A Perspective on Relationship Maintenance, Brand Loyalty

¹Prof. (Dr.) Munish Kumar Tiwari, ²Dr. Hitesh Kumar

¹Professor, Institute of Management, Commerce, and Economics, Shri Ramswaroop Memorial University, Lucknow

² Professor, Mangalmay Institute of Management & Technology, Gr. Noida

Abstract:

An extensive analysis of the literature related to Consumer and brand research serves as the basis for this paper by outlining the development of this significant stream of study. The literature research reveals important Conception and measurement problems of important consumer-related concepts including brand loyalty, brand devotion and brand adoration. Using these findings, the authors suggest that maintaining relationships mechanisms (i.e., behavioral and cognitive) provide the crucial to predicting and measuring consumer/brand behavior Strength in a relationship. In light of this, this study provides brand fidelity as a new method of analyzing consumer behavior show their devotion to and love towards the through participating, knowingly or unconsciously, in thoughts and actions related to maintaining relationships. Brand fidelity, which is defined as the customer's loyalty to a brand partner as shown by a collection of behaviors (such as accommodation/forgiveness, willingness to sacrifice) and cognitions (such as derogation of alternatives, cognitive interdependence, and positive illusions) that maintain relationship stability and durability, offers a strong foundation for future research and is valuable to both academics and brand practitioners.

Keywords: Consumer/brand relationships, Brand commitment, Brand loyalty, Relationship maintenance, Relationship fidelity

I. Introduction:

Understanding and quantifying consumer responses to product/brand offerings has been a major focus for academics and practitioners for many years. Early consumer research focused heavily on customer expectations and perceived product performance (e.g., Day 1977; Miller 1977), with the concept of customer satisfaction at its core (e.g., Anderson 1973; Pfaff 1972). The 1980s and 1990s saw a shift in research priorities toward brands (as opposed to products) and the requirement to comprehend the longer-term effects of customer pleasure. As a result, several research (such as Amine 1998; Jacoby and Chestnut 1978) concentrated on defining and assessing concepts like brand commitment and brand loyalty. The idea of brand love dominates much of the current consumer literature (e.g., Albert et al. 2008; Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Fetscherin et al. 2014; Langner et al. 2014; Long-Tolbert and Gammoh 2012; Rauschnabel and Ahuvia 2014). The current era of consumer research has embraced psychological theory relating to interpersonal relationships. It is crucial that we draw lessons from previous research trajectories in order to further this line of inquiry, in which consumers actively participate in the co-creation and upkeep of brands in order to fulfill complicated needs. Consequently, this study has two objectives. In order to make sense of our knowledge from a historical, or evolutionary, perspective, the pertinent literatures around consumers and brands are first read. Such an in-depth analysis sheds light on the criticisms and difficulties that have pushed academic and professional thought through the various research stages and enables us to see how our understanding of consumer/brand connections has changed over time.

Second, this study recommends that future research consider adopting a research attitude that goes beyond comprehending how and why consumer/brand interactions arise to a focus on how such ties are maintained in

order to discover historical trends in the literature. In this sense, we provide rationale for our new construct proposal, brand loyalty, which is centered on consumer behaviors and attitudes that demonstrate active involvement in the upkeep of positive consumer/brand connections. Brand fidelity is the ability to significantly improve how we perceive and, ultimately, measure consumer/brand relationships in the future. It is defined as the consumer's loyalty to a brand partner as manifested through various behaviors (i.e. accommodation/forgiveness—performance and price) and cognitions (i.e. derogation of alternatives and cognitive interdependence). By providing a complete framework for future research to study brand fidelity's operationalization and, subsequently, diagnostic capabilities through empirical validation, we present it as a construct that enhances our understanding of consumer/brand relationships. As a result, this study has important ramifications for brand practitioners as well as brand researchers.

II. Methodology:

The literature evaluation for this study is based on the theory of purposeful sampling, in which qualitative data is obtained and analyzed in three steps to reveal topics relevant to the research objective. The first step, called orientation, entails doing a thorough study of the literature in accordance with the methodology employed by Green et al. (2016) to offer the initial summaries of research challenges, theories, relative focus, and trends relevant to consumer responses to brands. The second phase, orientation, involves continuing research for supplementary material to identify trends and/or variances in philosophical outlooks and assumptions related to the conceptualization and measurement of consumer/brand connections. This step builds on the results of step one. Step two results are then utilized to detect evolutionary shifts in the trajectory of the consumer/brand relationship in step three (also known as demarcation).

III. Research

The results therefore allow for the discussion that follows. concerning the development of the consumer-brand connection It is graphically represented in research

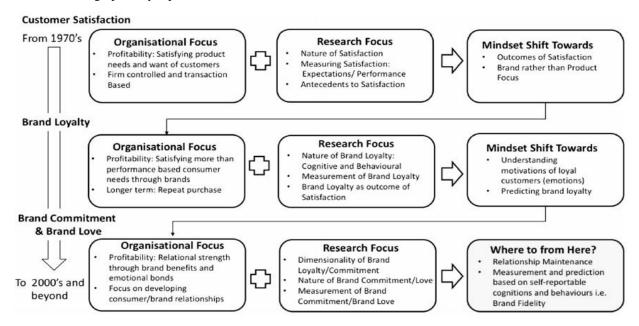


Figure. 1 Development of consumer/brand research

Relationships between consumers and brands evolving The 1970s saw a centralization of marketing theory and practice. centered on the idea of client satisfaction (e.g. Pfaff 1972; Day 1977; Anderson 1973; Miller 1977. This was a time when most market offerings were firm-controlled. the fulfillment of clients' demands, Wants were prioritized over business profitability. (1982, Churchill and Surprenant). As a result, the majority of early research (e.g. Oliver 1977; Olshavsky and Miller 1972; Olson and Dover 1976) focused on the nature of

customer satisfaction and its origins. As a result, marketing research topics during this time period were predominately concerned with measuring consumer expectation (dis)confirmation and perceived performance related to products (e.g., Day 1977; Miller 1977). Building on earlier research on customer satisfaction, the 1980s and 1990s saw a surge in study in two important areas: (1) customer satisfaction outcomes; and (2) a shift in emphasis from products to brands (Reynolds and Gutman 1984; Sheth and Parvatiyar 1995). Although "long considered one of the cornerstones of marketing strategy," the idea of customer happiness The use of customer satisfaction as a stand-in for customer loyalty was deemed to be fundamentally flawed (Roy et al. 2013, p. 329), as not all satisfied customers are loyal. Furthermore, even though loyal customers are typically satisfied (Roy et al. 2013, p. 329), satisfaction cannot be taken for granted due to the potential impact of habitual supply conditions (Amine 1998). Based on this, there was a notable shift in the focus of study toward the results or repercussions of satisfaction (e.g. Oliver 1999; Russell-Bennett et al. 2007).

