Brand addiction: Exploring the concept and its definition through an experiential lens∗

Charles Chi Cuia,⁎, Mona Mradb, Margaret K. Hoggc

a The University of Manchester, Booth Street West, Manchester M15 6PB, United Kingdom
b Lebanese American University, P.O. Box 13-5053, Chouran, Beirut, Lebanon
c Lancaster University Management School, Charles Carter Building, D42, Lancaster LA1 4YX, United Kingdom

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Brand addiction
Consumer-brand relationships
Focus group
Projective techniques
Salient properties
Definition

ABSTRACT

Brand addiction is one of the most important ways that consumers engage with brands. Other types of consumer-brand relationships include brand attachment, brand love, brand loyalty, brand passion and brand trust. This study provides an experientially grounded conceptualization and definition of brand addiction that distinguishes it clearly from other forms of consumer-brand relationships; and also from compulsive buying and acquisitive dependence, gratification, mental and behavioral preoccupation, and word of mouth. We compare brand addiction with the features of other consumer-brand relationships. The findings suggest that brand addiction is different from other consumer-brand-relationship concepts, and does not necessarily lead to harmful consequences for all brand addicts (unlike many other types of addiction).

1. Introduction

Brand addiction is one of the most important ways in which consumers engage with brands (Fajer & Schouten, 1995; Reimann, Castaño, Zaichkowsky, & Bechara, 2012). Consumers also associate with brands via brand attachment (Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995); brand liking (Anselmsson, Johansson, & Persson, 2008); brand love (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2011; Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006); brand loyalty (Fournier & Yao, 1997; Jacoby & Kyner, 1973; Oliver, 1999); brand passion (Swimberghe, Astakhova, & Wooldridge, 2014); and brand trust (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Aleman, 2001). Among addictive consumption behaviors, compulsive buying has attracted the most research attention. However, addictive brand behaviors have not been explored in depth since this phenomenon was noted in Fournier’s (1998) seminal paper on consumer-brand relationships. Consumer-brand relationships involve emotions that range from non-intense feelings to passionate love culminating in addictive obsession (e.g., Fehr & Russell, 1991; Fournier, 1998; Sternberg, 1986) (see Table 1 for definitions of these various concepts within consumer-brand relationships). We respond to recent calls for further research into consumers’ addictive behaviors (Fetscherin & Heinrich, 2015; Fournier & Alvarez, 2012; Park, Eisingerich, & Park, 2013; Swimberghe et al., 2014) by focusing on the salient properties of brand addiction at the conceptual level; and exploring the associated boundary conditions that underlie brand addiction compared with other forms of consumer-brand relationships.

We begin by reviewing relevant literature on consumer-brand relationships and addictive behaviors in order to identify the focal issues. We then describe the procedures for data collection, analysis and interpretation. We report the essential features of brand addiction identified from our focus groups and projective-technique-based interviews. We offer a conceptual definition of brand addiction from a more inductive, phenomenon-based approach to consumer-psychology related issues (Pham, 2013). We then compare the essential features of brand addiction to other types of consumer-brand relationships. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications, limitations and directions for future research on addictive consumer-brand relationships.

2. Theoretical background

An important distinction can be drawn between drug addiction and...
Brand addiction may also share some features with acquisitive desire (AD) (i.e., the desire to acquire status and expensive belongings). Acquisitive desire is linked with symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and addictive obsession (Fehr & Russell, 1991; Sternberg, 1986). Reimann et al. (2012) showed that close consumer-brand relationships are associated with the activation of an individual's brain area linked to addictive behaviors such as alcohol addiction (Myrick et al., 2004) and nicotine addiction (McClernon, Hiott, Huettel, & Rose, 2005). Based on this finding, Reimann et al. (2012) called on researchers to distinguish between the states of commitment to a brand and the state of addiction to a brand.

Non-drug addiction. Drug addiction is defined as “a chronic, relapsing brain disease that is characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences” (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2016). This definition is not applicable to brand addiction because brand addiction does not involve taking drugs.

Non-drug-related addiction is seen in a wide range of consumer behavioral addictions such as shopping, technology use, exercising, gambling, playing video games, hoarding, overeating, plastic surgery, pornography, kleptomania, dietary supplement usage and religious convictions (Martin et al., 2013). Addiction, in the context of consumers' associations with brands, was first mentioned by Fajer and Schouten (1995). Fournier (1998) included brand addiction in her conceptualization of consumer-brand relationships, which ranged in intensity from superficial effects to simple liking, friendly affection, passionate love, and addictive obsession (Fein & Russell, 1991; Sternberg, 1986). Reimann et al. (2012) showed that close consumer-brand relationships are associated with the activation of an individual's brain area linked to addictive behaviors such as alcohol addiction (Myrick et al., 2004) and nicotine addiction (McClernon, Hiott, Huettel, & Rose, 2005). Based on this finding, Reimann et al. (2012) called on researchers to distinguish between the states of commitment to a brand and the state of addiction to a brand.

Ex tant literature on consumer behavioral addictions has shown both negative and positive associations. Fournier (1998) picks up on the negative associations of addiction and reports several dark aspects of relationships with brands (i.e., dependency, enmity, enslavement, and secret affairs). Recently, Fournier and Alvarez (2013) have proposed an attachment-aversion relationship (AA Relationship) model with three pairs related to “asset (benefit)/liability” i.e., enticing/annoying-the-self, enabling/disabling-the-self, and enriching/impoverishing-the-self. Their AA relationship model encompasses positive and negative aspects; and suggests that when self-relevant benefits (enticing-the-self, enabling-the-self, and enriching-the-self) materialize, the consumer–brand relationship rises to a level similar to other intimate human relationships.

Brand addiction may also share some features with acquisitive desire (AD) (i.e., the desire to acquire status and expensive belongings). Acquisitive desire is linked with symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and impulsivity; “AD disorders have in common an intense desire to acquire, possess, or hoard objects” (Kotler, Montgomery, & Shepard, 2004, 151). Do these symptoms apply to brand addiction? According to Kotler et al. (2004), acquisitive desire underlies the desire for symbols of success among most people, and these are not necessarily perceived as all negative.

Our starting point is that addiction should be understood as involving the attempt to achieve some appetite effect and satisfaction through engagement in some behavior, and could have positive or negative implications (Sussman & Sussman, 2011). Our study seeks to distinguish brand addiction from acquisitive desire as well as from other states of brand commitment and consumer-brand relationships such as brand loyalty and brand love.
دریافت فوری متن کامل مقاله

امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات