2014

What Type of Relationship Do We Have With Loved Brands?

Marc Fetscherin
Rollins College, mfetscherin@rollins.edu

Published In

Marc Fetscherin, (2014) "What type of relationship do we have with loved brands?", Journal of Consumer Marketing, Vol. 31 Iss: 6/7, pp.430 - 440

What Type of Relationship Do We Have With Loved Brands?

1. Introduction

In the last few decades, researchers begun to assess the relationships consumers have with brands (Blackstone, 1993). Early discussions of the way people feel about brands center on assigning human characteristics (Levy, 1985), personalities (Aaker, 1997) and brands have been seen as relationship partners (Fournier, 1998). In fact, a "variety of different perspectives, concepts, models and various theories have been developed and introduced to understand consumers' relationships to their brands" (Fetscherin and Heinrich, 2014a, p. 1). Examples are brand loyalty (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978), brand trust (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001), brand attachment (Belaid and Behi, 2011; Park et al., 2010), brand passion (Bauer et al., 2004), brand romance (Patwardhan and Balasubramanian, 2011), brand tribalism (Veloutsou and Moutinho, 2009), and brand love (Ahuvia, 2005). These studies distinguish various emotions consumers have for brands (Batra et al., 2012) and illustrate that "consumer brand relationships research is multi-disciplinary, multi-dimensional and multi-conceptual (Fetscherin and Heinrich, 2014b, p. 1).

In the current 'brand love' literature, the concept of 'brand love' is often used as a holistic term including many of the previously mentioned construct such as brand loyalty or brand passion. Appendix A summarizes the dimensionality of the brand love constructs studied so far. All these studies make an important contribution to the understanding of the conceptualization and dimensionalities of brand love but regrettably do not assess and discuss the appropriate relationships theory behind the construct. This is important as the 'relationship' part of the "consumer brand relationships equation" (Fournier, 2009, p. 19) is the one which explains the emotional bond consumers have with brands. The 'equation' consists of three parts: the 'consumer', the 'brand' and the 'relationship' in-between. The relationship theory used to explain consumers' relationships with brands put forward which measurement scales to be used. So far brand love studies used, without any critical discussion, scales originated from interpersonal relationship theories.

Against this background, the contribution of this paper is to close this gap by providing a discussion, testing and comparing two different relationship theories and their underlying scales as applied to brand love. On one hand, existing studies use the interpersonal relationship metaphor and theories to conceptualize and measure the brand love relationship. On the other hand, we propose and discuss an alternative relationship metaphor, the parasocial relationship theory, as another relationship theory to use in order to construct and

assess the love relationship consumers have with brands[1]. Our finding suggest that using the parasocial love scale is appropriate for studying brand love relationships. In fact, we find that it leads to better results compared to the results obtained when using the interpersonal love attitude scale. For example, the explanation power of the dependent variables purchase intention and word of mouth were higher for both samples when using the parasocial love scale as compared to the interpersonal love attitude scale. Our findings are helpful as we provide researchers and managers an alternative scale for their research projects related to brand love relationships.

2. Love Relationship Theories

Existing brand love studies use the interpersonal relationship theory and their underlying measurement scales without critically assess whether these scales are the most suitable ones. In that respect, and as Batra et al., (2012, p.1) stated, "there are compelling reasons these conceptualizations of interpersonal love should not be applied to brand love". In fact, only a handful of papers have as a focal point a discussion about the 'relationship' part of the "consumer brand relationship equation" (Fournier, 2009, p. 19). On such study is by Hess, Story, and Danes (2011) who focus on communality and exchange relationships characteristics and how they impact consumer brand relationships. More recently, the study by Fetscherin and Conway Dato-on (2012) provides a first attempt in discussing relationship theories and brand love relationships. However, their study has some major limitations such the use of one sample, they do not include brand outcome variables such as purchase intention and word of mouth as well as overall used a different conceptual model. Taking all this into account, this section discusses first interpersonal relationship theory which is used in current brand love studies and then we discuss the parasocial relationship theory.

2.1. Interpersonal Relationship Theory

Current brand love studies are based on Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory of love and apply his triangular love scale (Sternberg, 1997) to the brand relationship context (Shimp and Madden, 1988). As Aggarwal (2004, p. 87) states "when consumers form relationships with brands they use norms of interpersonal relationships as a guide in their brand assessments". However, there are many other interpersonal relationship theories and

[1] The Latin origin of the word 'alternative' is 'alternare', which means interchange. In that respect, we used the word 'alternative' in this paper as we provide researchers and managers a choice between two possibilities (interpersonal relationship theory vs. parasocial relationship theory). They are different in their conceptualization and their scale items

underlying measurement scales in the literature proposed in addition to Sternberg's theory and triangular love scale. For example, Masuda (2003, p. 30) states in his meta-analyses of love theories, "in the realm of social psychology research on love, there have been four major love theories constructed". Rubin (1970) is the first researcher who measures love, suggesting the *liking scales.* Second, Hatfield and Sprecher (1986) introduce the *passionate love scale.* Third, Hendrick and Hendrick (1986) developed the *love attitude scale* based on Lee's (1977) early work on the color theory of love. The fourth and last one is Sternberg's (1997) *triangular love scale.*

In Masuda's (2003, p. 31) "dichotomous classification of love scales", he argues all the above love relationship theories (p. 31) "are based on the assumption that love comprises at least two aspects, that is sexual attraction to romantic partners, and non-sexual psychological closeness to partners". His dichotomy classifies the four scales into erotic love scales [Hatfield and Sprecher (1986) and Sternberg (1986)] and companionate love scales [Rubin (1970) and Hendrick and Hendrick (1986)]. As consumers have not really a sexually related (erotic) relationship with brands, we are left with Rubin (1970) or Hendrick and Hendrick (1986) scale for our interpersonal love scale. We chose Hendrick and Hendrick (1986) scale as it is subject of multiple validation studies related to brands (Wang et al., 2004) as well as multiple cross-cultural validating studies (Neto, et al., 2000).

