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Antecedents of luxury brand hate: A quantitative study

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Abstract

This study analyses the relationships of the antecedents of "extreme negative affect" toward luxury brands. The results show that the first-order predictors of luxury brand hate were negative stereotypes of people who use the luxury brand, consumer dissatisfaction with the brand, and negative word-of-mouth. The following three strategic approaches: (a) proactive, (b) neutral, and (c) reactive can be considered as a template to address the causes and implications of brand hate.

JEL CLASSIFICATION
M14; M31

1 | INTRODUCTION

The potential impact of growing anti-consumption behaviors is helping to shape strategic management decisions. A 2017 Edelman Earned Brand survey of 14,000 people in 14 countries found that 57% of consumers claim they will boycott a brand solely because of its parent company's perceived position on a social or political issue (Edelman, 2017). This path to consumer boycotting behavior is of particular relevance within the luxury sector given that luxury brands deliver higher levels of symbolic and experiential value compared to functional benefits (Berthon, Pitt, Parent, & Berthon, 2009). Luxury consumers tend to display stronger emotional involvement in the consumer decision-making process (Atwal & Williams, 2009), which increases the chances of the development of extreme negative effect, a component of the tripartite model of attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

Given this background, luxury brand executives need to consider the strategic management implications how extreme negative affect, i.e. brand hate, impacts luxury brands. Evidence is mounting that, for brands in general, they impact consumers' behavior ranging from brand avoidance behavior, to less frequent, but no less alarming revenge-seeking actions aimed at hurting the brand's image. These behaviors include complaining, negative word-of-mouth (NWOM), protest, patronage reduction or cessation (Zarantonello, Romani, Grappi, & Bagozzi, 2016; Grégoire, Tripp, & Legoux, 2009). In a similar vein, Gelbrich (2009) argues that negative emotions distinctly impact customers' purchase decisions, loyalty, and frequency with which they use a product or brand. Brand

transgressions may leave consumers with emotions analogous to a break-up of a close friendship, or betrayal (Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004). This issue is clearly important as negative brand relationships can have a detrimental effect on company performance (Fournier & Alvarez, 2013).

As a result, consumers are increasingly aligning their own personal values with those of the brands they buy. The occurrence of this phenomenon supports the view that brand meanings are not controlled by managers; rather they are co-created through interactions among their users (Boyd, Clarke, & Spekman, 2014; Cova & Cova, 2002; Fournier, 1998; Thompson, Rindfleisch, & Arsel, 2006). The relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and luxury branding has been well-documented (Franco, Hussain, & McColl, 2019) which is also reflective of the reallocation of resources in order to improve the brand's CSR performance.

However, within the strategic management literature, negative aspects of consumers' responses and attitudes to brands, such as anti-consumption behaviors, remains an area of the literature that is largely underdeveloped. Moreover, luxury management researchers have traditionally focused on the positive aspects of luxury consumption. We suggest that this underdeveloped area of strategic management literature is a significant omission as extremely negative incidents were found to affect consumers' affective attitudes toward luxury brands (Bryson, Atwal, & Hultén, 2013). Hence, the objective of this research is to analyze the relationships of the antecedents of brand hate, that is, extreme negative affect toward luxury brands. The outcomes of

this research will aid planners in developing a strategic orientation in order to be sensitive to the antecents of brand hate and allocate resources to avoid a potential brand transgression.

2 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 | Brand hate

A prominent aspect of mainstream anti-consumption literature considers the concept of brand avoidance, defined as "the incidents in which consumers deliberately choose to reject a brand" (Lee, Motion, & Conroy, 2009, p. 170). In our research, we conceptualize a difference between outcomes such as brand avoidance, brand rejection, boycotting, and so forth, and focus on a stronger more immediate and intense consumer reaction that occurs before these outcomes, that is, *extreme negative affect*—an affective attitudinal evaluation, similar to a short-term emotional response but differing in its duration and potential for damaging results. We have identified this phenomenon using the term brand hate (Bryson et al., 2013). We base our conceptualization on the tripartite model of attitudes from the social psychology literature (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Olsen & Zanna, 1993) to justify the definition of extreme negative affect as a separate and distinct construct, in this case, extreme negative effect toward a specific attitude object—the luxury brand.

In general, brand hate can be conceptualized as the opposite of brand love or brand passion, "a primarily affective, extremely positive attitude toward a specific brand that leads to emotional attachment and influences relevant behavioral factors" (Bauer, Heinrich, & Martin, 2007, p. 2190). Clearly brand hate, seen to be diametrically opposed to brand love, can therefore be defined as "an intense negative affect toward the brand," which may result in "the purposeful and deliberate intention to avoid or reject a brand, or even to act out behavior that demonstrated this rejection" (Bryson et al., 2013, p. 395). Enduring brand avoidance can be conceptualized as an equivalent of long-term indifference toward another as happens with failures in many human relationships.

Interestingly, Zarantonello et al. (2016) identify the construct brand hate as having two dimensions, including: (a) "active brand hate," which includes emotions related to anger and contempt; and (b) "passive brand hate," related to emotions such as fear, disappointment and dehumanization. Our definition more closely represents Zarantonello et al. (2016)'s "active brand hate" and does not include "passive brand hate." However, we reiterate brand hate is more than a fleeting emotional response, but a durable negative affective attitudinal one, although it might have been triggered by one or more emotional brand hate episodes. It is, therefore, assumed that the repetition of antecents that an individual experience strengthens brand hate.

Executives too often fail to consider the strategic implications of anti-consumption behaviors. We also follow the assumption that consumers are exposed to a deeper and more meaningful relationship with luxury brands compared to non-luxury brands (Atwal & Williams, 2009), and that antecents and consequences of luxury brand hate merit specific focus and research. To date, there is no evidence that generalizations about brand hate can be made across contexts; there is a dearth of evidence to the contrary.

2.2 | Consumer dissatisfaction

Satisfaction or dissatisfaction of products or services is a result of prior expectations and actual performance (Oliver, 1980; Olshavsky & Miller, 1972), which is strongly associated with consumer attitudes (Dawes & Rowley, 1999). Brand transgressions which can arise from relational or non-relational incidents, may result in customer dissatisfaction (Kim, Park, & Lee, 2019), and risk developing into very strong negative attitudes toward the brand. Consumers who feel that they are powerless to influence and improve their situation (Strauss & Mang, 1999) are, therefore, more likely to form extreme negative brand beliefs than those who feel that they can influence their situation.

Folkes (1984) and Johnson, Matear, and Thomson (2011) argue that product or service failures may cause angry consumers to seek revenge. Product or service failures might result in extreme negative brand attitudes and include framing the situation and the identification of a person or a group of people who can be blamed (Jean Harrison-Walker, 2001; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). This anti-brand behavior is demonstrated by Ekiz, Khoo-Lattimore, and Memarzadeh (2012) who investigated complaints posted online by luxury hotel guests. Customer complaints posted online appear to be of particular relevance for luxury brands as according to Korkofingas and Ang (2011), brands with stronger equity are more negatively impacted than the weaker non-established brands. Furthermore, Bolfing (1989) found that luxury-oriented service providers are more likely to be subject to a more harmful negative word-of-mouth form of complaining. According to Hedrick, Beverland, and Minahan (2007), strong emotional reactions and revenge-seeking actions may also be triggered when consumers feel that their trust in a brand has been broken. These outcome behaviors for brand hate are in general documented by Zarantonello et al. (2016). Therefore, we propose:

H1. *Consumer dissatisfaction is positively related to luxury brand hate.*

2.3 | Negative stereotypes

The assumption that stereotypes are not factually based is widely accepted within the literature (Lawrence, Marr, & Prendergast, 1992). According to Lawrence et al. (1992), stereotypes can trigger both positive and negative attitudes, which consumers rely upon when there is incomplete information on the subject. The stereotyping of brand consumption refers to consumers' notion that, through using a certain brand, they hold self-concepts similar to those of other consumers of the same brand (Grubb & Hupp, 1968). When negative stereotyping occurs, by contrast,

individuals refrain from using products and services that they associate with negative product-user stereotypes (Hogg & Banister, 2001). For instance, Dalakas and Levin (2005) found a reverse "halo" effect to describe consumers who punish sponsors of sports stars they dislike.

Negative stereotyping may also occur when consumers find a particular brand to be incompatible with their social role and are unable to fulfill the individual's symbolic identity requirements (Lee, Motion, & Conroy, 2009). Mason (1981, p. 128) introduced the notion of a "snob effect" to describe "when status sensitive consumers come to reject a particular product as and when it is seen to be consumed by the general mass of people." Interestingly, symbolic incongruence was found to be prevalent within the fashion category (Banister & Hogg, 2004; Kim, Choo, & Yoon, 2013). It is within the broader context that the explicit desire not to be identified with an avoidance group was identified as a source of brand hate within a luxury consumer sample (Bryson et al., 2013). Thus, we hypothesize:

H2. *Negative stereotypes of luxury consumers are positively related to luxury brand hate.*

2.4 | Country-of-origin

A large body of research has also shown that consumers use the recalled product–country images when they evaluate products. Recalled product-country images are of particular relevance within the luxury sector. For example, Piron (2000) found that the consumers' perception of the country-of-origin (COO) is an important factor for luxury purchase intention. Consumers are accordingly affected by COO labels, even when additional product information is presented (Verlegh et al., 2005). For instance, Roth and Romeo (1992) concluded that the willingness to buy a product from a particular country is high when the country image is an important characteristic of the product category. In their study, the country image included stereotypical characteristics of the country's citizens, for example, craftsmanship, or innovativeness of the country's workforce.

The effect of COO on negative brand attitudes is expected to be important since COO is not merely a cognitive cue for product quality as it also relates to emotions, identity, and pride (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Such symbolic and emotional connotations transform COO into an expressive or image attribute. Such attributes have been shown to be important determinants of consumer preferences and considered as critical components of brand equity (Lefkoff-Hagius & Mason, 1993). COO labels, therefore, contribute to consumers' trust in a brand (Jiménez & San Martin, 2010). While examining negative COO effects, Amine (2008) and Lee, Murphy, and Neale (2009) suggested that COO effects could result in brand avoidance.

Consumers may avoid a brand because they feel animosity toward the country from which the brand originates (Klein, Ettenson, & Morris, 1998; Shimp & Sharma, 1987). Animosity toward a country can be thought of as animosity toward the citizens of the country or even toward individuals that do not share the animosity.

We suggest that negative COO perceptions contribute to the formation of negative stereotypes of consumers' image of the group of luxury consumers from that country. Consequently, we tender the following hypothesis:

H3. *Lower country-of-origin evaluations are positively related to negative stereotypes of luxury consumers originating from the specific country-of-origin.*

2.5 | Negative word-of-mouth

Jean Harrison-Walker (2001, p. 63) defined word-of-mouth (WOM) as "informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization or a service." The ease with which dissatisfied customers can share their opinions is a potential threat toward many luxury brands. Electronic-word-of-mouth (eWOM) has been recognized as an effective medium to express dissatisfaction (Kietzmann & Canhoto, 2013). Negative e-WOM is of significance as negative attitudes are more likely to be disseminated through social networks (Allsop, Bassett, & Hoskins, 2007). Social media enables dissatisfied customers and activist groups to voice discontent, exchange anti-brand information, organize boycotts, and even coordinate lawsuits (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009).

Luxury brands appear to be particularly vulnerable, as Kucuk (2008) notes that the most valuable brands attract more anti-brand hate website attention than less valuable brands. From the customers' perspective, social media exposure encompasses the social pressure that consumers experience in everyday life. It affects the individual consumer's behavior since it is founded on the group's approval, and also guides the group's behavior (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). The pressure includes subjective norms guiding and describing consumers' moral judgment of right versus wrong or good versus bad (Brunk & Blümelhuber, 2011).

