

Japutra<sup>a</sup>, A., Ekinci<sup>b</sup>, Y. and Simkin<sup>c</sup>, L. (2018-Accepted). Positive and negative behaviours resulting from brand attachment: The moderating effects of attachment styles, *European Journal of Marketing*, DOI (10.1108/EJM-10-2016-0566)

<sup>a</sup>University of Western Australia, <sup>b</sup>University of Portsmouth, <sup>c</sup>Coventry University

## **Positive and negative behaviours resulting from brand attachment: The moderating effects of attachment styles**

### **Abstract**

**Purpose** – The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of brand attachment on brand loyalty, trash-talking, Schadenfreude and anti-brand actions. Furthermore, this study examines the moderating effects of attachment styles on these relationships.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The study is based on a survey of 432 respondents and the data are analysed using the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) approach.

**Findings** – This study empirically supports that brand attachment and attachment styles (i.e., anxiety attachment and avoidance attachment) are distinct. Brand attachment not only influences consumers' positive behaviour (i.e., brand loyalty), but also negative behaviours, such as trash-talking, Schadenfreude and anti-brand actions. The findings of the study suggest that only avoidance attachment style moderates the relationships between brand attachment and these consumer behaviours. The link between brand attachment and brand loyalty is attenuated for high attachment avoidance consumers. In contrast, the links between brand attachment with trash-talking, Schadenfreude and anti-brand actions are strengthened.

**Practical implications** – This study assists marketing managers in understanding that a strong brand attachment may result in negative behaviours and harm a company's brand image. Companies should beware the negative consequence of building relationships with consumers who have a high level of attachment anxiety and/or avoidance. Managers could use attachment styles, particularly attachment avoidance, to segment customers and develop appropriate tactics to hinder their negative behaviours.

**Originality/value** – This paper highlights that brand attachment not only influences brand loyalty behaviour, but also three negative behaviours: trash-talking, Schadenfreude and anti-brand actions. Moreover, the links between brand attachment and negative behaviours are strengthened when consumers have high level of attachment avoidance.

**Keywords:** *Attachment styles; Brand attachment; Brand loyalty; Trash-talking; Schadenfreude; Anti-brand actions*

**Paper type:** Research paper

## **1. Introduction**

According to Park et al. (2010), brand attachment reflects the strength of the bond between a consumer and a brand, which is illustrated by the perceived ease of accessibility and recognition in the consumer's mind. These authors argue that brand attachment is a significant predictor of brand equity, brand attitude and the success of brand extension (Fedorikhin et al., 2008; Schmalz & Orth, 2012). Previous research suggests that brand attachment motivates consumer-brand relationships and favourable consumer behaviours (e.g. Schmalz & Orth, 2012; Japutra et al., 2014; Brocato et al., 2015). However, recent studies argue that not every consumer is willing to develop a strong relationship with a brand (cf. Mende et al., 2013).

Hazan and Shaver (1994) note that establishing relationships between individuals is diverse and complex. The attachment theory suggests that such diverse relationships occur because of the attachment styles that refer to individuals' systematic pattern of expectations, emotions behaviours and history of attachment experiences (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2005). Mende and Bolton (2011) extend this theory from person-to-person to consumer-company relationships. They posit that the relationships between consumers and companies are being guided by consumers' attachment styles. Adopting this definition to the realm of consumer-brand relationships, we suggest that consumers' attachment styles influence the relationship between consumers and brands. Thereby, we define consumer attachment styles as the consumers' systematic pattern of relational expectations, needs, emotions and social behaviours, within their relationship with a brand, based on their previous attachment experiences.

Different individuals have varying attachment styles, resulting in different characteristics that guide their attachment process (Collins & Read, 1990). Following

from studies in the field of psychology, consumer attachment styles are categorised into two distinct dimensions: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance (Mende and Bolton, 2011). Attachment anxiety is, “the extent to which a customer worries that the firm might not be available in times of need, has an excessive need for approval, and fears rejection and abandonment from this firm”, whereas attachment avoidance is, “the extent to which a customer distrusts the firm’s goodwill, characterized by an excessive need for self-reliance, fears depending on the firm, and strives for emotional and cognitive distance from the firm” (Mende et al., 2013, p. 127). Only a few studies acknowledge that brand attachment and consumer attachment styles are related to positive as well as negative behaviours. For instance, Johnson et al. (2011) show that when a brand is more self-relevant in consumer-brand relationships, the greater the likelihood that a consumer conducts anti-brand actions. Subsequently, Johnson et al. (2012) demonstrate that attachment styles predict a number of consumers’ detrimental behaviours (e.g., complaints, obsessing and payback).

Hence, this study proposes that brand attachment leads to not only favourable consumer behaviour, such as brand loyalty, but also negative consumer behaviours, such as trash-talking, Schadenfreude and anti-brand actions. Trash-talking refers to negative communications by members of a group about rival brands due to their defence mechanism on behalf of their preferred brand (Hickman & Ward, 2007; Marticotte et al., 2016). Trash-talking can be seen in the case of the Mac vs. Windows operating system (OS), where it is common to see both sets of users express harsh and negative comments toward the other OS (cf. Hickman & Ward, 2007). Schadenfreude is the consumer’s feelings of malicious pleasure based on the misfortune of rival brands (Feather & Sherman, 2002; Hickman & Ward, 2007). For example, for Schadenfreude, Marticotte et al. (2016) note that failures or problems attributed to the PlayStation (or

Xbox) console are considered as a victory for users of the other console. Trash-talking and Schadenfreude have been considered as oppositional brand loyalty (Hickman & Ward, 2007; Marticotte et al., 2016; Marticotte & Arcand, 2017). Brand attachment may drive brand loyalty and oppositional brand loyalty at the same time. This is because oppositional brand loyalty starts with consumer loyalty (Japutra et al., 2014; Marticotte et al., 2016). Trash-talking occurs when consumers would like to express and justify their choice (Marticotte et al., 2016). Brand attachment drives anti-brand actions when consumers feel disappointed with a brand.

This study contributes to marketing knowledge in three different ways. First, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first attempt to combine attachment styles with brand attachment. Although researchers argue that the two concepts are distinct, there is no empirical results to support this notion. This is a response to the call for further research to advance the relationship between these two constructs (Mende & Bolton 2011; Mende et al. 2013). Second, research on the link between brand attachment and consumers' negative behaviours is limited. Previous research investigating the drivers of negative behaviours does not account for attachment strength and attachment styles (Johnson et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2012). Third, this study provides insights into how attachment styles (i.e., attachment avoidance) influence the relationship between brand attachment and its positive and negative behavioural consequences. Examination of such consequences of brand attachment is important for managerial standpoints because it provides insights into how different consumers are likely to display different behaviours.

