

**School of Marketing**

**The Tie that Binds: The Impact of Self-Congruity and Brand  
Experience on Brand Attachment**

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## Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

Signature:  .....

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> August 2018

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## ABSTRACT

During the past two decades, marketers have shifted their focus from product to consumer-brand relationship. The core of all strong consumer-brand relationships is brand attachment due to its significant impact on brand loyalty. Brand attachment is defined as 'the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self' (Park et al. 2010, 2). It is hardly surprising that brand attachment attracted considerable attention among practitioners and researchers alike. To attach consumers to brands, researchers and practitioners target the brand personality towards the consumer's actual or ideal self (actual or ideal self-congruity). Furthermore, the past decade has seen a drastic shift to experiential marketing. This shift broadens the role of the brand from a provider of identity to experiences. Subsequently, consumers are less likely to engage with brands that express their identities only. They seek brands that create meaningful and exciting experiences. These changes present obvious challenges to marketers in developing a strong brand attachment.

Most of the current research focuses on an emotional bond of passion and affection that connect the brand and the self. Brand attachment is not merely limited to emotional bonds in the consumer-brand dyad and thus, the creation of emotional bonds might be insufficient in building long-term business success. This study aims to assess the antecedents and outcomes of brand attachment. Although much has been done to investigate the effect of actual and ideal self-congruity on brand attachment, none has incorporated social self into the self-congruity framework and empirically tests the relationship between self-congruity types on brand attachment and subsequently on attitudinal and behavioural brand loyalty. Furthermore, little is known about the role of brand experience in this relationship. Also, this study includes regulatory focus and consumers' need for uniqueness as moderating variables, which possibly affect the effect of self-congruity types on brand attachment. These two moderating variables were selected because they are related to consumers' self-concepts.

To achieve the aim of the study, a total of ten variables consisting of actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity, social self-congruity, brand experience, brand

attachment, attitudinal brand loyalty, behavioural brand loyalty, prevention focus, promotion focus, consumers' need for uniqueness are operationalised to test the research hypotheses. A convenient sampling approach was adopted to collect data from 428 online panel consumers, and structural equation modelling (SEM) was employed to test the hypothesised relationships.

The findings of this study confirm that brand experience and social self-congruity are determinants of brand attachment whereas, actual and ideal self-congruity influence brand attachment indirectly through brand experience. In addition, brand attachment is found to have a significant positive relationship with both attitudinal and behavioural brand loyalty. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that consumers' regulatory focus (promotion focus) and need for uniqueness affects the relationship between ideal and social self-congruity and brand attachment.

This study contributes to the literature on brand attachment and self-congruity by highlighting the relationship between self-congruity types on brand attachment. Moreover, the described relationships differ by consumers' need for uniqueness and regulatory focus. The study is the first to explicate brand experience as a mediator of the relationship between self-congruity types and brand attachment. Furthermore, the findings also offer several practical implications to marketers when trying to increase brand attachment. Strategically managing brand personality (towards consumers' actual, ideal or social self) and brand experience can enhance brand attachment, which in turn fosters favourable attitudinal and behavioural loyalty to the brands.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 OVERVIEW

Building brand attachment is a fundamental issue for branding (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Japutra et al. 2018; Jiménez and Voss 2014). Empirical evidence demonstrates that brand attachment predicts post-consumption behaviours such as brand loyalty (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Ramaseshan and Stein 2014; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005), positive word of mouth (Vlachos et al. 2010), brand defense and purchase behaviours (Park et al. 2010; Schmalz and Orth 2012). Furthermore, practitioners have recognized the relevance of brand attachment in building long-term business success. For instance, companies like Disney, Apple, and Starbucks tactically, strategize ways to build attachment to their brands. As a topic of research, the vast majority of studies have focused on exploring the concept of brand attachment (Jiménez and Voss 2014; Park et al. 2010; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005) and its antecedents such as self-congruity (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Japutra et al. 2018; Malär et al. 2011), brand responsiveness (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016), brand experience (Dolbec and Chebat 2013; Japutra et al. 2016; Kang et al. 2017; Schmitt 2013; Ramaseshan and Stein 2014), brand trust (Frasquet, Mollá Descals and Ruiz-Molina 2017; Ramaseshan and Stein 2014; Vlachos et al. 2010), brand community identification (Zhou et al. 2012) as well as emotions (Dunn and Hoegg 2014; Proksch, Orth and Cornwell 2015).