The realization that consumers have demands other than those related to the functional (or performance) qualities of the product also generated interest in the brand notion (Keller 1993). The introduction, elaboration, and strengthening of brand meaning in consideration of consumers' functional, symbolic (e.g., Sirgy 1982; Solomon 1983), and experiential (e.g., Hirschman and Holbrook 1992; McAlister 1982) needs were thus included in the brand management concept (Park et al. 1986). The interest in interactions between consumers and brands was kindled as a result of this brand focus (Park et al., 1986; Fournier, 1998). In terms of behavior, repeat business and patronage are the key drivers of strong consumer-brand connections. However, Christodoulides and De Chernatony (2010) found that consumer-brand connections are significantly more nuanced than that. As a result, a lot of research attention has been focused on examining the aspects of these relationships, leading to the creation of a wealth of literature focusing on brand commitment, brand commitment, brand love, and more recently, brand love (e.g., Albert and Merunka 2013; Batra et al. 2012; Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Roy et al. 2013). As a result, these constructions serve as the foundation for the talks that follow.

IV. Brand adherence

Brand loyalty's definition and measurement are hotly contested topics. Fundamental conceptualizations of the notion were based on the purchasing and switching intentions of repeat customers, as well as their repeat purchase behavior (Jacoby and Chestnut 1978; Reichheld and Teal 1996; Popp and Woratschek 2017). Others have claimed that loyalty also includes cognitive elements that are visible in the decision-making process involving brand appraisal, preference, and attitudes (Dick and Basu 1994; Mattila 2001; Mitra and Lynch 1995; Leckie et al. 2016). A commonly accepted definition of brand loyalty is as follows: "the biased (i.e., nonrandom) behavioral response (i.e., purchase), expressed over time by some decision-making unit with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands as is a function of psychological (decision-making) evaluative processes" (Jacoby and Chestnut 1978, pp. 80-81). Although this definition does capture the temporal dimension of loyalty, Fournier and Yao (1997) contend that it still misses the "dynamic, evolutionary character of the phenomenon itself." They suggested that brand loyalty is better understood from a relational approach that especially takes into account "the nuances of meaning, context, and temporality" (Fournier and Yao 1997, p. 454) in consumer/brand partnerships. A model of brand relationship quality and stability/durability that Fournier (1998), using idiographic analysis, suggests (p. 366) includes love/passion, self-connection, commitment, interdependence, intimacy, and brand partner quality as being indicative of brand relationship quality. According to Fournier (1998), brand relationship quality offers a broader knowledge of the durability and depth of consumer/brand connections than brand loyalty does. The value of the BRQ model is derived from the very comprehensive nature of the model, which is why it has been widely accepted, used, and adapted. Fourier's (1998) BRQ model has since been criticized on the grounds that not all brands relate to their customers in the same manner (Dowling 2002).

V. A perspective on relationship maintenance, brand loyalty brand loyalty

Brand commitment and brand loyalty, which are frequently used interchangeably, have been the subject of extensive research since the 1970s. According to Mooreman et al. (1992), the term "brand commitment" is used

to describe the fundamental motives behind brand preference and recurrent purchasing behavior. In particular, it is stated that brand commitment adds depth to our knowledge of "loyal customers" because it captures the sentimental elements of consumer-brand relationships, which are strongly suggestive of the quality of relationships (Moorman et al. 1992). Additionally, brand commitment is thought to be a better indicator of brand loyalty depth because it essentially distinguishes between highly probable repeat purchase behavior (i.e. true brand loyalty) and less probable repeat purchase behavior (i.e. spurious brand loyalty) (Jacoby and Kyner 1973). Affective and calculative commitments are the two different forms (Mattila 2006; Cifci and Erdogan 2016). The emotional connections that consumers have with brands serve as a major example of affective commitment. In other words, in addition to evaluating brand attributes, affective commitment refers to the consumer's like or attachment to the brand (Morgan and Hunt 1994). Contrarily, calculative commitment entails a cognitive assessment of the advantages and disadvantages associated with the brand (Hennig-Thurau and Klee 1997; Jones et al. 2010). Therefore, if a brand's perceived benefits continue to outweigh its perceived drawbacks, consumers will stick with it. This is significantly more of a "head" than a "heart" (i.e. affective commitment) purchasing technique. Affective commitment, as opposed to calculative commitment, is more likely to result in long-term consistent behavior because it is less dependent on brand-related situational circumstances (Amine 1998; Punniyamoorthy and Raj 2007). This is an illustration of the important part that affect or emotion (Fournier and Yao 1997) play in consumer-brand connections.

The measurement of both has remained simplistically uni-dimensional despite several attempts to explain the underlying dimensions of the rather complex and closely connected conceptions of brand loyalty and commitment (Huang et al. 2007). The majority of studies, especially those that have looked at the factors that influence commitment or loyalty, have relied on scales with 2 to 6 items that cover a variety of topics, including general commitment or loyalty, switching behavior, purchase intentions, price sensitivity, and word-of-mouth (e.g., Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2002; Eisingerich and Rubera 2010; Kim et al. 2008; Nam et al. 2011; Pulligadda et al. 2016 and others). While such metrics do record a brief evaluation of commitment and loyalty, they offer little to identify particular behaviors within consumer/brand relationships that are indicative of the depth of consumer/brand relationships. The operationalization of the loyalty construct is actually criticized by Fournier and Yao (1997) for being uninspired, non-diagnostic, and contradicting.