Indications of consumers complying with peers' perceived wishes rather than following situation specific, rational cues are, consequently, signs of subjective group norms affecting individuals' behavior (Lee, Murphy, & Neale, 2009). As a result, the formation of brand hate could be adopted by those trusting the opinion leaders in their community, virtual or otherwise. In a study of fashion brands among young consumers, Ismail and Spinelli (2012) found that brand love has a positive impact on WOM. We can therefore deduce that negative WOM (NWOM) may contribute to the formation of consumers' brand hate. We are aware that this construct might also be a consequence of brand hate and depending on the relative effect sizes. The exact nature of causality might pose problems in the estimation of model coefficients that incorporate NWOM as an antecedent and a consequence. Hence, we proceed with this potential limitation in mind; the results of the analysis shall help to clarify if there is a problem with our proposition:

H4. *Negative word-of-mouth is positively related to luxury brand hate.*

2.6 | Perceived corporate social performance (CSP)

Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) discuss the significance of the perceived incongruence between the consumer's own identity and that of the brand's CSR performance. For example, consumers may boycott a brand because of its perceived disrespect for human rights, the natural environment, or involvement in unethical business practices (Sandikci & Ekici, 2009). A further level of complexity in respect to luxury brands is the argument that motivations activated by luxury brands could be inconsistent with those associated with CSR (Torelli, Monga, & Kaikati, 2011). It has also been suggested that a non-congruent relationship between the brand and a social cause may be detrimental to the brand (Zdravkovic, Magnusson, & Stanley, 2010).

Klein and Dawar (2004) suggested that consumers who have formed adverse opinions about a company's reputation might hold a strong negative attitude toward the brand in general. Further, consumers wishing to raise public awareness of questionable business practices and socially irresponsible actions by companies can, through their action, reinforce negative brand attitudes (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009).

However, Maxwell (2015) argues that CSR should be reframed beyond the traditional economic, social, and environmental categories. Significantly, Romani, Grappi, Zarantonello, and Bagozzi (2015) discuss how brand moral shortcomings can lead to anti-brand activism. This phenomenon is consistent with the notion of "ideological incompatibility" defined as "ideology refers to a set of beliefs which are incompatible with the consumer" (Hegner, Fetscherin, & van Delzen, 2017, p. 15). Ideological compatibility is evident within the premium coffee sector in France, where a recent study identified Starbucks' reportedly failure of tax compliance as a source of brand hate (Bryson & Atwal, 2018). Thus, we suggest:

H5. *Perceived poor corporate social performance is positively related to negative word-of-mouth.*

2.7 | Attitude toward advertising

Yoo and MacInnis (2005) found that the formation process of brand attitude depends on whether advertisements use an emotional or an informational format. When an advertisement uses an emotional format, brand attitudes may be developed through a positive feeling which enhances consumers' evaluations of the advertisement's credibility. When consumers experience negative feelings from seeing an advertisement such emotions usually result in negative evaluations of the advertisement and the brand. Moreover, the findings of Yoo and MacInnis (2005) demonstrated that when the advertising execution is informational, the creation of positive brand attitudes appears to be associated with the formation of strong beliefs. Advertising that is regarded as meaningful and credible appears to produce more positive than negative feelings.

Conversely, a negative attitude toward advertising tends to generate negative emotions and/or fails to create favorable evaluative cognitions.

Furthermore, negative affect may reinforce strong negative beliefs since customers may recall them when being exposed to a brand's advertising. Such negative affective attitudes are likely to occur in connection with customers' perceptions of over-commercialization, a perception that can develop when consumers find commercials to be intrusive, deceptive, misleading, and insulting (Rojas-Méndez, Davies, & Madran, 2009). In the luxury sector, we consider these risks to be higher than for non-luxury products. Hence, we propose our final hypothesis:

H6. *Negative attitude toward advertising is positively related to luxury brand hate.*

3 | RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 | Participants, sampling, and data collection

This study examines a snowball sample that began with 31 French luxury brand consumers invited to participate in this research. The sample proceeds by participants completing the questionnaire, followed by being invited to forward a URL to friends, family, and colleagues considered by the respondent to be potential luxury brand consumers. After cleaning, a total of 281 luxury brand consumers were retained from an initial respondent dataset of 366 completed questionnaires.

Respondents were screened at the beginning of the questionnaire to ensure they qualify as luxury brand consumers who have experience with brand hate. Next, respondents were removed from the dataset based on the following criteria: (a) respondents were unable to identify a luxury brand that they hated, (b) respondents declared that they are unable to afford purchasing a luxury product, (c) the respondent had an identical IP address as another respondent, and (d) the respondent's response pattern demonstrated a lack of variability.

