers rely on brand associations to develop psychological perceptions about a brand, allowing them to use these associations as indicative cues to comfortably link brand extensions to the parent brand (Hill & H.-H. Lee, 2015) and consequently presume quality and/or benefits of the brand's extension prior to purchase (Bhat & Reddy, 2001; Broniarczyk & Alba, 1994). As a result, the successful transferral of brand associations to the brand extension enhances the positive evaluation of a brand extension. However, there is also evidence documenting the likely impact for each individual dimension of brand associations that this study considers, as follow.

Brand image is believed to influence the perceived quality of a brand before the actual purchase (Dillon, Madden, Kirmani, & Mukherjee, 2001). Perceived quality is considered to have both a significant and positive impact on consumer evaluations of brand extensions (D. A. Aaker & Keller, 1990). The hedonic attributes of parent brands influence the way consumers think and feel about the brand (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004) and trigger the development of consumer feelings towards the brand (Albrecht et al., 2013; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Hedonic attributes can also be extended into new products, even in dissimilar categories (Bhat & Reddy, 2001; Yeung & Wyer, 2005). Furthermore, the extent to which consumers find a parent brand to be 'likeable' and 'relatable', subsequently impacts the extent to which new brand extensions are positively evaluated (Völckner & Sattler, 2006, p. 32, 2007). In relation to prestigious values, studies have confirmed that the type of 'value' a brand provides (i.e., prestige and/or functional values) impacts the formation of consumer attitudes towards a brand extension (Lye et al., 2001). For example, prestigious values may influence the purchase decision of the extension by prompting consumer's perception of quality (Albrecht et al., 2013; Baek et al., 2010). Furthermore, brand uniqueness describes the interpersonal or extrinsic benefits of brand consumption that are pivotal when consumers communicate with other consumers about their experiences with the brand (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). The brand extension could also inherit such benefits (e.g., see Albrecht et al., 2013).



In the context of brand extensions and luxury brands, Reddy et al. (2009) suggested that having an 'appropriate symbolic muscle' (e.g., consumers' perception about the brand's originality) is a key factor when extending the brand into new categories. In a more recent study, Albrecht et al., (2013) suggested that the hedonic, prestige and unique values of luxury brands, if accompanied by a high degree of luxuriousness (i.e., consumers recognise the brand as a luxury brand), have the power to positively influence consumers' attitude toward brand extensions.

In light of the above, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H1:** Brand association positively influences consumers' evaluations of a brand extension.

#### *6.4.2 Emotional consumer-brand relationships and brand extension evaluation*

Fedorikhin et al. (2008) demonstrated that emotions are more effective than attitudes and perceived fit in predicting consumers' reactions to brand extensions. In particular, Fedorikhin et al. (2008) confirmed that emotions towards brands determine the extent to which a consumer categorises the extension as 'a member of the parent brand family' (p. 281). However, Fedorikhin et al. (2008) conceptualised consumer-brand emotions only as brand attachment and did not consider the likely differences in this effect for low levels of perceived fit with the parent brand. Similarly, Hagtvedt and Patrick (2009) focused on luxury brands and showed that the promise of pleasure (a hedonic potential) is a key success factor for a luxury brand's extendibility. The authors specifically posited a 'feelings-based pathway' to brand extension evaluation, indicating that the hedonic potential of a luxury brand is 'applicable, and thus transportable, to a wide variety of product categories, leading to favourable brand extension evaluations' (p. 616). However, the authors' framework was limited to one aspect of the development of brand relationships—i.e., the hedonic benefits of the parent brand (pleasure-based emotions). Hem and Iversen (2003) found that consumer's affective relationship towards the parent brand might reduce the risk of negative evaluations of brand extensions; however, their focus was on affective loyalty, rather than emotional relationships. Specifically, Hem and Iversen (2003) used the 'affective commitment' scale developed by

Allen and Meyer (1990), albeit focusing only on the loyalty aspects of 'affective commitment' in their selection of the measurement items. Arguably, this assumption resulted in the neglect of other relevant aspects, such as individual identification, involvement and membership enjoyment with the brand.

Yeung and Wyer (2005) argued that the emotions that consumers experience when using a brand has a significant influence on their impression of the brand extension based on the parent brand. More specifically, when a brand induces emotional reactions, consumers form an initial impression of the brand's extension that is based on these reactions. This impression impacts consumers 'evaluations' of the extension. While insightful, the focus of this research was on brand-elicited affects, considered to be 'spontaneous' and 'subjective' feelings that consumers experience when they encounter a brand (Wyer Jr, Clore, & Isbell, 1999), or brand related feelings that consumers experience for other reasons (Yeung & Wyer, 2005). Therefore, these aspects are conceptually misaligned with the emotions consumers actively develop towards a brand (in the form of an affective relationship). Another study conducted by K. Kim et al. (2014) showed that brand relationship quality (a concept originally developed by Fournier, 1998) significantly improves brand extension evaluations. However, the validated effect only seemed to apply when the overall fit between an extension and the parent brand was moderately low, thus limiting the generalisability of these findings.

In the context of luxury brands, the affective benefits consumers expect from a brand are argued to be a key enabler of consumers' intention to purchase the brand's products (Tsai, 2005b). Furthermore, existing research has suggested that, although brand extensions (especially when extended into a dissimilar category) could be perceived by consumers as the brand engaging in 'deviant' behaviour, emotions towards the parent brand could alleviate this perception (Ahluwalia, 2008; J.-W. Park & Kim, 2001). More specifically, the weight of emotional consumer-brand relationships (i.e., the quality or strength of brand relationships) may affect the way in which a parent brand's claimed benefits with respect to its extensions are evaluated by consumers (J.-W. Park et al., 2002). Furthermore, consumers with strong emotional consumer-brand relationships have been shown to view the brand's extensions as 'in-group' members of the brand's family, leading to a more favourable evaluation (Brewer, 1991; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Perdue, Dovidio, Gurtman, & Tyler, 1990).

In light of the above, it is reasonable to argue that these consumers, as a result of feeling connected and empowered, pay the brand back by supporting the brand and positively evaluating the brand's future products. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H2:** Emotional consumer-brand relationships positively influence consumers' evaluations of a brand extension.

### *6.4.3 Brand association and emotional consumer-brand relationship*

Several studies including Keller (2001), Wyner (1999), Dyson, Farr, and Hollis (1996) and Chang and Chieng (2006) have concluded that successful brands create a special relationship with their consumers by offering a unique combination of brand and product associations. In addition, D. A. Aaker (1996) and Brown and Dacin (1997) showed that associations drive self-expressive benefits for consumers, which are a type of relationship benefit. These studies suggested a significant link between the concept of brand association and emotional consumer-brand relationship. Additionally, existing findings have suggested that all individual dimensions of brand association (i.e., brand image, uniqueness, prestige and hedonism) yield possible influences on the development of emotional consumer-brand relationship, as follows.

C. W. Park et al. (2008) believed that brand image could help consumers decide which brand is more likely to effectively satisfy their utilitarian needs. They also suggested that reliable and functional performance enhances a brand's image and influences the consumer's emotional bond with the brand by the 'enriching the self' mechanism. Additionally, D. A. Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) and Blackston (2000) suggested that brand image (if managed properly) aids the development of brand relationships, especially if it is perceived by consumers to be consistent with their self-image (Farquhar, 1989). Fournier (1998) also noted that brand image tends to 'legitimise' the brand as an active 'relationship partner' (p. 344).

Consumers are interested in the benefits a brand offers them that are unique and non-existent in other competitors (Tian et al., 2001). Chitturi et al. (2008) and Fournier (1998) suggested that consumers use these benefits to cultivate a sense of togetherness and self-connection with the brand. Similarly, Thomson et al. (2005) showed that consumers are interested in developing an emotional attachment only with a few selected brands that provide them with the opportunity to turn their desire for self-uniqueness and affiliation with in-groups into a reality. More specifically, by affiliating themselves with a brand that is perceived to be unique in comparison to other brands, consumers are able to create a bond with the brand which represents their identity (Baruch-Runyon, VanZandt, & Elliott, 2009). Drawing upon the *Theory of Optimal Distinctiveness* (Brewer, 1991), which proposes that individuals join moderately inclusive and distinct groups to satisfy the need for inclusion and the need for differentiation, this study also suggests that consumers' perception of uniqueness towards a brand is related to the development of emotional consumer-brand relationships.

As Goldsmith et al., (1996, as cited in O'Cass & Frost, 2002) asserted: 'one important motivating force that influences a wide range of consumer behaviour is the desire to gain status or social prestige from the acquisition and consumption of goods' (p. 309). More specifically, consumers express their identities by associating themselves with brands that are perceived to be prestigious (Belk, 1988) in order to gain the exclusivity, respect, and status that the brand encompasses (R. Elliott & Davies, 2006). This notion is echoed in the *Social Identity Theory* (Tajfel & Turner, 2004), which states that individuals embody the characteristics of social identity that help them to achieve positive aspirational goals. In fact, Baruch-Runyon et al. (2009) confirmed brands as social identities that consumer feel a bond and attachment to, as a result of self-identification with the brand's prestigious characteristics.

Hedonic benefits primarily relate to the aesthetic, experiential, and enjoyment-related advantages of brands (Chitturi et al., 2008). Accordingly, hedonic brands are those that excel in offering such benefits (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Fournier (1998) noted that hedonic offerings enable consumers to cultivate a sense of cohesion, oneness, and emotional self-connection with the brand. Several other studies have also suggested that such symbolic and

hedonic benefits could lead to feelings of love for the brand (e.g., Chandon et al., 2000; Vlachos et al., 2010) and the development of a personalised relationship between the consumer and the brand (C. W. Park et al., 2006).

In the context of luxury brands, the importance of creating symbolic meanings for consumers, such as prestigious benefits, has been documented (e.g., see Dubois & Czellar, 2002; Jinsoo Hwang & Han, 2014). In addition, scholars believe that luxury consumers nowadays base their purchases on the self-expressive attributes of a brand—attributes that help them reflect their personal and social value (Q. Bian & Forsythe, 2012). Studies have suggested that offering such values helps luxury brands to develop a sense of emotional closeness with their consumers, leading to the development of consumer-brand relationship (H. J. Choo et al., 2012). Based on these reflections, this study hypothesises that brand associations directly influence emotional consumer-brand relationship. Put more formally:

**H3:** Brand associations positively influence emotional consumer-brand relationships

#### *6.4.4 The mediating role of emotional consumer-brand relationship*

Prior studies have indicated that emotions towards brands can influence the processing of brand-related information. Accordingly, emotions can moderate the relative weight that consumers give to varied information about the brand when making a purchase decision (Adaval, 2001, 2003; Choi, 1998; Yeung & Wyer, 2005). This gains further significance when the evaluation of existing brands is based on their hedonic attributes (Voss, Spangenberg, & Grohmann, 2003). In fact, Knight and Young Kim (2007) argued that the emphasis consumers place on certain brand attributes, such as uniqueness, has several implications for brand outcomes (such as purchase intentions), which can be further emphasised when taking into consideration the 'emotional value' perceived by consumers (N. Kumar, Scheer, & Steenkamp, 1995; Morris, Woo, Geason, & Kim, 2002; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). For instance, when consumers have had positive experiences with a brand that arise from positive emotional bonds (Brakus et al., 2009; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010), any information about the brand's new extension products may be assessed more

favourably (Fedorikhin et al., 2008). Therefore, one might argue that the relationships consumers develop with a brand may, in fact, facilitate the evaluative process of purchasing brand extensions by the virtue of consumer's emotional feelings towards the brand (Yeung & Wyer, 2005). More specifically, the influence of brand associations (e.g., the effects of the brand's prestige or hedonic benefits, including excitement) could be reinforced by the pre-established feelings for the parent brand, which may concurrently influence perceptions about the quality or performance of the brand's extensions. For instance, consumers may have deeply rooted sentiments for Rolex, because it reminds them of the memories of their grandfather wearing his Rolex watch every day. Thus, as those consumers develop an evolving understanding of the brand's attributes (e.g., the globally renowned image and prestige), their rational process of judging or evaluating any future Rolex brand extensions (e.g., Rolex Cologne) could be affected by their profound emotional bond with the parent brand.

The influence of emotional brand relationships and the rational process of evaluating brand information can also be explained by drawing upon seminal studies on the psychology of affect, cognition, mood and judgment (Bower, 1981; Forgas, 1995, 2008). These studies proposed that the emotions consumers experience at the time of owning a product increases the availability of the information in their memory corresponding to that particular period of time (Bower, 1981). These pieces of information are selectively encoded into their memory, and are much more likely to be recalled later and used as a basis for evaluation (Adaval, 2001; Banerjee, Wang, Mishra, & Singh, 2010). Accordingly, when evaluating products based on hedonic criteria, consumers assign greater importance to certain attributes that are more consistent with their existing emotional affiliations (Hassenzahl, 2006; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Emotions that are embedded in consumer bonds with brands are in fact part of an established 'relational schema' held by consumers, and are closely linked with the information stored in their memory about the brand, which can be activated upon exposure to a relevant brand cue (such as the brand's extensions, Baldwin, 1992; Berscheid & Reis, 1998; J.-W. Park et al., 2002). Accordingly, these emotions are used as 'information' (for evaluating different brands) in times of extensions evaluations, regardless of parent brand-extension category similarity (K. Kim et al., 2014; Yeung & Wyer, 2005).

Based on the above discussions, this study hypothesises following:

**H4:** Emotional consumer-brand relationship mediates the relationship between brand associations and consumers' evaluation of a brand extension.

#### *6.4.5 The mediating role of perceived fit*

Bridges et al., (2000) define perceived fit as the degree to which a consumer perceives brand associations to 'fit' with those of the brand extension. Existing studies have provided support for the significant role of perceived fit in consumer evaluations of brand extensions (D. A. Aaker & Keller, 1990; C. W. Park, Milberg, & Lawson, 1991). That is, consumers evaluate brand extensions with higher perceived fit more favourably (D. A. Aaker & Keller, 1990; Ahluwalia, 2008; Barone, Miniard, & Romeo, 2000). Furthermore, the degree of perceived fit greatly determines the categorisation, which refers to consumer's attempt to relate a given brand extension to other products affiliated with the parent brand (D. A. Aaker & Keller, 1990; Farquhar, 1989; Herr, Farquhar, & Fazio, 1996).

Perceived fit also assists the transferal of affects and emotions from the parent brand into the brand extension, a transferal which studies have proposed to occur during the categorisation process (Abosag et al., 2012; Broniarczyk & Alba, 1994; Fedorikhin et al., 2008; Isen & Daubman, 1984). This can be explained using the argument that a more 'similar' brand extension (i.e., belonging to the same product category of the brand, Yeo & J. Park, 2006) can leverage consumer's 'emotional readiness', thus influencing their cognitive and attitudinal responses (Fedorikhin et al., 2008; Holmes, 2000). Particularly, in product categories where hedonic aspects comprise the core benefits of consumption, such as luxury brands, perceived fit can facilitate the transferal of hedonic and emotional benefits of the parent brand to the extension (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009).

Using the above argument, the study justifies a significant interfering role for perceived fit in the relationship between brand associations, emotional consumer-brand relationship and

brand extension evaluation, in the form of both mediation and moderation effects. Studies, such as Barone (2005) and Hagtvedt and Patrick (2009), have discussed the influences of emotions on information processing, suggesting that the effect of emotions on extension evaluation is mediated by perceptions of extension similarity. Contrastingly, other studies (e.g., Völckner & Sattler, 2006; Völckner & Sattler, 2007) have suggested that the link between high levels of parent-brand conviction (i.e., 'favourable predispositions toward the brand' and consumers' evaluation of brand extension's attributes) can be moderated by the level of parent brand-extension fit (Völckner & Sattler, 2006, p. 23). Therefore, it is proposed that:

**H1a:** Perceived fit mediates the relationship between brand associations and consumers' evaluation of a brand extension.

**H1b:** Perceived fit moderates the relationship between brand associations and consumers' evaluation of a brand extension.

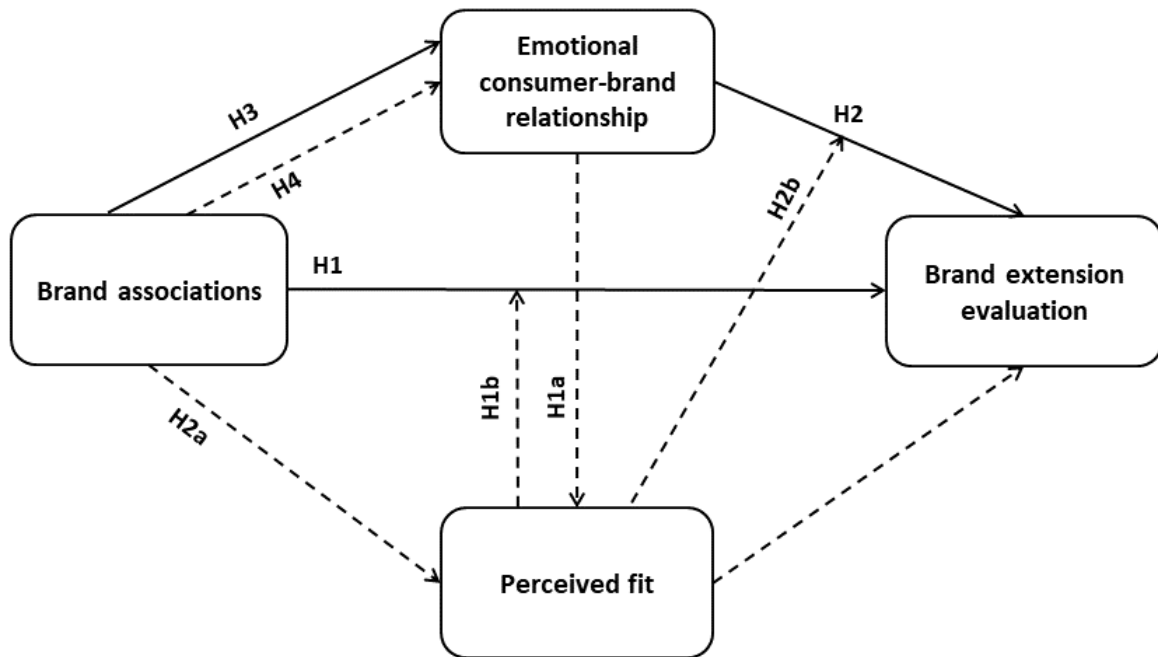
**H2a:** Perceived fit mediates the relationship between emotional consumer-brand relationship and consumers' evaluation of a brand extension.

**H2b:** Perceived fit moderates the relationship between emotional consumer-brand relationship and consumers' evaluation of a brand extension.

Figure 6.1 presents the resulting conceptual framework, to be tested empirically via structural equation modelling.

**Figure 6.1** Research model





## 6.5 Methodology

### 6.5.1 Sampling and data collection

The study used a convenience sampling approach, gathering responses via online and face-to-face surveys. With respect to the online surveys (created using Qualtrics), a web link was sent to the thesis author's personal and professional network via email and/or social media websites (including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn) and encouraging respondents to distribute the link to their own networks, to maximise the reach across demographics. With respect to the face-to-face surveys, the thesis's author distributed hard copies of the questionnaires via intercept across multiple locations in the city of Mashhad (second most populated city in Iran, UNdata, 2017). The selected locations included luxury leather stores and jewellery shops located in the city's busiest shopping malls, with the purpose of increasing the probability of inviting respondents who were interested in luxury brands. Respondents were required to be over 18 years old. The survey questionnaires distributed face-to-face were completed and returned immediately to enable the thesis author to clarify any queries or concerns about the questions, in order to maximising response rates.

Combined, the questionnaires distributed online and face-to-face returned 210 responses, out of which 189 were deemed usable, as the removed responses were either incomplete (i.e., more than 50% of questions unanswered) or invalid (i.e., all items with a similar response, or illogical/inconsistent responses). This is an adequate sample size for covariance-based structural equation modelling- SEM (Wolf, Harrington, Clark, & Miller, 2013). Finally, the data collection process took place during the months of December 2015 to January 2016.

Table 6.1 illustrates the descriptive profile of the study's sample.

**Table 6.1** Demographic profile

<b>Profile</b>	<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Age</b>	18 to 25	33	17.5
	26 to 35	117	62.1
	36 to 45	30	15.3
	Above 46	9	4
<b>Education</b>	High School	3	1.7
	Diploma	16	8.5
	Undergraduate	94	49.7
	Post Graduate	76	40.1
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	113	59.3
	Married	76	39.5
<b>Occupation</b>	Professional	10	5.1
	Business owner	23	12.4
	Student	6	3.4
	Housewife	42	22.0
	Salaried employee (public sector)	36	19.2
	Salaried employee (private sector)	40	20.9
	Other	26	13.6
	Retired	6	3.4
<b>Gender</b>	Male	85	44.6
	Female	103	54.2
<b>Household size</b>	One	20	10.7
	Two	58	30.5
	Three	51	27.1
	Four and more	60	31.0
<b>Number of children</b>	None	39	20.3
	One	60	31.6
	Two	45	23.7
	Three and more	45	23.7
<b>Annual household income</b>	< AUD 7,500	56	29.4
	Between AUD 7,500 and AUD 12,500	78	41.2
	> AUD 12,500	56	29.4

As demonstrated in Table 6.1, the majority of respondents (62%) were aged between 26 and 35. This age cohort is in line with the characteristics of the demographic profile of the Iranian consumers of luxury brands, as implied by many sources (e.g., see Exportiamo, 2016; HKTDC, 2016; Paivar & Sadeghzadeh, 2015; Reuters, 2016). Almost 90% of the sample had obtained university-level education, approximately 54% were female, and nearly 60% declared to be single. Respondents also had diverse occupations, with approximately 40% indicating that they were salaried employees working in either the private or public sector, and 22% indicating that they were housewives. Approximately 30% declared to be living in a household with 1 or more occupants, 27% with 2 or more occupants, and 31% with 3 or more occupants. 31% of the respondents declared to have one child, while 47% had two or more children. Finally, with respect to annual household income, more than 41% earned between AUD 7,500 and AUD 12,500 annually (note: average annual net salary in Iran is roughly AUD 6,000, equivalent to USD 4,670).

### *6.5.2 Measurement items and survey structure*

The study used established items from previous research to measure the variables of the conceptual framework; however, all items were tailored to fit the context of luxury brands. Table 6.2 shows the studies that informed the measurement items for each study construct. This allowed for a more robust conceptualisation of the variables included in the framework. The selected language for the study's questionnaire was Persian. Therefore, the author translated all of the questionnaire items from English to Persian (the author cross-checked the translated items with colleagues fluent in Persian to ensure face validity).

The questionnaire comprised of three sections. In the first section, the survey asked respondents to identify one brand as their 'most favourite brand' from a given list of 54 luxury brands, with the option to name their own brand of choice if their favourite brand was not included in the list. Statistics taken from websites including [www.Forbes.com](http://www.Forbes.com), [www.businessinsider.com](http://www.businessinsider.com), [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com), [www.toptenteh.com/brands](http://www.toptenteh.com/brands), and

www.wiseguyreports.com informed the selection of these brands, on the basis of their popularity. Appendix 6.1 provides a list of the names and logos of the included brands. In the next section, the survey invited respondents to complete a list of scale-item questions asking them to express their level of agreement with a series of statements with respect to their chosen brand (see Table 6.2). The respondents were asked to express their agreement using a 6-point Likert range, in which: 1 = completely disagree, 2 = to a great extent disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = to a great extent agree, and 6 = completely agree. The survey then asked the respondents to select a brand extension as their favourite new product. For that, the survey provided respondents with a list of six hypothetical new products, all developed by the thesis's author and presented in Appendix 6.2. The suitability of the hypothetical extensions, especially in regards to their similarity/dissimilarity with the chosen parent brand, was pre-tested using a small convenience sample of 20 consumers from Iran, recruited from the same pool of participants as the main study and reached online via social media. Respondents were asked: 'Imagine your selected brand is seriously considering to manufacture some of the products provided in the table below. Which product could be your favourite new product?' In developing the hypothetical new products, the thesis author paid particular attention to include an equal number of products that respondents were likely to perceive as both similar and dissimilar (three products for each) to the parent brand, to account for model generalisability. These included a luxury smartphone, a luxury skincare set and a luxury leather suitcase as the hypothetical brand extensions likely to be perceived as similar to the parent brand. In contrast, the survey presented a microwave oven, smart fit-band and fountain pen as products likely to be perceived as dissimilar to the parent brand. The similarity or dissimilarity of the extensions was determined a priori in line with definition of perceived fit from the literature (C. W. Park et al., 1991).

In the last section of the questionnaire and upon selecting a new product, respondents answered a series of questions relevant to the brand extension. These questions examined various concepts including purchase intentions, the level of perceived fit and product category involvement. The survey concluded with demographic questions, including age, gender, marital status, level of education, average household income, number of household members and occupation.

**Table 6.2** Measurement items included in the main survey

Concept	Item Statement
<b>Emotional consumer-brand relationship</b>	
Brand Attachment C. W. Park et al. (2010), Thomson et al. (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel that I am attached to this brand.</li> <li>• I feel personally connected to this brand.</li> <li>• I feel emotionally bonded to this brand.</li> </ul>
Brand Love Batra et al. (2012), Carroll and Ahuvia (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have come to realise that at the end, I always choose this brand.</li> <li>• I can say that I really love this brand</li> <li>• This brand creates warm feelings among its customers</li> </ul>
Brand Passion Albert et al. (2013), Bauer et al. (2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can say that I feel passionate about this brand</li> <li>• My relationship with this brand is very important to me</li> <li>• I feel I have an 'alive' connection with this brand.</li> <li>• Just seeing this brand is exciting for me</li> </ul>
Brand identification Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012), Tuškej et al. (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I strongly identify myself with this brand</li> <li>• This brand is a part of me</li> <li>• This brand has a great deal of personal meaning for me</li> </ul>
<b>Brand Association</b>	
Brand image Low and Lamb Jr (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In my opinion, this brand is attractive</li> <li>• In my opinion, this brand is exciting</li> <li>• In my opinion, this brand is reliable</li> </ul>
Hedonic attributes Wiedmann et al. (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This brand gives me pleasure</li> <li>• This brand gives me a good feeling</li> </ul>
Symbolic values Jinsoo Hwang and Hyun (2012); Wiedmann et al. (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This brand expresses my personality</li> <li>• This brand symbolizes my status</li> </ul>
Prestigious values Hwang and Hyun (2012), Lye et al. (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This brand is very prestigious</li> <li>• In my opinion, this brand is a well-esteemed brand among other luxury brands</li> <li>• This brand is a first-class, high-quality brand</li> </ul>
Uniqueness Knight and Young Kim (2007), Tian et al. (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This brand is unique</li> <li>• This brand stands out from its competitors</li> <li>• This brand provides me with an opportunity to stand out</li> </ul>
<b>Other concepts</b>	
Perceived Fit DelVecchio and Smith (2005), Fedorikhin et al. (2008),	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This brand would be a good fit with this brand's products/services</li> <li>• This brand would be consistent with this brand's products/services</li> <li>• This brand would be a representative of this brand</li> </ul>
Brand extension Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I will consider purchasing/using this brand</li> </ul>

---

Chandon et al. (2000), Netemeyer et al. (2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The next time I need the product/service from this brand's category, I will choose this brand's product</li> <li>• In the next year, if this brand need the product/service from this brand's category, I will select this brand's product</li> </ul>
---	--

---

### 6.5.3 Data analysis methods

Using cross-tabulation analysis, the study examined the association among the study variables (including brand association, emotional consumer-brand relationship, brand extension evaluation, and perceived fit). Then, the study used Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test the validity and reliability of the measurement items. Finally, the study employed Covariance-based Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to test the hypotheses (J. C. Anderson & Gerbing, 1988), using Amos SPSS version 23.0 statistical tool. There were 3 reasons for using this approach: (i) SEM is shown to be a strong method for theory testing in marketing research (Steenkamp et al., 2003); (ii) SEM is a versatile technique used to account for measurement error and to test hypotheses in 'cross-sectional models containing varying sets of constructs and indicators' (p. 201); and (iii) SEM allows for less rigorous sample distribution assumptions ((Reinartz, Haenlein, & Henseler, 2009; Hair et al., 2011).

## 6.6 Results

### 6.6.1 Preliminary analysis

The following analysis provides primary insights with respect to the overall level of associations amongst the constructs included in the study's conceptual framework, including brand associations, emotional consumer-brand relationship, brand extension evaluation, and perceived fit. Cross tabulation analysis allows for initial insights to be made from the collected data, by examining the relationships amongst the main variables. For each construct, the degree of significance was measured by the arithmetic average of the items related to that construct, where measures within the range of 1 and 3.5 (including 3.5) were labelled as 'low', and measures within the range of 3.5 and 6 (excluding 3.5) were labelled as 'high'. Then, using

cross-tabulation analysis, it was possible to appraise the possible correlations amongst the constructs.

The results illustrated in Table 6.6 show that emotional consumer-brand relationship is significantly correlated with extension evaluation (Chi-Square estimate = 56.879, p-value = 0.000), and perceived fit (Chi-Square estimate = 39.555, p-value = 0.000).

**Table 6.3** Cross tabulation analysis: Emotional consumer-brand relationship

		Emotional consumer-brand relationship		Chi-Square test		Symmetric Measures	
		Low	High	Value	Sig.	Value	Sig.
Brand Extension Evaluation	Low	74.1%	15.4%	56.879	0.000**	0.567 (Kandall's tau-b)	0.00**
	High	25.9%	84.6%				
Perceived fit	Low	64.3%	15.4%	39.555	0.000**	0.473 (Kandall's tau-b)	0.00**
	High	35.7%	84.6%				

\*\* p < 0.05, \* p < 0.10

Similar results were found for the assessment of association between brand associations and the other study constructs (see Table 6.4). That is, the findings revealed that brand associations are significantly associated with extension evaluation (Chi-Square estimate = 75.101, p-value = 0.000) and perceived fit (Chi-Square estimate = 59.039, p-value = 0.000). Additionally, the results of the cross-tabulation analysis showed that brand association is also significantly associated with emotional consumer-brand relationship (Chi-Square estimate = 35.759, p-value = 0.000).

**Table 6.4** Cross tabulation analysis: Brand associations

		Brand associations		Chi-Square test		Symmetric Measures	
		Low	High	Value	Sig.	Value	Sig.
Brand Extension Evaluation	Low	89.6%	24.0%	75.101	0.000**	0.651 (Kandall's tau-b)	0.000**
	High	10.4%	76.0%				

Perceived fit	Low	81.8%	19.0%	59.039	0.000**	0.625 (Kandall's tau-b) 0.901 (Gamma)	0.000**
	High	18.2%	81.0%				
Emotional consumer-brand relationship	Low	88.3%	44.0%	35.759	0.000**	0.456 (Kandall's tau-b) 0.812 (Gamma)	0.000**
	High	11.7%	56.0%				

\*\* p < 0.05, \* p < 0.10

Similarly, Table 6.5 reports the results of cross-tabulation analysis on brand extension evaluation and perceived fit, whereby a significant and positive association is evident between perceived fit and extension evaluation (Chi-square estimate = 46.723, p-value = 0.000).

**Table 6.5** Cross tabulation analysis: Brand extension evaluation

		Extension degree		Pearson Square Value	Chi-Sig.	Symmetric Measures	
		Low	High	Value	Sig.	Value	Sig.
Perceived fit	Low	76.5%	23.5%	46.723	0.000**	0.514 (Kandall's tau-b) 0.815 (Gamma)	0.000**
	High	25.0%	75.0%				

\*\* p < 0.05, \* p < 0.10

### 6.6.2 Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

In examining the convergent and discriminant validity, the study assessed the psychometric attributes of the included constructs and their respective measurement items. Firstly, in order to test the validity of the constructs, the thesis' author performed a CFA (J. C. Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Table 6.6 shows that the obtained loadings for all latent variables (i.e., brand association, emotional consumer-brand relationship, perceived fit, and brand extension evaluation) stood above the suggested value of 0.6, with no cross loading measures exceeding 0.6, thus confirming the convergent validity of the measurement items used. Table 6.6 also shows the descriptive measures of the main constructs included in this study. It can be seen that respondents are consistently distributed with respect to the intensity of each construct, indicating that there is no response bias.



**Table 6.6** Measurement items, factor loadings, and descriptive analysis

First Order Constructs	First Order components	Item statements	Factor Loading		
				Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Brand association</b>	Brand Image_1	In my opinion, this brand is attractive	0.876	3.82	1.40
	Brand Image_2	In my opinion, this brand is exciting	0.831		
	Brand Image_3	In my opinion, this brand is reliable	0.896		
	Hedonic attributes_1	This brand gives me pleasure	0.887	3.86	1.50
	Hedonic attributes_2	This brand gives me a good feeling	0.874		
	Symbolic values_1	This brand expresses my personality	0.865	3.12	1.44
	Symbolic values_2	This brand symbolizes my status	0.822		
	Prestigious values_1	This brand is very prestigious	0.834	3.78	1.34
	Prestigious values_1	In my opinion, this brand is a well-esteemed brand among other luxury brands	0.810		
	Prestigious values_2	This brand is a first-class, high-quality brand	0.854		
	Uniqueness_1	This brand is unique	0.899	3.57	1.38
	Uniqueness_2	This brand stands out from its competitors	0.865		
	Uniqueness_3	This brand provides me with an opportunity to stand out	0.878		
<b>Emotional consumer-brand relationship</b>	Brand Attachment_1	I feel that I am attached to this brand.	0.820	3.36	1.25
	Brand Attachment_2	I feel personally connected to this brand.	0.638		
	Brand Attachment_3	I feel emotionally bonded to this brand.	0.624		
	Brand Love_1	I have come to realise that at the end, I always choose this brand.	0.809	3.38	1.26
	Brand Love_2	I can say that I really love this brand	0.710		
	Brand Love_3	This brand creates warm feelings among its customers	0.814		
	Brand Passion_1	I can say that I feel passionate about this brand	0.679	3.30	1.18
	Brand Passion_2	My relationship with this brand is very important to me	0.703		
	Brand Passion_3	I feel I have an 'alive' connection with this brand.	0.768		
	Brand Passion_4	Just seeing this brand is exciting for me	0.793		

	Identifications_1	I strongly identify myself with this brand	0.724	3.24	1.28
	Identifications_2	This brand is a part of me	0.684		
	Identifications_3	This brand has a great deal of personal meaning for me	0.758		
<b>Perceived fit</b>	Perceived Fit_1	This brand would be a good fit with this brand's products/services	0.863	2.92	5.24
	Perceived Fit_2	This brand would be consistent with this brand's products/services	0.769		
	Perceived Fit_3	This brand would be a representative of this brand	0.922		
<b>Brand Extension Evaluation</b>	Extension Evaluation_1	I will consider purchasing/using this brand	0.885	2.71	6.90
	Extension Evaluation_2	The next time I need the product/service from this brand's category, I will choose this brand's product	0.897		
	Extension Evaluation_3	In the next year, if this brand need the product/service from this brand's category, I will select this brand's product	0.842		

When performing the CFA, the co-varying items that yielded high modification covariance indices (above 20) had to be removed to reach acceptable model fit indices. Accordingly, CFI was more than 0.95, PCLOSE exceeded 0.05 and REMSA stood below 0.05, indicating an acceptable fit for CFA (Stewart, 1981). The CFA results also confirmed the internal consistency (indexed by composite reliability scores - CR - see Table 6.7). The CR measures ranged from 0.85 to 0.95 and all items exceeded the recommended threshold value of 0.70 (Chin, 1998). Furthermore, the average variance extracted (AVE) measures were greater than 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), indicating that the variance explained by the items was greater than the variance due to measurement error. With respect to convergent validity, AVE measures of each latent constructs also surpassed the construct's highest squared correlation score with any other latent constructs. This revealed a strong discriminant validity for the measurement items (Hair et al., 2011). Given that the data originated from a single source, in order to test for the common method bias (Doty & Glick, 1998; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, J.-Y. Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), this study also included the generation of a correlation matrix of all the study's constructs. However, the calculated correlations did not reach the 0.9 thresholds (Lowry & Gaskin, 2014).

**Table 6.7** CFA and validity measurements

Latent Variables	CR	AVE	Maximum Shared Variance	Max. Reliability (H)	Squared Correlations			
					1	2	3	4
<b>1. Perceived FIT</b>	0.889	0.729	0.594	0.909	0.85			
<b>2. Emotional consumer-brand relationship</b>	0.944	0.533	0.397	0.966	0.52	0.73		
<b>3. Extension evaluation</b>	0.907	0.766	0.619	0.975	0.77	0.63	0.87	
<b>4. Brand associations</b>	0.951	0.765	0.619	0.983	0.71	0.57	0.78	0.87

In order to test for any possible Common Method Biases, the study took a full collinearity assessment approach (Kock, 2015) and checked the model for the existence of collinearity, where any occurrence of a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) greater than 3.3 is an indication of possible common method bias. Table 6.8 reveals that VIFs (at factor level) resulting from a full collinearity test were equal to or lower than 3.3 for brand associations, emotional consumer-brand relationship and brand extension, proposing that these constructs are free from potential common method bias. For perceived fit, the VIF associated with Emotional Consumer-Brand Relationship and brand associations exceeds 3.3, which means that a moderately potential common method bias exists. This is in fact a limitation that future research could attempt to overcome by selecting different indicators for measuring perceived fit as a latent variable.

**Table 6.8** Common method bias analysis results

	VIF measures			
	1	2	3	4
<b>Brand Associations</b>		1.792	1.243	5.46
<b>Emotional consumer-brand relationship</b>	1.598		1.688	5.457
<b>Brand Extension Evaluation</b>	1.002	1.003		1.003
<b>Perceived Fit</b>	1.595	1.789	1.406	

The study used the items obtained from CFA to generate and analyse the structural model. Specifically, the results of covariance-based SEM analysis (see Table 6.9) show that the proposed conceptual framework has acceptable model fit. In more detail, the RMSEA index

yielded approximately 0.06, which is acceptable (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Steiger, 1990). Also, the CFI and GFI indices showed satisfactory measures (CFI = 0.93, IFI = 0.82); and the Chi-Square value stood at 778.93, indicating an overall strong statistical significance for the structural model ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 6.9** Fit indices of the structural and measurement models.

Fit Indexes	Structural model	Accepted level
RMSEA	0.062	0.08 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993)
CFI	0.930	0.93 (Byrne, 1994)
GFI	0.826	0.90 (Byrne, 1994)
Chi-Square	778.93	-

The study tested the structural model using path analysis standardised coefficients, as well as T-statistics (see Table 6.10). It is important to note that in the SEM analysis, parent brand association and emotional consumer brand-relationship are conceptualized and treated as second-order theoretical constructs (following Lowry & Gaskin, 2014). The findings illustrate that both brand association ( $\beta = 0.103$ , CR = 0.054) and emotional consumer-brand relationship ( $\beta = 0.084$ , CR = 0.056) have a significant positive impact on brand extensions evaluations, confirming H1 and H2.

**Table 6.10** Path analysis results

Hypothesised Paths	$\beta$	S.E.	CR	P-value
Brand association → Brand Extension Evaluation	0.364	0.075	4.833	0.000** (H1)
Emotional consumer-brand relationship → Brand Extension Evaluation	0.186	0.088	2.106	0.035** (H2)
Brand association → Emotional consumer-brand relationship	0.103	0.064	7.020	0.000** (H3)
Brand association → Perceived fit	0.628	0.079	7.905	0.000**
Perceived fit → Brand Extension Evaluation	0.373	0.076	4.915	0.000**

\*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.10$

Table 6.11 illustrates the outcomes of the analysis of the hypothesised mediation relationships. Using bootstrapping for 2,000 resamples with bias-corrected confidence intervals of 90, the results indicate that emotional consumer-brand relationship significantly mediates the relationship between brand association and brand extension evaluation (bootstrapping estimate = 0.110, p-value = 0.001), thus confirming H4.

With respect to the mediating role of perceived fit, the relationship between brand association and brand extension evaluation supported it, confirming H1a (bootstrapping estimate = 0.235, p-value = 0.002); however, it was not supported in the relationship between emotional consumer-brand relationship and extension evaluation, thus leading to the rejection of H2a (bootstrapping estimate = 0.069, p-value = 0.102).

**Table 6.11** Mediation roles analysis

Hypothesised Paths	Mediator	Estimate	95% Lower Level	95% Upper Level	P-value
<b>Brand association → Brand Extension Evaluation</b>	Emotional consumer-brand relationship	0.110	0.053	0.174	0.001** (H4)
<b>Emotional consumer-brand relationship → Brand Extension Evaluation</b>	Perceived fit	0.069	-0.001	0.159	0.102 (H2a)
<b>Brand association → Brand Extension Evaluation</b>	Perceived fit	0.235	0.115	0.389	0.002** (H1a)

\*\* p < 0.05

With respect to the hypothesised moderation effects (see Table 6.12), in line with H1b, perceived fit was found to significantly moderate the relationship between brand association and brand extension evaluation (estimate measure = 0.105, p-value 0.061); however, it did not moderate the influence of emotional consumer-brand relationship on extension evaluation, thus leading to the rejection of H2b.

**Table 6.12** Moderation roles analysis

Hypothesised Paths	Moderator	Estimate	S.E.	P-value
--------------------	-----------	----------	------	---------

<b>Emotional consumer-brand relationship → Brand Extension Evaluation</b>	Perceived fit	-0.018	0.039	0.641 (H2b)
<b>Brand association → Brand Extension Evaluation</b>	Perceived fit	0.105	0.056	0.061* (H1b)

\*  $p < 0.10$

## 6.7 Discussion

### 6.7.1 Theoretical implications

This study confirmed the combined role of brand associations and emotional consumer-brand relationships in underpinning consumers' evaluation of brand extensions. It also confirmed that emotional consumer-brand relationship mediates the positive influence of brand association on brand extension evaluation. Hence, this study revealed that positive brand extension evaluations is a potential outcome of the synergy between consumers' perceptions about a brand's characteristics and the emotional bond between the consumer and the brand. This provides support for the existing research which highlights the importance of strategies that focus on leveraging consumer's established thoughts and knowledge about the brand, in order to encourage them to become emotionally closer to the brand (Esch et al., 2006; Fournier, 1995, 1998; Thomson et al., 2005).

Furthermore, this study confirmed that brand associations drive the development of emotional bonds between consumers and their favoured brands. This is in line with studies, which have implied that offering a unique combination of brand and product associations can lead to the establishment of a relationship between consumers and brands (e.g., Wyner, 1999; Chang & Chieng, 2006). Therefore, from a broader theoretical perspective, this study extends existing knowledge on the importance of creating and establishing intangible brand associations as a psychological mechanism that converts consumers' perceptions about the brand into emotion such as love and passion for the brand; a mechanism that eventually drives the development of consumer-brand relationships (Keller, 2012).

More specifically, the study indicated that brand association positively influences emotional consumer-brand relationship. This is in line with C. W. Park et al.'s (2007) 'enriching the self' mechanism through which consumers leverage a brand's performance and characteristics to create an image in their mind of the brand; an image that allows them to express, maintain and enhance their self-concepts. This research also confirmed that brand associations and emotional consumer-brand relationships have the capacity, separately, to explain the variations in brand extension evaluations. This outcome extends the works of Bhat and Reddy (2001) and Broniarczyk and Alba (1994) and highlights the importance of the symbolic and intangible attributes of brands in the success of brand extensions. More specifically, the study further confirms that through influencing consumers' perception of quality, brands with greater prestigious values (Albrecht et al., 2013; Baek et al., 2010) and with more positive brand image (Dillon et al., 2001) are more likely to be successful when launching extensions. Furthermore, the confirmed influence of emotional consumer-brand relationship on brand extension evaluation expands the existing knowledge with respect to the power of brand relationships in providing positive outcomes for the brand (e.g., W. Chiu & Won, 2016; Hudson et al., 2015). The study results particularly indicated that the combined effects of brand love, brand attachment, brand passion and brand identification help the consumer to form an initial impression of the brand's extension, which then positively impacts their evaluation of the extension (Abosag et al., 2012; K. Kim et al., 2014; Yeung & Wyer, 2005).

The outcomes of this study further indicate that emotional consumer-brand relationship positively mediates the influence of brand association on brand extension evaluation. This adds to the existing knowledge about the role of consumer emotions in providing a rich understanding of the experiential aspects of brand consumption (Cohen & Areni, 1991; O'Cass & Frost, 2002).

