

TWENTY YEARS RESEARCH ON BRAND LOVE: THE AGENDA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to understand the research on brand love since the first appearance of the word 'love' in consumer behaviour relationships and to provide a systematic review of brand love research in the literature. In addition, derive a comprehensive conceptualization of brand love, and summarize important key findings as well as the fundamental issues for future research. An extensive literature review was carried out on brand love, which was spread over 44 journals found on the ISI Web of Science, Scopus, Emerald, EBSCO, and Science Direct. A total of 79 conceptual and empirical papers from 1998 to 2017 were analysed using different classification schemes. Significant research activity found in the 2013-2017 period and most of that examined the antecedents and consequences of brand love in various research settings. This study can serve as a valuable tool for researchers to understand the concept of brand love and to direct further research.

Keywords: Brand Love, Consumer Brand Relationship, Systematic Review

INTRODUCTION

Marketers, psychologists and scholars have discussed the relationship between humans and brand loyalty by for more than a decade. It has been an issue since Fournier launched her seminal study entitled "Consumers and their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research" in 1998 which highlighted the importance of having a nurturing relationship between brands and consumers. Fournier (1998) showed that consumers build brand meaning with the product they are using and build an emotional relationship with brands over time. The nurtured relationship between brand and the consumer is build by consumer emotional or practical needs (Fournier, 2009). Strong relationship between the consumer and a brand will heighten consumers' loyalty level and can offer economic benefits to companies (MacInnis et al., 2009). One of the emotional connections between a person and a brand can be explained using the

concept of love. Scholars argue that there are psychological process similarities between a–person-to-person relationship and between a-person-to-a-brand relationship (Shimp and Madden, 1988) thus this emotional relationship can be called brand love.

Fournier (1998) considered love to be one of the indicators determining the quality of consumer-brand relationships. After Fournier’s work (1998), many scholars started to explore this brand love more intensively and measured by using several approaches, namely, Interpersonal Relationship Theory (Shimp and Madden, 1988, Albert et al., 2009, Long-Tolbert and Gammoh, 2012, Fetscherin, 2014), Parasocial Love (Fetscherin, 2014) and the Prototype of Love (Batra et al., 2012). Although many studies have tried to explore this relationship, several researches have proposed different definitions and different measurements of the brand love concept. There is a wide array of discussion about brand love; but to date, this concept is still contentious (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2008, Pinto Borges et al., 2016).

Although brand love is a new construct in Consumer-Brand Relationship study (Fournier, 1998, Ahuvia, 2005), it has become highly pertinent in marketing, for both researchers and marketing practitioners (Langner et al., 2015). However, only a few studies have examined how research has evolved and what work exists in this topic (e.g. Fetscherin and Heinrich (2014), Moussa (2015), Veloutsou and Guzmán (2017)). This paper seeks to fill this gap and aims to examine brand love research since it was first introduced by Fournier in 1998 until 2017 and shows how the concept has evolved. This review, using systematic analysis, tries to show the impact authors, journals, and key articles have had, which the most influential research stream and which can thus contribute most to brand love theory, as well as outline possible future research to make significant contributions to the body of knowledge in consumer-brand relationships, especially in the brand love context.

