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The impact of brand personality on consumer behavior: the role of brand love

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to analyze the influences of brand personality on consumer behavior, with a special emphasis on the brand love construct. The aim is to expand upon existing literature in the field of branding, investigating the relationship between brand love and brand personality through experiential approaches to consumer behavior.

Design/methodology/approach – The conceptual model and the analysis of related hypotheses were based on a sample of 478 Portuguese clothing brand consumers. The data were collected using an online survey and the data analysis was done using the structural equations modeling.

Findings – The results show that brand personality has a positive and significant impact on brand love, resistance to negative information and self-disclosure and brand love has a positive and significant impact on brand loyalty, word-of-mouth, resistance to negative information, willingness to pay more, self-disclosure and active engagement.

Research limitations/implications – This study has some methodological limitation affecting its potential contributions. This investigation has a cross-sectional nature and only tested a few variables as consequences of brand personality.

Practical implications – This investigation provides evidence of the major impacts of both brand personality and brand love, showing how they combine to boost relevant outcomes like brand loyalty, WOW, willingness to pay more, resistance to negative information, self-disclosure or active engagement.

Originality/value – The originality of this research is related to three fundamental aspects: it is the first time the relationship between brand personality and brand love is tested using second-order modeling to capture the combined effects of all dimensions of brand personality; the influence of brand personality is usually related to attitudes (e.g. word-of-mouth, willingness to pay more, etc.) and not with feelings, such as love, the most powerful feeling that can be established between two people or between a person and a brand (in the case of brand love); and the authors tested brand love by linking brand personality and some traditional relational outcomes under the assumption that brand love can strengthen such relationships.

Keywords Consumer behaviour, Outcomes, Brand personality, Brand love, Clothing brands

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Our daily lives are full of different fashion brands constantly fighting for our attention. In addition to this vigorous competition between fashion brands, consumers are also more discriminating and knowledgeable than ever, which results in more carefully considered purchasing decisions. Faced with this new reality, creating an emotional brand attachment is a key issue in brand management (Malär *et al.*, 2011). Many researchers have noted that consumers develop relationships with brands that reflect their relationships with people



(Liu and Chang, 2017). In this sense, companies are increasingly searching for strategies that enable them to establish a strong emotional bond with consumers. According to Roy *et al.* (2016), customer brand relationship management is a significant topic of study for both practitioners and academics. Two widely researched constructs in this field are brand personality and brand love. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) show that hedonic and self-enhancing products are more prone to fostering brand love. The anthropomorphism found between human love and brand love, like human personality and brand personality (Aaker, 1997), demonstrates that the relationship between brand love and brand personality requires further exploration (Batra *et al.*, 2012; Huber *et al.*, 2015). The need for further study is compounded by the fact that the existing studies that have attempted to establish a link between brand personality and brand love have failed to define more than just partial relationships between a few dimensions of these two constructs (Becheur *et al.*, 2017).

To this end, the purpose of this research is to analyze the influences of brand personality on consumer behavior, with a special emphasis on the brand love construct. The aim is to expand upon existing literature in the field of branding, investigating the relationship between brand love and brand personality through experiential approaches to consumer behavior (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982).

Exploring the concept of brand love is also of utmost importance in this research, given its relevance to marketing and to the consumer–brand relationship. Understanding how customers experience a feeling of love (Batra *et al.*, 2012) or how they bring love into their relationships with a brand may be critical both for researchers and practitioners. In fact, this concept has grown in popularity as marketing literature has progressively shown that brands are evaluated not only by their functional criteria, but also by symbolic aspects (Das, 2015, p. 181) like self-congruity or identification, which may help marketers to better understand how brand personality transfers its effects to customer behavior. Furthermore, “because brand personality is formed by associating a brand with human emotions and traits, it will sometimes capture aspects of human personality” (Kim *et al.*, 2018, p. 95).

The originality of this research is related to three fundamental aspects: it is the first time the relationship between brand personality and brand love is tested using second-order modeling to capture the combined effects of all dimensions of brand personality; the influence of brand personality is usually related to attitudes (e.g. word-of-mouth, willingness to pay more, etc.) and not with feelings, such as love, the most powerful feeling that can be established between two people or between a person and a brand (in the case of brand love); and we tested brand love by linking brand personality and some traditional relational outcomes under the assumption that brand love can strengthen such relationships.

2. Conceptual framework and research hypotheses

2.1 Conceptual framework

The present section is intended to provide the conceptual framework underlying all hypotheses. To begin, this research is guided by two specific objectives. First, to determine whether brand personality, an independent variable, leads to the creation of strong human feelings like brand love, and second, whether brand personality relates to other important consumer behavior variables like: brand love, brand loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, willingness to pay more self-disclosure, resistance to negative information and active engagement.

2.1.1 Brand personality. In contrast to “product-related features,” which tend to serve a utilitarian function for consumers, brand personality tends to serve a symbolic function (Keller, 1993). Brand personality is a kind of brand association that explains the symbolic consumption and the emotional connections that consumers establish with a brand (Aaker *et al.*, 2004; Aaker and Fournier, 1995; Aaker, 1997, 1999). According to Caprara *et al.* (2001), personality is a viable metaphor whose latent idea lies in the fact that a consumer creates affinities toward

brands based on his or her personality (Louis and Lombart, 2010). According to Aaker (1997), brand personality is defined as the set of human characteristics related to a brand, based on an approach that results from the anthropomorphizing of the brand. This identification between individual and brand traits may contribute toward the development and reinforcement of the relationships between customers and brands (Sundar and Noseworthy, 2016).