Finally, the results of this study revealed that perceived fit mediates and moderates the influence of brand association on extension evaluations. This means that a consumer's perception that a new product 'fits' with the luxury core of the parent brand is a significant factor that facilitates the transferral of positive perceptions about the parent brand to the extension. While this may limit the brand's ability to extend into other categories (Ahluwalia,

2008), it justifies the importance of offering new products that have the potential to be perceived by the consumer as just as 'luxurious' as the parent brand's core products.

### *6.7.2 Managerial implications*

The study offers a number of important managerial implications. Firstly, the study highlights the pivotal role of brand associations in brand management, and their effect on the development of emotional consumer-brand relationship. Specifically, the outcomes of this study suggest that brand managers should place emphasis on showcasing the inherent hedonic and emotional characteristics of their brands, in order to bolster the development of emotional bonds between the brand and the consumer. These bonds, if coupled with the concept of luxury (including positive brand image, strong symbolic attributes, unique and prestigious qualities) can strengthen evaluations of brand extensions. Accordingly, managers of brands should understand how consumers experience the brand's symbolic and hedonic characteristics (e.g., exclusivity, authenticity, and prestige), and then use those characteristics to encourage consumers to create their own aspired identities. Examples of such implications can be identified in the existing strategies that various global luxury brands already utilise. For instance, Tiffany and Co.'s new range of everyday household items and accessories is an attempt to democratise the brand and make it accessible, whilst still maintaining the same high-level associations and emotional connections with consumers that they always use (Tiffany, 2018).

Moreover, since this study has confirmed the mediating role of the emotional consumer-brand relationship in the link between brand associations and brand extensions evaluation, it is plausible to conclude that brand managers should leverage their established emotional consumer-brand relationships to overcome the potential obstacles associated with dissimilar or 'unfit' brand extensions (J.-W. Park & Kim, 2001). Examples of such implications can be identified in Swarovski's collection of accessories including stylish modern eyewear frames, where the brand leverages the way consumers feel about their core line of products (i.e., jewellery) and encourages them to complement their brand experience by purchasing fashionable glasses so that they can 'feel brilliant, more confident, radiant and daring'



(Swarovski, 2018). This implication is particularly important, given that recent research has indicated that the way consumers perceive luxury is currently changing. More specifically, some scholars have argued that the concept of luxury is stretching beyond its traditional limits into a broader perspective, appearing more prominently in consumers' everyday lives (Patrick & Hagtvedt, 2015, p. 218). As a result, it is more crucial than ever for brand managers to create extensions that offer more than what is expected from the product category (i.e., something that consumers can feel an emotional bond to). For instance, due to increasing consumer interest in wearable luxury technology, luxury brands have developed partnership strategies to extend into technology categories. An example of this is Apple Watch Hermès collection, described as 'a partnership based on parallel thinking and singular vision' that 'taps into a storied history in the world of automobile racing' with a strategy that features references to the design of 'the classic Hermès driving glove' or 'legendary Hermès scarf' (Apple, 2018). To do so, it is recommended that brand managers research the individual values that consumers gain from the brand. One such way of achieving this is through the establishment and/or monitoring of brand online communities, where consumers are able to share their opinions with other like-minded consumers. This allows the brand manager to research consumer-to-consumer interactions and gain valuable insights on the extent to which consumers are personally involved with the brand, and make strategy adjustments accordingly (Gensler et al., 2013; Heller Baird & Parasnis, 2011).

Furthermore, the brand extension literature has raised concerns about the potential risks associated with mismanaged brand extension strategies (P. Kumar, 2005; J.-W. Park et al., 2002; Sood & Keller, 2012). One possible way of managing such inherent risks could be to utilise strategies that focus on establishing consumer bonds, in order to enhance the perception of hedonism and pleasure (Patrick & Hagtvedt, 2015). Specifically, brands managers should focus on brand-building strategies for new extensions that leverage emotional consumer relationships, as opposed to relying purely on the perceptive evaluations of brand image, prestige or uniqueness. Therefore, brand managers must create marketing offerings that add individualised value and tailor-made experiences for the consumer (Hennigs et al., 2012; K.-P. Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Klarmann, 2012), in order to encourage them to emotionally engage with the brand. For example, Sneakerboy (a retailer of luxury sneakers and streetwear) offers a different purchase experience by mixing 'traditional values

of personalised customer service with contemporary technology', where consumers browse through a large sample selection of luxury sneakers and order the chosen product to be delivered to their doorstep (Vallois, 2015). In offering such a luxury experience, Sneakerboy is also able to expose consumers to a large selection of accessories and extension products such as hats, sports jackets, backpacks and sunglasses (Sneakerboy, 2018).

## **6.8 Limitations and future research directions**

The current study confirmed that brand associations and the emotional consumer-brand relationship jointly influence consumers' evaluation of brand extensions. The study also confirmed that the emotional consumer-brand relationship has the power to mediate the positive influence of brand association on brand extension evaluation. However, as with any empirical studies, the present research revealed some limitations, which nonetheless can be turned into avenues for further research.

First, the proposed research model was restricted to one—yet central—variable to explore the extension success (i.e., brand extension evaluation). Future research should expand upon this and consider other relevant outcomes, such as purchase intentions, positive WOM and loyalty towards the brand extension. Second, as the majority of the respondents were young luxury consumers from Iran, further replications to compare these findings against older generations and different cultural contexts are desirable. Third, while the sample size is deemed adequate for the covariance-based SEM, a larger sample would have provided a better representation of the target population in terms of their emotional relationship with the brand. The known limitations of a convenient sampling approach that prevented the author from collecting further samples included limited research funds, as well as the author's time constraints when collecting data from Iran. Fourth, this study used mock-up brand extensions (pre-tested). However, other studies have argued that using real brand extensions allows for a more accurate examination of consumer attitudes towards brand extensions (Aaker & Keller, 1990), as it is an indication of the link between brand equity and brand extension strategies (Swaminathan, 2003; Swaminathan, Fox, & Reddy, 2001). Hence, future

studies might also consider testing the proposed framework using real brand extensions to further confirm and explore the psychological link between brand associations and the emotional consumer-brand relationship. Fifth, given the unique characteristics of luxury brands, the model could be further improved by using other high involvement contexts as parent brands (e.g., fashion brands, cars, and household furniture) and low-involvement contexts as brand extensions (e.g., respectively, cosmetics, electronic devices, and hotels). This could further explore the power of brand associations in enhancing brand extension success. Finally, there is the opportunity for further empirical studies to investigate these links in more depth, particularly with respect to the mechanism through which perceptual attributes leverage brand emotions.

## Appendix

### Appendix 6.1 Luxury brands included in the survey of Study 2

<input type="checkbox"/> Louis Vuitton 	<input type="checkbox"/> Hermès 	<input type="checkbox"/> Cartier 
<input type="checkbox"/> Coach 	<input type="checkbox"/> Christian Dior 	<input type="checkbox"/> Chanel 
<input type="checkbox"/> Prada 	<input type="checkbox"/> Dolce & Gabbana 	<input type="checkbox"/> Gucci 
<input type="checkbox"/> Burberry 	<input type="checkbox"/> Tiffany & Co 	<input type="checkbox"/> Versace 
<input type="checkbox"/> Ralph Lauren 	<input type="checkbox"/> Rolex 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yohji Yamamoto 
<input type="checkbox"/> Yves Saint Laurent 	<input type="checkbox"/> Hugo Boss 	<input type="checkbox"/> Tod's 
<input type="checkbox"/> Michael Kors 	<input type="checkbox"/> Longines 	<input type="checkbox"/> Omega 
<input type="checkbox"/> Estée Lauder 	<input type="checkbox"/> Ray-Ban 	<input type="checkbox"/> Lancôme 
<input type="checkbox"/> Calvin Klein 	<input type="checkbox"/> Chloé 	<input type="checkbox"/> Swarovski 
<input type="checkbox"/>  برک	<input type="checkbox"/>  نیوا	<input type="checkbox"/>  سالیان
<input type="checkbox"/> MAXFACTOR  مکس فکتور	<input type="checkbox"/> ECUT MEN'S FASHION  ایکات	<input type="checkbox"/> L'ORÉAL  لورال
<input type="checkbox"/>  نوین چرم	<input type="checkbox"/> ROMANSON  رومانسون	<input type="checkbox"/>  جهان گولد
<input type="checkbox"/>  گراد	<input type="checkbox"/>  مظفریان	<input type="checkbox"/>  مارال چرم
<input type="checkbox"/>  پاتن جامه	<input type="checkbox"/>  هاکوپیان	<input type="checkbox"/>  جامعه
<input type="checkbox"/>  موکارلو	<input type="checkbox"/>  چرم مشهد	<input type="checkbox"/> BOURJOIS  بورژویس
<input type="checkbox"/>  کهن چرم	<input type="checkbox"/> MIDAS  میداس	<input type="checkbox"/>  آریا چرم
<input type="checkbox"/>  درسا چرم	<input type="checkbox"/> ZAGROS  زاگرس	<input type="checkbox"/>  مای
<input type="checkbox"/>  زرتاب	<input type="checkbox"/>  چرم وطن	<input type="checkbox"/>  ماکسیم

**Appendix 6.2** Mock-up brand extensions included in **Study 2**

Low Similarity Product Extensions	High Similarity Product Extensions
Microwave Oven 	Luxury leather suitcase set 
Fountain Pen 	Luxury skincare set 
Smart fit-band 	Luxury smartphone 

## CHAPTER SEVEN (STUDY 3): SYNERGIES BETWEEN CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIP AND CUSTOMER BASED BRAND EQUITY

### 7.1 Abstract

**Study 3** reveals that some of the key components of customer-based brand equity (CBBE) underpin the development of consumer-brand relationships, and lead to positive brand-related outcomes. These aspects are examined in the context of luxury brands, using data from a population of Australian consumers gathered via online and face-to-face questionnaires. In more detail, using a Partial Least Square (PLS) method of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), the study confirms the predicting power of brand knowledge and hedonic benefits over consumer-brand relationship; it also confirms the positive effect of consumer-brand relationship on positive WOM, purchase intentions and price insensitivity. Moreover, the findings support, in part, the moderating role of product category involvement and past purchases in the relationships between CBBE components and consumer-brand relationship. Hence, this study contributes to theory by offering a conceptual framework that maps the synergies between CBBE and consumer-brand relationships. This study also contributes to practice with the clarification that brand managers can deploy strategies to enhance tangible (e.g., perceived quality) and intangible brand associations (hedonic attributes) in the minds of consumers to establish a useful 'cognitive platform' for the development of consumer-brand relationships.

**Keywords:** Consumer-brand relationship, Customer-based brand equity, Product category involvement, Luxury brands

## 7.2 Introduction

Customer-based brand equity (or CBBE) has been at the heart of current brand management literature and practice, with research efforts primarily aimed at providing a better understanding and measurement of the concept (Christodoulides et al., 2015; Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Stocchi & Fuller, 2017). In the existing literature, there has been a strong focus on identifying and assessing the dimensions of CBBE and/or its outcomes (Baalbaki & Guzmán, 2016; Christodoulides & De Chernatony, 2010; R. Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014a, 2014b). However, more recent efforts have been dedicated to determining the extent to which the interactions between CBBE dimensions could be used to explain the process of building strong brands (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016; Christodoulides et al., 2015; Grohs et al., 2016; Stocchi & Fuller, 2017).

Keller (2001, 2009) was among the first researchers to recognise a process through which CBBE is created and strengthened. Chatzipanagiotou et al. (2016) drew upon Keller's (2001, 2009) framework and introduced the notion of a brand equity 'system', in which the creation of CBBE is assumed to be the outcome of three 'sub-systems': *brand building*, *brand understanding*, and *brand relationship*. Chatzipanagiotou et al.'s (2016) *brand building* sub-system is based on concepts from the main body of CBBE research (e.g., D. A. Aaker, 2012; Cheng-Hsui Chen, 2001; A. Y. Lee & Labroo, 2004). In contrast, the *brand relationship* sub-system is essentially drawn upon existing research on consumer-brand relationships (e.g., Ahuvia, 2005; Fournier, 1998; C. W. Park et al., 2010) and self-brand connection (e.g., Chaplin & John, 2005; Escalas, 2004; Kemp et al., 2012). The link between *brand building* and *brand understanding* can be interpreted, in part, by looking at literature focusing on the analysis of consumer responses to initiatives aimed at strengthening brands (e.g., Keller, 1993; Pitta & Katsanis, 1995; Sloot et al., 2005). However, existing research is yet to fully explore and investigate the theoretical link between *brand understanding* and *brand relationship*. This omission reflects, to a great extent, the fact that the link between Keller's (2001, 2009) cognitive and emotional dimensions of CBBE is significantly under-explored.

Existing research has considered the impact of some CBBE dimensions on the development of brand relationships. For example, studies have reported that brand image (Esch et al.,

2006; Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012; Vlachos & Vrechopoulos, 2012), brand awareness (Esch et al., 2006), perceived value of the brand including functional and symbolic benefits (Japutra et al., 2016; So et al., 2013; Vlachos & Vrechopoulos, 2012), brand evaluation (Veloutsou, 2015) and brand associations (So et al., 2013; Vlachos & Vrechopoulos, 2012) have positive influences on the development of brand relationships. Nonetheless, there is still a wider scope for investigation with respect to the overall effects of CBBE (and its components) on the development of consumer-brand relationships. This is because, collectively, the outcomes of the works mentioned here share two important limitations that warrant further investigations. First, existing works did not incorporate a wide range of CBBE dimensions (e.g., see Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012; So et al., 2013; Vlachos & Vrechopoulos, 2012). For example, important concepts such as perceived quality, uniqueness, and hedonic benefits were not considered. The failure to include brand associations that are triggered by brand characteristics with a strong bearing on customer-brand relationships may compromise the explanatory power of the existing models. Second, extant studies did not include comprehensive conceptualisations of the brand relationships concepts, placing great emphasis on brand attachment (Esch et al., 2006; Japutra et al., 2016) and brand love (Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012; Sallam, 2014; Vlachos & Vrechopoulos, 2012).

In light of the above, the current study presents and validates a framework that incorporates components of CBBE that previous research has often omitted (i.e., brand knowledge, perceived quality, and hedonic attributes) and a more comprehensive theorisation of the consumer-brand relationship. Using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Partial Least Square (PLS) path modelling (Hair et al., 2011), and based on a sample of consumers of luxury brands in Australia, this study addresses two key research questions of theoretical and practical relevance: *Do CBBE components explain how consumer-brand relationships are formed? If so, how does the underlying connection between the cognitive and relational dimensions of brands and their influence on brand-related decisions work?*

In addressing these two research questions, this study contributes to theory by expanding the understanding of the psychological mechanisms that sustain consumer-brand relationship formation (Greifeneder et al., 2011; Laros & Steenkamp, 2005; Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 1987). In particular, this study provides insights on the theoretical effect of Chatzipanagiotou et al.'s



(2016) *brand building* and *brand understanding* blocks on *brand relationship*. This contributes to a better understanding of how the creation of brand associations, together with the establishment of brand meaning in the minds of customers, influence brand-related responses and feelings, and ultimately leads to the establishment of brand relationships (Keller, 2001; O'Cass & Frost, 2002; Plutchik, 2001). That is, this study sheds light on the cognitive processes through which consumers might develop long-term relationships with brands (Aggarwal & Law, 2005; Lynch & De Chernatony, 2004), and explains how brand-related thoughts and feelings might impact brand-related attitudes and intentions (Hastak & Olson, 1989; C. W. Park et al., 2010). Furthermore, this study adds to the brand relationships literature by proposing a parsimonious conceptualisation of the consumer-brand relationship consisting of two dimensions: gratification, and emotional significance. Lastly, this study is different from previous works because it considers a broader range of relevant outcomes – i.e., price insensitivity, purchase intentions and positive WOM (Frijda, 1993; Roseman, Spindel, & Jose, 1990; Scherer, 1993).

Importantly, all these aspects are examined in the context of luxury brands, due to the following reasons. Luxury brands allow a broader manifestation of consumer-brand relationships, due to the highly symbolic and emotion-laden nature of luxury consumption (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009; Tynan et al., 2010). Luxury brands differentiate themselves through the establishment of brand identities linked to prestige and high-status images (H. J. Choo et al., 2012; Fionda & Moore, 2009). They also offer many emotional benefits, such as closeness and involvement with the brand at the time of purchase experience (So et al., 2013). Cailleux, Mignot, and Kapferer (2009) referred to these aspects as a 'paradigm shift' in luxury branding, which has resulted in moving from creating social status to developing customer emotional attachment in order to nurture long-term loyalty. In fact, Jean-Noël Kapferer and Bastien (2009) described emotional engagement with luxury brands as a crucial success factor, given that emotional values provide consumers with memorable consumption experiences (Brun et al., 2008; So et al., 2013). Furthermore, through offering tangible and, more importantly, intangible benefits, luxury brands encourage consumers to think of and feel differently towards brands (Shukla et al., 2016; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Lastly, due to inherently high levels of consumer involvement, luxury brands offer a suitable platform for examining how (or whether) thoughts and feelings about a brand lead to actual purchase-

related attitudes and intentions (Q. Bian & Forsythe, 2012; X. Bian & Moutinho, 2011; Tsai, 2005b). In fact, by offering strong tangible and intangible benefits, luxury brands often allow stronger emotional attachments and loyalty to be built, to the point of becoming irreplaceable to consumers (So et al., 2013).

The use of luxury brands as a gauging context enables the outcomes of this study to be translated into a series of valuable practical implications. Specifically, this study offers valuable insights for managers of luxury brands on how to pursue specific marketing objectives such as retention and satisfaction of customers through the establishment of strategies aimed at reinforcing the consumer-brand relationship. In addition, the study indicates that luxury brand managers should dedicate resources to the enhancement of consumers' perceptions about the brand's unique attributes and quality, invest in loyalty-building initiatives and activities, and highlight the hedonic and symbolic benefits that the brand can offer to consumers.

## **7.3 Conceptual background**

### *7.3.1 Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE)*

A detailed discussion of the definitions and implications of customer-based brand equity (CBBE), as well as its relevance for the thesis is provided in **Chapter 3** (§3.9.1 and §3.9.3). In summary, when theorised from a consumer perspective, brand equity refers to the intangible assets a brand obtains through its brand-building efforts (Ambler et al., 2002). Keller's widely accepted CBBE framework explains that in order to build and manage strong brands, marketers must generate positive thoughts, feelings, beliefs, opinions and perceptions about their brand in the minds and hearts of consumers (Keller, 2001). More recently, Chatzipanagiotou et al., (2016) and Christodoulides De Chernatony (2010) have described brand equity as the value that is co-created by consumers and the brand.

This study draws on two important frameworks to develop its CBBE concept: Keller's (2001, 2009) and Chatzipanagiotou et al.'s (2016). Keller's (2001, 2009) CBBE model comprises three

blocks: *cognitive blocks* (salience, imagery, and judgments), *behavioural blocks* (performance), and *emotional blocks* (feelings and resonance). The interactions amongst these three blocks lead to the creation of CBBE (Biedenbach & Marell, 2010; Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016; G. L. Gordon et al., 1993). Importantly, Keller (2001, 2009) believed that building strong brands is an outcome of a process consisting of the following logical steps (also referred to as the stages of brand development, see Keller, 2001, 2009):

- I. Establishing a proper brand identity, i.e., the creation of brand associations in consumers' minds with a specific product class or consumer need;
- II. Linking the created tangible and intangible brand associations to establish the totality of brand meaning in the minds of consumers;
- III. Eliciting positive brand responses in terms of brand-related judgment and feelings;
- IV. Converting brand response to forge brand relationships that reflect consumer loyalty.

Building on Keller's (2001, 2009) stages of brand development, Chatzipanagiotou et al., (2016) described CBBE as 'a process with discrete evolutionary stages that include closely interrelated brand concepts and contribute through a "branding ladder" to create a strong brand' (p. 5480). In more detail, Chatzipanagiotou et al., (2016) conceptualised CBBE drawing on the previous studies which highlighted the importance of looking at CBBE components individually as they each contribute to the process of CBBE, i.e., the consumer responses to branding activities (Grohs et al., 2016; Stocchi & Fuller, 2017). Accordingly, Chatzipanagiotou et al., (2016) argued that CBBE is essentially a system with three main sub-systems: *brand building*, *brand understanding* and *brand relationship*. *Brand building* is the stage when the marketers aim to position the brand in the minds of consumers using functional and experiential 'imagery' brand attributes. In *brand understanding* consumers' responses occur. These responses follow a sequence similar to Lavidge and Steiner (2000) cognitive-affective-conative hierarchy of effects. The process ends with *brand relationship*, where consumer-brand relationships are formed, established and developed (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016). Importantly, Chatzipanagiotou et al.'s (2016) CBBE system implies the existence of a theoretical link between cognitive (i.e., brand building sub-system) and emotional (i.e., brand relationship sub-system), which acts as a mechanism to turn consumer thoughts and perceptions into emotions towards brands, ultimately building strong brands.

In line with these reflections, this study draws upon the general theoretical assumption of Chatzipanagiotou et al., (2016), but employs components from the more traditional line of research on brand equity for the conceptualisation of CBBE. Specifically, this study considers three key components of CBBE: *brand knowledge* (includes *brand awareness*, *brand uniqueness* and *brand loyalty*), *perceived quality* and *hedonic attributes* as likely drivers of consumer-brand relationship. The conceptualisation of CBBE and the components involved were discussed in great detail in §3.4.2. In summary, according to Keller (1993, 2003), CBBE occurs when the customer is aware of the brand and holds positive, and unique associations about the brand in their memory. This study conceptualises CBBE using three primary components, including the brand knowledge, perceived quality and hedonic attributes. Brand knowledge (following Keller's conceptualisation, 1993) encompasses brand awareness, uniqueness and brand loyalty as its recurring dimensions. Inclusion of brand loyalty as a sub-component of brand knowledge is in line with the process of building CBBE discussed by Keller (1993). In addition, this study follows a stream of studies such as Delassus and Descotes (2012) and Mourad et al. (2011), and conceptualises hedonic attributes as primary components of CBBE. The following sections briefly recaps the most important arguments relevant to each component.

### *7.3.1.1 Brand knowledge*

Brand knowledge is the collection of consumer's perceptions, thoughts and impressions of a brand (D. A. Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). It characterises the image of a brand in consumer's memory through cognitive perceptions (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). It also has the power to validate a brand as a relationship partner in the minds of consumers (Chang & Chieng, 2006; Fournier, 1998; Franzen & Bouwman, 2001).

Existing research has consistently highlighted three key aspects (or dimensions) of brand knowledge: brand awareness, brand uniqueness and brand loyalty. Brand awareness refers to knowledge and information concerning the brand retained in the consumer's memory (D. A. Aaker, 1991; Hoyer & Brown, 1990; R. Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014a; Mandler, 1980). This knowledge and information strengthens the likelihood that the brand will be included in the

consideration set—i.e., the sub-set of alternatives that the consumer considers for purchase (see Hoyer & Brown, 1990; E. K. MacDonald & Sharp, 2000), assisting them in purchase decision-making (R. Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014b; Nedungadi, 1990) and helping brands achieve greater performance (G. L. Gordon et al., 1993). Brand uniqueness is ‘the degree to which customers feel the brand is different from competing brands’ (Netemeyer et al., 2004, p. 211) and reflects the scarcity value of a brand (W.-Y. Wu et al., 2012). Uniqueness encourages consumers to strive to distinguish themselves from others in social contexts (H.-J. Park et al., 2008; Tian & McKenzie, 2001) and acts a driving force for consumers to feel good about themselves (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). Uniqueness is achieved through ‘the acquisition, utilisation, and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one's personal and social identity’ (Tian et al., 2001, p. 50). Brand loyalty involves behavioural and attitudinal aspects. Behavioural loyalty reflects repeated purchases of a certain brand or the tendency to buy the brand as a primary choice (Yoo & Donthu, 2001), whereas attitudinal loyalty reflects the degree to which a consumer shows dispositional commitment towards the unique values associated with the brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Brand loyalty is considered to be an important element in brand building and the development of brand relationships. Accordingly, Keller (2001, 2009) considered brand loyalty as a dimension of *brand resonance*, which reflects ‘the nature of the relationship’ and ‘the intensity or depth of the psychological bond’ customers have with the brand (Keller, 2009, p. 144).

### *7.3.1.2 Perceived quality*

*Perceived quality* is a consumer’s subjective evaluation of a brand, providing them with a reason to buy the brand over competing brands (D. A. Aaker, 1991; Pappu et al., 2005). Zeithaml (1988) and Woodruff (1997) asserted that perceived quality is a key factor in determining consumers’ brand decisions. Arguably, greater perceived quality motivates consumers to choose a certain brand over competitors (Dodds et al., 1991; Netemeyer et al., 2004).

### 7.3.1.3 Hedonic attributes

*Hedonic attributes* refer to the symbolic and emotion-driven values that are essential for the development of strong brand equity (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016). Keller (1993) defined symbolic benefits as extrinsic advantages of a brand, such as consumers' underlying needs for social approval or personal expression. Hedonic attributes are described as the benefits and appropriate values brands offer the consumer in the form of experiences, sensory values (e.g., aesthetics, design, ambiance, feel) and emotions (e.g., pleasure, enjoyment, fun, excitement, adventure, and humour, Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009; J. B. Smith & Colgate, 2007; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Consumers tend to choose a brand with highly hedonic attributes (e.g., exceptional design, highly aesthetic products) to affirm their own sense of self (Huta & Ryan, 2010). Moreover, according to Gao, Wheeler, and Shiv (2009), individuals are motivated to choose brands with exciting characteristics and personalities to bolster their self-view. Hedonic attributes also partly reflect Chatzipanagiotou et al.'s (2016) associations. That is hedonic attributes are a number of brand associations that highlight the pleasure inducing and aesthetic-based memory links established in the minds of consumers.

The following section (§7.3.2) discusses the literature on brand relationship, while §7.3.3 explains the role of CBBE (the *brand building* sub-system) in the development of consumer-brand relationships (the *brand relationship* sub-system).

### 7.3.2 Consumer-brand relationship

Fournier (1998) referred to brand relationships as individually crafted bonds involving elements of love, passion, self-connection, interdependence, commitment, intimacy, and partner quality. The underlying elements triggering the creation of brand relationship are found in the non-product aspects of the brand, especially the intangible and symbolic benefits that the brand offers (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003, p. 86). Through these benefits, brand relationships often work as a 'conceptual platform' that connects brands to consumers' 'sense of self' by bringing meaning for consumers and helping them towards achieving their goals (see also Escalas, 2004). Accordingly, brand relationships are often considered the core assets

of strong brands, as they incorporate emotional, cognitive and behavioural aspects of the bond between a brand and its consumers. For example, C. W. Park et al. (2006) described brand relationships in the form of brand attachment encompassing two pivotal elements: 'connectedness between the brand and the self' and a 'cognitive and emotional bond, the strength of which evokes a readiness to allocate one's processing resources toward a brand' (p. 3). Subsequently, C. W. Park et al. (2010) confirmed brand-self connections (reflecting emotional elements) and the prominence of the brand in the consumer's mind (reflecting cognitive elements) as the dimensions of brand attachment. Similarly, Vlachos et al., (2010) described brand relationship in the form of attachment as a psychological state of mind in which both cognitive and emotional elements play a role in connecting the brand to a consumer. Malär et al. (2011) placed further emphasis on a brand's emotional connection with consumers who look for aspirations in the brand to create their 'ideal selves' (Kemp et al., 2012; Wallace et al., 2014) as the factors that link emotional and cognitive elements of brand relationships. Finally, Dunn and Hoegg (2014), Japutra et al. (2014), Langner et al. (2015), and Japutra et al. (2016) have argued that strategies that tap into cognitive and emotional aspects are equally relevant to the establishment of effective and strong brand relationships.

With respect to the conceptualisation of brand relationships, existing studies have not provided a comprehensive view of the cognitive and emotional aspects. In particular, they do not include the main emotional aspects of brand relationship that are reflective of key relational concepts (i.e., brand attachment, brand love and brand passion, as discussed in §3.3). Batra et al. (2012), however, effectively addressed these concepts together with cognitive aspects of brand relationships. More specifically, the authors used seven elements to address these aspects, including attachment, passion, emotional connection, long-term relationship, self-brand identification, and attitude strength (see §3.3.1 for further detail). Batra et al. (2012) ultimately acknowledged the distinction of love and relationships between the contexts of consumer-brand and interpersonal and argued that while love as an emotion (common in the interpersonal context) is a single feeling analogous to affection, consumer-brand love is episodic and involves numerous affective, cognitive and behavioural experiences.

In line of the above, it is imperative to further examine the mechanism through which consumer-brand relationships are developed. Accordingly, based on the works of Chatzipanagiotou et al. (2016) and (Keller, 2001, 2009), a possible way to understand this mechanism involves linking consumer-brand relationship and CBBE, given the existence of some likely conceptual synergies, explained next.

### *7.3.3 CBBE as a driver of consumer-brand relationship*

The role of CBBE in the development of brand relationships was recognised and discussed in the brand equity frameworks of Chatzipanagiotou et al., (2016) and Keller (2001, 2009), which assume that building brand equity is a process that follows a hierarchical order. Chatzipanagiotou et al.'s (2016) brand equity process starts with brand building, i.e., positioning the brand in the minds of consumers using functional and experiential 'imagery' brand attributes. The process progresses with the establishment of brand understanding, where consumers respond in a sequence similar to Lavidge and Steiner's (2000) cognitive-affective-conative hierarchy of effects. The process ends with the development of consumer-brand relationships (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016). A similar pattern is evident in Keller's (2001, 2009) framework, which suggests that the brand building process starts with the creation of brand identity, then moves to the development of brand meanings, followed by consumer responses and concludes with the establishment of the brand relationship.

In light of the above, it is plausible to assume that brand building (represented by CBBE in this study) precedes brand relationship (represented by consumer-brand relationship in this study) through the creation of brand understanding. This assumption can be further justified if one considers that from a theoretical perspective, the development of brand relationship is a consequence of consumer cognitive appraisal of the brand. *Cognitive appraisal* is 'a process through which the person evaluates whether a particular encounter with the environment is relevant to his or her well-being' (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986, p. 992). *Appraisal* is the evaluative judgment and interpretation one makes when encountering an occurrence (Bagozzi et al., 1999) and the *Psycho-Evolutionary Theory of Emotions* (Plutchik, 1980) contends that the existence of any emotion presumes the



occurrence of cognition or evaluation a priori. Similarly, consumer research (e.g., Frijda, 1993; A. R. Johnson & Stewart, 2005; Nyer, 1997; Roseman et al., 1990; Scherer, 1993) has acknowledged the power of cognitive appraisals in explaining different types and extents of consumer emotions.

Further support for assuming the existence of an underlying theoretical connection between the brand building and brand relationship facets of CBBE can be detected in the *Theory of Meaning Movement* (McCracken, 1989). According to this theory, brand-related meanings provide consumers with information that is relevant to the brand's appraisal and determines the relevance of marketing stimuli linked to the brand (R. Elliott, 1997). By purchasing a brand's offerings, consumers deliberately 'move' those meanings into their memories, creating brand associations (McCracken, 1989). In fact, studies have confirmed that the development of love-like emotions towards the brand in consumers' minds is the result of: (i) the appraisal of brand-specific information in the first instance; and (ii) meaning construction and transferral in the second instance (e.g., Albert et al., 2008). Accordingly, a sense of emotional attachment towards the brand often assists consumers in implementing generated meanings to construct their self-concepts (Belk, 1988; Richins, 1997).

Besides brand-related meanings, existing studies have highlighted other factors that could trigger the creation of positive brand associations and the development of brand relationships. For example, scholars have suggested that a brand's superior perceived quality (as a brand-related perceived value) can offer significant connotations to consumers, which can be reinforced through the brand's marketing activities (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Galli & Gorn, 2011). Consumers can use these connotations as 'tags' to store personalised brand-related knowledge in their memory (Fournier, 1998). If accompanied by a sense of self-identification with the brand (Alnawas & Altarifi, 2015; Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010), these memories could trigger the creation of a consumer-brand bond (Aggarwal & Law, 2005; Wood, 1982). Strengthened brand knowledge could trigger the development of brand relationships by providing psychological benefits for consumers, including social approval, self-esteem and self-expression (Keller, 1993; Tuškej et al., 2013). These benefits could further encourage consumers to purchase the brand, be close to the brand and desire it (Belk,

1988; Belk et al., 2003; Fournier, 1998), building the foundations for consumer-brand relationships (Escalas & Bettman, 2003a; Esch et al., 2006; Fournier, 1995, 1996, 1998).

In light of the above, existing studies have discussed some components of CBBE as drivers of consumer-brand relationship, discussed next.

#### *7.3.4 CBBE and consumer-brand relationship: What we know so far*

Esch et al. (2006) revealed that brand relationship is a result of links between brand attachment, brand trust and brand satisfaction. These components are influenced by brand knowledge, which involves brand awareness and brand image. However, the authors did not confirm the influence of brand awareness on brand satisfaction and brand trust. Furthermore, the authors did not include other important components of brand knowledge, such as uniqueness and brand loyalty, and omitted to incorporate a wider range of emotions in the development of brand relationship, including love and passion, as suggested by Batra et al. (2012) and Thomson et al. (2005).

In another study, Vlachos et al. (2010) described brand attachment as a psychological state of mind in which both cognitive and emotional factors play a role in the development of a bond between consumers and their favourite retailer. The authors revealed that cognitive aspects such as place identity and self-expression positively affect the strength of consumer-retailer attachment. Later, Vlachos and Vrechopoulos (2012) reported that brand image, brand perceived value and brand associations all yield positive influences on the development of consumer-retailer love. While insightful, the studies conducted by Vlachos and colleagues did not offer a comprehensive examination of the cognitive elements that could shape consumers' knowledge about and associations with the brand, such as hedonic attributes and perceived quality.

In another work, Loureiro and Kaufmann (2012) highlighted a significant effect of brand image on brand love in the context of wines. The authors included items in the measurement of brand love that resonated feelings of passion and attachment; however, they did not incorporate the cognitive aspects (e.g., attitudes and identification). This was also evident in

the work of So et al. (2013), where they concluded that corporate association, functional benefits and symbolic benefits had significant impacts on the development of emotional attachment towards luxury brands. However, the authors did not include key cognitive concepts such as brand knowledge, brand image or perceived quality.

In a more recent research, Veloutsou (2015) assessed the contribution of brand relationships in the development of loyalty, by examining it as a mediator or moderator in the link between trust, satisfaction and brand evaluation and brand loyalty. The authors provided important insights on the role of consumers' cognitive assessment of brands in the development of consumer-brand relationships; however, similar to the studies discussed above, the authors did not include other important cognitive elements such as brand image and hedonic and symbolic attributes, which are considered crucial to the formation of emotional consumer-brand bonds (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Ding & Tseng, 2015). Finally, Japutra et al. (2016) revealed that a consumer's perceptions about the sensory experiences with a brand (particularly familiarity and pleasure-based experiences) together with CSR activities, have the power to predict the development of brand attachment. The authors revealed that positive brand experiences evoke positive memories and increased salience, which in turn enhances emotional attachment towards the brand.

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the existing studies examining the role of cognitive elements (i.e., CBBE components) as drivers of consumer-brand relationship share two important limitations. First, they did not incorporate a wide range of CBBE dimensions such as perceived quality, uniqueness and hedonic benefits —brand characteristics that trigger strong brand associations—limiting the generalisability of the results. Second, existing studies did not include comprehensive conceptualisations of the brand relationships concepts, instead, placing emphasis on individual concepts such as brand attachment, and brand love. The current study caters for these limitations by presenting a framework that incorporates a wide range of the components of CBBE (i.e., brand knowledge, perceived quality, and hedonic attributes) and a more comprehensive theorisation of consumer-brand relationship, together with a series of relevant outcomes (price insensitivity, purchase intention and positive WOM).

## 7.4 Hypotheses development

### *7.4.1 The impact of brand knowledge on consumer-brand relationship*

Conventional thought suggest that brand awareness should predict brand relationship directly as well as indirectly, through strengthening brand trust and satisfaction. In a direct effect, it is believed that high levels of brand awareness entice consumers to develop a personalised bond with the brand (Japutra et al., 2014). Indirectly, brand awareness facilitates trust towards the brand (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003) and enables consumers to evaluate brands by lessening the risk and effort of the purchase decision (Bettman & C. W. Park, 1980; Esch et al., 2006; Hoyer & Brown, 1990). Brand trust also links with brand emotions in order to strengthen brand loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Albert et al., (2013) drew on the significance of trust in interpersonal relationships to confirm that brand trust leads to brand love. Esch et al., (2006) further confirmed that brand awareness predicts brand satisfaction, and brand attachment is a result of a relationship between the consumer and the brand, filled with awareness and satisfaction.

In the context of luxury brands, studies suggest rarity to be an influential factor in brand relationship development (Jean-Noel Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016; Phau & Prendergast, 2000). Based on Rarity Principle (Mason, 1981; Phau & Prendergast, 2000), in order to maintain prestige and exclusivity, luxury brands must sustain high levels of brand awareness, yet tightly controlled brand distribution.

With respect to brand uniqueness, consumers look for knowledge about the brand that makes it unique (Tian et al., 2001). Knight and Young Kim (2007) argued that consumers who tend to select brands that are not likely to become too popular, do so to distinguish themselves from others (labelled as 'unpopular choice', which, together with 'avoidance of similarity' and 'creative choice' represent 'consumer need for uniqueness'). Accordingly, Knight and Young Kim (2007) showed that consumers' tendency to select 'unpopular choices' explains the perceived brand-related 'emotional value'. In addition, studies have also posited that consumers tend to develop emotional bonds with brands that focus on exceeding consumers' expectation of tangible and intangible performance (Kandampully, 1998; C. W. Park et al.,

2008). Therefore, a theoretical connection between uniqueness and the development of brand relationships is to be expected. In the context of luxury brands, Bian and Forsythe (2012) revealed that consumers' need for uniqueness encourages them to develop self-expressive feelings towards the brand, which in turn strengthen the affective responses and attitudes towards the brand. Similarly, Latter, Phau and Marchegiani (2010) confirmed that luxury brands consumers' need for uniqueness drive emotional values for the brand, which are believed to be responsible for the development of consumer brand relationships.

In relation to brand loyalty, studies such as Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) argued that brands leverage consumer loyalty to create higher levels of consumer trust and brand-related emotions. In fact, loyalty is considered as a core element in the creation of a psychological bond with consumers. Accordingly, Keller (2001, 2009) considered loyalty as a dimension of *brand resonance*, which reflects 'the nature of the relationship' and 'the intensity or depth of the psychological bond' customers have with the brand (p. 144).

In the context of luxury brands, consumers tend to be 'trend-sensitive cross-shoppers with shallow loyalty toward specific brands' (A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012, p. 1485). Hence, luxury brands often deploy tactics aimed at creating true loyalty through special treatment or recognition of consumers (H. Kim, 2012; Tsai, 2005a). These strategies can drive brand loyalty towards a strong consumer relationship and boost relationship equity (A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012; K. H. Kim, Ko, Xu, & Han, 2012; Song, Hur, & Kim, 2012).

Considering the above discussions, this study proposes that:

**H1:** Brand knowledge has a positive influence on consumer-brand relationship.

#### *7.4.2 The impact of perceived quality on consumer-brand relationship*

Literature defines perceived quality as intangible perceptions or judgements of overall quality or superiority of a brand with respect to its intended symbolic and functional purposes (D. A. Aaker, 1991; J. L. Aaker, 1997; Zeithaml, 1988). In line with Keller's (2003) customer-based brand equity (CBBE) framework, perceived quality can also be categorised as an element of

thoughts and perceptions linked to the brand in the minds of consumers. These thoughts and perceptions arguably trigger consumer feelings towards the brand; emotions that are typically either experiential—i.e., affect and excitement, or inward facing—i.e., status, social approval, or self-respect (Keller, 2001). In addition, consumers commonly enjoy purchasing a brand with high-perceived quality, as it enables them to associate the brand's eminence to their self-image (C. W. Park et al., 2010). This often leads to self-expressive intentions through the development of personal relationships (Fournier, 1998; Japutra et al., 2014), especially in relation to products offering high symbolic attributes, such as luxury brands. In fact, perceived quality is a core element of the values that luxury brands offer (Phau & Prendergast, 2000; K. P. Wiedmann et al., 2009). Hence, the creation of the consumer brand relationship is in fact considered to be a relational value that luxury brands offer, focusing on personalised brand experiences (Tynan et al., 2010). Put more formally:

**H2:** Perceived quality has a positive influence on consumer-brand relationship.

#### *7.4.3 The impact of hedonic benefits and consumer-brand relationship*

Hedonic benefits are primarily aesthetic, experiential and enjoyment-related advantages that brands offer (Chitturi et al., 2008; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Consumers seek to obtain these benefits to improve their self-image (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Kunda, 1999), and to maintain and sustain positive self-views and self-esteem (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). Fournier (1998) noted that hedonic offerings enable the consumer to cultivate a sense of cohesion, oneness and emotional self-connection with the brand. This is supported by the underpinnings of Self-Expansion Theory (A. Aron & Aron, 1986, 1997) and the notion of the extended self (Belk, 1988; Kleine et al., 1993). That is, possession of brand attributes, which reflects positively on consumers' self-perception, allows them see themselves in a positive light, which eventually leads to increased levels of self-esteem (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Studies also suggest that symbolic and hedonic benefits could lead to feelings of love for the brand (e.g., Chandon et al., 2000; Lambert-Pandraud & Laurent, 2010). Furthermore, C. W. Park et al. (2006) suggested that consumers show high tendency to develop emotional attachment to brands that can fulfil certain self-enhancement needs,

including the need to 'gratify the self', to 'enable the self', or to 'enrich the self' (p. 9). These factors result in 'connectedness between the brand and the self' and 'a cognitive and emotional bond' (p. 3).

In the luxury context, since brands provide superior hedonic benefits, consumers perceive them to be irreplaceable and become more and more reliant on those brands (So et al., 2013). This often leads to consumers becoming more emotionally attached to the brands (Fournier, 1998). Furthermore, luxury brands are generally more likely to be evaluated based on the emotions that they create, i.e., leveraging on hedonic potential or promise of pleasure (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009). These considerations lead to the following hypothesis:

**H3:** Hedonic benefits have a positive influence on consumer-brand relationship.

#### *7.4.4 Outcomes of consumer-brand relationship*

The following sections examine *price insensitivity*, *purchase intentions*, and *positive WOM* as the outcomes of consumer-brand relationship.

##### *7.4.4.1 The impact of consumer-brand relationship on price insensitivity*

With respect to price insensitivity, existing studies have suggested that consumers show a distinctive tendency to accept price changes for brands that offer greater functional and symbolic values (Subodh Bhat & Reddy, 1998), and/or offer attributes that consumer can use to identify themselves in individual and social situations (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Thomson et al., 2005). These factors can lead to a greater willingness to accept higher prices (Bauer et al., 2007; Keller, 2003; Thomson et al., 2005; Yoo et al., 2000) and thus can lead to higher price insensitivity (Thomson et al., 2005; Yoo et al., 2000).

In the luxury context, G. Li et al. (2012) confirmed that perceived social and emotional value of a brand might significantly influence the willingness of consumers to pay a premium price. Luxury brands offer a platform for the provision of emotional benefits to consumers, albeit at

a premium price (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009). In fact, luxury brands' identity (tied with enhanced long-term consumer-brand relationship, Nandan, 2005) is often achieved through premium pricing (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008; Vickers & Renand, 2003). Therefore, it is proposed that:

**H4:** Consumer-brand relationship positively influences price insensitivity.

#### *7.4.4.2 The impact of consumer-brand relationship on purchase intentions*

A strong brand relationship could result in several psychological benefits for the consumer, including reducing purchase-related risks and saving on the time and financial costs associated with seeking new relationships with other brands (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). These benefits are drivers of purchase and repurchase intention (Esch et al., 2006; Ilicic & Webster, 2011; McAlexander et al., 2003). C. W. Park et al. (2010) demonstrated that the feeling of attachment towards a brand can predict purchase behaviour, including purchase intentions or product choice (see Fazio, Powell, & Williams, 1989; Petty, Hagtvedt, & Smith, 1995). Furthermore, Esch et al. (2006) revealed that brand attachment (conceptualised as the long-term outcome of brand relationships) creates a consumers desire to be with the brand that they feel attached to, saving the consumer the cost of seeking new relations with other brands (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Specifically, Esch et al., (2006) confirmed that brand attachment predicts future brand purchase intention. In a more recent study, Fetscherin (2014) verified that brand relationship has the power to predict purchase intentions, albeit through brand loyalty. However, the author measured love using a scale entirely based on interpersonal elements. Therefore, the author did not take into consideration elements such as self-identification and attitude strength, which arguably differentiate brand relationships from interpersonal ones (Fetscherin, 2014, see §3.3.1 and §3.2).

