

Demystifying the Antecedents of Brand Advocacy : Mediating the Role of Brand Love and Brand Passion

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Abstract

This research aimed to analyze the antecedents of brand advocacy and investigate the mediating role of brand love and brand passion. This research used a structured questionnaire and an online survey to collect the responses. The proposed hypotheses were tested with covariance-based structural equation modeling. The mediation effect was investigated with the help of IBM-SPSS software. The antecedents of brand advocacy were identified to be brand trust, brand image, self-brand connect, and brand experience. The interesting finding of the research is that brand love and brand passion were found to have a mediating effect on the path model. The critical contribution of the research is that brand love was found to be the proximal mediator for antecedents, and brand passion was found to be the distal mediator in the path model. A brand manager's primary task is to ascertain a brand's features, propagate the brand story, and engage loyal customers of different platforms with love. This research will help brand managers to formulate targeted marketing strategies to promote brand advocacy.

Keywords : brand advocacy, brand love, brand passion, self-brand connect, mediation, serial mediation

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In the digital age, several brands are competing to harvest the minds of the customers. To get a competitive advantage, resources or capabilities alone may not be enough. Marketers must go beyond traditional ways to traverse the emotional side of consumption and consequent advocacy (Franzak et al., 2014; Vrontis et al., 2017). They must kindle a passion akin to love that outweighs the bogey of rational thinking. Consumers, on their part, may erect a personal fortress not affected by waves of marketing. A sense of affection and resolute observation may stand still to overwhelm all other marketing afflictions. Consumers, therefore, do see human brands that implant deep relationships inside them. So even if a brand is strong, it needs more than just liking — a ring of love and attachment should pervade the layers of the human mind (Sharma et al., 2010). Only then do the brand advocates and consumers become the champion for the brand's cause despite a pandemic or otherwise. Brand advocates will not just buy the products; they also recommend others about it (Singh, 2018; Thomas & Rodrigues, 2020). Even in this technologically advanced era, brand advocacy is an unpaid method of advertising (Chu & Kim, 2018; Evans et al., 2017; Machado et al., 2014). Brand advocacy has the potential to keep any company ahead of its competition; it can enhance customer loyalty; brand advocacy can build trust in the minds of existing and new customers, and it also promotes business growth (Ahmad & Thyagaraj, 2015; Kotler et al., 2019;

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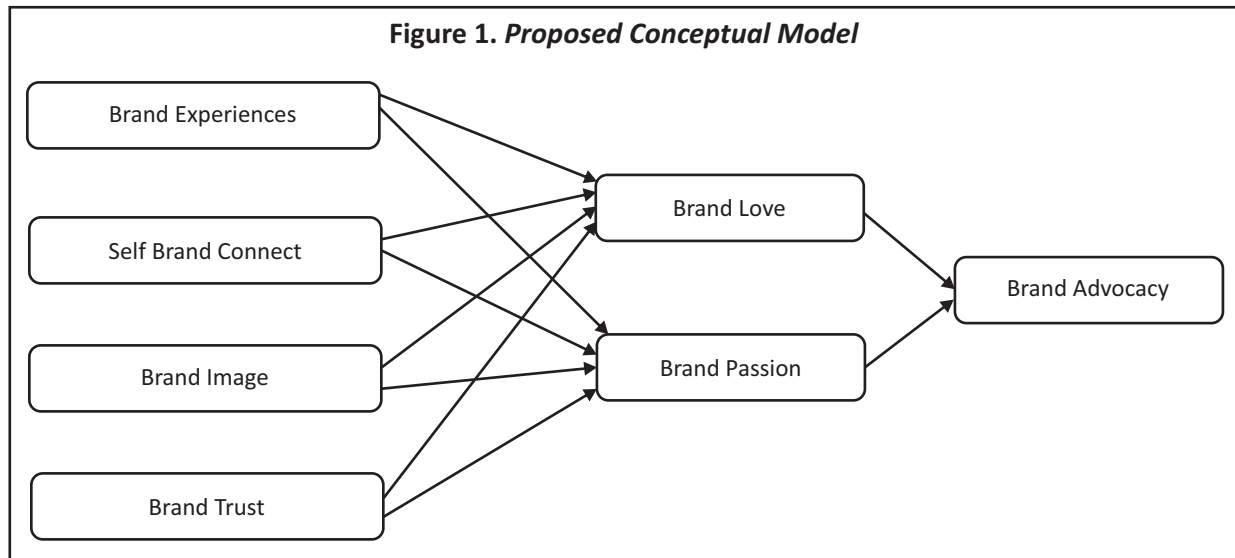
Veloutsou, 2015). Therefore, understanding the antecedents, mediators, and consequences of brand advocacy is critical for the success of a business firm (Santhosh Kumar & Menon, 2017; Sumbly & Siraj, 2019).

