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## **Behavioural Consequence of Brand Passion: A Conceptual Model**

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### **Abstract**

Brands, certainly, play a prominent role in customer's consumption and purchase behaviour. Extant studies into customer-brand relationship have proposed and tested several relational constructs including brand attachment, brand love and brand passion. However, despite the recent attentions, the relationship of brand passion to other relevant constructs stays undecided, as does its managerial outcomes. Based on this gap, the purpose of this study is to develop a conceptual framework that captures the behavioural consequences of brand passion including brand advocacy, social network support, brand community engagement, purchase loyalty, price insensitivity and alternative devaluation. This study adds to the body of knowledge in the customer behaviour literature and deepens our understanding about the consequences of enthusiastic connections between brands and consumers by incorporating several behavioural constructs as the outcomes of brand passion. Grounding on the evidence provided by the existing research on the significance of self-brand connection and the central role of emotions in robust customer-brand relationships, this study delivers more detailed insights on the market consequences of a customer's passionate feelings for a brand. In addition, from a managerial point of view, this study underlines the importance of enriching young customers' experience with the brands to provide strategic use of highlighted 'passion' and favourable positive emotions in customer-brand relationship management.

**Keywords:** Brand Passion, Customer-brand Relationship, Fast Fashion, Brand Constructs, Behavioural Effects, Quantitative Research

### **1. Introduction**

Brand practitioners pursue different approaches to establish and strong relationships with their customers (Fournier, 1998). Academics have also shown interest in this topic and have introduced different brand constructs to describe the role of affect and emotional connections in purchase behaviours, through various conceptual frameworks. As a result, literature examining customer-brand relationships through various brand constructs are growing rapidly.

Furthermore, there has been increasing effort by marketers and brand managers, especially in fashion and luxury category, to create and retain emotional and affectionate connections with their customers. Zara, Lacoste, Top Shop, H&M, Sports girl and Burberry are among the dominant brands. Nonetheless, there are limited studies that focus on luxury brands (see Bian & Forsythe, 2012; So, Parsons, & Yap, 2013) and fashion clothing brands (cf. Ismail & Spinelli, 2012; Phau & Ong, 2007) in relation to brand constructs and their behavioural consequences.

Research on psychological of spending suggests that spending behaviours usually originate from internal motivations such as emotions, experiences and culture (Baumgartner, 2012). With respect to clothing, customers choose particular brands that best represents them and aligns with the message they are trying to send to others. According to O'Cass (2004), brands and products provide different meanings to different people; hence, customers from differing attachments (in intensity and nature) to them.

Accordingly, a customer develops an emotional connection with a fashion brand that is both well suited to his character and makes him feel and look good (Ismail & Spinelli, 2012). Such connection may result in a strong and even extreme 'devotion' toward certain preferred brands (Belk & Tumbat, 2005) and are of paramount importance in driving customer behaviours (Bauer, Heinrich, & Martin, 2007). The increasing significance of the concepts such as relationship marketing and experiential marketing has led to augmented popularity of branding constructs -such as brand engagement, brand attachment, brand affect and brand passion, in brand management theory and practice.

Earlier research focused on well-established concepts as the consequences of brand passion including word-of-mouth (WOM), commitment, self-congruity and loyalty (see Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2013; Japutra, Ekinci, & Simkin, 2014; Park, MacInnis, & Priester, 2008; Vlachos, 2012). Whereas, existing studies offer limited insights into the consequences of brand passion, the lack of conceptual works on behavioural effects of brand constructs remains an essential gap in customer-brand relationship literature and more so in fashion brands category. The proposed model aims to address this gap by developing a conceptual model of two distinctive groups of behavioural effects- inner behavioural effects and social behavioural effects. This study will examine whether the identified variables in each group will act as behavioural effects of brand passion among young customers of fast fashion brands. We contemplate those particular effects due to their potential relevance to the customer-brand relationship domain. Our model builds upon the studies of Bauer et al. (2007) and Swimberghe, Astakhova, and Wooldridge (2014).