2.2. Parasocial Relationship Theory

Yoon et al., (2006) show consumers process brand relationships in a different part of their brain than interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, Whang et al., (2004, p. 320) argues "when the target of love is replaced with an object, love becomes uni-directional". More recently, Batra et al., (2012) argue "there are compelling reasons these conceptualizations of interpersonal love should not be applied to brand love". All these studies recommend to be caution when applying interpersonal love relationship theory to brand love relationships and ask for an alternative relationship theory.

Parasocial relationship has it's origin from the early works on parasocial interaction (PSI) by Horton and Wohl (1956) and the development of the parasocial interaction scale by Perse and Rubin (1989). Parasocial relationships describe a one-sided relationship where one party knows greatly about the other, but the other knows nothing. It is a perceived relationship of friendship or intimacy a person has with a media person (Schmid and Klimmt, 2011). Examples of such relationships are the celebrity-fan relationship (Cohen, 1997) or the influence of TV personalities on audience members' teleshopping intentions and behavior

(Curras-Perez, 2011). The parasocial relationship also assesses the relationship between viewers and non-personal or fictional characters (e.g., Mikey Mouse, Hulk) which some of them are brands themselves. The previously mentioned research in combination with the anthropomorphism of brands such as attributing human characteristics (Levy, 1985) or personalities to brands (Aaker, 1997), both research streams suggest that it is a reasonable assumption to apply parasocial relationship theory to product or service brands. Note that "we do not mean to imply that brand love researchers should abstain from citing interpersonal love research as sources of hypotheses or even citing parallels between findings on brand love and interpersonal love" (Batra et al., 2012, p. 6), but this paper discusses, tests and compares two different relationship theory and their underlying measurement scale as applied to brand love.

3. Conceptual Background

3.1. Brand Love

Ha and Perks (2005) suggest the lowest intensity of a relationship consumers have with brands is 'brand satisfaction' which results from the consumer's positive experiences with the brand. As the intensity of the relationship grows, brand satisfaction can lead to brand trust and then brand loyalty (Horppu et al., 2008). Extensive research confirms that brand satisfaction drives brand trust, which in turn drives brand loyalty (Fournier and Yao, 1997). But researchers know much less about the relationship between brand loyalty and brand love. The few brand love studies (Thomson et al., 2005; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Batra et al., 2012) illustrate brand love precedes brand loyalty. In line with previous research, we state the following hypothesis.

H1. Brand love positively influences brand loyalty.

As Miniard et al., (1983, p. 206) state, "the prediction of purchase intention is a central concern in marketing", arguing that purchase intention is influenced by the attitude toward the brand. Eagly and Chaiken (1993) confirm that consumer satisfaction with a brand influences the willingness to buy the brand. Several studies demonstrate the positive relationship between brand loyalty and purchase intention (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978; Srinivasan et al., 2002). Since brand love precedes brand loyalty (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006), we test the following hypothesis:

H2. Brand love positively influences purchase intention.

Many studies focus on the antecedents and consequences of word of mouth (WOM), including extreme (dis)satisfaction (Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002), commitment to products (Dick and Basu, 1994), and length of the relationship with brands (Wangenheim and Bayón, 2004). Bowman and Narayandas (2001) show that self-described loyal consumers are significantly more likely to engage in positive WOM. Most recently, Batra et al., (2012, p. 1) confirm that brand love is "associated with positive word of mouth". We therefore test the following hypothesis:

H3. Brand love positively influences word of mouth.

3.2. Brand Loyalty

Bloemer and Kasper (1995) outline the difference between brand loyalty and purchase intention, suggesting that purchase intention refers to buying a brand where actual behavior prevails. Many researchers explore the positive relationship between brand loyalty and purchase intention (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978; Srinivasan et al., 2002). Therefore, we test the following hypothesis:

H4. Brand loyalty positively influences purchase intention.

There is less research on the relationship between brand loyalty and word of mouth. Dick and Basu (1994) or Srinivasan et al., (2002) find that brand loyalty can add to positive word of mouth. The positive and direct relationship between brand loyalty and (positive) word of mouth finds further support by Walsh and Beatty (2007). We test the following hypothesis:

H5. Brand loyalty positively influences word of mouth.

Current brand love studies examine the above relationships individually but no study incorporates them collectively and more importantly, tests and compares different relationship theories and their underlying measurement scales. The objective of this study is to address this gap as mentioned in the introduction section.

Figure 1 illustrates the research framework

Figure 1 here.

---

4. Research Method

4.1. Measurement items

4.1.1. Dependent Variables

(1) Purchase intention. We considered two aspects, purchase intention and purchase probability. Market research uses purchase intention scales extensively and we employ two items from Kumar et al., (2009) to ascertain purchase intention. Purchase probability captures another aspect of purchase intention. Like many other studies, we use the popular Juster (1966) scale, a 11-point probability scale which is subject to multiple validation studies (Clawson, 1971). *(2) Positive word of mouth.* The literature proposes different WOM scales, from single-item (Swan and Oliver, 1989) to multi-item scales by Bone (1992) and Carroll and Ahuvia (2006). In this study we use the four items proposed by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) in their brand love study.

4.1.2. Independent Variables

(1a) Parasocial Love. We used eight items from the original parasocial interaction or parasocial love scale (Perse and Rubin, 1989). *(1b) Interpersonal Love*. We used seven items from the love attitude scale by Hendrick and Hendrick (1986) which is subject to multiple brand-related (Wang et al., 2004) and cross-cultural validation studies (Neto, et al., 2000). *(2) Brand loyalty.* Jacoby and Kyner (1973) suggest incorporating behavioral and attitudinal dimensions in any measurement for brand loyalty. We use 3 items developed by Quester and Lim (2003) to measure attitudinal brand loyalty and 2 items for behavioral brand loyalty. Appendix B summarizes the measurement items used in this study. If not mentioned otherwise, all items are measured along a 5-point Likert scale where respondents express their agreement or disagreement (1 = strongly disagree; to 5 = strongly agree). We calculate and compare the mean scores for all variables to prevent ecological fallacy (i.e., drawing conclusions for individual behavior based on group behavior) and atomistic fallacy (i.e., drawing conclusions between groups based on individual behavior).