Previous research articles have investigated the importance of brand advocacy (Keller, 2007; Kemp et al., 2012). However, very few studies have examined the factors influencing brand advocacy. The need to understand the antecedents and mediators of brand advocacy exist in the research arena. Moreover, emotional factors such as brand love, brand passion, and self-brand connection and their interconnectedness are yet to be explored thoroughly in relationship marketing research. Given the circumstances, it is crucial to investigate the impact of emotional aspects on brand advocacy. Therefore, the research questions to be addressed are:

- ↳ **RQ1** : What are the factors influencing customers to advocate their brands? How are the factors influencing the customers?
- ↳ **RQ2** : How can marketing managers love and have passion for their brands? What kind of experience should it provide?
- ↳ **RQ3** : What are the discreet and non-discrete factors that fuel brand love, brand passion, and brand advocacy?

The present study attempts to provide an answer to these research questions. Socially, it is the new norm. To protect a social identity, people nurture their own 'self' and yet proceed towards the 'social self.' Consumers combine their self-concepts and project them outside, trying to juxtapose them with their social selves (Vahdati & Mousavi Nejad, 2016). Through the halo effect of passion generated by the brand in question, the individual self merges with the greater social self. Passion, therefore, acts as a catalyst (stabilizer) in a smooth journey of the individual self towards the social self. When the crystallized social self is at its peak, passion also reaches its climax and vice-versa. Emotion rules love, passion, and advocacy (Kim & Zaho, 2014). Examples can be Raymond's shops in India with its offerings, Zomato's food delivery, and Nescafe coffee are gigantic brands with love and loyalty.

Sternberg (1986) investigated interpersonal love theory in which he discussed intimacy, commitment, and passion and their interrelationships. Aron and Aron (1986) researched the self-inclusion theory of love, in which the authors mentioned how people are willing to become a part of others to be loved. In line with the brand love theories, Fournier (1998) identified six possible dimensions of consumer brand relationships in which the author involved brand love and brand passion. The consumer love for a brand mentioned that there could be seven dimensions for defining brand love (Batra et al., 2012). The theory of brand loyalty explicates the relationship between emotional attachment and brand evaluation of a customer with a brand. The branding theory explains the different components of managing a brand, right from assigning a name to a brand, creating brand awareness, and finally engaging customers with the brand. Though the existing theories have investigated the different dimensions of a brand, the interconnectedness between brand love, brand passion, and brand advocacy are yet to be explored in the research arena. This research will add value to the existing theory by investigating the relationship between antecedents and mediators of brand advocacy. The existing theories have investigated the interconnectedness between antecedents of brand advocacy and brand love, however, very few researchers have attempted to understand the relationship between brand love, brand passion, and brand advocacy. Consumers who refer services to others have a lower attrition rate than non-referred customers, according to Wolters and Gedenk (2019); thus, brand advocacy is thought to assist increased market share. The unique contribution of this research is to investigate the antecedents of brand advocacy and the serial mediation effect of brand love and brand passion in the path model.



Literature Review

Brand Advocacy – A New Perspective

Brand advocacy can be viewed as loyal clients who will continue to support any business and naturally recommend the services or products to new customers (Saran & Swamy, 2018). As a result of brand advocacy, brands will be able to reach a wider audience without having to spend money on advertising or other traditional marketing methods (Yeap et al., 2018). As a result, brand advocacy will be considered an unpaid form of advertising.

For building advocacy, consumer connection must first be accomplished, followed by scale. By dint of social media interventions, customers can connect and share content on a much larger scale than before. Social media also enables word of mouth, or eWOM, as the users can spin out brand-related content fanning in their network (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Moreover, emotional support from the consumer for brands also takes off (Morrison & Humlen, 2013). The proposed conceptual model that explains the antecedents of brand advocacy is depicted in Figure 1. Facebook, Twitter, MakeMy Trip, and TripAdvisor are social media magnates relying on their respective followers. Instagram, TripAdvisor — all these sites trigger emotions after cognitive needs are met. eWOM spreads like wildfire about destination tourism, or an image endeared by fans constantly evokes emotions.