In the context of luxury brands, Hung et al. (2011) highlighted that the experiential value of luxury brands (based on Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982) consists of individual thoughts and feelings toward the luxury brand and is a significant predictor of brand purchase intentions. Hence:



**H5:** Consumer-brand relationship positively influences customer's purchase intentions.

#### *7.4.4.3 The impact of consumer-brand relationship on positive WOM*

Past research has confirmed the impact of a brand's emotional relationship with its consumers in encouraging them to spread the word about their favoured brand. For example, Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) argued that the feeling of satisfaction consumers experience from a loved brand predicts post-consumption behaviour. In particular, consumers who love a brand are expected to show greater willingness to spread 'the good word about the brands to others' (p. 82). This is because the self-expressive nature of brand relationships (i.e., consumers using the brand to help construct their identity—(see Wallace et al., 2014, also see more discussion in §3.2) encourages consumers to talk about the brand with other people. Furthermore, strategies that trigger consumer emotions and subsequently lead to the development of a trustful consumer-brand relationship can encourage consumers to share positive news, opinions or experiences about the brand to other potential consumers (Karjaluoto et al., 2016; Reast, 2005).

In the context of luxury brands, Wallace et al., (2012) showed that self-expressive brands such as luxury brands are more likely to be loved by their consumers and consequently be 'liked' and supported by consumers and fans on social media. Furthermore, studies have recently discussed the connections consumers develop with their favoured brands in the form of brand engagement (i.e., consumers' beyond-transactional interactions with the brand, yielding both psychological and behavioural outcomes, see Roderick J Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011a; Puligadda, Ross Jr, & Grewal, 2012; Sprott et al., 2009). In particular, recent studies have confirmed that consumer engagement with the brand generates positive WOM for the brand in the form of support and advocacy (R. L. Liu, Sprott, Spangenberg, & Czellar, 2018; Mende, Thompson, & Coenen, 2015).

In light of the above discussion, this study proposes that:

**H6:** Consumer-brand relationship positively influences customer's positive WOM.

#### *7.4.5 Product category involvement and past purchase: Moderating effects*

##### *7.4.5.1 The moderating effect of product category involvement*

Product category involvement can be described as ‘the feelings of interest and enthusiasm consumers hold toward product categories’ (Goldsmith & Emmert, 1991, p. 363). Past studies have implied that product category involvement positively influences the way that consumers process and leverage brand-related information to predict and evaluate the brand’s performance. For example, Dens and De Pelsmacker (2010) suggested that consumer perception of advertising techniques that leverage positive and negative emotions has different levels of effectiveness on brand evaluation, depending on the levels of category involvement. Similarly, higher levels of product category involvement have been found to be associated with stronger pro-brand attitudes (Drossos, Kokkinaki, Giaglis, & Fouskas, 2014; Fetscherin et al., 2014; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). M. E. Gordon, McKeage, and Fox (1998) proposed that product category involvement works as a contextual factor and influences the success of strategies based on the development of brand relationships. Moreover, greater category involvement generates more positive thoughts and connections about the brand in the minds of consumers; hence, it can elicit more positive beliefs about and evaluations of the brand’s products (Dens & De Pelsmacker, 2010).

Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012) confirmed a moderation role for product category involvement in the relationship between brand self-identification and distinctiveness (similar to uniqueness) in the context of their explanation of the development of brand experiences—a concept closely related to brand relationships (see Brakus et al., 2009). In addition, Knox and Walker (2003) and Quester and Lin Lim (2003) reported a significant relationship between product category involvement and brand loyalty. Cheung, Xiao, and Liu (2012) confirmed a moderation effect for consumer’s level of expertise in the brand (closely related to category involvement) and consumer involvement in the brand community, in the context of the relationship between electronic WOM and purchase intentions. Finally, in the luxury context, Albrecht et al. (2013) showed that consumer involvement with the brand’s category positively

influences the consumer's attitude towards the brand. Therefore, based on these reflections, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

**H7a/b/c:** Product category involvement moderates the relationship between brand knowledge, perceived quality, hedonic benefits and consumer-brand relationship.

**H7d/e/f:** Product category involvement moderates the relationship between consumer-brand relationship and price insensitivity, purchase intention and positive WOM.

#### *7.4.5.2 The moderating role of past purchase*

Seminal studies in brand equity research have suggested that past purchase plays an important role in the creation of brand equity (D. A. Aaker, 1991; Kaynak, Salman, & Tatoglu, 2008; Keller, 2003). For example, the works of Barwise and Ehrenberg (1985) and Barwise (1993) confirmed that recency or frequency of purchase is directly linked with whether consumers associate the brand with some attributes such as design and imagery resulting from brand positioning. In another study, Heinrich and Mühl (2008) showed that the levels of past and future purchases shape the brand equity of sports clubs by predicting fan loyalty. Similarly, Esch et al., (2006) confirmed direct effects of brand awareness and brand image on past purchase, in addition to the significant role of past purchase in predicting future purchases (Kwong, Yau, J. S. Lee, Sin, & Alan, 2003; Shim, Eastlick, Lotz, & Warrington, 2001). More recently, Oakenfull and McCarthy (2010) revealed that heavy users hold more and stronger brand image and uniqueness in their memory (tested across multiple product categories).

In the luxury context, some studies (e.g., So et al., 2013) have revealed that consumers show a greater tendency to continue their relationship with a brand that they have purchased in the past. Finally, luxury brand consumers often reveal their past brand purchases through recommendations or WOM as a way of expressing their membership to an elite community (see Algesheimer et al., 2005; A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012). This sense of belonging further encourages and strengthens the relationship with the brand (Zhou et al., 2012).

In light of the above, this study proposes that:

**H8a/b/c:** Past purchase moderates the relationship between brand knowledge, perceived quality, hedonic benefits and consumer-brand relationship.

Studies have suggested a link between past purchase and higher levels of price insensitivity in future purchases. For example, G. Li et al. (2012) found that a consumer's willingness to pay a premium price for a luxury brand is directly linked to their past purchasing behaviour. Studies have also indicated that past purchase predicts consumer's propensity to engage in WOM (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Dellarocas & Narayan, 2006; W. G. Kim, Han, & E. Lee, 2001). Furthermore, several studies have confirmed the influence of past purchase on future purchase intentions (Shim et al., 2001). For example, Weisberg, Te'eni, and Arman (2011) showed that past purchase experience positively affects future purchase intentions. Kokkinaki (1999) asserted that past purchase behaviour contributes significantly to the prediction of usage intentions, referring to the role of habit and repeated past behaviour in future product usage.

In the luxury context, Atwal and Williams (2009) revealed that consumer intentions to keep purchasing luxury brands in the future significantly relies on past purchases and brand-related experiences. Yoo and S. Lee (2012) predicted that once consumers have purchased genuine luxury brands, they are inclined to purchase more of those brands, as they fulfil their desire for higher social status. Given these insights, one might argue that past purchase could have a moderating role in the theoretical link between brand relationship and its outcomes. Put more formally:

**H8d/e/f:** Past purchase moderates the relationship between consumer-brand relationship and price insensitivity, purchase intention and positive WOM.

#### *7.4.6 Consumer-brand relationship: Mediating role*

The previous sections (§7.4.1 and §7.4.2) suggested that there could be direct relationships between the dimensions of CBBE and consumer-brand relationship, as well as between the consumer-brand relationship and brand-related outcomes. However, to the best of the thesis author's knowledge, existing research has not examined the mediating effects of brand relationship on the link between CBBE components and brand-related outcomes. This oversight is important because existing literature has highlighted that the consumer-brand connection has the power to enhance the success (e.g., yielding brand loyalty or increased purchase intentions) of branding strategies that leverage consumer perceptions such as self-congruence with the brand's image (Japutra & Molinillo, 2017), brand evaluations (Francisco-Maffezzolli et al., 2014; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012), and brand experience (Ding & Tseng, 2015).

Some studies have claimed that cognitive variables (e.g., brand associations or perceived quality) influence purchase decisions, but only in the presence of strong consumer-brand relationships. For example, Ismail and Spinelli (2012) stated that brand image could only affect consumer engagement in WOM if facilitated by feelings of love for the brand. Specifically, the authors suggested that, in order for consumers to talk positively about a brand, the image of the brand must fit with consumers' image of themselves, which they want others to have. Similarly, Wallace et al. (2012) showed that the impact of consumer's bonds with self-expressive brands on WOM is mediated by their feelings of love for the brand. The authors specifically looked at the perceptions about the brand in consumers' minds (e.g., symbolising personality, extension of the self, contribution to self-image and contribution to social roles and image). Furthermore, R. M. Baron and Kenny (1986) revealed that brand relationship is part of a mechanism that could intervene the effects of trust, satisfaction and brand evaluation on brand loyalty. In a recent study, Japutra and Molinillo (2017) showed that brand attachment mediates the relationship between actual and ideal self-congruence and impulsive buying. Lastly, brand relationship has been shown to act as a mediator in the link between brand loyalty and brand perception (Valta, 2013) and brand experience (Francisco-Maffezzolli et al., 2014; Ramaseshan & Stein, 2014).

In addition to the above, brand relationships can assist consumers during purchase decisions, ensuring that the brand is retrieved from memory and subsequently selected by the consumer (Keller, 2009). In fact, theoretical frameworks have supported the link between

CBBE and consumers' brand choices (e.g., see Alba & Marmorstein, 1987; Keller, 2003; A. Y. Lee & Labroo, 2004). Therefore, the stronger the brand knowledge and the associations retained in consumer's memory, the greater the chance that the consumer will recall the brand in buying situations, and the higher the intention of purchasing the brand (Esch et al., 2006; Nedungadi, 1990; Romaniuk & Sharp, 2004). This argument finds incidental support in Japutra et al. (2016) recent findings, which showed that consumer's perception of an ideal brand self-congruence (i.e., the degree to which a brand's image is congruent with consumers' ideal self-concept - see Sirgy, 1982) drives brand loyalty, however, only if fully mediated by the consumer's emotional attachment with the brand. In light of the above, it is plausible to assume that brand relationships facilitate (mediate) the influence of brand knowledge, perceived quality and hedonic attributes on purchase intentions.

In the luxury context, studies have narrowly argued that the effects of cognitive elements on brand-related outcomes could be mediated by the bond between consumers and the brand. However, the focus has been mostly on a brand's image. For example, Ismail and Spinelli (2012) implied that the effect of brand image on WOM could be mediated by consumer's love for the brand. In another study, Islam and Rahman (2016) confirmed that brand love in the context of luxury fashion brands has the power to mediate the influence of brand image on consumer engagement and loyalty towards the brand. Consequently, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

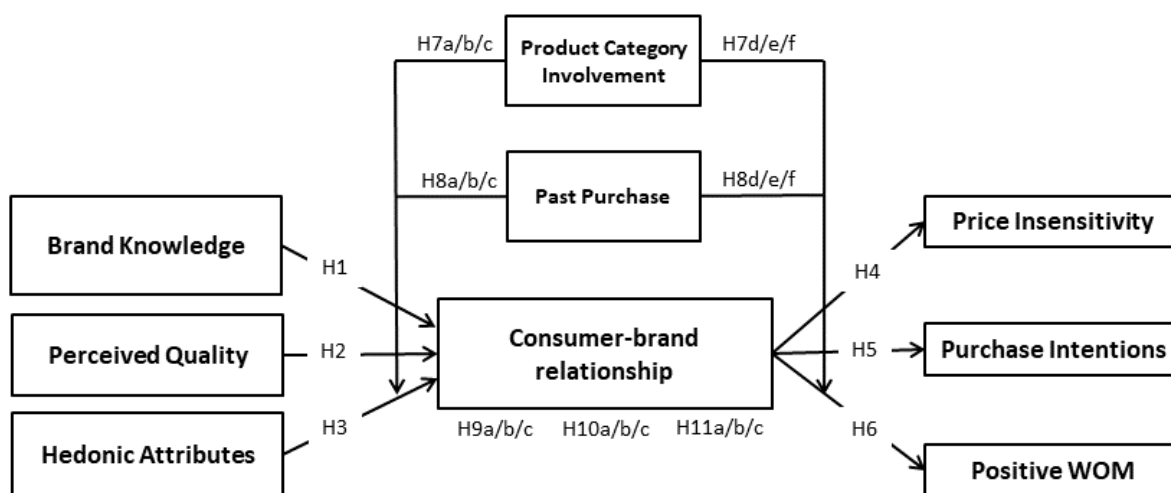
**H9a/b/c:** Consumer-brand relationship mediates the relationship between brand knowledge and price insensitivity, purchase intention, and positive WOM.

**H10a/b/c:** Consumer-brand relationship mediates the relationship between perceived quality and price insensitivity, purchase intention, and positive WOM.

**H11a/b/c:** Consumer-brand relationship mediates the relationship between hedonic benefits and price insensitivity, purchase intention, and positive WOM.

Figure 7.1 presents the hypotheses proposed in this study.

**Figure 7.1** The hypotheses proposed in this study



## 7.5 Methodology

### 7.5.1 Sampling and data collection

This study is based on a pilot survey and a main survey.

The pilot survey involved 55 undergraduate students from a Bachelor of Business degree at a public university based in South Australia (convenience sample). As part of the recruitment criteria, respondents had to be over 18 years old and had to have a general interest in luxury brands. The students were presented with a paper-based questionnaire that was distributed during tutorial classes. The sample included an equal distribution of male and female students, ranging between 18 and 24 years of age, and including 80% domestic students and

20% international students. The purpose of the pilot survey was threefold. First, the pilot intended to confirm that the statements included in the questionnaire were both appropriately worded and easy to understand for respondents. Second, the pilot intended to confirm that the number of questions included in the final questionnaire was appropriate, given that existing research has highlighted the likely negative effects of lengthy questionnaires on the quality of responses (Brace, 2008).

Upon conclusion of the pilot study, the number of measurement items were further reduced due to a number of issues, such as factor loading scores yielding results of less than 0.5, cross loading with other items, or some items returning high correlation scores with other items (i.e., 0.8 or more). Other items were excluded due to being similarly worded or too confusing and cumbersome for the respondents. Appendix 7.2 presents the full list of the final measurement items, as well as the past research that formed the basis of the measurement items for the study 's constructs.

The main study involved 300 undergraduate and postgraduate students from business degrees at the same public university in South Australia (convenience sample). Similar to the pilot, as part of the recruitment criteria, respondents had to be over 18 years old and generally interested in luxury brands. Table 7.1 shows the demographic profile of the characteristics of respondents who returned the questionnaire. Accordingly, while the sample is skewed towards younger consumers, it shows diversity in gender, education and occupation. Moreover, the frequency of purchasing luxury products ranged from never bought (20%) to buy more than once a year (17%) and respondents indicated that their luxury consumption is mostly in the form of purchasing for themselves (53%) and receiving gifts (47%).

**Table 7.1** Demographic profile

Profile	Characteristic	Count	%
Gender	Male	116	46
	Female	132	52
Age	18 to 24	129	51
	25 to 34	58	23
	35 to 44	43	17
	45 to 54	15	6



	55 and older	8	3
<b>Education</b>	Diploma	68	27
	Undergraduate	116	46
	Post Graduate	68	27
<b>Occupation</b>	Student	134	53
	Employed (Part-time and Full-time)	119	47
<b>Frequency of purchasing luxury products</b>	Never bought	53	21
	Less often than every five years	40	16
	Once every five years	35	14
	Once every two years	35	14
	Once per year	46	18
	Buy more than once a year	43	17
<b>Purpose of luxury consumption (multiple options were allowed)</b>	Receive luxury products as a gift	116	46
	Buy luxury products as a gift	68	27
	Purchase luxury products for themselves	134	53

The main survey questionnaire (created using Qualtrics) was distributed via web-link online (via social media sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram) as well as in paper format (distributed face-to-face in class). Questionnaires completed face-to-face were completed in real time, which enhanced both the response rate and the accuracy of responses. The process returned 253 usable responses, all of which were used for the purpose of data analysis after showing sufficient variation in scores, the provision of complete questionnaires, and an adequate sample size given the number of items included in PLS modelling (see Chin, 1998).

The use of student samples is not uncommon in research concerning the analysis of customer-based brand equity (CBBE) or consumer-brand relationship. In fact, studies have often argued that student samples are a good representative of the general population with respect to consumer perceptions and behaviours. For example, Jiyoung Hwang and Kandampully (2012) employed college student subjects as a representative group of younger consumers of luxury brands. Eisend (2005) did not find any difference between non-student and student samples in terms of the size of the effects in his study of elements of brand personality. Hudson, Huang, Roth, and Madden (2016) examined the influence of social media interactions on consumer-brand relationships, and achieved consistent findings when the results were validated by various samples including consumers from different countries (i.e., UK, US, and France), with student samples. Therefore, while using student samples has some possible

limitations (e.g., lack of real-life experience and higher academic knowledge compared to the general public), it also has some strengths, such as a homogeneity. As such, it is a suitable research approach that is theoretical in nature (Peterson, 2001). Moreover, the combination of a pilot research and a main study catered for some of these possible limitations and has been used in previous research (Batra et al., 2012; C. W. Park, Eisingerich, Pol, & J.-W. Park, 2013; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012) for the purpose of basic theory development.

### *7.5.2 Measurement items and survey structure*

The pilot survey included a list of approximately 90 items derived from previous research, representing this study's conceptual constructs (see Appendix 7.1 for a list of items and the studies from which the measurement items for each construct are adapted). All items were tailored to fit the context of luxury brands. The pilot survey identified two brands to be used as the focal brand in the main survey. The respondents were first asked to identify up to five luxury brands that they were aware of, in the categories of luxury watches, luxury sunglasses and luxury perfumes (recommended to be among the popular luxury product categories, (e.g., Alvarez, Kemanian, & Malnight, 2004; Ergin, 2010). Then, the questionnaire provided respondents with a list of top luxury brands in the same three product categories, and asked them to identify the brands they were familiar with. The two most frequently identified brands were Rolex by male respondents and Chanel by female respondents. Hence, these two brands were selected for the main study. The decision to use different brands for different genders is based on studies that have showed that men and women vary significantly in luxury consumption, particularly with respect to their attitudes (Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2013; Y. Wang & Griskevicius, 2013).

The survey of the main study comprised of three sections. In the first section, respondents were asked three questions with respect to luxury brands, to capture purchase frequency of luxury brands, the reason(s) for purchasing luxury brands (options included: 'buying as a gift', 'receiving as a gift', 'purchasing for personal use' and 'others - specify'), and the place the respondent usually purchases luxury brands (options included: 'at the brand's flagship store', 'in other retailers', 'online' and 'others - specify'). In the second section of the survey,

respondents were invited to answer a list of scale-item questions, i.e., to state their level of agreement with a series of statements with respect to the focal brand. The respondents were asked to select from a 5-point Likert-type scale, where: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Somewhat disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Somewhat agree, and 5 = Strongly agree, with an additional option for 'I don't know'. The third section included a series of demographic questions with respect to gender, age, highest educational qualification, marital status, household size, current occupation and annual household income.

Given that all measurements items of the study were obtained from the same respondents using a cross-sectional design, the gathered data were exposed to the potential of common method variance (CMV) bias (Woszczyński & Whitman, 2004). In order to mitigate the effect of this bias, the measurement items were carefully selected in order to ensure clear and easy comprehension (So et al., 2013). Additionally, the analytical steps undertaken prior to modelling included the creation and examination of a correlation matrix of all constructs (using Pearson's correlations). This returned no correlation greater than the 0.90 thresholds (Lowry & Gaskin, 2014). Therefore, it was concluded that CMV did not pose a significant threat to the validity of this study's outcomes.

### *7.5.3 Data analysis methods*

The data collected in the main survey were analysed using the software SmartPLS 2.0. The examination also included Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to confirm the scale's dimensionality with respect to the items of all study constructs. Then, using CFA, the study tested the reliability of the measurement items returned from EFA, using composite reliability scores and Cronbach's Alpha scores. Finally, the study used a Partial Least Squared Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to test the study hypotheses (Hair et al., 2011; Hair Jr et al., 2013; Ringle et al., 2012).

PLS-SEM is a common statistical approach that validates the constructs and measures of a structural relationship model (Chin & Newsted, 1999). There are three reasons for using this approach: (i) PLS path modelling does not require the normality of employed constructs (Hair,

Sarstedt, Ringle, & Mena, 2012); (ii) it is effective for models with small sample sizes (Chin & Newsted, 1999); and (iii) it is suitable for theory development, since it entails less rigorous sample distribution assumptions (Hair et al., 2011).

## 7.6 Results

### 7.6.1 *The measurement model*

By examining the convergent and discriminant validity, this study assessed the psychometric attributes of the study's constructs, as well as the respective measurement items. Since the majority of the study's constructs were intuitively interdependent, it was necessary to employ EFA to assess the dimensionality of the scale and to yield the final items loading to each construct (small coefficients with an absolute value below 0.3 were removed, see Table 7.2).

With respect to brand knowledge, out of all of the measurement items included in the survey, EFA returned three factors that perfectly loaded onto the constructs of brand awareness, brand uniqueness, and brand loyalty. Three and five items returned satisfactory loadings in relation to perceived quality and hedonic attributes, respectively. With respect to the dimensions of consumer-brand relationship, the results from EFA (using principal component analysis with Varimax rotation) yielded two independent dimensions. More specifically, two factors represented all of the elements included in consumer-brand relationship (including self-identification, attachment, emotional connection, attitude strength, passion and long-term relationship). Namely, items such as 'I feel [brand name] seems to fit my tastes perfectly'; '[brand name] satisfies my expectations', and 'Seeing [brand name] is very exciting for me' (see Appendix 3.2 for the list of all the items) loaded into a first factor, which was labelled as *gratification*. Gratification captures the emotional pleasure a consumer gains from being excited about the brand, being satisfied with the brand and desiring the brand. Similarly, items such as 'I feel emotionally connected with [brand name]', 'I feel that there is a strong bond between [brand name] and me', and 'My relationship with [brand name] is very important to me' represented the second factor labelled as *emotional significance*, which

signals the strongly-held and psychologically important emotional bond between the brand and the consumer.

The results derived from CFA (see Table 7.2) confirmed the robustness and resulting internal consistency of the measurement items returned from EFA (indexed by composite reliability scores, CR and Cronbach’s Alpha scores). The CR and Alpha measures ranged from 0.85 and 0.95, which exceeded the recommended threshold value of 0.70 (Chin, 1998). Regarding convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) measures for all constructs stood above the minimum suggested value of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In order to test for discriminant validity, Fornell–Larcker criterion were used, whereby AVE measures for latent constructs exceeded the construct’s highest squared correlation score with any other latent constructs (Hair et al., 2011). Table 7.2 also reveals the results of descriptive analysis involving the study’s main constructs. Since the measure of means revolves around 3.20 (ranging from 1 to 7) and the measures of standard deviation average around 1, it is clear that there is no response bias with respect to any of the constructs included in the research model.

**Table 7.2** CFA, validity measurements and descriptive measures

Study Concepts	AVE	CR	R <sup>2</sup>	Alpha	Communality	Redundancy	Mean	Std. Deviation
Brand awareness	0.671	0.803	-	0.512	0.671	0.000	2.44	1.10
Brand uniqueness	0.767	0.868	-	0.702	0.767	0.000	2.97	1.16
Brand loyalty	0.733	0.846	-	0.636	0.733	0.000	3.99	1.00
Perceived quality	0.851	0.920	-	0.827	0.851	0.000	2.14	1.20
Hedonic benefits	0.805	0.892	-	0.759	0.805	0.000	3.23	1.23
Symbolic values	0.791	0.919	-	0.867	0.791	0.000	3.86	1.17
Gratification	0.620	0.942	0.781	0.932	0.620	0.010	3.89	0.96
Emotional significance	0.586	0.960	0.806	0.956	0.586	0.003	3.90	0.94
Price insensitivity	0.762	0.865	0.596	0.688	0.762	0.442	3.60	1.19
Purchase intentions	0.779	0.876	0.640	0.718	0.779	0.409	3.90	1.08
Positive WOM	0.668	0.889	0.648	0.834	0.668	0.103	3.75	1.29

In order to test for the existence of any Common Method Bias, the study followed Kock (2015). Taking a full collinearity assessment approach, the study checked the model for the existence of collinearity. Table 7.3 reveals that VIFs (at factor level) resulting from a full collinearity test were equal to or lower than 10, suggesting no major common method bias is present (Kock, 2015; Kock, & Lynn, 2012). However, the measure associated with consumer-brand relationship, hedonic benefits and brand knowledge exceeded the value of 5, suggesting the potential existence of a minor to moderate common method bias with respect to the said constructs. This is in fact a limitation that future research could attempt to overcome by selecting different indicators for measuring these constructs as a latent variable.

**Table 7.3** Common method bias analysis results

	VIF measures			
	Consumer-brand relationship	Price insensitivity	Purchase intentions	Positive WOM
<b>Consumer-brand relationship</b>	N/A	6.738	5.848	6.628
<b>Price Insensitivity</b>	2.592	N/A	2.585	2.582
<b>Purchase intentions</b>	2.614	3.024	N/A	3.100
<b>Positive WOM</b>	1.852	1.951	1.96	N/A
<b>Hedonic benefits</b>	3.392	3.986	3.905	3.896
<b>Brand knowledge</b>	3.571	4.052	4.175	4.253
<b>Perceived quality</b>	1.384	1.403	1.426	1.404

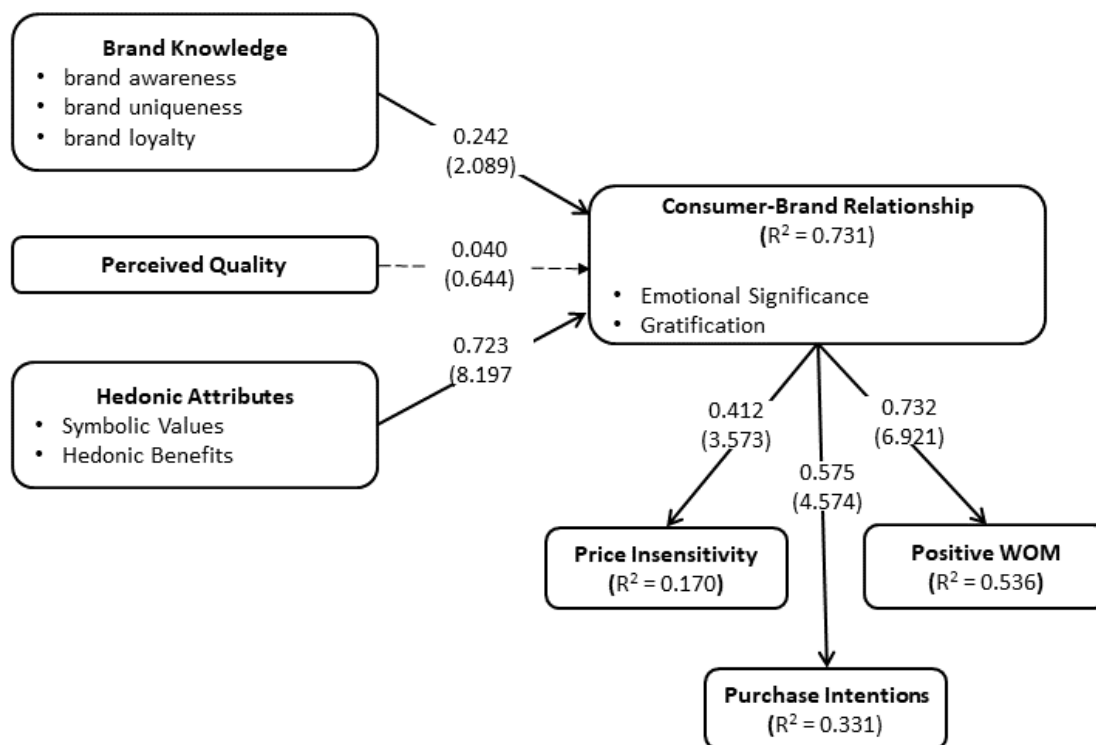
### 7.6.2 The structural model

Figure 7.2 presents the principal modelling estimates. With respect to the dimensions of consumer-brand relationship, gratification and emotional significance were re-structured using observed latent values in order to generate a second-order consumer-brand relationship construct (conforming to steps developed by Lowry & Gaskin, 2014). Similarly, brand awareness, brand uniqueness and brand loyalty were combined to develop the second-order construct of brand knowledge, in addition to the combination of symbolic values and hedonic benefits to create hedonic attributes as the second order construct. In addition, it is important to note that all the main constructs in this study are measured as a reflective

variables where all items are interchangeable and each item reflects the entire respective construct.

Observing the  $R^2$  values, it was apparent that brand equity components (i.e., brand knowledge, perceived quality and hedonic benefits) explained consumer-brand relationship very well, given that the  $R^2$  value (0.731) substantially surpassed the suggested cut-off value of 0.10 (Falk & Miller, 1992). With reference to purchase-related variables, the  $R^2$  values were again significant (for price insensitivity:  $R^2 = 0.170$ ; for purchase intentions:  $R^2 = 0.331$ ; and for positive WOM:  $R^2 = 0.536$ ).

**Figure 7.2** First order structural equation modelling results



Setting 5,000 re-samples via a bootstrapping approach (Hulland, 1999) to obtain resampled estimates and then replacing the original data set for each statistic in PLS-SEM analysis led to the procurement of path coefficients estimates (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2011). The path coefficients and T-statistics (see Table 7.4) revealed that brand knowledge ( $\beta = 0.242$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and hedonic benefits ( $\beta = 0.723$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) significantly influence consumer-brand

relationship. However, perceived quality ( $\beta = 0.040$ ) did not show a substantial impact. Consumer-brand relationship significantly influenced all three variables (price insensitivity:  $\beta = 0.412$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; purchase intention:  $\beta = 0.331$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; and positive WOM:  $\beta = 0.536$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Hence, the data supports H1, H3, H4, H5, and H6.

**Table 7.4** First order structural modelling and moderation analysis results.

	<b>Hypothesised paths</b>	<b>Path Coef.</b>	<b>T-stat</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
H1	Brand Knowledge → Consumer-brand relationship	0.242	2.11*	Supported
H7A	Brand knowledge → Consumer-brand relationship: the moderating role of product category involvement	-0.26	1.51	Not supported
H7D	Brand knowledge → Consumer-brand relationship: the moderating role of past purchase	-0.32	1.54	Not supported
H2	Perceived quality → Consumer-brand relationship	0.040	0.66	Not supported
H7B	Perceived quality → Consumer-brand relationship: the moderating role of product category involvement	-0.30	2.39**	Supported
H7E	Perceived quality → Consumer-brand relationship: the moderating role of past purchase	0.08	0.69	Not supported
H3	Hedonic benefits → Consumer-brand relationship	0.723	8.37**	Supported
H7C	Hedonic benefits → Consumer-brand relationship: the moderating role of product category involvement	-0.08	0.62	Not supported
H7F	Hedonic benefits → Consumer-brand relationship: the moderating role of past purchase	0.14	0.76	Not supported
H4	Consumer-brand relationship → Price insensitivity	0.412	3.60**	Supported
H8A	Consumer-brand relationship → Price insensitivity: the moderating role of product category involvement	-0.47	2.87**	Supported
H8D	Consumer-brand relationship → Price insensitivity: the moderating role of past purchase	-0.17	1.97*	Supported
H5	Consumer-brand relationship → Purchase intentions	0.575	4.73**	Supported
H8B	Consumer-brand relationship → Purchase intentions: the moderating role of product category involvement	0.48	2.65**	Supported
H8E	Consumer-brand relationship → Purchase intentions: the moderating role of past purchase	-0.20	1.78	Not supported
H6	Consumer-brand relationship → Positive WOM	0.536	7.46**	Supported
H8C	Consumer-brand relationship → Positive WOM: the moderating role of product category involvement	-0.34	2.30**	Supported
H8F	Consumer-brand relationship → Positive WOM: the moderating role of past purchase	-0.09	1.17	Not supported



NA	Brand knowledge ← Consumer-brand relationship	0.500	2.93**	-
NA	Perceived quality ← Consumer-brand relationship	0.350	3.26**	-
NA	Hedonic benefits ← Consumer-brand relationship	0.820	13.56**	-

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$

To test the framework's predictability power, the study assessed the reverse relationships between consumer-brand relationship and brand equity elements. Results (see Table 7.4) revealed that consumer-brand relationship has a substantial impact on all three elements of brand equity, as all three T statistics were significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).

In order to model the interaction effects in the framework, this study conformed to Hair et al., (2011) and the product-indicator (PI) approach (see also Chin, Marcolin, & Newsted, 2003). The results (see Table 7.4) showed only a few hypothesised moderation effects to be significant. Specifically, product category involvement was found to significantly moderate the impact of perceived quality on consumer-brand relationship ( $\beta = -0.30$ ,  $t = 2.39$ ), as well as the effect of consumer-brand relationship on price insensitivity ( $\beta = -0.47$ ,  $t = 2.87$ ), purchase intentions ( $\beta = 0.48$ ,  $t = 2.65$ ), and positive WOM ( $\beta = -0.34$ ,  $t = 2.30$ ).

Furthermore, the relationship between consumer-brand relationship and price insensitivity was significantly moderated (at  $p < 0.05$  level) by past purchase ( $\beta = -0.17$ ,  $t = 1.97$ ). The estimates indicate that the direct positive influence of perceived quality on consumer-brand relationship, and the influence of consumer-brand relationship on price insensitivity, purchase intention and positive WOM become significantly weaker (by 0.30, 0.47, 0.48 and 0.34, respectively) for each unit increase in the level of product category involvement. Similarly, each unit increase in the level of past purchase weakened the influence of consumer-brand relationship on price insensitivity by 0.17. Therefore, the data supports H7b, H8a, H8b, H8c, and H8d.

Finally, to establish the full nomological validity of the model, the study conducted a mediation test for consumer-brand relationship (see Table 7.5), estimating mediation effects' sizes by using Sobel's test (Sobel, 1982). Results showed that consumer-brand relationship is mediated by the influence of brand knowledge on purchase intentions and positive WOM.

Furthermore, consumer-brand relationship was found to fully mediate (see Lowry & Gaskin, 2014) the impact of hedonic benefits on all three purchase-related variables (price insensitivity, purchase intentions, and positive WOM).

**Table 7.5** Mediation interaction analysis results.

Hyp.	Mediating role of consumer-brand relationship	Sobel's test		Mediation type
		T	Sig.	
H9A	Brand knowledge → Price insensitivity	1.83	0.06	-
H9B	Brand knowledge → Purchase intentions	1.95	0.05	Full
H9C	Brand knowledge → Positive WOM	2.05*	0.03	Full
H10A	Perceived quality → Price insensitivity	0.65	0.51	-
H10B	Perceived quality → Purchase intentions	0.65	0.51	-
H10C	Perceived quality → Positive WOM	0.65	0.50	-
H11A	Hedonic benefits → Price insensitivity	3.23**	0.00	Full
H11B	Hedonic benefits → Purchase intentions	4.10**	0.00	Full
H11C	Hedonic benefits → Positive WOM	5.52**	0.00	Full

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$

## 7.7 Discussion

### 7.7.1 Theoretical implications

This study confirms that some key customer-based brand equity (CBBE) components (i.e., brand knowledge, perceived quality and hedonic attributes) act as the force behind the establishment of consumer-brand relationship. This finding provides valuable insights towards a better understanding of the synergies between CBBE and consumer-brand relationship, offering a conceptual framework that maps the chain of effects that bind consumer perceptions and the development of consumer-brand relationships. Moreover, the study reveals that, reflecting the importance of the establishment of tangible (e.g., perceived quality) and intangible brand associations (hedonic attributes) can offer a cognitive 'platform' for the development consumer-brand relationships (Keller, 2012).

From a broader perspective, the study results lend support towards the theoretically important link between Chatzipanagiotou et al.'s (2016) brand understanding and brand relationship sub-systems. The link between these two sub-systems provides important understandings on how brands can grow towards the ultimate aim, which is to reach 'resonance', i.e., a state where a harmonious relationship exists between the consumer and the brand (Keller, 2001, 2009). More specifically, the study reveals that the establishment of cognitive elements (represented by components of CBBE) in the minds of consumers are drivers of the relationship between the consumer and the brand. Therefore, this study adds to the limited number of studies that have explored the effects of some components of CBBE on brand relationship (e.g., Esch et al., 2006; Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012; Vlachos & Vrechopoulos, 2012) by incorporating a wider range of CBBE dimensions (i.e., including brand awareness, brand uniqueness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and hedonic attributes).

Additionally, this study adds to the brand relationship literature by: i) examining and confirming a wide range of cognitive elements as the drivers of consumer-brand relationship; and ii) conceptualising and refining a comprehensive, yet parsimonious, framework for consumer-brand relationship, which expands existing works (Karjaluoto et al., 2016; C. W. Park et al., 2010; Albert & Merunka, 2013; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012). From a psychological point of view, the study results improve the understanding of how consumers' cognitive appraisals can predict emotional responses and subsequent behaviours with respect to the brand (Frijda, 1993; Lazarus & Smith, 1988). Therefore, in relation to the key research questions, it is now confirmed that the components of brand equity can be used to explain how consumer-brand relationships are formed.

The above insights also offer clear implications towards the literature on luxury brands. Firstly, the study shows that consumers' perception, and, more importantly, awareness of a luxury brand's rarity and prestige are key factors in triggering brand relationships. Second, the strength of a luxury brand is often associated with the way the brand recognises and treats consumers, which subsequently boosts loyalty, and brand relationship equity (A. Kim & Ko, 2012). Third, among the cognitive elements that consumers associate with luxury brands, the ability to offer superior hedonic benefits such as irreplaceable pleasure and excitement provides the greatest level of emotional attachment from consumers and creates foundations

for the development of consumer-brand relationship (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009; So et al., 2013).

Nonetheless, the results did not support the influence of perceived quality on consumer-brand relationship. This can be explained from different viewpoints. One might suggest that for consumers of luxury products, high levels of build quality and exceptional functional utility are often taken for granted (D. A. Aaker, 1991; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). As a result, perceived quality, although necessary, may not be a determining factor. This is somewhat contrary to conventional expectations (Fournier, 1998; Japutra et al., 2014), as one might expect that if the respondents were to make inferences about the quality of a luxury brand, they would do so by a rational rather than an emotional evaluation. Lastly, the findings revealed that product category involvement significantly moderates the influence of perceived quality on consumer-brand relationship. Hence, it is plausible to conclude that the more consumers are interested in and involved with luxury brands and luxury consumption, the greater the influence of quality on the relationship with the brand.

The results also revealed that strong consumer-brand relationships lead to consumers being less sensitive towards price increases. As luxury products are often manifested at a premium price by leveraging uniqueness and exclusivity (Fionda & Moore, 2009), a reduction in price sensitivity most certainly allows the relationship between the customer and the brand to strengthen. Robust consumer-brand relationships with brands also reinforce positive WOM (Ismail & Spinelli, 2012). This is echoed in the study's findings, which demonstrated that consumer-brand relationship positively mediates the influence of brand knowledge and hedonic benefits on outcome variables.

Finally, the moderation effects for product category involvement were also significant, albeit with negative coefficients. This indicates that the extent to which consumers are involved in the luxury category negatively influences the strength of the relationship between consumer-brand relationship and outcome variables. In other words, as consumers become more involved with brands, the likelihood that their relationship with the brand will influence their buying decision decreases. This is supported by the existing literature which has already revealed that higher involvement with a particular product category leads to more evaluative (i.e., cognitive) purchase-related decision making (Albrecht et al., 2013; Quester & Lin Lim,

2003), overriding emotional factors. A similar pattern exists with regard to the negative influence of product category involvement on how quality perceptions lead to the development of consumer-brand relationships. This can be explained by drawing upon recent findings by Stocchi et al. (2016), who stated that the more consumers are familiar with the product category (i.e., higher level of category usage and/or involvement), the harder it becomes to retrieve the brand from memory and any related information, such as perceived quality.

### *7.7.2 Managerial implications*

Nowadays, the luxury brand market is experiencing a paradigm shift, where practitioners cannot simply rely on brand image and prestige to retain customers (H. J. Choo et al., 2012); rather, they must place extra emphasis on building emotional bonds with their consumers to drive loyalty (Cailleux et al., 2009; Jean-Noël Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Nonetheless, this study shows that any emotional bond between the consumer and the brand requires a coexistent evaluation of how certain attributes (i.e., uniqueness) could benefit the consumer (Atwal & Williams, 2009; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Accordingly, the outcomes of this study suggest that managers can leverage consumer-brand relationships for effective brand management strategies. More specifically, the results indicate that the inherent emotional and symbolic nature of luxury brands, coupled with the spectrum of intangible values that consumers associate with luxury consumption, can mediate the effects of CBBE and consumer-brand relationship. In particular, among the CBBE components, hedonic benefits had the strongest influence on consumer-brand relationship. This result clarifies that symbolic and hedonic consumption provides a unique platform for luxury brands to offer high levels of emotional meaning to their consumers.

In practical terms, the results of this research suggest that luxury brand managers may benefit from placing an extra emphasis on the aesthetic and pleasure inducing aspects of the brand in marketing communications. Managers can achieve this by paying particular attention to their flagship stores when displaying their latest product range (So et al., 2013). Particularly, these stores can enrich the brand's status and credibility amongst consumers to strengthen

consumer-brand relationships (C. M. Moore, Doherty, & Doyle, 2010). As a result, consumers may feel more emotionally inclined to bond with the brand (Barsky & Nash, 2002), through self-identification with the aesthetic attributes (Atwal & Williams, 2009; H. J. Choo et al., 2012; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009). Accordingly, luxury marketers should have market research programs in place to explore and examine the possibly varied levels of luxury brand importance for different consumers. Also, as the study's findings suggest, the extent of involvement in luxury brands has a positive influence on how consumer-brand relationship affect purchase intentions, but a negative role on how consumer-brand relationship impacts price insensitivity and positive WOM. It is therefore recommended that brand managers stimulate consumers' interest towards luxury consumption (Brun et al., 2008). Finally, brand managers should also appraise the strategic relevance of marketing communications as a way of showcasing and reinforcing the image of the brand, its quality and the symbolic aspects linked to it. This could be pursued using advertising tactics that emphasise celebrity endorsements, and through public relations and event strategies (e.g., VIP events) aimed at establishing an exclusive brand image (see also Truong et al., 2009).

## **7.8 Limitations and future research directions**

While this study provides many valuable findings, as with any research, it is not exempt from limitations which must be mentioned in order to propose avenues for future research development. Above all, the main limitation of this study relates to the findings being based on a single set of data gathered from one country (Australia) using non-probability sampling. In addition, as with any student sample, the demographic profile of the sample was markedly skewed towards younger generations (75% of respondents were between 18 and 35 years old). Although in Australia there is currently a growth in luxury brand purchases by younger cohorts (Cheah, Phau, Chong, & Shimul, 2015; Hung et al., 2011), this aspect calls for future replication studies capturing the views of a greater proportion of older consumers. Also, it is crucial to assess the proposed conceptual framework across different cultures, to determine whether cultural differences may result in a different set of relationships between the cognitive and affective components of customer based brand equity. For instance, future

studies could examine the unconfirmed effect of perceived quality on consumer-brand relationship, particularly when the country of origin profoundly alters consumers' quality perceptions (Elliott & Cameron, 1994).

The study also examined purchase intentions rather than actual purchase behaviour. As such, future replications of this work could complement intentions with actual behaviours and possibly other post-purchase behaviour variables. By doing so, future studies can further explore the psychological linkage of CBBE and consumer-brand relationship with purchase behaviour over time. Furthermore, given the unique characteristics of luxury brands, by replicating the results using different gauging contexts (e.g., high involvement shopping goods such as mobile phones or cars), future research could further explore other drivers of consumer-brand relationships.