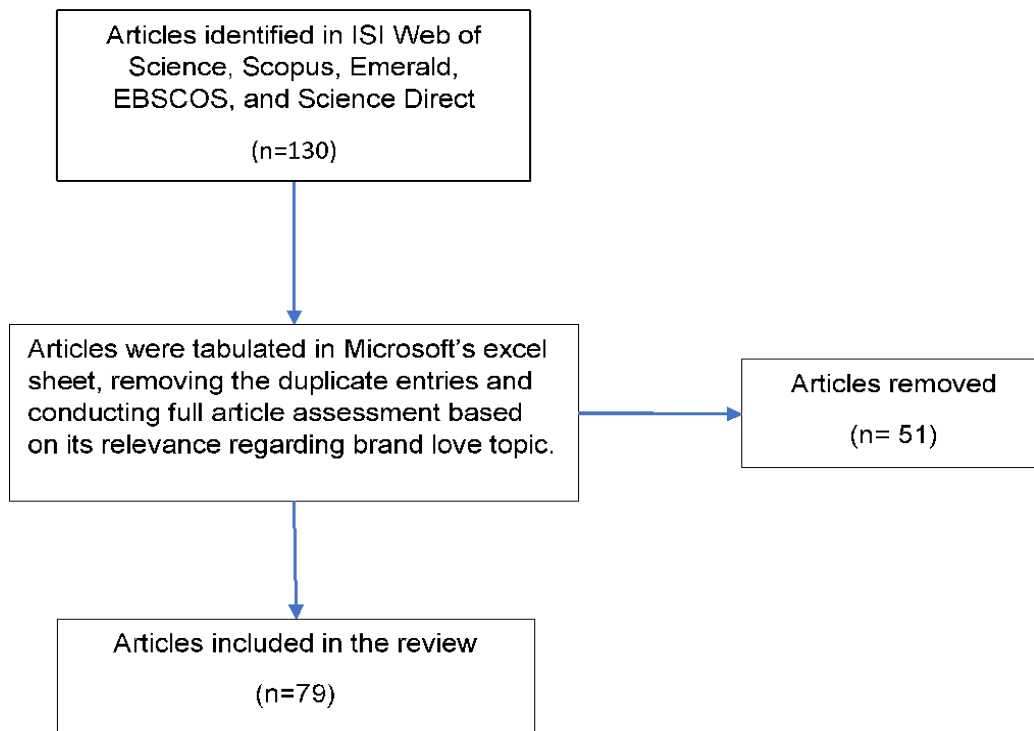
RESEARCH METHOD

This paper uses systematic review to provide an accurate up-to-date report through systematic, transparent, replicable, and synthesizing process related to the review questions or topic (Briner and Denyer, 2012) The objective of this systematic review is twofold: firstly, to provide thorough and detailed information about brand love research based on a critical classification scheme and identify the research gaps still existing even after 20 years of research and proposes key areas for further research.

In this systematic review, the initial step was to search the literature to locate relevant studies. This was conducted on five dominant academic databases, ISI Web of Science, Scopus, Emerald, EBSCOS, and Science Direct within the time range from 1998 to 2017. Several articles were

identified from the title, abstract, keywords like “brand love”, “loved brand”, “loving brand”, “brand” and “love” and those keywords were limited to subject in “Business, Management and Accounting”, “Marketing”, “Social Sciences” and “Psychology”. One hundred and thirty articles were found and sorted to identify those that met the keyword inclusion criteria and a detailed assessment was performed and resulted in 79 articles that were included in this review. This paper excluded reports, books, master thesis and dissertation and conference paper as suggested by Islam and Rahman (2016).

Figure 1: Flow diagram of article selection process



Source: Author

Full assessment of an article was based on its relevance to the “brand love” concept. Some of the articles which discussed “emotional attachment” or “brand attachment” were not included in this paper due to their different applicability in consumer brand relationship as suggested by Loureiro et al.(2012), even though some researchers argue that these two concepts have the same construct as brand love (Moussa, 2015). “Brand passion”, “brand romance” or “romantic brand love”, and “brand devotion” concepts were not included in this paper, because these concepts are only considered as an element of the brand love dimension and thus do not reflect the brand love

construct as a whole. Other articles were not relevant because they focussed on the love relationship between a mother and her child and how this relationship affected brand decision making (Lyer et al., 2016)

All articles included in this review were divided into 4 periods with five year on each period (Das, 2009; Islam and Rahman, 2016) starting from 1998 when Fournier (1998) introduced love or brand love concept as the strongest form of consumer brand relationship. The categorization based on the time range is intended to show the development of brand love research throughout the decades and adds a longitudinal study on key areas of brand love literature. The five-year time periods are shown below:

1. First period: 1998-2002
2. Second period: 2003-2007
3. Third period: 2008-2012
4. Fourth period: 2013-2017

ANALYSIS AND RESULT

This section describes and explains brand love research classification based on the year wise and study orientation (empirical, conceptual), country wise, journal wise, antecedents and consequences from previous study.

Year-wise Distribution of Articles in Respect to the Study Orientation, Conceptual or Empirical

The research on brand love has gained significant pace in the last five years (2013-2017). The articles up to 2012 were mostly empirical, but after 2012, scholars were using experiment studies. The reason for this could be the desire to better understand of brand love concept, both psychologically and physically (Maxian et al., 2013), to contrast it with similar concepts such as brand liking in terms of the emotional aspect (Langner et al., 2015) and to investigate how brand love functions in everyday life (Reimann et al., 2017).

Table I: Year-wise distribution of articles based on study orientation

| Study Type | 1998-2002 | 2003-2007 | 2008-2012 | 2013-2017 | Total |
|------------------|-----------|--|---|---|-------|
| Conceptual Paper | | | | Roy, Eshghi, and Sarkar (2013), Ahuvia, Bagozzi, and Batra (2014), Swanson (2015), R. Garg, Mukherjee, Biswas, and Kataria (2016) | 4 |
| Empirical | Ji (2002) | Pawle and Cooper (2006), Whang et.al (2004), Yeung and Wyer (2005), B. A. Carroll and A. C. Ahuvia (2006), | N. Albert, Merunka, and Valette-Florence (2008), Noel Albert, Merunka, and Valette-Florence (2009), Pang, Keh, and Peng (2009), Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli, and Friedmann (2009), Hosany and Gilbert (2010), P. A. Vlachos, Theotokis, Pramatar, and | Nguyen, Melewar, and Chen (2013) Noel Albert and Merunka (2013), Sarkar (2014), Richelieu and Korai (2014), T. Langner, Bruns, Fischer, and Rossiter (2014), Tsai (2014), E. Wallace, Buil, de Chernatony, and Hogan (2014), E. Wallace, Buil, de Chernatony, and Hogan (2014), Marc Fetscherin (2014), Elaine Wallace, Buil, and de Chernatony (2014), M. Fetscherin, Boulanger, Filho, and Souki (2014), Rauschnabel and Ahuvia (2014), Sarkar and Sreejesh (2014), Banerjee and Banerjee (2015), Drennan et al. (2015), Ruchi Garg, Mukherjee, Biswas, and Kataria (2015), Kwon and Mattila (2015), Chen and Quester (2015), Vernuccio, Pagani, Barbarossa, and Pastore (2015), Huber, Meyer, and Schmid (2015), Pool and Najafabadi (2015), Ismail, A. R. Ismail (2015), Liapati, Assiouras, and Decaudin (2015), Thakur, Kaur, Kohli, and Lamba (2015), K. K. Kim, Williams, and Wilcox (2015), Kudeshia, Sikdar, and Mittal | 67 |