4.2. Product category

Albert et al., (2008) suggest that brand love studies should investigate product categories with heavily branded products such as shoes, cars, lingerie, watches, or perfumes. However, a more recent study (Fetscherin et al., 2014) shows that brand love relationship can be applied to different product categories as long as respondents can choose their favorite

brand. With this in mind, we selected cars as the product category for this study. Using the product category and brands for cars, category equivalence was assured as both, product categories and brands, are widely available to our samples (Bensaou et al., 1999; Hayes et al., 2006).

4.3. Samples

We use two samples, one from the U.S. and one from Japan. From a theoretical viewpoint, using the U.S. and a Japanese sample is appropriate according to the method Sivakumar and Nakata (2001) suggest for suitable country combinations to strengthen the hypothesis testing. From a practical viewpoint, it is a relevant country combination as the U.S. is the largest and Japan the third largest economy. Both also have a very high percentage of car ownership and are major car producing countries. Erdem (2006, p. 37) suggest two ways to get sample comparability, by either "drawing nationally representative samples or selecting matched samples on the basis of some set of characteristics of interest". As we have undergraduate and graduate student samples from private Universities in both countries, we have 'matched' homogenous samples. Also student samples have limitations, one justification is that our study focuses on testing hypotheses rather than analyzing population projections. In that respect, Sternthal, Tybout and Calder (1994, p. 208) state, "when the researcher is interested in theoretical explanation, a homogeneous sample is the preferred option […] lowering inter-subject variance in this way enhances the likelihood of finding support for the theory is true. In such instances, student samples are preferred". Similarly, Erdem et al., (2006, p. 38) argue that the smaller "differences in age, socio-demographics, relative income and so forth […] making possible a clearer attribution of substantive theoretical differences". Finally, numerous brand relationship (Swaminathan et al., 2007) and brand love studies also use students samples (Batra et al., 2012). Finally, note that for the survey in Japan, we used a translation back-translation method by two independent translators to establish translation equivalence, implying the translation does not alter the item's meaning (Bensaou et al., 1999).

4.4. Data Collection

For both countries, local trained field workers conducted pre-tests with 20 respondents to uncover any potential question-based issues. For the survey, we randomly selected students on campus. Trained field workers were present to help if needed and to overlook the process. Through unaided brand recall, respondents were asked to mention three

car brands and then indicating their favorite one. This was important in the study design to give respondents the choice to pick their favorite brand (Fetscherin et al., 2014) and also suggests they have some brand awareness. Each respondent then filled out the survey which consistent of all items as described in Appendix B. In that respect, each participant responded to both brand love scales. The data collection efforts yielded 196 completed questionnaires in the U.S. and 248 in Japan. Missing data and listwise deletion reduced the sample to 180 and 225, respectively. For both samples, the absolute number is above the suggested threshold of 100 per (Hatcher, 1994). The item to sample ratio is 6.6 for the U.S. and 8.3 for the Japanese sample respectively. Again, both are above the suggested minimum of 5:1 (Hatcher, 1994; Bryant and Yardold, 1995). We also calculated the sampling adequacy by means of Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The KMO for the U.S. was .881 and .877 for the Japanese sample and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant for both sample indicating sample adequacy.

4.4. Measurement and Model Testing

The model testing comprised of three steps as suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) recommendations. (1) First, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). For the EFA, we used the principle component analysis[2] with varimax rotation. We excluded items with either a factor load of less than .5 or those with significant cross loadings (> .5). Of the 27 items, we retained 18 for the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The results confirm that the research framework in Figure 1 is well-specified as we got the same number of factors and underlying items loading on those factors for both samples.

(2) Second, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) where we used again the principle component analysis with variamax rotation. We got the same number of factors and items loadings, except one item which we excluded and we retained 17 items for our structure equation models (SEM). Appendix C provides the details of our CFA for both samples.

(3) Finally, we run a series of validity and reliability tests including (a) content validity, (b) internal consistency, stability and reliability of the scales, and (c) construct validity including convergent and discriminant validity tests. (a) *Content validity*. We used valid and reliable measurement scales. (b) *Internal consistency, stability and reliability of the scales.* We calculated Cronbach Alpha where we obtained for both samples values which

[22] We used in this study principle component analysis as for both samples, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk 'test of normality' were significant.

exceed the recommended minimum of .7 as show in the Appendix D. (c) Finally, we also assessed c*onstruct validity*. This included assessing convergent and discriminant validity. "Convergent validity refers to the degree of agreement in two or more measures of the same construct" (Sin, 2005, p. 189). The convergent validity of the scale was examined by calculating the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the construct reliability (CR). Both, the AVE needs to be above the threshold of .50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) and the CR of .60 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988) respectively. Out of the 16 AVE and 16 CR values, all exceeded the corresponding thresholds except two for AVE and one for CR respectively. In order to test this further, we tested our scales for discriminant validity by comparing the AVE with the squared inter-construct correlation estimates (SIC). As a rule of thumb, if all average variance extracted estimates are higher than the corresponding SIC, this indicates discriminant validity. We used the Kendall's tau-b correlations, a measure of correlation between ordinal scales (as we used Likert scale), to test common method bias. We got all satisfactory results as Appendix D displays.

5. Analysis and Results

5.1. Descriptive Statistics

U.S. respondents mentioned a total of 35 different brands whereas Japanese respondents mentioned 19 different brands. The following table provides some basic descriptive statistics for the two samples:

Table 1 here.

Both datasets consist of student samples and are fairly similar in terms of gender, marital status and age distribution, all suggesting sampling equivalence (Erdem et al., 2006).

5.2. Hypotheses testing

To investigate the differences in inter-construct relationships, we performed multi group structural equation models (MGSEM). Table 2 provides the results of the model fit indexes for the two samples (U.S. and Japan) and two scales tested (interpersonal and parasocial). Our chi-square/df for the U.S. (Model I=1.89; Model II=2.46) and Japanese sample (Model I=1.95; Model II=1.88) are below the threshold of 3.0. The goodness of fit criteria with the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Normed Fit

Index (NFI) and Incremental Fit Index (IFI) are all higher than the threshold of .9. The RMSEA for both samples and models are also below or equal to the threshold of .09.

