



WHAT WERE YOU THINKING? ANALYZING THOUGHT PROCESSES IN THE PRESENCE OF BRAND LOVE

Dr. Derek Ezell¹, Dr. William Bishop²

^{1 2} *The University of Tennessee Martin*

Abstract

This study attempts to obtain a glimpse into the minds of consumers concerning how information is processed differently in the presence of brand love. Guided by the theories of brand love, attachment theory, and source credibility, two studies are conducted in which consumers were given various messages by various sources about a brand they identify love for. These consumers are then asked to provide thought listings, therefore providing a better understanding of how consumers process new information, and how likely they are to seek additional information under various circumstances involving brands they love. Similarly, the effects of brand love on source credibility are also examined. Results indicate that although message valence plays a role in tendencies to seek additional information and source credibility, the presence of brand love may alter this relationship.

Keywords

Brand Love, Customer Thought Listing, Source Credibility

Introduction

Customers are now beginning to show more intimate feelings towards companies in a variety of ways including word-of-mouth, willingness to pay a premium, forgiveness of failures, and loyalty to brands (Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi 2012). Once companies understand that brand love is being shown by their customers, it is important for managers to determine “the degree to which target customers romantically love the focal brand” (Sarkar, Ponnampalani, and Murthy 2012, p.326).

Brand love is an emerging topic within marketing literature. Like most new topic areas, it takes time to develop a definition in which emerges from consensus, as is the current case with authors acknowledging the lack of consistency within definitions. Although this topic has gained some interest in the current stream of literature, there is still much to learn about brand love as consumers experience it. This study will attempt to begin filling the gap in this area as the main purpose of this study will be to gain a deeper understanding of the true meaning of brand love as consumers experience it. Until the foundation for brand love is complete, other attempts to build from this will be futile. In the search for how consumers process information, Dykas and Cassidy (2011) found a connection between the security levels of individuals and the processing method used when encountering new information. These findings suggested that individuals with insecure internal working models would process negative information based on the likelihood that this information would lead to psychological pain. Alternatively, those with secure working models would process both negative and positive information with open minds (Dykas and Cassidy 2011). Whereas previous research has established differing process styles with attachment, this research will focus on consumers who claim “love” for a brand. Theories from Marketing, Psychology, as well as other disciplines, will be utilized in furthering our knowledge of this topic. The main goal of this research is to answer the following research questions concerning brand love as consumers experience it:

1. How does the presence of brand love alter information processing for consumers?
2. How does the presence of brand love impact the likelihood to seek additional information?
3. In what way does the presence of brand love alter the perceived credibility of the source?

Answering this question will give marketers a better understanding of how brand love works, and ways in which to use it to their benefit. Both companies and consumers need to better understand how this process works as well as the implications of such a relationship. Additionally, this study will assist in developing the foundation for brand

love research as academicians gain a deeper knowledge of its inner workings. Although one could make assumptions about the meanings assigned to “brand love” by consumers, Blumer (1969) warns scholars and humans alike about this in saying “people act toward things on the basis of the meaning that these things have for them, not on the basis of the meaning that these things have for the outside scholar” (p.51). In light of this, the current study will look to uncover the underlying information process styles consumers use in decoding new information about a brand they have feelings of ‘love’ for.

Research has shown that affective states can have a strong impact on the information processing strategies chosen (Schwarz, Bless, and Bohner 1991). Although this relationship has been examined previously in the literature on a global vs. local level (Isbell 2010), a gap exists in this relationship when brand love is present. Other research has examined this relationship at a holistic vs. abstract level when evaluating the effect of relationship type on processing styles used (Aggarwal and Law 2005). Given that love is an affective state, this research will examine the effect this state has on the processing styles of consumers when receiving new information about a brand.

This research attempts to contribute to both practitioners and academicians. Building upon the foundations of research in the area of brand love, this research will shed more light on the way brand love influences various thought processes of consumers. Specifically, academicians understand that consumers typically disregard negative information initially (Klebb and Unger 1983), typically perceive a source to be credible based on their level of expertise (Ohanian 1990), and seek additional information at various levels. If it were discovered that brand love could alter any of these relationships, this could ultimately change our understanding of how consumers think, and the considerations made by these consumers when receiving new information.

Similarly, this would give practitioners a better understanding of how to reach certain customers. Marketing managers would be able to send different messages based on the love levels of the consumers. This could also give brands something to strive for in order to shield themselves and their image from possible negative information in the future.

What is Brand Love?

Before delving into the effect brand love has on the thought processes of consumers, a clear depiction of brand love must be discussed. Although the love felt for a brand isn’t necessarily the same love one would feel for their family or spouse, research has shown that consumers do develop feelings towards a brand that are considerably more intense than a liking towards that brand. Foundational research was theoretically based on Sternberg’s (1986) triangular theory of love. Although some research has challenged the notion that brand love should not be considered parallel to interpersonal love (Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi 2012; Langner, Schmidt, and Fischer 2015), multiple authors have found evidence that although not exact, there are great similarities between the two (Shimp and Madden 1988; Ji 2002; Ahuvia 2005; Maxian et al. 2008; Albert and Valette-Florence 2010; Reimann et al. 2012).

Despite the varying definitions concerning brand love, most definitions contain similar concepts and generally refer to the affinity generated by a customer towards the brand that they have formed a relationship with over time. Brand love is noted as an experience that goes beyond brand attachment (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 1995) and self-brand connections (Escalas and Bettman 2003; Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi (2012). Although little agreement has been made on the true meaning of brand love, Albert, Merunka, and Valette-Florence (2008) define brand love as “the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name” (p.1063). Customers express this love through the consistent use of the particular brand, spreading a positive word-of-mouth for the desired brand (Stokburger-Sauer et al. 2012), and sometimes these customers can even go as far as tearing other brands down in order to build their desired brand up in the eyes of their peers. Consumers feeling love towards a particular trade name are often seen as loyal beyond reason (Roberts 2005). This doesn’t mean that consumers use no logical explanation for why they love this brand. This means that once a consumer begins to feel love for a brand, decisions made concerning this brand aren’t given the same amount of rational thought as decisions concerning other brands. These consumers pay more attention to their loved brands and react more positively to these brands (Maxian et al. 2008). This falls in line with the adage “looking through rose-colored glasses”. Outcomes of brand love include loyalty, a willingness to pay a price premium, forgiveness of failures, and a willingness to spread positive word-of-mouth (Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi 2012).

Brand Love Literature

The concept of brand love started in the late 80’s when authors began to discuss consumers purchasing products as an extended version of themselves (Belk 1988) in which possessions are referred to as a form of second skin that makes positive contributions to the identities of consumers. Authors were beginning to discover not only were these products serving a functional purpose, they were also giving meaning in various other aspects of the lives of

consumers (Ji 2002). These products allowed consumers to portray their self-identity, and in some cases (Belk 1988), these products were found to help solve some identity issues that consumers were facing (Ahuvia 2005).

It wasn't until the mid-2000's that authors began to empirically test brand love and the effects it has on various aspects of the lives of consumers. Original notions were found to be supported both qualitatively and quantitatively (Ji 2002; Ahuvia 2005; Carrol and Ahuvia 2006), and Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory of love was being used as the main theory to explain the love consumers were claiming for brands (Shimp and Madden 1988). Authors began to find that brand love positively influences behavior variables such as brand loyalty, positive word-of-mouth (Carroll and Ahuvia 2006), forgiveness of failures, and a willingness to pay a price premium (Bauer, Heinrich, and Albrecht 2009).

As others began to show interest in the topic, authors began to uncover elements of brand love in hopes to better understand this phenomenon (Albert, Merunka, and Valette-Florence 2008). Eleven potential elements were unveiled including: (1) passion (2) duration of the relationship (3) self-congruity (4) dreams (5) memories (6) pleasure (7) attraction (8) uniqueness (9) beauty (10) trust (11) declaration of affect (Albert, Merunka, and Valette-Florence 2008). These elements were at a later point used to develop a new scale in order to better measure brand love, with seven first-order dimensions which form two second-order dimensions (Affection and Passion). Affection was found to positively influence brand loyalty, and passion was found to positively influence word-of-mouth (Albert, Merunka, and Valette-Florence 2008). Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi (2012) discussed brand love as a prototype made up of various characteristics and organized them hierarchically through a structural equation model: (1) great quality/qualities (2) strongly held values and existential meaning (3) intrinsic rewards (4) self-identity (5) positive affect (6) passionate desire and a sense of fit (7) emotional bonding and anticipated heartbreak (8) willingness to invest (9) frequent thought and use (10) length of use. There are four main pathways in which are taken in the formation of these emotional attachments to brands: (1) Marketing characteristics, value and satisfaction (2) Utilitarian and hedonic benefits-what the brand does for me (3) consumer socialization and intergenerational influence (4) sentimentality and emotional memories. Consumers may innately choose one of these pathways, or multiple pathways could be followed in finding this brand love.

Brand love is a way to describe the sentiment customers develop towards a brand, as there have been multiple authors who state the importance of a deeper relationship between consumers and companies, with some even equating this relationship to a marriage (Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987, p.12). Hooper (2011) stated that customers now desire something more than the generic customer-company relationship: "In essence, consumers want to connect with brands on a human level and want those brands to behave more like friends than anonymous corporate entities" (p.51). These customers look to companies to become more human-like so that a greater bond can be formed outside of the usual buying and selling relationship.

Title	Citation	Main Points/Findings
Consumer-object relations: A conceptual framework based analogously on Sternberg's triangular theory of love	Shimp and Madden (1988)	Used Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory of love to explain love consumers have towards brands/products (consumer-object relations)
Possessions and the extended self	Belk (1988)	Possessions can be an extension of the self. Possessions help to portray the self-image of the consumer to others
Brand equity as a love story.	Cook (1992)	Talks about a love story between customers and companies, and says brand equity doesn't tell the whole story (equity can be measured, whereas love cannot)
Children's relationships with brands: "True love" or "one-night" stand?	Ji (2002)	Conducted interviews produced 10 themes classified by interpersonal love metaphors: (1) first love, (2) true love (3) arranged marriage (4) secret admirer (5) good friend (6) fun buddy (7) old buddy (8) acquaintance (9) one-night stand (10) enmity
Beyond the extended self: Loved objects and consumers' identity narratives	Ahuvia (2005)	Findings support those from Belk (1988) and extend assertions made by Belk (1988) that possessions are extensions of the self, by saying that possessions help one to resolve identity conflicts.
Lovemarks: The future beyond brands	Roberts (2005)	"premium profits lie in strong emotional connections with brands that engender "loyalty beyond reason"
Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love	Carroll and Ahuvia (2006)	Brand love had positive direct effects on both behavioral endogenous variables, brand loyalty and +WOM; Both hedonic product and self-expressive brand had positive direct effects on brand love; hedonic product had a negative direct effect on brand loyalty, and self-expressive brand had a significant positive direct effect on +WOM

Conceptualizing and measuring consumers' love towards their brands	Albert, Merunka, and Valette-Florence (2008)	Identify 11 potential dimensions of love, developed scale to measure brand love with 7 first-order dimensions which form 2 second-order dimensions (affection and passion), Affection is found to positively influence brand loyalty, and Passion is found to positively influence word-of-mouth
Love is in the Heart: Physiological Responding to Preferred Brands	Maxian et al. (2008)	Find individuals' physiological responses are indicative of an emotional connection to their own unique set of brands.
When consumers love their brands: Exploring the concept and its dimensions	Albert, Merunka, and Valette-Florence (2008)	Found 11 dimensions of brand love: (1) passion (2) duration of the relationship (3) self-congruity (4) dreams (5) memories (6) pleasure (7) attraction (8) uniqueness (9) beauty (10) trust (11) declaration of affect
"Bye Bye Love"-Why Devoted Consumers Break Up With Their Brands	Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli, and Friedman (2009)	Qualitative, two main categories of relationship termination of brand devotees were found from interviews: self-healing, and personal transformation
All you need is love: Assessing consumers' brand love	Bauer, Heinrich, and Albrecht (2009)	Find positive relationship between BL and forgiveness of failures, and willingness to pay a price premium
Falling in love with brands: an inductive qualitative exploration of pathways to emotional attachment	Grisaffe and Nguyen (2009)	Find 4 pathways in which emotional attachment to brands are formed: (1) Marketing characteristics, value and satisfaction (2) Utilitarian and hedonic benefits-what the brand does for me (3) consumer socialization and intergenerational influence (4) sentimentality and emotional memories
The feeling of love toward a brand: Concept and measurement	Albert, Merunka, and Valette-Florence (2009)	Present new scale to measure brand love.
Measuring the love feeling for a brand using interpersonal love items	Albert and Valette-Florence (2010)	Propose a new brand love scale using interpersonal love items, then compare results to that of previous research using brand love scales. Results held across all scales, and nomological validity was achieved
Two studies of consequences and actionable antecedents of brand love	Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010)	Propose and test two actionable antecedents of brand love: brand identification and sense of community; both are shown to have a positive influence on brand love, which in turn has a positive influence on brand loyalty and active engagement
Should consumers be in love with brands?: An investigation into the influence that specific consumer-brand relationships have on the quality of the bonds that consumers develop with brands	Nobre (2011)	Results suggested that brand relationships of intimacy-loyalty influenced relationship strength in an indirect way through partner quality inferences and that these relationships might hold up better under brand disruption situations. Passion relationships were related to relationship strength, but to a lesser extent and they did not appear to involve issues of partner quality, The relationships may be more susceptible to tendencies of non-repurchase after brand disruptions occur
A new C-OAR-SE-based content-valid and predictively valid measure that distinguishes brand love from brand liking	Rossiter (2012)	C-OAR-SE method to measuring brand love more efficiently, with higher content-validity. Separates brand love from brand liking. Findings show significant differences between the % of those spreading positive word of mouth and usage with those who love compared to those who like.
Brand Love	Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi (2012)	Elements of the brand love prototype: (1) great quality/qualities (2) strongly held values and existential meaning (3) intrinsic rewards (4) self-identity (5) positive affect (6) passionate desire and a sense of fit (7) emotional bonding and anticipated heartbreak (8) willingness to invest (9) frequent thought and use (10) length of use
Consumer-retailer love and attachment: Antecedents and personality moderators	Vlachos and Vrechopolous (2012)	Findings imply that retail store image, perceived transactional value, and corporate social responsibility associations positively influence consumer-retailer love levels.