Moreover, the dimensions and conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationships are still under debate in the literature. While this study drew on existing research (i.e., Batra et al., 2012) to conceptualise and refine the brand relationship framework, there are other well established concepts such as trust and commitment to be considered. Also, there is no consensus as to whether relational concepts such as brand attachment or brand love and the comprehensive concept of consumer-brand relationship can be interchangeably used for empirical examinations. Finally, this study utilised cross-sectional research whereby the findings represented a snapshot scenario of the relationship between the constructs. Future research could conduct longitudinal examinations to further validate the conceptual framework.

## Appendix

### Appendix 7.1 Measurement items included in the pilot study

Concept	Item Statement
<b>CBBE</b>	
<b>Brand awareness and associations</b> D. A. Aaker (1991); Keller (2001); Pappu et al. (2005); Yoo et al. (2000)	I can recognise this brand among other competing brands.
	This brand is a brand of luxury products that I am very familiar with
	When I think of luxury, this brand is one of the brands that comes to mind
	I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of this brand.
	I don't have difficulty in imagining this brand in my mind
<b>Brand loyalty</b> D. A. Aaker (1991); Keller (2001); Pappu et al. (2005); Yoo et al. (2000)	I consider myself to be loyal to this brand.
	This brand would be my first choice when considering luxury products
	I will not buy other brands of luxury, if this brand is available at the store
<b>Perceived quality</b> Batra et al. (2012); Pappu et al. (2005)	This brand offers very good quality products
	This brand offers products of consistent quality
	The likelihood that this brand is reliable is very high
<b>Perceived value</b> Batra et al. (2012); Pappu et al. (2005)	This brand is good value for money
	Within the luxury brands, I consider this brand a good buy
	Considering what I would pay for this brand, I would get much more than my money's worth
<b>Brand image</b> D. A. Aaker (1991); Keller (2001); Pappu et al. (2005); Yoo et al. (2000)	This brand is friendly
	This brand is popular among luxury brand consumers
	I see this brand as an attractive brand
	In my opinion, this brand is an exciting brand
<b>Symbolic benefits</b> Jinsoo Hwang and Hyun (2012); K. P. Wiedmann et al. (2009)	Choosing this brand makes me feel that I made a smart choice
	By owning this brand, I can stand out in a crowd
	I get social approval through having this brand
	This brand looks sophisticated
	This brand expresses my personality
	This brand symbolises my status
<b>Sense of community</b> Keller (2003); Netemeyer et al. (2004)	When I see someone else using this brand, I feel a sense of kinship toward him/her
	I feel that I am like other customers of this brand
	I feel that other customers of this brand are like me
	I feel that all of this brand's customers are part of a special group
<b>Brand hedonism</b> Jinsoo Hwang and Hyun (2012); K. P. Wiedmann et al. (2009)	Purchasing this brand is a way of rewarding me
	This brand gives me pleasure
	This brand gives me a good feeling
	This brand develops a sense of aesthetics in me
	I find this brand very alluring
<b>Brand uniqueness</b>	This brand has a distinctive identity
	This brand is unique



Jinsoo Hwang and Hyun (2012); K. P. Wiedmann et al. (2009)	This brand stands out from its competitors
<b>Brand prestige</b> Jinsoo Hwang and Hyun (2012); K. P. Wiedmann et al. (2009)	This brand is very prestigious
	This brand helps me to make good impressions on others
	In my opinion, this brand is a well-regarded brand
	This brand has an attractive identity
	In my opinion, this brand is very upscale
<b>Consumer brand relationship</b>	
<b>Brand self-identification</b> Batra et al. (2012)	I feel a strong sense of belonging to this brand
	I strongly identify myself with this brand
	This brand says something about who I am
	This brand is an important part of my self
	I think my personal identity matches with this brand's identity
	This brand embodies what I believe in
	This brand has a great deal of personal meaning for me
	This brand helps me to present myself to others as the person I want to be
	Life meaning and intrinsic rewards
	This brand makes my life meaningful
	This brand is inherently important
	This brand is more than an investment in future benefits
	<b>Brand attachment</b> Batra et al. (2012)
I feel that I am emotionally attached to this brand	
I feel distressed when I do not own this brand	
I have many thoughts about this brand	
I feel that thoughts and feelings towards this brand come to my mind naturally and instantly	
The name of this brand automatically evokes many good thoughts about the past, present, and future	
<b>Attitude strength</b> Batra et al. (2012)	I very often talk to others about this brand
	I very often have thoughts about this brand
	My feelings towards this brand are strong
	I feel lots of affection toward this brand
	I feel certain about my evaluations about this brand
	I feel strongly hold evaluations about this brand
	I feel confident about my evaluations about this brand
	The intensity of my evaluations about this brand is high
<b>Emotional connection</b> Batra et al. (2012)	I have found myself always returning to this brand
	I feel emotionally close to this brand
	I value this brand greatly in my life
	I associate this brand with some important events of my life
	This brand reminds me of someone important to me
	This brand corresponds to an ideal for me
	I am always happy to use this brand
	I have a warm and comfortable relationship with this brand
	I can say that I love this brand
	This brand creates warm feelings among its users
This brand is emotional rather than rational	

	I feel psychologically comfortable using this brand
	This brand is a natural fit for me
	This brand is what I have been looking for in luxury brands
	This brand felt right when I first encountered it
	I feel strong feelings of liking towards this brand
	This brand feels like an old friend
<b>Long-term relationship</b> Batra et al. (2012)	This brand will be the brand I will be using for long time to come
	This brand will be part of my life for long time to come
	I feel a sense of long-term commitment towards this brand
<b>Passion</b> Batra et al. (2012)	I cannot imagine another brand making me as happy as this brand does
	I adore this brand
	There is something almost 'magical' about this brand
	My relationship with this brand is very 'alive'
	My passion for this brand is in harmony with other aspects of my lives
	I feel obsessively passionate about this brand
	This brand allows me to have memorable experiences
	I can't imagine my life without this brand
	I feel myself desiring this brand
	Willingness to invest resources
	I have spent lot of time making this brand fit my needs
	I am willing to spend lot of time shopping to buy this specific brand
<b>Past involvement</b> Kressmann et al. (2006)	I have been involved with this brand in the past
	I have done a lot of things with this brand in the past
	I have interacted a lot with this brand in the past
<b>Involvement in luxury brands</b> Kressmann et al. (2006)	I attach great importance to luxury brands
	Luxury brands interest me a lot
	Luxury brands matters a lot to me
<b>Purchase intention</b> Chandon et al. (2000); Netemeyer et al. (2004); Schlosser, White, and Lloyd (2006)	I will consider purchasing this brand
	The next time I need a product from luxury category, I will consider this brand
	This brand is my top choice, when purchasing luxury products
	Willingness to pay a premium price
	I am willing to pay a higher price for this brand
	I will pay a premium price for this brand, compared to other brands
	The higher price of this brand compared to other competitors will not stop me from choosing its products
<b>Positive WOM</b> Carroll and Ahuvia (2006)	I give this brand a lot of positive WOM over social media
	I recommend this brand to friends and family over social media
<b>Price insensitivity</b> Netemeyer et al. (2004)	I am willing to pay a higher price for this brand.
	The higher price of this brand compared to other competitors will not stop me from choosing its products.
<b>Past purchase</b> Taylor and Baker (1994)	I have purchased from this brand before.
	I have good experience with my past purchases from this brand

## Appendix 7.2 Measurement items of the main study

Constructs	Item Code	Items	Factor Loadings
<b>Brand knowledge</b> D. A. Aaker (1991); Keller (2001); Pappu et al. (2005); Yoo et al. (2000)	BK01	I can recognise [brand name] among other competing brands.	0.616
	BK02	When I think of luxury brands, [brand name] is one of the brands that comes to my mind	0.615
	BK03	[brand name] is unique in comparison to other luxury brands	0.778
	BK04	[brand name] stands out from its competitors	0.708
	BK05	Purchasing [brand name] is a way of rewarding me	0.802
	BK06	[brand name] would be my first choice when considering luxury brands	0.726
<b>Perceived quality</b> Batra et al. (2012); Pappu et al. (2005)	PQ01	[brand name]'s products are well made	0.855
	PQ02	[brand name] offers very good quality products	0.850
	PQ03	[brand name] is good value for money	0.820
<b>Hedonic benefits</b> Jinsoo Hwang and Hyun (2012); K. P. Wiedmann et al. (2009)	HB01	[brand name] gives me pleasure	0.818
	HB02	Social standing of [brand name] is an important motivator for my luxury consumption	0.786
	HB03	I get social approval through having [brand name]	0.819
	HB04	[brand name] expresses my personality	0.901
	HB05	[brand name] symbolises my status	0.821
<b>Gratification</b> Batra et al. (2012)	BB01	I feel [brand name] seems to fit my tastes perfectly.	0.807
	BB02	[Brand name] satisfies my expectations.	0.883
	BB03	I am very satisfied with [brand name]	0.790
	BB04	Seeing [brand name] is very exciting for me	0.828
	BB05	I am willing to spend a lot of money to buy products specifically from [brand name]	0.819
<b>Emotional significance</b> Batra et al. (2012)	BE01	I feel emotionally connected with [brand name].	0.817
	BE02	I feel that there is a strong 'bond' between [brand name] and me.	0.852
	BE03	If [brand name] would go out of existence, I would feel apprehensive.	0.822
	BE04	Using [brand name] would say something 'true' and 'deep' about who I am as a person	0.785
	BE05	[brand name] is able to contribute something towards making my life worth living.	0.824
	BE06	[brand name] keeps up popping in my mind.	0.815
	BE07	My relationship with [brand name] is very important to me	0.793
<b>Price insensitivity</b> Netemeyer et al. (2004)	PI01	I am willing to pay a higher price for [brand name]	0.886
	PI02	The higher price of [brand name] compared to other competitors will not stop me from choosing its products.	0.858
<b>Purchase intention</b> Netemeyer et al. (2004)	PIN1	I have high intention to purchase [brand name]'s luxury brands	0.897
	PIN2	[brand name] is my top choice, when purchasing luxury brands	0.868
<b>Positive WOM</b>	PW01	I give [brand name] a lot of positive WOM over social media	0.818

Carroll and Ahuvia (2006)	PW02	I recommend [brand name] to friends and family over social media	0.846
<b>Product category involvement</b> Kressmann et al. (2006)	CI01	I attach great importance to luxury brands	0.780
	CI02	Luxury brands interest me a lot	0.821
<b>Past purchase</b> Taylor and Baker (1994)	PP01	I have purchased from this brand before.	0.785
	PP02	I have good experience with my past purchases from this brand	0.824

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

### **8.1 Chapter summary**

The aim of this chapter is to provide a detailed discussion of how the thesis has addressed its primary research objectives, which were: i) to identify and critically review the existing conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationships (i.e., relational concepts); ii) to outline and test a parsimonious framework for consumer-brand relationship; iii) to extend the conceptualised consumer-brand relationship framework with respect to its effects on brand-related outcomes; and iv) to investigate the synergy between consumer-brand relationship and customer-based brand equity (CBBE).

Accordingly, the chapter begins by outlining and explaining the theoretical contribution that this thesis makes, distinguishing between major and minor contributions. Among the major contributions, the chapter explains how this thesis has led to the validation of the theoretical relationship between the components of CBBE and consumer-brand relationship. It also highlights that this thesis has confirmed the power of consumer-brand relationship in explaining several brand-related outcomes, such as purchase intentions and price insensitivity. Among the minor contributions, the chapter lists incremental advancements and extensions to existing knowledge, such as improving the theoretical understanding of three key relational concepts (brand love, brand attachment and brand passion). The chapter also highlights hedonic benefits as key drivers of brand relationships in the context of luxury brands.

The chapter then outlines the managerial implications resulting from this thesis. Specifically, it makes the distinction between general implications for brand management practices and specific implications for sports apparel brands and luxury brands (two contexts considered across the three empirical studies).

Finally, the chapter discusses a series of research limitations that emerged from the three empirical studies presented. In doing so, it summarises the areas where there is wider scope for future research developments and the research program resulting from this thesis.

## 8.2 Theoretical contributions

### 8.2.1 Major contributions

→ *The thesis explored the theoretical relationship between components of CBBE and consumer-brand relationship (Objective 4, Chapters 6 and 7).*

The thesis (in **Chapters 6 and 7**) contributes to the literature on brand relationship and CBBE by confirming that several cognitive elements act as drivers of consumer-brand relationship. More specifically, in **Chapter 6 (Study 2)**, the thesis revealed that brand associations (encompassing brand image, hedonic and prestigious values and uniqueness) drive emotional consumer-brand relationships. Furthermore, in **Chapter 7 (Study 3)**, the thesis built upon the findings of **Study 2** and confirmed the power of a range of CBBE components (i.e., brand knowledge, perceived quality and hedonic attributes) in predicting the development of consumer-brand relationship.

These findings yielded two important theoretical implications. First, the findings provided insights for the theoretical advancement of two inter-related areas of existing research: consumer-brand relationship and CBBE. The link between these areas reflected a key stage of the *process* of building strong brands (Keller, 2001, 2009; Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016; Christodoulides et al., 2015). This process comprises a sequence of effects between several blocks or sub-systems, whereby the link between cognitive and emotional blocks (Keller, 2009) is vastly under explored (Japutra et al., 2016; Langner et al., 2015; Malär et al., 2011). By revealing the existence of a link between the components of each block (e.g., brand knowledge and hedonic benefits positively influencing brand love and brand attachment, see §7.4), the thesis improved the current understanding of the dynamic process of brand relationship development, clearly theorising it as a sequence of cognitive evaluations and

emotional responses. Namely, the theoretical and empirical work that this thesis presented has clarified that this process begins in the minds of consumers, drives strong brand relationships, and eventually manifests itself in positive brand-related outcomes such as brand advocacy and price insensitivity (discussed in **Chapters 6 and 7**). Therefore, the thesis contributes to theory by providing insights into recent calls for the use of dynamic approaches to the study of social interactions and relationships (Berscheid, 2010; Langner et al., 2016), which have been widely overlooked in existing research concerning brand relationships published to date.

Second, the thesis sheds light on how CBBE theory can be drawn upon to conceptualise the psychological mechanism that explains how consumers use brand knowledge and perceptions about brands in the process of developing consumer-brand relationships. This is an important contribution, because, to the best of the thesis author's knowledge, such a level of detailed analysis linking components of CBBE and consumer-brand relationship has never been considered in existing conceptual and empirical research. More importantly, the majority of researchers have only considered cognitive aspects such as self-expression and brand attitudes as the antecedents of customer-brand relationship (e.g., Batra et al., 2012). However, considering the various benefits that brand relationships can bring to consumers (e.g., self-expression and social status), there are multiple alternative 'pathways' mapping how consumers link specific memories about a brand to the emotional response towards it. Hence, by revealing a significant causal link between components of CBBE and brand relationship, this thesis explains how cognitive and emotional components contribute to the development of strong brands. This is in line with Chatzipanagiotou et al. (2016), which stated that the nature of the process of brand building requires numerous closely related brand-concepts (e.g., consumers' evaluative perceptions about the brand and feelings towards the brand) to co-exist and interact. The theoretical and empirical insights that this thesis has generated clearly suggest the existence of an underlying synergy between CBBE and consumer-brand relationship. Importantly, this thesis has 'mapped' how this synergy might unfold, and the possible chain of effects leading to the establishment of customer-brand relationships via CBBE dimensions such as brand knowledge, perceived quality and hedonic and symbolic benefits.

→ *The thesis confirmed the power of consumer-brand relationship in explaining brand-related outcomes (Objective 3, Chapter 7)*

The thesis (in **Chapter 7, Study 3**) revealed the power of consumer-brand relationships in producing positive purchase-related intentions and attitudes towards the brand. More specifically, **Study 3** broadened the understanding of the importance of consumer-brand relationship as a driver of brand-outcomes such as: (i) positive WOM, which is a focal objective of marketing activities (Chen & Xie, 2008; Karjaluoto et al., 2016); ii) consumer reactions to pricing tactics (Okonkwo, 2016); and iii) and purchase intentions (Q. Bian & Forsythe, 2012). In more detail, the thesis (in **Chapter 7**, see §7.6 and §7.7.1) revealed that having strong relationships with consumers is a key asset for a brand as it causes greater purchase intentions. This is an important finding, because it discloses a new driver of consumer intentions to purchase the products of a brand. That is, while prior research associates purchase intentions with consumer evaluations of the product (W. Chiu & Won, 2016; Hidayat & Diwasasri, 2013) and external factors—e.g., celebrity endorsement (Pradhan, Duraipandian, & Sethi, 2016; Tripp, Jensen, & Carlson, 1994), this thesis shows that a consumer's relationship with the brand is, in fact, another vital feature of brand management that has the power to predict purchase intentions.

Furthermore, the empirical results that this thesis offers in **Study 3** (see §7.6) revealed that consumers who have developed a relationship with a favoured brand are willing to spread positive WOM about it. Through this, the thesis uncovered an implication relating to the self-expressive nature of the brand relationship—i.e., consumers use the brand to help construct their own identity (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Wallace et al., 2014). In more detail, in line with the findings of **Study 3**, it can be concluded that while consumers are drawn to brands with attributes that allow them to express themselves (either their current or ideal selves), the same attributes also encourage consumers to spread the good word about the brand and about their relationship with it to other consumers. Therefore, this thesis contributes to the existing research, which has posited that the feeling of satisfaction that is embedded in consumer-brand relationships is a likely driver of WOM (e.g., Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; C. W. Park et al., 2010; Batra et al., 2012).



The thesis also confirmed that strong consumer-brand relationships could lead to consumers being less sensitive towards price increases. This adds to the literature due to the following reason. Existing studies have demonstrated that the main reason why consumers show a willingness to pay a premium price for a brand lies in the greater value they associate with the brand (functional and symbolic - see Bauer et al., 2007; Subodh Bhat & Reddy, 1998; Hung et al., 2011; Thomson et al., 2005). While there is no agreement on what truly constitutes superior value (Christodoulides et al., 2015; Davcik, Vinhas da Silva, & Hair, 2015), this thesis demonstrates that emotional consumer-brand relationship could be a manifestation of the overall value that the brand provides to the consumer.

In addition to the above, in **Chapter 6 (Study 2)**, this thesis revealed the power of the emotional consumer-brand relationship (see §6.3.2) in predicting consumer evaluation of brand extensions. This finding adds to the body of literature by validating the usefulness of brand relationships to the establishment of pro-brand attitudes and intentions; towards the brand (discussed in **Study 3**) and towards brand extensions (revealed in **Study 2**). More importantly, the thesis contributes to the theory by providing and validating a new theoretical framework, which confirmed the combined role of brand associations and emotional consumer-brand relationships in driving consumers' positive evaluations of brand extensions. This adds to the existing literature whose several conceptual and empirical limitations were noted in **Chapter 2** (see §2.5), such as: i) a limited focus on relational concepts rather than the overall brand relationship (e.g., see Fedorikhin et al., 2008; Hem, De Chernatony, & Iversen, 2003; Yeung & Wyer, 2005); and ii) non- generalisable findings due to limited validation (K. Kim et al., 2014).

→ *The thesis developed and tested two research models that revealed the underlying components of the consumer-brand relationship (**Objective 2, Chapters 6 and 7**)*

The thesis (in **Chapters 6 and 7**) offers two new frameworks for the concept of consumer-brand relationship. First, in **Chapter 6 (Study 2)** the thesis proposed and tested a conceptual

framework capturing the underlying emotional elements of consumer-brand relationships. Specifically, the thesis combined the psychological notions of interpersonal relationships (see §2.3) and research on relational concepts (see §3.3) into a framework that included several facets of emotional bonds with consumers. Importantly, the emotional consumer-brand relationship developed in **Study 2** is the first framework to the best of the author's knowledge, to incorporate four well-established concepts (i.e., brand attachment, brand passion, brand love, and brand identification) to reflect various aspects of emotional brand relationships (i.e., affection, love, friendliness, passion, delightedness, connectedness, oneness and attachment - see Fournier, 1998). More specifically, the thesis considered and critically evaluated the literature behind the four selected concepts (see §3.3) to formulate a comprehensive conceptualisation of the emotional consumer-brand relationships, which was then validated empirically (see §6.5.2).

Second, in **Chapter 7 (Study 3)** the thesis theorised and tested a comprehensive conceptual framework outlining the emotional and cognitive aspects of the consumer-brand relationship. The new framework incorporated brand self-identification, brand attachment, attitude strength, emotional connection, long-term relationship and passion (see §7.3.2). The thesis validated this framework in **Study 3**, upon using Exploratory Factor Analysis and principal component analysis with Varimax rotation. Importantly, the dimensions considered loaded onto two single dimensions: gratification and emotional significance (see §7.6.2 for a more detailed explanation and definition of the new dimensions). Therefore, this thesis adds to existing literature by offering empirical evidence in support of the inclusion of cognitive and emotional components in the theorisation of brand relationships (in line with recent research by Ding & Tseng, 2015; Japutra et al., 2016; Veloutsou, 2015). This contributes significantly to the literature, because the majority of published studies do not include important cognitive elements such as consumer's evaluative judgement (e.g., Fournier, 1998) or consumer's existing knowledge about the brand (e.g., Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003) and/or brand relationship history (e.g., Smit et al., 2007). The omission of these concepts might hinder a thorough understanding and validation of various aspects of brand relationship, since they have been deemed to be significant in predicting consumers' intentions and behaviours (see §7.3.2 for more discussion).

→ *The thesis confirmed the theoretical importance of brand passion as a powerful predictor of attitudinal loyalty and other brand-related outcomes (Objective 1, Chapter 5).*

The thesis (in **Chapters 3** and **5**) examined brand passion (a lesser investigated relational construct compared to brand attachment and brand love) and validated it as a driver of positive brand-related outcomes. By doing this, the thesis makes two important contributions.

Firstly, through a thorough review of the literature on brand passion, the thesis identified and discussed a series of distinctive features signifying the importance of investigating brand passion as a concept independent from brand love (Batra et al., 2012; Heinrich et al., 2012; Sarkar & Murthy, 2012) and brand attachment (Japutra et al., 2014; Thomson et al., 2005). For example, as **Chapter 3** (see §3.3.5) highlighted, brand passion (compared to brand love and brand attachment) is a more complex concept, because it implies a connection with the brand, which is driven by the desire to obtain the brand's symbolic benefits such as prestige and uniqueness (Albert et al., 2013; Swimberghe et al., 2014; Bauer et al., 2007). In addition, brand passion relates to a stage of the consumer-brand relationship during which the consumer has limited knowledge of the brand (Albert et al., 2013). In comparison, brand love and brand attachment associate with later stages of the development of brand relationships, where the consumer possess greater knowledge about the brand and have developed a series of mental associations about the brand, stored in his/her memory. Furthermore, unlike brand love and brand attachment, brand passion does not require cognitive consistency (Awa & Nwuche, 2010; Rauschnabel & Ahuvia, 2014). That is, it does not require beliefs and attitudes to 'fit together in a coherent way' (Rauschnabel & Ahuvia, 2014, p. 378). To the best of the author's knowledge, there is no published work currently offering a similar detail of reflections about brand passion. Arguably, such level of detail offers a solid basis for the development of new theoretical frameworks to be tested empirically, such as these presented in **Chapter 5**.

Secondly, the thesis adds to the literature on brand passion by examining its role as a driver of consumer's attitudes and intentions, which has been overlooked in existing research. More specifically, the thesis, in **Chapter 5 (Study 1)**, confirmed brand passion as a strong predictor of attitudinal loyalty (see §5.6 and §5.7.1), rather than perceptual knowledge. In **Study 1**, the thesis also revealed that brand passion has the power to drive various brand-related outcomes such as brand advocacy, sense of community, social media support, price insensitivity and alternative devaluation (albeit indirectly, through attitudinal loyalty). These outcomes extend beyond transactional purposes and reflect the nature of consumers' relationship with the brand that goes beyond the fulfilment of immediate needs (Rozanski et al., 1999). Accordingly, it can be concluded that this thesis indirectly contributes to a number of existing strands of research, as follows.

- i. Studies that have linked the relationship between consumers' willingness to be loyal to the brand and the perceived similarity with other like-minded brand community members (e.g., see Shen & Chiou, 2009)
- ii. Studies that have suggested attitudinal loyalty drives consumer's willingness to act as a reference or an advocate on behalf of the brand (e.g., see Fullerton, 2005a)
- iii. Studies that have investigated the link between consumers' interaction on social media and loyalty (e.g., see Wallace et al., 2014)
- iv. Studies that have discussed the values obtained from being loyal to a brand, and their subsequent effect on the way consumers evaluate other brands (e.g., see Albert et al., 2013).

### *8.2.2 Minor contributions*

→ *The thesis improved the theoretical understanding of three key relational concepts: brand love, brand attachment and brand passion (**Objective 1, Chapter 3**)*

The thesis, in **Chapter 3** (see §3.3), critically reviewed the literature on three key relational concepts: brand love, brand attachment and brand passion. Accordingly, the thesis makes a number of minor theoretical contributions as follows.

First, the thesis provided a thorough understanding of the three concepts with respect to their definitions and theoretical dimensions (see §3.3.1, §3.3.3, and §3.3.5), including the features that make each concept distinct from the other two. The provision of these reflections offer researchers investigating customer-brand relationship a wider understanding of the meaning of these concepts, paving the way to the construction of new frameworks. Second, the thesis (see §3.3.7) highlighted the different and important aspects of brand relationships that each of these three relational concept represents, leading to an important conclusion. That is, any theorisation of brand relationships should include all three concepts in order to outline a more comprehensive approach to conceptualise brand relationships – a conclusion that in this thesis implemented in the frameworks developed and tested in **Chapters 6 and 7**.

→ *The thesis confirmed that hedonic benefits are the key drivers of the establishment of brand relationships in the context of luxury brands (**Objective 4, Chapter 7**).*

In **Study 3**, the thesis revealed that the hedonic and prestigious benefits associated with luxury brands have the strongest influence on the development of consumer-brand relationships. This finding adds to the literature on luxury brands, indicating that there is a theoretical pathway linking consumers' thoughts and perceptions about luxury brands to the inclination to develop a long-term bond with the brand. As already mentioned in **Chapter 7** (see §7.2), studies on luxury brands (e.g., see Christodoulides, Michaelidou, & Li, 2009; Shukla et al., 2016; Tynan et al., 2010) have implied a shift in luxury consumption from firm and product-centric approaches to strategies that focus on personalised brand experiences. Arguably, the discovery of a theoretical link between hedonic benefits and customer-brand relationships could exemplify this shift, and explain that consumers cultivate customised relationships with their favoured luxury brand on the basis of the benefits they obtain from their experiences. These hedonic benefits include consumer self-expressions—i.e., self-identification with the brand's unique characteristics or its prestige; and upholding values (Tynan et al., 2010) vital for luxury consumers (e.g., symbolic/expressive,

experiential/hedonic and relational values), all of which are linked to positive perceptions and thoughts about the brand.

Through this finding, the thesis also addressed some limitations in the literature. Specifically, while the majority of the existing research considering luxury brands has focused on a practical and managerial perspective (e.g., see Phau & Teah, 2009; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Liu et al., 2012), the thesis focused more extensively on the theoretical mechanisms that drive development of brand relationships through components of CBBE from consumers' perspective.

→ *The thesis incorporated brand identification as an essential dimension of emotional consumer-brand relationship (Objective 1, Chapter 6)*

This thesis reveals that brand identification plays a significant role in the development of brand relationships. More specifically, in **Chapter 6 (Study 2, see §6.3.2)** the thesis posited that self-identification with a brand represents an emotion that corresponds with the feelings that consumer experience when they associate their identities with a brand's symbolic characteristics such as prestige or uniqueness (see §6.3.2). Hence, it can be included as a dimension of emotional consumer-brand relationships. The thesis proved the validity of this assumption by examining the convergent and discriminant validity of the concepts of emotional consumer-brand relationships, and assessing the psychometric attributes of the employed dimensions (including brand identification). The result of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) showed that the obtained loadings for brand identification stood above the suggested threshold value with no cross loading measures. This is an important finding because it revealed another key theoretical component (along with brand love, brand attachment, and brand passion) that should be included in the theorisation of consumer-brand relationships.

→ *The thesis drew upon several interpersonal theories to justify the approach taken towards and the elements included in the conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationship (Objective 2, Chapter 2)*

In **Chapter 2**, this thesis presented a discussion of the role of some important psychological theories (see §2.2) in the advancement of research on consumer-brand relationships. These theories included the Triangle of Love (Sternberg, 1986 - see §2.2.1), Attachment Theory (Ainsworth, 1969; Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bowlby, 1958, 1960), Self-Expansion Theory (A. Aron & Aron, 1986; A. Aron & Westbay, 1996; E. N. Aron & Aron, 1996) and Theory of Relational Cohesion (Lawler et al., 2000; Lawler & Yoon, 1996). These theories were thoroughly reviewed in order to find valuable theoretical explanations that could inform the theorisation of the relational concepts examined in this thesis. This led to establishment of a series of foundational hypotheses concerning consumer-brand relationships. For example, the thesis posited the role of brand associations in influencing emotional consumer-brand relationship drawing on the notions of Self-Expansion Theory and Theory of Relational Cohesion (in **Chapter 6**, see §2.2.5). The thesis also drew on Attachment Theory and Self-Expansion Theory in order to assume the influence of hedonic benefits on consumer-brand relationship (in **Chapter 7**, see §2.2.2 and §2.2.3).

To the best of the author's knowledge, the use of a combination of these psychological theories to interpret and explain brand relationship is an innovative theoretical approach and a theoretical contribution of this thesis. For example, while studies (e.g., see Thomson et al., 2005) have incorporated the notions of Attachment Theory in the development of brand relationships, the thesis posited that studies should also incorporate the notions of Self-Expansion Theory to justify the mechanisms of rapid self-expansion and emotional arousal crucial in the theorisation of brand passion (see also §2.2.2.1).

→ *The thesis revealed the theoretical similarities and differences between interpersonal relationships and consumer-brand relationships (Objective 2, Chapter 2)*

Upon reviewing psychological research regarding interpersonal love and relationships, this thesis also (in **Chapter 2**) contributes to theory by highlighting and critically evaluating some of the most important similarities and differences between the theoretical foundations of interpersonal relationships and consumer-brand relationships. The identification of shared vs. non-shared theoretical foundations led to the formulation of a series of key assumptions that have informed the three empirical studies (**Chapter 5, 6 and 7**). These assumptions allow making informed decisions about which components to include when theorising brand relationships in future studies. Above all, it is important to consider that in comparison to interpersonal love, brand relationships are limited with respect to: *richness, depth* and *overall importance* to the individual(s) involved in the relationship (Aggarwal, 2004). Accordingly, researchers should be cautious when developing scale items to measure components of consumer-brand relationships. For instance, when examining the level of consumers' emotions towards brands, instead of using statements such as 'I am in love with this brand' (which has a deep and rich connotations similar to interpersonal relationships), researchers are recommended to simply use the expression of 'I love this brand'. For example, in **Study 2** (see Table 6.2) used 'I can say that I really love this brand' as an item to measure brand love. Similarly, the thesis in **Study 3** (see Appendix 7.2) used expressions such as 'I feel emotionally connected with [brand name]' and 'I feel that there is a strong bond between [brand name] and me' for a more in-depth discussion) to measure emotional significance.

Furthermore, the thesis (in **Chapter 2**) adds to the literature by highlighting the unidirectional nature of brand relationships (also raised by Fetscherin, 2014; Shimp & Madden, 1988), and by examining the potential benefits that consumers would expect to obtain from developing relationship with brands to make up for the fact that brands are not able to return the 'love' (see §2.5). Namely, through the reflections outlined on the basis of a thorough review of relevant psychological research, it was possible to determine that the theorisation of customer-brand relationship should include hedonic and emotional values (e.g., Knight & Young Kim, 2007) and unique brand characteristics (e.g., Batra et al., 2012). For example, the



thesis incorporated items such as ‘this brand creates warm feelings among its users’, ‘I adore this brand’, and ‘there is something almost magical about this brand’ in the measurement scales of brand relationships to reflect the afore-said expected benefits (see §7.5.2 and Appendix 7.1 for further detail).

### **8.3 Managerial implications**

The primary objective of brand relationship strategies is to encourage marketers to implement initiatives that focus on establishing, developing and maintaining successful relationships with current and prospective consumers (Aggarwal & Law, 2005; Albert et al., 2008; Blackston, 2000; Fournier, 1998). In these initiatives, the brand must offer values to consumers that satisfy their long-term needs (Grönroos, 2000). In doing so, managers must have a sound understanding of how consumers perceive brands, what influences those perceptions, how these perceptions trigger positive brand-related feelings, and how all of these factors, combined, influence brand-related outcomes and consumers’ purchase decisions.

In line with the above, the managerial implications that this thesis provides can empower brand managers to develop better branding strategies. These implications offer managers particularly valuable insights on how to grow, strengthen and leverage their relationships with consumers. Accordingly, the following sections summarise these implications by: i) outlining the general implications for managers; and ii) addressing more specific implications for managers of sports apparel brands and luxury brands.

#### ***8.3.1 General managerial implications***

The findings in the thesis led to the conclusion that strengthening consumer-brand relationships offers a fundamental managerial benefit, and a sustainable and strategic competitive advantage (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001; Webster Jr, 1992). Accordingly, the thesis

led to the following recommendations. Brand managers should develop strategies to create positive and sophisticated relationships with their consumers. Drawing on the discussion in **Chapter 3**, as well as the findings of the three empirical studies (**Chapter 5**, **Chapter 6** and **Chapter 7**), the following sections outline more specific managerial implications concerning the development of strong emotional relationships with consumers. These elements include relational concepts—i.e., love, passion, attachment and identification, personalised experiences and hedonic and emotional values.

### *8.3.1.1 Self-identification with the brand*

The thesis highlighted (in **Chapter 6**, see §6.3.2) the important role of consumers' identification with the brand in the development of brand relationships. This corroborates key findings from the literature, where it has been argued that: i) the relationship with a brand enables consumers to enhance their self-image or self-identities (see Belk, 1988; Belk et al., 2003; Escalas & Bettman, 2005; McCracken, 1989; Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987); and ii) the ability of the brand to enable consumers to express their desired identities through the brand is fundamental in sustaining strong brand relationships (Batra et al., 2012). Therefore, brand managers are recommended to create meaningful associations between their brands and the causes that are important to the consumer. For instance, brands could associate their business with social responsibility initiatives, value co-creation programs or societal trends. A concrete example of how such a strategy would work is represented by the brand Dove (a personal care brand owned by Unilever), which has successfully inspired women around the world with their 'self-esteem project' (Dove, 2017). The key marketing message that Dove has recently deployed is 'the world where beauty is a source of confidence, not anxiety', where 'next generation grow up enjoying a positive relationship with the way they look – helping girls to raise their self-esteem and realise their full potential' (see Figure 8.1). Through this project, Dove has been able to provide young women around the world with a platform to identify themselves with the strong and diverse group of women that are presented. Through such positive messages, consumers are able to develop a meaningful relationship with the brand.

**Figure 8.1** Dove's self-esteem project, inspiring young people to raise their self-esteem



In looking at the example of Dove in conjunction with the outcomes of this thesis (see **Study 2** and **Study 3**), it seems plausible to conclude that brand managers should focus on factors that influence consumers' willingness to identify with the brand to build stronger relationships with consumers. For example, brand managers are recommended to constantly research (and monitor) the fundamental characteristics of their brand, such as brand values, because those values must be congruent with the values of the target group of consumers, as they play a crucial role in influencing consumer attitudes, intentions and behaviours (Tuškej et al., 2013).

### *8.3.1.2 Love*

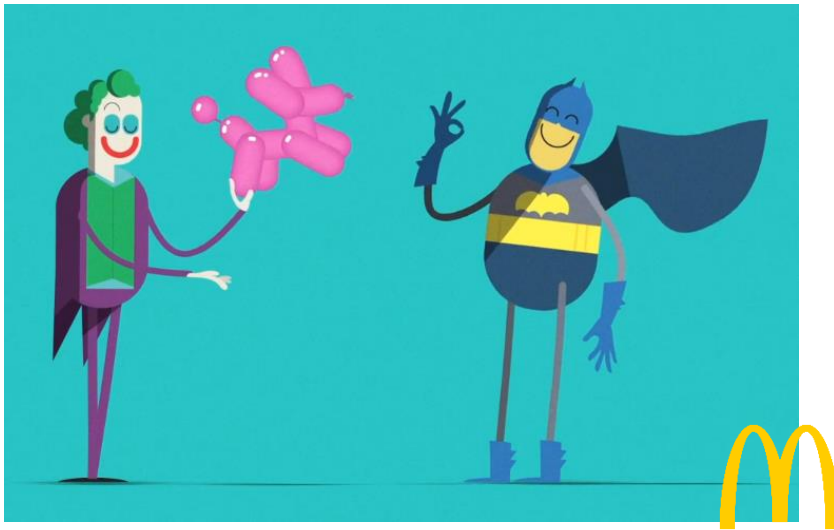
As discussed in **Chapter 2** (see §2.6) and **Chapter 6** (see §6.3.2), this thesis uncovered a significant role of love in brand relationships strategies. Accordingly, brand managers are recommended to focus more heavily on strategies based on creating experiences for the consumer that are filled with positive emotions of love, in order to enable them to associate these emotions with the brand. The ultimate goal should be to trigger stronger feelings and emotional resonance towards the brand, in order to facilitate the development of positive brand relationships. Establishing and maintaining a high level of brand love amongst consumers is a beneficial strategy for marketers, because it can offer a platform to cultivate stronger consumer-brand relationships, together with other strategic results such as engagement in positive WOM and brand advocacy, brand loyalty, and devaluation of

alternatives (Batra et al., 2012; Vernuccio et al., 2015; Wallace et al., 2014). While the thesis did not investigate the implication of brand love as a separate construct, it highlighted various positive outcomes in two frameworks: the emotional consumer-brand relationship framework in **Study 2** and the consumer-brand relationship framework in **Study 3**, which both encompassed brand love as a key dimension. The framework also included positive evaluation of brand extensions, positive WOM, price insensitivity and purchase intentions as outcomes (see §6.4.2 and §7.4.4). In light of these findings, it is plausible to recommend brand managers to place emphasis on cultivating consumers' feeling of love towards their brands.

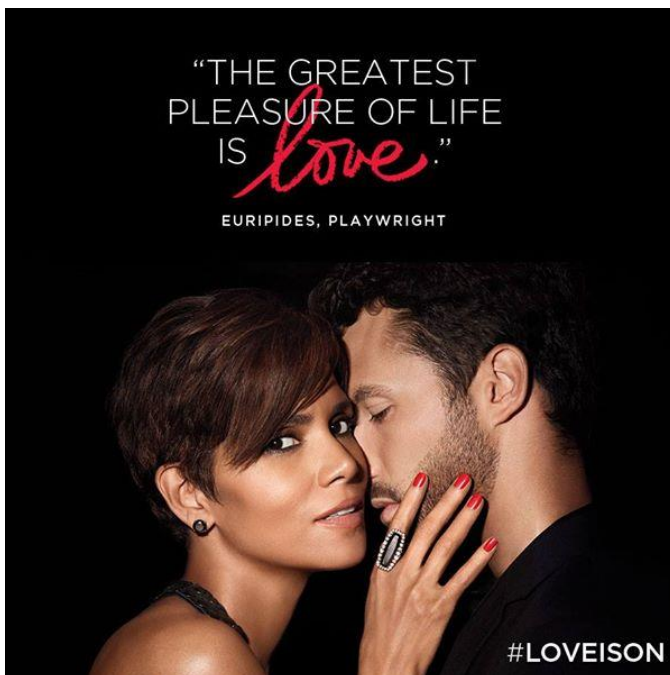
In more detail, in order to trigger a sense of love for the brand, brand managers should engage in strategies that communicate a genuine concern for consumers' well-being, address their tangible and intangible needs, and demonstrate a willingness to be flexible to market changes (Hegner, Beldad, & op Heghuis, 2014). Research has also shown that consumers look for 'love brands'—i.e., brands that are willing to play a more significant role in supporting them towards achieving their goals (J. MacDonald, 2017). Therefore, brand managers are recommended to highlight the values and benefits that encourage consumers to develop a sense of 'love' for the brand.

As a matter of example, brands can communicate global positive values such as world peace in their advertising, coupled with powerful expressive messages to prompt consumer love. For instance, McDonald's has recently developed the 'Love is Endless' social media campaign, which features traditional archenemies such as Batman and the Joker (see Figure 8.2) 'who fall madly in love over their mutual desire for McDonald's (Miller, 2015). Another example is the beauty brand Revlon and their 'Love is on' campaign (see Figure 8.3), which leverages the positive advertising message that 'invites women to step into this world of love', with the ultimate goal of relaunching the brand to the world through 'a more emotional story that allows Revlon to have a larger voice in everything from print and social media to digital, TV and in stores' (S. Elliott, 2014).

**Figure 8.2** McDonald's 'Love is Endless' campaign



**Figure 8.3** Revlon's 'Love is on' campaign



Using the strategies exemplified above, brand managers can appeal to consumers' expressive values to trigger positive and associative 'love-like' emotions towards the brand (Long-Tolbert & Gammoh, 2012).

### 8.3.1.3 *Passion*

As discussed in **Chapter 5 (Study 1)**, see §5.3.1 and §5.4) this thesis outlined the importance of passionate emotions in the development of consumer brand relationships, and revealed that brand passion has several managerial implications. Firstly, managers must monitor and profile passionate consumers, which can be done by interacting with consumers at the brand's social events or consumer conventions, as well as through a systematic exploration of social media analytics. For example, brands should monitor their social media pages and search for the frequency of mentions or tags of their products or services or even brand name by unique individuals. Besides frequency, this analysis should also have a particular focus on the quality of the individual interactions with the brand, peer-to-peer or influencer-to-user interactions, and the scope of interactions over various platforms. Brand managers can also understand and monitor consumers' passion for the brand by gauging social media sentiment—i.e., the way the brand's target consumers feel about the content shared by the brand on social media. When positive sentiments are associated with a number of unique users, the brand can understand the quality of engagement with consumers and determine whether the content needs to be improved.

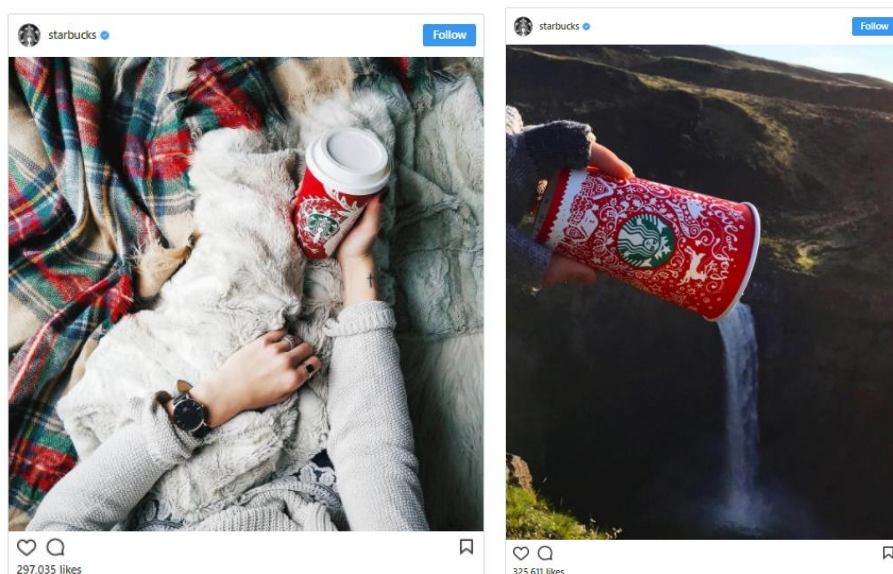
In addition, brand managers should develop strategies with the aim of targeting and retaining these consumers, which can be done through user-generated content, product giveaways based on consumer profiling, idea-generation competitions or customised brand badges for passionate fans. For example, BT Sport and OgilvyOne unveiled a series of specialised hand-painted 'pub signs' (see Figure 8.4) to celebrate the return of the Champions League (as a part of BT's TV offering this season for the first time), that ignited fans' passion for 'football, wordplay and intrigue, and combined these with modern references and humour' (McCarthy, 2015).

**Figure 8.4** BT Sport and OgilvyOne ‘pub signs’ campaign



As another example, Starbucks launched the #RedCupContest (see Figure 8.5) in order to promote its ‘holiday-themed seasonal beverages’, and to encourage avid coffee drinkers with a passion for Starbucks to share photos of their coffees for the chance to win Starbucks gift card. This campaign not only generated sales, but also created positive engagement with the users on social media (Bernazzani, 2017).

**Figure 8.5** Starbucks’ #RedCupContest



Based on the examples above, to generate strong bonds with consumers, brand managers are recommended to leverage consumer's passion and excitement for the brand, particularly during specific times of the year when consumer engagement rises—i.e., Christmas time for Starbucks, and Champions League time for BT Sport. Moreover, there are endless opportunities for brands to leverage consumers' passion for marketing purposes, especially given the realm of digital media platforms available in recent years. For example, brands can incorporate search engines such as Google and Bing in their brand management strategies, as they offer unique opportunities to get brands in front of online users to achieve greater brand retrieval at the time of potential purchases (e.g., when consumers use the 'shopping' tab on Google search). In addition, search engines can deliver highly targeted advertising to consumers based on profile information obtained from search engines (e.g., using cookies to suggest products based on users' search history). Therefore, the thesis recommends brands to develop strategies based on social media, and other digital avenues to engage with passionate consumers.

#### *8.3.1.4 Attachment*

The thesis suggests that emotional attachment has the ability to strengthen the bond between a brand and its consumers. More specifically, the thesis (in **Chapter 6** and **Chapter 7**) included brand attachment as a key contributor of consumer-brand relationship, which drives positive brand related outcomes such as purchase intentions and consumer engagement in positive WOM (see §6.4.2 and §7.4.4). Accordingly, emotional attachment is identified as the key factor that expresses the consumer's desire and willingness to maintain the bond with the brand. Furthermore, by developing emotional attachment with brands, consumers craft a unique bond that helps them to identify themselves with the brand and feel a sense of belonging (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). The thesis provides insights relevant to this effect by revealing the influence of brand passion on sense of community (in **Chapter 5**, see §5.4.4). This outcome leads to practical recommendations that are very much consistent with existing marketing practices, which should therefore be considered and deployed by brands managers who wish to enhance their personal connection with consumers.



For example, Weet-Bix, a breakfast cereal biscuit manufactured in Australia and New Zealand by the Sanitarium Health and Wellbeing Company (Sanitarium, 2017) has strengthened its tight-knit connection with Australian consumers through its singing competition (Weet-Bix, 2017). In this competition, consumers were encouraged to create a cover for Weet-Bix's iconic 1987 anthem 'Aussie Kids are Weet-Bix Kids' (see Figure 8.6). Through this initiative, Weet-Bix reflected a sense of authenticity and kinship with their proud history.

**Figure 8.6** Weet-Bix's 'Aussie Kids are Weet-Bix Kids' singing competition



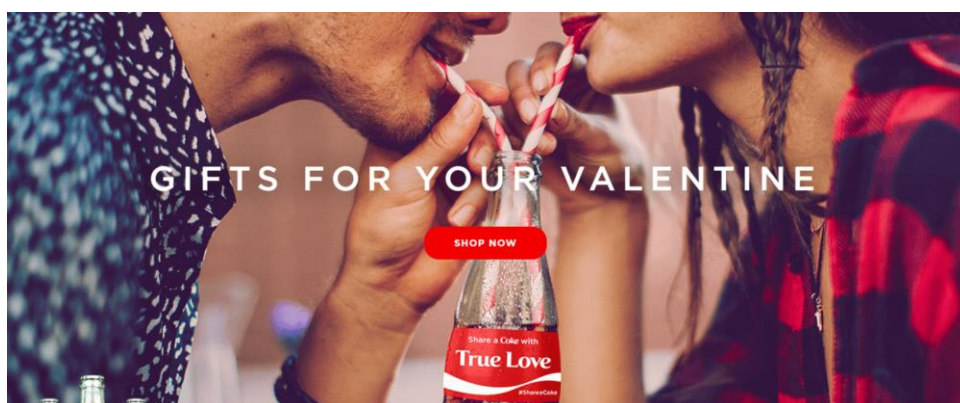
Accordingly, brand managers should invest in strategies that allow them create a relationship with consumers, in which they feel that they are part of a caring community (Andersen, 2005). To do so, marketers can leverage the opportunities available on social media to build strong communities for consumers. Social media communities are 'ideal environments for seeding viral contents' to leverage on consumer engagement and spread the word about the brand across other communities and the web, strengthening consumer-brand relationships (Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2014b). One important implication of such communities, and the feelings associated with them, is that they entice consumers to let the brand 'off the hook' during times of expressed dissatisfaction, and to stay loyal towards the brand (e.g., Levy & Hino, 2016, p. 146). These communities also create a strong sense of loyalty that allows the brand to 'reach beyond the purely rational and purely economic level', and form an emotional bond with the consumer that 'sparks feelings of closeness, affection, and trust' (Berry, 2000, p. 134).

### 8.3.1.5 Personalised brand experiences

Brand managers are recommended to incorporate strategies that allow and encourage consumers to customise and personalise their experience with the brand (Batra et al., 2012). This reflection is derived from the findings of **Study 3 (Chapter 7)**, where it was confirmed that consumers' pre-existing knowledge about the brand has a positive influence on the development of consumer-brand relationships (see §7.6 and §7.7). Accordingly, consumers are able to use personalised experiences with the brand as 'tags' to store brand-related knowledge in their memory (Fournier, 1998). Therefore, brand managers must take initiatives to offer personalised products or services that provide consumers with key touch points (e.g., an unexpected birthday message, or a personalised email to enquire about consumer satisfaction with an online service after a long period of being inactive).

For instance, in 2014, Coca Cola launched the 'Share a Coke' campaign (<https://buy.shareacoke.com>), in which each bottle contained one of the most popular first names or semi-personal labels such as 'Better Half' or 'True Love' (see Figure 8.7). Later, Coca Cola introduced ShareaCoke.com, an initiative that allowed consumers customising their own bottle labels. Through this campaign, Coca Cola created an avenue to develop a personalised bond with consumers in one of the most commoditised product categories, i.e., soft drinks.

**Figure 8.7** Coca Cola's 'Share a Coke' campaign



As another example, Pandora offers consumers hand-finished bracelets jewels and inspires them to personalise the bracelets with a wide range of 'charms' (see Figure 8.8). These bracelets are individually designed to allow consumers to 'express their individuality' and to

tell their 'stories' through a personal collection of special moments that makes them who they are' (Pandora, 2017).

**Figure 8.8** Pandora's 'charms' allow consumers to personalise their purchase



Based on these examples, it is advisable that brand managers deploy similar initiatives to provide consumers with an avenue where they can express themselves and, at the same time, interact with the brand's communication message (e.g., the choice of message in Coca Cola's label, or the design and combination of charms in Pandora's bracelets) in order to promote long-term consumer-brand relationships.

### *8.3.1.6 Hedonic and emotional values*

Researchers have agreed that brand relationships offer emotional and hedonic values to consumers that go beyond functional purposes (e.g., Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009). In particular, as the thesis revealed in **Chapter 6** (see §6.4.2) and **Chapter 7** (see §7.4.3), managers leverage the hedonic and symbolic benefits of their brand (e.g., prestige, uniqueness or social status) to drive the development of brand relationships. These benefits must match and possibly exceed consumers' expectations of the brand. Accordingly, brand managers are recommended to establish hedonic values that are harmonious and congruent with the evolving values of the largest segment of their current or potential consumers (Swimberghe et al., 2014). For example, brand managers could offer emotional and hedonic benefits to

young consumers by using an advertising message that associates the brand with successful role models. In particular, it is important for brands to consistently communicate the hedonic and emotional elements offered by the brand, in order to monitor for possible incongruences (Tuškej et al., 2013). For example, in contexts with a high level of consumer purchase involvement and/or with a high level of expected symbolic benefits such as fashion brands or cosmetics, managers should focus on developing campaigns that promote subjective and internal consumer responses. These campaigns could include messages that involve feelings of social and professional success, sensorial pleasure, or relief from feelings of dissatisfaction with oneself (Apaolaza-Ibáñez, Hartmann, Diehl, & Terlutter, 2011).

The above implications can be understood if one considers the example of the marketing approach that Priceline (a chain of pharmacies in Australia) has already implemented. Priceline prides itself on offering characteristic values to their primary customer segment, Australian women. Through their 'Sisterhood Foundation' (see Figure 8.9), Priceline encourages women to choose their brand as it is one that is 'more than just a beauty choice', a brand that 'supports women in need through six charities across Australia'; and a brand that 'make a real difference' in the world (<https://www.priceline.com.au/about-priceline>). As a result of this strategy, Priceline has made the most of the opportunity to grow into a business that truly cares about their consumers' deeply held values, ultimately becoming a brand with which consumers comfortably see themselves developing a personalised relationship.

**Figure 8.9** Priceline's Sisterhood Foundation



### *8.3.2 Managerial implications for sports apparel brands*

The thesis, in **Chapter 5 (Study 1)**, revealed that consumers' feelings of passion towards sports apparel brands provide important outcomes for the brand, such as attitudinal loyalty, brand advocacy, sense of community, price insensitivity, social media marketing support, and alternative devaluation (albeit indirectly, through attitudinal loyalty - see §5.7.2). Based on these findings, the following sections outline the main relevant implications for managers of sports apparel brands.

*→ Managers of sports apparel brands should profile and build customised strategies to retain passionate consumers*

Considering the positive outcomes that having passionate consumers offer brands, it has become crucial for managers of sports apparel brands to profile passionate consumers, as it allows them to build customised strategies for this segment of the market.

There are various methods that managers of sports apparel brands can employ to profile passionate consumers. For example, managers can find online communities of consumers specialising in a certain subject (e.g., best light-running sneakers) and determine unique active users in those communities. Managers could also profile users on the basis of their interests and behavioural traits (e.g., other social media pages liked/followed by them), with the aim of attracting more consumers that share similar interests and behaviours. Moreover, brand managers can directly ask consumers for feedback. For example, sports apparel brand managers could run social media polls, surveys or competitions to encourage feedback about the brand and its products. These data can then be used to complement information collected through more traditional avenues (e.g., CRM database) for a more accurate consumer profiling. Profiling consumers enables managers to gain insights into their most valuable consumers, and provides greater opportunities for developing marketing strategies.

After profiling these passionate consumers, managers could then develop strategies with the aim of targeting and retaining them. These strategies may involve encouraging consumers to share their brand-related stories and experiences with friends and other like-minded enthusiasts, and then leveraging these stories and experiences in future promotional communications (e.g., featuring user-generated stories on social media, giving credit to the user).

*→ Sports apparel brand managers are recommended to devise strategies that strengthen consumers' interest in the brand's social communities*

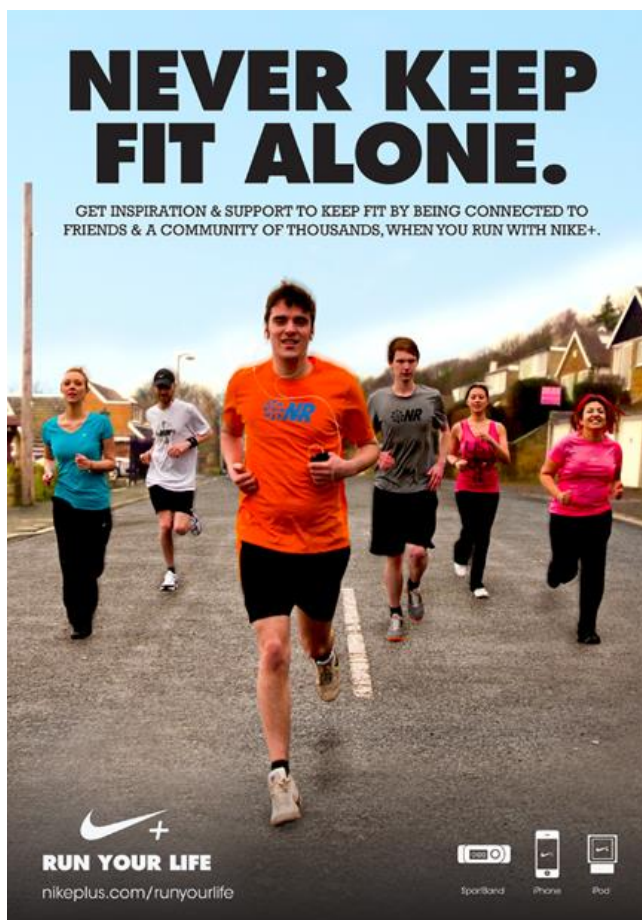
Based on the discussions in §5.7, the outcomes of this thesis suggest that managers of sports apparel brand must take into consideration and leverage consumers' strong sense of community and the resulting support they provide to brands on social media platforms.

Accordingly, brands can utilise the psychological sense of belonging that consumers have developed towards the community of brand lovers as a 'sign' of the development of an emotional bond between the brand and the consumer. Sense of community involves psychological belonging towards a sports brand that is represented by symbolic values such as personalised achievements (see §5.4.4). When consumers develop a feeling of passion for the brand, the brand then become necessary in maintaining those values. Consequently, consumers can become motivated to develop a sense of belonging to the community of fans who believe in 'what the brand stands for' and 'what it symbolises', all with the goal of creating a personalised meaning out of the bond with the brand (Subodh Bhat & Reddy, 1998; R. Elliott & Davies, 2006; Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967).

To achieve these objectives, managers of sports apparel brands are recommended to develop campaigns with the aim of inspiring consumers to see the brand as the heart of a community of motivated people. Examples of such campaigns can be found in Nike's community of users of their Nike+ mobile app (see Figure 8.10). Through the app, Nike has managed to establish a personal link with their consumers through a platform that they use on a daily basis—i.e., smart phones. Moreover, in addition to using the app to achieve their sports-related goals,

consumers psychologically associate those achievements with Nike+ and the community behind it. Consequently, this creates a sense of belonging to the community of users who have played a role in inspiring those achievements. While these interactions do not necessarily lead to the development of brand relationships, they enable brands to leverage the anytime-anywhere connectivity with consumers to gain strategic insights based on their frequency and quality of interactions with the app. This most certainly classes as one of the key advantages of apps and other digital technologies as 'media' that facilitate, by default, the establishment of seamless connections between the brand and the consumer (E. Kim, Lin, & Sung, 2013; Sultan & Rohm, 2005; B. Wang, Kim, & Malthouse, 2016).

**Figure 8.10** Nike's community of Nike+ users

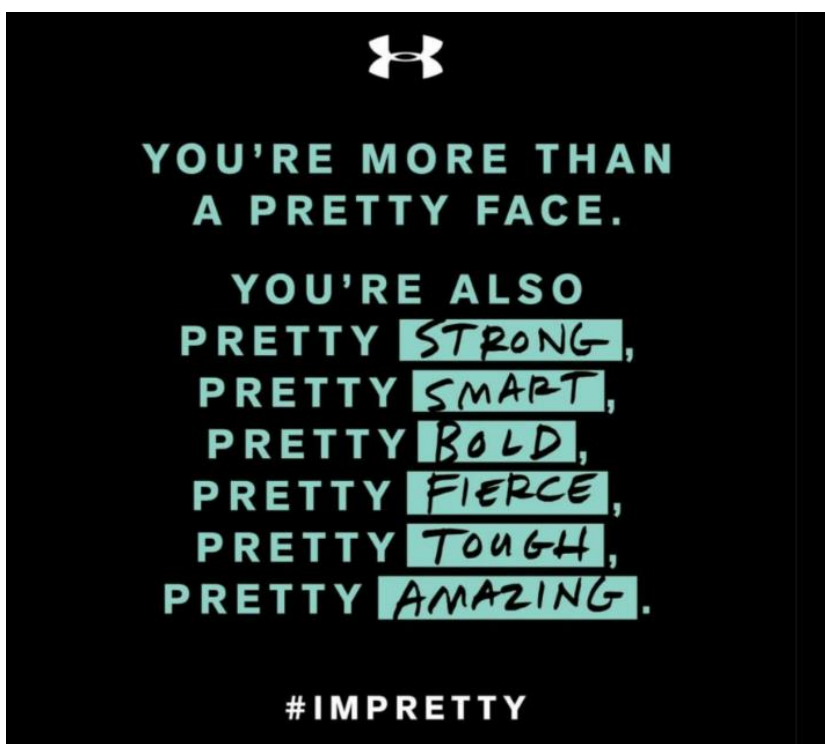


Additionally, sports apparel brands can gain benefits such as long-term loyalty and WOM by offering social platforms where passionate consumers can express and share their feelings for the brand with others, and even act as brand advocates. Social media offer unlimited interactions between consumers and brands, and as discussed in §5.4.3, feelings of passion

for the brand often encourage consumers to support the brand over social media. Therefore, managers of sports apparel brands are recommended to invest in the development of strategies that encourage consumers to engage with the brand via social media to provide feedback, ask questions, share ideas and thoughts and show support for the brand.

Such strategies have been showcased in Under Armour's latest digital campaign, #IMPRETTY (see Figure 8.11), which focuses on women, their careers and their craft, and aims to 'celebrate and inspire the strong female spirit' (Velasco, 2017). In order to encourage women to contribute to the campaign, Under Armour created a meme generator application allowing users to create their own 'I'm Pretty ...' image (that also features the brand's logo) and share it on various social media platforms. This not only generated digital buzz around the brand, but also created a psychological association between the generated content in support of the 'strong female spirit' with Under Armour and its values—i.e., 'performance solutions you never knew you needed but can't imagine living without' (Under Armour, 2018).

**Figure 8.11** Under Armour's #IAMPRETTY campaign





### *8.3.3 Managerial implications for luxury brands*

In addition to the general implications discussed earlier in this chapter (§8.3.1), the thesis offers several managerial implications specifically aimed at luxury brands' managers, as follows.

→ *Luxury brand managers should leverage consumer-brand relationship when developing branding strategies.*

Based on the results discussed in §7.4.4 and §7.4.5, brand managers should place extra emphasis on building emotional bonds with their consumers to achieve positive brand-related outcomes such as purchase intentions, positive WOM, price insensitivity and brand extension evaluation. Importantly, this thesis (In **Study 3**, see §7.3.3 and **Study 2**, see §6.4.3) showed that the relationship between the consumer and the brand mediates the power of brand associations with parent brand, brand knowledge and hedonic attributes over the aforementioned outcomes. Hence, managers of luxury brands must emphasise the brand's aesthetic appeal (e.g., product design or presentation) when developing branding strategies and advertisements, in order to encourage emotional consumer bonds (Atwal & Williams, 2009; Barsky & Nash, 2002; H. J. Choo et al., 2012; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009). For example, as recommended by Walden (2014), luxury brands can elicit strong pro-brand emotions in their consumers by delivering an elegant design that 'distils the complex nature of a brand into something that is utterly simple and makes sense', or by using 'custom typography, or sometimes modified fonts', as well as employing clean and light aesthetics in the product and store design, as if they are 'displayed as works of art'.

As revealed in **Chapter 7** (see §7.6.2), by emphasising the brand's characteristics that enable consumers to gain certain symbolic and prestigious benefits, marketers can then trigger a bond between the consumer and the brand. This bond can 'turbocharge' consumers' knowledge and perceptions about the brand, which leads to positive brand-related outcomes (Jean-Noël Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). This is evident in the city of Sydney's 'A day out on the town' campaign, where tourists and residents of Sydney were encouraged to treat themselves

to well-appointed 'luxury Sydney experiences' (see Figure 8.12), such as to 'indulge in a spa treatment at one of the best Sydney spas' or 'Waterside dining at one of Sydney's top eateries' (Sydney.com, 2017). These experiences are aimed at building a connection between guests and the truly luxurious character of the city. The stronger this bond, the greater the likelihood that the guests' pre-established image and perceptions about the brand (i.e., the city of Sydney) will lead to positive brand related outcomes such as WOM about these experiences, re-purchase intentions or consumer advocacy of the luxurious benefits the brand can offer.

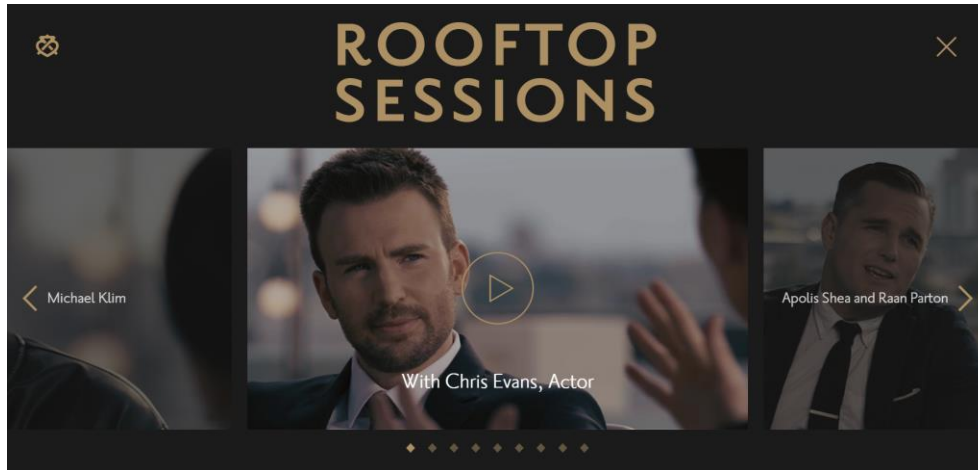
**Figure 8.12** Sydney.com's 'A day out on the town' promotion



In another example, Chivas (a whiskey brand) produced a series of video interviews called 'Rooftop Sessions', where they hold 'conversations about success' with successful individuals such as actors, entrepreneurs, or artists (see Figure 8.13). Through showcasing these conversations in the advertising campaign, Chivas wishes to encourage consumers and fans to join their online debates (mostly on Twitter), where they discuss 'aesthetics', 'the concept of luxury' or 'cultural perspectives'. Through this initiative, Chivas has been able to transform itself from a mere business venture into a 'thought-leader' (Blackden, 2016). The brand has

also improved its image, most likely contributing to the development of a personalised bond between the consumer and the brand.

**Figure 8.13.** Chivas' rooftop sessions: Conversations about success



The findings revealed in **Chapter 7**—i.e., the influence of the hedonic and symbolic attributes of luxury brands on the development of brand relationships (see §7.6.2 and §7.7.1) were obtained using a sample of young Australian consumers who are showing a growing interest in luxury brands (Cheah et al., 2015; Hung et al., 2011). Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that luxury brand managers should develop strategies specifically aimed at HENRYs, i.e., High-Earners-Not-Rich-Yet consumers. HENRYs are consumers, primarily aged between 25 and 34, who have high disposable incomes, spend half their income on luxury brands. HENRYs desire exclusive brands, experiences, and lifestyle, and demand brands to offer benefits that go beyond the mediocre ones (Blackden, 2016).

→ *Luxury brand managers should highlight the emotional attributes of their brand when promoting brand extensions*

The findings of the thesis in **Chapter 6** (see §6.6.2) confirmed that emotional consumer-brand relationship: i) directly affects consumer evaluation of brand extensions: and ii) mediates the effect of brand associations on brand extension evaluation. Considering that brand extension is a commonly used growth strategy in the luxury brand context—e.g., Aston Martin's boutique (see Reddy et al., 2009; Hanslin & Rindell, 2014), luxury brand managers are

recommended to highlight the emotional and hedonic attributes of the brand across their core products when introducing new brand extensions. This creates positive expectations for the brand's extensions and allows for a more effective transferral of consumer associations with the parent brand to the brand extension. More specifically, by reminding consumers about the brand qualities that made the consumer initially fall in love with the brand, marketers can transfer positive brand associations (e.g., exceptional perceived quality, or high-status image) to the brand extensions (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004).

In achieving this, luxury brand managers could directly communicate with consumers using elegant methods, such as individualised emails or hand-signed letters, asking about their satisfaction with the purchased product and informing them about any new product or brand extensions. Furthermore, brand managers should strive to create a clear correspondence between the aesthetic elements of their parent brand and the brand extensions, to help consumers develop a psychological link between parent and brand extension. For example, Tiffany and Co. used its iconic 'Tiffany Blue' trademarked colour and style in their new line of every day's accessories such as paper clip cards, Tiffany Love teddy bear and leather luggage tag (see Figure 8.14).

**Figure 8.14** Tiffany and Co.'s use of their iconic blue colour in their brand extensions



As another example, in 2016, Aston Martin (the British manufacturer of luxury sports cars) opened its first brand experience boutique in London, named 'Aston Martin at No. 8 Dover Street' (see Figure 8.15). In this 'intersection of the company's products, experiences and brand collaborations', Aston Martin represented 'an expression of the British marque's Art of

Living' by offering 'a carefully chosen portfolio of the finest artisan products and truly bespoke experiences', that truly embodied 'the Aston Martin spirit' (Aston Martin, 2018).

**Figure 8.15** Aston Martin's brand experience boutique in London



Based on the above examples, it can be recommended that luxury brand managers employ similar strategies with a focus on the unique characteristics of the brand that consumers could associate with the brand. These characteristics, if effectively embedded in the brand's extensions, could help the consumer associate emotional aspects of the parent brand with the brand's extensions.

## **8.4 Limitations and future research directions**

While this thesis offers important theoretical and managerial implications, it is not free from limitations. In §5.8, §6.8, and §7.8, the thesis discussed the limitations and future research directions with respect to **Study 1**, **Study 2**, and **Study 3**. The following section discusses the overall limitations of the thesis with respect to methodology and theoretical development, followed by proposed avenues for future research.

#### *8.4.1 Limitations related to methodology*

First, while this thesis focused on sports apparel brands and luxury brands as the gauging contexts, the results obtained may not be automatically generalisable to other contexts, predominantly due to the unique attributes different categories may hold, such as high inherent levels of involvement (either via self-expression potential or via the provision of hedonic values). As an opportunity for future research, it would be valuable to replicate **Study 1** across other product categories such as the automotive industry, where consumers' attitudes have the potential to be shaped and/or altered by their passion towards certain brands (Gatersleben, 2007; Solomon, 1992). In particular, the research program resulting from this thesis should be aimed at investigating in further detail **Study 1's** framework using multiple categories ranging in involvement from high (e.g., smartphones) to low (e.g., potato chips) while controlling for the effect of consumer category involvement and comparing potential differences in brand-related outcomes. Additionally, the conceptual frameworks validated in **Study 2** and **Study 3** could be examined in product categories where hedonic and emotional aspects are the predominant purchase decision influencers, such as fashion products (A. J. Kim & Ko, 2010), and luxury services such as luxury hotels (C. H.-J. Wu & Liang, 2009) and luxury beauty and health facilities (Jones, 2010). Similarly, future research could also replicate **Study 2** and **Study 3** in low involvement product categories where hedonic attributes might nonetheless influence consumer behaviour, such as fast food chain brands or fast fashion brands. Here, the hedonic facet of consumption could emerge from the pleasure that consumers seek in the provision of immediate rewards and instant satisfaction.

Second, the thesis based its results on sets of data gathered from two countries, i.e., Iran and Australia. In order to achieve more generalisable results, future research could replicate and compare these findings in different cultural contexts. In particular, the results obtained from Iran (**Study 2** and **Study 3**) could be compared with data gathered from countries with similar characteristics such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt (News, 2017), or from countries with very different characteristics, such as Asian markets. Moreover, the samples used were skewed, in part, towards younger demographics especially in **Study 3**. While this cannot be

avoided through the use of convenience sampling and student respondents, it was compensated by the fact that samples sizes were generally adequate in size and diverse in terms of other aspects. More specifically, **Study 1**'s sample was diverse in terms of annual income (see §5.5.1); **Study 2** had a sample of respondents with diverse education, occupation and household income (see §6.5.1); and **Study 3**'s sample was diverse with respect to gender and the level of education (see §7.5.1). Nonetheless, given the importance of diversity in age cohorts raised by previous scholars (Sheth, Sisodia, & Sharma, 2000), the research program resulting from this thesis will include additional studies with samples including more information about older demographics to allow for a comparison of likely differences across different generations. This will allow taking into account the fact that older cohorts may have a longer relationship and experience with their favourite luxury brand (Schade, Hegner, Horstmann, & Brinkmann, 2016). This could affect brand-related outcomes, particularly those relating to purchase intentions and WOM (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). In addition, older consumers' interest in luxury brands could be associated with specific factors such as the desire to appear younger (Amatulli, Guido, & Natarajan, 2015) or nostalgia (Lambert-Pandraud & Laurent, 2010). Importantly, future research could further examine the relationship between these factors and the components of brand associations, CBBE and brand related outcomes, such as brand advocacy and sense of community.

Third, another potential limitation of this thesis is the use of non-probability convenience sampling. This sampling approach, despite its strengths (e.g., requiring less practical investment in recruitment costs and availability of participants - see Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016), presents some limitations. For example, convenience sampling only captures a fragment of the target population, particularly those who were more eager to participate and collaborate in the survey (Fricker, 2008). Moreover, the thesis author encouraged the targeted respondents to distribute the survey's web-link further to their networks to maximise the reach of the questionnaire across various demographics. In doing so, it is likely that the additional survey distribution was subjective towards individuals with larger personal networks, resulting in some degree of selection bias (Heckathorn, 1997). To overcome this limitation, future studies should deploy probabilistic sampling techniques. This could take the form of an online survey system (linked to a brand's online store) that sends automatic emails

or notifications to randomly selected customers requesting for their participation in the survey.

#### *8.4.2 Limitations related to theoretical development*

The thesis introduced two conceptualisations for brand relationships, i.e., emotional consumer-brand relationship (**Study 2**) and consumer-brand relationship (**Study 3**). These two frameworks revealed satisfactory reliability and validity in the focal context of luxury brands. However, as discussed in §7.3.2 and §6.3.2, there is no consensus regarding the components that must be included in the conceptualisation of brand relationship. Accordingly, key studies such as Smit et al. (2007) and Esch et al. (2006) have considered other components such as trust, satisfaction and commitment in their conceptualisation of brand relationship. Studies have also highlighted the importance of these components in the research on luxury brands (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009; Song et al., 2012). While these components are to some extent measured using items included in other concepts (e.g., trust and satisfaction are both implicitly reflected and measured using single items in emotional significance and gratification, respectively, see Appendix 7.2), the research trajectory resulting from this thesis will incorporate these components into the theorisation of consumer-brand relationship frameworks. Moreover, there are factors that recent studies have identified as significant in the development of brand relationships, such as two-way communications (Veloutsou, 2015) and anthropomorphism (Hegner et al., 2017; Rauschnabel & Ahuvia, 2014). Given their theoretical importance, the author of the thesis will include these factors in future conceptual frameworks as determinants of the development of consumer-brand relationship.

Additionally, while the thesis placed a great emphasis on brand passion and its implications in **Study 2**, the thesis did not offer similar investigations with respect to brand love and brand attachment. As discussed in §3.3, this is important to note as brand love, brand attachment and brand passion each represent a particular set of characteristics of brand relationships. Accordingly, brand love and brand attachment could have similar implications to those examined with respect to brand passion (i.e., brand advocacy, sense of community, price insensitivity, social media support and alternative devaluation). Therefore, future research



could examine these implications as outcomes of brand attachment and brand love. Future research could also examine these implications with respect to emotional consumer-brand relationship (the concept developed in **Study 2**), as it incorporates all the relational concepts together with brand identification, which also reflects emotional bonds between consumers and brands. Moreover, recent research has suggested concepts such as compulsive buying (Japutra & Molinillo, 2017) and customer citizenship behaviour (Cheng, Luo, Yen, & Yang, 2016) may be outcomes of brand attachment, and concepts such as behavioural loyalty (Roy, Khandeparkar, & Motiani, 2016; Zarantonello et al., 2016) may be an outcome of brand love. Future research should examine these aspects.

Finally, the thesis assessed consumers' intentions and perceptions, with respect to the intended study objectives. While valuable, consumers observed behaviours might not be congruent with their stated attitudes and intentions (Chandon, Morwitz, & Reinartz, 2005). This is a phenomenon known as intention-behaviour gap (see Sheeran, 2002), which is a common issue in consumer behaviour research (Belk & Tumbat, 2005). This could potentially be a critical concern in the research on luxury brands. That is, consumers' expressed interest and purchase intentions may be different from the actual purchase behaviour. In particular, as luxury brands are often associated with premium prices, consumers' purchase intentions may never turn into actual purchases (Q. Bian & Forsythe, 2012), or may lead to purchasing counterfeits (Phau & Teah, 2009; Phau, Teah, & A. Lee, 2009). Accordingly, future research should examine the actual purchase decision as a consequence of purchase-related intentions and attitudes.

With respect to research on luxury counterfeits, while studies have focused on several countries including Indonesia (Hidayat & Diwasasri, 2013), China (Hung et al., 2011; Phau & Teah, 2009), Singapore (Phau et al., 2009), Latin America (Wilcox, H. M. Kim, & Sen, 2009), Slovenia (Trstenjak & Dobovšek, 2013), Canada (Nia & Lynne Zaichkowsky, 2000), Italy (Gistri, Romani, Pace, Gabrielli, & Grappi, 2009) and Mexico (Perez, Castaño, & Quintanilla, 2010), to the best of the thesis author's knowledge, no published work has assessed this issue in Australia. Therefore, as an important direction for future research, studies could focus on examining the effectiveness of luxury branding strategies (especially brand relationship

development) with respect to their influence on factors triggering counterfeit purchase intentions.

## References

- Aaker, D. A. (1990). Brand extensions: the good, the bad, and the ugly. *Sloan Management Review*, 31(4), 47-56.
- Aaker, D. A. (1991). *Managing brand equity: Capitalizing on the value of a brand name*: Free Press, 2000.
- Aaker, D. A. (1996). Measuring brand equity across products and markets. *California Management Review*, 38(3), 103.
- Aaker, D. A. (2012). *Building strong brands*: Simon and Schuster.
- Aaker, D. A., & Joachimsthaler, E. (2000). The brand relationship spectrum: The key to the brand architecture challenge. *California Management Review*, 42(4), 8-23.
- Aaker, D. A., & Keller, K. L. (1990). Consumer evaluations of brand extensions. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(1).
- Aaker, J., Fournier, S., & Brasel, S. A. (2004). When good brands do bad. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(1), 1-16.
- Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(3), 347-356.
- Aaker, J. L., & Fournier, S. (1995). A brand as a character, a partner and a person: Three perspectives on the question of brand personality. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 22, 391-391.
- Abbey, J. D., Meloy, M. G., Guide, V. D. R., Jr, & Atalay, S. (2015). Remanufactured products in closed-loop supply chains for consumer goods. *Production and Operations Management*, 24(3), 488-503.
- Abosag, I., Roper, S., & Hind, D. (2012). Examining the relationship between brand emotion and brand extension among supporters of professional football clubs. *European Journal of Marketing*, 46(9), 1233-1251.

- Acevedo, B. P., & Aron, A. (2009). Does a long-term relationship kill romantic love? *Review of General Psychology, 13*(1), 59.
- Adaval, R. (2001). Sometimes it just feels right: The differential weighting of affect-consistent and affect-inconsistent product information. *Journal of Consumer Research, 28*(1), 1-17.
- Adaval, R. (2003). How good gets better and bad gets worse: Understanding the impact of affect on evaluations of known brands. *Journal of Consumer Research, 30*(3), 352-367.
- Affianian, M. (2016, August 21). Expect retail revolution in Iran *Financial Tribune*.
- Aggarwal, P. (2004). The effects of brand relationship norms on consumer attitudes and behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research, 31*(1), 87-101.
- Aggarwal, P., & Law, S. (2005). Role of relationship norms in processing brand information. *Journal of Consumer Research, 32*(3), 453-464.
- Ahearne, M., Bhattacharya, C. B., & Gruen, T. (2005). Antecedents and consequences of customer-company identification: Expanding the role of relationship marketing. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 90*(3), 574.
- Ahluwalia, R. (2008). How far can a brand stretch? Understanding the role of self-construal. *Journal of Marketing Research, 45*(3), 337-350.
- Ahluwalia, R., Burnkrant, R. E., & Unnava, H. R. (2000). Consumer response to negative publicity: The moderating role of commitment. *Journal of Marketing Research, 37*(2), 203-214.
- Ahuvia, A. C. (1993). I love it! Towards a unifying theory of love across diverse love objects. *Unpublished PhD dissertation, Northwestern University*.
- Ahuvia, A. C. (2005). Beyond the extended self: Loved objects and consumers' identity narratives. *Journal of Consumer Research, 32*(1), 171-184.

- Ahuvia, A. C., Batra, R., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2009). Love, desire and identity: a conditional integration theory of the love of things *Handbook of brand relationships* (pp. 342-357). Routledge.
- Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1969). Object relations, dependency, and attachment: A theoretical review of the infant-mother relationship. *Child Development*, 969-1025.
- Ainsworth, M. D. S., & Bell, S. M. (1970). Attachment, exploration, and separation: Illustrated by the behavior of one-year-olds in a strange situation. *Child Development*, 40, 969-1025.
- Alba, J. W., & Lutz, R. J. (2013). Broadening (and narrowing) the scope of brand relationships. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 23(2), 265-268.
- Alba, J. W., & Marmorstein, H. (1987). The effects of frequency knowledge on consumer decision making. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14(1),14-25.
- Albert, N., & Merunka, D. (2013). The role of brand love in consumer-brand relationships. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 30(3), 258-266.
- Albert, N., Merunka, D., & Valette-Florence, P. (2008). When consumers love their brands: Exploring the concept and its dimensions. *Journal of Business Research*, 61(10), 1062-1075. doi:DOI 10.1016/j.jbusres.2007.09.014
- Albert, N., Merunka, D., & Valette-Florence, P. (2009). The feeling of love toward a brand: Concept and measurement. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 36, 300-307.
- Albert, N., Merunka, D., & Valette-Florence, P. (2013). Brand passion: Antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(7), 904-909.
- Albrecht, C. M., Backhaus, C., Gurzki, H., & Woisetschläger, D. M. (2013). Drivers of brand extension success: What really matters for luxury brands. *Psychology & Marketing*, 30(8), 647-659. doi:10.1002/mar.20635

- Alden, D. L., Steenkamp, J.-B. E., & Batra, R. (1999). Brand positioning through advertising in Asia, North America, and Europe: The role of global consumer culture. *The Journal of Marketing*, 63(1), 75-87.
- Alford, J. (2002). Defining the client in the public sector: A social-exchange perspective. *Public Administration Review*, 62(3), 337-346.
- Algesheimer, R., Dholakia, U. M., & Herrmann, A. (2005). The social influence of brand community: Evidence from European car clubs. *Journal of Marketing*, 69(3), 19-34.
- Allaway, A. W., Huddleston, P., Whipple, J., & Ellinger, A. E. (2011). Customer-based brand equity, equity drivers, and customer loyalty in the supermarket industry. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 20(3), 190-204.
- Allen, N. J., & Meyer, J. P. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organization. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 63(1), 1-18.
- Allsopp, J. (2005). Additional practice papers: Premium pricing: Understanding the value of premium. *Journal of Revenue and Pricing Management*, 4(2), 185-194.
- Alnawas, I., & Altarifi, S. (2015). Exploring the role of brand identification and brand love in generating higher levels of brand loyalty. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 22(2), 1-18.
- Alvarez, G., Kemanian, V., & Malnight, T. (2004, September - November). *Keeping the strategic balance in the new luxury market. CriticalEye*, 42-47.
- Amatulli, C., Guido, G., & Nataraajan, R. (2015). Luxury purchasing among older consumers: exploring inferences about cognitive Age, status, and style motivations. *Journal of Business Research*, 68(9), 1945-1952.
- Ambler, T., Bhattacharya, C. B., Edell, J., Keller, K. L., Lemon, K. N., & Mittal, V. (2002). Relating brand and customer perspectives on marketing management. *Journal of Service Research*, 5(1), 13-25.

- Amine, A. (1998). Consumers' true brand loyalty: the central role of commitment. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 6(4), 305-319.
- Andersen, P. H. (2005). Relationship marketing and brand involvement of professionals through web-enhanced brand communities: The case of Coloplast. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 34(1), 39-51.
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso Books.
- Anderson, E. W. (1998). Customer satisfaction and word of mouth. *Journal of Services Research*, 1(1), 5-17.
- Anderson, J. C., & Gerbing, D. W. (1988). Structural equation modeling in practice: A review and recommended two-step approach. *Psychological Bulletin*, 103(3), 411.
- Anker, T. B., Sparks, L., Moutinho, L., & Grönroos, C. (2015). Consumer dominant value creation: A theoretical response to the recent call for a consumer dominant logic for marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, 49(3/4), 532-560.
- Anselmsson, J., Vestman Bondesson, N., & Johansson, U. (2014). Brand image and customers' willingness to pay a price premium for food brands. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 23(2), 90-102.
- Apaolaza-Ibáñez, V., Hartmann, P., Diehl, S., & Terlutter, R. (2011). Women satisfaction with cosmetic brands: The role of dissatisfaction and hedonic brand benefits. *African Journal of Business Management*, 5(3), 792.
- Apple. (2018). *Apple watch Hermès*. Retrieved from [https://www.apple.com/au/apple-watch-hermes/?afid=p238%7CsVGtaLNWf-dc\\_mtid\\_18707vxu38484\\_pcrd\\_225521364422\\_&cid=aos-au-kwgo-watch--slid-](https://www.apple.com/au/apple-watch-hermes/?afid=p238%7CsVGtaLNWf-dc_mtid_18707vxu38484_pcrd_225521364422_&cid=aos-au-kwgo-watch--slid-)
- Aron, A., & Aron, E. N. (1986). *Love and the expansion of self: Understanding attraction and satisfaction*. Hemisphere Publishing Corp/Harper & Row Publishers.

- Aron, A., & Aron, E. N. (1997). Self-expansion motivation and including other in the self . In S. Duck (Ed.), *Handbook of personal relationships: Theory, research and interventions*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Aron, A., Aron, E. N., & Smollan, D. (1992). Inclusion of other in the self scale and the structure of interpersonal closeness. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 63(4), 596.
- Aron, A., Fisher, H., Mashek, D. J., Strong, G., Li, H., & Brown, L. L. (2005). Reward, motivation, and emotion systems associated with early-stage intense romantic love. *Journal of Neurophysiology*, 94(1), 327-337.
- Aron, A., Lewandowski, G. W., Jr, Mashek, D., & Aron, E. N. (2013). The self-expansion model of motivation and cognition in close relationships. In J. Simpson & L. Campbell (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of close relationships*, 90-115.
- Aron, A., Mashek, D., McLaughlin-Volpe, T., Wright, S., Lewandowski, G., & Aron, E. N. (2005). Including close others in the cognitive structure of the self. In M. W. Baldwin (Ed.), *Interpersonal cognition*. New York, NY: Guilford. 206-232.
- Aron, A., Norman, C. C., Aron, E. N., McKenna, C., & Heyman, R. E. (2000). Couples' shared participation in novel and arousing activities and experienced relationship quality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(2), 273.
- Aron, A., Paris, M., & Aron, E. N. (1995). Falling in love: Prospective studies of self-concept change. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(6), 1102.
- Aron, A., & Westbay, L. (1996). Dimensions of the prototype of love. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(3), 535.
- Aron, E. N., & Aron, A. (1996). Love and expansion of the self: The state of the model. *Personal Relationships*, 3(1), 45-58.
- Arruda-Filho, E. J., Cabusas, J. A., & Dholakia, N. (2010). Social behavior and brand devotion among iPhone innovators. *International Journal of Information Management*, 30(6), 475-480.



- Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *Academy of Management Journal*, 14(1), 20-39.
- Astakhova, M., Swimberghe, K. R., & Wooldridge, B. R. (2017). Actual and ideal-self congruence and dual brand passion. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 34(7), 664-672.
- Aston Martin. (2018). *Aston martin opens new destination at no. 8 Dover Street*. Retrieved from <https://www.astonmartin.com/en/live/news/2016/09/01/aston-martin-opens-new-destination-at-no.-8-dover-street>
- Atwal, G., & Williams, A. (2009). Luxury brand marketing—The experience is everything! *Journal of Brand Management*, 16(5), 338-346.
- Auhagen, A. E., & Hinde, R. A. (1997). Individual characteristics and personal relationships. *Personal Relationships*, 4(1), 63-84.
- Aurier, P., & Séré de Lanauze, G. (2012). Impacts of perceived brand relationship orientation on attitudinal loyalty: An application to strong brands in the packaged goods sector. *European Journal of Marketing*, 46(11/12), 1602-1627.
- Awa, H. O., & Nwuche, C. A. (2010). Cognitive consistency in purchase behaviour: Theoretical & empirical analyses. *International Journal of Psychological Studies*, 2(1), 44.
- Azadi, R., Yousefi, B., & Eydi, H. (2016). The role of the sponsorship in the Sport in promoting brand equity of sportswear industry. *Busqueret*, 2(1), 107-120
- Baalbaki, S., & Guzmán, F. (2016). A consumer-perceived consumer-based brand equity scale. *Journal of Brand Management*, 23(3), 229-251.
- Baek, T. H., Kim, J., & Yu, J. H. (2010). The differential roles of brand credibility and brand prestige in consumer brand choice. *Psychology & Marketing*, 27(7), 662-678.
- Bagozzi, R. P. (1974). Marketing as an organized behavioral system of exchange. *The Journal of Marketing*, 38(4), 77-81.
- Bagozzi, R. P. (1975). Marketing as exchange. *The Journal of Marketing*, 39(4), 32-39.

- Bagozzi, R. P. (2006). The role of social and self-conscious emotions in the regulation of business-to-business relationships in salesperson-customer interactions. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 21*(7), 453-457.
- Bagozzi, R. P., Batra, R., & Ahuvia, A. (2017). Brand love: Development and validation of a practical scale. *Marketing Letters, 28*(1), 1-14.
- Bagozzi, R. P., & Dholakia, U. M. (2006). Antecedents and purchase consequences of customer participation in small group brand communities. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 23*(1), 45-61.
- Bagozzi, R. P., Gopinath, M., & Nyer, P. U. (1999). The role of emotions in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 27*(2), 184-206.
- Baldus, B. J., Voorhees, C., & Calantone, R. (2015). Online brand community engagement: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Business Research, 68*(5), 978-985.
- Baldwin, M. W. (1992). Relational schemas and the processing of social information. *Psychological Bulletin, 112*(3), 461.
- Ball, A. D., & Tasaki, L. H. (1992). The role and measurement of attachment in consumer behavior. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 1*(2), 155-172.
- Baloglu, S. (2002). Dimensions of customer loyalty: Separating friends from well wishers. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 43*(1), 47-59.
- Bandyopadhyay, S., & Martell, M. (2007). Does attitudinal loyalty influence behavioral loyalty? A theoretical and empirical study. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 14*(1), 35-44.
- Banerjee, P., Wang, Z., Mishra, S., & Singh, S. N. (2010). Prototype or exemplar? Effects of self construal on brand extension evaluation in a multi-product brand context. *ACR*. In M. C. Campbell, J. Inman, & R. Pieters (Eds.), *NA - Advances in Consumer Research* (Vol. 37, pp. 755-757). Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research.

- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator–mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51(6), 1173.
- Baron, S., & Harris, K. (2008). Consumers as resource integrators. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 24(1-2), 113-130.
- Barone, M. J. (2005). The interactive effects of mood and involvement on brand extension evaluations. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 15(3), 263-270.
- Barone, M. J., Miniard, P. W., & Romeo, J. B. (2000). The influence of positive mood on brand extension evaluations. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 26(4), 386-400.
- Barsky, J., & Nash, L. (2002). Evoking emotion: affective keys to hotel loyalty. *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 43(1), 39-46.
- Baruch-Runyon, A., VanZandt, Z., & Elliott, S. A. (2009). Forging connections: An investigation of new students' perspectives of their transition to the university. *NACADA Journal*, 29(1), 31-42.
- Barwise, P. (1993). Brand equity: Snark or boojum? *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 10(1), 93-104.
- Barwise, P., & Ehrenberg, A. S. (1985). Consumer beliefs and brand usage. *Journal of the Market Research Society*, 27(2), 81-93.
- Batra, R., Ahuvia, A., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2012). Brand love. *Journal of Marketing*, 76(2), 1-16.
- Bauer, H. H., Heinrich, D., & Albrecht, C.-M. (2009). *All you need is love: Assessing consumers' brand love*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the American Marketing Association Summer Educators Conference.
- Bauer, H. H., Heinrich, D., & Martin, I. (2007). How to create high emotional consumer-brand relationships? The causalities of brand passion. *Australian & New Zealand Marketing Academy (ANZMAC) Conference* (pp. 2189-2198).

- Baumeister, R. F., & Bratslavsky, E. (1999). Passion, intimacy, and time: Passionate love as a function of change in intimacy. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 3(1), 49-67.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497-529.
- Bazzini, D. G., & Shaffer, D. R. (1999). Resisting temptation revisited: Devaluation versus enhancement of an attractive suitor by exclusive and nonexclusive daters. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 25(2), 162-176.
- Bei, L.-T., & Chiao, Y.-C. (2001). An integrated model for the effects of perceived product, perceived service quality, and perceived price fairness on consumer satisfaction and loyalty. *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, 14, 125.
- Bearden, W. O., & Etzel, M. J. (1982). Reference group influence on product and brand purchase decisions. *Journal of consumer research*, 9(2), 183-194.
- Becerra, E. P., & Badrinarayanan, V. (2013). The influence of brand trust and brand identification on brand evangelism. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 22(5/6), 371-383.
- Belaid, S., & Behi, A. T. (2011). The role of attachment in building consumer-brand relationships: An empirical investigation in the utilitarian consumption context. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 20(1), 37-47.
- Belén del Río, A., Vazquez, R., & Iglesias, V. (2001). The effects of brand associations on consumer response. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 18(5), 410-425.
- Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 139-168.  
doi:10.1086/209154
- Belk, R. W. (2013). Extended self in a digital world. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(3), 477-500.

- Belk, R. W., Ger, G., & Askegaard, S. (2003). The fire of desire: A multisited inquiry into consumer passion. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 30(3), 326-351.
- Belk, R. W., & Tumbat, G. (2005). The cult of Macintosh. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 8(3), 205-217.
- Bendapudi, N., & Berry, L. L. (1997). Customers' motivations for maintaining relationships with service providers. *Journal of Retailing*, 73(1), 15-37.
- Bengtsson, A. (2003). Towards a critique of brand relationships. In P. A. Keller & D. W. Rook (Eds.), *NA-Advances in Consumer Research* (Vol. 30, pp. 154-158). Valdosta, GA: Association for Consumer Research
- Bennett, R., & Rundle-Thiele, S. (2002). A comparison of attitudinal loyalty measurement approaches. *The Journal of Brand Management*, 9(3), 193-209.
- Bergami, M., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2000). Self-categorization, affective commitment and group self-esteem as distinct aspects of social identity in the organization. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 39(4), 555-577.
- Berger, J., & Heath, C. (2007). Where consumers diverge from others: Identity signaling and product domains. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34(2), 121-134.
- Bergkvist, L., & Bech-Larsen, T. (2010). Two studies of consequences and actionable antecedents of brand love. *Journal of Brand Management*, 17(7), 504-518.
- Bernazzani, S. (2017). The 10 best user-generated content campaigns on Instagram. Retrieved from <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/best-user-generated-content-campaigns>
- Berry, L. L. (2000). Cultivating service brand equity. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 28(1), 128-137.
- Berscheid, E. (2010). Love in the fourth dimension. *Annual review of psychology*, 61, 1-25.

- Berscheid, E., & Reis, H. T. (1998). Attraction and close relationships. In Delamater, J. (Ed.), *Handbook of social psychology*. Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas: Springer.
- Bettman, J. R., & Park, C. W. (1980). Effects of prior knowledge and experience and phase of the choice process on consumer decision processes: A protocol analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 7(3), 234-248.
- Bhat, S., & Reddy, S. K. (1998). Symbolic and functional positioning of brands. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 15(1), 32-43.
- Bhat, S., & Reddy, S. K. (2001). The impact of parent brand attribute associations and affect on brand extension evaluation. *Journal of Business Research*, 53(3), 111-122.
- Bhattacharya, C. B., & Sen, S. (2003). Consumer-company identification: A framework for understanding consumers' relationships with companies. *Journal of Marketing*, 67(2), 76-88.
- Bian, Q., & Forsythe, S. (2012). Purchase intention for luxury brands: A cross cultural comparison. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(10), 1443-1451.
- Bian, X., & Moutinho, L. (2011). The role of brand image, product involvement, and knowledge in explaining consumer purchase behaviour of counterfeits: Direct and indirect effects. *European Journal of Marketing*, 45(1/2), 191-216.
- Bıçakcıoğlu, N., Ögel, İ. Y., & İlter, B. (2017). Brand jealousy and willingness to pay premium: The mediating role of materialism. *Journal of Brand Management*, 24(1), 33-48.
- Biedenbach, G., & Marell, A. (2010). The impact of customer experience on brand equity in a business-to-business services setting. *Journal of Brand Management*, 17(6), 446-458.
- Blackden, E. (2016). 6 key luxury trends that will make or break brands in 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.luxurysociety.com/en/articles/2016/01/6-key-luxury-trends-that-will-make-or-break-brands-in-2016>

- Blackston, M. (1995). The qualitative dimension of brand equity. *Journal of Advertising Research, 35*(4), RC2-RC7.
- Blackston, M. (2000). Observations: Building brand equity by managing the brand's relationships. *Journal of Advertising Research, 40*(06), 101-105.
- Blackston, M., Aaker, D. A., & Biel, A. (Eds.). (1993). Beyond brand personality: building brand relationships. *Brand equity and advertising: Advertising's role in building strong brands* (pp. 113-124). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbau, Associates.
- Blau, P. M. (1960). A theory of social integration. *American Journal of Sociology, 65*(6), 545-556.
- Blau, P. M. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. Transaction Publishers.
- Botonaki, A., Polymeros, K., Tsakiridou, E., & Mattas, K. (2006). The role of food quality certification on consumers' food choices. *British Food Journal, 108*(2), 77-90.
- Bottomley, P. A., & Holden, S. J. (2001). Do we really know how consumers evaluate brand extensions? Empirical generalizations based on secondary analysis of eight studies. *Journal of Marketing Research, 38*(4), 494-500.
- Boush, D. M., & Loken, B. (1991). A process-tracing study of brand extension evaluation. *Journal of Marketing Research, 28*(1), 16-28.
- Bouwman, J. (2008). Winning people's hearts. *ESOMAR Research World Article*. Amsterdam. ESOMAR.
- Bower, G. H. (1981). Mood and memory. *American Psychologist, 36*(2), 129.
- Bowlby, J. (1958). The nature of the child's tie to his mother. *The International Journal of Psycho-analysis, 39*, 350.
- Bowlby, J. (1960). Separation anxiety: A critical review of the literature. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 1*(4), 251-269.

- Bowlby, J. (1979). *The making and breaking of affectional bonds*. Tavistock, London: Routledge.
- Bowlby, J. (1982). Attachment and loss: Retrospect and prospect. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 52(4), 664.
- Brace, I. (2008). *Questionnaire design: How to plan, structure and write survey material for effective market research*. Kogan Page Publishers.
- Brakus, J. J., Schmitt, B. H., & Zarantonello, L. (2009). Brand experience: what is it? How is it measured? Does it affect loyalty? *Journal of Marketing*, 73(3), 52-68.
- Branden, N. (2008). *The psychology of romantic love: Romantic love in an anti-romantic age*. Penguin.
- Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 17(5), 475-482.
- Brewer, M. B., & Gardner, W. (1996). Who is this "We"? Levels of collective identity and self representations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(1), 83.
- Bridges, S., Keller, K. L., & Sood, S. (2000). Communication strategies for brand extensions: Enhancing perceived fit by establishing explanatory links. *Journal of advertising*, 29(4), 1-11.
- Britannica. (2017). *Mashhad*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Mashhad>
- Brodie, R. J., Hollebeek, L. D., Jurić, B., & Ilić, A. (2011). Customer engagement conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications for research. *Journal of Service Research*, 14(3), 252-271.
- Brodie, R. J., Ilic, A., Juric, B., & Hollebeek, L. (2013). Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(1), 105-114. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.07.029



- Broniarczyk, S. M., & Alba, J. W. (1994). The importance of the brand in brand extension. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 31(2), 214-228.
- Brown, T. J., Barry, T. E., Dacin, P. A., & Gunst, R. F. (2005). Spreading the word: Investigating antecedents of consumers' positive word-of-mouth intentions and behaviors in a retailing context. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 33(2), 123-138.
- Brown, T. J., & Dacin, P. A. (1997). The company and the product: Corporate associations and consumer product responses. *The Journal of Marketing*, 68-84.
- Browne, M. W., & Cudeck, R. (1993). Alternative ways of assessing model fit. *Sage focus editions*, 154, 136-136.
- Brun, A., Caniato, F., Caridi, M., Castelli, C., Miragliotta, G., Ronchi, S., . . . Spina, G. (2008). Logistics and supply chain management in luxury fashion retail: Empirical investigation of Italian firms. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 114(2), 554-570.
- Bügel, M. S., Verhoef, P. C., & Buunk, A. P. (2011). Customer intimacy and commitment to relationships with firms in five different sectors: Preliminary evidence. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 18(4), 247-258.
- Buil, I., de Chernatony, L., & Martinez, E. (2008). A cross-national validation of the consumer-based brand equity scale. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 17(6), 384-392.
- Butler, B. S. (2001). Membership size, communication activity, and sustainability: A resource-based model of online social structures. *Information Systems Research*, 12(4), 346-362.
- Byrne, B. M. (1994). *Structural equation modeling with EQS and EQS/Windows: Basic concepts, applications, and programming*. Sage.
- Cailleux, H., Mignot, C., & Kapferer, J.-N. (2009). Is CRM for luxury brands? *Journal of Brand Management*, 16(5), 406-412.

- Carlson, B. D., Todd Donavan, D., & Cumiskey, K. J. (2009). Consumer-brand relationships in sport: brand personality and identification. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 37(4), 370-384.
- Carroll, B. A., & Ahuvia, A. C. (2006). Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love. *Marketing Letters*, 17(2), 79-89. doi:10.1007/s11002-006-4219-2
- Carù, A., & Cova, B. (2003). Revisiting consumption experience: A more humble but complete view of the concept. *Marketing Theory*, 3(2), 267-286.
- Cassidy, J., & Shaver, P. R. (2002). *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications*. Rough Guides.
- Chadha, R., & Husband, P. (2010). *Cult of the luxury brand: Inside Asia's love affair with luxury*. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
- Chan, K. W., & Li, S. Y. (2010). Understanding consumer-to-consumer interactions in virtual communities: The salience of reciprocity. *Journal of Business Research*, 63(9-10), 1033-1040.
- Chandon, P., Morwitz, V. G., & Reinartz, W. J. (2005). Do intentions really predict behavior? Self-generated validity effects in survey research. *Journal of Marketing*, 69(2), 1-14.
- Chandon, P., Wansink, B., & Laurent, G. (2000). A benefit congruency framework of sales promotion effectiveness. *Journal of Marketing*, 64(4), 65-81.
- Chang, P. L., & Chieng, M. H. (2006). Building consumer-brand relationship: A cross-cultural experiential view. *Psychology & Marketing*, 23(11), 927-959.
- Chaplin, L. N., & John, D. R. (2005). The development of self-brand connections in children and adolescents. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(1), 119-129.
- Chatzipanagiotou, K., Veloutsou, C., & Christodoulides, G. (2016). Decoding the complexity of the consumer-based brand equity process. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(11), 5479-5486.

- Chaudhuri, A., & Holbrook, M. B. (2001). The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance: the role of brand loyalty. *Journal of Marketing*, 65(2), 81-93.
- Cheah, I., Phau, I., Chong, C., & Shimul, A. S. (2015). Antecedents and outcomes of brand prominence on willingness to buy luxury brands. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 19(4), 402-415.
- Chen, Y., & Xie, J. (2008). Online consumer review: Word-of-mouth as a new element of marketing communication mix. *Management Science*, 54(3), 477-491.
- Cheng, J.-C., Luo, S.-J., Yen, C.-H., & Yang, Y.-F. (2016). Brand attachment and customer citizenship behaviors. *The Service Industries Journal*, 36(7-8), 263-277.
- Cheng-Hsui Chen, A. (2001). Using free association to examine the relationship between the characteristics of brand associations and brand equity. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 10(7), 439-451.
- Cheung, C. M., & Lee, M. K. (2012). What drives consumers to spread electronic word of mouth in online consumer-opinion platforms? *Decision Support Systems*, 53(1), 218-225.
- Cheung, C. M., Xiao, B., & Liu, I. L. (2012). *The impact of observational learning and electronic word of mouth on consumer purchase decisions: The moderating role of consumer expertise and consumer involvement*. Paper presented at the System Science (HICSS), 2012 45th Hawaii International Conference on System Science.
- Chevalier, M., & Mazzalovo, G. (2008). *Luxury brand management: A world of privilege*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Chi, H. K., Yeh, H. R., & Yang, Y. T. (2009). The impact of brand awareness on consumer purchase intention: The mediating effect of perceived quality and brand loyalty. *Journal of International Management Studies*, 4(1), 135-144.

- Chin, W. W. (1998). The partial least squares approach to structural equation modeling. *Modern Methods for Business Research*, 295(2), 295-336.
- Chin, W. W., Marcolin, B. L., & Newsted, P. R. (2003). A partial least squares latent variable modeling approach for measuring interaction effects: Results from a Monte Carlo simulation study and an electronic-mail emotion/adoption study. *Information Systems Research*, 14(2), 189-217.
- Chin, W. W., & Newsted, P. R. (1999). *Structural equation modeling analysis with small samples using partial least squares* (Vol. 2). SAGE Publications.
- Chitturi, R., Raghunathan, R., & Mahajan, V. (2008). Delight by design: The role of hedonic versus utilitarian benefits. *Journal of Marketing*, 72(3), 48-63.
- Chiu, H.-C., Hsieh, Y.-C., Li, Y.-C., & Lee, M. (2005). Relationship marketing and consumer switching behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(12), 1681-1689.
- Chiu, W., & Won, D. (2016). Consumer-brand relationships in sports products and repurchase intention: An application of the investment model. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 17(3), 243-259.
- Choi, J. P. (1998). Brand extension as informational leverage. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 65(4), 655-669.
- Choo, H., & Petrick, J. F. (2014). Social interactions and intentions to revisit for agritourism service encounters. *Tourism Management*, 40, 372-381.
- Choo, H. J., Moon, H., Kim, H., & Yoon, N. (2012). Luxury customer value. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 16(1), 81-101.
- Christodoulides, G., Cadogan, J. W., & Veloutsou, C. (2015). Consumer-based brand equity measurement: Lessons learned from an international study. *International Marketing Review*, 32(3/4), 307-328.

- Christodoulides, G., & De Chernatony, L. (2010). Consumer-based brand equity conceptualization and measurement: A literature review. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 52(1), 43-66.
- Christodoulides, G., Michaelidou, N., & Li, C. H. (2009). Measuring perceived brand luxury: An evaluation of the BLI scale. *Journal of Brand Management*, 16(5-6), 395-405.
- Christopher, M., Payne, A., & Ballantyne, D. (1993). *Relationship marketing: bringing quality customer service and marketing together*. London: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Clark, M., & Melancon, J. (2013). The influence of social media investment on relational outcomes: A relationship marketing perspective. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 5(4), p132.
- Cohen, J. B., & Areni, C. S. (1991). Affect and consumer behavior. *Handbook of Consumer Behavior*, 4(7), 188-240.
- Collins, N. L., & Feeney, B. C. (2000). A safe haven: an attachment theory perspective on support seeking and caregiving in intimate relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(6), 1053.
- Consiglio, I., Kupor, D. M., Gino, F., & Norton, M. I. (2015). Brand (in) fidelity: When flirting with the competition strengthens brand relationships. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 28 (1), 5-22.
- Cornwell, A. (2016, July 8). Sport could be key to foreign firms in Iran. *Gulf News*.
- Cova, B. (1997). Community and consumption: Towards a definition of the "linking value" of product or services. *European Journal of Marketing*, 31(3/4), 297-316.
- Cova, B., & Cova, V. (2002). Tribal marketing: The tribalisation of society and its impact on the conduct of marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, 36(5/6), 595-620.
- Cova, B., & Pace, S. (2006). Brand community of convenience products: New forms of customer empowerment-the case "My Nutella The Community". *European Journal of Marketing*, 40(9/10), 1087-1105.

- Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of Management, 31*(6), 874-900.
- Czellar, S. (2003). Consumer attitude toward brand extensions: An integrative model and research propositions. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 20*(1), 97-115.
- Das, G., Agarwal, J., Malhotra, N. K., & Varshneya, G. (2018). Does brand experience translate into brand commitment?: A mediated-moderation model of brand passion and perceived brand ethicality. *Journal of Business Research* (in press).
- Datta, H., Ailawadi, K. L., & van Heerde, H. J. (2017). How well does consumer-based brand equity align with sales-based brand equity and marketing-mix response?. *Journal of Marketing, 81*(3), 1-20.
- Davcik, N. S., Vinhas da Silva, R., & Hair, J. F. (2015). Towards a unified theory of brand equity: Conceptualizations, taxonomy and avenues for future research. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 24*(1), 3-17.
- Dawes, J. G. (2009). Brand loyalty in the UK sportswear market. *International Journal of Market Research, 51*(4). SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2014466>
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1975). *Intrinsic motivation*. Wiley Online Library.
- Delgado-Ballester, E., & Luis Munuera-Alemán, J. (2005). Does brand trust matter to brand equity? *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 14*(3), 187-196.
- Delgado-Ballester, E., Munuera-Aleman, J. L., & Yague-Guillen, M. J. (2003). Development and validation of a brand trust scale. *International Journal of Market Research, 45*(1), 35-54.
- Dellarocas, C., & Narayan, R. (2006). A statistical measure of a population's propensity to engage in post-purchase online word-of-mouth. *Statistical Science, 21*(2), 277-285.
- DelVecchio, D. (2001). Consumer perceptions of private label quality: The role of product category characteristics and consumer use of heuristics. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 8*(5), 239-249.

- DelVecchio, D., & Smith, D. C. (2005). Brand-extension price premiums: The effects of perceived fit and extension product category risk. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 33(2), 184-196.
- Dennis, C., Papagiannidis, S., Alamanos, E., & Bourlakis, M. (2016). The role of brand attachment strength in higher education. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(8), 3049-3057.
- Dens, N., & De Pelsmacker, P. (2010). Advertising for extensions: Moderating effects of extension type, advertising strategy, and product category involvement on extension evaluation. *Marketing Letters*, 21(2), 175-189. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11002-009-9086-1>
- Deppe, M., Schwindt, W., Kugel, H., Plassmann, H., & Kenning, P. (2005). Nonlinear responses within the medial prefrontal cortex reveal when specific implicit information influences economic decision making. *Journal of Neuroimaging*, 15(2), 171-182.
- Dick, A. S., & Basu, K. (1994). Customer loyalty: Toward an integrated conceptual framework. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 22(2), 99-113.
- DigitalIQIndex. (2016). *Sportswear*. Retrieved from <https://www.rankingthebrands.com/PDF/Digital%20IQ%20Index%20Sportswear%202015,%20L2%20ThinkTank.pdf>
- Dillon, W. R., Madden, T. J., Kirmani, A., & Mukherjee, S. (2001). Understanding what's in a brand rating: A model for assessing brand and attribute effects and their relationship to brand equity. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 38(4), 415-429.
- Ding, C. G., & Tseng, T. H. (2015). On the relationships among brand experience, hedonic emotions, and brand equity. *European Journal of Marketing*, 49(7/8), 994-1015.
- Djikic, M., & Oatley, K. (2004). Love and personal relationships: Navigating on the border between the ideal and the real. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 34(2), 199-209.

- Do, H., Ko, E., & Woodside, A. G. (2015). Tiger Woods, Nike, and I are (not) best friends: How brand's sports sponsorship in social-media impacts brand consumer's congruity and relationship quality. *International Journal of Advertising*, 34(4), 658-677.
- Dobni, D., & Zinkhan, G. M. (1990). *In search of brand image: A foundation analysis*. In M. E. Goldberg, G. Gorn & R. W. Pollay (Eds.), *NA - Advances in Consumer Research* (Vol. 17, pp. 110-119). Provo, UT : Association for Consumer Research.
- Dodds, W. B., Monroe, K. B., & Grewal, D. (1991). Effects of price, brand, and store information on buyers' product evaluations. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 28(3), 307-319.
- Doty, D. H., & Glick, W. H. (1998). Common methods bias: does common methods variance really bias results? *Organizational research methods*, 1(4), 374-406.
- Dove. (2017). *The Dove self-esteem project*. Retrieved from <http://selfesteem.mydove.com.au/our-mission>
- Drennan, J., Bianchi, C., Cacho-Elizondo, S., Louriero, S., Guibert, N., & Proud, W. (2015). Examining the role of wine brand love on brand loyalty: A multi-country comparison. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 49, 47-55.
- Drossos, D. A., Kokkinaki, F., Giaglis, G. M., & Fouskas, K. G. (2014). The effects of product involvement and impulse buying on purchase intentions in mobile text advertising. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 13(6), 423-430.
- Du, S., Bhattacharya, C. B., & Sen, S. (2007). Reaping relational rewards from corporate social responsibility: The role of competitive positioning. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 24(3), 224-241.
- Dubois, B., & Czellar, S. (2002). *Prestige brands or luxury brands? An exploratory inquiry on consumer perceptions*. Retrieved from <https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:5816>
- Dubois, B., Czellar, S., & Laurent, G. (2005). Consumer segments based on attitudes toward luxury: Empirical evidence from twenty countries. *Marketing Letters*, 16(2), 115-128.



- Dunn, L., & Hoegg, J. (2014). The impact of fear on emotional brand attachment. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41(1), 152-168.
- Dwyer, F. R., Schurr, P. H., & Oh, S. (1987). Developing buyer-seller relationships. *The Journal of Marketing*, 51(2), 11-27.
- Dyson, P., Farr, A., & Hollis, N. S. (1996). Understanding, measuring, and using brand equity. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 36(6), 9-22.
- East, R., Wright, M., & Vanhuele, M. (2013). *Consumer behaviour: Applications in marketing*. Sage.
- Economist, T. (2013). *The Adidas method: A German firm's unusual approach to designing its products*. Retrieved from <https://www.economist.com/news/business/21584002-german-firms-unusual-approach-designing-its-products-adidas-method>
- Ehrenberg, A. S., Uncles, M. D., & Goodhardt, G. J. (2004). Understanding brand performance measures: using Dirichlet benchmarks. *Journal of Business Research*, 57(12), 1307-1325.
- Eisend, M. (2005). The role of meta-analysis in marketing and consumer behavior research: Stimulator or inhibitor? *Advances in Consumer Research*, 32, 620-622.
- Ekeh, P. P. (1974). *Social exchange theory: The two traditions*. Heinemann London.
- Ekinci, Y., Yoon, T.-H., & Oppewal, H. (2005). An examination of the brand relationship quality scale in the evaluation of restaurant brands. In (Eds.), *Advances in hospitality and leisure* (Vol. 1, pp. 189-197), Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Elliott, G. R., & Cameron, R. C. (1994). Consumer perception of product quality and the country-of-origin effect. *Journal of International Marketing*, 2(2), 49-62.
- Elliott, R. (1997). Existential consumption and irrational desire. *European Journal of Marketing*, 31(3/4), 285-296.

- Elliott, R., & Davies, A. (2006). Symbolic brands and authenticity of identity performance. *Brand culture*, 155-70.
- Elliott, S. (2014). *To reconnect with consumers, Revlon looks for love*. Retrieved from [https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/17/business/media/to-reconnect-with-consumers-revlon-looks-for-love.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/17/business/media/to-reconnect-with-consumers-revlon-looks-for-love.html?_r=0)
- Emerson, R. M. (1976). Social exchange theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2, 335-362.
- Erdem, T., Swait, J., Broniarczyk, S., Chakravarti, D., Kapferer, J.-N., Keane, M., . . . Zetzmeyer, F. (1999). Brand equity, consumer learning and choice. *Marketing Letters*, 10(3), 301-318.
- Ergin, E. A. (2010). The rise in the sales of counterfeit brands: The case of Turkish consumers. *African Journal of Business Management*, 4(10), 2181.
- Escalas, J. E. (2004). Narrative processing: Building consumer connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(1), 168-179.
- Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2003a). Using narratives to discern self-identity related consumer goals and motivations. In S. Ratneshwar, D. G. Mick, & C. Huffman (Eds.), *The why of consumption: Contemporary perspectives on consumer motives, goals, and desires* (pp. 237-258). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2003b). You are what they eat: The influence of reference groups on consumers' connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 13(3), 339-348.
- Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2005). Self-construal, reference groups, and brand meaning. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(3), 378-389.
- Esch, F.-R., Langner, T., Schmitt, B. H., & Geus, P. (2006). Are brands forever? How brand knowledge and relationships affect current and future purchases. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 15(2), 98-105.

- Esch, F.-R., Möll, T., Schmitt, B., Elger, C. E., Neuhaus, C., & Weber, B. (2012). Brands on the brain: Do consumers use declarative information or experienced emotions to evaluate brands? *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 22*(1), 75-85.
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5*(1), 1-4.
- Evanschitzky, H., Iyer, G. R., Plassmann, H., Niessing, J., & Meffert, H. (2006). The relative strength of affective commitment in securing loyalty in service relationships. *Journal of Business Research, 59*(12), 1207-1213.
- Evrard, Y., & Aurier, P. (1996). Identification and validation of the components of the person-object relationship. *Journal of Business Research, 37*(2), 127-134.
- Exportiamo. (2016). *Luxury tempted Iran is a dream market for retail*. Retrieved from <http://www.exportiamo.it/aree-tematiche/12836/luxory-tempted-iran-is-a-dream-market-for-retail/>
- Falk, R. F., & Miller, N. B. (1992). *A primer for soft modeling*. University of Akron Press.
- Farquhar, P. H. (1989). Managing brand equity. *Marketing Research, 1*(3), 24-33.
- Fazio, R. H., Powell, M. C., & Williams, C. J. (1989). The role of attitude accessibility in the attitude-to-behavior process. *Journal of Consumer Research, 16*(3), 280-288.
- Fedorikhin, A., & Cole, C. A. (2004). Mood effects on attitudes, perceived risk and choice: Moderators and mediators. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 14*(1), 2-12.
- Fedorikhin, A., Park, C. W., & Thomson, M. (2008). Beyond fit and attitude: The effect of emotional attachment on consumer responses to brand extensions. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 18*(4), 281-291.
- Feeney, J. A., & Noller, P. (1990). Attachment style as a predictor of adult romantic relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58*(2), 281.
- Feeney, J. A., & Noller, P. (1996). *Adult attachment*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Fehr, B. (1988). Prototype analysis of the concepts of love and commitment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 55(4), 557.
- Fehr, B., & Russell, J. A. (1991). The concept of love viewed from a prototype perspective. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60(3), 425.
- Fetscherin, M. (2014). What type of relationship do we have with loved brands? *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 31(6/7), 430-440.
- Fetscherin, M., Boulanger, M., Gonçalves Filho, C., & Quiroga Souki, G. (2014). The effect of product category on consumer brand relationships. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 23(2), 78-89.
- Fetscherin, M., & Heinrich, D. (2015). Consumer brand relationships research: A bibliometric citation meta-analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 68(2), 380-390.
- Fill, C., & Turnbull, S. L. (2016). *Marketing communications: brands, experiences and participation*. Pearson.
- Fionda, A. M., & Moore, C. M. (2009). The anatomy of the luxury fashion brand. *Journal of Brand Management*, 16(5), 347-363.
- Fiske, S. T., & Pavelchak, M. A. (1986). Category-based versus piecemeal-based affective responses: Developments in schema-triggered affect. In R. M. Sorrentino & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of motivation and cognition: Foundations of social behavior* (pp. 167-203). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Fitzgibbon, C., & White, L. (2005). The role of attitudinal loyalty in the development of customer relationship management strategy within service firms. *Journal of Financial Services Marketing*, 9(3), 214-230.
- Fletcher, G. J., Simpson, J. A., & Thomas, G. (2000). The measurement of perceived relationship quality components: A confirmatory factor analytic approach. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26(3), 340-354.

- Fletcher, G. J., Simpson, J. A., Thomas, G., & Giles, L. (1999). Ideals in intimate relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*(1), 72.
- Folkman, S., Lazarus, R. S., Dunkel-Schetter, C., DeLongis, A., & Gruen, R. J. (1986). Dynamics of a stressful encounter: cognitive appraisal, coping, and encounter outcomes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50*(5), 992.
- Fombrun, C. J., & Rindova, V. P. (2000). The road to transparency: Reputation management at Royal Dutch/Shell. *The expressive organization, 7*, 7-96.
- Forgas, J. P. (1995). Mood and judgment: the affect infusion model (AIM). *Psychological Bulletin, 117*(1), 39.
- Forgas, J. P. (2008). Affect and cognition. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 3*(2), 94-101.
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research, 18*(1), 39-50.
- Forte, D. (2016). Fitness brands building brand loyalty by becoming part of the lifestyle. *Multichannelmerchant*.
- Fournier, S. (1995). Toward the development of relationship theory at the level of the product and brand. *Advances in Consumer Research, 22*, 661-661.
- Fournier, S. (1996). *The consumer and the brand: An understanding within the framework of personal relationships*. Division of Research, Harvard Business School.
- Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research, 24*(4), 343-353.
- Fournier, S., Dobscha, S., & Mick, D. G. (1998). The premature death of relationship marketing. *Harvard Business Review, 76*(1), 42-51.
- Fournier, S., & Yao, J. L. (1997). Reviving brand loyalty: A reconceptualization within the framework of consumer-brand relationships. *International Journal of research in Marketing, 14*(5), 451-472.

- Fraering, M., & S. Minor, M. (2013). Beyond loyalty: Customer satisfaction, loyalty, and fortitude. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 27(4), 334-344.
- Francisco-Maffezzolli, E. C., Semprebon, E., & Prado, P. H. M. (2014). Construing loyalty through brand experience: The mediating role of brand relationship quality. *Journal of Brand Management*, 21(5), 446-458.
- Frank, P., & Watchravesringkan, K. (2016). Exploring antecedents and consequences of young consumers' perceived global brand equity. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 25(2), 160-170.
- Franzen, G., & Bouwman, M. (2001). *The mental world of brands: Mind, memory and brand success*. Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire: World Advertising Research Centre.
- Fricker, R. D. (2008). Sampling methods for web and e-mail surveys. In N. Fielding, R. M. Lee, & G. Blamk (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of online research methods* (pp. 195-216). Sage.
- Frijda, N. H. (1993). The place of appraisal in emotion. *Cognition & Emotion*, 7(3-4), 357-387.
- Fromkin, H. L., & Snyder, C. R. (1980). The search for uniqueness and valuation of scarcity. In K. Gergen (Ed.), *Social exchange: Advances in theory and research*. (pp. 57-75). Springer.
- Füller, J., Jawecki, G., & Mühlbacher, H. (2007). Innovation creation by online basketball communities. *Journal of Business Research*, 60(1), 60-71.
- Füller, J., Matzler, K., & Hoppe, M. (2008). Brand community members as a source of innovation. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 25(6), 608-619.
- Fullerton, G. (2005a). How commitment both enables and undermines marketing relationships. *European Journal of Marketing*, 39(11/12), 1372-1388.
- Fullerton, G. (2005b). The impact of brand commitment on loyalty to retail service brands. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences/Revue Canadienne des Sciences de l'Administration*, 22(2), 97-110.

- Fullerton, G. (2011). Creating advocates: The roles of satisfaction, trust and commitment. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 18(1), 92-100.
- Funk, D. C., & James, J. (2001). The psychological continuum model: A conceptual framework for understanding an individual's psychological connection to sport. *Sport Management Review*, 4(2), 119-150.
- Galli, M., & Gorn, G. (2011). Unconscious transfer of meaning to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 21(3), 215-225.
- Gao, L., Wheeler, C., & Shiv, B. (2009). Products as compensation for self-confidence: Subtle actions affect self-view confidence and product choice. *ACR North American Advances*. 36, 131-134
- Gapper, J. (2004). The challenge of turning a brand into an object of love. *Financial Times*, Retrieved from [www.saatchikevin.com/download/pdf/1042\\_FT\\_lovemarks\\_Mar04.pdf](http://www.saatchikevin.com/download/pdf/1042_FT_lovemarks_Mar04.pdf).
- Garbarino, E., & Johnson, M. S. (1999). The different roles of satisfaction, trust, and commitment in customer relationships. *the Journal of Marketing*, 63(2), 70-87.
- Gatersleben, B. (2007). Affective and symbolic aspects of car use. In T. Gärling & L. Steg (Eds.), *Threats from car traffic to the quality of urban life: Problems, causes and solutions* (pp. 219-233). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Gensler, S., Völckner, F., Liu-Thompkins, Y., & Wiertz, C. (2013). Managing brands in the social media environment. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27(4), 242-256.
- Gentina, E., Shrum, L., & Lowrey, T. M. (2016). Teen attitudes toward luxury fashion brands from a social identity perspective: A cross-cultural study of French and US teenagers. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(12), 5785-5792.
- Gilliland, D. I., & Bello, D. C. (2002). Two sides to attitudinal commitment: The effect of calculative and loyalty commitment on enforcement mechanisms in distribution channels. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 30(1), 24-43.

- Gilliland, N. (2017). How Adidas Originals uses social media to drive sales. *Econsultancy*. Retrieved from <https://econsultancy.com/blog/68785-how-adidas-originals-uses-social-media-to-drive-sales>
- Giovanis, A., & Athanasopoulou, P. (2017). Gen Y-ers' brand loyalty drivers in emerging devices. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 35(6), 805-821.
- Giovanis, A. (2016). Consumer-brand relationships' development in the mobile internet market: Evidence from an extended relationship commitment paradigm. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 25(6), 568-585.
- Gistri, G., Romani, S., Pace, S., Gabrielli, V., & Grappi, S. (2009). Consumption practices of counterfeit luxury goods in the Italian context. *Journal of Brand Management*, 16(5-6), 364-374.
- Gladden, J. M., & Funk, D. C. (2001). Understanding brand loyalty in professional sport: Examining the link between brand associations and brand loyalty. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 3(1), 54-81.
- Gobē, M. (2001). *Emotional branding: The new paradigm for connecting brands to people*. New York: Allworth Press.
- Gold, A. H., & Arvind Malhotra, A. H. S. (2001). Knowledge management: An organizational capabilities perspective. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 18(1), 185-214.
- Goldsmith, R. E., & Emmert, J. (1991). Measuring product category involvement: A multitrait-multimethod study. *Journal of Business Research*, 23(4), 363-371.
- Goldsmith, R. E., Eastman, J.K. , Calvert, S. and Flynn, L.R . (1996). Status consumption and self-image: A replication with Mexican consumers. *Association of Marketing Theory and Practice Proceedings*, 317-323.
- Goldsmith, R. E., Flynn, L. R., & Kim, D. (2010). Status consumption and price sensitivity. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 18(4), 323-338.



- Goodman, L. A. (1960). On the exact variance of products. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 55(292), 708-713.
- Gordon, G. L., Calantone, R. J., Di Benedetto, C. A., Gordon, G. L., Calantone, R. J., & di Benedetto, C. A. (1993). Brand equity in the business-to-business sector: An exploratory study. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 2(3), 4-16.
- Gordon, I. (1998). *Relationship marketing: New strategies, techniques, and technologies to win the customers you want and keep them forever*. Canada: John Wiley & Sons.
- Gordon, M. E., McKeage, K., & Fox, M. A. (1998). Relationship marketing effectiveness: the role of involvement. *Psychology & Marketing*, 15(5), 443-459.
- Gorn, G. J., Goldberg, M. E., & Basu, K. (1993). Mood, awareness, and product evaluation. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 2(3), 237-256.
- Graham, J. M. (2011). Measuring love in romantic relationships: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 28(6), 748-771.
- Greifeneder, R., Bless, H., & Pham, M. T. (2011). When do people rely on affective and cognitive feelings in judgment? A review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 15(2), 107-141.
- Grewal, R., Cote, J. A., & Baumgartner, H. (2004). Multicollinearity and measurement error in structural equation models: Implications for theory testing. *Marketing Science*, 23(4), 519-529.
- Grime, I., Diamantopoulos, A., & Smith, G. (2002). Consumer evaluations of extensions and their effects on the core brand: Key issues and research propositions. *European Journal of Marketing*, 36(11/12), 1415-1438.
- Grisaffe, D. B., & Nguyen, H. P. (2011). Antecedents of emotional attachment to brands. *Journal of Business Research*, 64(10), 1052-1059.
- Grohs, R., Raies, K., Koll, O., & Mühlbacher, H. (2016). One pie, many recipes: Alternative paths to high brand strength. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(6), 2244-2251.

- Grönroos, C. (1994). From marketing mix to relationship marketing: Towards a paradigm shift in marketing. *Management Decision*, 32(2), 4-20.
- Grönroos, C. (2000). Creating a relationship dialogue: Communication, interaction and value. *The Marketing Review*, 1(1), 5-14.
- Grönroos, C. (2004). The relationship marketing process: Communication, interaction, dialogue, value. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 19(2), 99-113.
- Grubb, E. L., & Grathwohl, H. L. (1967). Consumer self-concept, symbolism and market behavior: A theoretical approach. *The Journal of Marketing*, 31(4), 22-27.
- Gurviez, P., & Korchia, M. (2003). *Test of a consumer-brand relationship model including trust and three consequences*. Paper presented at the International Research Seminar in Marketing, La Londe les Maures, France.
- Habibi, M. R., Laroche, M., & Richard, M.-O. (2014a). Brand communities based in social media: How unique are they? Evidence from two exemplary brand communities. *International Journal of Information Management*, 34(2), 123-132.
- Habibi, M. R., Laroche, M., & Richard, M.-O. (2014b). The roles of brand community and community engagement in building brand trust on social media. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 37, 152-161.
- Habibi, M. R., Laroche, M., & Richard, M.-O. (2016). Testing an extended model of consumer behavior in the context of social media-based brand communities. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 62, 292-302.
- Hagtvedt, H., & Patrick, V. M. (2009). The broad embrace of luxury: Hedonic potential as a driver of brand extendibility. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 19(4), 608-618.
- Hair, J. F., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2011). PLS-SEM: Indeed a silver bullet. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 19(2), 139-152.

- Hair, J. F., Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., & Mena, J. A. (2012). An assessment of the use of partial least squares structural equation modeling in marketing research. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 40(3), 414-433.
- Hair, J. F., Jr, Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C., & Sarstedt, M. (2013). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)*. Sage Publications.
- Han, Y. J., Nunes, J. C., & Drèze, X. (2010). Signaling status with luxury goods: The role of brand prominence. *Journal of Marketing*, 74(4), 15-30.
- Hanlon, P. (2006). *Primalbranding: Create zealots for your brand, your company, and your future*. Simon and Schuster.
- Hanslin, K., & Rindell, A. (2014). Consumer-brand relationships in step-down line extensions of luxury and designer brands. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 18(2), 145-168. doi:10.1108/jfmm-04-2013-0057
- Hanzaee, K. H., & Andervazh, L. (2012). The influence of brand loyalty on cosmetics purchase intention of Iranian female consumers. *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research*, 2(5), 5389-5398.
- Harrison-Walker, L. J. (2001). The measurement of word-of-mouth communication and an investigation of service quality and customer commitment as potential antecedents. *Journal of Services Research*, 4(1), 60-75.
- Hassenzahl, M. (2006). Hedonic, emotional, and experiential perspectives on product quality. In C. Ghaoui (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of human computer interaction* (pp. 266-272). IGI Global.
- Hastak, M., & Olson, J. C. (1989). Assessing the role of brand-related cognitive responses as mediators of communication effects on cognitive structure. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(4), 444-456.
- Hatfield, E., & Sprecher, S. (1986). Measuring passionate love in intimate relationships. *Journal of Adolescence*, 9(4), 383-410.