In the next paragraphs, we succinctly look over the description and the previous literature on fast fashion brands. Then we discuss customers' self-association with brands, based on 'self-expansion' theory, paying singular attention to fashion brands. The study continues with a discussion about the role of passion (as a marketing concept addressing strong passionate customer-entity relationships) in customers' relationship with their favourite fashion brands. In hypothesis development, we briefly explain identified behavioural concepts and elucidate how they can act as a behavioural effect of brand passion, leading to study conceptual framework. We wrap up with proposed methodology that we plan to employ in order to test the conceptual model and address limitations of this study as well as academic and managerial implications.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Fast Fashion**

The term *fast fashion* is a contemporary strategy that fashion companies and retailers employ to transfer most recent fashion trends from catwalk directly and quickly to the customer market. Zara has been leading this retail strategy revolution. This strategy is based on a system

which combines quick response production with enhanced design capabilities to accomplish two goals: (1) design fashionable products and (2) exploit minimal production lead times to match supply with uncertain demand (Cachon & Swinney, 2011).

In addition, fast fashion retailers do not directly invest in designing products and instead get inspirations from fashion shows, promising trends and cues taken from mainstream customers, which lowers the final lower production cost and gives them a certain competitive advantage (Segre Reinach, 2005; Tokatli, 2007). In other words, fast fashion gives the mainstream customer an opportunity to take advantage of hot clothing styles at a lower price. Globally renowned brands such as Zara, H&M, and Benetton have effectively used this retailing strategy (Passariello, 2006).

In Australia, over the past five years, fast fashion has made its way into customers' wardrobes, the industry revenue worth \$1.1 billion (8.5% of total clothing retail market with an estimated value of \$12.8 billion) with an estimated annual growth rate of 8.7%. Young customers' exposure to latest fashion designs through social media and online shopping knowingly facilitate the entrance of major international retail giants such as Zara and H&M, changing the industry landscape. The leading brands in Australian fast fashion market are Cotton On (Brand Names: Cotton On, Factorie, Supre), Fast Future Brands (Brand Names: Valley girl, Temt), Zara, Top Shop, H&M and Uniqlo (IBISWorld, 2013).

## 2.2 Self-Association with Fashion Brands

Evidence drawn from the literature suggests that the personality traits are surrounding a particular brand, significantly affect how others think of the personality of the owner of that brand. This is characteristics of what brands one wears (Fennis & Pruyn, 2007). Academics believe that this phenomenon deeply relates to specific emotional associations that customers develop with brands. They seek both functional and symbolic benefits through owning a particular brand. However, as mentioned earlier, in order to establish and maintain a higher level of social status, people look for brands that are capable of adding a socially symbolic characteristic to their personalities that is better regarded or more easily visible than their own characteristics. The self-brand connection, therefore, serves to enhance self-identity.

This connection seems rather vital for customers of fashion clothing. Focusing on emotional connection, which is central context of this study, clothing companies create value for customers by offering experience with the brand with several potential symbolic benefits, such as creating positive emotions, expressing themselves by wearing that brand, and at a social level, establishing a sense of belonging with the brand community.

Previous research extensively acknowledges the significant role of self-expressive connections that customer develop with their favourite brands. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) refer to these connections as key players in shaping customers' emotional relationship towards brands. They define self-expressive connections as 'the customer's perception of the degree to which the specific brand enhances one's social self and/or inner self' (p. 82). With the booming development of internet-based social media over the past decade, the 'social' aspect of such connections has been emerged as easy-to-access online communities where individuals with diverse personal backgrounds share common senses towards their favourite brand. Recent

studies seek to examine different consequences that inner self-expressive connections and social self-expressive connections might have. Wallace, Buil, and De Chernatony (2012) found that customers, who establish socially self-expressive connections, are more likely to accept the brand and its wrongdoings, while inner self-expressive connectors mostly offer word-of-mouth for that brand. Nonetheless, previous studies clearly indicate the significance of the brand in terms of reflecting, participating in, or creating customers' inner and social identity (Albert et al., 2013).

### **2.3 The Role of Passion**

In the psychology literature, the concept of 'passion' is strongly related to deep interpersonal feelings. It is described as a state of involving strong senses of attraction to and desire to be united with another person, which are usually characterised by sexual and physiological arousal (cf. Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999; Djikic & Oatley, 2004; Hatfield, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978). Sternberg includes passion as one major component of the 'triangular of love' (1986, 1997). The triangular theory of posits that interpersonal love comprises of three components: intimacy, decision/commitment, and passion. Sternberg defines passion as "the drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, sexual consummation, and related phenomena in loving relationships" (Sternberg, 1997, p. 315).