## **2. Conceptual framework and hypotheses development**

The majority of researchers refer to consumers' emotional bonding regarding passion, affection and connection towards brands (Thomson et al., 2005). Brocato et al. (2015) show that brand attachment influences positive word-of-mouth as well as switching intentions. Japutra et al. (2016) reveal that self-congruence, experience, responsiveness and CSR beliefs are antecedents of brand attachment whereas brand loyalty and resilience to negative information are the consequences of brand attachment.

In addition to brand attachment, a few studies have investigated attachment styles. Thomson and Johnson (2006) show that attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance style indirectly influence satisfaction through reciprocity. Paulssen (2009) reveals that attachment avoidance predicts satisfaction, trust and repurchase intention in a business-to-business context. Swaminathan et al. (2009) suggest that attachment styles moderate the relationship between brand personality and brand choice. Mende and Bolton (2011) investigate specific firm-focused attachment styles, concluding that customers with low anxiety, avoidance, or both, are more favourable in terms of satisfaction, trust and affective commitment toward the firm. Mende et al. (2013) find that attachment styles predict preference for closeness, as well as influencing loyalty.

The two attachment styles – anxiety and avoidance – are conceptually distinct from brand attachment (Mende & Bolton, 2011). We propose that brand attachment is the magnitude of the relationship between consumers and brands, while attachment styles are the individuals' working model guiding relationships with brands. Consumers who exhibit a high level of attachment avoidance or attachment anxiety view themselves and others negatively (Mende & Bolton, 2011). In this study, we posit that brand attachment not only influences positive behaviours, but also negative behaviours, as illustrated in Figure 1.

## **INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE**

As shown in Figure 1, brand attachment has a positive relationship with brand loyalty (H1), trash-talking (H2), Schadenfreude (H3) and anti-brand actions (H4). Previous studies have shown that brand attachment leads to loyalty only (e.g. Park et al., 2010). However, strong emotional bonds towards brands may turn into: (1) heightened rivalry, including trash-talking and Schadenfreude, due to social identification (cf. Muniz & Hamer 2001; Hickman & Ward, 2007), and (2) lasting hate, due to brands' transgressions (cf. Grégoire et al., 2009), which induce anti-brand actions.

The links between brand attachment and the four consumer behaviours are moderated by attachment anxiety (H5a-H5d) and attachment avoidance (H6a-H6d). The link between brand attachment and brand loyalty is strengthened for consumers with a low level of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. On the other hand, the link between brand attachment and anti-brand actions is strengthened for consumers with a high level of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. Consumers with a high level of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance are likely to be more demanding. These individuals are less loyal and when the brand disappoints them they are more likely to induce negative behaviours.

### **3.1. Brand attachment and brand loyalty**

According to Park et al. (2010), brand attachment influences consumers' favourable behaviours (e.g., promoting a brand or always buying a particular brand). Even if a firm behaves unethically on a specific occasion, those consumers who are

strongly attached to a brand will be more forgiving (Schmalz & Orth, 2012). A consumer who is strongly attached to a brand (i.e., high self-brand connection) maintains favourable brand evaluations despite receiving negative information about the brand (Cheng et al., 2012). Brocato et al. (2015) show that attachment to a service location positively influences positive word-of-mouth and negatively influences switching intentions.

When consumers develop brand attachment due to their self-congruence (i.e. similarity between self-concept and brand image), they display favourable behaviours for the brand (e.g., purchase intention and willingness to pay) (Fedorikhin et al., 2008; Cheng et al., 2012). Also, they are likely to devote ample resources (i.e., money, time, energy) to the brand (Park et al., 2010). These consumers remain loyal to the brand despite receiving negative information about the brand, because they think that they protect their own self (Cheng et al., 2012). Thus, we posit this hypothesis:

H1: Brand attachment is positively associated with brand loyalty.

### **3.2. Brand attachment, trash-talking and Schadenfreude**

Trash-talking refers to negative communications about rival brands (Hickman & Ward, 2007), including insults towards rival brands (Ewing et al., 2013). Hickman and Ward (2007) note that when trash-talking occurs within a group, it refers to internal trash-talking, whereas if it occurs outside of a group, it refers to external trash-talking. Trash-talking usually occurs in the world of sport (cf. Simon, 2003; Rainey & Granito, 2010). However, these days, it is evident that consumers conduct trash-talking when defending their favourite brands (Muniz & Hamer, 2001; Marticotte et al., 2016). It has been suggested that trash-talking is intensified due to the increase in competitiveness



and rivalry among brands (Japutra et al., 2014). Ewing et al. (2013) state that extreme rivalry results in ridiculing opponents. In sports, the motive for trash-talking is to psych-up one's own self, psych-out the opponents to intimidate or to impair the opponents' performance (Rainey & Granito, 2010). Teammates and opponents usually instigate trash-talking. In a business context, trash-talking is verbally discrediting alternative brands, to gain an edge in order to express and justify a choice (Marticotte et al., 2016).

Trash-talking is different from negative Word-of-Mouth (WOM) which is the result of an unsatisfactory experience with the brand (Richins, 1983; Hickman & Ward, 2007). Negative WOM refers to interpersonal communication that belittles a firm or brand regarding its products and services, which is driven by emotions (Richins, 1983; Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008). Richins (1983) notes that when consumers are severely dissatisfied with products, negative WOM is likely to occur. In the service sector, negative WOM occurs when consumers are dissatisfied with an existing service provider and/or when they are more satisfied with alternative service providers (Wangenheim, 2005). On the contrary, trash-talking is the result of consumers' desire to positively differentiate a particular brand from rival brands (Muniz & Hamer, 2001; Hickman & Ward, 2007). Marticotte et al. (2016) state that trash-talking and negative WOM differ in two ways: (1) consumers do not have any experiences with the brands being criticised, and (2) it is intended to discredit one option in favour of another.

The link between brand attachment and trash-talking is driven by consumers' sense of social identity, characterised by self-categorization, affective commitment and group-based self-esteem (Bagozzi, 2000). The higher the level of consumer commitment to a particular brand, the higher the probability that trash-talking occurs (Hickman & Ward, 2007). Muniz and Hamer (2001) show that consumers tend to judge their brand choice based on their self-concept (Marticotte et al., 2016). Hence, those

consumers tend to positively discriminate their brands in comparison to rival brands (Hickman & Ward, 2007). If someone insults the brand, they consider this as an insult to themselves because they think of it as a threat. They activate a defence strategy to protect their self-esteem (Marticotte et al., 2016). Just as Becerra and Badrinaranayan (2013) show that brand identification is by far the most important antecedent of oppositional brand referrals.

Although trash-talking is more likely to happen in the presence of other users (i.e., internal trash-talking), it is also possible for trash-talking to happen without the other users of the brand present (i.e., external trash-talking). Hickman and Ward (2007) note that internal trash-talking occurs because consumers rate their brands better than rival brands, perceiving their fellow consumers to be warmer and more competent than rival consumers. They also argue that these reasons support consumers acting as “apostles” for the brands and increase the inclination for external trash-talking. External trash-talking occurs because consumers are defending their favourite brands (Muniz & Hamer, 2001; Colliander & Hauge Wien, 2013; Japutra et al., 2014). Following this argument, we advocate that trash-talking is a way of reducing anxiety and seeking social support. Thus, we posit this hypothesis:

H2: Brand attachment is positively associated with trash-talking.