VI. Brand loyalty

While there has been significant disagreement in brand love research over the past ten years in terms of the construct's definitional parameters, the field has gained momentum in recent years. Shimp and Madden (1988) claimed that love (in consumption contexts) comprises of liking, yearning, and decision/commitment, drawing on Sternberg's (1986) triangulation theory of love (i.e. intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment). It was thanks to this idea that others (such as Ahuvia 2005; Thomson et al. 2005; Wang and Wallendorf 2004 and others) were able to objectively prove that love is, in fact, a legitimate consumption-related construct. The amount and variety of study on brand love, however, is extensive. For instance, desire, intimacy commitment, powerfully favorable emotions (affect), idealization, nostalgia, uniqueness, permanence, and anticipation separation anxiety, integrating one's own brand, dreams, individuality, appeal, expression of emotion, prior behavior, investment readiness, friendship (maintenance of this connection) attitudes (see, for instance, Albert and Merunka 2013; Carroll and Ahuvia; Batra et al. (2012); Albert et al. Langner et al. 2014; Fetscherin et al. 2014; Long-Maxian et al. 2013; Tolbert and Gammoh (2012); Rossiter (2012), Roy et al., Rauschnabel and Ahuvia (2014), and others.

All of the proposed dimensions that (Sarkar et al. brand love, many of which serve as the foundation for operationalization. in empirical investigations of brand love. Additionally, there is a lot of blurring between brand love dimensions, precursors to brand love, and results of brand love. For example, self-brand integration and strong positive feelings (affect), identified by some (e.g. Batra et al. 2012; Langner et al. 2014; Maxian et al. 2013; Rauschnabel and Ahuvia 2014, and more) as being dimensions of brand love, are proposed by others (e.g. Albert and Merunka 2013; Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Sarkar et al. 2012; Wallace et al. 2014, and more) as being antecedents to brand love. While other antecedents like product hedonism (Carroll and Ahuvia 2006),

romanticism (Sarkar et al. 2012), materialism (Roy et al. 2013), trust (Albert and Merunka 2013), brand experience (de Oliveira Santini et al. 2018), partner quality, and social support (Long-Tolbert and Gammoh 2012) have also been put forth.

Trust has been mentioned as a dimension of brand love (Albert et al. 2008), an antecedent of brand love (Albert and Merunka 2013), and an outcome of brand love (Loureiro et al. 2012), although there is less misunderstanding in regards to the outcomes of brand love. Nevertheless, there appears to be some consensus over other brand love outcomes with purchase intention (Fetscherin et al. 2014; Sarkar et al. 2012), word-ofmouth recommendation/advocacy (Fetscherin et al. 2014; Sarkar et al. 2012), loyalty (Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Loureiro et al. 2012; Roy et al. 2013; Alnawas and Altarifi 2016) and commitment (Albert and Merunka 2013; Loureiro et al. 2012; Garg et al. 2016) being cited as prominent outcomes. However, it is proposed that consensus may be a phantom based on construct labeling, rather than construct measurement or validity, given the inconsistent operationalization of these outcome components across investigations. Given the conceptual ambiguities around the brand love construct, it is not unexpected that there is much disagreement over how to measure it. For instance, Batra et al. (2012) and others (such as Carroll and Ahuvia 2006) are criticized by Rossiter (2012) for their conceptualizations and measurements of brand love on the grounds that (1) the measures lack content validity, (2) the measurement scales should not be continuous because such measurement fails to distinguish between brand love and brand like, and (3) the measurement model (i.e., of Batra et al. 2012) should be formative rather than reflective. Based on these findings, Rossiter (2012) suggests an alternative contrastive single-item measure with five possible responses1 and draws the following conclusions: (1) brand love is an emotional state experienced by a small percentage of customers; (2) the proportion of "brand lovers" depends on the product category; and (3) brand love (if achieved) equates to high behavioral returns.

Zarantonello et al. (2016) advocate measuring brand love using a 13-item scale that encompasses five dimensions (fantasies and thoughts, attachment, self-expression, enjoyment, and idealization), as opposed to other research. In addition, Bagozzi et al. (2017) developed a 26-item scale covering 13 dimensions of brand love, taking into account higher-order factors (such as self-brand integration, passion-driven behaviors, and positive emotion connection) as well as other factors like attitude strength and valence, long-term relationship, and anticipated separation distress. The studied literature makes it clear that there is still no scholarly agreement on how to conceptualize and measure brand love. While there are differing opinions on how to define brand love, there is growing consensus that love is better understood from a relational rather than an emotional viewpoint when it comes to brands (Ahuvia et al. 2014). However, a number of research (such as Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Loureiro et al. 2012; Maxian et al. 2013) operationalize brand love using one-dimensional emotional measures. diverse varieties of love draw from diverse components since love is both companionate (related to the relationship) and passionate (connected to strong emotion) (Hatfield et al. 1984). However, as relationships grow and mature, companionate love takes center stage as it stands for the solidification and dedication of the union.

VII. Analyzing the development of the consumer/brand connection

Zarantonello et al. (2016) advocate measuring brand love using a 13-item scale that encompasses five dimensions (fantasies and thoughts, attachment, self-expression, enjoyment, and idealization), as opposed to other research. Furthermore, Bagozzi et al. (2017) developed a 26-item scale covering 13 dimensions of brand love, including higher-order factors (i.e. self-brand integration, passion-driven behaviors, positive emotion connection) and additional factors like attitude strength and valence, long-term relationship, and anticipated separation distress. They also believe that brand love is a highly complex, multi-faceted construct. The studied literature makes it clear that there is still no scholarly agreement on how to conceptualize and measure brand love. Strong brand emotions, such as commitment and love, are best understood from a relational rather than an emotional perspective, according to what we do know about them (Ahuvia et al. 2014). In reality, Keller recognized intense and active ties between consumers and brands as early as 2001. The emotional bond and/or sense of belonging that a consumer develops with a brand are referred to as intensity. The behavioral manifestation of emotional connection (intensity) of brand loyalty is referred to as activity, on the other hand.

This supports Aaker's (1996) contention that consumers engage actively with brands, much as people do with their friends.

Additionally, Keller (2009) asserts in a subsequent argument that brand resonance, which encompasses another significant element of modern consumer/brand connections, is demonstrated by how "in" customers are, which conform" to the brand. All of these pertinent issues are essential to a more effective consumer measurement and comprehension brand connections. It is not our goal to criticize anyone here, brand loyalty or brand love as an idea. To the there are five possible responses: hate, dislike, neutral, like, and love, categories. Contrary to popular belief, we think brand loyalty and love are still very much alive in today's brand-dominated world. We propose that a more tangible method lies in identifying the behavioral (i.e. activity) and cognitive (i.e. "in sync") expressions of those consumers who are devoted and "in love" with a brand rather than attempting to measure the strength of emotions (i.e. intensity). We think that maintaining relationships is the key in this regard.

We contend that relationship maintenance behavior more accurately reflects commitment strength than self-reported wants on the basis of the axiom that deeds speak louder than words. We contend that wishes or feelings may not always be excellent predictors of relationship maintenance, much as purchase intentions are not always shown to be strong indicators of purchase behavior (Auger and Devinney 2007; Carrington et al. 2010). From a measurement perspective, we propose that researchers should ask people to self-report relationship maintenance behaviors in order to assess the level of brand commitment/love they have toward the brand. This is similar to how personality inventories ask people to self-report their behaviors so that researchers can analyze personality type. By doing this, we may avoid the issues with respondent competency and data quality (which were previously described) and get a step closer to understanding brand performance. In light of this, we propose brand fidelity as a conceptual framework for comprehending the cognitive and behavioral facets of relationship preservation, opening up the possibility for future accurate brand performance measurement.

VIII. Brand loyalty: conceptual growth

Rusbult (1980) originally suggested the investment model, which was developed in the context of romantic relationships, challenging earlier social psychological methods that saw relationship commitment as a result of positive affect. According to the investment model of commitment processes, relationship commitment is shown as having a direct impact on relationship behavior as well as serving as a mediator between satisfaction, alternatives, and investments on behavior. An individual's commitment to a relationship was formerly mostly explained by positive emotion, such as satisfaction. Contrary to popular belief, we think that in today's branddominated industry, brand dedication and love are still very much alive. We propose that a more tangible method lies in identifying the behavioral (i.e. activity) and cognitive (i.e. "in sync") expressions of those consumers who are devoted and "in love" with a brand rather than attempting to measure the strength of emotions (i.e. intensity). We think that maintaining relationships is the key in this regard. We contend that relationship maintenance behavior more accurately reflects commitment strength than self-reported wants on the basis of the axiom that deeds speak louder than words. Since then, the investment model has been extensively applied in other relational contexts. For instance, the use of the investment model in empirically advancing theory within these contextual domains has benefited research on online travel behavior (Nusair et al. 2010), B2B marketing (White and Yanamandram 2007), financial marketing (Huang et al. 2007), mobile internet market (Giovanis 2016), and brand loyalty (Li and Petrick 2008).

Though little to no emphasis has been paid to the relationship maintenance behaviors that are portrayed as a result of commitment or the desire to preserve relationships, all of these research have centered their attention on the antecedents of commitment. Importantly, Fournier (1998) proposed the idea of "brand as relationship partner" and developed a thorough model of brand relationship quality and stability in response to the relationship metaphor's growing momentum in marketing contexts (e.g. Fournier and Yao 1997; Morgan and Hunt 1994). The idea that brand connections should be understood through "what consumers do with brands to add meaning to their lives" (p. 367) is central to this paradigm. Based on this, Fournier (1998) contends that the connection's quality is determined by the meaning, elaboration, and reinforcement processes that are connected to both relationship participants (the consumer and the brand).

Since then, the brand relationship quality elements advocated by Fournier (1998)—love/passion, selfconnection, intimacy, interdependence, brand partner quality, and commitment—have received a great deal of research attention. For instance, the contemporary research on brand love frequently relies on passion, selfconnection, and intimacy (e.g., Albert and Merunka 2013; Batra et al. 2012). Along with a plethora of studies on commitment and relationship interdependency (Bansal et al. 2004; Morgan and Hunt 1994; Reynolds and Beatty 1999), the fundamental components of brand relationships, such as brand trust, dependability, and consistency (Fournier 1998), have also established themselves firmly in the marketing literature. Despite the fact that the ideas in these literatures frequently overlap and contradict one another (as was previously noted), they do support the relationship metaphor in consumer/brand research and are essential to comprehending how strong consumer/brand relationships are. The factors in Fournier's (1998) model that serve as a conduit between brand relationship quality and relationship stability/durability (i.e. accommodation, tolerance/forgiveness, biased partner perceptions, devaluation of alternatives, and attribution biases) are what catch our attention because the maintenance of brand relationships—not their development—is of particular interest in this paper. The results of Fournier's (1998) study also fit in well with the mechanisms for maintaining relationships that Rusbult et al. (2001) and Rusbult et al. (2012) identified in their extension of Rusbult's (1980) investment model of commitment processes (i.e., accommodation, forgiveness, cognitive interdependence, derogation of alternatives, positive illusions, and willingness to sacrifice). As a result, the two models' similarities (e.g. Fournier 1998; Rusbult et al. 2012), as well as adjusting the study evidence in relation to individual dimensions of relationship upkeep, develops our comprehension of the factors that maintain relationships, and outline the definitional parameters of our suggested build, such as brand loyalty.

IX. Dimensions of relationship maintenance

Although the words "relationship stability," "fidelity," and "durability" have been sporadically mentioned in the literature (Ryan et al. 1999; Brocks et al. 2000; Park et al. 2002) Studies have made an effort to present a range of behaviors and cognitions. that explain these words. Important variations include In the context of marketing, Fournier (1998) and Rusbult Rusbult et al. (2012) and et al. (2001) in the context of romantic connections. Despite contextual changes, there are several similarities between the findings of the two research, including that aspects of behavioral maintenance, such accommodation having the capacity to forgive and make sacrifices, as well as with aspects of cognitive maintenance, such as cognitive mutual reliance, rejection of alternatives, and constructive Using illusions to properly frame what we already know criteria for maintaining relationships.

X. Behavioral parameters

The pertinent relationship models of Fournier (1998), Rusbult et al. (2001), and Rusbult et al. (2012) both provide explanations for both accommodation and forgiveness. Hirschman's (1970) research on the demise of organizations and Rusbult et al.'s (1982) investigation of reactions to discontent in close relationships served as the foundation for the accommodation theory. According to Rusbult et al. (1991), accommodation occurs when one party breaks a promise (or behaves in an unexpected way) and the other party resists the urge to retaliate (i.e., in a destructive way) by responding in a way that will strengthen the relationship (i.e., constructively). From the standpoint of the consumer and the brand, the "accommodation" of the loyal customer during periods of subpar performance not only protects the brand from financial loss (i.e., losing loyal customers) but also helps to defuse the situation in the eyes of other customers. In this regard, highly dedicated customers act in a way that safeguards the brand and preserves the relationship (Fournier, 1998). There are many similarities between forgiveness and accommodation. "The tendency to renounce retribution and other damaging patterns of engagement, instead behaving towards the offender in a positive and helpful manner" (Finkel et al. 2002, p. 958) is what is meant by forgiveness in ongoing relationships. This is because forgiveness relates to a person's viewpoint (such as "I forgive you" or "I do not forgive you") that is expressed through behavior, either destructive (such as retaliation) or constructive (such as relationship maintenance). Hegner et al. (2017) discovered that forgiveness was, in fact, a result of brand love when seen from this angle.