Some researchers have shown the importance of brand personality and how this concept allows a consumer, through the use of and identification with a brand, to express his or her own self (Belk, 1988) or an ideal self (Malhotra, 1988). Viewed from this perspective, according to Kim *et al.* (2001), self-expression is related to its self-expressive value, in the sense that it helps consumers to express and enhance their self-concept and reflect their personality. The same authors found that, the higher the self-expressive value and the distinctiveness of the brand personality, the more attractive the brand personality will be.

In the present research, brand personality is explored considering its five dimensions: peacefulness, passion, sincerity, sophistication and excitement. It should be noted that these brand personality dimensions reflect the Spanish scale, developed by Aaker *et al.* (2001). It is therefore an adaptation of the original scale developed by Aaker with American consumers (1997), since commercial brands may carry both culturally common and culturally specific meanings, which is precisely why the Spanish scale was adopted for this research, as it is culturally closer to the population being studied.

Several different consequences of brand personality have been identified, such as brand quality, attitudes toward the brand, intentions of future behavior, trust, attachment, commitment, persuasion and affect (Su and Tong, 2015). However, even if these impacts are empirically tested, their means of transfer are not absolutely clear. Most research attempts to identify the impacts of each of these dimensions, but sometimes only a few of the same are analyzed (Molinillo *et al.*, 2017; Roy *et al.*, 2016; Matzler *et al.*, 2016). Because of their importance and the potential factorial structure of the data collected, sincerity and excitement are the most cited dimensions and the ones that are easiest for customers to perceive (Roy *et al.*, 2013). Accordingly, Malär *et al.* (2012) suggest using the singularity of a brand's personality, instead of considering all its dimensions. In fact, when attempting to develop a brand personality, companies focus their marketing efforts on a combination of dimensions that converge on "single-mindedness" (Malär *et al.*, 2012), a singular idea that is formed in a customer's or prospective customer's mind. Consequently, more than their individual impacts, what matters is how these dimensions combine to produce a single idea in the consumer's mind. Finally, Aguilar *et al.* (2016) suggest that the use of a reflexive second-order model for brand personality provides a better fit and an easier explanation of the effects of brand personality on its outcomes. In fact, in using a second-order model, the perceptions related to all dimensions are retained and contribute to the overall explanation, contrary to modeling based on a first-order approach. In this way, it is possible to identify an overall impact as well as the weights of the brand personality dimensions (Aguilar *et al.*, 2016).

2.1.2 Brand love. Among all consumer-brand relationships present in the literature, brand love seems to be one of the most recent and popular marketing constructs (Batra *et al.*, 2012; Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Turgut and Gultekin, 2015). According to Fournier (1998), the core elements of the consumer-brand relationship include love and passion, with "love" being defined as a richer, deeper and longer lasting feeling than a simple preference for the brand. Love is regarded as a very complex emotion, perhaps the most complex of all (Loureiro and Kaufmann, 2012). More than a feeling, brand love is considered a real emotion (Ahuvia, 2005).

The consumer-brand love relationship involves multiple cognitive, affective and behavioral experiences. Batra *et al.* (2012) present seven brand love dimensions: passion-driven behaviors,

(passionate desire, desire to invest resources); self-brand integration (desired self-identity, current identity, meaning of life, frequent thoughts); positive emotional connection (intuitive fit, emotional attachment, positive emotions); long-term relationship; anticipated separation distress; and attitudes and confidence. Thus, the brand love relationship is deep and enduring, such that the loved brand is considered irreplaceable (Albert and Merunka, 2013). It is important to highlight that brand love is very important for business due to its effects on word-of-mouth (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006), loyalty (Batra *et al.*, 2012), willingness to pay more (Thomson *et al.*, 2005) and resistance to negative information (Turgut and Gultekin, 2015), to name a few.

2.2 Research hypotheses

2.2.1 Consequences of brand personality. The influence on brand love. It is expected that consumers develop strong feelings, such as love, for some brands, since brand love is one of the six dimensions of consumer–brand relationships (Fournier, 1998). The effects of different brand personality dimensions and the partner quality inferences that each involves (Aaker *et al.*, 2004) may boost these consumer–brand relationships. A consumer can create and develop a love relationship with a brand with a strong personality, since consumers often think of brands as if they were people, attributing and imbuing them with different personality characteristics (Aaker, 1997). Based on the fact that brands, like individuals, have different personalities, brand personality is considered an important factor in increasing bonds and engagement, in the same way that people establish links with one another (Bouhleb *et al.*, 2011). Aguilar *et al.* (2016) suggest that, the more positively a brand's personality is perceived, the more it is considered sincere and competent and the more likely a consumer is to feel love for it. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Brand personality is positively related to brand love.