For Love of Brand and Community: Why Self-Brand Connection Changes the Nature of Social Comparisons Involving Prestige Brands	Sundie et al. (2012)	Found that implicit self-brand connection moderated the link between envy and hostility such that stronger self-brand connections reduced the transmutation of envy into other hostile emotions
How we relate to brands: Psychological and neurophysiological insights into consumer–brand relationships	Reimann et al. (2012)	Find greater self-reported arousal for recently formed brand relationships, as well as decreased emotional arousal and increased inclusion of close brands over time; also find an association between established close relationships and activation of part of the brain associated with urging, addiction, loss aversion, and interpersonal love.
Understanding and measuring romantic brand love	Sarkar, Ponnampalani, and Murthy (2012)	Developed and validated a two-factor (brand intimacy and brand passion) measurement scale for romantic brand love; reliability, convergent, discriminant, criterion, and nomological validities were all established.
Brand love is in the heart: Physiological responding to advertised brands	Maxian et al. (2013)	Findings show that participants responded more intensely, paid more attention, and reflexively smiled more to their unique set of loved brands, and also prepared to frown at their less-loved brands
What's (brand) love got to do with it?	Romaniuk (2013)	Challenges assertions made by Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi (2012) claiming no evidence that brand love leads to higher market share, sales, or profitability. "having a measure does not make it meaningful"
Psychometric vs. C-OAR-SE measures of brand love: A reply to Rossiter	Ahuvia, Bagozzi, and Batra (2014)	In response to Rossiter, authors argue in favor of their previously used psychometric measures of brand love.
From Customer Satisfaction to Brand Loyalty: A Mediation Model of Brand Trust and Brand Love	Huang and Jian (2015)	The relationship between satisfaction and attitudinal loyalty and behavior loyalty is mediated by brand love and brand trust.
Is it really love? A comparative investigation of the emotional nature of brand and interpersonal love	Langner, Schmidt, and Fischer (2015)	Found differences and similarities between interpersonal and brand love; also, brand love was less arousing than interpersonal love, though loved brands can be as arousing as close friends and induce more positive valence than this interpersonal relationship.
The Power of Brand Love	Fetcherin, Barker, and Peacock (2015)	Authors respond to article by Romaniuk (2013) with empirical evidence that brand love leads to greater profitability and total shareholder return

Table 1

How is Brand Love Any Different?

Although brand love is an emerging topic in marketing literature, some may question its relevance and place in the literature. With topics such as brand loyalty and brand equity already being discussed in the literature, why does the literature stream need brand love? What more can brand love add that the others haven't covered? How is brand love any different from these other topics? This section will answer these questions by giving brief explanations as to why brand love is different from each as well as why it is necessary to dig deeper into this topic.

Brand loyalty is typically associated with the notion that a consumer satisfied with their previous purchase, will continue to purchase this product with the assumption that future purchases will bring with them the same satisfaction as previous ones (Matthews, Son, and Watchravesringkan 2014). Although satisfaction inherently entails some emotion, it is typically associated with a cognitive function; whereas brand love is considered to be more of an affective function (Carroll and Ahuvia 2006). Brand love has been referred to as loyalty beyond reason. This may indicate that a typical customer (not feeling love) may be loyal to a brand until a logical reason comes to switch to another brand. However, this logic would not convince a loving customer to switch due to the infatuation involved. These customers would realize the great memories involved, which far outweigh the reasoning to switch. Although loyalty has been noted as an outcome of brand love, loyalty may not forgive failures, pay a price premium, or spread positive word of mouth quite like brand love will (Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi 2012).

Brand equity is known as the value attached to a product or service by associating it with a particular brand name (Matthews, Son, and Watchravesringkan 2014). Although an important aspect of brand love is to realize the value attached to that particular brand, the other aspects of the love concept go far beyond this. Some categories that make up the basis of brand equity are brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations,

and other proprietary brand assets (Aaker and Biel 2013). Both brand equity and loyalty are typically associated with measurable items, usually transactions. Although researchers have tried to measure brand love, love itself is difficult, if not impossible to measure, especially in a business context. The aspects and outcomes of brand love are difficult to measure. Most researchers rely on self-reported measures of how willing consumers are willing to spread word of mouth, and how willing they would be to forgive failures. Other outcomes such as loyalty and paying a price premium are more measurable.

The main difference between brand love and these other concepts is the notion of connections beyond reason. Loyalty and equity tend to follow more of a logical path than does love. Given that brand love goes beyond transactions involved with loyalty and equity, it is vital that researchers and practitioners understand the effects of brand love, and how it may alter some of the thoughts and actions of consumers.

Attachment Theory

An antecedent to the love emotion is the notion that the object being loved provides something of need or desire to the person who feels love (Shaver et al. 1987). Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi (2012) take this into consideration in their construction of a brand love prototype, stating “people are attracted to things that provide them with needed benefits and it is difficult to conceive of brand love in the absence of necessary quality” (p. 6). Among the antecedents of the brand love prototype is a positive emotional connection, a subset of which is emotional attachment (Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi 2012). Included in this emotional attachment are sentiments towards the loved brand in which the consumer “feels a bond”, is “emotionally connected”, or the brand “feels like an old friend” (Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi 2012, p. 8). The foundation of attachment theory centers around the notion that humans often reach for an “attachment figure” when faced with a difficult situation (e.g. stress, illness, fatigue). These attachment figures serve as comfort for the individual. Derivative of positive past experiences with these figures, individuals are immediately calmed and comforted when in the presence of their attachment figures (Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Bowlby 1982).

Attachment theory dates as far back as the 1930’s and 1940’s with clinicians observing adolescent behavior among different mother-figures. Many have witnessed an instance when parents allow others to hold their child, and the child begins to cry and reach for its parent. This is an example of attachment theory. The child has had positive memories of the nurture given to the child by the parent and has anxiety about being separated from such a positive relationship. This dimension of secondary attachment strategies is known as attachment-related anxiety, which refers to the fear that the attachment figure will not be present in times of need (Mikulincer and Shaver 2007). Although its origin focused on a young child’s emotional state towards a mother-figure, recent applications have begun to focus on the phenomena of adult attachment (Sperling et. al 1992). Attachment in adults is typically attributable to previous experiences in relationships, and the outcomes of such relationships. These life experiences allow adults to make calculated decisions in choosing their attachment figures, making these adult attachments more meaningful (Bowlby 1982).

Noted as an integral part of human nature, attachment behaviors include one remaining close to an object that allows that person to better cope with their environment or situation (Bowlby 1982). Past authors have also noted that as these children age, the figures in which they attach themselves to may begin to evolve. Siblings, coaches, close friends, co-workers, therapists, groups, or institutions may become the target of this attachment as the individual recalls positive experiences associated with each (Bowlby 1982; Mikulincer and Shaver 2007). “To remain within easy access of a familiar individual known to be ready and willing to come to our aid in emergency is clearly a good insurance policy” (Bowlby 1982, p.669). Multiple authors suggest that attachment is something formed early in childhood as a means to feel more comfortable in stressful situations (Bowlby 1982; Benoit and Parker 1994; Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Peluso et al. 2009). Since the child discovers how this attachment aids in their overall well-being, these attachment habits are carried throughout the aging of the child into adulthood. This behavior has become such an instinctive part of life, past research has shown a direct similarity between attachment style and lifestyle.