| | | | | | |
|------------|--|--|---|---|---|
| | | | <p>Vrechopoulos (2010), Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010), H. Y. Kim and Kwon (2011), Tsai (2011), Batra et al. (2012), Pavlos A. Vlachos and Vrechopoulos (2012), J. Rossiter and Bellman (2012), J. R. Rossiter (2012), Rageh Ismail and Spinelli (2012), Long-Tolbert and Gammoh (2012), Hwang and Kandampully (2012), Correia Loureiro and Kaufmann (2012), Loureiro et al. (2012)</p> | <p>(2016), Lee and Hyun (2016), Baena (2016), Pinto Borges, Cardoso, and Rodrigues (2016), Sarkar and Sarkar (2016), Islam and Rahman (2016), Hassan, Rafi, and Kazmi (2016), Kaufmann, Loureiro, and Manarioti (2016), Rauschnabel, Krey, Babin, and Ivens (2016), Karjaluo, Munnukka, and Kiuru (2016), (Bagozzi, Batra, & Ahuvia, 2017), Becheur, Bayarassou, and Ghrib (2017), Chao-Chin (2017), Elaine Wallace, Buil, and Chernatony (2017), Hegner, Fenko, and Teravest (2017), Liu, Wang, Chiu, and Chen (2017), Shuv-Ami, Vrontis, and Thrassou (2017), Swanson (2017).</p> | |
| Experiment | | | Reimann, | Maxian, Bradley, Wise, and Toulouse (2013), | 6 |

| | | | | | |
|--------|--|--|--|--|---|
| | | | Castano, Zaichkowsky, and Bechara (2012) | Salgado-Montejo, Velasco, Olier, Alvarado, and Spence (2014), Tobias Langner, Schmidt, and Fischer (2015), Mishra (2017), Reimann, Nuñez, and Castaño (2017) | |
| Review | | | | Moussa (2015), Veloutsou and Guzmán (2017) | 2 |

Source: Author (2017)

Country-wise Distribution of Articles in Different Time Periods

Table II: Country-wise distribution of articles in different time periods

| No | Country | 1998-2002 | 2003-2007 | 2008-2012 | 2013-2017 |
|----|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | Australia | | | 1 | |
| 2 | Austria | | | 1 | |
| 3 | Brazil | | | | 1 |
| 4 | Canada | | | | 1 |
| 5 | China | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 6 | Cyprus | | | | 1 |
| 7 | Ireland | | | | 3 |
| 8 | Finland | | | | 1 |
| 9 | France | | | 2 | 1 |
| 10 | Germany | | | 1 | 4 |
| 11 | Greece | | | 2 | 1 |
| 12 | India | | | | 11 |
| 13 | Iran | | | | 1 |

| | | | | | |
|----|---------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 14 | Israel | | | | 1 |
| 15 | Korea | | | | 1 |
| 16 | Mexico | | | | 1 |
| 17 | Netherlands | | | | 1 |
| 18 | Pakistan | | | | 1 |
| 19 | Portugal | | | 2 | 1 |
| 20 | Spain | | | | 1 |
| 21 | Taiwan | | | | 2 |
| 22 | Tunisia | | | | 1 |
| 23 | UK | | | 2 | 2 |
| 24 | UK and Switzerland | | | | 1 |
| 25 | USA | 1 | 3 | 6 | 8 |
| 26 | USA and Japan | | | | 1 |
| 27 | USA and Korea | | | | 1 |
| 28 | Multi country study | | | 1 | 6 |
| | TOTAL | 1 | 4 | 19 | 55 |
| | Percentage | 1% | 5% | 24% | 70% |