In the context of romantic relationships, there is a clearer distinction between the two since accommodation can refer to simply agreeing with a partner in order to avoid a disagreement while forgiveness can refer to much more serious issues that involve significant physical, psychological, or social costs (Rusbult et al. 1991). In terms of brand connections, the line between the two is less apparent, with a brand's "bad behavior" typically being performance- or price-related, resulting in some amount of annoyance or inconvenience rather than genuine personal harm. The distinction between forgiveness and accommodation in the context of interactions between customers and brands becomes hazy on this premise. Similar to this, it is asserted that forgiveness and accommodation are closely related to readiness to make sacrifices (Rusbult et al. 2001). For instance, from the standpoint of the consumer and brand, the devoted consumer's choice to pardon will inspire the adoption of positive relationship behaviors, such as accommodation (Xie and Peng 2009). However, doing so may be expensive or go against one's immediate self-interest, making such actions a sacrifice. The willingness to sacrifice, which is well explained in Rusbult et al. (2012) model as a critical relationship maintenance element, has drawn a lot of attention in the marketing literature. Most studies of sacrifice have looked at it from the perspective of cost (premiums) or product accessibility (stock shortages) (Albert and Merunka 2013; Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Jones et al. 2010; Jones and Taylor 2007). There is, however, little disagreement regarding the positioning of willingness to give up as a crucial consumer response outcome variable, viewed either explicitly as an outcome of commitment (Albert and Merunka 2013; Rusbult et al. 2012) or implicitly as a manifestation of brand loyalty (e.g. Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Jones et al. 2008).

XI. Cognitive aspects

The derogation (Rusbult et al. 2001) or devaluation (Fournier 1998) of alternatives is another area where Fournier's (1998) and Rusbult et al.'s (2001) relationship models are compatible. Derogation of alternatives, also known as the derogation effect, is when the attraction of potential romantic partners is downplayed while the attractiveness of current relationships is exaggerated or treated leniently (Rusbult et al. 2012). The derogation effect, which has been empirically established in the context of romantic relationships (e.g., Arriaga et al. 2007, and others), may be a significant behavioral result of brand relationship commitment. In this way, the customer transforms into a powerful brand defender who, in doing so, is biased in favor of the advantages of their chosen brand partner and proactive in pointing out the drawbacks of other brands (i.e., derogation). The derogation effect is further supported by positive illusions (Rusbult et al. 2012) and biased perceptions (Fournier 1998). According to Murray and Holmes (1997), positive illusions are when devoted people view problematic relationships in slightly romanticized or, to put it another way, through rose-colored glasses. Positive illusions, on the other hand, go beyond merely emphasizing the partner's qualities (while simultaneously downplaying their weaknesses) to envisioning strengths that do not actually exist. As partners attempt to subtly establish their relationship and lessen cognitive dissonance, this frequently happens in romantic partnerships (Rusbult et al. 2001). In order to lessen cognitive dissonance, consumers who engage in brand promotion behavior (Soutar and Sweeney 2003; Wangenheim 2005) could also be said to be doing the same thing.

Additionally, it's crucial to comprehend positive illusions in regard to brands since they "capture a prospective sense of conviction or security that is not simply isomorphic with satisfaction" (Murray and Holmes 1997, p. 586) (Murray and Holmes, 1997). According to Agnew et al. (1998), cognitive interdependence refers to "a mental state characterized by a pluralistic, collective representation of the self-in-relationship" in romantic partnerships. (p. 939). This is illustrated, for instance, by the increased use of pronouns ending in "us," "we," and "our." More recently, it has become common practice to combine partners' names to identify romantic relationships (e.g., Brangelina for Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie) to demonstrate the perceived overlap in mental representations of partners in highly committed relationships (Agnew et al. 1998). In contrast to relationships involving best friends, it is discovered that this dialectal behavior is considerably more particular to love relationships (Agnew et al. 1998). The derogation effect, which has been empirically established in the context of romantic relationships (e.g., Arriaga et al. 2007, and others), may be a significant behavioral result of brand relationship commitment. In this way, the customer transforms into a powerful brand defender who, in doing so, is biased in favor of the advantages of their chosen brand partner and proactive in pointing out the drawbacks of other brands (i.e., derogation). The derogation effect is further supported by positive illusions (Rusbult et al. 2012) and biased perceptions (Fournier 1998). According to Murray and Holmes (1997), positive illusions are

when devoted people view problematic relationships in slightly romanticized or, to put it another way, through rose-colored glasses.

XII. Brand loyalty explained

The term "fidelity" has been used amorphously throughout the marketing literature, frequently being used as a shorthand for (or in close proximity to) behavioural loyalty and purchase intentions (e.g., Giann and Franceschini 2003; Jones and Taylor 2007; Ryan et al. 1999) and largely going without definition. There is minimal consensus among the few studies who try to define fidelity in the context of consumers and, as a result, its operationalization. For instance, Langley et al. (2012) say that in their study of social contagion in new product adoption, fidelity is the tendency of the consumer "to make accurate copies of new behaviors" (p. 629); this tendency is heavily dependent on the consumer's personality qualities. Contrarily, Dumitrescu and Ichindelean (2011) define customer fidelity as "the felt satisfaction after the consumption of a product/service" while researching customer relationship cycles. (p. 105). Furthermore, Arrondo et al. (2002) operationalize fidelity as a relative household expenditure level in multi-format retailing. These inconsistent readings of faithfulness underscore the necessity to defend the term's use in the current research while also offering little theoretical advice.

We think the word "fidelity" effectively conveys the substance of the concept being developed here. To be clear, fidelity refers to someone's commitment and support shown throughout time toward a cause, person, or belief. Being faithful implies durability, stability, and exclusivity (OED 2004). Since exclusivity, durability, and stability are all essential components of good consumer/brand relationships (Fournier 1998; Fournier and Yao 1997) and it is the maintenance of such ties that forms the basis of this study, brand faithfulness is thus a particularly pertinent term for our concept. Accordingly, we define brand fidelity as the customer's loyalty to a brand partner as evidenced by a collection of behaviors (such as accommodation/forgiveness, willingness to make sacrifices) and cognitions (such as derogation of alternatives, cognitive interdependence, and positive illusions) that uphold relationship stability and durability. We provide the following definitions for the behavioral indicators of brand loyalty, such as accommodation or forgiving and willingness to make sacrifices: The degree to which a person is tolerant of and supportive of a brand partner in the event of price or performance discrepancies is referred to as accommodation or forgiveness. The degree to which a person is willing to make sacrifices in order to maintain their relationship with the brand partner is referred to as willingness to sacrifice.