Brand Love and Brand Passion

This study delves into brand love and passion, what inspires love and passion, what benefits it confers on marketing managers, and how a brand moves from a ‘liked’ brand to a ‘loved’ brand. A passion brand always stays and generates continuous advocacy. Rossiter (2012) conducted a study among young consumers in Germany on their liking for a brand or love for a brand. The finding was that those consumers who loved a brand were doubling the usage rate compared to that group who never loved the brand (Maisam & Mahsa, 2016). Brand love influences attitudinal and behavioral loyalty.

The choice between loving a brand and having a passion for it has its roots in relationships. Passion can be viewed as the core of a relationship (Liow et al., 2019). Passion will never degrade transgressions, product defects,

or product recalls as consumers forgive mistakes committed by brands (Batra et al., 2012). Brand passion explains a psychological state of union with the brand. Union implies fulfillment and ecstasy. Café Coffee Day in India inspires such fulfillment and sublime emotions. On the other side, unrequited love connotes emptiness, anxiety, or despair. Researchers have dwelt on these dimensions. The ability of the consumer to have it “my way” is a tremendous engine of ownership. Starbucks’s “mocha-cappuccino-double-shot-skinny” ethos is the poster child of this tactic for \$5. Mysore Sandal Soap sparks off anxiety and tension in customers’ minds if not available on the shelf. Questions start pouring in about when it will be delivered.

Brand Experience

Feelings, sensations, cognitions, and behavioral responses constitute brand (Sumbly & Siraj, 2019; Trong Tuan, 2012). These responses can be had from the brand’s design packaging, communications, identity, and environments. Brand experience connotes cognitions, feelings, and sensations (Brakus et al., 2009; Ha & Perks, 2005). Hence, it can be presumed that brand experience will lead to brand love. Hence, it is hypothesized as follows:

- ↪ **H1** : There is a positive association between brand experience and brand love.
- ↪ **H2** : There is a positive association between brand experience and brand passion.

Self-Brand Connect

Tuškej et al. (2013) characterized buyers’ relationship with a brand as a perception of sameness between the brand and the customer. Customers have two types of identity, namely social identification and personal identification (Del Rio et al., 2001). The degree to which a consumer associates with or distances himself or herself from a group of people in his or her immediate area is referred to as social identity (Del Rio et al., 2001). Value congruity is defined by the self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1985) as a psychological comparison made by consumers when evaluating similarities and differences between an entity’s values and their own (Tuškej et al., 2013). The perception of an individual on how well he/she relates to a brand is termed as self-brand connects. The brand connection has an impact on a person’s buying behavior (Dorai et al., 2021; Moore & Wurster, 2007). Self-brand connections have a vital role in brand advocacy; if an individual can connect himself/herself with a brand, then it is easier for that individual to play the role of advocate for that brand (Dorai et al., 2021; Kemp et al., 2012). Pond’s talcum powder provides a consumer association for generations because of a self-brand perception. Here, the legacy factor works, which makes it nostalgic too. The existing literature supports that the intensity of the self-brand connectedness is in line with the tendency to advocate a brand (Escalas & Bettman, 2009; Granitz & Forman, 2015). Hence, it is hypothesized :

- ↪ **H3** : There is a positive association between self-brand connect and brand love.
- ↪ **H4** : There is a positive association between self-brand connect and brand passion.

Brand Image

Brand image can be viewed as all sources of information with which a brand is associated. Each activity associated with the brand will create an impression in the customer’s minds (Aaker, 1996; Aaker, 1997; Maisam & Mahsa, 2016; Quynh, 2019). This will help the customer to make some association with the brand. The association with

the brand helps the customer to arrive at a purchase decision (Kaur & Kaur, 2019). This association shall also act as a rationale for forming emotional connections with the brand, such as brand love and brand passion. Hence, we propose the following hypotheses :

- ↪ **H5** : Brand image is positively associated with brand love.
- ↪ **H6** : Brand image is positively associated with brand passion.

Brand Trust

Brand trust portrays the degree of belief the average consumer has in the performance of a brand about its stated function (Moorman et al., 1993). Trust is built up by believing in the reliability and honesty of one side to the other. Since trust formalizes a bond between brand and customers, it connotes brand love (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Without the trust factor, a brand customer fails to enter a love set (Ahmad & Thyagaraj, 2015; Amine, 1998). Zappos, for example, has developed a deep trust relationship with its customers by enabling a seamless and never redundant enjoyable shopping experience by dint of its intuitive and clear site UI design of product returns and the exchange process (Panda et al., 2014). Trust is a cementing link that seeps in intertwining passion and love, much like humans. Therefore, it is posited that :

- ↪ **H7** : Brand trust is positively associated with brand love.
- ↪ **H8** : Brand trust is positively associated with brand passion.

Interactive features of a brand uphold many brands connecting nodes (advergames, virtual trial rooms), prodding consumers to interact with them. Brand advocacy maximizes the brand potential for onward buys. It further constrains marketing costs; especially reducing the useless communication with unsuitable customers. Not just that, it also identifies strengths and weaknesses in the brand perception compared to other brands.

Brand advocacy (BA) defines exactly how consumers perceive the brand and how to reach each target group. BA in our model helps streamline communication and improves the return on marketing investment. Therefore,

- ↪ **H9** : Brand love is positively associated with brand advocacy.
- ↪ **H10** : Brand passion is positively associated with brand advocacy.

Brand advocacy of a customer depends on his/her perception of a brand (Saran & Swamy 2018). Researchers felt that brand love and passion shall mediate between antecedents and the dependent variable brand advocacy (Wallace et al., 2012). With their different avatars, Royal Enfield bikes connote brand love, passion, and advocacy. Hence, it is posited :

- ↪ **H11** : There exists a mediating relationship between antecedents, brand love, and brand advocacy.
- ↪ **H12** : There exists a mediating relationship between antecedents, brand passion, and brand advocacy.

Methodology

The proposed hypotheses are examined using survey research. Initially, we floated the online survey link to a database of consumers collected from different branded retail outlets. We administered the snowball sampling

method as suggested by Dorai et al. (2021). Survey participants were offered an Amazon coupon as a consideration for their participation. We received 512 responses, of which 450 responses were identified as usable data (46% women; 12% from the age group below 20 years; 52% from the age group from 20 – 30 years; 36% from the age group above 30 years; 26% were students). The time period of the study ranged from November 2020 – April 2021.

The questionnaire consisted of 43 construct items and three questions on demographic characteristics. All items were measured on a 7-point scale (7 = *very strongly agree* and 1 = *very strong disagree*). Measures for the construct items were identified from previous research; brand image (Aaker, 1996; Aaker, 1997; Maisam & Mahsa, 2016) ; self- brand connect (Dorai et al., 2021; Granitz & Forman, 2015; Kemp et al., 2012; Maisam & Mahsa, 2016; Moore & Wuster, 2007) ; brand trust (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001) ; brand experience (Ha & Perks, 2005); brand love (Maisam & Mahsa, 2016); brand passion (Sarkar et al., 2012); and brand advocacy (Halliday & Kuenzel, 2008; Maisam & Mahsa, 2016; Sichtmann, 2007; Tuškej et al., 2013).

This paper used structural equation modeling to test the proposed hypotheses. First, confirmatory factor analysis was tested to check the satisfying conditions for content validity. Inter-correlation analysis in comparison with average variance extracted (AVE) was tested to ensure convergent and discriminant validity. Reliability was checked to know whether the scale was free from measurement error. Followed by a sequence of validity tests, structural equation modeling was used to test the proposed hypotheses and paths. Haye’s approach was used to test the mediating relationship between brand love and brand passion. To investigate the influence of proximal mediator and distal mediator, we administered the serial mediation approach as suggested by Hayes (2009).

Data Analysis and Results

The results are interpreted through three sections; first, the measurement model is given, then the results for the hypotheses are presented, and finally, the results for the mediation analysis are interpreted.

Internal consistency and reliability of the scale are checked with the composite reliability index. The reliability values are well above the recommended value (>.75). This satisfies the condition that the items in the scale are free from measurement error. All factor loadings for the items in the constructs are above 0.60, which satisfies the basic condition for content analysis (Nunnally, 1978). AVE values satisfy the requirements of convergent validity by establishing values of more than 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The inter-correlation table (Table 1) gives a snapshot of the correlation values among the constructs. Also, the values are less than \sqrt{AVE} , which satisfies the conditions of discriminant validity (Sánchez Franco & Roldán, 2005).