Based on psychological studies of emotional interpersonal connections and Sternberg's theory of love (1997), marketing academics attempted to describe passionate feelings towards different marketing entities. Early qualitative research suggests significant similarities between interpersonal passion and marketing passion (Shimp & Madden, 1988). Correspondingly, in later studies of consumption marketing, passion is usually described as individuals' strong willingness to develop an effective and extremely positive attitude towards an entity (Bauer et al., 2007). Such entities stretch from products and brands to places, communities, sports clubs, and even countries. Fournier (1998) refer to passion as the core of strong and high-quality customer-brand relationships. Albert et al. (2013) define passion, as 'a psychological construct comprised of excitation, infatuation, and obsession for a brand' (p. 2) and 'a feeling which few customers embrace' (p. 5).

Literature suggests that feeling passionate toward a brand differs from other types of customer-brand connections conceptualised in previous studies, such as love and attachment. For instance, according to Pimentel and Reynolds (2004), emotionally dedicated customers usually go beyond the simple act of spreading positive WOM; they involve in convincing others to choose a specific brand. These strong emotional connections derive from overpowering longing that controls customers' attitudes, feelings and behaviours, in both inner and social context (Belk, Ger, & Askegaard, 2003).

Rozanski, Baum, and Wolfsen (1999) refer to 'brand zealots', whose emotional connection with their preferred brand goes well beyond the fulfilment of immediate needs and can even encourage them to commit extreme acts. They give example in terms of how a vocal minority of old 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 provide a few evidence of such acts: zealous owners of VW Beetle giving personal names to their cars and

Mac passionate users who promote campaigns against Bill Gates (the founder of Microsoft) or tattoo Apple logo on their chest next to their hearts. There are more examples of studies that try to examine enthusiastic and highly passionate forms of customer object relationships (see Muniz Jr & Schau, 2005; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995).

One might ask what types of individuals show more passionate attitudes and behaviours towards marketing entities. Academics have conducted studies to find a significant relationship between personal traits and passionate attitude and behaviours. Matzler, Pichler, and Hemetsberger (2007) studied passionate car owners and concluded that more extravert customers are more likely to be passionate customers. Therefore, they suggest that individual characteristics and personality plays a role in level and strength of emotional connections toward brands. Füller, Matzler, and Hoppe (2008) give supporting evidence to Matzler et al. (2007)'s finding by identifying two personality traits that exert significant influence on brand passion: extraversion and openness. However, yet no consensus can be found on the effects of personal traits on emotional relationships with brands.

Considering the positive outcomes of having customers who are passionate towards a brand, brand managers actively focus on building such deep emotional connections to establish groups of long-time loyal customers. Previous research shows that customer-brand passionate connection may result in loyalty (Whang, Allen, Sahoury, & Zhang, 2004); willingness to pay premium price (Albert et al., 2013; Bauer et al., 2007; Swimberghe et al., 2014); evangelism (Matzler et al., 2007); positive word-of-mouth (Albert et al., 2013; Bauer et al., 2007); commitment (Albert et al., 2013); purchase intention (Bauer et al., 2007). Significantly different contexts and contrary findings of previous studies, coupled with diverse inner and social outcomes of self-expressive connections indicate the inconsistency in existing literature.

### 3. Hypotheses development

As discussed earlier, previous researches suggest different outcomes of inner and social self-expressive passionate connections. This study in search for a conceptual framework to identify such different outcomes, present an initial framework (Figure 1). In this framework, six variables have been identified and proposed to have significant relationship with customer-brand passionate connection. These variables act as inner and social behavioural consequences of developing strong passionate relationship with fashion brands. In the following sections, first we explain the literature background for each variable and then provide theoretical supportive notions for the proposed relationships.

#### 3.1 Social Behavioural Effects

**Brand Advocacy:** Development of a connection between the customer and the brand, leading to strong brand associations, may result in individuals becoming advocates of the brand (Kemp, Childers, & Williams, 2012; Kemp, Jillaipalli, & Becerra, 2014). Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, and Sen (2012) refer to brand advocacy as the promotion of the brand or organization that customer feels self-identified. Brand advocacy can go beyond simple act of socially defending a brand (itself or its offerings) to more behavioural acts, such as showing off company logo or name, collecting memorabilia, apparel, or even acquiring tattoos (Katz, 1994).

Regarding the prominence of brand advocacy, Dye (2000) report that more than two-third of US economy is influenced by buzz ('explosive self-generating demands', referring to the high speed at which word of mouth works) (p. 140). This means that a majority of US marketing industries such as entertainment and fashion are affected by the communications and interactions among customers.