Table 2 here

Table 3 provides the summary results of the explanation power for the two dependent variables as well as the results of our hypotheses testing.

Table 3 here

We can draw at least five main observations from the results of Table 2 and 3.

(1) Looking at Table 2 and the various fit indexes, we can conclude that for both samples and models, our research framework is well specified and theoretically robust and sound.

(2) Looking at the explanation power of the dependent variables purchase intention (PI) and positive word of mouth (WOM) in Table 3, we can conclude that the values are higher for the model using the parasocial love scale compared to model using the interpersonal love scale. This suggests conceptualizing and measuring the brand love relationship as a parasocial relationship leads to superior results in terms of explanation power for purchase intention and word of mouth. With our samples, we are able to explain in Model II between 53-62% of the variance of purchase intention and 50-60% for WOM compared to Model I with 23-32% for purchase intention and 41-49% for WOM respectively.

(3) Looking at the directionality, signs and significance level of the path coefficients of our models, except in two cases, all were positive and significant. For the relationship between brand love and brand loyalty (H1) we got between .31 ($p < .01$) and .52 ($p < .01$); for brand love and purchase intention (H2) we got .32 ($p < .01$) and .73 ($p < .01$); for brand love and word of mouth (H3) they were .32 ($p < .01$) and .60 ($p < .01$); for brand loyalty and purchase intention (H4) they were .14 ($p < .01$) and .58 ($p < .01$), and finally for brand loyalty and word of mouth (H5) they were .33 ($p < .01$) and .65 ($p < .01$).

(4) Interestingly, the two hypotheses which are not significant are with our U.S. sample when brand love was conceptualized as an interpersonal relationship (Model I). The two non-significant relationships were between brand love and purchase intention -.03 ($p > .10$) and brand love and word of mouth .09 ($p > .10$). One could argue that this is in line with

what Batra et al., (2012, p. 1) stated, “there are compelling reasons these conceptualizations of interpersonal love should not be […and …] cannot be applied directly to brand love”. In fact, we showed in point 1 above that we can use interpersonal relationship theory to explain the love relationship with brands but point 2 above also shows that using parasocial relationship theories leads to higher explanation power of the dependent variables studied. The non-significance of the two hypotheses in Model I further point out that parasocial relationship scale leads to superior and stronger results. This brings us to the next discussion point.

(5) Despite the similarities of the results between the two samples, there are also some differences. One explanation for these differences could be cultural. Numerous studies confirm cultural differences as they relate to the orientation toward love (Sprecher et al., 1994), their attitudes towards love (Simmons et al., 2001) and their love relationships (Kim and Hatfield, 2004) between people. However, the interpersonal love relationship literature is not conclusive. While the above studies show differences, there are also studies showing there are no differences. For example, Cho and Cross (1995) found American students’ beliefs about love to be similar to those of Taiwanese students or Gao (2001) shows with an American and Chinese samples that there were no cultural differences between intimacy and commitment. This all suggests that further studies should investigate to what extend culture influences brand love relationships and which relationship theory and underlying scale is more suitable in one or the other culture.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper seeks to advance research about relationship theories as applied to brands by discussing, testing and comparing two different relationship theories and their underlying scales as applied to loved brands. We used a 2x2 experimental design with two competing models based on different love relationship theories (interpersonal vs. parasocial) and across two samples (U.S. vs. Japan). We offer an alternative perspective and theoretical explanation of the relationship consumers have with their loved brands.

6.1. Theoretical Contributions

From a theoretical point of view, this paper discusses and presents an alternative relationship theory for testing brand love relationships. Our results show that conceptualizing ‘brand love’ as a parasocial relationship leads to superior and stronger results compared to interpersonal relationship. This suggests that the brand love construct should be theorized and

modeled as a one-sided (parasocial) rather than a two-sided (interpersonal) relationship and using the parasocial love scale is more suitable than using the interpersonal love attitude scale. For both samples, we get *stronger* relationships between brand love and purchase intention as well as positive WOM. We also get *higher* explanation power for the both dependent variables when we measured this relationship with the parasocial love scale.

6.2. Managerial Implications

From a practitioner viewpoint, Harley-Davidson®, Starbucks® and Apple® exemplify brands where consumers have very strong emotional bonds with. Professionals try to create emotional bonds with consumers such as by using the concept of love in advertising (Batra et al., 2012), using the word '*love'* in their slogans (e.g., McDonald's *I'm lovin' it*) or using the symbol or word '*love'* in the brand name (e.g., ;). Roberts, the CEO Worldwide of Saatchi and Saatchi, argued in his *Lovemarks* book, "I knew that love was the missing link, the only way to strengthen the emotional and to create the new kinds of brand relationship needed" (Roberts, 2004, p. 57). In that respect, for marketing and brand managers, this study confirms the importance of the consumer's feeling of love for brands and validates previous studies that brand love positive impacts brand loyalty, purchase intention and word of mouth. This study specifically contributions to the discussion about the appropriate relationship theory and underlying scale to be used for the study of brand love relationships. The study shows that using the parasocial love scale leads to equally good and in some instance even better results compared to the interpersonal love attitude scale. Our findings are helpful for managers in the research design of marketing research projects related to brand relationships. We present managers with an alternative and more suitable scale to measure brand love relationships. The parasocial love scale seems also to provide more consistent results across culture, also this needs to be validated with future studies.