Table 1. Critical Ratio, AVE, and Discriminant Validity

| | CR | AVE | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|------------------------|-------|-------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Brand Experience (1) | 0.841 | 0.776 | <i>0.881</i> | | | | | | |
| Brand Love (2) | 0.816 | 0.588 | 0.283 | <i>0.767</i> | | | | | |
| Brand Advocacy (3) | 0.854 | 0.714 | 0.348 | 0.590 | <i>0.845</i> | | | | |
| Self-Brand Connect (4) | 0.914 | 0.757 | 0.242 | 0.676 | 0.467 | <i>0.870</i> | | | |
| Brand Image (5) | 0.865 | 0.607 | 0.193 | 0.236 | 0.277 | 0.164 | <i>0.779</i> | | |
| Brand Trust (6) | 0.874 | 0.581 | 0.287 | 0.457 | 0.400 | 0.380 | 0.424 | <i>0.762</i> | |
| Brand Passion (7) | 0.905 | 0.699 | 0.815 | 0.264 | 0.335 | 0.240 | 0.225 | 0.275 | <i>0.836</i> |

Note. The square root of AVE is bold and italicized in the diagonal.

Table 2 depicts the results for the proposed hypotheses in terms of path coefficients. Brand experience, self-brand connect, and brand trust are found to impact brand love significantly. Similarly, brand experience, brand image, self-brand connect, and brand trust are found to have a positive impact on brand passion. In the same vein, brand passion and brand love have a significant positive impact on self - brand connect, and the construct of self-brand connect positively impacts brand advocacy. Therefore, it is apparent that brand love goes along with trust and brand advocacy. The connection is highly psychological.

Similarly, brand experience and brand passion go together. A rich experience with a brand and continuing sets of experiences are enough to germinate brand passion. They can also work on creating unique experiences that add value for consumers. We followed the model fit indices as suggested by Balasubramanian and Balaji (2021), and the results of structural equation modeling reveal that the *R* - square values and model fit are acceptable.

Hypotheses H11 and H12 for the study are tested using the mediating effect methodology proposed by Hayes (2009). The mediation effect of brand love through the antecedents: brand experience, self-brand connect, and

Table 2. Maximum Likelihood Estimates for the Structural Model

| Endogenous Factor (Dependent) | Exogenous Factor (Independent) | Standardized Coefficient | R ² | Hypothesis |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Brand Love | Brand Experience | 0.164*** | 0.260 | H1- Accepted |
| | Self-Brand Connect | 0.136*** | | H3- Accepted |
| | Brand Image | 0.007 ^{ns} | | H5- Rejected |
| | Brand Trust | 0.181** | | H7- Accepted |
| Brand Passion | Brand Experience | 0.122*** | 0.245 | H2- Accepted |
| | Self-Brand Connect | 0.115*** | | H4- Accepted |
| | Brand Image | 0.109*** | | H6- Accepted |
| | Brand Trust | 0.168*** | | H8- Accepted |
| Brand Advocacy | Brand Love | 0.189*** | 0.325 | H9- Accepted |
| | Brand Passion | 0.195*** | | H10- Accepted |

*** represents significant at 99% confidence level.

** represents significant at 95% confidence level.

^{ns} represents a non-significant relationship.

Model Fit : $\chi^2/df = 3.362$ (Good fit < 4) ; GFI = 0.91 (Good fit > 0.90) ; CFI = 0.908 (Good fit > 0.90) ; TLI = 0.93 (Good fit > 0.90) ; RMSEA = 0.06 (Good fit < 0.07) ; SRMR = 0.04 (Good fit < 0.08).

Table 3. Analyzing the Mediation Effect of Brand Love

| X Variable (Antecedent) | Mediating Variable | R - Square | Beta Coefficient | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|------------|------------------|------------|
| | | | (β) X -> M | (β) M -> Y |
| X = Brand Experience | Brand Love | 0.249 | 0.164** | 0.182** |
| X = Self - Brand Connect | | 0.302 | 0.136*** | 0.147*** |
| X = Brand Trust | | 0.262 | 0.181*** | 0.167** |

***denotes Z significant at 99%.

**denotes Z significant at 95%.

Note. X - denotes antecedent, M - denotes mediating variable, and Y denotes dependent variable (brand advocacy).