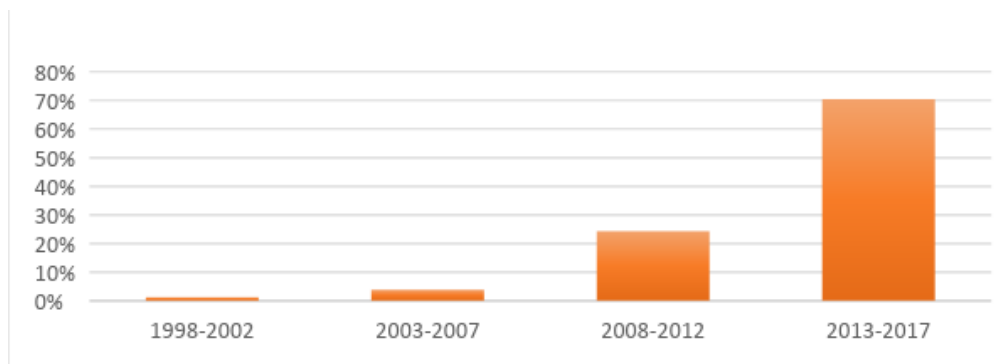
Source: Author (2017)

A country wise classification was undertaken to identify the amount of research across the globe (Islam and Rahman, 2016). Starting in 2008, brand love research began to take hold across Europe and some Asian countries. It then sharply increased in 2013, expanding from Asian countries (mostly in India with 11 studies), across Europe (mostly in Germany), and some parts of Africa, but was still mainly concentrated in the US. However, the number of studies regarding culture influence on brand love research are still limited; further research could explore these areas. The 79 articles demonstrate that brand love research is mostly confined to the US with total of 18 articles in US only and three articles that included the US as another contributor.

Time Distribution of Research Papers

Out of 79 research papers, only one percent of the papers were represented in the first period (1998-2002), and then slightly improved to 5 percent in the next period (2003-2007). The number of papers improved to 24 percent and increased sharply to 70 percent in the last period (2013-2017). The significant increase in the fourth year period confirms that brand love has become more important in consumer behaviour research and has gained the attention of businesses and institution. See Figure 2 for a graphical presentation.

Figure 2: Period-wise Contribution of Research Papers



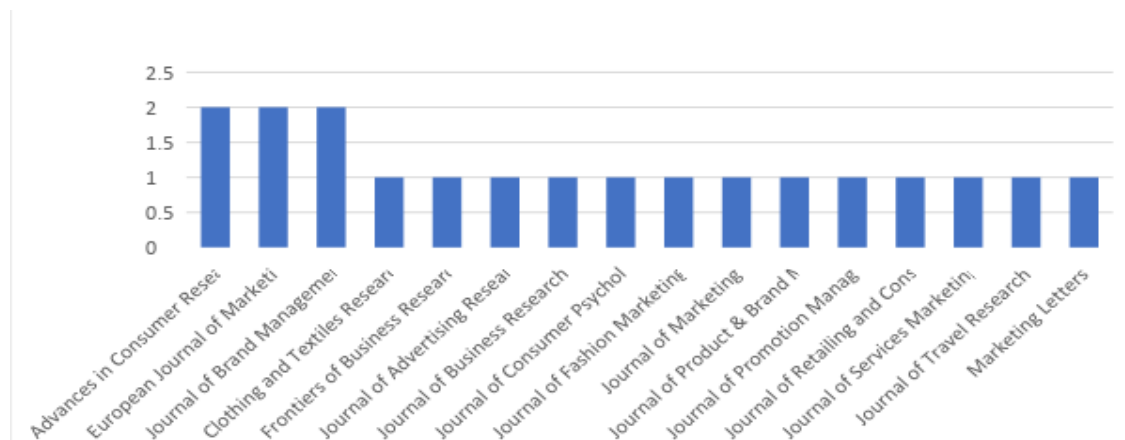
Source: Author (2017)

Journal-wise Distribution of Articles In Different Time Periods

Brand love research is spread over a variety of journals. There is one paper in *Psychology and Marketing Journal* in first time period and four marketing journals in second period (*Advances in Consumer Research*, *Journal of Advertising Research*, *Journal of Marketing Research* and *Marketing Letters*). In the third period, brand love research had quadrupled and begun to spread

out across different fields, including services, tourism and retailing with total of 16 journals (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Journal-wise Distribution of Articles in Third Period (2008-2012)