Keller (2007) reports that strong advocacy on behalf of a brand is vitally linked with the growth of brand vibrancy: 'the anticipation and excitement generated around a brand— by a brand' (Kitchin, 2003, p. 86). Marsden, Samson, and Upton (2005) examined various sectors including banks, car manufacturers, mobile phone networks and supermarkets, in the UK market and found that positive and negative advocacy are significant predictors of sales growth in these sectors. Therefore, one can theorise that brand passion would lead to brand advocacy, which consequently leads to sales growth. Recent studies reveal the significant relationship between self-brand connection and advocacy. For example, Fullerton (2005) demonstrated that in retail service brand setting, emotional connection to a brand positively relates to both repurchase intentions and willingness to act as an advocate on behalf of the brand. Wallace et al. (2012) provide support for the same proposition in social networks context. In the marketing education perspective, Jillapalli and Wilcox (2010) conducted a study on students attachment to professors and how that impacts advocacy. They concluded that students' strong attachments to university professors might result in students' willingness to advocate the professor. Furthermore, Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, and Iacobucci (2010) report the influence of brand emotional attachment on promotion behaviours. Based on empirical and theoretical evidence, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H1. Brand passion is positively correlated with brand advocacy.*

**Social network support:** Recent developments in IT have created strong virtual media and revolutionised the way people communicate. Easy-to-access, low costs and ubiquitous popularity are just a few merits that such networks enjoy, creating global networks of individuals sharing ideas. For example, Facebook social network has approximately 1.3 billion monthly active users, among which 680 million are mobile users, while Twitter and Google + have 645 and 540 million active users respectively, uploading, sharing, 'liking' and 'following' billions of photos, videos and texts every single week (<http://www.statisticbrain.com>). Marketing scholarship nowadays places noticeable importance on the active role of customers in social networks. Customer are regarded as active members of social communities who participate in value creation by active communication (Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010). 'Linking' a brand's page in Facebook page, 'following' a brand's Twitter or Google+ page, and consequent relevant word-of-mouth are among those communications.

In this study, we propose the notion that having a strong emotional connection with a fashion brand could act as a motivation for the customer to get active in brand's social media pages' communications. Based on the connection each customer sense with a particular brand, he or she engage in social networks and use the profile page to present his or her online identity to other members (Schau & Gilly, 2003). In addition, Wallace et al. (2012) suggest that the customers who have 'liked' a brand's social media page, seek self-expressive purposes. Considering self-expressive brands are among those brands that customer usually develops a

strong connection with, we can state that having an emotional connection with a brand may have a significant impact on active engagement on brand's social media. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H2. Brand passion is positively correlated with Social network support.*

***Brand community engagement:***

Muniz Jr and O'guinn (2001) introduced the idea of brand communities as 'a specialized, non-geographically community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand' and 'marked by a shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility' (p. 412). McMillan and Chavis (1986) consider four elements for brand communities: (1) membership (as the feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal relatedness); (2) influence (as a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group and of the group mattering to its members); (3) reinforcement (as integration and fulfilment of needs; and (4) shared emotional connections, as (the commitment, belief and experience that members have shared). Since the introduction, academic scholars have shown considerable attention to the idea of brand community(cf. Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002). Communities can influence members' perceptions and actions, circulate information, learn customer evaluations of new offerings, and engage and collaborate with highly loyal customers (Algesheimer et al. 2005).

There are several prototypical examples of brand communities that truly represent the strong bond between the brand and its loyal customers. In technology, we have Apple Macintosh brand community (Belk & Tumbat, 2005), Sun's Java centre community (Cothrel & Williams, 2000), and virtual communities of Linux or Android (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalú, 2010). However, long before the technology thriving years, Harley-Davidson's Harley Owners Group, a support group actively nurtured by the company, gathered motorbike fanatics for various events (Fournier, McAlexander, Schouten, & Sensiper, 2000). Such effective support communities have allured marketing managers to consider significant investments in building and facilitating brand communities (Algesheimer et al., 2005). While much fast fashion brand such as Zara and H&M administers social communities of thousands of loyal customers, no study have specifically focused on relevant aspects to customers.