Along with the positive aspects of attachment theory, individuals may alternatively experience more stress, and possibly even separation anxiety if the attachment figure is not available in times of need. This may lead to the individual looking to other figures for comfort, as there is a hierarchy of comforting figures in the mind of this individual. Signs of anger can form towards this attachment figure that is absent in stressful times, but a reappearance of this figure can lead back to a reattachment. This attachment can even become stronger after this situation with the individual recalling the extreme emotions felt while the attachment figure was away (Bowlby 1982).

In furthering the adult attachment literature, previous authors have found four main attachment styles among adults: dependent, avoidant, hostile, and resistant-ambivalent (Sperling et al. 1992). A two-dimensional matrix was formed in which each of the four attachment styles lies. Along with the dependent style of attachment comes a high level of dependence as well as low anger. The avoidant style falls in the portion of the matrix that includes low dependence and low anger. Low dependence is also inherent in the hostile style along with high anger.

Those with high manifest anger, as well as high dependent levels, fall into the resistant-ambivalent category. The style in which the adult uses in their attachment is reflective both past and present experiences. Although past experiences create an innate style that serves as a default for the adult, current experiences can alter these styles. This alteration may be brief, with the adult reverting back to their previous style. This would mean that although companies would benefit from a dependent consumer, these companies should also beware that these attachment styles do not suddenly change into a more aggressive style. A consumer using the hostile style of attachment may use the manifest anger to attach themselves to negativity, and possibly spread this negativity to others.

Brand Attachment

Attachment theory, although founded in psychology literature, has been used in a business context to assess the consumer response to loss (Ferraro et al. 2007), as well as predict individual behaviors in the workplace (Richards and Schat 2011; Johnstone and Feeney 2015). Broadening the scope of attachment theory in a business context, consumers who remember positive experiences with a particular brand may become attached to that brand. This means that when a stressful buying situation may arise, these consumers will come back to a familiar brand that has always left them with pleasant memories. Included in attachment theory is the notion that if the attachment figure is not readily available in times of need, the individual may make do with the next available attachment figure (Bowlby 1982). This would place great importance of availability to brands in the attachment figure role. If these brands are not readily available when the need arises, other brands may be relied on, ultimately replacing the original. Individuals attach themselves to objects that can be relied upon. Research has shown that losing an object of attachment can often result in a devaluation of other objects (Ferraro et al. 2007). This is the result of a protection mechanism used by people in attempt to prevent experiencing the heartache of losing another item that is the focus of their attachment. Similar to findings in psychology literature, research in brand attachment among consumers has shown that these consumers also use brand attachment as a method of preventing social loss (Beck and Dagogo-Jack 2014).

Research has shown that people not only form attachments to other people, consumers can also develop attachments to product brands (Fournier 1998; Keller 2003). Consistent with previous definitions of attachment theory, brand attachment is defined as “the strength of the bond connecting the brand with self” (Park et al. 2010). This brand attachment, due to the intense emotions behind attachment, has been shown to more accurately predict behavioral intentions than other information sources such as consumer resources and even brand attitude strength. It is also shown to have a greater effect on brand equity than brand attitude strength (Park et al. 2010). While younger consumers still form attachments to brands, longer durations of attachment are more common among more mature consumers. Also, long-established brands often have a higher tendency to become attachment figures to their consumers (Lambert-Pandraud and Laurent 2010). Determinants of brand attachment include self-congruity, experience, responsiveness, quality, reputation, and trust, while outcomes of brand attachment include intention to recommend, purchase, revisit, resilience to negative information and act of defending the brand.

Social-Identity Theory

As stated previously, consumers sometimes use products as a form of second skin in which they use to portray themselves as they would like to be seen to others (Belk 1988). For example, a businessman who would like to be seen as successful by his peers may spend more money on things regularly seen by his peers (e.g. top-of-the-line suits, exotic car, etc.). This doesn't necessarily mean that this businessman is indeed successful enough to comfortably afford these possessions, but he would like to be seen as such by a certain selection of people. This follows the logic of an old axiom sometimes used in business: “fake it until you make it”.

Social-Identity can have a large influence on the brands in which consumers choose to purchase as well as which brands they choose to love. Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, Sen (2012) refer to this by saying: “knowing who they are and feeling good about themselves are twin goals of the utmost importance to most individuals” (p.408). This can lead us to assume that consumers often make purchase decisions based on social norms and their hope to be accepted by a particular social group. Once accepted by that group, these purchase decisions may continue in order to remain a part of the group. These repeat purchases may also lead to a loyalty, and ultimately ‘love’ for that brand.

Research has shown that people tend to see distinct groups and associate themselves with certain groups. This is referred to as the Social Identity Theory (Ashforth and Mael 1989). Among these groups, members often tend to psychosocialize, which has been described as emulating other persons. This desire to fit in with certain groups, and emulate the actions of others that are similar, may create a strong sense of unintentional groupthink. Groupthink is defined as “a pattern of thought characterized by self-deception, forced manufacture of consent, and conformity to group values and ethics” (Bénabou 2012, p.430). This line of thinking creates that strong influential personality that Word-of-Mouth Marketers can target, such as the “opinion leaders” (Kozinets et al. 2010). These opinion leaders are often those that are most trusted and leaned on to gain information in certain networks. These people often tend to have the most influential power as well as the ability to spread word to large groups quickly. Persuading an “opinion leader” could have major implications in spreading positive word-of-mouth to a large

group. "Knowing who they are and feeling good about themselves are twin goals of the utmost importance to most individuals" (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, Sen 2012, p.408).

Companies can aid by giving the customer something to identify with, as people typically look for companies to which they can relate with and help to define themselves and their social identity (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003). The more a consumer identifies with a brand, the more loyal that person will be, and the more they will advocate the brand to others. Brand loyalty is a high priority for companies. Brand loyalty usually involves customers self-creating exit barriers to the brand. It takes more effort to convince a customer to switch from a brand they have been loyal to for years, and a high brand loyalty often coincides with customer-company identification (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003).

Source Credibility

With past authors referring to brand love as loyalty beyond reason (Roberts 2005; Maxian et al. 2008), the impact that brand love has on perceived credibility is of interest within this research. Typically source credibility comes with an inherent believability based on the expertise of the message sender (Ohanian 1990), but brand love comes with a sense of confidence in one's own knowledge about the brand. This is due to the long-standing relationship the consumer has had with the brand and numerous fond memories that have formed over the years.

With the internet and social media being such a large part of today's society, consumers are surrounded by information. This information manifests itself in many forms in both an official (e.g. press releases, advertisements, etc.) and unofficial (e.g. word-of-mouth) capacity. These consumers are then left with the task of discerning the credibility of these sources. Source credibility includes the characteristics of the message communicator that may affect the acceptance or rejection of the intended message (Ohanian 1990). Although the perception of the credibility of the information obtained varies among individuals, each still gains the same amount of information through this information (Hovland and Weiss 1951). This suggests that consumers may receive new information about a brand they love, and all will gain knowledge from that review regardless of the perception of its credibility. The difference will be seen in the opinions of each consumer in assessing the credibility. Some may be influenced to believe the information to be credible, and those who do not see it as credible may choose not to believe this information, thus not utilizing this information in their decision to further elaborate.