Table 4. Analyzing the Mediation Effect of Brand Passion

| X Variable (Antecedent) | Mediating Variable | R - Square | Beta Coefficient | Beta Coefficient |
|--------------------------|--------------------|------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | | | (β) X -> M | (β) M -> Y |
| X = Brand Experience | Brand Passion | 0.217 | 0.122** | 0.193*** |
| X = Self - Brand Connect | | 0.305 | 0.115*** | 0.169*** |
| X = Brand Image | | 0.215 | 0.109** | 0.117** |
| X = Brand Trust | | 0.207 | 0.168*** | 0.187*** |

*** denotes Z significant at 99%.

** denotes Z significant at 95%.

Note. X - denotes antecedent, M - denotes mediating variable, and Y denotes dependent variable (brand advocacy).

Table 5. Analyzing the Serial Mediation Effect of Brand Love and Brand Passion

| X Variable (Antecedent) | Mediating Variable 1 (M1) | Mediating Variable 2 (M2) | R - Square | Beta Co-efficient | Beta Co-efficient |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | | | | (β) M1 – Y | (β) M2 – Y |
| X = Brand Experience | Brand Love | Brand Passion | 0.432 | 0.162*** | 0.197** |
| X = Self - Brand Connect | | | 0.479 | 0.124*** | 0.186*** |
| X = Brand Image | | | 0.422 | ns | 0.134*** |
| X = Brand Trust | | | 0.452 | 0.155*** | 0.198*** |

***denotes Z significant at 99%.

**denotes Z significant at 95%.

^{ns} denotes not significant .

brand trust are tested and reported in Table 3. Since the direct effect of brand image on brand love is not significant, the construct is not taken for mediation analysis. Apart from brand image, all other antecedents' relationships with brand advocacy mediating through brand love are found to be significant, thereby supporting hypothesis H11.

The mediation effect of brand passion through the antecedents of brand experience, self-brand connect, brand image, and brand trust are tested and reported in Table 4. The antecedents' relationship with brand advocacy mediating through brand love is found to be significant, thereby supporting hypothesis H12.

To test the serial mediation effect of self-brand connect, we administered the mediation analysis suggested by Hayes (2009). The results of the mediation analysis are found to be significant. Brand love and brand passion are found to have a serial mediation effect in the path model. The beta-coefficient, R - square value, bootstrapped lower confidence interval, and bootstrapped upper confidence interval are found to be within acceptable limits, as suggested by Hayes (2009). The beta coefficient between antecedent and proximal mediator (M1) is found to be less when compared to the beta coefficient of the path model between distal mediator (M2) and brand advocacy (Table 5). Therefore, it can be inferred that brand love (M1) should be established before brand passion (M2). Thus, the serial mediation effect between the antecedents, M1, M2, and brand advocacy is established.

Discussion

Trust in a brand is developed by believing in the reliability and honesty of messages, transparency, and an overall positive impression of the brand in question. Since trust formalizes a bond between brand and customers, it connotes brand love. Without the trust factor, a brand customer fails to evoke love and loyalty. Cadbury's chocolates, Pepsi, Coke, and Lay's are all classic examples of trust ingrained with love.

Advocacy has been defined as an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship (Moorman et al., 1993). Hence, advocacy permeates the ongoing process of trust-building. So, trust and advocacy should be associated because trust counts in relational exchanges, and advocacy comes in its train. Trust leads to advocacy and then commitment (Moorman et al., 1992). Hartnett et al. (2016) mentioned that the sales effectiveness of advertisements needs improvements. Even in the digital era, the best way of advertising is through positive word of mouth (Ismagilova et al., 2019), and brand advocacy is a strategy to improve word of mouth.

Self-brand connect explains how well an individual shall connect himself/herself with a brand. If the brands can well establish this connectedness through brand love and brand passion, then it is easier for the person to become an advocate of the brand, and the construct of self-brand connect is found to have a serial mediation effect in the path model. Therefore, it can be inferred that to develop brand love and brand passion in the minds of their customers, brand managers should establish self-brand connections with the brand. Brand advocacy shall be easily established when the love for the brand and passion for the brand is present in the minds of customers. The findings provide solid evidence of the need to consider brand love, brand passion, and self-brand connections in the development of brand advocacy. Cinthol soap is a classic example of love, passion, connection, and a glorified brand for use in India. The ad campaign of Liril imbued with freshness in the past had an iconic romantic flavor induced by a woman enjoying her bath in a waterfall made by Hindustan Unilever.