However, one limitation in this area is the fact that most studies tend to focus on emotional attachment towards brands, representing affectionate ties between the brand and the consumer. In this case, the conceptualization of emotional attachment fails to capture the cognitive bonds that link the brand with the self. Brands are highly connected to consumers' self-concept, symbolically representing whom consumers believe they are or want to be (Chaplin and John 2005; Escalas and Bettman 2003; Fournier 1998). Therefore, brand-self connection is the fundamental aspect of the conceptualization of brand attachment (Fournier 1998; Alvarez and Fournier 2016; Park et al., 2010). Later, Park re-conceptualized brand attachment as a cognitive and emotional bond connecting both the brand and the consumer. Brand-self connection

and its prominence reflect the conceptual properties of brand attachment. Accordingly, Japutra et al. (2018) aptly state that little is understood about the ways to enhance brand attachment that foster brand self-connection and its prominence.

To move beyond this current position in explaining how emotional attachment is created, new studies are therefore required in order to analyze ways that can facilitate the emergence of this cognitive and emotional bond with brands. Therefore, this study aims to examine whether, how and when practitioners should invest in building a strong brand attachment that fosters brand-self-connections and brand prominence. In order to illustrate, this study examines whether brand attachment is likely to influence attitudinal and behavioural brand loyalty. The 'how' is addressed by exploring antecedents of brand attachment, answering the call of Japutra et al. (2018) for more research identifying means to enhance brand attachment. Specifically, it examines how consumers' perception of self-brand congruity and their interactions with the brand influence their attachment to the brand, and the 'when' relates to the investigation of boundary conditions governing the brand attachment. Past research has indicated that the relationship between self-congruity and brand attachment may not equally be plausible for all consumers. Indeed, this effect is influenced by the consumers' characteristics or motivations (Malär et al., 2011). In this regard, this study further examines two key variables that could help moderate the relationship between self-congruity and brand attachment, namely; the consumers' need for uniqueness and self-regulatory focus. Moreover, this study contributes to the growing literature on brand relationships and brand attachment by addressing these gaps.

Accordingly, this chapter provides an overview of the thesis, starting with a discussion of the study background. This is followed by an explanation of the business along with the research questions and objectives. Throughout the chapter, the methodological approach that is applied in the study is also described. A brief description of the contributions of the study is provided. The chapter concludes by describing the outline of the organization of the thesis and definitions of key terms.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In today's fast-paced, highly competitive world, consumers are no longer brand loyal (Bennett and Rundle-Thiele 2005). With savvy consumers who are mindful of their purchasing habits, brands should instead, focus on how to build strong relationships with consumers (Llopis 2014). In this regard, it is crucial for marketers to explore ways and means to interact with consumers and to build strong connections that help to unite consumers and brands. Brand attachment plays an important role in this case, as this concept describes the strength of the cognitive and emotional bond that connects the consumer with the brand (Park et al. 2010). Prior research has drawn upon attachment theory (Bowlby 1979; 1980) to explain the possibility that consumers may develop an attachment to brands. According to this theory, an individual who is attached to a person is committed to that person and is willing to sacrifice for that person (Bowlby 1980; Hazan and Shaver 1994). Applying this theory to the present context and discussion, a consumer who is strongly attached to a brand is likely to be committed to the brand and willing to make financial sacrifices in order to possess the brand (Park et al., 2010). Thus, it has been advocated that brand attachment is a critical determinant of true brand loyalty (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016; Park et al. 2010; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005), which in turn fosters brand profitability and customer lifetime value (Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). In considering this fact, a growing body of research has increasingly focused on exploring the concept of brand attachment, its nature and dimensions and to propose a reliable and valid measure (Dwyer et al., 2015; Jiménez and Voss 2014; Park et al., 2010; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). However, at this stage, there is no consensus on how brand attachment should be measured (Jiménez and Voss 2014).