The influence on brand loyalty. Oliver (1999, p. 34) defines brand loyalty as a “deeply held commitment to re-buy a preferred good/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand purchasing, despite situational influences, and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior.” Developing a salient brand personality that provides symbolic benefits to consumers can significantly contribute toward establishing a lasting bond with consumers (Kim *et al.*, 2011). Louis and Lombart (2010) developed an integrated model of the relational consequences of brand personality and showed the positive influence of brand personality on brand commitment (Louis and Lombart, 2010). It became evident that competence and sophistication are some brand dimensions that positively influence attitudinal/affective loyalty as well as behavioral loyalty (Lin, 2010). As a result, we suggest the following hypothesis:

H2. Brand personality is positively related to brand loyalty.

The existence of close relationships between a brand and its consumers tends to reflect the level of positive affect and stronger feelings evoked by that brand (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Along this line of reasoning, Albert and Merunka (2013) showed the significant influence of brand love on brand commitment, thus demonstrating that brand love influences attitudinal loyalty and, consequently, influences long-term brand relationships. Therefore, loyal consumers, driven by emotion, are those who have a strong attachment to one particular brand, excluding other alternatives from their consideration sets (Fournier, 1998; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006).

It is worth noting that this positive and significant relationship between brand love and loyalty has already been empirically evidenced in previous studies (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Batra *et al.*, 2012; Bıçakcıoğlu *et al.*, 2016). Turgut and Gultekin (2015) have also shown

the influence of brand love on repurchase intention for clothing brands. Accordingly, we suggest the following hypothesis:

H3. Brand love is positively related to brand loyalty.

The impact on word-of-mouth. In its broadest sense, word-of-mouth communication includes any information about a target object (e.g. company, brand) transferred from one individual to another, either personally or via some communication medium (Brown *et al.*, 2005). Effectively, word-of-mouth involves behaviors such as communicating the positive aspects of a brand to others (Gremler and Gwinner, 2000) and making favorable recommendations regarding third-party brand products (Algesheimer *et al.*, 2005; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006), thus promoting the brand to other consumers. Given that this construct plays an important role in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors, it is becoming a notable tool in integrated marketing communication (Harrison-Walker, 2001).

As suggested by Freling and Forbes (2005b), brand personality affects consumers' feelings, perceptions, attitudes and behavior. Accordingly, by buying a brand that is similar to their actual personality, the consumer is communicating something about who they are (Aaker, 1999; Keller, 1993), which may contribute to the dissemination of positive word-of-mouth (Ismail and Spinelli, 2012). To elaborate on the last point, Ismail and Spinelli (2012) found that the excitement dimension of brand personality (daring, spirited, imaginative) has a direct and positive impact on word-of-mouth. Attaching personality to brands can make them more desirable to the consumer (Bouhlel *et al.*, 2011), leading them to recommend the brand, spread positive word-of-mouth and encourage other consumers to buy it (Ismail and Spinelli, 2012). Consequently, we suggest the following hypothesis:

H4. Brand personality is positively related to positive word-of-mouth.

Brand love is linked to a desirable post-consumption behavior, such as loyalty and positive word-of-mouth, demonstrating the importance of this construct for developing an affective relationship with consumers (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Thus, by building an emotional relationship with consumers, companies will encourage customers to speak positively about brands they love (Ismail and Spinelli, 2012). In this perspective, positive word-of-mouth is an emotional outcome of the consumer-brand relationship (Ismail and Spinelli, 2012). If a consumer nurtures intense feelings like love for a brand, then it is also expected that the consumer will say positive things to others about the loved brand, which, in turn, increases the diffusion of the brand in the market (Sarkar, 2011). Previous research has shown a positive link between brand love and positive word-of-mouth. That is, if consumers feel they love their brands, that, in turn, may translate into a desire to say positive things and recommend it to friends and relatives (Batra *et al.*, 2012; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). In this sense, consumers are important spokespersons for brands they love (Dick and Basu, 1994; Harrison-Walker, 2001; Bıçakcıoğlu *et al.*, 2016), being the first to suggest them to others to buy (Loureiro and Kaufmann, 2012). Similarly, based on previous findings, we propose a positive relationship between a consumer's brand love and the desire to speak positively of the loved brand, recommending the brand and its products. Consequently, we suggest the following hypothesis:

H5. Brand love is positively related to positive word-of-mouth.

The impacts on resistance to negative information. As Batra *et al.* (2012) note, resistance to negative information is the degree to which consumers do not allow negative information negatively influence their evaluations about the brand (Eisingerich *et al.*, 2011). In an effort to understand and eventually predict consumers' responses to brands and their actions, research in marketing has explored various types of relationships that consumers may form with brands (Eisingerich *et al.*, 2011), since strong consumer-brand relationships may be at the heart of consumers' resistance to negative information.

Even if the relationship between brand personality and resistance to negative information lacks empirical evidence, the literature widely suggests that the relationship between brand personality and attitudes toward brands (Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer, 2013), like commitment (Louis and Lombart, 2010) and brand loyalty (Kim *et al.*, 2001), are closely linked to negative information avoidance. Consequently, we propose the following hypothesis:

H6. Brand personality is positively related to resistance to negative information.

When a consumer loves a brand, it means that the brand is relevant on a personal level, becoming integrated into the consumer's identity (Batra *et al.*, 2012). That is, when the consumer identifies with a brand that they love, their resistance to negative information increases. On the other hand, the extent of resistance to negative information is influenced by both satisfied and committed customers (Eisingerich *et al.*, 2011; Turgut and Gultekin, 2015). Since brand love is the extent of a satisfied consumer's passionate emotional attachment (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006), a strong consumer–brand relationship increases resistance to negative information (Batra *et al.*, 2012). Accordingly, it is expected that:

H7. Brand love is positively related to resistance to negative information.