Schadenfreude refers to feelings of malicious pleasure based on the misfortune of others (Feather & Sherman, 2002). Schadenfreude occurs when consumers of a brand derive emotional pleasure from rival brands’ misfortunes (Hickman & Ward, 2007). Marticotte et al. (2016) note that Schadenfreude is a compensatory phenomenon. Having Schadenfreude generates a certain form of satisfaction because consumers see

it as a counterweight, restoring balance to a previously unfair situation. These days Schadenfreude flourishes due to the growth of social media. People peruse other people's social media pages (i.e., Facebook) because they would like to read other people's misfortunes and find pleasure in it (Veer, 2011).

Cikara and Fiske (2012) posit envy, anger, hate, perceived deservingness and resentment as the predictors of Schadenfreude. Similarly, Smith et al. (2009) note three interrelated conditions that provide support to Schadenfreude: personal gain, resentment and envy. These conditions are discussed within the context of counterfeit of luxury brands (Marticotte and Arcand, 2017). Consumers who cannot afford the genuine luxury brand may feel more envious because they would like to be part of that group and resentful because they believe that the success of the luxury brand is not deserved. They feel pleasure from the fact that the original brand is being copied, while at the same time receiving the benefit without having to pay a high price.

It is argued that brand attachment may lead to Schadenfreude due to the equality of condition (Fonagy, 2000; Cross and Littler, 2010). According to Marticotte et al. (2016), adversity in the form of Schadenfreude (i.e. taking pleasure from others' misfortunes) generates a certain form of satisfaction due to the consumers' inclination for restoring balance to a previously unfair situation. For instance, a consumer that is strongly attached to Samsung may feel that there should be a levelling process towards their rival brand (i.e., Apple). When s/he sees consumers of Apple having misfortunes, s/he induces Schadenfreude in order to level Samsung with Apple. Hence, we posit this hypothesis:

**H3: Brand attachment is positively associated with Schadenfreude.**

### **3.3. Brand attachment and anti-brand actions**

In this study, anti brand actions refer to the consumers' obsessive behaviours and hatred. Deterioration and dissolution may also occur in stable and close relationships (Anderson & Jap, 2005). For example, Grégoire and Fisher (2006) argue that a loving relationship can turn to hatred. The adverse brand-consumer relationship is more likely to occur when there is dissatisfaction with brands (e.g., product or service failure). Romani et al. (2009) suggest that there are three conditions for negative brand emotions: physical object, symbolic cultural object and agent. They argue that consumers elicit negative feelings when the brand disappoints them. Hegner et al. (2017) argue that the consumers' dissatisfaction with brands leads to brand hate. However, Tripp and Gregoire (2011) note that not all consumers conduct anti-brand actions (e.g., complaints). Consumers who exhibit negative behaviours are the ones who feel betrayed by the company after investing a considerable amount of their resources (i.e., money, time or energy).

Other reasons attributed to the link between brand attachment and anti-brand actions are: (1) brand opportunism activities (Anderson & Jap, 2005), and (2) incongruity of values between consumers and the brands (Palazzo & Basu, 2007). Brand opportunism activities may include the abuse of the counterparts' trust (Anderson & Jap, 2005). When consumers realise that their trust is abused by brands, they are inclined to retaliate (Grégoire et al., 2009). Also consumers are more likely to exhibit detrimental behaviour for those brands that are more self-relevant (Johnson et al., 2011; Japutra et al., 2014). This occurs when there is mismatch between consumer's social, personal or consumption values and brand actions (Palazzo & Basu, 2007). It might be that a particular brand offers high quality products, but the brand is not socially

responsible to the environment. Those consumers who are socially responsible may feel cheated and start engaging anti-brand actions. Hence, we posit this hypothesis:

H4: Brand attachment is positively associated with anti-brand actions.

### **3.4. Moderating effects of attachment styles**

According to Hazan and Shaver (1994), within the domain of interpersonal adult relationships, being anxious reflects inconsistency in responsiveness that may lead to heightened vigilance, fears of abandonment and neglect, whereas being avoidant reflects rejection on physical affection and intimate emotional expression. These can lead to evasion of closeness. Both attachment anxiety and avoidance are represented by the failure of proximity seeking (i.e., seeking and maintaining closeness to significant others) to relieve distress (Mikulincer et al., 2003).

Individuals with a low level of attachment anxiety or attachment avoidance have the ability to reduce distress and remove obstacles through turning to others, whereas individuals with a high level of attachment anxiety or attachment avoidance are less able to confront the distress-eliciting situation, exhibiting fewer resources to explore the environment, have fun with others or attend to the needs of others (Mikulincer et al., 2003). When failure of proximity seeking to relieve distress occurs, individuals with high level of attachment anxiety carryout hyper-activation strategy; whereas individuals with a high level of attachment avoidance carry out a deactivation strategy (Mikulincer et al., 2003; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2005).

A hyper-activation strategy is defined as, “intense efforts to attain proximity to attachment figures and ensure their attention and support”, whereas a deactivation strategy is defined as, “the inhibition of proximity-seeking inclinations and actions, and

the suppression or discounting of any threat that might activate the attachment system” (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2005, p.26). Individuals who abide with a hyper-activating strategy are hyper-sensitive to signs of abandonment, prone to ponder personal insufficiencies and threats to relationships; while individuals who adopt a deactivating strategy tend to distance themselves from others, strive for self-reliance, and experience discomfort with closeness (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2005).

Insecure attachment (i.e., high in attachment anxiety and/or attachment avoidance) is the root of multiple dysfunctional behaviours that result in relationship dissatisfaction and dissolution (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). It might be that insecure attachment mobilizes the activation of hyper-activating and deactivating strategies. Hyper-activating and deactivating strategies put the attachment system chronically in check, causing insecure individuals to be constantly on the alert for threats, separations and betrayals, with serious consequences for cognitive and emotional openness (Mikulincer et al., 2003).

We apply these notions to the consumer-brand relationships context. We surmise that consumers with a high level of attachment anxiety activate hyper-activating strategies towards their relationship with a brand, while consumers with a high level of attachment avoidance activate deactivating strategies. When they activate these strategies, they expect the brand’s products or brand’s employees to increase efforts to exceed their expectations. The reason behind this is the feeling that they have allocated cogent resources in this relationship. Thus, these consumers’ expectations are raised. These conditions might weaken a sense of loyalty to the brand. In addition, Whelan and Dawar (2014) show that attachment style predicts attribution of blame following a product-harm crisis. Hence, we posit:

H5a: The relationship between brand attachment and brand loyalty is weakened for consumers with a high level of attachment anxiety.

H5b-d: The relationships between brand attachment and trash-talking (H5b), Schadenfreude (H5c) as well as anti-brand actions (H5d) are strengthened for consumers with a high level of attachment anxiety.

H6a: The relationship between brand attachment and brand loyalty is weakened for consumers with a high level of attachment avoidance.

H6b-d: The relationships between brand attachment and trash-talking (H6b), Schadenfreude (H6c) as well as anti-brand actions (H6d) are strengthened for consumers with a high level of attachment avoidance.

### **3. Data collection**

#### **3.1. Design and respondents**

The data were collected using an online platform, which was distributed through web survey software (i.e., Survey Monkey). The invitation to participate in the survey was posted on several boards on the Internet (e.g., DailyInfo, Craigslist, LinkedIn) covering all UK cities, ranging from Aberdeen to London. The participants were informed that they could win one of three Amazon vouchers if they participated in the survey. Respondents were asked to choose their favourite brand from a list of brands provided. The brands listed were diverse and from a mix of categories, including car manufacturers (e.g., Toyota, Volkswagen), electronics (e.g., Samsung, Apple), food and beverages (e.g., Cadbury, Coca-Cola), fashion retailers (e.g., Next, M&S) and airlines (e.g., Virgin Atlantic, British Airways).

Overall, 432 questionnaires were used for the analysis. Sixty-one per cent of the respondents were women, 77% were British, 26% worked as professionals. Thirty-seven per cent of the participants were in the age group of 16-34, 38% of the participants were in the age group of 35-54 and the rest were in the age group of 55 and over. Fifty-four per cent of the respondents had been using the brand that they chose for 10 years or above, 24% purchased the brand several times a year and 34% purchased the brand less than a week ago.

### **3.2. Measures**

Brand attachment was measured using four items; two items reflect brand-self connection and two items reflect brand prominence (Park et al., 2010). Following Mende and Bolton (2011), anxiety and avoidance attachment style were measured with multi-item Likert type scales (see Appendix 1). Exploratory factor analysis was undertaken on the data to identify a priori dimensionality of the attachment styles scale. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity were computed to assess the appropriateness of factor analyses to the data. The KMO value was 0.75, and Bartlett's test was significant at the 0.00 level. Both results demonstrate the factorability of the matrices being considered (Hair et al., 2010). Principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation was used to identify the underlying dimensions. Items exhibiting low factor loadings ( $< 0.45$ ), high cross loadings ( $> 0.40$ ), or low communalities ( $< 0.30$ ) were candidates for elimination (Hair et al., 2010). A final 2-factor model was estimated. The factor solution accounted for approximately 57% of the total variance, with all communalities ranging from 0.40 to 0.64.

Brand loyalty was measured with three items following Yim et al. (2008). We measured trash-talking with three items adapted from Hickman and Ward (2007). To



measure Schadenfreude, we used three items adapted from Feather and Sherman (2002). To measure anti-brand actions, we created a scenario type direction: “Imagine that [this brand] disappoints you severely (e.g., infringing ethical standards or malfunctions that cause severe injuries or whatever wrong-doing you can think of)”. Anti-brand actions were measured with four items following Johnson et al. (2011; 2012).

#### **4. Results**

A structural equation model (SEM) approach was employed to test the research hypotheses. SEM has its merits particularly in theory testing and on explaining marketing phenomena (cf. Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 2000). Iacobucci, (2009) argues that SEM simultaneous fitting provide more precise results (i.e., indicated by smaller standard errors) and less bias (i.e., each effect is estimated while partially out the other effects). SEM has been considered as a natural progression of regression as SEM handles measurement error better compared to regression since the measurement is properly represented (i.e., multiple indicators are represented by a factor). We performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using SEM on the measurement model to ensure that each of the items strongly loaded on its respective construct. Before CFA analysis was conducted, we conducted a normality test in order to confirm normality of the data (Hair et al., 2010). Normality testing was conducted using the absolute value of skewness and kurtosis of each item. The results of the skewness and kurtosis were around the absolute value of +/- 1, suggesting that the data distribution was normal.

##### **4.1. Measurement model**

The measurement model produced an overall good fit (Hair et al., 2010):  $\chi^2_{(209)} = 335.58$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.61$ , GFI = .94, NFI = .94, CFI = .98, and RMSEA = .04. One item from anxiety and one item from avoidance were deleted, since the items exhibited low factor loadings. Details on the measurement can be seen in Appendix A. The adequacy of the measures was assessed through evaluating the validity and the composite reliability values of the constructs. The discriminant validity of the constructs was assessed through comparing the average variance extracted (AVE) from each construct with its squared correlations with the other constructs (cf. Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 1 also displays the means and standard deviations.

#### **INSERT TABLE 1 HERE**

As indicated in Table 1, the AVEs were greater than all of the squared correlations, indicating discriminant validity was achieved. Composite reliability of the constructs exceeds .70, indicating the constructs were reliable (Hair et al., 2010). Before continuing to test the hypotheses by creating the structural model, we checked whether there is a common-method variance problem. Common-method variance was checked through Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003), which suggests that a common-method problem exists when (1) a single unrotated factor solution appears from the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) test, or (2) one general factor accounts for the majority of the covariance among the measures. The results of the EFA test revealed 6 factors with Eigen values greater than 1. The results account for 71.60% of the total variance, where the first factor accounts for 25.20% of the total variance. This suggests that common-method variance does not pose a significant problem since there was no general factor in the unrotated structure.

## **4.2. Structural model and test of hypotheses**

Since our model includes a moderating effect, we tested the research hypotheses following hierarchical moderator regression analysis. Thus, we created two structural models. Model 1 was created to test the main effects. Model 2 was created to test the main and interaction effects. As is often the case in testing moderating effects through the use of interaction terms, preliminary analysis revealed several multicollinearity effects among the variables. Therefore, to address this issue, the continuous independent variables (i.e., brand attachment, anxiety and avoidance) were summated and mean-centered to reduce the multicollinearity between the main and interaction terms (Aiken & West, 1991). Table 2 reports the fit statistics of Model 1 and Model 2.

**INSERT TABLE 2 HERE**

As shown in Table 2, both Model 1 and Model 2 produced an overall good fit. It is also evident from the fit indices that Model 2 is marginally better (i.e., higher CFI, lower  $\chi^2/Df$  and lower RMSEA). The proposed research hypotheses were examined from the standardized path coefficient and t-value as shown on Table 3.

**INSERT TABLE 3 HERE**

Model 1 explains 31% of variance in brand loyalty, 16% of variance in trash-talking, 22% of variance in Schadenfreude and 13% of variance in anti-brand actions. With regard to brand attachment and brand loyalty, the results show that the stronger is

their attachment towards a brand, the more loyalty there is to that particular brand, which supports H1 (SPC = .03,  $t = 1.83$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The next three research hypotheses (H2-H4) propose that strong brand attachment may also results in consumers' negative behaviours. H2 proposes that the stronger the attachment between consumers and brands, then consumers are more likely to exhibit trash-talking. The results strongly support H2 (SPC = .18,  $t = 4.80$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This outcome is similar to H3 (SPC = .17,  $t = 4.48$ ,  $p < .001$ ), which proposes that consumers are more likely to exhibit Schadenfreude when they have strong attachment with a particular brand. We also find support to H4 (SPC = .06,  $t = 1.73$ ,  $p < .05$ ), which states that when the brand disappoints severely, the consumers strongly attached to it tend to exhibit anti-brand actions.

Model 2 concerns the moderation effects of attachment styles, where it explains 32% of variance in brand loyalty, 17% of variance in trash-talking, 24% of variance in Schadenfreude and 14% of variance in anti-brand actions. The results reject H5a-H5d. By and large, anxiety does not moderate the relationships between brand attachment and its positive and negative behavioural consequence. Although our results do not find support for the moderation effect of attachment anxiety, interestingly the direct effect of attachment anxiety on these behaviours is statistically significant. The directions of the relationships are negative towards brand loyalty and positive towards the negative behaviours, as predicted. Attachment anxiety has negative direct effects on brand loyalty (SPC = -.25,  $t = -5.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and has positive direct effects on trash-talking (SPC = .28,  $t = 5.61$ ,  $p < .001$ ), Schadenfreude (SPC = .39,  $t = 8.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and anti-brand actions (SPC = .34,  $t = 6.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

The results show strong support for the moderation effect of attachment avoidance. H6a proposes that the relationships between brand attachment and brand

loyalty are attenuated when consumers have a high level of attachment avoidance. From the results, it can be seen that the interaction of brand attachment and avoidance on brand loyalty was significant (SPC = -.10,  $t = -2.16$ ,  $p < .05$ ), which supports H6a. The results of the SEM also show support for H6b (SPC = .09,  $t = 1.85$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and H6c (SPC = .11,  $t = 2.37$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Both of these hypotheses propose that consumers who have a high level of attachment avoidance tend to exhibit more negative behaviours, such as trash-talking and Schadenfreude. We also find strong support for H6d (SPC = .10,  $t = 1.92$ ,  $p < .05$ ), which means attachment avoidance moderates the relationship between brand attachment and anti-brand actions.

### **4.3. Post hoc analysis**

In order to check whether there are any differences between respondents' gender and age, these were added as control variables in Model 2. The fit statistics produced an overall good fit:  $\chi^2_{(128)} = 368.09$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.88$ , GFI = .93, NFI = .91, CFI = .94, and RMSEA = .07. The results reveal that males are more likely engage with trash-talking (SPC = -.13,  $t = -2.74$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and Schadenfreude (SPC = -.12,  $t = -2.69$ ,  $p < .01$ ) than females. We confirmed the results through an independent samples t-test. The mean differences between males and females for trash-talking ( $M_{\text{male}} = 3.72$ ,  $M_{\text{female}} = 3.23$ ,  $t = 3.05$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and Schadenfreude ( $M_{\text{male}} = 2.66$ ,  $M_{\text{female}} = 2.18$ ,  $t = 3.19$ ,  $p < .01$ ) are significant. Meanwhile, younger consumers are more likely to engage with Schadenfreude (SPC = -.10,  $t = -2.16$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and anti-brand actions (SPC = -.14,  $t = -2.90$ ,  $p < .01$ ) than the elderly. We confirmed the results through a one-way ANOVA test. The results show that the mean differences between younger consumers (i.e. 16-34 years old) for Schadenfreude ( $F = 8.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Anti-brand actions ( $F = 11.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ) are significant.

## **5. Discussion and conclusion**

Most researchers regard brand attachment as a prominent marketing construct that leads to favourable consumer behaviours (e.g., Park et al., 2010; Japutra et al., 2016). In interpersonal relationships, they suggest that people are being guided in their relationships by their attachment styles (e.g., Mikulincer et al., 2003; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2009). However, the relationship-specific attachment styles are under-studied topics in the marketing literature. In particular the research that combines attachment styles and brand attachment is limited (Mende & Bolton, 2011). This research is one of the early studies to examine this phenomenon. Thus, this study provides guidance for managers who wish to understand the complete relationship between brand attachment and its consequences.

The major contribution of this paper is to offer knowledge about how brand attachment operates in relation to unfavourable consumer behaviours. Although extant research (e.g., Park et al., 2010; Schmalz & Orth, 2012) suggests that brand attachment produces favourable behaviours, our study shows that brand attachment may also produce unfavourable behaviours. Our findings confirm H1, revealing the positive relationships between brand attachment and brand loyalty. This result provides support to prior research (e.g., Cheng et al., 2012) suggesting that the emotional attachment between brands and consumers will result in favourable behaviours (e.g., purchase and recommend intentions). Companies should begin to design marketing campaigns that foster these relationships (e.g., building a community and a forum). Another conclusion that can be drawn from this research is with regard to the role of brand prominence (perceived ease and frequency) towards loyalty (Park et al., 2010). Managers must communicate the brand's prominence to their consumers. This can be done by

designing a promotion campaign based on the usefulness of the brand in solving everyday problems.

The results of this study show that brand attachment also leads to negative behaviours. In particular, this study shows that higher brand attachment may lead to higher tendency to incur trash-talking (H2), Schadenfreude (H3) and anti-brand actions (H4). Trash-talking and Schadenfreude are the manifestations of adverse brand loyalty (e.g., Muniz & Hamer, 2001). This study adds to the brand rivalry literature (e.g., Ewing et al., 2013) by highlighting the reason why consumers display adverse brand loyalty behaviours. Our study explains that these behaviours can occur at the individual level because such consumers have strong attachment with the brand. Surprisingly, consumers who are strongly attached to particular brands are the ones who tend to display anti-brand actions when their brands severely disappoint them. This might be due to the fact that consumers who are strongly attached to those brands feel betrayed and have greater resentment towards these brands (Park et al., 2010; Tripp & Gregoire, 2011).

This research also examines the moderating effects of attachment styles on the relationships between brand attachment and the four behavioural consequences. By investigating consumer attachment styles, we acknowledge that not all consumers are the same when it comes to building consumer-brand relationships. The results offer support to our propositions (H6a-H6d) that attachment avoidance moderates the relationships between brand attachment and its consequences. This study suggests that consumers who exhibit high attachment avoidance attenuate favourable behaviours (e.g., loyalty) and strengthens unfavourable behaviours (e.g., anti-brand actions). As predicted, individuals with high attachment avoidance are harder to establish loyalty. They are more demanding since they tend to avoid relationships. However, when

consumers have become loyal, they are more likely to conduct trash-talking and Schadenfreude. These consumers also have the tendency to conduct anti-brand actions when their brands severely disappoint them. Relationship-avoidant consumers are likely to generate higher loyalty towards the brands. However, managers should note that these consumers think that they have put forward their trust and resources for the brands. Thus, these types of consumers need to be taken care of differently. Mende and Bolton (2011) argue that these consumers pertain to financial rather than social programmes. In addition, managers could set up a designated employee as a point of contact.

Interestingly, the results show that attachment anxiety does not moderate the relationships between brand attachment and the four consumer behaviours examined by this study (H5a-H5d). However, attachment anxiety has direct effects on these behaviours, as predicted. Thus, this study shows that when consumers have high attachment anxiety, they tend to exhibit lower brand loyalty and a higher tendency to conduct trash-talking, Schadenfreude and anti-brand actions. It seems that individuals, who are highly anxious in their relationships, are more unforgiving towards the brand. Mende et al. (2013) note that anxious consumers are more sensitive to relational cues, where they respond positively to being recognized, while at the same time they respond negatively to being downgraded. Thus, managers need to take extra care in dealing with these types of consumers. They could offer personalized treatment towards these consumers (e.g., sending birthday cards, calling their names, inviting them to a designated lounge or date).

On another note, further analysis displays that consumers' gender and age play a role in predicting behaviours. In particular, female participants tend to exhibit lower trash-talking and Schadenfreude, whereas elder participants tend to exhibit lower



Schadenfreude and anti-brand actions. These confirm the findings of Becerra and Badrinaranayan (2013): the relationships between brand identification and oppositional brand referrals are stronger for males compared to females.

Academic researchers (e.g., Mende et al., 2013) advocate the importance of measuring consumers' attachment styles. We support these researchers by providing a crucial standpoint: that attachment styles are prominent moderating variables affecting consumers' behaviours. We highlight that the unfavourable behaviours (i.e. trash-talking, Schadenfreude and anti-brand actions) will escalate for consumers who have a high level of attachment anxiety or attachment avoidance. Managers need to fine-tune their segmentation and targeting efforts. They should start segmenting not only using demographic profiles, but also using a psychographic profile, such as consumer attachment styles. Managers should understand that consumers' with high attachment avoidance are more likely to conduct anti-brand actions when they are disappointed with the brands. Consumers' with high attachment avoidance are more receptive to financial compared to social relationship programs (Mende & Bolton, 2011). Thus, managers could provide financial rewards (e.g., gifts, vouchers, cash back) with no reservations (e.g. fine print conditions) to reduce retaliation from those customer.

## **6. Limitations and directions for future research**

This research enlightens practitioners and academics in understanding how consumers can be categorized based on their relationship-specific attachment styles. However, it is not without its limitations. The framework was tested with cross-sectional survey data in the context of UK consumers. This context may raise issues of method and measurement bias, as well as limit conclusions about causality. Thus, further research, to test the framework in a different context and using a longitudinal

study, is needed. The measurement of attachment styles used in this study follows Mende and Bolton's (2011) measure of consumers' relationship-specific attachment styles. It is worth taking the time to check on the consumers' general attachment styles. In particular, Paulssen's (2009) measure of attachment styles accounts for both personal and business relationships. Thus, future studies should investigate the conceptual framework of our study incorporating Paulssen's measures.

The scenario about the brand disappointing its consumers leaves room for interpretation. Thus, future studies should test this conceptual framework in a more controlled environment, such as experimental studies. Additionally, a qualitative approach would be useful in understanding the reasons for why consumers with a high level of attachment anxiety and avoidance are more demanding. Finally, the findings find supports for the moderating effects of attachment avoidance but not attachment anxiety on the dependent variables. Interestingly, the findings support the direct effects of attachment anxiety on the dependent variables. Future studies could investigate more on the direct, indirect and moderating effects of attachment avoidance and anxiety.

## References

- Aiken, L., and S. West (1991). *Multiple Regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Anderson, E., & Jap, S. D. (2005). The dark side of close relationships. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 46, 75-82.
- Bagozzi, R. P. (2000). On the concept of intentional social action in consumer behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27, 388-396.
- Becerra, E.P. and Badrinarayanan, V. (2013), "The influence of brand trust and brand identification on brand evangelism", *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 22 (5/6), pp. 371-383.
- Brocato, E. D., Baker, J., & Voorhees, C. M. (2015). Creating consumer attachment to retail service firms through sense of place. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43, 200-220.
- Cheng, S. Y., White, T. B., & Chaplin, L. N. (2012). The effects of self-brand connections on responses to brand failure: A new look at the consumer-brand relationship. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22, 280-288.
- Cikara, M., & Fiske, S. T. (2012). Stereotypes and schadenfreude affective and physiological markers of pleasure at outgroup misfortunes. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 3, 63-71.
- Colliander, J., & Hauge Wien, A. (2013). Trash talk rebuffed: consumers' defense of companies criticized in online communities. *European Journal of Marketing*, 47, 1733-1757.
- Collins, N. L., & Read, S. J. (1990). Adult attachment, working models, and relationship quality in dating couples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58, 644-663.

- Cross, S., & Littler, J. (2010). Celebrity and schadenfreude: The cultural economy of fame in freefall. *Cultural studies*, 24, 395-417.
- Ewing, M. T., Wagstaff, P. E., & Powell, I. H. (2013). Brand rivalry and community conflict. *Journal of Business Research*, 66, 4-12.
- Feather, N. T., & Sherman, R. (2002). Envy, resentment, schadenfreude, and sympathy: Reactions to deserved and undeserved achievement and subsequent failure. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28, 953-961.
- Fedorikhin, A., Park, C. W., & Thomson, M. (2008). Beyond fit and attitude: The effect of emotional attachment on consumer responses to brand extensions. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 18(4), 281-291.
- Fonagy, P. (2000). Attachment and borderline personality disorder. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 48, 1129-1146.
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18, 39-50.
- Grégoire, Y., & Fisher, R. J. (2006). The effects of relationship quality on customer retaliation. *Marketing Letters*, 17, 31-46.
- Grégoire, Y., Tripp, T. M., & Legoux, R. (2009). When customer love turns into lasting hate: The effects of relationship strength and time on customer revenge and avoidance. *Journal of Marketing*, 73, 18-32.
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate Data Analysis: A Global Perspective*; Pearson Education.
- Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. R. (1994). Attachment as an organizational framework for research on close relationships. *Psychological Inquiry*, 5, 1-22.