The survey was conducted online for over 1 month. The questionnaire requires respondents to complete each item of the questionnaire and, therefore, there is no problem of missing data in the final dataset.

3.2 | Measurement

Measurement of the constructs relies on using seven-point Likert scales ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Measurement items have been developed in the French language by a series of focus groups comprised of research students and experienced researchers. However, some items are inspired from relevant literature; some items are adapted from KLD Research's (2007) environmental, social, and governance ratings criteria; and some items were adapted from internal and external dissertations (Charro, 2010; Salvatori, 2007; Si, 2009).

A pilot test of the questionnaire was run and scales refined in order to ensure uni-dimensional constructs were measured as such.

Items were focused in order to ensure that construct definitions matched operationalization. Cronbach α scores are calculated for each of the measurement scales of the seven constructs to determine if these measurement scales demonstrate sufficient internal consistency. The Cronbach α scores range from .671 to .873 with scores above .6 deemed acceptable (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006).

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | The sample

The sampled respondents are exceptionally young, with 62% falling between 19 and 29 years old and 84% below the age of 40. This result is not surprising given the changing nature of luxury brand consumption, that is, luxury consumers are younger than was historically the case, combined with the bias of younger people using information technology, and, consequently, complete online questionnaires. Further, the sample is 64% female, which might reflect a gender bias regarding the degree of being open to, and interested in, responding about luxury brand consumption. Refer to Table 1 for details of the sample.

4.2 | Data analysis

To begin data analysis, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using Varimax rotation in SPSS. To ensure CFA was a feasible procedure, we verify that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy is above .5 and found it to be very good at .813. Furthermore, the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant at $p < .000$ (Approx. $\chi^2 = 2,814.542$) indicating factor analysis is appropriate for this dataset (Hair et al., 2006). Overall, results indicate that the constructs, as measured, show satisfactory convergent and discriminant validity. This conclusion is confirmed by a lack of items with cross-loadings over .3 in magnitude. The total amount of variance explained with a seven-factor solution is found to be 67.235%.

Next, we calculated the average variance extracted (AVE) for each of the seven constructs and found that in the case of the construct attitude toward advertising, the AVE is .408 and, therefore, does not meet the cut-off point of .5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The decision

was made to eliminate this construct from further analysis. We proceeded with six constructs. The total variance explained with six components is 67.289%. The KMO remains high at .808 and Bartlett's Test is significant at $p < .000$ ($\sim\chi^2 = 2,529.899$).

Subsequently, we used AMOS and conduct a two-stage method for the data analysis, recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). First, we created a measurement model, which essentially is a CFA with fit indices, so the measurement model is again evaluated for discriminant and convergent validity, and model fit. The measurement model was assessed for fit using: (a) χ^2 and df, which gives the normal χ^2 (i.e., χ^2/df), (b) the goodness of fit index (GFI), (c) the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), and (d) the comparative fit index (CFI). These indices are considered as being the most appropriate as they include "absolute goodness-of-fit" measures (the normal χ^2, the GFI and the RMSEA), and an "incremental" fit measure (the CFI) (Hair et al., 2006). The results for the measurement model are: (a) $\chi^2/df = 1.288$, where the maximum is 3.0, (b) GFI = 0.932, where the minimum is .9, (c) RMSEA = 0.032, where the maximum is 0.08 (LO 90 = 0.018, HI 90 = 0.044, PCLOSE = 0.996, which indicates that operating with the hypothesis of "close fit," meaning RMSEA <= 0.5, the probability of getting a sample RMSEA as large as 0.032 is .996), and (d) CFI = .979, where the minimum is .9. Therefore, the measurement model is accepted as these scores are very good in all respects (Arbuckle, 2009).