There is a well-established relationship between source credibility and persuasiveness, such that a credible source is typically seen as more trustworthy. With trustworthiness being a major component of source credibility, those who are associated with trustworthiness are often more persuasive with their messages (Sternthal et al. 1978). Similar to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo 1986), people can be persuaded systematically, or through heuristics. Systematic persuasion relies more heavily on factual information, or other information directly related to the message, where more cognitive effort is made in the decision to accept or reject the message (Chaiken 1980). Alternatively, heuristic persuasion could involve less cognitive effort and therefore reliant on other non-content cues when receiving the message. These heuristics could be based on the attractiveness of the source, or possibly even the recipient's surroundings.

Past research has shown that the goals of consumers can also play a role in their decision to accept the source as credible or not. Developed from this research are two main types of goals consumers can have when making decisions, problem solvers and psychosocializers (Wilding and Bauer 1968). The problem solvers have the goal of solving the issue at hand. This goal will lead them to react more positively to the competence of the source in order to meet their goal. The psychosocializers are more focused on the social benefit associated with their end choice. This goal leads consumers to rely more on the social attractiveness of the source. When rejecting the message, these psychosocializers tend to view the source less favorable (Wilding and Bauer 1968). Although it is often difficult to uncover the goals of consumers, marketers can use the type of product being purchased to predict the goals of future customers. Although iPhones could easily meet the goals of problem solvers who are looking for a well-functioning phone for their everyday use, iPhones may be more fitting for psychosocializers who are looking for the social benefit associated with owning an Apple product. Combining this information with the findings of Jin and Phua (2014), Apple may use a socially attractive source with a large number of social media followers to deliver their message to consumers. The psychosocializers will react more positively to this source, and less likely to reject the message.

Theoretical Framework

Information processing styles have been shown to be directly influenced by the affective state of the individual. Some have examined this in terms of global vs. local, while others have looked at it in terms of holistic vs. abstract thinking. This study will further examine the relationship between this state of affect and information processing styles with consideration for 'brand love'. Brand loyalty is a consequence of brand love. This means that when consumers feel love for a brand, they are loyal to that brand, and typically think highly of that brand. Attachment theory suggests that when individuals are faced with stress or adversity, they often look to attachment figures for comfort.

Research has shown that consumers respond more intensely and pay closer attention to the brands they have feelings of love for (Maxian et al. 2013). Merely seeing the logo of the loved brand elicited these responses as well as more smiles, as opposed to the formation of frowns when presented with the logos of non-loved brands. This leads to the formation of the first proposed hypothesis. Due to the consumers paying such close attention to loved brands, it is proposed that when presented with new information, consumers will be more likely to seek out additional information than if they did not love the brand. This is proposed to hold true regardless of the valence in which the message is given. Hypothesis one is formally stated as follows:

H₁ – Consumers who receive new information about a brand they acknowledge love for will be more likely to seek additional information

Consistent with previous research showing an initial rejection of negative information (Klebbba and Unger 1983), the second hypothesis posits that consumers who receive a positive message will be more likely to seek additional information, and those who receive a negative message will be less likely to seek additional information. This means that consumers presented with positive information about a brand, regardless of whether love is present or not, will seek out conformational information. This may be a result of the consumer fearing they are missing out on a potential benefit of the brand whether it is of practical or social benefit. Conversely, those consumers given a negative statement will have low elaboration likelihood. Following the logic that consumers will reject the negative message, this initial rejection leaves no incentive for the consumer to seek additional information. Hypothesis two is formally stated as follows:

H₂ – Consumers who receive a positive (negative) message about a given brand will be more (less) likely to seek additional information

The third hypothesis proposes a moderating effect of brand love on the relationship between message valence and the likelihood to seek additional information. This means that consumers who acknowledge brand love will be less likely to seek additional information when receiving a positive message and will be more likely to seek additional information when receiving a negative message. Positive messages about a loved brand would simply reaffirm the reasoning behind the love leaving no reason to elaborate on this information. Although those who feel love may initially be dismissive of negative information, this may also raise concerns about the brand which influence the consumer to seek additional information. Also within this hypothesis is the alternative; those who do not acknowledge brand love will be more likely to seek additional information when presented with positive information about a brand, and less likely to seek additional information when presented negative information about the brand. Again, the negative information will simply reaffirm their reasoning behind not loving the brand, and no additional information is needed. The positive statements, on the other hand, may reveal potential benefits about the company that are being missed by the consumer. This would entice the consumer to further research the brand in order to see if their initial thoughts about the brand were incorrect. Hypothesis three is formally stated as follows:

H₃ – The presence of brand love moderates the relationship between message valence and the likelihood to seek additional information, such that love-acknowledging consumers receiving a positive (negative) message will be less (more) likely to seek additional information

The fourth hypothesis proposes that consumers receiving negative information will perceive the source to have low credibility, and those receiving positive information will perceive the source as having high credibility. The logic behind this hypothesis follows previous research on reaction to negative information (Klebbba and Unger 1983). This hypothesizes a direct relationship between message valence and source credibility. Hypothesis four is formally stated as follows:

H₄ – Consumers who receive a positive (negative) message about a given brand will perceive the source to have high (low) credibility

The fifth hypothesis proposes a moderating effect of brand love on the relationship between message valence and source credibility. It is proposed that those experiencing brand love will perceive the source to have high credibility when receiving a positive message and low credibility when given a negative message. This logic follows that of H₄ in that negative messages result initially result in the source being perceived as non-credible. Counter to this, it is expected that those not experiencing brand love will perceive the source to have higher credibility when given negative statements, and lower credibility when given positive statements. Having love for a brand is accompanied by positive thoughts towards the brand, and thus positive messages about the brand reaffirm these positive thoughts. Similarly having no love for the brand is typically associated with neutral or negative

thoughts about the brand, leading to the reaffirmation of these negative feelings when receiving negative statements about this brand. It is proposed that these consumers will agree with the source, and rate the source as having higher credibility as a result. Following the same logic, these same individuals will rate the credibility of the source as lower when given a positive statement out of disagreement. Hypothesis five is formally stated as follows:

H₅ – The presence of brand love moderates the relationship between message valence and source credibility, such that love-acknowledging consumers receiving a positive (negative) message will perceive source credibility to be high (low)

Methodology

Pretest

In order to determine the processing styles of positive vs. negative information when brand is present, a pretest was conducted. Participants were given ten various messages regarding the same brand. A non-existent brand (Company A) was given in order to avoid pre-established feelings towards the brand. An obviously fictitious brand allowed participants to focus less on the brand, and more on the overall statements. An equal number of positive and negative messages were given. Some of the messages were coded to seem as if they were made in an official capacity (e.g. press release), whereas others were given as if it were in an unofficial capacity (e.g. consumer product review).

These statements were rated on a 7-point scale to determine their positivity/negativity ranging from extremely negative to extremely positive, with a neutral mid-point. Points were assigned to each of the responses, with extremely negative being assigned a score of -3, and extremely positive assigned a score of +3. Multiplying the amount of responses for each choice by the assigned score created a composite score for each question. The lowest scores for official and unofficial statements were chosen as the negative statements, and highest scores for the official and unofficial statements were chosen as the positive statements. Results of this pretest are shown in Figure 1 below with those statements chosen being represented by an asterisk (*).