Previous studies evidently advocate association between a strong relationship with the brand and willingness to join brand support communities. The relationships and integration that customers perceive to have with their favourite brands determine the strength of a brand community(Schouten, McAlexander, & Koenig, 2007). Accordingly, Bender (1978) defines brand communities as 'a network of social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds'. Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, and Ilić (2011) address that engagement with brand communities is in strong connection with customer empowerment, connection and emotional bonding. Davidson, McNeill, and Ferguson (2007) refer to regular magazine readers, as a habit of addiction, implying emotional attachment to their favourite magazines, which brings upon negative effects of disconnecting oneself from a magazine. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H3. Brand passion is positively correlated with Brand community engagement.*

### 3.2 Inner behavioural effects

#### *Purchase Loyalty:*

Marketing research support the notion that establishing and maintaining a high-quality relationship with customers, based in emotional connection, is an important determinant of loyal purchase behaviour (Albrecht, Neumann, Haber, & Bauer, 2011). Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) believe that brands that make customers 'joyful' and 'affectionate' motivate greater purchase loyalty.

Regarding brand passion, Füller et al. (2008) suggest that there is a substantial link between brand passion and brand trust, and argued that brand trust leads to higher levels of loyalty. Yim, Tse, and Chan (2008) highlight the substantial roles of intimacy and passion in developing customer loyalty. Among luxury and fashion brands studies, Bian and Forsythe (2012) report empirical support for positive impact of affective commitment on purchase loyalty, which in view of the non-negligible interrelation between affective commitment and brand attachment (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Tsai, 2011a), suggest a valid connection between brand passion and behavioural loyalty. Thus:

*H4: brand passion is positively correlated with purchase loyalty*

*Devaluation of alternatives:* This concept originates from psychological literature in the context of interpersonal relationships and commitment, where Johnson and Rusbult (1989) conducted the pioneering study. They examined that individuals who are more committed to their relationships, de-value potential threatening alternative partners. In other words, committed individuals reveal a propensity to view tempting alternatives in less favourable terms (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989). Other studies provide evidence to support this conception (see Lydon, Fitzsimons, & Naidoo, 2003) and argue that the more the alternatives are threatening, the stronger alternative devaluating. These studies are foundational for conceptual and empirical examinations in marketing settings.

Tsai (2011a, 2011b) posits that in customers-brands relationships, commitment and trust towards the preferred brand are the key elements in resisting other alternatives. By strengthening these relationships, customer beliefs about the brand are deepened to a point that serves as an intense commitment by customers to preserve the relationship (Fournier, 1998). Furthermore, Park et al. (2010) propose that when a customer is passionately attached to a brand, he/she is 'less likely to rely on alternatives, even in other categories that fill the same need' (p. 5). Considering the supports provided from both psychological and marketing literature, we emphasise on this concept as a key behavioural effect of brand passion and propose the following hypothesis:

*H5: brand passions positively correlated with devaluation of alternatives*

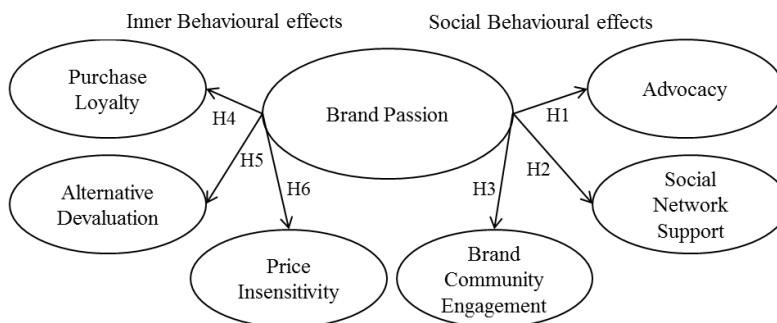
*Price Insensitivity:* The willingness of customers to pay for products or services reflects their purchasing intentions (Li, Li, & Kambele, 2012). Customer's unconditional willingness to pay is one of the strongest indicators of brand loyalty and may be the most reasonable summary measure of overall brand equity (Netemeyer et al., 2004). Popular brands affect customer-brand self-expressive connection by offering exceptional values (over and above the functional value). At the same time, customers associate high values to a brand, as they feel symbolically self-identified and emotionally connected with the brand. Studies have provided empirical support to



the notion that the extent to which a customer links value to a brand (Starr & Robinson, 1978; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005), and the consequent level of customer-brand emotional connection (Bauer et al., 2007) determine the degree of willingness to purchase that brand, even if the price increased. Hence, we propose that:

*H6. Brand passion is positively correlated with willingness to price insensitivity.*

Figure 1 depicts the full conceptual framework presented for this study. As shown, brand advocacy, willingness to pay premium price and devaluation of alternatives are hypothesised to be the behavioural effects of brand passion.