Since the assessments of reliability and validity, and measurement model fit scores are well above minimum standards, we continued to the second step of the SEM analysis (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) and tested our structural model and its hypotheses. Standardized regression weights (β) and R^2 values are given in Figure 1.

$$\text{Model fit}: (1)\, \chi^2 \div df = 1.372, (2)\, \text{GFI} = .923, (3)$$
$$\text{RMSEA} = 0.036\, (\text{LO}\, 90 = 0.024, \text{HI}\, 90 = 0.047,$$
$$\text{PCLOSE} = 0.982), \text{and}\, (4)\, \text{CFI} = 0.971.$$

4.3 | Common method variance

Common method variance (CMV) might occur due to the unique method in which the data was collected in this study, and could result in overinflated β coefficients in the final estimated structural model.

TABLE 1 Age and gender of respondents

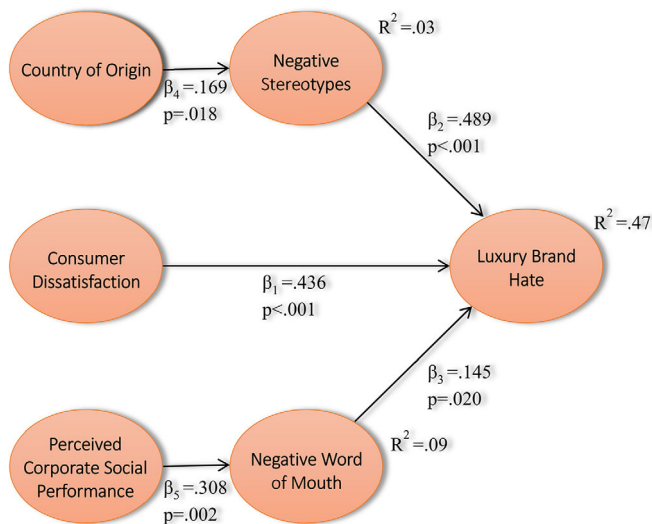|			Age				
			Between 19 and 29	Between 30 and 39	Between 40 and 49	50 and over	Total
Gender	Male	Count	49	29	16	7	101
		% of Total:	17.4%	10.3%	5.7%	2.5%	35.9%
	Female	Count	125	34	15	6	180
		% of Total:	44.5%	12.1%	5.3%	2.1%	64.1%
Total		Count	174	63	31	13	281
		% of Total:	61.9%	22.4%	11.0%	4.6%	100.0%

FIGURE 1 Structural model predicting luxury brand hate [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

We use Harmon's single-factor method test in SPSS to examine the possibility of CMV in the dataset (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). The test demonstrated that CMV is not an issue for the data or the results of the SEM analysis.

4.4 | Post hoc tests

Finally, we tested for gender bias using a Mann–Whitney U test and age bias using a Kruskal-Wallis H test. These tests are chosen when the data are not normally distributed as was demonstrated by the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. Regarding gender bias, we found that NWOM is slightly higher among males (μ = 2.84 vs. μ = 2.51 on a 7-point Likert scale, p = .028) and that luxury brand hate itself is markedly higher amongst males than among females (μ = 4.56 vs. μ = 3.93 on a 7-point Likert scale, p = .002).

We tested NWOM as a dependent variable in a separate structural model. The results turned out to be completely unacceptable.

5 | GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The final research model (Figure 1) displays the key factors which predict 47% of the variance (R^2 = .47) in respondents' degree of luxury brand hate. Hypotheses H1 to H5 are supported by the results and are found to be statistically significant, while H6: "Negative attitude toward advertising is positively related toward luxury brand hate" could not be tested due to a low AVE score in ATA. This proposition needs re-examination in future studies.

An interesting finding is that the first order predictors of luxury brand hate, namely negative stereotypes of people who use the luxury brand, consumer dissatisfaction, and NWOM predict 47% of the

variance (R^2 = .47). The second-order predictors of luxury brand hate, namely COO and perceived CSP can be left out of the final model if model parsimony is the sole objective. However, fit indices of the model become worse when these constructs are excluded. Accordingly, we report the results of the complete model in this paper.

6 | IMPLICATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH, AND LIMITATIONS

The research findings have important implications for both academics and managers of luxury brands. Academics studying strategic luxury management now have a quantitative study which demonstrates good predictively of brand hate using three main antecedents: negative stereotypes of luxury brand consumers, customer dissatisfaction with the luxury product or service, and NWOM. Findings from this research might serve as a starting place for future work.

