



BRAND LOVE: EXPLORING EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS THROUGH NEUROMARKETING

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Introduction

Relevance

In the ever-evolving landscape of modern marketing, the concept of "brand love" has gained significant traction, capturing the attention of both industry professionals and academic researchers alike. This emotional connection between consumers and brands has become crucial in cultivating customer loyalty and fostering long-lasting relationships.

Research problem

Despite the growing research interest in brand love, a gap persists in understanding how emotional connections between consumers and brands manifest in measurable marketing outcomes. Specifically, the underlying mechanisms by which brand love shapes customer loyalty and advocacy behaviors warrant further exploration. This may involve incorporating insights from neuromarketing techniques to capture relevant metrics of brand love.

Aim

The aim of this research is to systematically review the existing literature on brand love to identify the key factors, mechanisms, and outcomes associated with emotional connections between consumers and brands, particularly focusing on how these connections influence customer loyalty and advocacy.

Tasks

1. Conduct a systematic literature review: gather and analyze peer-reviewed articles related to brand love.
2. Identify key antecedents that contribute to the development of brand love.
3. Investigate how neuromarketing can be utilized to measure and understand brand love quantitatively.

Research methodology

A systematic literature review is employed to comprehensively analyze existing research on brand love.

Theoretical assumptions

The theoretical foundations of **brand love** can be drawn from diverse psychological theories and empirical research examining the nature of **consumer-brand relationships**.

- 1. Causal model of brand love:** A comprehensive causal model of brand love has been proposed, identifying several antecedents and consequences. Key antecedents include functional and sensory brand uniqueness, brand satisfaction, personal experiences, and brand fit with the consumer's self-concept. This model suggests that emotional connections to brands are influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, leading to outcomes such as brand loyalty and willingness to pay a premium. (Fournier, 1998)
- 2. Triangular theory of love:** initially proposed by Sternberg (1986), has been adapted to understand brand love as a psychological construct. This theory posits that brand love encompasses three components: intimacy, passion, and commitment. These elements reflect the emotional attachment consumers develop towards brands, paralleling interpersonal relationships. (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Joshi & Garg, 2021)
- 3. Attachment theory:** Drawing on Bowlby's attachment theory, researchers have explored how emotional bonds between consumers and brands can manifest similarly to interpersonal attachments. Constructs such as passion, emotional attachment, and separation distress are integral to understanding the dynamics of brand love relationships. This viewpoint underscores the significance of emotional involvement in fostering strong connections between consumers and brands. (Thomson et al., 2005)
- 4. Neuroscientific insights:** Emerging empirical research employing neuroimaging methodologies has endeavored to elucidate the neural underpinnings of the brand love phenomenon. These studies suggest a potential overlap between the brain regions activated during experiences of brand love and those activated in the context of interpersonal romantic love, indicative of a shared emotional foundation. Understanding these neural substrates can provide deeper insights into how marketers can cultivate brand love through targeted strategies. (Gumparthi et al., 2021) In general, neuromarketing methods help to gain insights into consumer emotions and preferences. Techniques such as eye-tracking, facial coding, or brain imaging can help identify how consumers emotionally respond to branding efforts.

Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(4), 343-373. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209515>

Carroll, B. A., & Ahuvia, A. (2006). Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love. *Marketing Letters*, 17(2), 79-89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11002-006-9015-6>

Joshi, A., & Garg, R. (2021). Brand Love: Role of Online Customer Experience, Value Co-creation, and Brand Loyalty in Emerging Markets Contexts. *Frontiers in Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.897933>

Thomson, M., MacInnis, D. J., & Park, C. W. (2005). The ties that bind: Measuring the strength of consumers' emotional attachments to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 15(1), 77-91. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp1501_10

Gumparthi, S., Sinha, A., & Kaur, H. (2021). Neural mechanisms of brand love relationship dynamics: Is the development of brand love relationships the same as that of interpersonal romantic love relationships? *Frontiers in Neuroscience*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnins.2020.534671>

Research results

The following summarizes key findings from recent studies regarding the antecedents of brand love.

- 1. Functional and sensory brand uniqueness:** According to Rahman et al. (2021), functional and sensory brand uniqueness serve as indirect precursors to the development of emotional connections between consumers and brands. These distinctive brand attributes enhance the brand's appeal and distinctiveness, thereby creating a favorable environment that facilitates deeper emotional engagement from consumers. While these factors do not directly lead to brand love, they play a crucial role in cultivating the conditions necessary for such emotional attachments to form.
- 2. Brand satisfaction:** identified as a direct antecedent of brand love. When consumers are satisfied with their experiences and interactions with a brand, they are more likely to develop strong emotional ties. Satisfaction can stem from product quality, customer service, and overall brand experience. (Rahman et al., 2021)
- 3. Brand fit with inner self:** the alignment between a brand's image and the consumer's self-concept plays a crucial role in fostering brand love. When consumers perceive that a brand reflects their identity or values, they are more likely to form an emotional attachment. (Rahman et al., 2021)
- 4. Personal experiences:** meaningful personal experiences with a brand, such as nostalgic memories or significant life events associated with the brand, significantly contribute to the development of brand love. These experiences create lasting emotional bonds that enhance consumer loyalty. (Rahman et al., 2021)
- 5. Self-Expressive brands:** brands allowing consumers to express their identities contribute positively to brand love. Self-expressive brands resonate with consumers on an emotional level, reinforcing their attachment to the brand. (Bıçakcıoğlu et al., 2016; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006)
- 6. Brand trust:** when consumers trust a brand to deliver on its promises consistently, it strengthens their emotional connection and loyalty. (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Joshi & Garg, 2021)
- 7. Hedonic value:** brands that provide enjoyable experiences or evoke positive emotions are more likely to foster strong attachments among consumers. (Kang, 2015)

Rahman, R., Langner, T., & Temme, D. (2021). Brand love: Conceptual and empirical investigation of a holistic causal model. *Journal of Brand Management*, 28(5), 577-594. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-021-00237-7>

Bıçakcıoğlu, I., Ipek, I., & Bayraktaroglu, S. (2016). Factors Influencing Brand Love: A Study on Turkish Consumers. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 11(10), 92-103.

Carroll, B. A., & Ahuvia, A. (2006). Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love. *Marketing Letters*, 17(2), 79-89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11002-006-9015-6>

Albert, N., & Merunka, D. (2013). The role of brand love in consumer-brand relationships: An empirical study in the luxury market. *Journal of Brand Management*, 20(5), 388-402.

Joshi, A., & Garg, R. (2021). Brand Love: Role of Online Customer Experience, Value Co-Creation, and Relationship Quality in Emerging Markets Contexts. *Frontiers in Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.897933>

Kang, A. (2015). Brand Love – Moving Beyond Loyalty: An Empirical Investigation of Perceived Brand Love of Indian Consumers. *Arab Economic and Business Journal*, 10(2), 90-101. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aebj.2015.04.001>

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Emotional engagement is fundamental to brand love**, as consumers develop strong emotional attachments based on personal experiences, satisfaction, and self-expressive brand qualities. This emotional bond enhances customer loyalty and encourages positive word-of-mouth behaviors.
- **Brand love is influenced by various antecedents**, including functional and sensory brand uniqueness, brand satisfaction, trust, personal experiences, and alignment with the consumer's self-concept. Understanding these factors can guide marketers in designing strategies that foster deeper emotional connections.
- Incorporating neuromarketing techniques can **provide valuable insights into the neural mechanisms underlying brand love**, allowing marketers to tailor their strategies based on how consumers emotionally connect with brands at a neurological level.
- Strong emotional ties not only enhance customer loyalty but also lead to increased advocacy behaviors, where consumers actively promote the brand to others. **This underscores the importance of nurturing brand love as a strategic marketing objective.**