Consumers' attachment to brands has been conceptualized as positive emotional bonding that exists between a consumer and a brand, measured by deep feelings of affection, passion and connection (Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). Although, Park et al. (2010) argue that brand attachment does not encapsulate emotional bonding but also cognitive bonding, thereby reflecting brand-self cognitions, thoughts and memories. In this context, the brand attachment is defined as 'the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self' (Park et al. 2010, 2). The conceptual properties of brand attachment are reflected in two dimensions, namely; brand-self connection and

brand prominence. Brand-self connection is the subjective belief on the relevance of a brand as part of a consumer's self-concept, whereas brand prominence refers to the ease of the brand to be brought into the consumers' mind (Park et al. 2010). This conceptualization of brand attachment is relatively new, with very limited empirical research examining this emerging concept (Japutra, Ekinici and Simkin 2016). Japutra et al. (2018) urge further research be undertaken towards gaining a better understanding of the ways to enhance brand attachment that adequately reflects both cognitive and emotional bonding. Therefore, given this condition or circumstance, this study extends the current examination of brand attachment based on emotions (e.g., Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Japutra et al. 2018; Malär et al. 2011) by conceptualizing brand attachment as embodying both emotional and cognitive bonding. Accordingly, Park's conceptualization of brand attachment is adopted in this study for two reasons. Firstly, Park et al.'s (2010) conceptualization of brand attachment focuses on the formation of a rich neural network, exemplars and positive memories (Mikulincer et al. 2001) that makes the brand more salient. Indeed, this network subsumes the integration of brands into the cognitive aspects of self that is one's self-concept (Mikulincer and Shaver 2005; Park et al. 2001). Furthermore, the incorporation of cognitive elements (Park et al. 2010) provides for richer conceptualization compared to emotional attachment. Also, measuring brand attachment based on love, passion and connection as noted by Thomson, MacInnis and Park (2005) may not entirely capture the other types of emotions retrieved from brand-self connections such as joy, pride, excitement or nostalgia (Park et al. 2010).

According to Park et al. (2006), one way to create a strong connection with the consumer is by fulfilling the consumer's symbolic needs in consumption. Consumers buy a branded offering not just for the functional benefits of the offering but also its symbolic meaning(s) (Belk 1988) that serve as a means of self-expression (Aaker 1999; Sirgy 1982). For example, a consumer purchases Brand X because the brand makes him or her look and feel cool in front of their friends. In fact, consumers are more likely to purchase brands perceptually consistent with their self-concepts (Sirgy 1982). Specifically, they are more likely to use brands with a particular personality to construct and maintain their self-concept. Such brands provide a sense of comfort to consumers (Aaker 1999; Sirgy 1982). Similarly, marketing practitioners adopt strategies that tend to link the consumers' self-concept to a particular image of a certain brand. For example,

Pantene hair shampoo associates the brand with “shine and strong” hair and consumers, therefore, believe that using the brand will make them shine and strong in their daily life (Monllos 2014). Drawing from this phenomenon, marketing researchers examine the concept of ‘self-congruity’ (Sirgy 1982), which can be described as the match between the consumer’s self-concept and the brand’s image (or personality-like characteristics). Notably, this research stream has demonstrated that self-congruity has a positive influence on consumption-related constructs, for example, brand preference, brand satisfaction, brand attitude and brand loyalty (Sirgy 1982, 1985; Sirgy, Grewal and Mangleburg 2000; Sirgy and Su 2000).

It is widely recognized that the central criterion for creating brand attachment is the involvement of the consumers’ self-concepts (Park et al. 2010; Malär et al. 2011; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). Accordingly, prior studies (e.g., Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Japutra et al. 2018; Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016; Malär et al. 2011) suggest that self-congruity can enhance brand attachment. Moreover, this line of research has revealed significant relationships between self-congruity, particularly with regards to actual and ideal self-congruity and brand attachment. The findings of these studies have contributed significantly to the understanding of the determinants of brand attachment. However, these studies have overlooked the fact that the conceptualization of the self is not limited to the actual and ideal self but instead, social self (Markus and Wurf 1987). Furthermore, research on consumer behaviour has highlighted the importance of social self in determining consumers’ purchasing behaviours as consumers purchase brands for their symbolic meanings, which rely on social meanings (Belk 1988; Solomon 1983). Therefore, in an attempt to include social influences, Huber, Eisele and Meyer (2018) link ought self-congruity (Higgins 1987) to brand attachment. Ought self refers to the traits that individuals ‘believe they should possess and represent the individuals’ duty, responsibilities and obligations (Higgins 1987). However, in this case, the authors failed to find a relationship between ought self-congruity and brand attachment. Similarly, Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin (2014) suggest that social self is an important dimension of self that affects brand attachment. Subsequently, these authors call for empirical research to examine the effect of social self in fostering brand attachment. Accordingly, this research extends the work of previous studies on the self-congruity effect on brand attachment by examining not only

the congruity of the actual and ideal self but also social self as distinct dimensions of the self.

Much of the earlier research focuses on the functional or product-related benefits of brands (e.g., Cohen, Fishbein and Ahtola 1972; Porter 2011; Zeithaml 1988). For example, Porter (2011) emphasizes product differentiation and innovation as competitive advantages for firms to sustain. In contrast, one important upshot in recent branding research has been the attempt to understand consumers' experiences. Creating superior experiences seems to be one of the central objectives of companies as consumers continually expect to receive more from brands than simply the product or service itself but also experiences (Morrison and Crane 2007; Pine and Gilmore 1998; Schmitt 1999). Furthermore, consumers "want something [brands] that engages their senses and touches their hearts"; "excites or intrigues them"; and "strikes them as authentic and genuine" (Schmitt 1999, 318). Consequently, more brands are turning to experiential marketing (Schmitt 1999). For example, Toyota attempts to attain customers by providing the most satisfying ownership experience in their vehicles, and similarly, Starbucks is based on creating a distinctive customer experience (Michelli 2007). Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) explore brand experience and define it as "subjective, internal consumer responses and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli..." (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009, 53). In other words, brand experience reflects the positive impact of brand stimuli due to the consumers' past and present interactions with a brand (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009). Brand-self connections are then developed through these interactions with the brand (Park et al. 2010). This is because brand experience evokes rich cognitive schemata that connect the brand with the self and makes the thoughts and feelings toward the brand salience (Park et al., 2010; Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013; Park, MacInnis and Priester 2006). Therefore, brand experiences should play a dominant role in deepening consumers' attachment to the brand. Little studies have explored the relationship between brand experience and brand attachment (Schmitt 2012).

Malär et al. (2011) suggest that the impact of self-congruity types on brand attachment varies across different consumers which are supported in the recent study by Huber, Eisele and Meyer (2018). In order to predict the relationship between self-congruity types and brand attachment more comprehensively, moderating effects of self-

regulatory focus (prevention focus versus promotion focus) and the need for uniqueness in these relationships are analyzed. Indeed, not all self-congruent brands are equally plausible of being attached depending on consumers' dominant regulatory state as well as their need for uniqueness. These two variables could be promising moderators of the relationship between self-congruity and brand attachment because they are related to individuals' self-concept (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Malär et al. 2011; Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001).

Regulatory focus theory explains individuals' differences in how they view their goals and how they pursue these goals (Higgins 1997; 1998). Moreover, this theory identifies two regulatory foci that are promotion focus and prevention focus. Consumers with either a promotion focus or prevention focus, are motivated to regulate their behaviours in order to pursue their goals (Higgins 1997). In particular, promotion-focused individuals regulate their behaviours to eagerly approach desired end states while prevention-focused individuals vigilantly regulate their behaviours in avoiding undesirable outcomes (Crowe and Higgins 1997). Evidently, a dominant self-regulatory orientation affects consumers' attitudes toward the brand (Aaker and Lee 2001), evaluations on the brand and brand choice decisions (Berinsky, Margolis and Sances 2014; Bourque and Fielder 2003; Higgins 2008; Higgins, Shah and Friedman 1997). Accordingly, consumers with different regulatory states react sensibly to brands congruent with different dimensions of the self, depending on internalized strategies of goal attainment (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018).