- Hatfield, E., Walster, G. W., & Berscheid, E. (1978). *Equity: Theory and research*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Hawkins, K., & Vel, P. (2013). Attitudinal loyalty, behavioural loyalty and social media: An introspection. *The Marketing Review*, 13(2), 125-141.
- Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. R. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52(3), 511.
- Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. R. (1994). Attachment as an organizational framework for research on close relationships. *Psychological Inquiry*, 5(1), 1-22.
- He, H., Zhu, W., Gouran, D., & Kolo, O. (2016). Moral identity centrality and cause-related marketing: the moderating effects of brand social responsibility image and emotional brand attachment. *European Journal of Marketing*, 50(1/2), 236-259.
- Heckathorn, D. D. (1997). Respondent-driven sampling: A new approach to the study of hidden populations. *Social Problems*, 44(2), 174-199.
- Hegner, S. M., Beldad, A. D., & op Heghuis, S. K. (2014). How company responses and trusting relationships protect brand equity in times of crises. *Journal of Brand Management*, 21(5), 429-445.
- Hegner, S. M., Fetscherin, M., & van Delzen, M. (2017). Determinants and outcomes of brand hate. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 26(1), 13-25.
- Heinonen, K., Strandvik, T., & Voima, P. (2013). Customer dominant value formation in service. *European Business Review*, 25(2), 104-123.
- Heinrich, D., Albrecht, C.-M., & Bauer, H. H. (2012). Love actually? Measuring and exploring consumers' brand love. *Consumer-Brand Relationships—Theory and Practice*, 137-150.
- Heinrich, D., & Mühl, H. H. B. J. C. (2008). Measuring brand love: Applying Sternberg's triangular theory of love in consumer-brand relations. In *Proceedings of the 2008 Australian & New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference*.

- Heller Baird, C., & Parasnis, G. (2011). From social media to social customer relationship management. *Strategy & Leadership, 39*(5), 30-37.
- Hem, L. E., De Chernatony, L., & Iversen, N. M. (2003). Factors influencing successful brand extensions. *Journal of Marketing Management, 19*(7-8), 781-806.
- Hem, L. E., & Iversen, N. M. (2003). Transfer of brand equity in brand extensions: The importance of brand loyalty. In P. A. Keller & D. W. Rook (Eds.), *NA-Advances in Consumer Research* (Vol. 30, pp. 72-79). Valdosta, GA: Association for Consumer Research.
- Hemetsberger, A., Kittinger-Rosanelli, C. M., & Friedmann, S. (2009). 'Bye Bye Love'-Why devoted consumers break up with their brands. In A. L. McGill & S. Shavitt (Eds.), *NA-Advances in Consumer Research* (Vol. 36, pp. 430-437). Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research.
- Hemsley-Brown, J., & Alnawas, I. (2016). Service quality and brand loyalty: The mediation effect of brand passion, brand affection and self-brand connection. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 28*(12), 2771-2794.
- Hendrick, C., & Hendrick, S. S. (1986). A theory and method of love. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50*(2), 392.
- Hendrick, C., & Hendrick, S. S. (1991). Dimensions of love: A sociobiological interpretation. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 10*(2), 206.
- Hendrick, S. S. (1988). A generic measure of relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 93-98*.
- Hendrick, S. S., Dicke, A., & Hendrick, C. (1998). The relationship assessment scale. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 15*(1), 137-142.
- Hendrick, S. S., Hendrick, C., & Adler, N. L. (1988). Romantic relationships: Love, satisfaction, and staying together. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54*(6), 980.

- Hennigs, N., Wiedmann, K. P., Klarmann, C., Strehlau, S., Godey, B., Pederzoli, D., . . . Donvito, R. (2012). What is the value of luxury? A cross-cultural consumer perspective. *Psychology & Marketing, 29*(12), 1018-1034.
- Hennigs, N., Wiedmann, K.-P., Behrens, S., Klarmann, C., & Carduck, J. (2013). Brand extensions: A successful strategy in luxury fashion branding? Assessing consumers' implicit associations. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management, 17*(4), 390-402.
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 43*( 1), 115-135..
- Hernández, B., Hidalgo, M. C., Salazar-Laplace, M. E., & Hess, S. (2007). Place attachment and place identity in natives and non-natives. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 27*(4), 310-319.
- Herr, P. M., Farquhar, P. H., & Fazio, R. H. (1996). Impact of dominance and relatedness on brand extensions. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 5*(2), 135-159.
- Herr, P. M., Kardes, F. R., & Kim, J. (1991). Effects of word-of-mouth and product-attribute information on persuasion: An accessibility-diagnostics perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research, 17*(4), 454-462.
- Herrando, C., Jiménez-Martínez, J., & Martín-De Hoyos, M. J. (2017). Passion at first sight: How to engage users in social commerce contexts. *Electronic Commerce Research, 17*(4), 701-720.
- Hess, J., & Story, J. (2005). Trust-based commitment: Multidimensional consumer-brand relationships. *Journal of Consumer Marketing, 22*(6), 313-322.
- Hew, J. J., Badaruddin, M. N. B. A., & Moorthy, M. K. (2017). Crafting a smartphone repurchase decision making process: Do brand attachment and gender matter?. *Telematics and Informatics, 34*(4), 34-56.

- Hidayat, A., & Diwasasri, A. H. A. (2013). Factors influencing attitudes and intention to purchase counterfeit luxury brands among Indonesian consumers. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 5(4), 143.
- Hieke, S. (2010). Effects of counterfeits on the image of luxury brands: An empirical study from the customer perspective. *Journal of Brand Management*, 18(2), 159-173.
- Higgins, E. T., & Scholer, A. A. (2009). Engaging the consumer: The science and art of the value creation process. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 19(2), 100-114.
- Hill, J., & Lee, H.-H. (2015). Sustainable brand extensions of fast fashion retailers. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 19(2), 205-222.
- Hinde, R. A. (1997). *Relationships: A dialectical perspective*. Psychology Press.
- Hirschman, E. C., & Holbrook, M. B. (1982). Hedonic consumption: Emerging concepts, methods and propositions. *The Journal of Marketing*, 46(3), 92-101.
- HKTDC. (2016). *Iran unbound: Retail and consumer goods opportunities*. Retrieved from <http://economists-pick-research.hktcdc.com/business-news/article/Research-Articles/Iran-Unbound-Retail-and-Consumer-Goods-Opportunities/rp/en/1/1X000000/1X0A7J2D.htm>
- Hobbs, T. (2016). How Under Armour plans to become the world's biggest sports brand *Marketing Week*. Centaur Communications Ltd.
- Hoeffler, S., & Keller, K. L. (2003). The marketing advantages of strong brands. *The Journal of Brand Management*, 10(6), 421-445.
- Hoffman, D. L., & Fodor, M. (2010). Can you measure the ROI of your social media marketing? *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 52(1), 41.
- Holbrook, M. B., & Hirschman, E. C. (1982). The experiential aspects of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(2), 132-140.

- Hollebeek, L. D. (2011a). Demystifying customer brand engagement: Exploring the loyalty nexus. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(7-8), 785-807.
- Hollebeek, L. D. (2011b). Exploring customer brand engagement: Definition and themes. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 19(7), 555-573.
- Hollebeek, L. D., Glynn, M. S., & Brodie, R. J. (2014). Consumer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, scale development and validation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28(2), 149-165.
- Holmes, J. G. (2000). Social relationships: The nature and function of relational schemas. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 30(4), 447-495.
- Homans, G. C. (1958). Social behavior as exchange. *American Journal of Sociology*, 63(6), 597-606.
- Homburg, C., Klarmann, M., & Schmitt, J. (2010). Brand awareness in business markets: When is it related to firm performance? *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 27(3), 201-212.
- Homburg, C., Stierl, M., & Bornemann, T. (2013). Corporate social responsibility in business-to-business markets: How organizational customers account for supplier corporate social responsibility engagement. *Journal of Marketing*, 77(6), 54-72.
- Hoyer, W. D., & Brown, S. P. (1990). Effects of brand awareness on choice for a common, repeat-purchase product. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17(2), 141-148.
- Hsieh, A.-T., & Li, C.-K. (2008). The moderating effect of brand image on public relations perception and customer loyalty. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 26(1), 26-42.
- Huang, C.-C., Fang, S.-C., Huang, S.-M., Chang, S.-C., & Fang, S.-R. (2014). The impact of relational bonds on brand loyalty: The mediating effect of brand relationship quality. *Managing Service Quality*, 24(2), 184-204.
- Huang, R., & Sarigöllü, E. (2014a). Assessment of brand equity measures. *International Journal of Market Research*, 56(6), 783-806.



- Huang, R., & Sarigöllü, E. (2014b). How brand awareness relates to market outcome, brand equity, and the marketing mix. In T-M. Choi (Ed.), *Fashion Branding and Consumer Behaviors: Scientific models* (pp. 113-132). Springer.
- Huber, F., Meyer, F., & Schmid, D. A. (2015). Brand love in progress—The interdependence of brand love antecedents in consideration of relationship duration. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 24(6), 567-579.
- Hudson, S., Huang, L., Roth, M. S., & Madden, T. J. (2016). The influence of social media interactions on consumer–brand relationships: A three-country study of brand perceptions and marketing behaviors. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 33(1), 27-41.
- Hudson, S., Roth, M. S., Madden, T. J., & Hudson, R. (2015). The effects of social media on emotions, brand relationship quality, and word of mouth: An empirical study of music festival attendees. *Tourism Management*, 47, 68-76.
- Hulland, J. (1999). Use of partial least squares (PLS) in strategic management research: A review of four recent studies. *Strategic Management Journal*, 20(2), 195-204.
- Hulting, N. (2014, September 10). Under Armour's #IWillWhatIWant campaign finds its audience. *Britton*.
- Hung, K.-p., Huiling Chen, A., Peng, N., Hackley, C., Amy Tiwsakul, R., & Chou, C.-I. (2011). Antecedents of luxury brand purchase intention. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 20(6), 457-467.
- Hunt, S. D. (1976). The nature and scope of marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 40(3), 17-28.
- Hunt, S. D. (1983). General theories and the fundamental explananda of marketing. *The Journal of Marketing*, 47(4), 9-17.
- Huta, V., & Ryan, R. M. (2010). Pursuing pleasure or virtue: The differential and overlapping well-being benefits of hedonic and eudaimonic motives. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 11(6), 735-762.

- Hütten, A. S., Salge, T. O., Niemand, T., & Siems, F. U. (2017). Advancing relationship marketing theory: Exploring customer relationships through a process-centric framework. *AMS Review*, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13162-017-0091-x>
- Hwang, J., & Han, H. (2014). Examining strategies for maximizing and utilizing brand prestige in the luxury cruise industry. *Tourism Management*, 40, 244-259.
- Hwang, J., & Hyun, S. S. (2012). The antecedents and consequences of brand prestige in luxury restaurants. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 17(6), 656-683.
- Hwang, J., & Kandampully, J. (2012). The role of emotional aspects in younger consumer-brand relationships. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 21(2), 98-108.
- IBISWorld. (2017). Luxury retailing in Australia. *IBISWorld Industry Report OD5465*.
- Iglesias, O., Singh, J. J., & Batista-Foguet, J. M. (2011). The role of brand experience and affective commitment in determining brand loyalty. *Journal of Brand Management*, 18(8), 570-582.
- Ilicic, J., & Webster, C. M. (2011). Effects of multiple endorsements and consumer-celebrity attachment on attitude and purchase intention. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ)*, 19(4), 230-237.
- Im, S., Bhat, S., & Lee, Y. (2015). Consumer perceptions of product creativity, coolness, value and attitude. *Journal of Business Research*, 68(1), 166-172.
- Isen, A. M., & Daubman, K. A. (1984). The influence of affect on categorization. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 47(6), 1206.
- Islam, J. U., & Rahman, Z. (2016). Examining the effects of brand love and brand image on customer engagement: An empirical study of fashion apparel brands. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 7(1), 45-59.
- Ismail, A. R., & Spinelli, G. (2012). Effects of brand love, personality and image on word of mouth: The case of fashion brands among young consumers. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, 16(4), 386-398.

- Jacoby, J., & Chestnut, R. W. (1978). *Brand loyalty: Measurement and management*. John Wiley & Sons Incorporated.
- Jafari, A., & Süerdem, A. (2012). An analysis of material consumption culture in the Muslim world. *Marketing Theory, 12*(1), 61-79.
- Jahn, B., & Kunz, W. (2012). How to transform consumers into fans of your brand. *Journal of Service Management, 23*(3), 344-361.
- Jalilvand, M. R., & Samiei, N. (2012). The effect of electronic word of mouth on brand image and purchase intention: An empirical study in the automobile industry in Iran. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 30*(4), 460-476.
- Jang, H., Olfman, L., Ko, I., Koh, J., & Kim, K. (2008). The influence of on-line brand community characteristics on community commitment and brand loyalty. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce, 12*(3), 57-80.
- Japutra, A., Ekinci, R. Y., & Simkin, L. (2014). Exploring brand attachment, its determinants and outcomes. *Journal of Strategic Marketing, 22*(7), 610-630.
- Japutra, A., Ekinci, R. Y., & Simkin, L. (2016). Tie the knot: Building stronger consumers' attachment toward a brand. *Journal of Strategic Marketing, 1-18*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2016.1195862>
- Japutra, A., Ekinci, R. Y., & Simkin, L. (2018). Positive and negative behaviours resulting from brand attachment: The moderating effects of attachment styles. *European Journal of Marketing*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-10-2016-0566>
- Japutra, A., & Molinillo, S. (2017). Responsible and active brand personality: On the relationships with brand experience and key relationship constructs. *Journal of Business Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.08.027>
- Jillapalli, R. K., & Wilcox, J. B. (2010). Professor brand advocacy: Do brand relationships matter? *Journal of Marketing Education, 32*(10), 328-340.

- Johnson, A. R., & Stewart, D. W. (2005). A reappraisal of the role of emotion in consumer behavior. *Review of Marketing Research, 1*, 3-33.
- Johnson, D. J., & Rusbult, C. E. (1989). Resisting temptation: Devaluation of alternative partners as a means of maintaining commitment in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57*(6), 967.
- Jones, G. (2010). *Beauty imagined: A history of the global beauty industry*. Oxford University Press on Demand.
- Jung Jung, H., Lee, Y., Kim, H., & Yang, H. (2014). Impacts of country images on luxury fashion brand: Facilitating with the brand resonance model. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management, 18*(2), 187-205.
- Juriscic, B., & Azevedo, A. (2011). Building customer–brand relationships in the mobile communications market: The role of brand tribalism and brand reputation. *Journal of Brand Management, 18*(4-5), 349-366.
- Kandampully, J. (1998). Service quality to service loyalty: A relationship which goes beyond customer services. *Total Quality Management, 9*(6), 431-443.
- Kang, I., Lee, K. C., Lee, S., & Choi, J. (2007). Investigation of online community voluntary behavior using cognitive map. *Computers in Human Behavior, 23*(1), 111-126.
- Kapferer, J.-N., & Bastien, V. (2009). The specificity of luxury management: Turning marketing upside down. *Journal of Brand Management, 16*(5), 311-322.
- Kapferer, J.-N., & Valette-Florence, P. (2016). Beyond rarity: The paths of luxury desire. How luxury brands grow yet remain desirable. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 25*(2), 120-133.
- Karami, M., Olfati, O., & Dubinsky, A. J. (2017). Key cultural values underlying consumers' buying behaviour: A study in an Iranian context. *Journal of Islamic Marketing, 8*(2), 289-308.

- Karjaluoto, H., Munnukka, J., & Kiuru, K. (2016). Brand love and positive word of mouth: the moderating effects of experience and price. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 25(6), 527-537.
- Kaufmann, H. R., Loureiro, S. M. C., & Manarioti, A. (2016). Exploring behavioural branding, brand love and brand co-creation. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 25(6), 516-526.
- Kaynak, E., Salman, G. G., & Tatoglu, E. (2008). An integrative framework linking brand associations and brand loyalty in professional sports. *Journal of Brand Management*, 15(5), 336-357.
- Keh, H. T., Pang, J., & Peng, S. (2007). Understanding and measuring brand love. In J. R. Priester, D. J. MacInnis, & S. W. Park (Eds.), *New frontiers in branding: Attitudes, attachments, and relationships* (pp. 84-88). Santa Monica, CA: Society for Consumer Psychology.
- Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *The Journal of Marketing*, 57(1), 1-22.
- Keller, K. L. (2001). *Building customer-based brand equity: A blueprint for creating strong brands*. Marketing Science Institute.
- Keller, K. L. (2003). Brand synthesis: The multidimensionality of brand knowledge. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(4), 595-600.
- Keller, K. L. (2009). Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 15(2-3), 139-155.
- Keller, K. L. (2012). Understanding the richness of brand relationships: Research dialogue on brands as intentional agents. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(2), 186-190.
- Keller, K. L., & Lehmann, D. R. (2006). Brands and branding: Research findings and future priorities. *Marketing Science*, 25(6), 740-759.

- Kemp, E., Childers, C. Y., & Williams, K. H. (2012). Place branding: Creating self-brand connections and brand advocacy. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 21(7), 508-515.
- Kemp, E., Jillapalli, R., & Becerra, E. (2014). Health care branding: Developing emotionally based consumer brand relationships. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 28(2), 4-4.
- Kessous, A., Roux, E., & Chandon, J. L. (2015). Consumer–brand relationships: A contrast of nostalgic and non-nostalgic brands. *Psychology & Marketing*, 32(2), 187-202.
- Khan, L. M., & Ahmed, R. (2016). A comparative study of consumer perception of product quality: Chinese versus non-Chinese products. *Pakistan Journal of Engineering, Technology & Science*, 2(2), 118-143.
- Khoei, R. (2014). Brand loyalty in sportswear in Iran. *International Journal of Management, Accounting and Economics*, 1(1), 52-80.
- Kim, A. J., & Ko, E. (2010). Impacts of luxury fashion brand's social media marketing on customer relationship and purchase intention. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 1(3), 164-171.
- Kim, A. J., & Ko, E. (2012). Do social media marketing activities enhance customer equity? An empirical study of luxury fashion brand. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(10), 1480-1486.
- Kim, C. K., Jun, M., Han, J., Kim, M., & Kim, J. Y. (2013). Antecedents and outcomes of attachment towards smartphone applications. *International Journal of Mobile Communications*, 11(4), 393-411.
- Kim, C. K., Lavack, A. M., & Smith, M. (2001). Consumer evaluation of vertical brand extensions and core brands. *Journal of Business Research*, 52(3), 211-222.
- Kim, E., Lin, J.-S., & Sung, Y. (2013). To app or not to app: Engaging consumers via branded mobile apps. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 13(1), 53-65.

- Kim, H.-b., Gon Kim, W., & An, J. A. (2003). The effect of consumer-based brand equity on firms' financial performance. *Journal of Consumer Marketing, 20*(4), 335-351.
- Kim, H. (2012). The dimensionality of fashion-brand experience: Aligning consumer-based brand equity approach. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal, 16*(4), 418-441.
- Kim, H. K., Lee, M., & Lee, Y. W. (2005). Developing a scale for measuring brand relationship quality. *Asia Pacific Advances in Consumer Research, 6*(1), 118-126.
- Kim, K., Park, J., & Kim, J. (2014). Consumer–brand relationship quality: When and how it helps brand extensions. *Journal of Business Research, 67*(4), 591-597. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2013.03.001
- Kim, K. H., Ko, E., Xu, B., & Han, Y. (2012). Increasing customer equity of luxury fashion brands through nurturing consumer attitude. *Journal of Business Research, 65*(10), 1495-1499.
- Kim, W. G., Han, J. S., & Lee, E. (2001). Effects of relationship marketing on repeat purchase and word of mouth. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research, 25*(3), 272-288.
- Kim, Y. K., Trail, G. T., Woo, B., & Zhang, J. (2011). Sports consumer-team relationship quality: Development and psychometric evaluation of a scale. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship, 12*(3), 57-74.
- Kimpakorn, N., & Tocquer, G. (2009). Employees' commitment to brands in the service sector: Luxury hotel chains in Thailand. *Journal of Brand Management, 16*(8), 532-544.
- Kingshott, R. P. (2006). The impact of psychological contracts upon trust and commitment within supplier–buyer relationships: A social exchange view. *Industrial Marketing Management, 35*(6), 724-739.
- Kleinc, S., & Baker, S. M. (2004). An integrative review of material possession attachment. *Academy or Marketing Science Review, 1*, 1-29.

- Kleine, R. E., Kleine, S. S., & Kernan, J. B. (1993). Mundane consumption and the self: A social-identity perspective. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 2*(3), 209-235.
- Knight, D. K., & Young Kim, E. (2007). Japanese consumers' need for uniqueness: Effects on brand perceptions and purchase intention. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal, 11*(2), 270-280.
- Knox, S., & Walker, D. (2003). Empirical developments in the measurement of involvement, brand loyalty and their relationship in grocery markets. *Journal of Strategic Marketing, 11*(4), 271-286.
- Kocak, A., Abimbola, T., & Özer, A. (2007). Consumer brand equity in a cross-cultural replication: An evaluation of a scale. *Journal of Marketing Management, 23*(1-2), 157-173.
- Kock, N. (2015). Common method bias in PLS-SEM: A full collinearity assessment approach. *International Journal of e-Collaboration (IJeC), 11*(4), 1-10.
- Kock, N., & Lynn, G. (2012). Lateral collinearity and misleading results in variance-based SEM: An illustration and recommendations. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems, 13*(7), 546-580.
- Kokkinaki, F. (1999). Predicting product purchase and usage: The role of perceived control, past behavior and product involvement. In E. J. Arnoould & L. M. Scott (Eds.), *NA - Advances in Consumer Research* (Vol. 26, pp. 576-583). Provo, UT : Association for Consumer Research.
- Kollock, P. (1994). The emergence of exchange structures: An experimental study of uncertainty, commitment, and trust. *American Journal of Sociology, 100* (2), 313-345.
- Kollock, P., Blumstein, P., & Schwartz, P. (1994). The judgment of equity in intimate relationships. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 57*(4), 340-351.
- Konecnik, M., & Gartner, W. C. (2007). Customer-based brand equity for a destination. *Annals of Tourism Research, 34*(2), 400-421.



- Kotler, P. (1972). A generic concept of marketing. *The Journal of Marketing*, 36(2), 46-54.
- Kozinets, R. V. (2001). Utopian enterprise: Articulating the meanings of Star Trek's culture of consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(1), 67-88.
- Kozinets, R. V., De Valck, K., Wojnicki, A. C., & Wilner, S. J. (2010). Networked narratives: Understanding word-of-mouth marketing in online communities. *Journal of Marketing*, 74(2), 71-89.
- Kressmann, F., Sirgy, M. J., Herrmann, A., Huber, F., Huber, S., & Lee, D.-J. (2006). Direct and indirect effects of self-image congruence on brand loyalty. *Journal of Business Research*, 59(9), 955-964.
- Krishnamurthy, S., & Kucuk, S. U. (2009). Anti-branding on the internet. *Journal of Business Research*, 62(11), 1119-1126.
- Krishnan, H. S. (1996). Characteristics of memory associations: A consumer-based brand equity perspective. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 13(4), 389-405.
- Krystallis, A., & Chrysochou, P. (2014). The effects of service brand dimensions on brand loyalty. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21(2), 139-147.
- Kumar, N., Scheer, L. K., & Steenkamp, J.-B. E. (1995). The effects of supplier fairness on vulnerable resellers. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 32(1), 54-65.
- Kumar, P. (2005). Brand counterextensions: The impact of brand extension success versus failure. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 42(2), 183-194.
- Kunda, Z. (1999). *Social cognition: Making sense of people*: MIT press.
- Kusume, Y., & Gridley, N. (2013). *Brand romance: Using the power of high design to build a lifelong relationship with your audience*: Springer.
- Kwon, E., & Mattila, A. S. (2015). The effect of self-brand connection and self-construal on brand lovers' word of mouth (WOM). *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 1938965514566071.

- Kwong, K. K., Yau, O. H., Lee, J. S., Sin, L. Y., & Alan, C. (2003). The effects of attitudinal and demographic factors on intention to buy pirated CDs: The case of Chinese consumers. *Journal of Business Ethics, 47*(3), 223-235.
- Labrecque, L. I. (2014). Fostering consumer-brand relationships in social media environments: The role of parasocial interaction. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 28*(2), 134-148.
- Lacoeuilhe, J. (2000). Attachment to the brand: Proposal of a measurement scale. *Research and Applications in Marketing, 15*(4), 61-77.
- Ladhari, R. (2007). The effect of consumption emotions on satisfaction and word-of-mouth communications. *Psychology & Marketing, 24*(12), 1085-1108.
- Lam, S. K., Ahearne, M., Mullins, R., Hayati, B., & Schillewaert, N. (2013). Exploring the dynamics of antecedents to consumer-brand identification with a new brand. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 41*(2), 234-252.
- Lambe, C. J., Wittmann, C. M., & Spekman, R. E. (2001). Social exchange theory and research on business-to-business relational exchange. *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing, 8*(3), 1-36.
- Lambert-Pandraud, R., & Laurent, G. (2010). Why do older consumers buy older brands? The role of attachment and declining innovativeness. *Journal of Marketing, 74*(5), 104-121.
- Langner, T., Bruns, D., Fischer, A., & Rossiter, J. R. (2016). Falling in love with brands: A dynamic analysis of the trajectories of brand love. *Marketing Letters, 1-12*.
- Langner, T., Schmidt, J., & Fischer, A. (2015). Is it really love? A comparative investigation of the emotional nature of brand and interpersonal love. *Psychology & Marketing, 32*(6), 624-634.
- Laroche, M., Habibi, M. R., & Richard, M.-O. (2013). To be or not to be in social media: How brand loyalty is affected by social media? *International Journal of Information Management, 33*(1), 76-82.

- Laros, F. J. M., & Steenkamp, J.-B. E. (2005). Emotions in consumer behavior: A hierarchical approach. *Journal of Business Research, 58*(10), 1437-1445.
- LaSalle, D., & Britton, T. A. (2002). *Priceless: Turning ordinary products into extraordinary experiences*: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Lassar, W., Mittal, B., & Sharma, A. (1995). Measuring customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Consumer Marketing, 12*(4), 11-19.
- Lastovicka, J. L., & Sirianni, N. J. (2011). Truly, madly, deeply: Consumers in the throes of material possession love. *Journal of Consumer Research, 38*(2), 323-342.
- Latter, C., Phau, I., & Marchegiani, C. (2010). The roles of consumers need for uniqueness and status consumption in haute couture luxury brands. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing, 1*(4), 206-214.
- Lavidge, R. J., & Steiner, G. A. (2000). A model for predictive measurements of advertising effectiveness. *Advertising & Society Review, 1*(1). 10.1353/asr.2000.0008
- Lawler, E. J. (2001). An affect theory of social exchange. *American Journal of Sociology, 107*(2), 321-352.
- Lawler, E. J., & Thye, S. R. (2006). Social exchange theory of emotions. In J. Stets & J. Turner (Eds.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions* (pp. 295-320). Springer.
- Lawler, E. J., Thye, S. R., & Yoon, J. (2000). Emotion and group cohesion in productive exchange. *American Journal of Sociology, 106*(3), 616-657.
- Lawler, E. J., & Yoon, J. (1996). Commitment in exchange relations: Test of a theory of relational cohesion. *American Sociological Review, 61*(1), 89-108.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Smith, C. A. (1988). Knowledge and appraisal in the cognition—emotion relationship. *Cognition & Emotion, 2*(4), 281-300.
- Lee, A. Y., & Labroo, A. A. (2004). The effect of conceptual and perceptual fluency on brand evaluation. *Journal of Marketing Research, 41*(2), 151-165.

- Lee, H. J., Lee, D.-H., Taylor, C. R., & Lee, J.-H. (2011). Do online brand communities help build and maintain relationships with consumers? A network theory approach. *Journal of Brand Management*, 19(3), 213-227.
- Lee, J. J., Capella, M. L., Taylor, C. R., & Gabler, C. B. (2014). The financial impact of loyalty programs in the hotel industry: A social exchange theory perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(10), 2139-2146.
- Lee, L. (2009). *The power of community in marketing*. Forbes.
- Leigh, T. W., Peters, C., & Shelton, J. (2006). The consumer quest for authenticity: The multiplicity of meanings within the MG subculture of consumption. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 34(4), 481-493.
- Leventhal, R. C., & Papadatos, C. (2006). The art of storytelling: how loyalty marketers can build emotional connections to their brands. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 23(7), 382-384.
- Levin, A. M., Beasley, F., & Gamble, T. (2004). Brand loyalty of NASCAR fans towards sponsors: The impact of fan identification. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 6(1), 7-17.
- Levy, S., & Hino, H. (2016). Emotional brand attachment: A factor in customer-bank relationships. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 34(2), 136-150.
- Li, G., Li, G., & Kambele, Z. (2012). Luxury fashion brand consumers in China: Perceived value, fashion lifestyle, and willingness to pay. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(10), 1516-1522.
- Li, X., & Petrick, J. F. (2010). Revisiting the commitment-loyalty distinction in a cruising context. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 42(1), 67-90.
- Lichtenstein, D. R., Ridgway, N. M., & Netemeyer, R. G. (1993). Price perceptions and consumer shopping behavior: A field study. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 30(2), 234-245.

- Lii, Y.-S., & Lee, M. (2012). Doing right leads to doing well: When the type of CSR and reputation interact to affect consumer evaluations of the firm. *Journal of Business Ethics, 105*(1), 69-81.
- Liu, F., Li, J., Mizerski, D., & Soh, H. (2012). Self-congruity, brand attitude, and brand loyalty: A study on luxury brands. *European Journal of Marketing, 46*(7/8), 922-937.
- Liu, R. L., Sprott, D. E., Spangenberg, E. R., & Czellar, S. (2018). Engaging with brands: The influence of dispositional and situational brand engagement on customer advocacy. In R. W. Palmatier, V. Kumar, & C. M. Harmeling (Eds.), *Customer Engagement Marketing* (pp. 269-292). Springer.
- Long-Tolbert, S. J., & Gammoh, B. S. (2012). In good and bad times: The interpersonal nature of brand love in service relationships. *Journal of Services Marketing, 26*(6), 391-402.
- Louis, D., & Lombart, C. (2010). Impact of brand personality on three major relational consequences (trust, attachment, and commitment to the brand). *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 19*(2), 114-130.
- Loureiro, S. M. C., & Kaufmann, H. R. (2012). Explaining love of wine brands. *Journal of Promotion Management, 18*(3), 329-343.
- Loureiro, S. M. C., Ruediger, K. H., & Demetris, V. (2012). Brand emotional connection and loyalty. *Journal of Brand Management, 20*(1), 13-27.
- Low, G. S., & Lamb, C. W. Jr. (2000). The measurement and dimensionality of brand associations. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 9*(6), 350-370.
- Lowry, P. B., & Gaskin, J. (2014). Partial Least Squares (PLS) Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) for building and testing behavioral causal theory: When to choose it and how to use it. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication, 57*(2), 123-146.
- Luo, X. (2002). Trust production and privacy concerns on the Internet: A framework based on relationship marketing and social exchange theory. *Industrial Marketing Management, 31*(2), 111-118.

- Lydon, J. E., Fitzsimons, G. M., & Naidoo, L. (2003). Devaluation versus enhancement of attractive alternatives: A critical test using the calibration paradigm. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29(3), 349-359.
- Lye, A., Venkateswarlu, P., & Barrett, J. (2001). Brand extensions: Prestige brand effects. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ)*, 9(2), 53-65.
- Lynch, J., & De Chernatony, L. (2004). The power of emotion: Brand communication in business-to-business markets. *Journal of Brand Management*, 11(5), 403-419.
- MacDonald, E. K., & Sharp, B. M. (2000). Brand awareness effects on consumer decision making for a common, repeat purchase product: A replication. *Journal of Business Research*, 48(1), 5-15.
- MacDonald, J. (2017). *Love brands RIP. Citizen brands are the future of marketing*. Retrieved from <http://www.thedrum.com/opinion/2017/07/28/love-brands-rip-citizen-brands-are-the-future-marketing>
- MacKenzie, S. B., & Podsakoff, P. M. (2012). Common method bias in marketing: Causes, mechanisms, and procedural remedies. *Journal of retailing*, 88(4), 542-555.
- MacInnis, D. J., Moorman, C., & Jaworski, B. J. (1991). Enhancing and measuring consumers' motivation, opportunity, and ability to process brand information from ads. *The Journal of Marketing*, 55(4), 32-53.
- Madden, T. J., Fehle, F., & Fournier, S. (2006). Brands matter: An empirical demonstration of the creation of shareholder value through branding. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 34(2), 224-235.
- Mageau, G. A., Vallerand, R. J., Charest, J., Salvy, S. J., Lacaille, N., Bouffard, T., & Koestner, R. (2009). On the development of harmonious and obsessive passion: The role of autonomy support, activity specialization, and identification with the activity. *Journal of Personality*, 77(3), 601-646.

- Malär, L., Krohmer, H., Hoyer, W. D., & Nyffenegger, B. (2011). Emotional brand attachment and brand personality: The relative importance of the actual and the ideal self. *Journal of Marketing, 75*(4), 35-52.
- Mandler, G. (1980). Recognizing: The judgment of previous occurrence. *Psychology & Marketing, 87*(3), 252.
- Martin, A. (2018). *Aston Martin Unveiled*. Retrieved from <https://www.astonmartin.com/>
- Martin, C. L. (1998). Relationship marketing: a high-involvement product attribute approach. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 7*(1), 6-26.
- Marzocchi, G., Morandin, G., & Bergami, M. (2013). Brand communities: loyal to the community or the brand? *European Journal of Marketing, 47*(1/2), 93-114.
- Mason, R. S. (1981). *Conspicuous consumption*: Gower.
- Matt, P. (2014). *Sneakernomics: The sneaker business is a premium business*. Forbes.
- Matzler, K., Pichler, E. A., & Hemetsberger, A. (2007). Who is spreading the word? The positive influence of extraversion on consumer passion and brand evangelism. In A. L. Dixon & K. A. Machleit (Eds.), *AMA winter educators' conference proceedings marketing theory and applications* (Vol 18, pp. 25-32).
- McAlexander, J. H., Kim, S. K., & Roberts, S. D. (2003). Loyalty: The influences of satisfaction and brand community integration. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 11*(4), 1-11.
- McAlexander, J. H., Schouten, J. W., & Koenig, H. F. (2002). Building brand community. *Journal of Marketing, 66*(1), 38-54.
- McCarthy, J. (2015). *BT Sport unveils Champions League tailored 'Pub Signs'*. Retrieved from <http://www.thedrum.com/news/2015/09/17/bt-sport-unveils-champions-league-tailored-pub-signs>

- McCracken, G. (1986). Culture and consumption: A theoretical account of the structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13(1), 71-84.
- McCracken, G. (1989). Who is the celebrity endorser? Cultural foundations of the endorsement process. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16(3), 310-321.
- McEwen, W. J. (2005). *Married to the brand: Why consumers bond with some brands for life; Lessons from 60 years of research into the psychology of consumer relationships*. New York, NY: Gallup Press.
- McMillan, D. W. (1996). Sense of community. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 24(4), 315-325.
- Mechinda, P., Serirat, S., & Gulid, N. (2009). An examination of tourists' attitudinal and behavioral loyalty: Comparison between domestic and international tourists. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 15(2), 129-148.
- Mehta, R., & Belk, R. W. (1991). Artifacts, identity, and transition: Favorite possessions of Indians and Indian immigrants to the United States. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17(4), 398-411.
- Mende, M., Bolton, R. N., & Bitner, M. J. (2013). Decoding customer-firm relationships: How attachment styles help explain customers' preferences for closeness, repurchase intentions, and changes in relationship breadth. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 50(1), 125-142.
- Mende, M., Thompson, S. A., & Coenen, C. (2015). It's all relative: How customer-perceived competitive advantage influences referral intentions. *Marketing Letters*, 26(4), 661-678.
- Mick, D. G., & DeMoss, M. (1990). Self-gifts: Phenomenological insights from four contexts. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17(3), 322-332.



- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2007). *Attachment in adulthood: Structure, dynamics, and change*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Mikulincer, M., Shaver, P. R., Gillath, O., & Nitzberg, R. A. (2005). Attachment, caregiving, and altruism: boosting attachment security increases compassion and helping. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 89*(5), 817.
- Mikulincer, M., Shaver, P. R., & Pereg, D. (2003). Attachment theory and affect regulation: The dynamics, development, and cognitive consequences of attachment-related strategies. *Motivation and Emotion, 27*(2), 77-102.
- Miller, J. (2015). *McDonald's doubles down on lovin' in new campaign*. Retrieved from <https://www.fastcompany.com/3040392/mcdonalds-doubles-down-on-lovin-in-new-campaign>
- Mirabella, L. (2015, September 21). Under Armour and Sports Authority link fitness tracking and customer loyalty *The Baltimore Sun*.
- Mittal, B. (2006). I, me, and mine—how products become consumers' extended selves. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 5*(6), 550-562.
- Mollen, A., & Wilson, H. (2010). Engagement, telepresence and interactivity in online consumer experience: Reconciling scholastic and managerial perspectives. *Journal of Business Research, 63*(9-10), 919-925.
- Monga, A. B., & John, D. R. (2010). What makes brands elastic? The influence of brand concept and styles of thinking on brand extension evaluation. *Journal of Marketing, 74*(3), 80-92.
- Moore, C. M., Doherty, A. M., & Doyle, S. A. (2010). Flagship stores as a market entry method: The perspective of luxury fashion retailing. *European Journal of Marketing, 44*(1/2), 139-161.
- Moore, D., & Wurster, D. (2007). Self-brand connections and brand resonance: The role of gender and consumer emotions. *Advances in Consumer Research, 34*, 64.

- Morgan, R. M., & Hunt, S. D. (1994). The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing. *The Journal of Marketing*, 58(3), 20-38.
- Morris, J. D., Woo, C., Geason, J. A., & Kim, J. (2002). The power of affect: Predicting intention. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 42(3), 7-17.
- Mourad, M., Ennew, C., & Kortam, W. (2011). Brand equity in higher education. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 29(4), 403-420.
- Moussa, S. (2015). I may be a twin but I'm one of a kind: Are brand attachment and brand love different names for the same construct? *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 18(1), 69-85.
- Moutinho, L., Dionísio, P., & Leal, C. (2007). Surf tribal behaviour: A sports marketing application. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 25(7), 668-690.
- Mugge, R., Schifferstein, H. N., & Schoormans, J. P. (2010). Product attachment and satisfaction: Understanding consumers' post-purchase behavior. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 27(3), 271-282.
- Muniz, A. M., & O'Guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(4), 412-432.
- Muniz, A. M., & Schau, H. J. (2005). Religiosity in the abandoned Apple Newton brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(4), 737-747.
- Nandan, S. (2005). An exploration of the brand identity–brand image linkage: A communications perspective. *Journal of Brand Management*, 12(4), 264-278.
- Nasirabadi, E., & Bokaei, M. (2013). A study on relationship of brand characteristics and customer satisfaction with brand loyalty. *Management Science Letters*, 3(7), 1907-1914.
- Neale, L., & Funk, D. (2006). Investigating motivation, attitudinal loyalty and attendance behaviour with fans of Australian football. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 7(4), 12-22.

- Nedungadi, P. (1990). Recall and consumer consideration sets: Influencing choice without altering brand evaluations. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17(3), 263-276.
- Nedungadi, P., & Hutchinson, J. (1985). The prototypicality of brands: Relationships with brand awareness, preference and usage. In E. C. Hirschman & M. B. Holbrook (Eds.), *NA - Advances in Consumer Research* (Vol. 12, pp. 498-503). Provo, UT : Association for Consumer Research.
- Neff, J. (2012). *GE study proves consumers respond more to shared content than to paid placements*. Retrieved from <http://adage.com/article/digital/ge-study-proves-consumers-respond-shared-content/232324/>
- Netemeyer, R. G., Krishnan, B., Pullig, C., Wang, G., Yagci, M., Dean, D., . . . Wirth, F. (2004). Developing and validating measures of facets of customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Business Research*, 57(2), 209-224.
- News, N. (2017). *Nike celebrates pioneering spirit of the Middle East*. Retrieved from [https://news.nike.com/news/pba63c75f5252fc335df1a05ce09c2f62/sneak\\_peek](https://news.nike.com/news/pba63c75f5252fc335df1a05ce09c2f62/sneak_peek)
- Nia, A., & Lynne Zaichkowsky, J. (2000). Do counterfeits devalue the ownership of luxury brands? *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 9(7), 485-497.
- Nike. (2014). *Nike Fiscal Q4 2014 earnings*. Retrieved from <https://news.nike.com/news/nike-inc-reports-fiscal-2014-fourth-quarter-and-full-year-results-fiscal-2014-fourth-quarter-and-full-year-results>
- Nike. (2018). *Community Impact*. Retrieved from <https://communityimpact.nike.com>
- Nkwocha, I., Bao, Y., Johnson, W. C., & Brotspies, H. V. (2005). Product fit and consumer attitude toward brand extensions: The moderating role of product involvement. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 13(3), 49.
- Nyer, P. U. (1997). A study of the relationships between cognitive appraisals and consumption emotions. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 25(4), 296-304.

- O'Cass, A., & Frost, H. (2002). Status brands: Examining the effects of non-product-related brand associations on status and conspicuous consumption. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 11(2), 67-88.
- Oakenfull, G. K., & McCarthy, M. S. (2010). Examining the relationship between brand usage and brand knowledge structures. *Journal of Brand Management*, 17(4), 279-288.
- Oatley, K., & Johnson-Laird, P. N. (1987). Towards a cognitive theory of emotions. *Cognition & Emotion*, 1(1), 29-50.
- Okonkwo, U. (2016). *Luxury fashion branding: trends, tactics, techniques*. Springer.
- Oliver, R. L. (1999). Whence consumer loyalty? *the Journal of Marketing*, 63, 33-44.
- Onkvisit, S., & Shaw, J. (1987). Self-concept and image congruence: Some research and managerial implications. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 4(1), 13-23.
- Ortiz, M. H., Reynolds, K. E., & Franke, G. R. (2013). Measuring consumer devotion: Antecedents and consequences of passionate consumer behavior. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 21(1), 7-30.
- Padgett, D., & Allen, D. (1997). Communicating experiences: A narrative approach to creating service brand image. *Journal of advertising*, 26(4), 49-62.
- Page, T. (2014). Product attachment and replacement: Implications for sustainable design. *International Journal of Sustainable Design*, 2(3), 265-282.
- Paivar, A., & Sadeghzadeh, C. (2015). *Why a luxury-shopping revolution is coming to Iran*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33224168>
- Palmatier, R. W., Dant, R. P., Grewal, D., & Evans, K. R. (2006). Factors influencing the effectiveness of relationship marketing: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marketing*, 70(4), 136-153.
- Palmatier, R. W., Jarvis, C. B., Bechhoff, J. R., & Kardes, F. R. (2009). The role of customer gratitude in relationship marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(5), 1-18.

- Palmer, A. (2010). Customer experience management: a critical review of an emerging idea. *Journal of Services marketing*, 24(3), 196-208.
- Pandora. (2017). *Pandora: The Pandora Story*. Retrieved from <http://www.pandora.net/en-au/company/about/the-story>
- Papista, E., & Dimitriadis, S. (2012). Exploring consumer-brand relationship quality and identification: Qualitative evidence from cosmetics brands. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 15(1), 33-56.
- Pappu, R., Quester, P. G., & Cooksey, R. W. (2005). Consumer-based brand equity: Improving the measurement-empirical evidence. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 14(3), 143-154.
- Pare, V., Pourazad, N., & Jevons, C. (2015). *Deconstructing brand concepts*. Paper presented at the Australian & New Zealand Marketing Academy (ANZMAC) Conference, 2015.
- Park, C. W., Eisingerich, A. B., & Park, J. W. (2013). Attachment–aversion (AA) model of customer–brand relationships. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 23(2), 229-248.
- Park, C. W., Eisingerich, A. B., Pol, G., & Park, J. W. (2013). The role of brand logos in firm performance. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(2), 180-187.
- Park, C. W., Jaworski, B. J., & MacInnis, D. J. (1986). Strategic brand concept-image management. *The Journal of Marketing*, 135-145.
- Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., Priester, J., Eisingerich, A. B., & Iacobucci, D. (2010). Brand attachment and brand attitude strength: Conceptual and empirical differentiation of two critical brand equity drivers. *Journal of Marketing*, 74(6), 1-17.
- Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., & Priester, J. R. (2006). Beyond attitudes: Attachment and consumer behavior. *Seoul National Journal*, 12(2), 3-36.
- Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., & Priester, J. R. (2007). Brand attachment and management of a strategic brand exemplar. In B. H. Schmitt & D. L. Rogers (Eds.), *Handbook of Brand and Experience Management* (pp. 3017). Cheltenham, UK: Elgar Publishing.

- Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., & Priester, J. R. (2008). *Brand attachment: Constructs, consequences and causes*. Hanover, MA: Now Publishers Inc.
- Park, C. W., & MacInnis, D. J. (2006). What's in and what's out: Questions on the boundaries of the attitude construct. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 33(1), 16-18.
- Park, C. W., Milberg, S., & Lawson, R. (1991). Evaluation of brand extensions: The role of product feature similarity and brand concept consistency. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 18(2), 185.
- Park, D.-H., Lee, J., & Han, I. (2007). The effect of on-line consumer reviews on consumer purchasing intention: The moderating role of involvement. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 11(4), 125-148.
- Park, H.-J., Rabolt, N. J., & Sook Jeon, K. (2008). Purchasing global luxury brands among young Korean consumers. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, 12(2), 244-259.
- Park, J.-W., & Kim, K.-H. (2001). Role of consumer relationships with a brand in brand extensions: Some exploratory findings. In M. C. Gilly & J. Meyers-Levy (Eds.), *NA - Advances in Consumer Research* (Vol. 28, pp. 179-185). Valdosta, GA: Association for Consumer Research.
- Park, J.-W., Kim, K.-H., & Kim, J. (2002). Acceptance of brand extensions: Interactive influences of product category similarity, typicality of claimed benefits, and brand relationship quality. In S. M. Broniarczyk & K. Nakamoto, *NA - Advances in Consumer Research* (Vol. 29, pp. 190-198). Valdosta, GA: Association for Consumer Research, Pages: 190-198.
- Park, S.-Y., & Lee, E. M. (2005). Congruence between brand personality and self-image, and the mediating roles of satisfaction and consumer-brand relationship on brand loyalty. In Y-U. Ha & Y. Yi (Eds.), *AP-Asia Pacific Advances in Consumer Research* (Vol. 6, pp. 39-45). Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research.
- Pathak, S. (2015, September 15). How Under Armour is linking fitness data with customer loyalty. *Digiday*.

- Patrick, V. M., & Hagtvedt, H. (2015). Luxury brands. In R. K. Srivastava & G. M. Thomas (Eds.), *The Future of Branding* (pp. 217-236). New Delhi: Sage.
- Patwardhan, H., & Balasubramanian, S. K. (2011). Brand romance: A complementary approach to explain emotional attachment toward brands. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 20(4), 297-308.
- Patwardhan, H., & Balasubramanian, S. K. (2013). Reflections on emotional attachment to brands: Brand romance and brand love. *Journal of Customer Behaviour*, 12(1), 73-79.
- Pauwels Delassus, V., & Mogos Descotes, R. (2012). Brand name substitution and brand equity transfer. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 21(2), 117-125.
- Pedeliento, G., Andreini, D., Bergamaschi, M., & Salo, J. (2016). Brand and product attachment in an industrial context: The effects on brand loyalty. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 53, 194-206.
- Peng, K.-F., Chen, Y., & Wen, K.-W. (2014). Brand relationship, consumption values and branded app adoption. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 114(8), 1131-1143.
- Pentina, I., Gammoh, B. S., Zhang, L., & Mallin, M. (2013). Drivers and outcomes of brand relationship quality in the context of online social networks. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 17(3), 63-86.
- Perdue, C. W., Dovidio, J. F., Gurtman, M. B., & Tyler, R. B. (1990). Us and them: Social categorization and the process of intergroup bias. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59(3), 475.
- Perez, M. E., Castaño, R., & Quintanilla, C. (2010). Constructing identity through the consumption of counterfeit luxury goods. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 13(3), 219-235.
- Peterson, R. A. (2001). On the use of college students in social science research: Insights from a second-order meta-analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(3), 450-461.

- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). *The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Petty, R. E., Haugtvedt, C. P., & Smith, S. M. (1995). Elaboration as a determinant of attitude strength: Creating attitudes that are persistent, resistant, and predictive of behavior. *Attitude Strength: Antecedents and Consequences*, 4(93-130).
- Petzer, D., Mostert, P., Kruger, L.-M., & Kuhn, S. (2014). The dimensions of brand romance as predictors of brand loyalty among cell phone users. *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, 17(4), 457-470.
- Phau, I., & Prendergast, G. (2000). Consuming luxury brands: The relevance of the 'rarity principle'. *The Journal of Brand Management*, 8(2), 122-138.
- Phau, I., & Teah, M. (2009). Devil wears (counterfeit) Prada: A study of antecedents and outcomes of attitudes towards counterfeits of luxury brands. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 26(1), 15-27.
- Phau, I., Teah, M., & Lee, A. (2009). Targeting buyers of counterfeits of luxury brands: A study on attitudes of Singaporean consumers. *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing*, 17(1), 3-15.
- Pichler, E. A., & Hemetsberger, A. (2007). 'Hopelessly Devoted to You'-Towards an extended conceptualization of consumer devotion. In G. Fitzsimons & V. Morwitz (Eds.), *NA - Advances in Consumer Research* (Vol. 34, pp. 194-199). Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research.
- Pike, S., & Bianchi, C. (2016). Destination brand equity for Australia: Testing a model of CBBE in short-haul and long-haul markets. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 40(1), 114-134.
- Pike, S., Bianchi, C., Kerr, G., & Patti, C. (2010). Consumer-based brand equity for Australia as a long-haul tourism destination in an emerging market. *International Marketing Review*, 27(4), 434-449.



- Pimentel, R. W., & Reynolds, K. E. (2004). A model for consumer devotion: Affective commitment with proactive sustaining behaviors. *Academy of Marketing Science Review, 5*(1).
- Pina, J. M., Martinez, E., De Chernatony, L., & Drury, S. (2006). The effect of service brand extensions on corporate image: An empirical model. *European Journal of Marketing, 40*(1/2), 174-197.
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1998). Welcome to the experience economy. *Harvard Business Review, 76*, 97-105.
- Pistole, M. C. (1989). Attachment in adult romantic relationships: Style of conflict resolution and relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 6*(4), 505-510.
- Pitta, D. A., & Katsanis, L. P. (1995). Understanding brand equity for successful brand extension. *Journal of Consumer Marketing, 12*(4), 51-64.
- Plutchik, R. (1980). A general psychoevolutionary theory of emotion. *Theories of Emotion, 1*, 3-31.
- Plutchik, R. (2000). *Emotions in the practice of psychotherapy: Clinical implications of affect theories*. American Psychological Association.
- Plutchik, R. (2001). The nature of emotions: Human emotions have deep evolutionary roots, a fact that may explain their complexity and provide tools for clinical practice. *American scientist, 89*(4), 344-350.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: a critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*(5), 879-903.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2012). Sources of method bias in social science research and recommendations on how to control it. *Annual Review of Psychology, 63*, 539-569.

- Pourazad, N., Pare, V., & Saniee, A. (2015). Brand passion: What would customers do for their favourite brands? *Melbourne International Business and Social Science Research Conference*. Melbourne: Australian Academy of Business Leadership (AABL).
- Pradhan, D., Duraipandian, I., & Sethi, D. (2016). Celebrity endorsement: How celebrity–brand–user personality congruence affects brand attitude and purchase intention. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 22(5), 456-473.
- Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2003). The new frontier of experience innovation. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 44(4), 12-18.
- Puligadda, S., Ross, W. T., Jr, & Grewal, R. (2012). Individual differences in brand schematicity. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 49(1), 115-130.
- Puma. (2018). *Selena Gomez*. Retrieved from <https://eu.puma.com/de/en/selena-gomez>
- Quester, P., & Lin Lim, A. (2003). Product involvement/brand loyalty: Is there a link? *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 12(1), 22-38.
- Raju, S., Unnava, H. R., & Montgomery, N. V. (2009). The moderating effect of brand commitment on the evaluation of competitive brands. *Journal of Advertising*, 38(2), 21-36.
- Ramaseshan, B., & Stein, A. (2014). Connecting the dots between brand experience and brand loyalty: The mediating role of brand personality and brand relationships. *Journal of Brand Management*, 21(7-8), 664-683.
- Ramaswamy, V. (2008). Co-creating value through customers' experiences: the Nike case. *Strategy & Leadership*, 36(5), 9-14.
- Rapp, A., Beitelspacher, L. S., Grewal, D., & Hughes, D. E. (2013). Understanding social media effects across seller, retailer, and consumer interactions. *Academy of Marketing Science Journal*, 41(5), 547-566.
- Rauschnabel, P. A., & Ahuvia, A. C. (2014). You're so lovable: Anthropomorphism and brand love. *Journal of Brand Management*, 21(5), 372-395.

- Rauyruen, P., & Miller, K. E. (2007). Relationship quality as a predictor of B2B customer loyalty. *Journal of Business Research, 60*(1), 21-31.
- Ravald, A., & Grönroos, C. (1996). The value concept and relationship marketing. *European Journal of Marketing, 30*(2), 19-30.
- Reast, J. D. (2005). Brand trust and brand extension acceptance: the relationship. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 14*(1), 4-13.
- Reddy, M., Terblanche, N., Pitt, L., & Parent, M. (2009). How far can luxury brands travel? Avoiding the pitfalls of luxury brand extension. *Business Horizons, 52*(2), 187-197.
- Reimann, M., & Aron, A. (2009). Self-expansion motivation and inclusion of brands in self. In D. J. MacInnis, C. W. Park & J. R. Priester (Eds.), *Handbook of Brand Relationships* (pp. 65-81). London and New York: M. E. Sharpe.
- Reimann, M., Castaño, R., Zaichkowsky, J., & Bechara, A. (2012). How we relate to brands: Psychological and neurophysiological insights into consumer–brand relationships. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 22*(1), 128.
- Reinartz, W., Haenlein, M., & Henseler, J. (2009). An empirical comparison of the efficacy of covariance-based and variance-based SEM. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 26*(4), 332-344.
- Reuters. (2016). *Beauty brands eye up in Iran*. Retrieved from <http://fortune.com/2016/04/17/beauty-brands-iran-dubai/>
- Richards, K. (2017, July 20). Under Armour tells its women athletes' stories through poetry in artful new ads. *Adweek*.
- Richardson, P. S., Dick, A. S., & Jain, A. K. (1994). Extrinsic and intrinsic cue effects on perceptions of store brand quality. *The Journal of Marketing, 58*(4), 28-36.
- Richins, M. L. (1997). Measuring emotions in the consumption experience. *Journal of Consumer Research, 24*(2), 127-146.

- Ringle, C. M., Sarstedt, M., & Straub, D. (2012). A critical look at the use of PLS-SEM in MIS Quarterly. *MIS Quarterly (MISQ)*, 36(1), iii-xiv.
- Ringle, C. M., Wende, S., & Will, A. (2005). SmartPLS 2.0 (beta): Hamburg.
- Roberts, K. (2005). *Lovemarks: The future beyond brands*. PowerHouse Books.
- Rohra, D., & Sharma, D. (2016). Qualitative study on brand passion: The role of admiration and experience. *South Asian Journal of Management*, 23(2), 90-.
- Romaniuk, J. (2013). Modeling mental market share. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(2), 188-195.
- Romaniuk, J., & Gaillard, E. (2007). The relationship between unique brand associations, brand usage and brand performance: Analysis across eight categories. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23(3-4), 267-284.
- Romaniuk, J., & Nenycz-Thiel, M. (2013). Behavioral brand loyalty and consumer brand associations. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(1), 67-72.
- Romaniuk, J., & Sharp, B. (2004). Conceptualizing and measuring brand salience. *Marketing Theory*, 4(4), 327-342.
- Romaniuk, J., & Sharp, B. (2016). *How brands grow. Part 2: Emerging markets, services and durables, new brands and luxury brands*. Oxford University Press.
- Roseman, I. J., Spindel, M. S., & Jose, P. E. (1990). Appraisals of emotion-eliciting events: Testing a theory of discrete emotions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59(5), 899.
- Rosenbaum, M. S., Ostrom, A. L., & Kuntze, R. (2005). Loyalty programs and a sense of community. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 19(4), 222-233.
- Rossiter, J. R., & Bellman, S. (2012). Emotional branding pays off: How brands meet share of requirements through bonding, companionship, and love. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 52(3), 291-296.

- Rossiter, J. R. (2012). A new C-OAR-SE-based content-valid and predictively valid measure that distinguishes brand love from brand liking. *Marketing Letters*, 23(3), 905-916.
- Roy, P., Khandeparkar, K., & Motiani, M. (2016). A lovable personality: The effect of brand personality on brand love. *Journal of Brand Management*, 23(5), 97-113.
- Rozanski, H., Baum, A., & Wolfsen, B. (1999). Brand zealots: Realizing the full value of emotional loyalty. *Strategy & Business, Fourth Quarter*, (17), 51-62.
- Ruane, L., & Wallace, E. (2015). Brand tribalism and self-expressive brands: Social influences and brand outcomes. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 24(4), 333-348.
- Rubin, Z. (1970). Measurement of romantic love. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 16(2), 265.
- Rubinstein, R. I., & Parmelee, P. A. (1992). Attachment to place and the representation of the life course by the elderly. In I. Altman & S. M. Low (Eds.), *Place attachment* pp. 139-163). Springer.
- Rubio, N., Oubiña, J., & Villaseñor, N. (2014). Brand awareness–Brand quality inference and consumer’s risk perception in store brands of food products. *Food Quality and Preference*, 32, 289-298.
- Rusbult, C. E., & Buunk, B. P. (1993). Commitment processes in close relationships: An interdependence analysis. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 10(2), 175-204.
- Ruth, J. A., Brunel, F. F., & Otnes, C. C. (2002). Linking thoughts to feelings: investigating cognitive appraisals and consumption emotions in a mixed-emotions context. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 30(1), 44-58.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25(1), 54-67.

- Salam, A., Rao, R., & Pegels, C. (1998). An investigation of consumer-perceived risk on electronic commerce transactions: The role of institutional trust and economic incentive in a social exchange framework. *AMCIS 1998 Proceedings*, 114.
- Salinas, E. M., & Pérez, J. M. P. (2009). Modeling the brand extensions' influence on brand image. *Journal of Business Research*, 62(1), 50-60.
- Sallam, M. A. (2014). The effects of brand image and brand identification on brand love and purchase decision making: The role of WOM. *International Business Research*, 7(10), 187.
- Sanitarium. (2017). *It's what's on the insides that counts*. Retrieved from <https://www.sanitarium.com.au/>
- Sarkar, A., & Murthy, B. K. (2012). Understanding and measuring romantic brand love. *Journal of Customer Behaviour*, 11(4), 324-347.
- Sarkar, A., & Sarkar, J. G. (2016). Devoted to you my love: Brand devotion amongst young consumers in emerging Indian market. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 28(2), 180-197.
- Sashi, C. (2012). Customer engagement, buyer-seller relationships, and social media. *Management Decision*, 50(2), 253-272.
- Sasmita, J., & Mohd Suki, N. (2015). Young consumers' insights on brand equity: Effects of brand association, brand loyalty, brand awareness, and brand image. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 43(3), 276-292.
- Schade, M., Hegner, S., Horstmann, F., & Brinkmann, N. (2016). The impact of attitude functions on luxury brand consumption: An age-based group comparison. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(1), 314-322.
- Schau, H. J., Muniz, A. M., & Arnould, E. J. (2009). How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(5), 30-51.

- Scherer, K. R. (1993). Studying the emotion-antecedent appraisal process: An expert system approach. *Cognition & Emotion, 7*(3-4), 325-355.
- Schifferstein, H. N., & Zwartkruis-Pelgrim, E. P. (2008). Consumer-product attachment: Measurement and design implications. *International Journal of Design, 2*(3), 1-13.
- Schiffman, L. G., & Kanuk, L. L. (2000). *Consumer behavior*, 7<sup>th</sup> edn.. NY: Prentice Hall.
- Schlesinger, L. (2017). Why luxury retail brands want a spot in Australia. Retrieved from <http://www.afr.com/real-estate/commercial/leasing/why-luxury-retail-brands-want-a-spot-in-australia-20170104-gtlnfa>
- Schlosser, A. E., White, T. B., & Lloyd, S. M. (2006). Converting web site visitors into buyers: how web site investment increases consumer trusting beliefs and online purchase intentions. *Journal of Marketing, 70*(2), 133-148.
- Schmitt, B. (1999). Experiential marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management, 15*(1-3), 53-67.
- Schmitt, B., Joško Brakus, J., & Zarantonello, L. (2015). From experiential psychology to consumer experience. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 25*(1), 166-171.
- Schouten, J. W., & McAlexander, J. H. (1995). Subcultures of consumption: An ethnography of the new bikers. *Journal of Consumer Research, 43*-61.
- Schouten, J. W., McAlexander, J. H., & Koenig, H. F. (2007). Transcendent customer experience and brand community. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 35*(3), 357-368.
- Schultz, D. E., Barnes, B. E., Schultz, H. F., & Azzaro, M. (2015). *Building customer-brand relationships*. Routledge.
- Schultz, S. E., Kleine, R. E., & Kernan, J. B. (1989). 'These are a few of my favorite things': Toward an explication of attachment as a consumer behavior construct. *Advances in Consumer Research, 16*(1), 359-366.

- Sethuraman, R., & Cole, C. (1999). Factors influencing the price premiums that consumers pay for national brands over store brands. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 8(4), 340-351.
- Sharp, B., Wright, M., & Goodhardt, G. (2002). Purchase loyalty is polarised into either repertoire or subscription patterns. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ)*, 10(3), 7-20.
- Sharpsteen, D. J. (1993). Romantic jealousy as an emotion concept: A prototype analysis. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 10(1), 69-82.
- Sheeran, P. (2002). Intention—behavior relations: A conceptual and empirical review. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 12(1), 1-36.
- Shen, C.-C., & Chiou, J.-S. (2009). The effect of community identification on attitude and intention toward a blogging community. *Internet Research*, 19(4), 393-407.
- Sheth, J. N., Sisodia, R. S., & Sharma, A. (2000). The antecedents and consequences of customer-centric marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 28(1), 55-66.
- Shim, S., Eastlick, M. A., Lotz, S. L., & Warrington, P. (2001). An online prepurchase intentions model: The role of intention to search: Best Overall Paper Award—The Sixth Triennial AMS/ACRA Retailing Conference, 2000☆ 1. *Journal of Retailing*, 77(3), 397-416.
- Shimp, T. A., & Madden, T. J. (1988). Consumer-object relations: A conceptual framework based analogously on Sternberg's triangular theory of love. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 15(1), 163-168.
- Shirdelian, A. (2017). *Need for sportswear market to shift gaze inwards*. Retrieved from <https://financialtribune.com/articles/economy-business-and-markets/66217/need-for-sportswear-market-to-shift-gaze-inwards>
- Shukla, P., Banerjee, M., & Singh, J. (2016). Customer commitment to luxury brands: Antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(1), 323-331.



- Sierra, J. J., & McQuitty, S. (2005). Service providers and customers: Social exchange theory and service loyalty. *Journal of Services Marketing, 19*(6), 392-400.
- Silverstein, M. J., & Fiske, N. (2003). Luxury for the masses. *Harvard Business Review, 81*(4), 48-57, 121.
- Simpson, J. A., & Rholes, W. S. E. (1998). *Attachment Theory and Close Relationships*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Sirgy, M. J. (1982). Self-concept in consumer behavior: A critical review. *Journal of Consumer Research, 9*(3), 287-300.
- Sirgy, M. J. (1986). *Self-congruity: Toward a theory of personality and cybernetics*. Praeger Publishers/Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Sirgy, M. J., Lee, D.-J., Johar, J., & Tidwell, J. (2008). Effect of self-congruity with sponsorship on brand loyalty. *Journal of Business Research, 61*(10), 1091-1097.
- Slater, J. S. (2001). Collecting brand loyalty: A comparative analysis of how Coca-Cola and Hallmark use collecting behavior to enhance brand loyalty. *Advances in Consumer Research, 28*, 362-369.
- Sloot, L. M., Verhoef, P. C., & Franses, P. H. (2005). The impact of brand equity and the hedonic level of products on consumer stock-out reactions. *Journal of Retailing, 81*(1), 15-34.
- Smit, E., Bronner, F., & Tolboom, M. (2007). Brand relationship quality and its value for personal contact. *Journal of Business Research, 60*(6), 627-633.
- Smith, J. B., & Colgate, M. (2007). Customer value creation: a practical framework. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 15*(1), 7-23.
- Smith, J. R., Terry, D. J., Manstead, A. S., Louis, W. R., Kotterman, D., & Wolfs, J. (2008). The attitude-behavior relationship in consumer conduct: The role of norms, past behavior, and self-identity. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 148*(3), 311-334.

- Smith, S., & Wheeler, J. (2002). *Managing the customer experience: Turning customers into advocates*. Pearson Education.
- Sneakerboy. (2018). *Sneakerboy*. Retrieved from <https://www.sneakerboy.com/>
- Snyder, C. R., & Fromkin, H. L. (1977). Abnormality as a positive characteristic: The development and validation of a scale measuring need for uniqueness. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 86*(5), 518.
- So, J. T., Parsons, A. G., & Yap, S.-F. (2013). Corporate branding, emotional attachment and brand loyalty: the case of luxury fashion branding. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management, 17*(4), 403-423.
- Sobel, M. E. (1982). Asymptotic confidence intervals for indirect effects in structural equation models. *Sociological Methodology, 13*(1982), 290-312.
- Social@Ogilvy (2013). *How to build a global passion brand: Insights from the 2013*. Retrieved from <https://www.slideshare.net/socialogilvy/socialogilvy-advocacy-studyjuly2013-1>
- Solomon, M. R. (1992). Driving passions: Vehicles and consumer culture. In J. F. Sherry, Jr. & B. Sternthal (Eds.), *NA - Advances in Consumer Research* (Vol. 19, pp. 66-168). , Provo, UT : Association for Consumer Research.
- Song, Y., Hur, W.-M., & Kim, M. (2012). Brand trust and affect in the luxury brand–customer relationship. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal, 40*(2), 331-338.
- Sood, S., & Keller, K. L. (2012). The effects of brand name structure on brand extension evaluations and parent brand dilution. *Journal of Marketing Research, 49*(3), 373-382.
- Spary, S. (2015, June 9). How Adidas, Amazon, Jaguar and GHD are building advocacy with user generated content. *Campaign*. Retrieved from <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/adidas-amazon-jaguar-ghd-building-advocacy-user-generated-content/1350476>
- Spearman, C. (1927). *The abilities of man*. New York: Macmillan.

- Sperling, M. B., & Berman, W. H. (1994). *Attachment in adults: Clinical and developmental perspectives*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Sprott, D., Czellar, S., & Spangenberg, E. (2009). The importance of a general measure of brand engagement on market behavior: Development and validation of a scale. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *46*(1), 92-104.
- Srivastava, K., & Sharma, N. K. (2011). Exploring the multidimensional role of involvement and perceived risk in brand extension. *International Journal of Commerce & Management*, *21*(4), 410-427. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/10569211111189392>
- Strull, T. K., & Wyer, R. S. (1989). Person memory and judgment. *Psychology & Marketing*, *96*(1), 58.
- Stankeviciute, R., & Hoffmann, J. (2010). The impact of brand extension on the parent luxury fashion brand: The cases of Giorgio Armani, Calvin Klein and Jimmy Choo. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, *1*(2), 119-128.
- Steenkamp, J.-B. E., Batra, R., & Alden, D. L. (2003). How perceived brand globalness creates brand value. *Journal of International Business Studies*, *34*(1), 53-65.
- Steiger, J. H. (1990). Structural model evaluation and modification: An interval estimation approach. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, *25*(2), 173-180.
- Sternberg, R. J. (1986). A triangular theory of love. *Psychological Review*, *93*(2), 119-135.
- Sternberg, R. J. (1997). Construct validation of a triangular love scale. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *27*(3), 313-335.
- Sternberg, R. J., & Barnes, M. L. (1988). *The psychology of love*. Yale University Press.
- Stewart, D. W. (1981). The application and misapplication of factor analysis in marketing research. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *18*(1), 51-62.

- Stocchi, L., Driesener, C., & Nenycz-Thiel, M. (2015). Brand image and brand loyalty: Do they show the same deviations from a common underlying pattern? *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 14*(5), 317-324.
- Stocchi, L., & Fuller, R. (2017). A comparison of brand equity strength across consumer segments and markets. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 26*(5), 453-468.
- Stocchi, L., Pare, V., Fuller, R., & Wright, M. (2017). The Natural Monopoly effect in brand image associations. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ)*.
- Stocchi, L., Wright, M., & Driesener, C. (2016). Why familiar brands are sometimes harder to remember. *European Journal of Marketing, 50*(3/4).
- Stocking, G. W. Jr. (1971). Animism in theory and practice: EB Tylor's unpublished 'Notes on "Spiritualism"'. *Man, 6*(1), 88-104.
- Stokburger-Sauer, N. E., Ratneshwar, S., & Sen, S. (2012). Drivers of consumer-brand identification. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 29*(4), 406-418.
- Stokburger-Sauer, N. E., & Teichmann, K. (2013). Is luxury just a female thing? The role of gender in luxury brand consumption. *Journal of Business Research, 66*(7), 889-896.
- Stovall-McClough, K. C., & Dozier, M. (2016). Attachment states of mind and psychopathology in adulthood. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (pp. 715-738). New York: Guilford Press.
- Stratton, G., & Northcote, J. (2014). When totems beget clans: The brand symbol as the defining marker of brand communities. *Journal of Consumer Culture, 14*69540514528194.
- Strong, G., & Aron, A. (2006). The effect of shared participation in novel and challenging activities on experienced relationship quality: Is it mediated by high positive affect? In K. D. Vohs & E. J. Finkel (Eds.), *Self and relationships: Connecting intrapersonal and interpersonal processes* (pp. 342-359). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

- Sultan, F., & Rohm, A. (2005). The coming era of "brand in the hand" marketing. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 47(1), 83.
- Sung, Y., & Choi, S. M. (2010). "I won't leave you although you disappoint me": The interplay between satisfaction, investment, and alternatives in determining consumer–brand relationship commitment. *Psychology & Marketing*, 27(11), 1050-1073.
- Swaminathan, V. (2003). Sequential brand extensions and brand choice behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 56(6), 431-442.
- Swaminathan, V., Fox, R. J., & Reddy, S. K. (2001). The impact of brand extension introduction on choice. *Journal of Marketing*, 65(4), 1-15.
- Swaminathan, V., Page, K. L., & Gürhan-Canli, Z. (2007). "My" brand or "our" brand: The effects of brand relationship dimensions and self-construal on brand evaluations. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34(2), 248-259.
- Swarovski. (2018). *Brighten your day*. Retrieved from [https://www.swarovski.com/Web\\_AU/en/91124/promotion/The\\_Accessories\\_Collection.html](https://www.swarovski.com/Web_AU/en/91124/promotion/The_Accessories_Collection.html)
- Sweeney, J. C., & Soutar, G. N. (2001). Consumer perceived value: The development of a multiple item scale. *Journal of Retailing*, 77(2), 203-220.
- Swimberghe, K. R., Astakhova, M., & Wooldridge, B. R. (2014). A new dualistic approach to brand passion: Harmonious and obsessive. *Journal of Business Research*, 67, 2657-2665.
- Sydney.com. (2017). A day out on the town – treat yourself with these splendid Sydney experiences. Retrieved from <http://www.sydney.com/sydney-life/food-and-wine/a-day-out-on-the-town-treat-yourself-with-these-splendid-sydney-experiences>
- Takali, H., Hamidi, M., Khabiri, M., Sajjadi, N., & Alhani, F. (2012). The analysis of experts' perceived experience of the effective factors in brand equity of Iranian National Olympic Committee. *World Journal of Sport Sciences*, 6(4), 441-51.

- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (2004). The Social Identity Theory of intergroup behavior. In J. T. Jost & J. Sidanius (Eds.), *Political psychology: Key readings*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Tan, T., & Ming, M. (2003). Leveraging on symbolic values and meanings in branding. *The Journal of Brand Management*, 10(3), 208-218.
- Taylor, S. A., & Baker, T. L. (1994). An assessment of the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in the formation of consumers' purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing*, 70(2), 163-178.
- Taylor, S. A., Hunter, G. L., & Lindberg, D. L. (2007). Understanding (customer-based) brand equity in financial services. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 21(4), 241-252.
- Teimourpour, B., & Heidarzadeh Hanzaee, K. (2011). The impact of culture on luxury consumption behaviour among Iranian consumers. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 2(3), 309-328.
- Teimourpour, B., & Heidarzadeh Hanzaee, K. (2014). An analysis of Muslims' luxury market in Iran: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 5(2), 198-209.
- Tenenhaus, M., Vinzi, V. E., Chatelin, Y.-M., & Lauro, C. (2005). PLS path modeling. *Computational Statistics & Data Analysis*, 48(1), 159-205.
- Thompson, C. J., Rindfleisch, A., & Arsel, Z. (2006). Emotional branding and the strategic value of the Doppelgänger brand image. *Journal of Marketing*, 70(1), 50-64.
- Thomson, M., MacInnis, D. J., & Park, C. W. (2005). The ties that bind: Measuring the strength of consumers' emotional attachments to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 15(1), 77-91.
- Thye, S. R., Yoon, J., & Lawler, E. J. (Eds.). (2002). The theory of relational cohesion: Review of a research program. In *Advances in group processes* (Vol. 19, pp. 139-166). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Tian, K. T., Bearden, W. O., & Hunter, G. L. (2001). Consumers' need for uniqueness: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(1), 50-66.

- Tian, K. T., & McKenzie, K. (2001). The long-term predictive validity of the consumers' need for uniqueness scale. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 10*(3), 171-193.
- Tiffany. (2018). *Home and accessories: uniquely yours*. Retrieved from <http://www.tiffany.com.au/accessories/everyday-objects>.
- Tong, X., & Hawley, J. M. (2009). Measuring customer-based brand equity: Empirical evidence from the sportswear market in China. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 18*(4), 262-271.
- Tong, X., Su, J., & Xu, Y. (2017). Brand personality and its impact on brand trust and brand commitment: An empirical study of luxury fashion brands. *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education, 26*(1), 1-14.
- Tripp, C., Jensen, T. D., & Carlson, L. (1994). The effects of multiple product endorsements by celebrities on consumers' attitudes and intentions. *Journal of Consumer Research, 20*(4), 535-547.
- Trstenjak, S., & Dobovšek, B. (2013). Counterfeit luxury brands. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Security (1)*, 116-136.
- Trudeau H, S., & Shobeiri, S. (2016). The relative impacts of experiential and transformational benefits on consumer-brand relationship. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 25*(6), 586-599.
- Truong, Y., McColl, R., & Kitchen, P. J. (2009). New luxury brand positioning and the emergence of masstige brands. *Journal of Brand Management, 16*(5-6), 375-382.
- Tsai, S.-p. (2005a). Impact of personal orientation on luxury-brand purchase value. *International Journal of Market Research, 47*(4), 429-454.
- Tsai, S.-p. (2005b). Utility, cultural symbolism and emotion: a comprehensive model of brand purchase value. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 22*(3), 277-291.
- Tsai, S.-p. (2011a). Fostering international brand loyalty through committed and attached relationships. *International Business Review, 20*(5), 521-534.

- Tsai, S.-p. (2011b). Strategic relationship management and service brand marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, 45(7/8), 1194-1213.
- Tuškej, U., Golob, U., & Podnar, K. (2013). The role of consumer–brand identification in building brand relationships. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(1), 53-59.
- Tynan, C., McKechnie, S., & Chhuon, C. (2010). Co-creating value for luxury brands. *Journal of Business Research*, 63(11), 1156-1163.
- UNdata. (2017). *UNData: A world of information*. Retrieved from <http://data.un.org/>
- Under Armour. (2018). *We put it all on the line, every day*. Retrieved from <https://careers.underarmour.com/mission-and-values>
- Underwood, R., Bond, E., & Baer, R. (2001). Building service brands via social identity: Lessons from the sports marketplace. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 9(1), 1-13.
- Vallerand, R. J., Blanchard, C., Mageau, G. A., Koestner, R., Ratelle, C., Léonard, M., . . . Marsolais, J. (2003). Les passions de l'ame: On obsessive and harmonious passion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85(4), 756.
- Vallerand, R. J., Ntoumanis, N., Philippe, F. L., Lavigne, G. L., Carbonneau, N., Bonneville, A., . . . Maliha, G. (2008). On passion and sports fans: A look at football. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 26(12), 1279-1293.
- Vallerand, R. J., Salvy, S. J., Mageau, G. A., Elliot, A. J., Denis, P. L., Grouzet, F. M., & Blanchard, C. (2007). On the role of passion in performance. *Journal of Personality*, 75(3), 505-534.
- Vallois, P. (2015). *10 top luxury brand experiences*. Retrieved from <https://www.luxurysociety.com/en/articles/2015/06/10-top-luxury-brand-experiences/>
- Valta, K. S. (2013). Do relational norms matter in consumer-brand relationships? *Journal of Business Research*, 66(1), 98-104.



- Van Lange, P. A., Rusbult, C. E., Drigotas, S. M., Arriaga, X. B., Witcher, B. S., & Cox, C. L. (1997). Willingness to sacrifice in close relationships. *Journal of Personality*, 72(6), 1373.
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008). Service-dominant logic: Continuing the evolution. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36(1), 1-10.
- Velasco, H. (2017). *Under Armour launches digital campaign, #IMPRETTY*. Retrieved from <http://www.thedrum.com/news/2017/04/08/under-armour-launches-digital-campaign-impretty>
- Veloutsou, C. (2007). Identifying the dimensions of the product-brand and consumer relationship. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23(1-2), 7-26.
- Veloutsou, C. (2015). Brand evaluation, satisfaction and trust as predictors of brand loyalty: the mediator-moderator effect of brand relationships. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 32(6), 405-421.
- Veloutsou, C., Christodoulides, G., & de Chernatony, L. (2013). A taxonomy of measures for consumer-based brand equity: Drawing on the views of managers in Europe. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 22(3), 238-248.
- Veloutsou, C., & Moutinho, L. (2009). Brand relationships through brand reputation and brand tribalism. *Journal of Business Research*, 62(3), 314-322.
- Venter, M., Chuchu, T., & Pattison, K. (2016). An empirical investigation into the effectiveness of consumer generated content on the purchase intention of sports apparel brands. *Journal of Contemporary Management*, 13(1), 27-54.
- Vernuccio, M., Pagani, M., Barbarossa, C., & Pastore, A. (2015). Antecedents of brand love in online network-based communities. A social identity perspective. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 24(7), 706-719.
- Vickers, J. S., & Renand, F. (2003). The marketing of luxury goods: An exploratory study—three conceptual dimensions. *The Marketing Review*, 3(4), 459-478.

- Vigneron, F., & Johnson, L. W. (1999). A review and a conceptual framework of prestige-seeking consumer behavior. *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, 1(1), 1-15.
- Vigneron, F., & Johnson, L. W. (2004). Measuring perceptions of brand luxury. *The Journal of Brand Management*, 11(6), 484-506.
- Vigneron, F., & Johnson, L. W. (2017). Measuring perceptions of brand luxury. In Kapferer J. N., Kernstock J., Brexendorf T., Powell S. (Eds.) *Advances in Luxury Brand Management. Journal of Brand Management: Advanced Collections*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham
- Vlachos, P. A. (2012). Corporate social performance and consumer-retailer emotional attachment: The moderating role of individual traits. *European Journal of Marketing*, 46(11/12), 1559-1580.
- Vlachos, P. A., Theotokis, A., Pramataris, K., & Vrechopoulos, A. (2010). Consumer-retailer emotional attachment: Some antecedents and the moderating role of attachment anxiety. *European Journal of Marketing*, 44(9/10), 1478-1499.
- Vlachos, P. A., & Vrechopoulos, A. P. (2012). Consumer–retailer love and attachment: Antecedents and personality moderators. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 19(2), 218-228.
- Völckner, F., & Sattler, H. (2006). Drivers of brand extension success. *Journal of Marketing*, 70(2), 18-34.
- Völckner, F., & Sattler, H. (2007). Empirical generalizability of consumer evaluations of brand extensions. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 24(2), 149-162.
- Voss, K. E., Spangenberg, E. R., & Grohmann, B. (2003). Measuring the hedonic and utilitarian dimensions of consumer attitude. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 40(3), 310-320.
- Walden, S. (2014). *The elements of elegance: What makes design 'sophisticated'?* Retrieved from [https://mashable.com/2014/09/29/sophisticated-design/#lY\\_wmG152OqC](https://mashable.com/2014/09/29/sophisticated-design/#lY_wmG152OqC)

- Wallace, E., Buil, I., & De Chernatony, L. (2012). Facebook 'friendship' and brand advocacy. *Journal of Brand Management*, 20(2), 128-146.
- Wallace, E., Buil, I., & de Chernatony, L. (2014). Consumer engagement with self-expressive brands: Brand love and WOM outcomes. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 23(1), 33-42.
- Wang, B., Kim, S., & Malthouse, E. C. (2016). Branded apps and mobile platforms as new tools for advertising. In R. Brown, V. Jones & B. M. Wang (Eds.), *The new advertising: Branding, content and consumer relationships in the data-driven social media era* (app.) Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.
- Wang, X., & Yang, Z. (2010). The effect of brand credibility on consumers' brand purchase intention in emerging economies: The moderating role of brand awareness and brand image. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 23(3), 177-188.
- Wang, Y., & Griskevicius, V. (2013). Conspicuous consumption, relationships, and rivals: Women's luxury products as signals to other women. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(5), 834-854.
- Washburn, J. H., & Plank, R. E. (2002). Measuring brand equity: An evaluation of a consumer-based brand equity scale. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 10(1), 46-62.
- Wayne, S. J., Shore, L. M., & Liden, R. C. (1997). Perceived organizational support and leader-member exchange: A social exchange perspective. *Academy of Management Journal*, 40(1), 82-111.
- Webster, F. E., Jr. (1992). The changing role of marketing in the corporation. *The Journal of Marketing*, 56(4), 1-17.
- Wee, C. S., Ariff, M. S. B. M., Zakuan, N., Tajudin, M. N. M., Ismail, K., & Ishak, N. (2014). Consumers perception, purchase intention and actual purchase behavior of organic food products. *Review of Integrative Business and Economics Research*, 3(2), 378.

- Weet-Bix. (2017). *Aussie kids are Weet-Bix kids*. Retrieved from <https://www.weetbix.com.au/aussiekids/>
- Weisberg, J., Te'eni, D., & Arman, L. (2011). Past purchase and intention to purchase in e-commerce: The mediation of social presence and trust. *Internet Research, 21*(1), 82-96.
- Wetzels, M., Odekerken-Schröder, G., & Van Oppen, C. (2009). Using PLS path modeling for assessing hierarchical construct models: Guidelines and empirical illustration. *MIS Quarterly (MISQ), 33*(1), 177-195.
- Whang, Y.-O., Allen, J., Sahoury, N., & Zhang, H. (2004). Falling in love with a product: the structure of a romantic consumer-product relationship. *Advances in Consumer Research, 31*(1), 320-327.
- Wiedmann, K.-P., Hennigs, N., & Klarmann, C. (2012). Luxury consumption in the trade-off between genuine and counterfeit goods: What are the consumers' underlying motives and value-based drivers? *Journal of Brand Management, 19*(7), 544-566.
- Wiedmann, K. P., Hennigs, N., & Siebels, A. (2009). Value-based segmentation of luxury consumption behavior. *Psychology & Marketing, 26*(7), 625-651.
- Wilcox, K., Kim, H. M., & Sen, S. (2009). Why do consumers buy counterfeit luxury brands? *Journal of Marketing Research, 46*(2), 247-259.
- Wolf, E. J., Harrington, K. M., Clark, S. L., & Miller, M. W. (2013). Sample size requirements for structural equation models: An evaluation of power, bias, and solution propriety. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 73*(6), 913-934.
- Wong, F. Y., & Sidek, Y. (2008). Influence of brand loyalty on consumer sportswear. *International Journal of Economics and Management, 2*(2), 221-236.
- Liu, M. T., Wong, I. A., Tseng, T. H., Chang, A. W. Y., & Phau, I. (2017). Applying consumer-based brand equity in luxury hotel branding. *Journal of Business Research, 81*, 192-202.

- Wood, J. T. (1982). Communication and relational culture: Bases for the study of human relationships. *Communication Quarterly*, 30(2), 75-84.
- Woodruff, R. B. (1997). Customer value: The next source for competitive advantage. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 25(2), 139-153.
- Woszczyński, A. B., & Whitman, M. E. (Eds.). (2004). The problem of common method variance in IS research. *The handbook of information systems research*, (pp. 66-77). Hershey, PA: Idea Group Publishing.
- Wragg, T. (2004). Nurturing brand advocates. *Brand Strategy*, 187, 36-37.
- Wu, C. H.-J., & Liang, R.-D. (2009). Effect of experiential value on customer satisfaction with service encounters in luxury-hotel restaurants. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 28(4), 586-593.
- Wu, S.-I., & Lo, C.-L. (2009). The influence of core-brand attitude and consumer perception on purchase intention towards extended product. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 21(1), 174-194.
- Wu, W. Y., Lu, H. Y., Wu, Y. Y., & Fu, C. S. (2012). The effects of product scarcity and consumers' need for uniqueness on purchase intention. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 36(3), 263-274.
- Wyer, R. S., Jr, Clore, G. L., & Isbell, L. M. (1999). Affect and information processing *Advances in experimental social psychology*, (Vol. 31, pp. 1-77). Elsevier.
- Wyner, G. A. (1999). Customer relationship measurement. *Marketing Research*, 11(2), 39.
- Xie, D., & Heung, V. C. (2012). The effects of brand relationship quality on responses to service failure of hotel consumers. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 31(3), 735-744.
- Yen, C. H., Chen, C. Y., Cheng, J. C., & Teng, H. Y. (2018). Brand attachment, tour leader attachment, and behavioral intentions of tourists. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 42(3), 365-391.

- Yeo, J., & Park, J. (2006). Effects of parent-extension similarity and self regulatory focus on evaluations of brand extensions. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 16*(3), 272-282.
- Yeung, C., & Wyer, R. (2005). The role of brand-elicited affect in brand extension evaluations. *Advances in Consumer Research, 32*, 134.
- Yim, C. K., Tse, D. K., & Chan, K. W. (2008). Strengthening customer loyalty through intimacy and passion: roles of customer-firm affection and customer-staff relationships in services. *Journal of Marketing Research, 45*(6), 741-756.
- Yim, C. K. B., Chan, K. W., & Hung, K. (2007). Multiple reference effects in service evaluations: Roles of alternative attractiveness and self-image congruity. *Journal of Retailing, 83*(1), 147-157.
- Yin Wong, H., & Merrilees, B. (2005). A brand orientation typology for SMEs: A case research approach. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 14*(3), 155-162.
- Yoo, B., & Donthu, N. (2001). Developing and validating a multidimensional consumer-based brand equity scale. *Journal of Business Research, 52*(1), 1-14.
- Yoo, B., Donthu, N., & Lee, S. (2000). An examination of selected marketing mix elements and brand equity. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 28*(2), 195-211.
- Yoo, B., & Lee, S.-H. (2012). Asymmetrical effects of past experiences with genuine fashion luxury brands and their counterfeits on purchase intention of each. *Journal of Business Research, 65*(10), 1507-1515.
- Zarantonello, L., Romani, S., Grappi, S., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2016). Brand hate. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 25*(1), 11-25.
- Zarantonello, L., & Schmitt, B. H. (2010). Using the brand experience scale to profile consumers and predict consumer behaviour. *Journal of Brand Management, 17*(7), 532-540.

- Zarantonello, L., & Schmitt, B. H. (2013). The impact of event marketing on brand equity: The mediating roles of brand experience and brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising, 32*(2), 255-280.
- Zeithaml, V. A. (1988). Consumer perceptions of price, quality, and value: A means-end model and synthesis of evidence. *The Journal of marketing, 52*(3), 2-22.
- Zhou, Z., Zhang, Q., Su, C., & Zhou, N. (2012). How do brand communities generate brand relationships? Intermediate mechanisms. *Journal of Business Research, 65*(7), 890-895.