From Table 2, it is evident that except for hypothesis H5, all other proposed hypotheses are found to be statistically significant. To establish brand love, the brand managers must concentrate on brand experience, self-brand connection, and brand trust. Similarly, for establishing brand passion, the brand managers should establish brand experience, self-brand connection, brand image, and brand trust. The serial mediation is also found to be statistically significant, therefore, brand managers should establish brand love, and it further leads to brand passion. After establishing brand love and brand passion, brand advocacy shall be established effortlessly. This finding is a significant contribution for the brand managers. Brand trust is found to have a positive association with brand love and brand passion. Trust is consumer confidence that the consumer could rely on the seller to provide the services promised. On the other side, brand managers should establish self-brand connections to enhance brand advocacy. Overall, the antecedents thicken into brand love and brand passion, which serve as a foundation for brand advocacy.

Managerial and Theoretical Implications

The results of the present study are in line with the previous literature. The framed hypotheses are found to be supported by the data. As stated in the theory of brand loyalty, consumer psychology is influenced by emotional attachment and brand evaluation. The constructs of self-brand connect, brand trust, and brand image explain the valuation part of the theory of brand loyalty, brand love, and brand passion, which explain a consumer's emotional attachment with a brand. Hence, the research adds value to the existing literature by demonstrating and evaluating the emotional factors of a brand.

Wolters and Gedenk (2019) identified that customers who referred a service to others have less churn rate when compared to non-referred customers. Hence, it is understood that brand advocacy helps in increasing the market share. The research contributes to theory by creating a structural equation model with antecedents and mediators of brand advocacy.

The task of a brand manager is to propagate the brand story, refine it as far as possible, and engage loyal customers through different platforms, and the research helps the brand managers to analyze brand love, brand passion, and its connectedness with brand advocacy of their customers. Over many years based on product features, a brand may have come to fruition. Rebranding occurs with the overtone of brand extensions. Consumers patronize many (different) extended brands — each one with likes and dislikes. Eventually, the objective is to usher in brand advocacy and commitment and nurture the twins: love and passion.

For brand managers, the task then is to ascertain the features and version capabilities to propagate the created story, refine it as far as possible, and engage loyal customers of the different platforms. The content can purely be entertaining, letting go of a buzz in the form of viral marketing, or educating, as in the case of insurance marketing. In other cases, the products and/or services should be the focus area. Consumers can foresee the inherent value in content the brand will give when they decide to purchase the brand.

Conclusion

This research article attempts to investigate the relationship between brand experience, self-brand connections, brand image, and brand trust mediated through brand love and brand passion for brand advocacy. In a way, this research has attempted to demystify the antecedents and mediators of brand advocacy. Brand managers and policymakers shall make use of this research to increase the advocacy of their brand and the factors influencing the same. A brand manager has to assemble the features and version capabilities to propagate the created story, refine it as far as possible, and engage loyal customers of different platforms.

The present study investigates the antecedents of brand advocacy and provides a nomological model that will help marketers to understand brand advocacy. Micro-segmenting, micro-targeting, and constant adaptation of brand strategies seem to be the way forward. A brand moves from an 'experienced' brand to a 'loved' brand, from a loved brand to a passionate brand, and moves further from a passionate brand to an 'advocated' brand. With the growing popularity of Ola, Uber, Swiggy, and PayTM, we are seeing the content being shared across other social media platforms, showing that consumers are engaging on an omnichannel level. Consumers are proving to be so engrossed and obsessed with these new entrants in brand building that other channels have to follow or lose out.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

The limitations of the study are an indication of the direction for future research. In general, these findings should be matched with disparate service categories and brands. So, it needs to further bridge the gaps emanating from brand advocacy and other related variables (especially brand involvement, associations, and personality). Further, the intertwining of brand experiences and integrated marketing communication should be explored, especially touching on brand experiences affecting customer lifetime value. Further research should lay stress on the antecedents of brand experiences. The present study concentrates on the Indian subcontinent, and the results apply to Indian consumers. By extending the scope of the study to other geographical areas, the researchers shall get an integrated solution to the research questions.

Authors' Contribution

Dr. Susobhan Goswami conceived the idea and developed the conceptual model to undertake the research study. Dr. Nataraj Balasubramanian extracted research papers with high repute, filtered these based on keywords, and developed the research hypotheses. Dr. Susobhan Goswami wrote the manuscript in consultation with the authors. The numerical computations, structural equation modeling, and mediation analysis were done by Dr. Nataraj Balasubramanian using SPSS 22.0. Dr. Susobhan Goswami verified the analytical methods and contributed to the discussion and conclusion part of the research study.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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