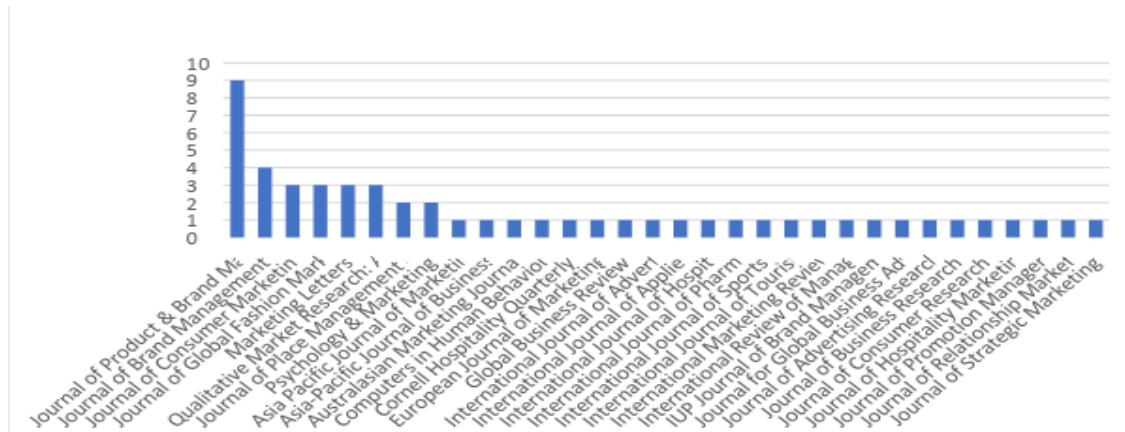
Source: Author

A significant increase in the number of researches was found in fourth period and *Journal of Product and Brand Management* contributing 9 papers (Figure 4). From the 55 articles found in this period, we can infer the following:

- The hospitality and tourism sector showed a growing interest in the brand love topic namely *Journal of Place Management and Development*, *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, *Journal of Hospitality Management*, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management*, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Branding*.
- Research into brand love covers a wide area, including sports (*International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship* and *Journal of Promotion Management*), pharmaceutical (*International Journal of Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Marketing*) and in higher education (*Journal of Business Research*).

This information indicates that brand love research has been undertaken over a wide range of areas and its application is useful in many business fields.

Figure 4: Journal-wise Distribution of Articles in Fourth Period (2013-2017) Antecedents of Brand Love



Source: Author

The precursor of brand love is based on the work of Roy et al. (2013) who divided brand love antecedents into three categories namely experience-based, individual consumer differences and not experienced-based antecedents.

Table III: Antecedents of the Brand Love Variable

| Categories | Variable antecedent of brand love | Author |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Experience based | Product experience | Drennan et al. (2015) |
| | Active engagement | Sarkar (2014) |
| | Affordability | Hegner, Fenko, and Teravest (2017) |
| | Attitude | Hegner, Fenko, and Teravest (2017) |
| | Behavioural branding | Kaufmann et al. (2016) |
| | Brand attachment | Kaufmann et al. (2016), Loureiro et al. (2012) |
| | Brand engagement | Pinto Borges et al. (2016) |
| | Brand excitement | Ismail (2015) |
| | Brand experience | R. Garg et al. (2016), Roy et al. (2013), Chao-Chin (2017) |
| | Brand global identification | Noel Albert and Merunka (2013) |
| | Brand identification | Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) |
| | Brand image | Ismail (2015), Correia Loureiro and Kaufmann (2012), Islam and Rahman (2016), Rageh Ismail and Spinelli (2012), Pool and Najafabadi (2015) |
| | Brand liking for consumer | R. Garg et al. (2016) |
| | Brand personality | Pool and Najafabadi (2015), Becheur, Bayarassou, and Ghrib (2017) |
| | Brand reputation | Liu, Wang, Chiu, and Chen (2017) |
| | Brand satisfaction | Correia Loureiro and Kaufmann (2012), Drennan et al. (2015) |
| | Brand trust | Noel Albert and Merunka (2013), Karjaluo et al. (2016), Drennan et al. (2015), Tsai (2011) |
| | Brand-switching cost | Tsai (2011) |
| | Category level evaluation | Rauschnabel and Ahuvia (2014) |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | Consumer delight | Roy et al. (2013) Tsai (2011) |
| | CSR associations | Pavlos A. Vlachos and Vrechopoulos (2012) |
| | Excitement | Rageh Ismail and Spinelli (2012) |
| | Fan page liking | Kudeshia et al. (2016) |
| | Functional satisfaction | Tsai (2014) |
| | Gratitude | Long-Tolbert and Gammoh (2012) |
| | Hedonic product | Karjaluoto et al. (2016), Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) |
| | Impulse buying | Sarkar (2014) |
| | Novelty perception | Liu, Wang, Chiu, and Chen (2017) |
| | Overall attitude scale | Pinto Borges et al. (2016) |
| | Partner quality | Long-Tolbert and Gammoh (2012) |
| | Perceived destination ability | Lee and Hyun (2016) |
| | Perceived quality | Rauschnabel and Ahuvia (2014) |
| | Price fairness satisfaction | Tsai (2014) |
| | Product quality | Batra et al. (2012), Bagozzi, Batra, and Ahuvia (2017) |
| | Propensity to anthropomorphise | Hegner, Fenko, and Teravest (2017) |
| | Retail store image | Pavlos A. Vlachos and Vrechopoulos (2012) |
| | Satisfaction | Roy et al. (2013) |
| | Satisfaction of affective attributes | Tsai (2011) |
| | Satisfaction of utilitarian attributes | Tsai (2011) |