**Figure 1:** Study conceptual framework

#### 4. Methodology

This research study is designed to investigate customers' behavioural responses to a brand construct i.e. brand passion. The self-administered questionnaire will be designed as the survey instrument, including all the concepts in the proposed model, in order to investigate the hypotheses of interest. The measures for all the constructs in the study will be drawn from previous research and measures will be subjected to reliability and validity tests. Brand passion items will be adapted from Albert, Merunka, and Valette-Florence (2008), Vallerand et al. (2003) and Sternberg (1997). To measure brand advocacy, items from Wallace et al. (2012) will be used. Willingness to pay the premium price will be captured using scales developed by Albert et al. (2013) and Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996). Finally, items to measure devaluation of alternatives will be adapted from Johnson and Rusbult (1989). All the items will be measured using a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". In order to make the scale items fit with the fashion clothing sector, all scale items will be tailored accordingly.

Initially participants will be asked a series of questions that relates to emotional connection, which will enable us to identify brands towards which participants are emotionally connected. These questions will also help us identify the strength of emotional connection i.e. brand passion, and three behavioural effects will be obtained via scale items. Regarding data analyses, the proposed relationships between brand passion, brand advocacy, willingness to pay a premium price and de-valuation of alternatives will be tested using structural equation modelling (SEM) technique via AMOS 16.0. However, the measurement will be first validated through a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of a pilot test, prior to estimating the full SEM.

Upon establishing the model fit, the direction and significance of several structural parameters will be estimated.

## 5. Conclusion Implications and Limitations

Since Fournier's (1998) comprehensive discussion on the brand-customer relationship, its comprising elements and customers' perceived quality of relationships, the subject has become a popular topic for academics. Based on Fournier's identified elements, several marketing constructs have been introduced to conceptualise a particular part of relationship above that plays a significant role in marketing practices. Among the constructs, a few were commonly accepted and officially entered the marketing and brand management terminology, including brand engagement, brand attachment, brand love, brand affect and brand passion. While Research on brand passion is recent, other constructs have been rigorously studied in different contexts and various marketing sectors.

Despite recent studies, little is known about brand passion. We began a comprehensive attempt to model behavioural responses that customers demonstrate as a consequence of their emotional connection with fashion brands. We identified six concepts as both inner and social behavioural effects of brand passion; comprising purchase loyalty, brand advocacy, price insensitivity, alternative de-valuation, social network support and brand community engagement.

Academically, in pursuit of a profound understanding of customer-brand relationships, this study adds to the body of knowledge in the brand management and customer behaviour literature. By incorporating several behavioural effects as the consequences of brand passion, the proposed conceptual framework expands the current understanding of the impact of enthusiastic connection on customers' behaviours in the fashion-clothing sector.

From a managerial point of view, first we have to address the implications that establishing passion-inducing brands might have for marketers. Successful brands inspire their customers to develop positive personal qualities, such as open-mindedness and gregariousness (Hemetsberger 2014). Practitioners can leverage these qualities and trigger customers' fantasies, feelings and excitements. In particular, fashion brands portray lifestyle qualities of a certain group of people that customers dream to have. These brands must aim to take on a caring role, i.e. dedicating extra time, space and money to passionate and loyal customers.

In this study, we underline that marketers must cater to the needs of customers who are passionate towards brands. They have to be aware of the significance of connecting enthusiastic customers' experiences with the brands. For instance, creating and promoting a live and vibrant social community could be an effective use of highlighted enthusiasm and favourable positive emotions and attitudes. These communities have to provide an environment where passionate customers can easily share the ideas, thoughts and suggestions. Through this, customers feel even more identified towards the brand, which helps managers to channel effectively this state of emotional connection towards strengthened loyalty. The marketer should also be aware of the symbolic meanings customer associate to the emotions and feelings of interest to the experiential (So et al., 2013).

This research has a number of limitations. First, the present study only considers a limited number of behavioural outcomes of brand passion. Considering particular behaviours that obsessive passion might bring upon, future studies could investigate other behaviour

consequences of brand passion, pertaining to the characteristics of the company, brand and customer. Second, the broad range of luxury and fashion products and different connections that customers might experience with fashion brands demand more empirical examinations of passionate relationships. These limitations provide new research opportunities. This research area is still at first stages, and detailed examinations are required to provide general understandings about different aspects of self-expressive customer-brand connections.

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