6.3. Limitations and Future Research

Like any study, there are some limitations. First, surveying a larger, more diverse pool of respondents would allow further generalizability of the findings and could confirm the external validity of our results. Nevertheless, the advantage of having homogenous respondent samples is to test theoretical hypotheses. Second, future studies should incorporate and compare other interpersonal love scales as discussed in section 2.1 such as Rubin's (1970) *liking scale* or Hatfield and Sprecher's (1986) *passionate love scale,* also Hendrick and Hendrick's (1986) *love attitude scale* is subject to multiple validation studies

related to brands as well as cross-cultural. Third, our study assesses and compares two relationship theories and their underlying measurement scale. In the case of Model I (interpersonal relationship) we got some differences between the U.S. and Japanese sample. Future research should assess whether these differences are due to the methodology or due to culture. As Albert et al., (2008) state, love and its expression are culturally grounded. By either validating our results with non-student samples from the U.S. and Japan or extending our research beyond these two samples, researchers could examine the brand love construct among different cultures or sub-cultures (e.g., African American, Asian American, Indian American). In that respect, this study is exploratory in nature. Fourth, other models could be tested by incorporating other brand relationship constructs such as brand experience (Brakus et al., 2009) or brand meaning (Strizhakova, et al., 2008). For example we know that personality and love are widely associated (White et. al., 2004) and future research could investigate this. Fifth, future research could assess other product categories. For example, most consumer brand relationship studies focus on tangible products (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006) but more recent research investigates consumer service brand relationships or consumer firm relationships (Yim et al., 2008).

References

Aaker, J. L. (1997), "Dimensions of Brand Personality", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol., 34 No. 3, pp. 347–356.

Aggarwal, P. (2004), "The Effects of Brand Relationship Norms on Consumer Attitudes and Behavior", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 31, pp. 87–101.

Ahuvia, A. (2005), "Beyond the Extended Self: Loved Objects and Consumers' Identity Narratives", *Journal of Consumer Research,* Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 171–184.

Albert, N. Merunka, D. and Valette-Florence, P. (2008), "When Consumers Love their Brands: Exploring the Concept and Its Dimensions", *Journal of Business Research,* Vol. 61, pp. 1062-1075.

Anderson, J. and Gerbing, D. (1988), "Structural Equation Modeling in Practice: A Review and Recommended Two- Step Approach", *Psychological Bulletin,* Vol. 103 No. 3, pp. 411-423.

Bagozzi, R.P. and Yi, Y. (1988), "On the evaluation of structural equation models", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 74-94.

Batra, R., Ahuvia, A. and Bagozzi, R. (2008), "Brand love: its Nature and Consequences", Working Paper, Michigan Dearborn University, Ann Arbord, MI.

Batra, R., Ahuvia, A. and Bagozzi, R. (2012), "Brand Love", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 76, No. 2, 1–16.

Bauer, H. H., Heinrich, D., and Martin, I. (2004), "How to Create High Emotional Consumer-Brand Relationships? The Causalities of Brand Passion", *Psychological Review*, pp. 2189–2198.

Belaid, S. and Behi, A.T. (2011), "The role of attachment in building consumer-brand relationships: an empirical investigation in the utilitarian consumption context", *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 37–47.

Bensaou, M., Coyne, M., and Venkatraman, C. (1999), "Testing Metric Equivalence in CrossNational Strategy Research: An Empirical Test across the United States and Japan", *Strategic Management Journal,* Vol. 20 No. 7, pp. 671-689.

Blackstone, M. (1993), "Beyond brand personality: Building brand relationships", In Aaker, D.,A., Biel, A.L. and Biel, A. (Eds.), *Brand equity and Advertising: Advertising's role in building strong brands,* Psychology Press, New York and London, pp. 113–124.

Bloemer, J. and Kasper, H. (1995), "The Complex Relationship Between Consumer Satisfaction and Brand Loyalty", *Journal of Economic Psychology,* Vol. 16, pp. 311–329.

Bone, P. (1992), "Determinants of word of mouth communications during product consumption", *Advances in Consumer Research,* Vol. 19, pp. 579-583.

Bowman, D. and Narayandas, D. (2001), "Managing customer-initiated contacts with manufacturers: The impact on share of category requirements and word of mouth behavior", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 38, pp. 291-297.

Brakus, J., Schmitt, B. and Zarantonello, L. (2009), "Brand Experience: What Is It? How Is It Measured? Does It Affect Loyalty?", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 73, No. 3, pp. 52–68.

Bryant, F. B., and Yarnold, P. R. (1995), "Principal components analysis and exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis", in Grimm, L.G., and Yarnold, R. (Eds.), *Reading and understanding multivariale statistics,* American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, pp. 99-136.

Carroll, B. and Ahuvia, A. (2006), "Some Antecedents and Outcomes of Brand Love", *Marketing Letters*, Vol. 17 No. 2, pp. 79–89.

Chaudhuri, A. and Holbrook, M. (2001), "The Chain of Effects from Brand Trust and Brand Affect to Brand Performance: The Role of Brand Loyalty", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 65 No. 2, pp. 81-93.

Cho, W., and Cross, S.E. (1995), "Taiwanese love styles and their association with self-esteem and relationship quality", *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs*, Vol. 121, pp. 283–309.

Clawson, J. (1971), "How useful are 90-day purchase probabilities?", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 35, pp. 43-47.

Cohen, J. (1997), "Parasocial relations and romantic attraction: Gender and dating status differences", *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media,* Vol. 41, pp. 516–529.

Curras-Perez, R., Mafé, C.R. and Sanz-Blas, S. (2011), "What Motivates Consumers to Teleshopping? The Impact of TV Personality and Audience Interaction", *Marketing Intelligence & Planning,* Vol. 29 No. 5, pp. 534-555.

Dick, A. and Basu, K. (1994), "Customer Loyalty: Toward an Integrated Conceptual Framework", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* Vol. 22, pp. 99-113.

Eagly, A. and Chaiken, S. (1993), "The psychology of attitudes". Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

Erdem, T., Swait, J. and Valenzuela, A. (2006), "Brands as Signals: A Cross-Country Validation Study", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 70 No. 1, pp. 34–49.

Fetscherin, M., Boulanger, M., Gonçalves Filho, C., and Souki, G. (2014), The Effect of Product Category on Consumer Brand Relationships, *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, Vol. 23 No. 2, pp. 78-89.

Fetscherin, M. Conway Dato-on, M. (2012), "Brand Love: Investigating two alternative love relationships", in Fournier, S., Breazeale, and Fetscherin, M., (Eds), *Consumer Brand Relationship: Insights for Theory and Practice*, Taylor and Francis, London, pp. 151-164.