| | | |
|----------------------|--|--|
| | Self-expressive brand | Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) |
| | Service satisfaction | Tsai (2014) |
| | Uniqueness | Tsai (2011) |
| | Brand Personality | Rauschnabel et al. (2016) |
| | Product knowledge | Drennan et al. (2015) |
| | Hedonic and utilitarian value | Huber et al. (2015) |
| | Hedonism | Liu, Wang, Chiu, and Chen (2017) |
| | Privilege | Tsai (2011) |
| | Social interactive engagement | Vernuccio et al. (2015) |
| Individual | Cognitive consistency | Rauschnabel and Ahuvia (2014) |
| | Cognitive fluency | Rauschnabel and Ahuvia (2014) |
| | Confidence | Pinto Borges et al. (2016) |
| | Materialism | Roy et al. (2013) |
| | Respect | R. Garg et al. (2016) |
| | Romanticism | Roy et al. (2013) |
| | Social identity | Vernuccio et al. (2015) |
| Not experience based | Active online marketing activities | Baena (2016) |
| | Self-congruence or self-concept connection | Huber et al. (2015), Elaine Wallace, Buil, and Chernatony (2017), Hwang and Kandampully (2012), Tsai (2011), Roy et al. (2013) |
| | Mobile marketing activities | Baena (2016) |
| | Perceived Transactional Value | Pavlos A. Vlachos and Vrechopoulos (2012) |
| | Self-expressiveness | Elaine Wallace et al. (2014), Sarkar and Sreejesh (2014), Kaufmann et al. (2016), Karjaluo et al. (2016), Loureiro et al. (2012) |

| | | |
|--|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| | Self-extension | Rauschnabel and Ahuvia (2014) |
| | Social Support | Long-Tolbert and Gammoh (2012) |
| | Subjective norm | Hegner, Fenko, and Teravest (2017) |

Consequences of Brand Love

As shown in Table IV, adopted from MacInnis et al. (2009), this study classified brand love as having both psychological and behavioural components.

Table IV: Consequences of Brand Love Variable

| Categories | Consequences of Brand Love | Author |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Behavioural Effect | Brand advocacy | Elaine Wallace et al. (2014) |
| | Brand Jealousy | Sarkar and Sreejesh (2014) |
| | Brand loyalty | Thakur et al. (2015), Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010), Marc Fetscherin (2014), M. Fetscherin et al. (2014), Kaufmann et al. (2016), Correia Loureiro and Kaufmann (2012), Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), Drennan et al. (2015), Chao-Chin (2017), Elaine Wallace, Buil, and Chernatony (2017), Whang et al. (2004), Tsai (2011) |
| | Co-creation | Kaufmann et al. (2016) |
| | Brand forgiveness | Hegner, Fenko, and Teravest (2017) |
| | Intention to recommend | Hosany and Gilbert (2010) |
| | Loyalty | P. A. Vlachos et al. (2010), Noel Albert et al. (2009), Chen and Quester (2015), Pinto Borges et al. (2016), Loureiro et al. (2012), Roy et al. (2013), Batra et al. (2012), Hwang and Kandampully (2012), Bagozzi, Batra, and Ahuvia (2017) |

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|---|
| | Purchase intention | Pinto Borges et al. (2016), Pool and Najafabadi (2015), Marc Fetscherin (2014), M. Fetscherin et al. (2014), Pavlos A. Vlachos and Vrechopoulos (2012), Kudeshia et al. (2016) |
| | Resistance | Batra et al. (2012), Bagozzi, Batra, and Ahuvia (2017) |
| | Revisit intention | Liu, Wang, Chiu, and Chen (2017) |
| | Switching resistance loyalty | Tsai (2014) Lee and Hyun (2016) |
| | Willingness to pay premium | Noel Albert and Merunka (2013) |
| | Word of Mouth | P. A. Vlachos et al. (2010), Noel Albert et al. (2009), Liu, Wang, Chiu, and Chen (2017), Elaine Wallace, Buil, and Chernatony (2017), Kudeshia et al. (2016), Pinto Borges et al. (2016), Pool and Najafabadi (2015), Roy et al. (2013), Rageh Ismail and Spinelli (2012), Ismail (2015), Batra et al. (2012), Karjaluoto et al. (2016), Correia Loureiro and Kaufmann (2012), Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), Noel Albert and Merunka (2013), Marc Fetscherin (2014), M. Fetscherin et al. (2014), Bagozzi, Batra, and Ahuvia (2017), Karjaluoto et al. (2016) |
| Psychological Effect | Active engagement | Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) |
| | Brand Commitment | R. Garg et al. (2016), Becheur, Bayarassou, and Ghrib (2017), Noel Albert and Merunka (2013) |
| | Commitment to community | Kaufmann et al. (2016) |
| | Customer engagement | Islam and Rahman (2016) |
| | Positive Affect | Liapati et al. (2015) |
| | Satisfaction | Hosany and Gilbert (2010) |
| | Trust | Noel Albert et al. (2009), Kaufmann et al. (2016) |

Development of a Valid and Reliable Measurement of Brand Love

In explaining general theories of love, some researchers use a theoretical “top down” approach and others follow the empirically driven “bottom up” approach of Regan (2008) so does this article tried to classify the brand love concept and to explain the measurement scale derived from them. The top down approach defines and measures the concept of love based on the theoretical approach of Social Psychology, which most researchers use. Whereas, the bottom up approach explores what consumers think when asked about what love is, what factors distinguish the concepts of love with other concepts, and how this conceptualization of love affects their behaviour (Regan, 2008).