The impacts on willingness to pay more. When a consumer is emotionally attached to a brand, they are more willing to perform behaviors that use significant consumer resources (time, money, reputation) and make financial sacrifices in order to obtain it (e.g. willingness to pay a price premium) (Thomson *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, the willingness to pay more embodies the behavioral outcome associated with the strength of a consumer's brand preferences (Chernev *et al.*, 2011), being defined as the amount a customer is willing to pay for their preferred brand over comparable/lesser brands of the same package size/quantity (Netemeyer *et al.*, 2004). Thus, it is one of the strongest indicators of brand loyalty.

Brands with strong and positive brand personalities tend to influence consumer perceptions and preferences (Freling and Forbes, 2005a) and may lead to an increased willingness to continue using a given brand and to pay premium prices for a brand (Freling and Forbes, 2005b). Freling and Forbes (2005a) also found that brand personality may differentiate the brand from other competitors in the consumer's mind, thus offering a distinct form of sustainable competitive advantage. Even if this relationship lacks empirical evidence, the literature shows that the perception of unique, differentiating features of a brand influences the willingness to pay a higher price for it (Netemeyer *et al.*, 2004). Consequently, we suggest that:

H8. Brand personality is positively related to willingness to pay more.

Concerning brand love, research suggests that the degree of emotional attachment to an object predicts the nature of an individual's interaction with that object (Kim *et al.*, 2010). Thus, customer love increases over time, based on interactions between a consumer and the brand. These interactions encourage the development of meaning and evoke strong emotions in reference to a brand (Thomson *et al.*, 2005). In this sense, individuals who are strongly emotionally attached to a brand feel that the brand is irreplaceable, thus displaying specific behaviors such as a willingness to make financial sacrifices, including paying a higher price, in order to obtain a certain brand (Thomson *et al.*, 2005). Consequently, it is expected that when consumers feel love for certain brand, they will not switch to other competing brands even if the marketer charges a premium price. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H9. Brand love is positively related to willingness to pay more.

The impacts on self-disclosure. Self-disclosure is a relatively new relational construct (Kim *et al.*, 2010). Self-disclosure is defined as the customer's willingness to share personal

information details leading to a more intimate relational bond with a brand (Aaker *et al.*, 2004; Kim *et al.*, 2010). Apparently, there are no previous studies that empirically relate self-disclosure with brand personality. However, the role of brand personality in establishing strong relationships with the consumer is undeniable (Aaker *et al.*, 2004), with intimacy being one of the four relationship strength indicators (in addition to commitment, satisfaction and self-connection). Consequently, it is expected that a consumer who has a strong relationship with a particular brand will feel more comfortable sharing personal details with it. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H10. Brand personality is positively related to self-disclosure.

Consumers often invest resources like emotions, loyalty and personal information in a particular brand with the expectation of receiving special benefits later on in the relationship (Morais *et al.*, 2005). The strength of a consumer's emotional connection to a brand increases over time, as brand interactions occur (Kim *et al.*, 2010). This relational outcome was recently explored in a study conducted by Kim *et al.* (2010), where the authors provided empirical evidence that customer love has a positive effect on self-disclosure, showing that satisfied customers are mainly driven by their affective state when considering self-disclosure, although they do not suggest that customer love is the only driver of self-disclosure. Based on these studies, it is expected that the combination of a strong and positive brand personality with consumer-brand love will lead to greater openness in providing personal information to the brand to preserve their relationship with it. Therefore, it is expected that:

H11. Brand love is positively related to self-disclosure.

The impacts on active engagement. Active engagement is defined as when customers are willing to invest time, energy, money or other resources in the brand beyond those that are expected during purchase or consumption (Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010). This construct encompasses a more proactive attitude toward the brand, including behaviors such as visiting the brand's website, following news about the beloved brand, as well as buying brand merchandise.

According to Freling and Forbes (2005b), a strong and positive brand personality provides the consumer with emotional fulfillment and may lead to an increased willingness to continue using a given brand and engage with it. Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) found that, of the six brands explored in their investigation, consumers showed a stronger attitude toward self-expressive brands (i.e. brands with greater identification between consumers and brand personality, such as clothing and technology brands, i.e. iPod) than toward more utilitarian branded products.

From this perspective, when a brand has a strong personality, it may increase the customer's willingness not just to continue buying that brand, but also to visit the brand's webpage, buy brand merchandise, follow news about the brand, as well as say positive things about it.

That means that brand personality leads to active engagement. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H12. Brand personality is positively related to active engagement.

When consumers believe that a brand makes life meaningful and worth living, they may develop feeling of love for that brand (Batra *et al.*, 2012), reflecting a greater willingness to make sacrifices (Kim *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, it is not surprising that beloved objects and activities require a considerable investment of time and energy (Ahuvia, 2005). It should be highlighted that, in a study by Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010), a positive relationship between brand love and active engagement was empirically evidenced. Consequently, it is

expected that a strong and positive brand personality, as well as brand love, both have a positive relationship with active engagement, leading the consumer to behave in a more proactive way in relation to the beloved brand. Thus, it is expected that:

H13. Brand love is positively related to active engagement.