- Hegner, S. M., Hegner, S. M., Fetscherin, M., Fetscherin, M., van Delzen, M., & van Delzen, M. (2017). Determinants and outcomes of brand hate. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 26(1), 13-25.
- Hickman, T., & Ward, J. (2007). The dark side of brand community: Inter-group stereotyping, trash talk, and schadenfreude. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 34, 314-319.
- Iacobucci, D. (2009). Everything you always wanted to know about SEM (structural equations modeling) but were afraid to ask. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 19, 673-680.
- IBM (2012). Leading through Connections: Insights from the Global Chief Executive Officers Study. <http://public.dhe.ibm.com/common/ssi/ecm/en/gbe03485gben/gbe03485gben.pdf>. Accessed 29 April 2014
- Japutra, A., Ekinici, Y., Simkin, L., & Nguyen, B. (2014). The dark side of brand attachment: A conceptual framework of brand attachment's detrimental outcomes. *The Marketing Review*, 14, 245-264.
- Japutra, A., Ekinici, Y., & Simkin, L. (2016). Tie the knot: Building stronger consumers' attachment toward a brand. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 1-18.
- Johnson, A. R., Matear, M., & Thomson, M. (2011). A coal in the heart: Self-relevance as a post-exit predictor of consumer anti-brand actions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 38, 108-125.
- Johnson, A. R., Whelan, J., & Thomson, M. (2012). Why brands should fear fearful consumers: How attachment style predicts retaliation. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22, 289-298.

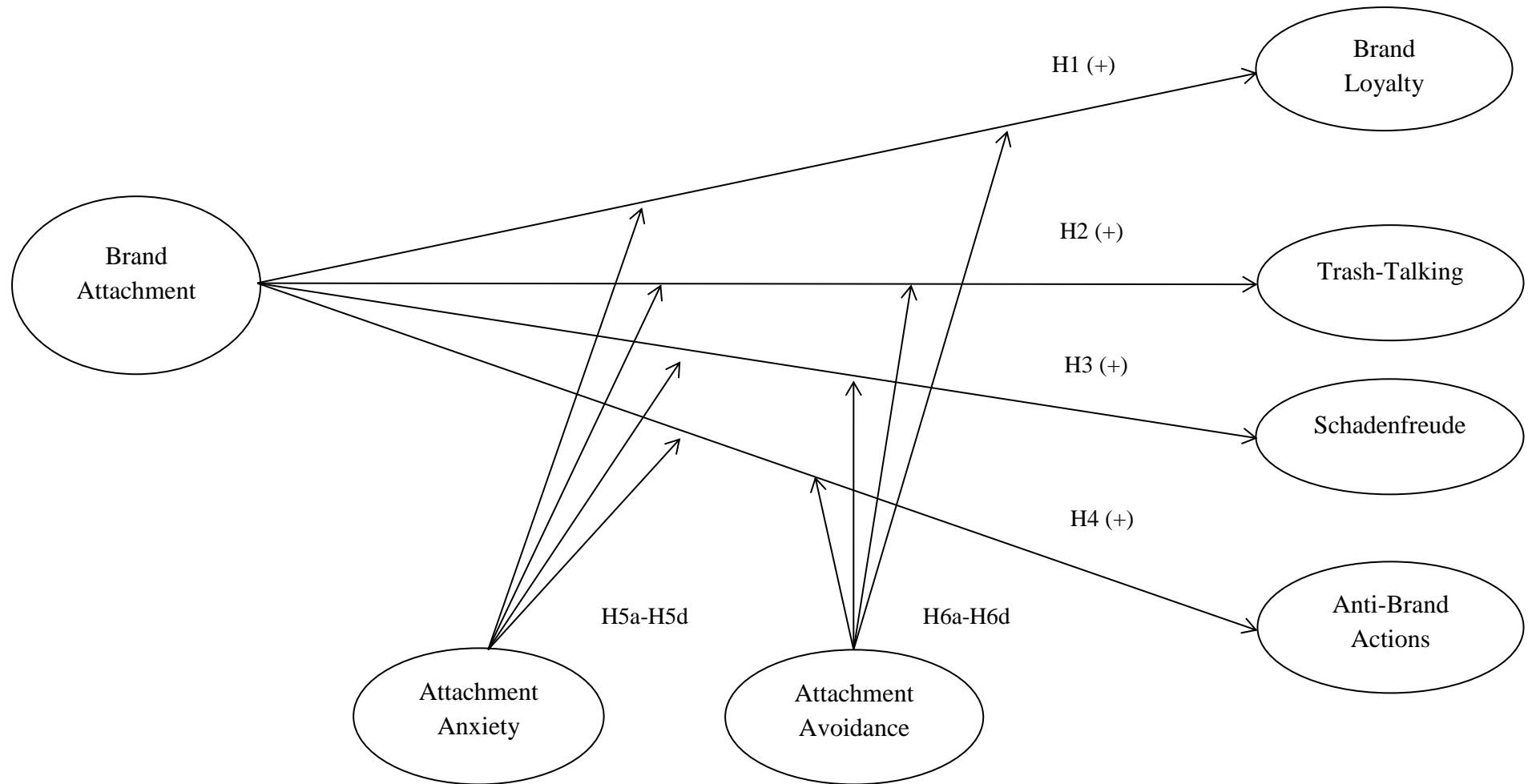
- Mende, M., & Bolton, R. N. (2011). Why attachment security matters: How customers' attachment styles influence their relationships with service firms and service employees. *Journal of Service Research*, 14, 285-301.
- Mende, M., Bolton, R. N., & Bitner, M. J. (2013). Decoding customer-firm relationships: How attachment styles help explain customers' preferences for closeness, repurchase intentions, and changes in relationship breadth. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 50, 125-142
- Mikulincer, M., Shaver, P. R., & Pereg, D. (2003). Attachment theory and affect regulation: The dynamics, development, and cognitive consequences of attachment-related strategies. *Motivation and Emotion*, 27, 77-102.
- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2009). An attachment and behavioral systems perspective on social support. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 26, 7-19.
- Muniz, A. M., & Hamer, L. O. (2001). Us versus them: Oppositional brand loyalty and the cola wars. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 28, 355-361.
- Palazzo, G., & Basu, K. (2007). The ethical backlash of corporate branding. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 73, 333-346.
- Park, C. W., 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, 1-17.
- Paulssen, M. (2009). Attachment orientations in business-to-business relationships. *Psychology & Marketing*, 26, 507-533.

- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879.
- Rainey, D. W., & Granito, V. (2010). Normative rules for trash talk among college athletes: An exploratory study. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 33(3), 276.
- Richins, M. L. (1983). Negative Word-of-Mouth by Dissatisfied Consumers: A Pilot Study. *Journal of Marketing*, 47(1), 68–78.
- Romani, S., Sadeh, H. and Dalli, D. (2009). When the brand is bad, I'm mad!: An exploration of negative emotions to brands. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 36, pp. 494-501.
- Schmalz, S., & Orth, U. R. (2012). Brand attachment and consumer emotional response to unethical firm behavior. *Psychology and Marketing*, 29, 869-884.
- Schoefer, K. & Diamantopoulos, A. (2008), The role of emotions in translating perceptions of (in)justice into postcomplaint behavioral responses, *Journal of Service Research*, 11, 91-103.
- Shaver, P. R., & Mikulincer, M. (2005). Attachment theory and research: Resurrection of the psychodynamic approach to personality. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 39, 22-45.
- Simons, H. D. (2003). Race and penalized sports behaviors. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 38(1), 5-22.
- Steenkamp, J. B. E., & Baumgartner, H. (2000). On the use of structural equation models for marketing modeling. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 17, 195-202.