It is widely recognized that consumers tend to choose brands or products in order to differentiate themselves from others (i.e. friends, colleagues, family, etc.) as to maintain or enhance their self-concepts (Cheema and Kaikati 2010; Ruvio, Shoham and Brencic 2008; Tian, Bearden and Hunter (2001). Past research has generally agreed that consumers' need for uniqueness influences the attitudes and behaviours of consumers' (e.g., Lynn and Harris 1997, Ku et al. 2014; Roy and Sharma 2015). As discussed earlier, symbolic consumption reflects consumers' identity. Meanwhile, such consumption also expresses their social distinctions (Sirgy 1982). Thus, a consumer with a high or low need for uniqueness may choose a different brand personality (that is consistent with their self-concepts) to express their uniqueness or distinctiveness from others. In light of this, the effect of self-congruity type on brand attachment is dependent

on consumers' differences in pursuit of uniqueness relative to others as an end goal. Accordingly, this study explores whether self-congruity types interact with consumers' need for uniqueness in determining the intensity of the subsequent brand attachment.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

To counter the problem of decreased brand loyalty, it is imperative therefore to cultivate a deep and intimate relationship with consumers (Llopis 2014). Attaching consumers to a brand is a cornerstone of the consumer-brand relationship as attachment increases loyalty (Fournier and Yao 1997). This means, when a brand is able to make connections with its consumer, the brand earns the consumers' long-term loyalty. However, building brand attachment is an arduous task and a challenge for practitioners because consumers only develop an attachment with a few brands (Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). Thus, marketing academics and practitioners are increasingly concerned with how best to develop strong brand attachment among their consumers.

Practitioners have been emphasizing on the self-expressive benefit of the brand's personality to form strong connections with consumers. For example, Dove targets its brand personality toward the consumers' actual self, whereas other brands such as Nike, SKII seem to create an attachment with campaigns that focus on the ideal self. Scholars have generally recognized the need to express one's self as a crucial motivation that drives consumers to consume products or brands (Graeff 1996; Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Sirgy 1982). In light of this, self-congruity hypothesis posits that a fit between the brand personality and the consumer's self-concept can be a significant determinant of brand attachment (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016; Malär et al. 2011). Specifically, consumers express themselves by choosing brands with personalities that match with their own self-concept and form attachment to such brands. The self-concept comprises different dimensions. Specifically, one's self-concept composes of actual, ideal and social self (Sirgy 1982). What is unclear, however, is which dimension of the self-concept (i.e., actual, ideal or social self) should marketers target to enhance brand attachment and when should they emphasize a brand personality that relates to an actual, ideal or social self-concept.

Traditionally, the predominant framework for self-congruity is centered on actual and ideal self-congruity (emphasizing the private dimension of the self) (Hosany and Martin 2012). Notably, this framework fails to capture the idea that self-concept consists of both private and social dimensions (Baumeister and Tice 1986; Markus and Wurf 1986; Sim et al. 2014; Swann et al. 2009; Tesser and Paulhus 1983). The social self-concept refers to how individuals present themselves to others (Sirgy 1982). Furthermore, the social dimension of the self should not be neglected as it accounts for the influence of significant others or social groups on consumers' purchases and brand relationships (Reeds 2002). It is not surprising therefore to see that consumers tend to buy similar cars or listen to similar music within their social groups. Also, companies such as Starbucks build connections with its customers to become a place, besides home and work by creating a sense of community in its many cafés (Danna 2017). Similarly, marketing scholars also denote that social self-congruity is a promising determinant of brand attachment (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016). However, no study has empirically examined the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment. Therefore, to address this problem, this study incorporates the social self into the self-congruity framework and exposes its relationship with brand attachment.