The proposed model presents the set of hypotheses developed (Figure 1). These hypotheses express the means to achieve the proposed objectives of this investigation.

3. Method

The study was carried out in Portugal and structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the proposed hypotheses. The proposed model that includes key variables of this research is depicted in Figure 1.

3.1 Sample and data collection

The present survey was administered during February and March of 2016, collecting 478 valid responses. Considering the purposes of this study, data were collected from a snowball sample. An online questionnaire was used and distributed to Portuguese individuals aged between 18 and 67 who had received all information necessary to complete the questionnaire and to share it with other potential respondents. The use of a snowball method, which has been frequently used to investigate the relationship between brands and consumers (Albert *et al.*, 2008; Valta, 2013), is a faster way to collect data and obtain a bigger sample. Of the 478 respondents, a total of 35.4 percent were male and the majority (64.6 percent) were female, with an average age of 27. Additionally, 55.2 percent had an income between €500 and €1,499, 47.7 percent were workers and the majority of respondents were still students (60.1 percent). Also, 58.8 percent held a bachelor's degree or higher. Moreover, 80.5 percent were single and 58.8 percent were part of a household between three and four individuals (Table I).

The questionnaire asked respondents to indicate their preferred clothing brand (one they are strongly attached to and have bought before). In total, 88 different clothing brands were

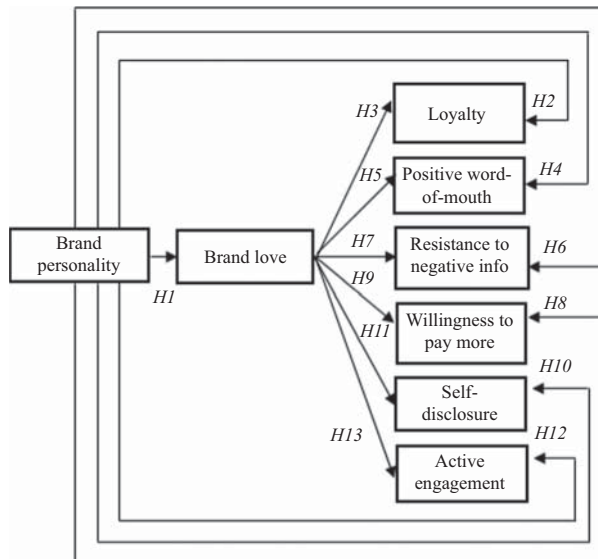


Figure 1.
Conceptual model

						Brand personality
<i>Gender</i>						
Female	309	64.6%	<i>Academic qualification</i>		144	30.1%
Male	169	35.4%	High School		53	11.1%
Total	478	100%	University attendance		281	58.8%
			Bachelor's degree or higher		478	100%
			Total			
<i>Age</i>						
Minimum	18					
Maximum	67					
Average	27					
<i>Outcomes</i>						
Under €500	41	8.9%	<i>Marital status</i>		385	80.5%
€500–€999	128	27.8%	Not married		84	17.6%
€1,000–€1,499	126	27.4%	Married		9	1.9%
€1,500–€1,999	102	22.2%	Divorced		0	0.0%
More than €2,000	63	13.7%	Widower		478	100%
Total	460	100%	Total			
Did not answer	18					
<i>Occupation</i>						
Student	223	46.7%	<i>Household</i>		66	13.8%
Self-employed	23	4.8%	1 person		85	17.8%
Unemployed	23	4.8%	2 people		106	22.2%
Employed	141	29.5%	3 people		175	36.6%
Retired	4	0.8%	4 people		37	7.7%
Employed and student	64	13.4%	5 people		9	1.9%
Total	478	100%	More than 6 people		478	100%
			Total			

Table I.
Sample characteristics

reported in the results, with 22.4 percent stating that they had a special relationship with the brand Zara, 6.1 percent with Tiffosi, 5.2 percent with Mango, 4.8 percent with H&M and 4.8 percent with Pull & Bear.

3.2 Measures

The measurement items used in the study were based on a review of the literature. Therefore, the variables used in the research model were adapted from commonly accepted scales and operationalized, namely, brand love (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006), brand personality (Aaker *et al.*, 2001), resistance to negative information (Eisingerich *et al.*, 2011; Bagozzi *et al.*, 2014); willingness to pay more (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996; Netemeyer *et al.*, 2004), self-disclosure (Cho, 2006), active engagement (Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010), brand loyalty (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Bagozzi *et al.*, 2014), that measure repeated buying and positive word-of-mouth (Gremler and Gwinner, 2000; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996), and that measure a positive attitude of recommendation. Finally, it is important to highlight that all the items used in the model were measured by seven-point Likert-type scales with the anchors strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (7). Brand personality was used as a second-order variable. Second-order models may be preferable when the measurement instrument contains several different variables measured using different dimensions, producing a more parsimonious interpretation of data and results (Judge *et al.*, 2002). According to Aguilar *et al.* (2016), a reflexive second-order model for brand personality is the one that presents better fit and the best way to operationalize the concept. Most investigations using a first-order model have failed to consider the five dimensions, namely, because of the factorial structure or simply because relationships were not significant. In a second-order model, all dimensions account for the final results and the factorial weights may explain how the different dimensions behave.