There are two clarifications in this situation. First, despite being discussed separately in earlier studies of romantic relationships (Rusbult et al. 2001, 2012), we have combined accommodation and forgiveness into one behavioral category in order to better understand consumer/brand relationships based on our prior argument regarding the overlap between the two in the context of consumer/brand relations. Second, in order to adapt our thinking to the contemporary research situation, we are referring to accommodation/forgiveness in this context in terms of unforeseen events connected to pricing and/or performance fluctuations. The following definitions are proposed in regard to brand fidelity's cognitive manifestations: The level to which a person feels "at one" with the brand partner and claims personal ownership of the brand is known as cognitive interdependence. Positive illusions refer to the extent to which a person has positive illusions about the brand partner, which may or may not reflect reality. Derogation of alternatives refers to the degree to which a person concentrates on the strengths of the brand partner and the weaknesses of its competitors. The proposed brand fidelity construct's definitional bounds and dimensions are visually shown in Fig. 2 for clarity's sake.

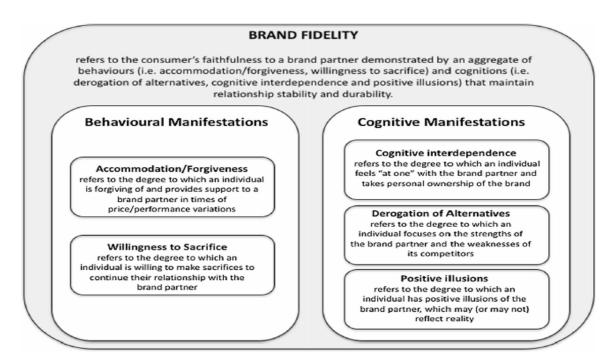


Figure 2: Proposed Brand Fidelity construct's definitional bounds and dimensions

XIII. In the overall scheme, brand loyalty

For the sake of clarity, Fig. 3 offers a visual summary of the key points made in this study as well as how brand integrity fits into the "bigger picture" in terms of marketing strategies. It is crucial to offer a few last clarifications using Fig. 3 as a point of reference.

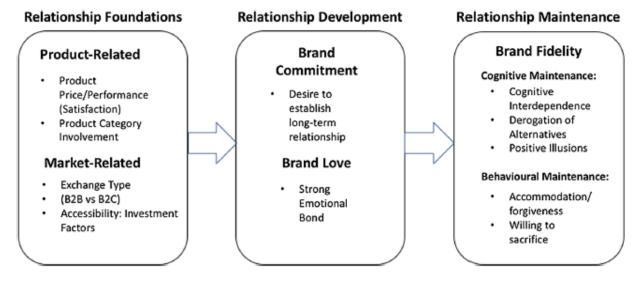


Figure 3: brand integrity fits into the "bigger picture"

First, we realize that the basis of relationships (i.e., factors connected to products and markets) essentially determine how much customers want to build relationships with brands. Higher level brand relationship qualities (such as commitment, love, and faithfulness) are not necessarily appropriate for all brands because the establishment and maintenance of these relationships is very influenced by the product/brand category and market factors. According to research, a number of variables, including product type (e.g., hedonic versus utilitarian), product category involvement (e.g., high versus low involvement) (Christy et al. 1996), brand personality (Smit et al. 2007), and the type of relational exchange (e.g., B2B versus B2C) (Valta 2013), have a

significant impact on the depth of consumer/brand relationships. As can be seen in Fig. 3, we accept that these variables set the limits for the applicability of the brand integrity construct. Second, despite assuming their proper roles in supporting the growth of consumer/brand interactions, brand commitment and brand love are challenging to express and quantify (as thoroughly described in this study). The extent to which a customer is driven to strive toward preserving their relationship with a brand also reflects the level of their emotional connection to it. A declaration of love is simple to make, just like in all partnerships, but it takes work from both parties to keep a relationship strong and healthy. For these reasons, the brand fidelity concept views the consumer's behavioral and cognitive "effort" towards relationship maintenance as a true reflection of their emotional attachment, in addition to what they may self-report.

In this way, the actions of the consumer (also known as brand faithfulness) reveal the degree of their emotional connection to the brand. Last but not least, we admit that the dimensions of brand fidelity, as illustrated in Fig. 3, have characteristics with other well-studied notions such brand citizenship behaviors, attitudinal and behavioral loyalty, switching costs, and so forth. However, brand fidelity's contribution to the consumer/brand literature does not reside in its dimensions alone, but rather in how these dimensions are formed to represent the range of relationship maintenance behaviors and cognitions that are combined to form brand fidelity. In other words, the brand fidelity construct's value comes from the interaction of its components. Furthermore, because there are similarities between individual dimensions across the literature, operationalizing brand faithfulness in the future will be well-informed by it. As a result, measurement issues that are frequently related to new scale development will be greatly avoided.

Conclusion

This study proposes a fresh approach to effectively grasp consumer cognitions and behaviors that best represent stable, long-lasting, and exclusive consumer/brand partnerships by fully embracing the idea that customers and brands are "relationship partners." Brand loyalty, which is derived from theories about commitment and relationship upkeep in romantic love, exhibits high promise as a useful marketing concept and indicator deserving of future academic and practitioner study. The brand loyalty concept effectively expresses the implicit promises that customers make to their brand partners metaphorically. For instance, when a consumer adopts a brand as their own (e.g., cognitive interdependence), they may do so regardless of wealth or circumstance (e.g., willingness to make a sacrifice), in good times and bad (e.g., accommodation or forgiveness), and by forgoing all alternatives. Consumers expressly safeguard and preserve long-lasting brand connections by displaying faithfulness to their brand partners.