Fetscherin, M., and Heinrich, D. (2014a), "Consumer-Brand Relationship Research: A Bibliometric Citation Meta-Analysis", *Journal of Business Research*, (in press).

Fetscherin, M., and Heinrich, D. (2014b), "Consumer Brand Relationships: A Research Landscape", *Journal of Brand Management*, Vol. 21, No. 5, pp. 366-371.

Fornell, C. and Larcker, D. F. (1981), "Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 39-50.

Fournier, S. (1998), "Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 24 No. 4, pp. 343–373.

Fournier, S. (2009), "Lessons learned about consumers' relationship with their brands", in MacInnis, D., Park, W., and Priester, J. (Eds), *Handbook of Brand Relationships*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, pp. 5-23.

Fournier, S., and Yao, J. (1997), "Reviving brand loyalty: A reconceptualization within the framework of consumer-brand relationships", *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, Vol. 14, pp. 451–472.

Gao, G. (2001), "Intimacy, passion, and commitment in Chinese and US American romantic relationships", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 25 No. 3, pp. 329–342.

Ha, H-Y. and Perks, H. (2005), "Effects of consumer perceptions of brand experience on the web: brand familiarity, satisfaction and brand trust", *Journal of Consumer Behaviour,* Vol. 4 No. 6, pp. 438-452.

Hatcher, L. (1994), "A Step-by-Step Approach to Using the SAS® System for Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling", Cary, NC: SAS Institute, Inc.

Hatfield, E. and Sprecher, S. (1986), "Measuring passionate love in intimate relationships", *Journal of Adolescence,* Vol. 9 No. 12, pp. 383-410.

Hayes, J.B., Alford, B.L., Silver, L. and York, R.P. (2006), "Looks matter in developing consumer-brand relationships", *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, Vol. 15, No. 5, pp. 306-315.

Hendrick, C. and Hendrick, S. (1986), "A theory and method of love", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 50 No. 2, pp. 392-402.

Hess, J., Story, J. and Danes, J. (2011), "A three-stage model of consumer relationship investment", *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, Vol. 20, No. 1, pp.14–26.

Horppu, M., Kuivalainen, O., Tarkiainen, A., and Ellonen, H-K. (2008), "Online satisfaction, trust and loyalty, and the impact of the offline parent brand", *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, Vol. 17, No. 6, pp. 403-413.

Horton R. and Wohl, R. (1956), "Mass communication and para-social interaction: observation on intimacy at a distance", *Psychiatry*, Vol. 19 No. 3, pp. 188-211.

Jacoby, J. and Chestnut, R. (1978), "*Brand loyalty measurement and management"*. New York: Wiley.

Jacoby, J. and Kyner, D. B. (1973), "Brand loyalty vs. repeat purchasing behavior", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 1-9.

Juster, T. (1966), "Consumer Buying Intentions and Purchase Probability: An Experiment in Survey Design", *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, Vol. 61 No. 315, pp. 658-696.

Kim, J. and Hatfield, E. (2004), "Love Types and Subjective Well-Being: A Cross-Cultural Study", *Social Behavior and Personality,* Vol. 32 No. 2, pp. 173-182.

Kumar, A., Lee, H-J. and Kim, Y-K. (2009), "Indian consumers' purchase intention toward a United States versus local brand", *Journal of Business Research,* Vol. 62 No. 5, pp. 521-527.

Lee, J. A. (1977), "A typology of styles of loving", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 173-182.

Levy, S. J. (1985), "Dreams, fairy tales, animals, and cars", *Psychology and Marketing*, Vol. 2 No. 2, pp. 67-81.

Masuda, M. (2003), "Meta-analyses of love scales: do various love scales measure the same psychological constructs?", *Japanese Psychological Research,* Vol. 45 No. 1, pp. 25-37.

Maxham, J. and Netemeyer, R. (2002), "A Longitudinal Study of Complaining Customers' Evaluations of Multiple Service Failures and Recovery Efforts", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 66 No. 4, pp. 57-71.

Miniard, P., Obermiller, C. and Page, T. (1983), "A further assessment of measurement influence on the intention-behavior relationship", *Journal of Marketing Research,* Vol. 20 No. 2, pp. 206-213.

Neto, F., Mullet, E. Deschamps, J-C, Barros, J., Benvindo, R. Camino, L., Falconi, A., Kagibanga, V. and Machado, M. (2000), "Cross-Cultural Variations in Attitudes Toward Love", *Journal of Cross Cultural Psychology*, Vol. 31 No. 5, pp. 626-635.

Quester, P. and Lim, A.L. (2003), "Product involvement/brand loyalty: is there a link?", *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 22-38.

Park, W., MacInnis, D., Priester, J. Eisengerich, A. and Iacabucci, A. (2010), "Brand Attachment and Brand Attitude Strength: Conceptual and Empirical Differentiation of Two Critical Brand Equity Drivers", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 74 No. 11, pp. 1–17.

Patwardhan, H. and Balasubramanian, S. (2011), "Brand romance: a complementary approach to explain emotional attachment toward brands", *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 297-308.

Perse E. and Rubin, R. (1989), "Attribution in Social and Parasocial Relationships", *Communication Research*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 59-77.

Roberts, K. (2004), "*Lovemarks: the Future Beyond Brands",* New York: Power House Books.

Rubin, Z. (1970), "Measurement of Romantic Love", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 265-73.

Schmid, H., and Klimmt, C. (2011), "A magically nice guy: Parasocial relationships with Harry Potter across different cultures", *International Communication Gazette*, Vol. 73 No. 3, pp. 252–269.

Shimp, T. and Madden, T. (1988), "Consumer-object relations: a conceptual framework based analogously on Sternberg's triangular theory of love", *Advances in Consumer Research,* Vol. 15, pp. 163-168.

Simmons, C., vom Kolke, A. and Shimizu, H. (2001), "Attitudes Toward Romantic Love Among American, German, and Japanese Students", *Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 126 No. 3, pp. 327-336.

Sin, L (2005), "Relationship marketing orientation: scale development and cross-cultural validation", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 58 No. 2, pp. 185–194.