After data collection, exploratory factor analysis as well as reliability analyses were carried out to ensure the internal consistency of the research constructs. These analyses have shown that, in general, all the measures (e.g. KMO, Bartlett' test, Cronbach's α , etc.) are satisfactory, since most of the variables have a good internal consistency.

3.3 Validity

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to assess the psychometric properties of the scales and the measurement model fit using AMOS 21. Brand personality was used as a second-order construct (Aaker, 1997). The final model shows a good fit (incremental fit index = 0.915; Tucker Lewis index = 0.907; comparative fit index = 0.915; goodness of fit index = 0.822; root mean square error of approximation = 0.06; χ^2 /degree of freedom = 2.649). Composite reliability and average variance extracted were computed. All scales showed values above 0.7 on average variance extracted, which is in line with the recommendations. Discriminant validity is evidenced by the fact that all correlations between the constructs are significantly smaller than 1 and the squared correlations calculated for each pair of constructs is always smaller than the variance extracted for corresponding constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), thereby confirming the discriminant validity (Table II).

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Findings

Amos 21 was used to perform confirmatory factor analysis and SEM to test the proposed hypotheses. The final model shows a good fit (incremental fit index = 0.901; Tucker Lewis index = 0.893; comparative fit index = 0.901; goodness of fit index = 0.800; root mean square error of approximation = 0.063; χ^2 /degree of freedom = 2.890). According to Hair *et al.* (2010), IFI, TLI above 0.9 may be considered good, as well as RMSEA below 0.08. Additionally, with a basis in the Monte Carlo simulation using a perfectly identified model, Ding *et al.* (1995) tested the impacts of the number of observed variables on fit indices: when the number of observed variables in a latent variable increased from 2 to 6, the fit indices decreased significantly, which may be the case of this model, with latent variables using from 3 to 10 observed items. Table III presents the final results for the overall sample.

As predicted, brand personality is positively related to brand love ($b = 0.731$, $p < 0.01$), resistance to negative information ($b = 0.138$, $p < 0.1$) and self-disclosure ($b = 0.152$, $p < 0.05$), thus supporting *H1*, *H6* and *H10*. Unexpectedly, brand personality does not relate to brand loyalty ($b = 0.063$, $p > 0.1$), word-of-mouth ($b = 0.049$, $p > 0.1$), willingness to pay more ($b = -0.122$, $p > 0.1$) or active engagement ($b = -0.015$, $p > 0.1$), thus not supporting *H2*, *H4*, *H8* and *H12*.

Table II.
Correlations,
Cronbach's α ,
composite reliabilities
and average
variances extracted

	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	CR	AVE
Brand personality (X1)	0.90								0.92	0.71
Brand love (X2)	0.72	0.92							0.82	0.70
Brand loyalty (X3)	0.57	0.68	0.90						0.89	0.73
Word-of-mouth (X4)	0.54	0.64	0.72	0.93					0.93	0.76
Resist. to negative information (X5)	0.31	0.29	0.37	0.36	0.84				0.85	0.67
Willingness to pay more (X6)	0.32	0.48	0.52	0.52	0.30	0.88			0.89	0.68
Self-disclosure (X7)	0.44	0.47	0.41	0.43	0.21	0.44	0.84		0.85	0.66
Active engagement (X8)	0.52	0.69	0.64	0.65	0.26	0.46	0.46	0.72	0.74	0.51

Notes: CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted. Diagonal entries are Cronbach's α coefficients

		SRW	<i>p</i>	Brand personality
<i>H1</i>	Brand personality→brand love	0.731	***	
<i>H2</i>	Brand personality→brand loyalty	0.063		
<i>H3</i>	Brand love→brand loyalty	0.685	***	
<i>H4</i>	Brand personality→word-of-mouth	0.049		
<i>H5</i>	Brand love→word-of-mouth	0.669	***	
<i>H6</i>	Brand personality→resistance to negative information	0.138	*	
<i>H7</i>	Brand love→resistance to negative information	0.232	***	
<i>H8</i>	Brand personality→willingness to pay more	-0.122		
<i>H9</i>	Brand love→willingness to pay more	0.621	***	
<i>H10</i>	Brand personality→self-disclosure	0.152	**	
<i>H11</i>	Brand love→self-disclosure	0.399	***	
<i>H12</i>	Brand personality→active engagement	-0.015		
<i>H13</i>	Brand love→active engagement	0.740	***	

Notes: two-tailed test. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Table III.
Results

H3 postulated a positive relationship between brand love and loyalty, which has received empirical support in this research. That is, brand love has a significant positive influence on brand loyalty. This indicates that the trend is toward brand loyalty to be more important for consumers who value brand love, on average. The data confirm *H3* ($b = 0.685$; $p < 0.01$). *H5* postulated a positive relationship between brand love and positive word-of-mouth, which is supported by the data ($b = 0.669$; $p < 0.01$). It can be concluded that brand love exerts a significant positive influence on word-of-mouth. This indicates that the trend is toward positive word-of-mouth to be more important for those consumers who value brand love, on average.

H7 predicted a positive relationship between brand love and resistance to negative information, which is empirically supported ($b = 0.232$; $p < 0.01$). As predicted, brand love is positively related to willingness to pay more ($b = 0.621$, $p < 0.01$). That is, brand love has a positive and statistically significant influence on the willingness to pay more for a clothing brand. This indicates that the trend is for willingness to pay more to be more important for those consumers who give more importance to brand love, on average.