Marketing scholars generally agree that self-congruity is a crucial determinant of brand attachment (e.g., Malär et al., 2011; Huang, Zhang and Hu 2017; Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Japutra et al. 2018). These studies have provided important contributions to the theoretical mechanism linking self-congruity to brand attachment. However, it is interesting to understand that self-congruity types do not always create brand attachment as the effect of self-congruity on brand attachment varies across different types of self-congruity (i.e., actual, ideal or social self-congruity). For example, Malär et al. (2011) find a positive significant relationship between actual self-congruity and brand attachment, but the effect of ideal self-congruity is not significant. In contrast, the findings of Huang, Zhang and Hu (2017) indicate the negative influence of ideal self-congruity on brand attachment. The notion that brand attachment is developed through consumers' past and present interactions with the brand may also suggest that brand experience is particularly important to consumers' attachment to brands. Previous studies in retailing and tourism marketing have suggested the potential mediating role of brand experience in the relationship between self-congruity types and brand

attachment (e.g., Dolbec and Chebat 2013; Fu, Kang and Tasci 2017). However, this effect is yet to be explicitly addressed. Therefore, this study would like to investigate how self-congruity could influence brand experience and its contribution to brand attachment. The findings may shed light on the level of importance that marketers and academics should place on brand personality (that match with consumers' self) and brand experience.

As discussed earlier, the relationships between self-congruity types and brand attachment are complex and contingent upon a number of boundary conditions (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Malär et al. 2011). Past research focuses on individual consumer-related variables (Malär et al. 2011) and product-related context (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018). The extant research has paid little attention to individuals' motivational factors that might moderate the effect of self-congruity and brand attachment. In an extension of the recent studies, which has found that individuals' traits and motivations are important underlying factors driving brand attachment (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Malär et al. 2011), this study suggests that individuals' self-regulatory focus (promotion versus prevention focus) (Higgins 1997; 1998) and need for uniqueness (Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001) as promising moderating factors that might differentiate the effects of self-congruity and brand attachment. Examining these factors provide insights into how effects of actual, ideal and social self-congruity on brand attachment varies across consumers' with different (high versus low) need for uniqueness and (prevention versus promotion focus) self-regulatory orientations.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study aims to explain the direct relationship of actual, ideal and social self-congruity on brand attachment as well as the indirect relationship through brand experience. Also, this study examines the moderating role of consumers' need for uniqueness and self-regulatory focus on the relationship between actual, ideal and social self-congruity. As such, the following research questions are presented for this study about products in the Australian context.

1. Does actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity and social self-congruity influence brand attachment?
2. Does brand experience mediate the relationship between actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity and social self-congruity and brand attachment?
3. Does brand attachment lead to attitudinal brand loyalty and behavioural brand loyalty?
4. Does self-regulatory focus moderate the relationship between actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity and social self-congruity and brand attachment?
5. Does consumers' need for uniqueness moderate the relationship between actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity and social self-congruity and brand attachment?

## **1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

This thesis contributes to brand attachment literature by satisfying five research objectives as follows:

1. To acknowledge the social self as a unique dimension of the self, including it into the self-congruity framework and empirically examines the influence of actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity and social self-congruity on brand attachment.
2. To investigate the indirect effect of actual, ideal and social self-congruity on brand attachment through brand experience.
3. To assess the specific role of brand attachment in predicting attitudinal brand loyalty and behavioural brand loyalty.
4. To examine the moderating effect of self-regulatory focus (prevention versus promotion focus) on the relationship between actual, ideal and social self-congruity and brand attachment.

5. To examine the moderating effect of consumers' need for uniqueness on the relationship between actual, ideal and social self-congruity and brand attachment.

## **1.6 CONTRIBUTIONS**

This study contributes in providing a comprehensive model; complete with antecedents and consequences of brand attachment. In doing so, this thesis synthesizes three research streams that have attracted significant research interest and attention in marketing, including brand experience, self-congruity and brand attachment. This study includes brand experience in the study of brand attachment while aiming to clearly explain the effects of self-congruity on brand attachment. While most of the existing research measures brand attachment based on emotions or deep feelings (Malär et al. 2011; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005), this study conceptualizes brand attachment with both cognitive and emotional dimensions, following Park et al.'s (2010) suggestion.