Capacity Given	Valence	Statement	Score
Official	Positive	1	108 *
Official	Positive	2	90
Official	Positive	3	63
Unofficial	Positive	4	112 *
Unofficial	Positive	5	58
Official	Negative	6	-78
Official	Negative	7	-67
Unofficial	Negative	8	-86
Unofficial	Negative	9	-91 *
Official	Negative	10	-97 *

Figure 1

Study 1

This study was a 2 (brand love vs. No-brand love) by 2 (Positive message vs. negative message) within-subjects study with random assignment. For this study, 201 participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk and were monetarily compensated for their participation. At the beginning of the experiment, participants were randomly assigned into "brand love" or "no brand love" groups. Those assigned to the brand love group were asked to name a brand in which they feel 'love' for, and those assigned to the no brand love group were asked to name a brand in which such love is not felt. At the end of the survey, participants were asked to rate these brands on the brand love scale (Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi 2012) in order to verify the amount of love felt for each.

The participants were then further randomly divided into groups with either a positive or negative message given to them about their brand. These are the messages that were decided upon in the preceding pretest. These statements were again rated on their positivity/negativity to ensure the participants' feelings align with those in the pretest. A "thought listing" (Tang et al. 2011, Chang 2005, Lord et al. 1995, and Martin 2003) immediately followed these statements to qualitatively measure the feelings towards the message. This thought listing consisted of respondents recalling their thoughts as they decoded the messages given to them.

Once the thought-listing was completed, a short survey was conducted in order to measure the likelihood of these participants to seek more information regarding the statements (Bezjian-Avery, Calder, and Iacobucci 1998).

Study 2

A second study was conducted to assess the effect that source credibility has when consumers receive new information. This study will be a 2 (brand love vs. No brand love) by 2 (Positive message vs. negative message) by 2 (credible vs. non-credible) source within-subjects study with random assignment. The 204 participants for this study were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk and compensated monetarily. As with the first study, participants were randomly assigned and asked at the beginning of the experiment to either name a brand in which they feel 'love' for, or a brand in which no love is felt. The brand love scale (Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi 2012) was used at the end of the survey in order to verify the amount of love felt for each.

At this point, participants were first randomly assigned to a group with either a credible or non-credible source (official statement vs. unofficial statement). Each group was further randomly divided, such that half of each group received a positive message, and half received a negative message. The credible source was a press release by the previously identified brand revealing new information about that brand. Given the official nature of the press release by the company, this would represent the credible source. The second group received a statement made by a consumer, not affiliated with the brand in an official capacity. This statement made by a person in an unofficial capacity will lead the participant to see this source as less credible. A brief survey was then given to each participant to confirm the credibility of the source to verify the effectiveness of each stimulus, as well as the level of positivity/negativity of the messages given. Again, these participants were asked to provide a thought-listing after assessing these statements. These listings aid in revealing the thought processes used by participants when receiving the various messages from various sources.

Results

Study 1

As stated previously, participants from Amazon's Mechanical Turk were used in the current data set. Two-hundred and twenty submissions were initially collected, with a few being deleted due for various reasons. While some were deleted for not responding to the majority of questions, others were deleted for not providing a brand in the beginning of the survey. Although thinking of a general brand in which they love/do not love may have sufficed, responses with specifically named brands were assumed to allow the participants to answer the survey in a more sincere manner. The final number of participants for the study 1 dataset was two-hundred and one. The 2 x 2 design of this study would place approximately fifty participants in each group.

Results show support for hypothesis 1 ($p < 0.001$), indicating those who love a brand are more likely to seek additional information that those who do not love the brand. This falls in line with the notion that consumers think more intently and pay more attention to brands they love. Regardless of whether it is positive or negative, as new information comes in about this loved brand, consumers want to know more.

Hypothesis 2 postulates that regardless of the presence of brand love, participants receiving a positive message will have high elaboration likelihood, and those receiving a negative message will have low elaboration likelihood. After testing this hypothesis, results show no significant (0.094) difference in the likelihood of participants to seek additional information depending on the positivity/negativity of the message. This means that although those given a positive statement may be somewhat more likely to seek additional information, there is no significant difference between them and those who receive a negative piece of information.

Results from previous hypotheses testing shows that the presence of brand love increases the likelihood to seek additional information regardless of message valence and that there is no significant difference in the likelihood to seek additional information when given a positive vs. negative message (controlling for brand love). Perhaps given that love makes consumers seek more information, there may be some interaction effects between brand love and message valence. Testing this position taken in the third hypotheses reveals no significant ($p = 0.156$) interaction effects between the two.

Study 2

Similar to study 1, data was collected through Amazon's Mechanical Turk. Two-hundred and fourteen submissions were initially collected, with very few being deleted due for various reasons. A majority were deleted for not having responded to the majority of questions, thus leaving most of the survey blank. Others were deleted for not providing a brand in the beginning of the survey. Although thinking of a general brand in which they love/don't love may have sufficed, responses with specifically named brands were assumed to allow the participants to answer the survey in a more sincere manner. The final number of participants used in the analyses for study 2 was two-hundred and four. With this study being of a 2 x 2 x 2 design, each group would have approximately 35 participants.

The fourth hypothesis states a direct relationship between message valence and source credibility such that those receiving a positive message will perceive the source to have a higher credibility. Alternatively, those receiving a negative message will perceive the source to have a lower credibility, as results of past research show an initial disbelief in negative messages (Klebba and Unger 1983). The analysis supports this hypothesis indicating a significant difference ($p=0.02$) between perceived source credibility when given various statements. This supports the notion that consumers are initially skeptical of negative information. Results from study 1 indicate these consumers may look for additional information about these statements before accepting the source as credible.

The last hypothesis again proposes an interaction between brand love and message valence. Results from testing this hypothesis indicate a significant interaction ($p<0.001$). This would mean that the effect message valence has on the source credibility will vary depending on whether brand love is present or not. This shows the important role that brand love plays in determining the credibility of the source.

As an aside, further interaction effects were tested among brand love/official capacity (0.83), message valence/official capacity (0.776), brand love/message valence/official capacity (0.553) with no significant interactions revealed.

	Study 1		Study 2	
	Likelihood to Seek Additional Information f-statistic	p-value	Source Credibility f-statistic	p-value
Brand Love	16.511	<0.001	1.19	0.169
Message Valence	1.755	0.187	5.54	0.02
Brand Love * Message Valence	2.031	0.156	24.86	<0.001
R-Squared	0.106		0.173	

Table 2

Implications and Limitations

In the attempt to lay the groundwork for better understanding the minds of consumers experiencing brand love, this study has some limitations. This study proposes that consumers who love a brand will search for additional information when presented with a negative message about the brand. One could argue that a negative message about a loved brand may be immediately discarded with no additional information being sought out. One could also argue that lacking love for a brand would mean that a consumer would be indifferent towards the brand and not seek out new information regardless of the positivity/negativity of the message. If they do not feel love for the brand, they may not care to find more information. Seeking confirmatory information may seem like a waste of time to these consumers.

Although results indicated some support for the hypotheses, the one item scale used to measure elaboration likelihood is another limitation of this study. One-item scales have been used in previous literature, but multi-item measures are often preferred. Churchill (1979) discusses the issues alleviated by using multi-item scales in measurement, including an increase in reliability and decrease in measurement error. He emphasizes this importance by stressing the need for marketers to develop multi-item measures and use them in future studies (Churchill 1979).

Previous research has challenged the use of psychometric measures of brand love, claiming them to be inefficient and less validity (Rossiter 2012). However, these notions have since been refuted by multiple authors (Albert and Valette-Florence 2010; Ahuvia, Bagozzi, and Batra 2014). Also, given that Rossiter (2012) proposed a "better" method to measure brand love, his results fell in line with those published before and after him. Therefore, regardless of whether the proposed method was better or not, results still indicated the same effects.

The results of this study would give academicians and practitioners a better understanding of the thought processes consumers have in considering brand love. Theoretically, these findings indicate the role that brand love plays in altering the previously established relationships message valence has with the likelihood to seek additional information and source credibility. Reiterating the newness of brand love as a concept, this research is foundational in setting the stage for new research to be conducted. A better understanding of brand love is necessary before further research can be conducted.

A better understanding of brand love by marketing managers will allow them to better formulate marketing strategies based on their intended target. Marketing managers will have the understanding that their loving customers are likely to seek out additional information when faced with new information about their brand. Luckily, consumers' tendencies to reject negative information initially will provide some semblance of a shield to protect the brand from the possible impact of this negative information. Having brand love will strengthen this shield, making it very difficult for negative information to permeate the positive image held in the mind of these consumers.

The search for additional information can be good or bad for the company. Even if a person feeling no love begins a search to confirm negative information about a brand, this search could ultimately lead them to positive

information about the company. If overwhelming enough, this positive information may even change the perception of the brand in their minds. Likewise, a consumer looking for additional positive information could stumble across negative information leaving them with somewhat of a conflict on their hands.

Future Research

This study indicates high elaboration likelihood when receiving negative information for those who feel love for a brand, yet a propensity to perceive the source to have low credibility. Future research could determine the effect that source credibility has on the elaboration likelihood. One might expect that a low perception of credibility would lead to a high likelihood to elaborate. If someone is not perceived as knowledgeable about a subject, there would be reason to seek additional information in order to either confirm or refute the given information. One might also expect there to be low elaboration likelihood if the source was perceived to have high credibility. If the person is knowledgeable about the subject, there is little reason to seek additional information.

Previous research has shown that although initially rejected, the perception of negative information begins to change over time. As time goes by, people are less likely to associate the source with the information. This ultimately results in remembering only the information, and not the source, causing the information to be accepted as truth. Often, this information is better remembered than truths (Hovland and Weiss 1951). Future research could conduct a longitudinal data analysis on the statements given from non-credible sources. Although past research indicates that these messages will eventually be accepted as truth, of particular interest would be the role brand love (attachment) plays. Participants could be divided into two groups (brand love and no brand love) and given statements from a non-credible source. The acceptance level of this message would then be measured over time to determine how long it would take each group to accept the message. One would assume the acceptance time would be dependent on the type of message as well.

References

- Aggarwal P, Law S. Role of Relationship Norms in Processing Brand Information. *Journal of Consumer Research* [serial online]. December 2005;32(3):453-464. Available from: Business Source Complete, Ipswich, MA. Accessed December 10, 2015.
- Ahuvia, A. C. (2005). Beyond the extended self: Loved objects and consumers' identity narratives. *Journal of consumer research*, 32(1), 171-184.
- Ahuvia, A., Bagozzi, R. P., & Batra, R. (2014). Psychometric vs. C-OAR-SE measures of brand love: A reply to Rossiter. *Marketing Letters*, 25(2), 235-243.
- Albert, N., Merunka, D. R., & Florence-Valette, P. (2008). Conceptualizing and measuring consumers' love towards their brands. *Society for Marketing Advances Proceedings*, 108-111.
- Albert, N., Merunka, D., & Valette-Florence, P. (2008). When consumers love their brands: Exploring the concept and its dimensions. *Journal of Business Research*, 61(10), 1062-1075.
- Albert, N., Merunka, D., & Valette-Florence, P. (2009). The feeling of love toward a brand: Concept and measurement. *NA-Advances in Consumer Research Volume 36*.
- Albert, N., & Valette-Florence, P. (2010). Measuring the love feeling for a brand using interpersonal love items. *Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness*, 5(1), 57.
- Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *Academy of management review*, 14(1), 20-39.
- Batra, R., Ahuvia, A., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2012). Brand love. *Journal of Marketing*, 76(2), 1-16.
- Bauer, H., Heinrich, D., & Albrecht, C. M. (2009). All you need is love: Assessing consumers' brand love. In *Proceedings of the American Marketing Association summer educators conference* (pp. 252-53). Chicago: American Marketing Association.
- Beck, J., & Dagogo-Jack, S. (2014). All You Need Is Love: Focusing on Brand Attachment Self-Affirms Against Social Loss. *NA-Advances in Consumer Research Volume 42*.
- Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of consumer research*, 15(2), 139-168.
- Bénabou, R. (2012). Groupthink: Collective delusions in organizations and markets. *The Review of Economic Studies*, rds030.
- Benoit, D., & Parker, K. C. (1994). Stability and transmission of attachment across three generations. *Child development*, 65(5), 1444-1456.
- Bergkvist, L., & Bech-Larsen, T. (2010). Two studies of consequences and actionable antecedents of brand love. *Journal of Brand Management*, 17(7), 504-518.
- Bezjian-Avery, Alexa, Bobby Calder, and Dawn Iacobucci. "New media interactive advertising vs. traditional advertising." *Journal of advertising research* 38 (1998): 23-32.
- Bhattacharya, C. B., & Sen, S. (2003). Consumer-company identification: A framework for understanding consumers' relationships with companies. *Journal of marketing*, 67(2), 76-88.
- Blumer, H. (1986). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. Univ of California Press.
- Bowlby, J. (1982). Attachment and loss: retrospect and prospect. *American journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 52(4), 664.
- Carroll, B. A., & Ahuvia, A. C. (2006). Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love. *Marketing Letters*, 17(2), 79-89.
- Chaiken, S. (1980). Heuristic versus systematic information processing and the use of source versus message cues in persuasion. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 39(5), 752.
- Churchill Jr, G. A. (1979). A paradigm for developing better measures of marketing constructs. *Journal of marketing research*, 64-73.
- Cook, W. A. (1992). Brand equity as a love story.
- Dwyer, F. R., Schurr, P. H., & Oh, S. (1987). Developing buyer-seller relationships. *The Journal of marketing*, 11-27.
- Dykas, M. J., & Cassidy, J. (2011). Attachment and the processing of social information across the lifespan: theory and evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 137(1), 19.
- Fetscherin, M., Barker, R., & Peacock, J. (2015). The Power of Brand Love.
- Ferraro, R., Escalas, J., & Bettman, J. R. (2007). Attachment style, psychological security, and consumer response to special possession loss. *NA-Advances in Consumer Research Volume 34*.
- Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. *Journal of consumer research*, 24(4), 343-373.
- Grisaffe, D., & Nguyen, H. (2009). Falling in love with brands: an inductive qualitative exploration of pathways to emotional attachment. In *Advances in consumer research. In: North American Conference Proceedings* (Vol. 36, pp. 869-870).
- Hemetsberger, A., Kittinger-Rosanelli, C. M., & Friedmann, S. (2009). 'Bye Bye Love'-Why Devoted Consumers Break Up With Their Brands. *NA-Advances in Consumer Research Volume 36*.