Using the top down approach of Regan (2008), previous brand love research using several theories namely Romantic Love, Passionate Love, Love Attitude, Triangular Theory of Love, and lastly the Parasocial Relationship Theory (Fetscherin, 2014).

The Triangular Theory of Love is used to explain the concept of brand love based on the similarity of psychological processes of personal relationships with others and the relationship consumers have with objects (Shimp and Madden, 1988). In addition, the discussion whether the direction of the relationship between the consumer and the brand is bidirectional or unidirectional is still a debatable in top down approach. The relationship between the consumer and a brand can be bidirectional is because it can be likened to someone who has based a 'personality' on the brand through its promotional activity. In the study of Rauschnabel and Ahuvia (2014), it explains that brand anthropomorphism has a strong influence on brand love. Anthropomorphism in psychological and consumer research refers to “anthropomorphic thinking” because the product, brand or object has been given 'human characteristics' which stimulate this way of thinking (Rauschnabel and Ahuvia, 2014).

The Parasocial Relationship Theory (Fetscherin, 2014) which was originally used to explain the relationship between a spectator and a performer stresses that the unidirectional relationship between the consumer and a brand, cannot be bidirectional because a brand cannot communicate like a human. This approach more accurately explains the relationship between consumers and brands. Further research in this area explains that parasocial relationships can also be seen in the relationship between audiences and non-personal figures or fictional characters such as Mickey Mouse, Hulk (Fetscherin, 2014). This type of relationship is one with a lack of reciprocity between the spectator and an object.

The bottom up approach is widely used by researchers to explain what love towards a brand is. The most widely used measurement for brand love in this research stream is that from Carroll

and Ahuvia (2006). Another measurement for brand love research is the one developed by Batra et al. (2012), who tried to measure brand love by using two level hierarchy of brand love. In a study which refers to this measurement, Rauschnabel and Ahuvia (2014), show that the use of one dimension proved to be insignificant. Although the bottom up approach is used extensively (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006), its generalizability is still questionable because consumers have different meanings for love (Rossiter, 2012). When consumers have different views of what brand love is, then it cannot be used in a general context; thus, it needs to be adapted and measured for its validity in various settings.

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Various studies mention that brand love is a pivotal marketing topic for researchers and practitioners (Batra et al., 2012, Langner et al., 2015). According to Fournier (1998), love is the strongest interaction between a person and a brand and is crucial for long-term survival. From a systematic review, brand love is an important driver of consumer loyalty (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006, Albert et al., 2009, Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010, Tsai, 2011, Batra et al., 2012, Hwang and Kandampully, 2012, Fetscherin, 2014, Kaufmann et al., 2016). Word of mouth is an important driver too (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006, Batra et al., 2012, Rageh Ismail and Spinelli, 2012, Albert and Merunka, 2013, Roy et al., 2013, Ismail, 2015, Karjaluoto et al., 2016, Kudeshia et al., 2016, Pinto Borges et al., 2016) Another important driver is purchase intention (Vlachos and Vrechopoulos, 2012, Fetscherin, 2014, Fetscherin et al., 2014, Pool and Najafabadi, 2015, Pinto Borges et al., 2016).

This study examines brand love research from the first published work up to the present and shows how it evolved. It aims to show the impact of authors, journals, and key articles and to outline possible future research using systematic review analysis, and to explore which research stream is most influential on the study of brand love and which can then contribute most to the area of brand love. It is felt that this study could provide significant contributions in several ways. From the theoretical view, this study provides a comprehensive systematic review and shows how researchers have so far explored the brand love concept by showing various conceptualizations and measurement scales based on its particular research stream. In addition, this review also presents a summary of brand love antecedents and consequences to gain knowledge about the driver of brand love and the effect of having strong consumer relationships. This review also explores the limitations of previous research that future research should pay attention to, as outlined below.

Exploration and Empirical Validation of the Relationship Between Brand Love and Another Related Constructs

Although various studies have proposed the use of empirical research regarding brand love antecedents and consequences, it still needs empirical validation to assess brand love in a more holistic view. As Fournier and Alvarez (2012) pointed out, researchers need to understand consumers not only as perceivers but also as relationship agents. According to Batra et al. (2012), more work is needed to determine how the identified components of brand love interact with each other. In 2016, several brand love studies expanded from its initial product categories to tourism, sport, higher education and pharmaceuticals. This encouraged researchers to explore and conduct empirical studies concerning brand love applicability in a wider context. Study by Swanson (2015a) examined brand love of place in the context of tourism. This added empirical research on the influence of place attachment and explored in more detail brand love in the context of place or destination.