The research also suggests further constructs that precede the antecedents, namely COO weakly predicts the negative stereotypes and poor perceived CSP partially predicts NWOM. These results raise questions such as "what are better predictors of the primary antecedents of brand hate?" and "can a more comprehensive or elegant expanded nomological web be created?"

Future research is required to broaden the conceptual scope of brand hate research, and further clarify the antecedents, precursory antecedents, and outcomes. Other precursors to the antecedents of luxury brand hate, such as negative stereotypes, and NWOM, are also areas of interest for future research. The idea of a breach of moral contract is interesting for future work. As well, the importance of the role of the Internet and social media in passing WOM and NWOM regarding luxury brands is another area for further exploration. NWOM is particularly interesting due to it potentially being a gender biased antecedent and also a potential outcome of luxury brand hate, which itself seems to be gender biased. Males tend to hate luxury brands more intensely. Why? Interestingly, further research warrants a study of how brand hate impacts employee identification. As Brannan, Parsons, and Priola (2015) discuss, brand meanings are not only applicable to organizations' external relationships with customers but also impact employee attitudes and behavior in contemporary organizations.

Outcomes of brand hate, in general, have been the subject of limited study in a wider context, and further research is needed. The question of construct discrimination within larger models is a good target for investigation. We suggest that both qualitative and quantitative studies are welcome in order to investigate brand hate outcomes in detail. More case studies might provide deeper insights. The idea of "passive" versus "active" brand hate (Zarantonello et al., 2016) also opens avenues for future contemplation and research as to the definition of brand hate.

Further research should also broaden the scope of context in which brand hate occurs, for example, expanding the geographical scope of the work to other countries is one interesting direction. Studying France is one rational place to start, given the mature luxury industry and savvy consumers. Other areas of the globe should be

interesting to study due to sociocultural, political, and economic differences, as well as the fact that many areas are developing at different speeds, and overall luxury markets continue to grow at rates that seem independent of their host economies.

In this research, the sampling method is not random, and there is no manner in which to establish a sampling frame. Further studies might try alternative sampling approaches and/or other research designs.

Implications for luxury brand executives are also evident, both from the results seen in the model, and from further reflection. As a starting point, they will need to accept that a luxury brand is likely to polarize consumer opinion and evoke both extreme positive and extreme negative affective reactions. It fact, it can reasonably be assumed that brand hate is an inevitable outcome for most prominent luxury brands as some antecedents are beyond the direct control of the company producing the luxury brand. As well, luxury brand managers need to recognize the risk that brand hate will not only distance former customers, but also spread to existing and future customers. eWOM seems to be a powerful force, like nothing experienced prior to the age of social media, and luxury brands seem to be vulnerable targets.

Luxury brand executives need to consider three strategic approaches to address the causes and implications of brand hate. First, a "proactive" approach is needed in order to avoid brand hate. A prominent starting place is the development and implementation of a coherent CSR strategy that is communicated internally and externally. Discussing this CSR strategy openly with customers can help address potential shortcomings, real or perceived. Further, luxury brand managers need to consider how customer service deals with dissatisfied customers and their complaints. A robust complaint management system could indeed be effective as noted by Zarantonello et al. (2016) to convert brand hate into neutrality, or even optimistically, brand love.

Second, a "reactive" approach could be used to monitor NWOM and use this intelligence in order to address potential sources of brand hate. For example, false accusations concerning irresponsible behavior could be rebuffed via targeted communications in order to influence key opinion leaders.

Finally, a "neutral" approach is for luxury brands executives to simply accept that the brand will be hated for specific characteristics beyond their direct control, such as brand COO and negative stereotypes of the luxury brand users, as opposed to any actual inappropriate behavior. However, it is essential to monitor the breadth (percentage of brand haters) and depth (intensity of brand hate, as measured on a scale) concerning the cause of brand hate in order to gauge an appropriate degree of action. One such action is to attempt the seemingly improbable, that is to neutralize sources of negative stereotypes. For example, this activity might be aided somewhat by replacing inappropriate celebrity brand ambassadors.

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