References

- [1] Aaker, D.A. 1996. Building strong brands. New York: Free Press.
- [2] Agnew, C.R., P.A. Van Lange, C.E. Rusbult, and C.A. Langston. 1998. Cognitive interdependence: Commitment and the mental representation of close relationships. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 74 (4): 939–954.
- [3] Alnawas, I., and S. Altarifi. 2016. Exploring the role of brand identification and brand love in generating higher levels of brand loyalty. Journal of Vacation Marketing 22 (2): 111–128.
- [4] Ahuvia, A., R.P. Bagozzi, and R. Batra. 2014. Psychometric vs. C-OAR-SE measures of brand love: A reply to Rossiter. Marketing Letters 25 (2): 235–243.
- [5] Ahuvia, A.C. 2005. Beyond the extended self: Loved objects and consumers' identity narratives. Journal of Consumer Research 32 (1): 171–184.
- [6] Albert, N., and D. Merunka. 2013. The role of brand love in consumer-brand relationships. Journal of Consumer Marketing 30 (3): 258–266.
- [7] Albert, N., D. Merunka, and P. Valette-Florence. 2008. When consumers love their brands: Exploring the concept and its dimensions. Journal of Business Research 61 (10): 1062–1075.

- [8] Amine, A. 1998. Consumers' true brand loyalty: the central role of commitment. Journal of Strategic Marketing 6 (4): 305–319.
- [9] Anderson, R.E. 1973. Consumer dissatisfaction: The effect of disconfirmed expectancy on perceived product performance. Journal of Marketing Research 10 (1): 38–44.
- [10] Arriaga, X.B., E.S. Slaughterbeck, N.M. Capezza, and J.L. Hmurovic. 2007. From bad to worse: Relationship commitment and vulnerability to partner imperfections. Personal Relationships 14 (3): 389–409.
- [11] Arrondo, E., C. Berne', J.M. Mu'gica, and P. Rivera. 2002. Modelling of customer retention in multi-format retailing. The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research 12 (3): 281–296.
- [12] Auger, P., and T.M. Devinney. 2007. Do what consumers say matter? The misalignment of preferences with unconstrained ethical intentions. Journal of Business Ethics 76 (4): 361–383.
- [13] Bagozzi, R.P., R. Batra, and A. Ahuvia. 2017. Brand love: Development and validation of a practical scale. Marketing Letters 28 (1): 1–14.
- [14] Bansal, H.S., P.G. Irving, and S.F. Taylor. 2004. A three-component model of customer to service providers. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science 32 (3): 234–250.
- [15] Batra, R., A. Ahuvia, and R.P. Bagozzi. 2012. Brand love. Journal of Marketing 76 (2): 1–16.
- [16] Bengtsson, A., F. Bardhi, and M. Venkatraman. 2010. How global brands travel with consumers: An examination of the relationship between brand consistency and meaning across national boundaries. International Marketing Review 27 (5): 519–540.
- [17] Brucks, M., V.A. Zeithaml, and G. Naylor. 2000. Price and brand name as indicators of quality dimensions for consumer durables. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science 28 (3): 359–374.
- [18] Carrington, M.J., B.A. Neville, and G.J. Whitwell. 2010. Why ethical consumers don't walk their talk: Towards a framework for understanding the gap between the ethical purchase intentions and actual buying behaviour of ethically minded consumers. Journal of Business Ethics 97 (1): 139–158.
- [19] Carroll, B.A., and A.C. Ahuvia. 2006. Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love. Marketing Letters 17 (2): 79–89.
- [20] Chaudhary, A.H. 2018. Brand love: Fiction or reality? Journal of Strategic Marketing. https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2018.1430056.
- [21] Chaudhuri, A., and M.B. Holbrook. 2002. Product-class effects on brand commitment and brand outcomes: The role of brand trust and brand affect. The Journal of Brand Management 10 (1): 33–58.
- [22] Christodoulides, G., and L. De Chernatony. 2010. Consumer-based brand equity conceptualization and measurement: A literature review. International Journal of Research in Marketing 52 (1): 43–66.
- [23] Cifci, S.D., and B.Z. Erdogan. 2016. Antecedents and measurement of brand commitment and behavioural loyalty. Journal of Customer Behaviour 15 (4): 321–336.
- [24] Christy, R., G. Oliver, and J. Penn. 1996. Relationship marketing in consumer markets. Journal of Marketing and Management 12 (1): 175–187.
- [25] Churchill Jr., G.A., and C. Surprenant. 1982. An investigation into the determinants of customer satisfaction. Journal of Marketing Research 19 (4): 491–504.
- [26] Crosby, L.A., and J.R. Taylor. 1983. Psychological commitment and its effects on post-decision evaluation and preference stability among voters. Journal of Consumer Research 9 (4): 413–431.

- [27] Day, G.S. 1977. Diagnosing the product portfolio. Journal of Marketing 41 (2): 29–38.
- [28] Del Vecchio, D. 2000. Moving beyond fit: The role of brand portfolio characteristics in consumer evaluations of brand reliability. Journal of Product & Brand Management 9 (7): 457–471.
- [29] de Oliveira Santini, F., W.J. Ladeira, C.H. Sampaio, and D.C. Pinto. 2018. The brand experience extended model: A meta-analysis. Journal of Brand Management. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-018-0104-6.
- [30] Dick, A.S., and K. Basu. 1994. Customer loyalty: Toward an integrated conceptual framework. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science 22 (2): 99–113.
- [31] Dowling, G. 2002. Customer relationship management. In B2C markets, often less is more. California Management Review 44 (3): 87–104.
- [32] Dumitrescu, L., and M. Ichindelean. 2011. Value chain and customer relationship cycle: Two concepts of relationship marketing. International Journal of Trade, Economics and Finance 2 (2):
- [33] 103–108.
- [34] Eisingerich, A.B., and G. Rubera. 2010. Drivers of brand commitment: A cross-national investigation. Journal of International Marketing 18 (2): 64–79.
- [35] Brand fidelity: a relationship maintenance perspective Fetscherin, M., M. Boulanger, C. Gonc¸alves Filho, and G. Quiroga Souki. 2014. The effect of product category on consumer brand relationships. Journal of Product & Brand Management 23 (2): 78–89.
- [36] Finkel, E.J., C.E. Rusbult, M. Kumashiro, and P.A. Hannon. 2002. Dealing with betrayal in close relationships: Does commitment promote forgiveness? Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 82 (6): 956–974.
- [37] Fournier, S. 1998. Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. Journal of Consumer Research 24 (4): 343–353.
- [38] Fournier, S., and J.L. Yao. 1997. Reviving brand loyalty: A reconceptualization within the framework of consumer-brand relationships. International Journal of Research in Marketing 14 (5): 451–472.
- [39] Garg, R., J. Mukherjee, S. Biswas, and A. Kataria. 2016. An investigation into the concept of brand love and its proximal and distal covariates. Journal of Relationship Marketing 15 (3): 135–153.
- [40] Gianni, G., and F. Franceschini. 2003. A new model to support the personalised management of a quality e-commerce service. International Journal of Service Industry Management 14 (3): 331–346.
- [41] 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.
- [42] Green, A., D. Grace, and H. Perkins. 2016. City branding research and practice: An integrative review. Journal of Brand Management 23 (3): 252–272.
- [43] Gupta, S., and V. Zeithaml. 2006. Customer metrics and their impact on financial performance. Marketing Science 25 (6): 718–739.
- [44] Hatfield, E., J. Traupmann, and S. Sprecher. 1984. Older women's perceptions of their intimate relationships. Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology 2 (2): 108–124.
- [45] Hegner, S.M., A. Fenko, and A. Teravest. 2017. Using the theory of planned behaviour to understand brand love. Journal of Product & Brand Management 26 (1): 26–41.