- Hooper, C. S. (2011). Qualitative in context. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 51(1), 19.
- Huang, Y. T., & Jian, S. P. (2015). From Customer Satisfaction to Brand Loyalty: A Mediation Model of Brand Trust and Brand Love. *Marketing Review/Xing Xiao Ping Lun*, 12(2).
- Isbell, Linda M. "What is the relationship between affect and information-processing styles?: This and other global and local questions inspired by GLOMOSys." *Psychological Inquiry* 21.3 (2010): 225-232.
- Japutra, A., Ekinci, Y., & Simkin, L. (2014). Exploring brand attachment, its determinants and outcomes. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 22(7), 616-630.
- Ji, M. F. (2002). Children's relationships with brands: "True love" or "one-night" stand?. *Psychology & Marketing*, 19(4), 369-387.
- Jin, S. A. A., & Phua, J. (2014). Following celebrities' tweets about brands: The impact of Twitter-based electronic word-of-mouth on consumers' source credibility perception, buying intention, and social identification with celebrities. *Journal of Advertising*, 43(2), 181-195.
- Johnstone, M., & Feeney, J. A. (2015). Individual differences in responses to workplace stress: the contribution of attachment theory. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 45(7), 412-424.
- Keller, K. L. (2003). *Strategic brand management* (Vol. 11998). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Klebba, J. M., & Unger, L. S. (1983). The impact of negative and positive information on source credibility in a field setting. *NA-Advances in Consumer Research Volume 10*.
- Kozinets, R., Wojnicki, A. C., Wilner, S. J., & De Valck, K. (2010). Networked narratives: Understanding word-of-mouth marketing in online communities. *Journal of Marketing, March*.
- Lambert-Pandraud, R., & Laurent, G. (2010). Why do older consumers buy older brands? The role of attachment and declining innovativeness. *Journal of Marketing*, 74(5), 104-121.
- Langner, T., Schmidt, J., & Fischer, A. (2015). Is it really love? A comparative investigation of the emotional nature of brand and interpersonal love. *Psychology & Marketing*, 32(6), 624-634.
- Maxian, W., Siegrist, N., Wise, W., Freeman, J. D., Altman, K., & Bradley, S. D. (2008, January). LOVE IS IN THE HEART: PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONDING TO PREFERRED BRANDS. In *American Academy of Advertising. Conference. Proceedings (Online)* (p. 57). American Academy of Advertising.
- Maxian, W., Bradley, S. D., Wise, W., & Toulouse, E. N. (2013). Brand love is in the heart: Physiological responding to advertised brands. *Psychology & Marketing*, 30(6), 469-478.
- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2007). Boosting attachment security to promote mental health, prosocial values, and inter-group tolerance. *Psychological Inquiry*, 18(3), 139-156.
- Nobre, H. (2011). Should consumers be in love with brands?: An investigation into the influence that specific consumer-brand relationships have on the quality of the bonds that consumers develop with brands. *Journal of Transnational Management*, 16(4), 270-281.
- Park, Whan C., MacInnis, D. J., Priester, J., Eisingerich, A. B., & Iacobucci, D. (2010). Brand attachment and brand attitude strength: Conceptual and empirical differentiation of two critical brand equity drivers. *Journal of marketing*, 74(6), 1-17.
- Peluso, P. R., Peluso, J. P., Buckner, J. P., Kern, R. M., & Curlette, W. (2009). Measuring lifestyle and attachment: An empirical investigation linking individual psychology and attachment theory. *Journal of Counseling and Development: JCD*, 87(4), 394.
- Reimann, M., Castaño, R., Zaichkowsky, J., & Bechara, A. (2012). How we relate to brands: Psychological and neurophysiological insights into consumer-brand relationships. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(1), 128-142.
- Reinartz, W., Thomas, J. S., & Kumar, V. (2005). Balancing acquisition and retention resources to maximize customer profitability. *Journal of Marketing*, 69(1), 63-79.
- Richards, D. A., & Schat, A. C. (2011). Attachment at (not to) work: applying attachment theory to explain individual behavior in organizations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(1), 169.
- Roberts, K. (2005). *Lovemarks: The future beyond brands*. Powerhouse books.
- Romaniuk, J. (2013). What's (brand) love got to do with it?.
- Rossiter, J. R. (2012). A new C-OAR-SE-based content-valid and predictively valid measure that distinguishes brand love from brand liking. *Marketing Letters*, 23(3), 905-916.
- Sarkar, A., Ponnamp, A., & Murthy, B. K. (2012). Understanding and measuring romantic brand love. *Journal of Customer Behaviour*, 11(4), 324-347.
- Schwarz, Norbert, Herbert Bless, and Gerd Bohner. "Mood and persuasion: Affective states influence the processing of persuasive communications." *Advances in experimental social psychology* 24 (1991): 161-199.
- Shimp, T. A., & Madden, T. J. (1988). Consumer-object relations: A conceptual framework based analogously on Sternberg's triangular theory of love. *NA-Advances in Consumer Research Volume 15*.
- Sperling, M. B., Berman, W. H., & Fagen, G. (1992). Classification of adult attachment: An integrative taxonomy from attachment and psychoanalytic theories. *Journal of personality assessment*, 59(2), 239-247.

- Sternthal, B., Dholakia, R., & Leavitt, C. (1978). The persuasive effect of source credibility: Tests of cognitive response. *Journal of Consumer research*, 4(4), 252-260.
- Stokburger-Sauer, N., Ratneshwar, S., & Sen, S. (2012). Drivers of consumer–brand identification. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 29(4), 406-418.
- Sundie, J., Beal, D., Perkins, A., & Ward, J. (2012). For Love of Brand and Community: Why Self-Brand Connection Changes the Nature of Social Comparisons Involving Prestige Brands. *NA-Advances in Consumer Research Volume 40*.
- Thomson, M., MacInnis, D. J., & Park, C. W. (2005). The ties that bind: Measuring the strength of consumers' emotional attachments to brands. *Journal of consumer psychology*, 15(1), 77-91.
- Vlachos, P. A., & Vrechopoulos, A. P. (2012). Consumer–retailer love and attachment: Antecedents and personality moderators. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 19(2), 218-228.
- Wilding, J., & Bauer, R. A. (1968). Consumer goals and reactions to a communication source. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 73-77.

Appendix A

Brand Love Stimuli (Both studies)

- Name a brand in which you have felt feelings of love toward. (Future questions will be about this brand. Feel free to write this brand down in order to remember it.)
OR
- Name a brand in which you have felt no feelings of love toward. (Future questions will be about this brand. Feel free to write this brand down in order to remember it.)

Statement Stimuli

Study 1

- With the previously named brand in mind, answer the following questions based on this statement about the brand:
 - "A press conference will be held to recognize Company A for their excellent customer service."
OR
 - "Stock prices of Company A are dropping rapidly."

Study 2

- With the previously named brand in mind, answer the following questions based on this statement about the brand:
 - "A press conference will be held to recognize Company A for their excellent customer service."
OR
 - "Stock prices of Company A are dropping rapidly."
OR
 - "A press conference will be held to recognize Company A for their excellent customer service."
OR
 - "Stock prices of Company A are dropping rapidly."

Elaboration Question (Both studies) – 7 point scale

- How likely are you to seek out additional information regarding this statement?

Source Credibility Scale Items (Both studies) – 7 point scale

- This statement seems dependable.
- This statement seems to come from a knowledgeable source.
- This statement seems reliable.
- This statement seems trustworthy.

This statement seems to come from a qualified source.