Sprecher, S., Aron, A., Hatfield, E., Cortese, A., Potapova, E. and Levitskaya, A. (1994), "Love: American style, Russian style, and Japanese style", *Personal Relationships,* Vol. 1*,* pp. 349-369.

Srinivasan, S., Anderson, R., and Ponnavolu, K. (2002), "Customer loyalty in e-commerce: an exploration of its antecedents and consequences", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 78, pp. 41-50.

Sternberg, R. (1986), "Triangular theory of love", *Psychological Review*, Vol. 93, pp. 119-135.

Sternberg, R. J. (1997), "Construct validation of a triangular love scale", *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 27 No. 3, pp. 313-335.

Sternthal, B., Tybout, A., and Calder, B. (1994), "Experimental Design: Generalization and Theoretical Explanation", in *Principles of Marketing Research*, Ed. Bagozzi, R. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, pp. 195-223.

Strizhakova, Y., Coulter, R. and Price, L. (2008), "The meaning of branded products: a cross-national scale development and meaning assessment", *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, Vol. 25, pp. 82-93.

Sivakumar K, and Nakata, C. (2001), "The Stampede toward Hofstede's Framework: Avoiding the Sample Design Pit in Cross- Cultural Research", *Journal of International Business Studies,* Vol. 32 No. 3, pp. 555-574.

Swaminathan, V., Page, K., and Grhan-Canli, Z. (2007), "'My' Brand or 'Our'" Brand: The Effects of Brand Relationship Dimensions and Self-Construal on Brand Evaluations", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 34 No. 2, pp. 248-259.

Swan, J. and Oliver, R. (1989), "A postpurchase communication by consumers", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 65, pp. 516-533.

Thomson, M., MacInnis, D. and Park, W. (2005), "The ties that bind: measuring the strength of consumers emotional attachment to brands", *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 15, pp. 77-91.

Veloutsou, C. and Moutinho, L. (2009), "Brand Relationships Through Brand Reputation and Brand Tribalism", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 62 No. 3, pp. 314-322.

Wangenheim, F. and Bayón, T. (2004), "Satisfaction, loyalty and word of mouth within the customer base of a utility provider: differences between stayers, switchers and referral switchers", *Journal of Consumer Behaviour,* Vol. 3 No. 3, pp. 211-220.

Walsh, G. and Beatty, S. (2007), "Customer-based corporate reputation of a service firm: scale development and validation", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 127-143.

Whang, Y-O., Allen, J., Sahoury, N. and Zhang, H. (2004), "Falling in love with a product: the structure of a romantic consumer-product relationship", *Advances in Consumer Research,* Vol. 31, pp. 320-327.

White, J., Hendrick, S. and Hendrick, C. (2004), "Big five personalities variables and relationship constructs", *Personality and Individual Differences*, Vol. 37 No. 7, pp. 1519-1530.

Yim, C-K., Tse, D. and Chan, K. (2008), "Strengthening consumer loyalty through intimacy and passion: roles of consumer–firm affection and consumer–staff relationships in services", *Journal of Marketing Research,* Vol. 45 No. 6, pp. 741-756.

Yoon, C., Gutchess, A. Feinberg, F. and Polk, T. (2006), "A Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging Study of Neural Dissociations between Brand and Person Judgments", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 33 No. 1, pp. 31-40.

The Figure 1. Research framework.

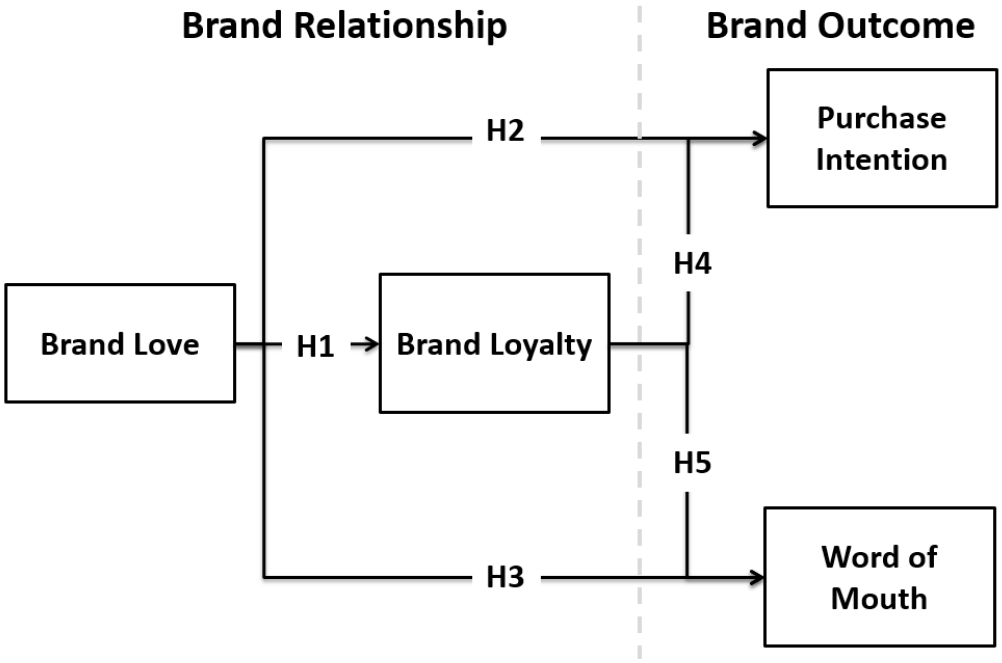

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

	United States (*n*=180)	**Japan (*n*=225)**
Gender		
Male	54%	58%
Female	46%	42%
Marital Status		
Single	87%	81%
Married	12%	17%
Divorced/Other	1%	2%
Age		
Min years	18	18
Max years	47	53
Mean years	25	24
Mode years	22	21

Table 2. Summary Model Fit.

	United States		**Japan**		
	Model I	**Model II**	**Model I**	**Model II**	**Threshold**
x^2/df	1.89	2.46	1.95	1.88	≤ 3.0
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	.94	.91	.94	.95	≥ .9
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	.96	.94	.96	.97	≥ .9
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	.92	.91	.92	.94	≥ .9
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	.96	.94	.96	.97	≥ .9
RMSEA	.07	.09	.06	.06	≤ .09

Table 3. Summary Results and Hypotheses Testing.