- [46] Hennig-Thurau, T., and A. Klee. 1997. The impact of customer satisfaction and relationship quality on customer retention: A critical reassessment and model development. Psychology & Marketing 14 (8): 737–764.
- [47] Hirschman, A.O. 1970. Exit, voice, and loyalty: Responses to decline in firms, organisations, and states. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- [48] Hirschman, E.C., and M.B. Holbrook. 1992. Postmodern consumer research: The study of consumption as text. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- [49] Huang, L.-T., T.-C. Cheng, and C.-K. Farn. 2007. The mediating effect of commitment on customer loyalty towards e-brokerages: An enhanced investment model. Total Quality Management & Business Excellence 18 (7): 751–770.
- [50] Jacoby, J., and R.W. Chestnut. 1978. Brand loyalty: Measurement and management. New York: Ronald Press.
- [51] Jacoby, J., and D.B. Kyner. 1973. Brand loyalty vs. repeat purchasing behaviour. Journal of Marketing Research 10 (1): 1–9.
- [52] Jones, T., G.L. Fox, S.F. Taylor, and L.R. Fabrigar. 2010. Service customer commitment and response. Journal of Services Marketing 24 (1): 16–28.
- [53] Jones, T., and S.F. Taylor. 2007. The conceptual domain of service loyalty: How many dimensions? Journal of Services Marketing 21 (1): 36–51.
- [54] Jones, T., S.F. Taylor, and H.S. Bansal. 2008. Commitment to a friend, a service provider, or a service company—are they distinctions worth making? Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science 36 (4): 473–487.
- [55] Kachersky, L., and N. Palermo. 2013. How personal pronouns influence brand name preference. The Journal of Brand Management 20 (7): 558–570.
- [56] Keller, K.L. 1993. Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. Journal of Marketing 57 (1): 1–22.
- [57] Keller, K.L. 2001. Building customer-based brand equity: A blueprint for creating strong brands. Cambridge, MA: Marketing Science Institute (MSI).
- [58] Keller, K.L. 2009. Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment. Journal of Marketing Communications 15 (2–3): 139–155.
- [59] Kim, J., J.D. Morris, and J. Swait. 2008. Antecedents of true brand loyalty. Journal of Advertising 37 (2): 99–117.
- [60] Langley, D.J., T.H. Bijmolt, J.R. Ortt, and N. Pals. 2012. Determinants of social contagion during new product adoption. Journal of Product Innovation Management 29 (4): 623–638.
- [61] Langner, T., D. Bruns, A. Fischer, and J.R. Rossiter. 2014. Falling in love with brands: A dynamic analysis of the trajectories of brand love. Marketing Letters 27 (1): 1–12.
- [62] Leckie, C., M.W. Nyadzayo, and L.W. Johnson. 2016. Antecedents of consumer brand engagement and brand loyalty. Journal of Marketing Management 32 (5–6): 558–578.
- [63] Li, X.R., and J.F. Petrick. 2008. Examining the antecedents of brand loyalty from an investment model perspective. Journal of Travel Research 47 (1): 25–34.
- [64] [ong-Tolbert, S.J., and B.S. Gammoh. 2012. In good and bad times: The interpersonal nature of brand love in service relationships. Journal of Services Marketing 26 (6): 391–402.

- [65] Loureiro, S.M.C., K.H. Ruediger, and V. Demetris. 2012. Brand emotional connection and loyalty. Journal of Brand Management 20 (1): 13–27.
- [66] Mattila, A.S. 2001. The impact of relationship type on customer loyalty in a context of service failures. Journal of Service Research 4 (2): 91–101.
- [67] Mattila, A.S. 2006. How affective commitment boosts guest loyalty (and promotes frequent-guest programs). Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly 47 (2): 174–181.
- [68] Maxian, W., S.D. Bradley, W. Wise, and E.N. Toulouse. 2013. Brand love is in the heart: Physiological responding to advertised brands. Psychology & Marketing 30 (6): 469–478.
- [69] McAlister, L. 1982. A dynamic attribute satiation model of variety seeking behaviour. Journal of Consumer Research 9 (2): 141–150.
- [70] Miller, J.A. 1977. Studying satisfaction, modifying models, eliciting expectations, posing problems, and making meaningful measurements. In Conceptualization and measurement of consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction, ed. H.K. Hunt, 72–91. Cambridge, MA: Marketing Science Institute.
- [71] Mitra, A., and J.G. Lynch Jr. 1995. Toward a reconciliation of market power and information theories of advertising effects on price elasticity. Journal of Consumer Research 21 (4): 644–659.
- [72] Moorman, C., G. Zaltman, and R. Deshpande. 1992. Relationships between providers and users of market research: The dynamics of trust within and between organizations. Journal of Marketing Research 29 (3): 314–328.
- [73] Morgan, R.M., and S.D. Hunt. 1994. The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing. Journal of Marketing 58 (3): 20–38.
- [74] Murray, S.L., and J.G. Holmes. 1997. A leap of faith? Positive illusions in romantic relationships. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 23 (6): 586–604.
- [75] Nam, J., Y. Ekinci, and G. Whyatt. 2011. Brand equity, brand loyalty and consumer satisfaction. Annals of Tourism Research 38 (3): 1009–1030.
- [76] Nusair, K., N. Hua, and X. Li. 2010. A conceptual framework of relationship commitment: e-travel agencies. Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology 1 (2): 106–120.