- Swaminathan, V., Stilley, K. M., & Ahluwalia, R. (2009). When brand personality matters: The moderating role of attachment styles. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35, 985-1002.
- Thomson, M., & Johnson, A. R. (2006). Marketplace and personal space: Investigating the differential effects of attachment style across relationship contexts. *Psychology & Marketing*, 23, 711-726.
- 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.
- Tripp, T. M., & Grégoire, Y. (2011). When unhappy customers strike back on the Internet. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 52(3), 37.
- Veer, E. (2011). Staring: How Facebook facilitates the breaking of social norms. *Research in Consumer Behavior*, 13, 185-198.
- Wangenheim, F. V. (2005). Postswitching negative word of mouth. *Journal of Service Research*, 8, 67-78.
- Whelan, J., & Dawar, N. (2014). Attributions of blame following a product-harm crisis depend on consumers' attachment styles. *Marketing Letters*, 1-10.
- Yim, C. K., Tse, D. K., & Chan, K. W. (2008). Strengthening customer loyalty through intimacy and passion: Roles of customer-firm affection and customer-staff relationships in services. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 45, 741-756.



**Figure 1**  
Research Model



**Table 1**

Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, Correlations and Validities

	Mean	SD	CA	CR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Brand attachment	5.19	2.52	.90	.91	<b>.71</b>	.00	.30	.08	.10	.05	.01
2. Anxiety	2.58	1.28	.73	.75	.07	<b>.50</b>	.04	.13	.11	.25	.16
3. Avoidance	2.81	1.14	.72	.72	-.55***	.19**	<b>.47</b>	.35	.02	.00	.00
4. Brand loyalty	5.89	1.02	.80	.81	.29***	-.36***	-.59***	<b>.59</b>	.01	.05	.12
5. Trash-talking	3.42	1.63	.88	.88	.31***	.33***	-.14*	.10	<b>.72</b>	.41	.08
6. Schadenfreude	2.38	1.53	.92	.92	.23***	.50***	.03	-.23***	.64***	<b>.80</b>	.17
7. Anti-brand actions	1.83	1.16	.88	.88	.10	.40***	.03	-.35***	.29***	.41***	<b>.66</b>

Note: The diagonal values in bold indicate the average variances extracted (AVE). The scores in the lower diagonal indicate inter-construct correlations (IC). The scores in the upper diagonal indicate squared IC (SIC). CA: Cronbach's Alpha; CR: Composite Reliability; \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$

**Table 2**

Fit statistics

Model	N	$\chi^2$	Df	$\chi^2/\text{Df}$	GFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Model 1	432	341.70	92	3.71	.92	.91	.93	.08
Model 2	432	353.22	110	3.21	.92	.91	.94	.07

Note: Df: Degrees of freedom; GFI: Goodness of Fit Index; NFI: Normed Fit Index; CFI: Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR: Standardized Root Mean Residual.

**Table 3**  
Result of Structural Equation Analyses

Relationships		Model 1		Model 2	
		Main Effects Only		Main Effects & Interactions	
		SPC	t-value	SPC	t-value
H1	Brand Attachment→Brand Loyalty	.03	1.83*	.10	1.91*
H2	Brand Attachment→Trash-Talking	.18	4.80***	.25	4.71***
H3	Brand Attachment→ Schadenfreude	.17	4.48***	.23	4.60***
H4	Brand Attachment→ Anti-Brand Actions	.06	1.73*	.09	1.56ns
	Anxiety →Brand Loyalty	-.30	-5.31***	-.25	-5.23***
	Anxiety →Trash-Talking	.51	5.72***	.28	5.61***
	Anxiety → Schadenfreude	.66	8.72***	.39	8.36***
	Anxiety → Anti-Brand Actions	.51	6.59***	.34	6.58***
	Avoidance →Brand Loyalty	-.52	-7.61***	-.44	-7.87***
	Avoidance →Trash-Talking	-.20	-0.79ns	-.02	-0.45ns
	Avoidance → Schadenfreude	-.04	1.38ns	.09	1.82*
	Avoidance → Anti-Brand Actions	-.02	0.29ns	.03	0.62ns
H5a	Anx*BA →Brand Loyalty			.06	1.16ns
H5b	Anx*BA →Trash-Talking			-.04	-0.89ns
H5c	Anx*BA → Schadenfreude			.01	0.32ns
H5d	Anx*BA → Anti-Brand Actions			-.08	-1.51ns
H6a	Avd*BA →Brand Loyalty			-.10	-2.16*
H6b	Avd*BA →Trash-Talking			.09	1.85*
H6d	Avd*BA → Schadenfreude			.11	2.37**
H6d	Avd*BA → Anti-Brand Actions			.10	1.92*
Variance explained (R <sup>2</sup> )					
Brand Loyalty			.31		.32
Trash-Talking			.16		.17
Schadenfreude			.22		.24
Anti-brand Actions			.13		.14

Note: SPC: Standardized Path Coefficient; \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .

## Appendix A

### Measurement items and the standardized path coefficients (SPC)

Scale	Scale Items	SPC
Brand Attachment	To what extent is [this brand] part of you and who you are?	.77
	To what extent do you feel that you are personally connected to [this brand]?	.84
	To what extent are your thoughts and feelings toward [this brand] often automatic, coming to mind seemingly on their own?	.85
Brand Loyalty	To what extent do your thoughts and feelings toward [this brand] come to you naturally and instantly?	.89
	I will continue to purchase [this brand] even if it increases price.	.72
	I intend to keep purchasing [this brand].	.81
Trash-Talking	I will recommend [this brand] to someone who seeks my advice.	.77
	With other users of [this brand], I talk about how negatively we feel about competing brands.	.79
	With other users of [this brand], I talk about competing brands being inferior.	.91
Schadenfreude	With other users of [this brand], I say negative things about competing brands.	.84
	When I encounter others' misfortune (who use competing brands) I feel happy.	.90
	I couldn't resist a little smile upon others' misfortune (who use competing brands).	.92
Anti-Brand Actions	I enjoyed it when a misfortune happened to others (who use competing brands).	.86
	I would make it one of my life's missions to damage [this brand].	.82
	I would become obsessed over what I could do to get back at [this brand].	.85
Attachment Anxiety	[This brand] is my enemy.	.81
	I am a fanatic against [this brand].	.76
	[This brand] changes how it treats me for no apparent reason.	.69
Attachment Avoidance	I worry that [this brand] doesn't really like me as a customer.	.74
	I worry that [this brand] doesn't care about me as much as I care about it.	.69
	I am comfortable having a close relationship with this brand. (reversed)	.72
	It is a comfortable feeling to depend on this brand. (reversed)	.64
	It's easy for me to feel warm and friendly towards this brand. (reversed)	.69