	United States		Japan	
	Model I	**Model II**	**Model I**	**Model II**
Summary Results				
Purchase Intention	$R^2 = 32\%$	$R^2 = 53\%$	$R^2 = 23\%$	$R^2 = 62\%$
Positive Word of Mouth	$R^2 = 49\%$	$R^2 = 50\%$	$R^2 = 41\%$	$R^2 = 60\%$
Hypotheses Testing				
H1: Brand Love → Brand Loyalty (+)	$.49^{***}$	$.51^{***}$	$.52^{***}$	$.31^{***}$
H2: Brand Love → Purchase Intention (+)	-.03	$.61^{***}$	$.32^{***}$	$.73^{***}$
H3: Brand Love → Word of mouth (+)	.09	$.32^{***}$	$.41^{***}$	$.60^{***}$
H4: Brand Loyalty → Purchase Intention (+)	$.58^{***}$	$.20^{**}$	$.23^{**}$	$.14^{**}$
H5: Brand Loyalty → Word of mouth (+)	$.65^{***}$	$.49^{***}$	$.33^{***}$	$.34^{***}$

*** Significant at the .01 level.

** Significant at the .05 level.

* Significant at the .10 level.

Appendix A. Dimensionality of Brand Love Construct.

Author(s)	**Dimension(s)**
Thomson et al., (2005)	(1) passion (2) connection (3) affection
Caroll and Ahuvia (2006)	(1) brand love (with 10 items)
Heinrich, Bauer, and Mühl (2006)	(1) commitment (2) Intimacy (3) Passion
Batra et al., (2008)	(1) perceived functional quality (2) self-related cognitions (3) positive affect (4) negative affect (5) satisfaction (6) attitude strength (7) loyalty
Albert et al., (2008b)	First order: (1) idealization (2) intimacy (3) pleasure (4) dream (5) memories (6) unicity Second order: (1) passion (2) affection
Albert and Valette-Florence (2010)	(1) Affection (2) Passion
Batra et al., (2012)	(1) self-brand integration (2) passion-driven behaviors (3) positive emotional connection (4) long-term relationship (5) positive overall attitude valence (6) attitude valence (7) confidence

Appendix B. Construct Measurement.

Dimensions	Items	Source
Interpersonal Love		
	When I think of this car brand, it is hard for me to say exactly when the *friendship* turned into love for this brand	
	In truth, the love I have for this car brand required friendship first	
	I expect to always be friends with this car brand	
	The love I have for the car brand is the best kind because it grew out of a long friendship	Hendrick and Hendrick (1986); Lee (1977)
	The friendship with the car brand merged gradually into love over time	
	The love relationship is really a deep friendship, not a mysterious, mystical emotion	
	The love relationship is the most satisfying because it developed from a good friendship	
Parasocial Love		
	I feel sorry for this car brand when there is negative news	
	This car brand makes me feel comfortable, as if I'm with friends	
	I see this car brand as a natural, down-to-earth person	
	I'm looking forward to using this car brand	Perse and Rubin (1989)
	I miss seeing this car brand when it's not available at a rent-a-car agency	
	This car brand seems to understand the kind of things I want	
	I find this car brand attractive	
	If there were a story about this car brand in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it	
Brand Loyalty		
	I am committed to this car brand	
	I pay more attention to this car brand than to other car brands	Quester and Lim (2003
	I am more interested in this particular car brand than in other car brands*	
	It is very important for me to buy this car brand rather than another car brand	
	I always buy the same car brand because I really like it	
Purchase Intention		
	I intend to buy this car brand	Juster (1966); Kumar et al., (2009)
	I plan to buy this car brand	
	Taking everything into account, what are the chances of you personally buying this car brand in the next 5 years?*	
Word of mouth		
	I have recommended this car brand to lots of people	
	I "talk up" this car brand to my friends	Carroll and Ahuvia (2006)
	I try to spread the good word about this car brand	
	I give this car brand tons of positive word of mouth advertising	

* Item removed from confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) due to either low factor loads or high cross loadings.

Appendix C. Results Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

	United States					Japan				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
BLa1	.746					.841				
BLb4	.757					.802				
BLb5	.829					.799				
IPL1		.769					.465			
IPL2		.771					.799			
IPL4		.808					.795			
IPL5		.847					.741			
IPL7		.853					.782			
PAR4			.605					.738		
PAR6			.756					.516		
PAR7			.809					.614		
WOM1				.765					.725	
WOM2				.842					.808	
WOM3				.864					.803	
WOM4				.790					.742	
PIa1					.847					.795
PIa2					.854					.766

Appendix D. Reliability and Validity Results.

US Sample

	Cronbach	Model I		Model II		SIC				
	Alpha	AVE	CR	AVE	CR	IL	PL	BL	PI	WOM
Interpersonal love (IL)	.89	.64	.83				.05	.09	.03	.08
Parasocial love (PL)	.72			.53	.70	.05		.09	.17	.13
Brand loyalty (BL)	.83	.61	.79	.61	.79	.09	.09		.11	.18
Purchase intention (PI)	.93	.72	.90	.72	.90	.03	.17	.11		.25
Word of mouth (WOM)	.91	.67	.86	.67	.86	.08	.13	.18	.25	

[1] SIC calculation = Kendall's tau-b correlations coefficient in the square.

Japan Sample

	Cronbach	Model I		Model II		SIC				
	Alpha	AVE	CR	AVE	CR	IL	PL	BL	PI	WOM
Interpersonal love (IL)	.81	.48	.62				.07	.03	.06	.11
Parasocial love (PL)	.75			.40	.51	.07		.06	.05	.07
Brand loyalty (BL)	.84	.66	.85	.66	.85	.03	.06		.21	.21
Purchase intention (PI)	.82	.61	.80	.61	.80	.06	.05	.21		.15
Word of mouth (WOM)	.90	.59	.78	.59	.78	.11	.07	.21	.15	

[1] SIC calculation = Kendall's tau-b correlations coefficient in the square.