H11 predicted a positive relationship between brand love and willingness to give personal information, which is empirically supported ($b = 0.399$, $p < 0.01$). We conclude that the feeling of brand love for a clothing brand has a positive and statistically significant effect on the consumer's ability to give personal information to a beloved brand.

Finally, *H13* predicted a positive relationship between brand love and active Engagement, which is supported by the data ($b = 0.740$, $p < 0.01$). Our findings support brand love having a positive and statistically significant impact on active engagement. That is, this result indicates that the trend is toward active engagement (have a more dynamic attitude toward a clothing brand involving personal resources, time, energy and money) being more important for consumers who value the feeling of love for a clothing brand, on average.

Table IV shows how each of the brand personality dimensions weighs on the second-order variable.

	SRW	CR
Peacefulness	0.795	15.619
Sophistication	0.796	14.922
Passion	0.908	20.494
Excitement	0.812	15.543
Sincerity	0.881	18.153

Table IV.
Brand personality:
dimension weights

Ahuvia (1993) uses Sternberg's triangular love theory, which combines intimacy, passion and decision/commitment, to illustrate why a feeling of love may arise between a customer and a brand. At the same time, passion, sincerity and excitement are the perceived dimensions that score higher and are the dimensions that are closest to human traits in our relationships with others. Apparently, the relationship between brand personality and brand love may be due to the weight of these dimensions.

4.2 Discussion

The first part of our discussion will be focused on the consequences of brand personality. As has already been emphasized, this is, to the best of our knowledge, the first study that explores the relationship between brand personality and brand love. Our study underscores the fact that brand personality does exert a strong and direct effect on brand love. As Aaker *et al.* (2004) proposed, the effects of different brand personality dimensions and the partner quality inferences that each involves boost these consumer–brand relationships. This study also found a positive relationship between brand personality and resistance to negative information. It is important to highlight that, to the best of our knowledge, this relationship has not been tested yet. However, Aaker *et al.* (2004) found that, in the presence of acts of transgression caused by brands, relationships with an exciting brand personality demonstrate stronger intimacy bonds. That is, the literature indicates that resistance to negative information may be indicative of strong relationships with consumers. Based on these ideas found in the literature, the results of the present study complement the sparse findings. It was concluded that the association of human traits with clothing brands plays an important role in consumer resistance to negative information, not altering their opinion of their preferred clothing brand. Another important aspect involves the consequence of brand personality on self-disclosure since, again, to the best of our knowledge, past studies have not investigated the relationship between brand personality and self-disclosure. That is, respondents who perceive human characteristics in their clothing brands more readily share their personal information when a clothing brand requests it. According to Fournier (1998), consumers choose and use brands with a strong personality, with which they may establish relationships. Therefore, this research concludes that the construct of brand personality is related to greater openness and willingness to share a consumer's personal data, encouraging consumers to establish a relationship with the brand. After discussing the more important aspects related to the consequences of brand personality, the second part of the discussion will be focused on the consequences of brand love.

It should be highlighted that this study concluded there was a positive impact of brand love on all variables considered in the conceptual model. Therefore, the contributions of this work support previous findings and provide new insights regarding clothing brands.

With regard to the relationship between brand love and brand loyalty, this study indicates a strong relationship between both constructs. In other words, these findings are consistent with previous studies (Bairrada, 2015; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Loureiro and Kaufmann, 2012). Therefore, passionate love for a brand is a strong indicator of brand loyalty, translated into behavioral intentions, such as continuing to purchase the same brand in detriment to competitor brands. In addition to these findings, this study found a notable link between a consumer's love for a clothing brand and positive word-of-mouth about it. This result emphasizes the great potential of brand love, which leads consumers to recommend their beloved clothing brand to friends and others, as well as highlight its positive aspects. In this way, the present study is in line with earlier research (Noël Albert and Merunka, 2013; Bairrada, 2015; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Ismail and Spinelli, 2012; Kim *et al.*, 2010). Thus, it seems to make sense that, when consumers nurture strong feelings like love for a particular brand, it is expected that they will say positive things about the brand and recommend it to other consumers (Sarkar, 2011). Not only does brand love

influence brand loyalty and positive word-of-mouth, but it also encourages consumers to pay a higher price in order to possess their preferred clothing brand over competing brands. In this sense, this result also supports the findings of Albert and Merunka (2013), Bairrada (2015), Batra *et al.* (2012), Kim *et al.* (2010) and Thomson *et al.* (2005). As another contribution, the love consumers have for a clothing brand also enables them to resist negativity about that particular brand, which is in line with previous findings (Batra *et al.*, 2012; Turgut and Gultekin, 2015). Similarly, as Batra *et al.* (2012) state, consumers are indifferent to negative information about brands with which they have love relationships. In addition to these findings, brand love is also found to influence a consumer's willingness to share personal data with their preferred clothing brand (self-disclosure). It is important to emphasize that self-disclosure is a largely unexplored variable in the marketing domain, although the link between brand love and this construct has been empirically confirmed in the retail context (Kim *et al.*, 2010). Thus, by highlighting the impact of brand love on self-disclosure, this study provides new insights for brand love literature and clothing brand management. These findings confirm that consumers are driven by their feelings when they consider providing personal information to their favorite brand, having the goal of creating a more intimate relational tie with it. If consumers do have a special bond with their preferred brand, they will stick to it, without losing contact. Finally, our study shows the strong impact of brand love on active engagement. That is, consumers who love their clothing brands reveal a connection with the brand that involves the investment of personal resources, such as time, energy or money. Thus, it should be noted that the present study reinforces the previous research conducted by Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010), which inspired the inclusion of this variable in the conceptual model.