Investigation of Brand Love Relationship Across Consumers Segments and Consumer Characteristics

Various studies had been undertaken by involving a large number of respondents in various countries, with the highest number of studies in the USA conducted on graduate or undergraduate students (Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010, Hosany and Gilbert, 2010, Batra et al., 2012, Hwang and Kandampully, 2012, Long-Tolbert and Gammoh, 2012, Rageh Ismail and Spinelli, 2012, Rauschnabel and Ahuvia, 2014, Kwon and Mattila, 2015).

However, only some of the research focused on a particular segment of consumers such as children (Ji, 2002), women (Thakur et al., 2015) and adolescents (Hwang and Kandampully, 2012, Sarkar and Sreejesh, 2014). Further research should attempt to gather larger samples from different consumer segments (Karjaluo et al., 2016) to correct this deficit.

Future research needs to highlight whether gender differences, or other personality characteristics, influence the process of emotional detachment (Hemetsberger et al., 2009)

Investigation of Brand Love Relationship Across Culture and Country Classification

MacInnis et al., (2009) showed there is a cultural contribution that shapes brand meaning for consumers. While cultural studies have already been done in multi country settings (Albert and Merunka, 2013, Langner et al., 2014, Rauschnabel and Ahuvia, 2014, Huber et al., 2015, Langner et al., 2015), only a few discuss the effects of cultural variations and differences. Future research is encouraged to investigate which culture dimensions and variations have an impact on brand love (Garg et al., 2016 Albert et al., 2008). Fetscherin et al. (2014) emphasised that brand love and its expression are culturally grounded. Furthermore, country classification needs to be explored because according to consumer psychologists, lifestyles in affluent (developed country)

and non-affluent societies (non-developed country) are very dissimilar (Tsai, 2011) therefore this may play an important role in the concept of brand love.

Examination of How the Brand Love Relationship Differs Across Different Products and Services

Brand love had been studied in a limited set of services such as, hospitality (Tsai, 2011, Tsai, 2014), tourism (Swanson, 2015b, Lee and Hyun, 2016), higher education (Rauschnabel et al., 2016), retailing (Tsai, 2011, Vlachos and Vrechopoulos, 2012) and express delivery (Tsai, 2011). Many services remain unstudied e.g. hospital, telecommunication, banking, airline, travel agents and many more. Further research needs to examine these services (Tsai, 2014) and explore particular cases of loyalty such as switching resistance (Tsai, 2014) or multiple user loyalty versus single user loyalty (Lee and Hyun, 2016). However, while brand love is still the foremost topic in the consumer brand relationship context, further investigation needs to focus on various products and brand categories (Batra et al., 2012, Loureiro et al., 2012, Fetscherin et al., 2014, Huber et al., 2015)

Exploration of The Brand Love Relationship in the Online Context

Most online research of the brand love relationship on was conducted in such social media as Facebook. Scholars tried to examine whether Facebook brand page liking reflects or acts as antecedent to love of a brand (Wallace et al., 2014a, Wallace et al., 2014b, Kudeshia et al., 2016). Only a few have considered how brand love is formed through website communication (Baena, 2016).

As the internet gains importance and popularity over traditional media because of its numerous advantages including building consumer attachment, experiences and engagement (Baena, 2016), researchers needs to explore whether this communication channel is an effective tool to build love of a brand. Vernuccio et al. (2015) suggest future research could consider other social media, such a micro-blogs, professional social networks, or interest-based social networks.

A Longitudinal Investigation of How Brand is Formed, Maintained And Broken Up

Langner et al. (2014) maintain that most brand love relationships start with neutral feelings or with brand liking or even dislike and are shaped by personal experiences. Further research in brand love relationships might consider a longitudinal research to be useful.

Many critical incidents that shape the development of brand love are related to childhood, interpersonal relationships, transitional periods, hobbies, gifts, vacations, and living abroad.

According to Hemetsberger et al. (2009) when consumers break up with their brands, it is always connected to a major life event such as the phase of personal development or emancipation, or with a changing brand personality, which contributes to a growing incompatibility of the consumer and their brand. Conversely, consumers that already loved a brand are reluctant to give up their emotional relationships.

A longitudinal study rather than of cross sectional study could clarify how consumers form and maintain their relationships and why and how they break up their love with particular brands.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that brand love is an interesting topic and important to marketers as well as marketing scholars. However, brand love research needed to be broadened to gain more insight. By building a relationship with the consumer, brand love research could become an effective marketing strategy that can influence both brand experience and brand loyalty. Overall, by providing this systematic review, this study can serve as valuable tool in understanding the brand love concept, especially in the marketing context that have been done up to 2017 and a key for further research.

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