Even if branding literature lends support to the idea that brand personality may be linked to customer-related outcomes like those we have suggested, *H2* concerning brand loyalty, *H4* word-of-mouth, *H8* willingness to pay more and *H12* active engagement were not supported. According to the literature and to practice, investments in brand personality are expected to increase relational outcomes like these proposed.

5. Conclusions

This study concludes that most of the formulated hypotheses were supported. It also found that Zara was the brand respondents preferred most, which points to the special relationship consumers have with it. The descriptive statistics for this brand confirmed higher brand love and loyalty when compared to other clothing brands, which imply a greater connection with and intention to repurchase the brand. Thus, through a more affective brand approach, this study intended to investigate the influence of brand personality on some variables of consumer behavior such as loyalty, word-of-mouth, etc. For this purpose, the impact of brand personality on brand love, brand loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, willingness to pay more, resistance to negative information, self-disclosure and active engagement were investigated. Furthermore, given the notion that consumers associate human characteristics to brands, perceiving them as partners in a relationship, as well as considering the extent to which brand personality could influence feelings such as the love felt for a brand, exploring this potential link was another purpose of this research. In addition to focusing on constructs that are already well explored in the literature, it is important to point out that the conceptual model of this research also considered some recent variables in the marketing domain, whose relationships with brand personality were not investigated. Thus, the relationships between brand personality and brand love, brand personality and self-disclosure, brand personality and resistance to negative information are highlighted as novelties in our research model, showing the notable link between them. In line with previous work, it was also concluded that brand love translates into several positive behaviors, supporting all the hypotheses defined in the

model, which confirms the immense potential of this construct in understanding consumers' attitudes and intentions (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Turgut and Gultekin, 2015). It is expected that, beyond its theoretical contributions, this study could provide managerial guidance for brand managers, given the crucial relevance of this construct for marketing.

6. Implications and limitations

6.1 Theoretical Implications

Even if the anthropomorphisms found between human love and brand love and human personality and brand personality are nowadays assumed as evident, the relationships between these have yet to be explored (Batra *et al.*, 2012; Huber *et al.*, 2015). This investigation has attempted to fill this gap, exploring the relationship between brand personality and brand love and their relationships with several different customer behaviors. Second, we have treated brand personality as a second-order variable, contributing to a more parsimonious interpretation of results, a better comprehension of the relationships and including all dimensions in the analysis. According to Aguilar *et al.* (2016), a brand personality reflexive second-order model may provide better fit and a better means to understanding the chain of effects between brand personality, brand love and other customer-related behaviors.

As a matter of fact, this investigation provides evidence of the major impacts of both brand personality and brand love, showing how they combine to boost relevant outcomes like loyalty, WOM, willingness to pay more, resistance to negative information, self-disclosure or active engagement. Brand personality and brand love are not so important *per se*, but because they both may contribute to the company and brand major outcomes that strengthen the brand, increase performance and reinforce competitiveness. Thus, the overall vision of the impacts of both brand personality and brand love constitute the major conceptual contribution of this research.

6.2 Managerial implications

At the level of practical contributions, the findings of this research should convince practitioners and brand managers to define more emotional strategies, based on concepts such as brand personality and brand love. Developing feelings like brand love may be the right way to boost the relationships between brands and consumers. A brand with a strong and captivating personality should, at the same time, transform itself into an object of desire, passion and uniqueness, conquering a place in the hearts of its customers. More than promoting the physical product itself, marketing efforts must converge upon the nature of the relationship consumers may have with them. Since love may be based on passion, sincerity and excitement, these are the dimensions of brand personality that should be at the forefront of marketing managers' minds. Developing brand communities and brand co-creation may lead to increased intimacy and involvement with brands, producing greater identification with them and the development of feelings like brand love. Online brand communities are one way to integrate isolated customers, linked by a brand, coming together over their common vision of a brand, their willingness to do something for it and, finally, their consideration of it as a part of them and their lives.

Therefore, to develop brands that are loved, managers should invest in learning about consumers' expectations and desires and consistently meet these through brand activities related to advertising and communication or another promotion mix. Companies may therefore center on attractiveness and passion while creating closer proximity between their brands and consumers, such as by highlighting human personality traits in their communications. Future studies must pick up on these aspects of brand personality, especially given the significance of brand personality in determining consumer behavior.

These findings suggest that marketers need to be a little more considered in their development of brand personality, since this will foster not only a love relationship between the consumer and the brand but will also bolster resistance to negative information and encourage a greater willingness to provide personal information.

6.3 Limitations and future research

This paper tested only a few variables as consequences of brand personality. We suggest introducing other variables capable of extending the knowledge of this construct. Future research in the area of brand personality should attempt to identify the antecedents of this construct, examining it at the dimensional level, in order to develop some relevant personality traits. Future research could also explore these variables in different categories of products. For a better understanding of these relationships, we also suggest carrying out longitudinal studies.

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