Additionally, this study investigates the role of social self-congruity, on top of actual and ideal self-congruity and answers the calls from Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin (2014). According to Sirgy (1982), the self is not limited to private self (i.e., actual and ideal self) only but social self. In particular, this study contributes to the brand relationship literature by incorporating social self-congruity in brand attachment framework, covering the effects of both private (actual versus ideal self) and the social aspect of self-congruity on brand attachment.

By answering the call from Schmitt (2013), this thesis also explores the relationship between brand experience and brand attachment and proposes a mediating effect of brand experience on the relationship between actual, ideal and social self-congruity on brand attachment. Therefore, this study attempts to describe the combined effect of self-congruity and brand experience on brand attachment.

In addition, the examination of the moderating roles of self-regulatory focus and consumers' need for uniqueness provide insight into how the effects of self-congruity on brand attachment differ across different consumers. Indeed, this helps to enhance the

theoretical understanding of how motivational states of individuals may influence the effect of self-congruity on brand attachment.

## **1.7 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS**

This thesis is organized into six chapters. Chapter 1 sets the scene for this thesis by providing an overview and background of the research. This chapter also introduces business problems by identifying gaps delineated in the literature of self-congruity, brand experience and brand attachment. This is followed by a discussion on research questions together with the identification of research aims and objectives and concludes with a discussion of potential contributions to the study and definitions of key concepts.

Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical foundation for the thesis by presenting an overview of the extant literature on self-congruity, brand experience, brand attachment and brand loyalty. Furthermore, concepts in self-regulatory focus and consumers' need for uniqueness are also illustrated. In addition, this chapter provides the theoretical foundation and empirical studies to support this study. Concerning the literature review in Chapter 2, the proposed conceptual framework and the development of the research hypotheses for the study are presented in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 presents the research methodology of the study. The chapter considers and justifies the research philosophies, research design, data collection procedures and data analyses. A description of how respondents and focal brands are selected in this study is also presented. Furthermore, the definitions of operationalization and measurements of constructs are presented in this chapter. Finally, this chapter explains the ethical considerations of this research.

Chapter 5 presents the analysis of the collected data, and at the same time, the research findings that are relevant to the hypotheses developed for this study are examined, interpreted and reported. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to assess the measurement model via structural equation modeling. Upon confirmation of the measurement model, a structural model is estimated with the results of the analysis being used to address the research hypotheses. The chapter also presents a discussion of the findings. Finally, Chapter 6 evaluates the implications of the study

from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Limitations of the study and recommendations for future studies are also presented in this chapter.

## 1.8 DEFINITIONS OF THE KEY TERMS

The definitions for the key terms for this study are presented below:

**Brand Attachment:** Brand attachment is defined as ‘the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self’ (Park et al. 2010, 2). The brand attachment consists of two dimensions: (1) brand-self connection and (2) brand prominence. Brand-self connection is the subjective belief on the relevance of brand and the self, whereas brand prominence refers to the ease and frequency of this connection to be brought into consumers’ mind (Park et al 2010).

**Self-Concept:** Self-concept is referred to as ‘the totality of an individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object’ (Rosenberg 1979, 7). It reflects an individual’s understandings of who he or she is, resulting from inferences made through direct self-assessment and social experiences (Markus and Wurf 1987).

**Actual Self-Concept:** Actual self-concept refers to how individuals perceive themselves, which is ‘who I am’ (Markus and Nurius 1986; Sirgy 1982).

**Ideal Self-Concept:** Ideal self-concept denotes how individuals would like to view themselves, which is ‘how I would like to be?’ (Markus and Nurius 1986; Sirgy 1982). Actual self-concept and ideal self-concept are also recognized as private self, which is the way a person understand himself or herself without the inclusion of others’ evaluations (Greenwald and Pratkanis 1984).

**Social Self-Concept:** Social self-concept refers to how individuals present themselves to others, which is ‘who I would like others to see me’ (Malhotra 1988; Sirgy 1982). It is also known as public self as it emphasizes on cognition of how others view an individual’s self-concept (Greenwald and Pratkanis 1984).

**Self-Congruity:** Self-congruity is conceptualized as a cognitive match between the consumer's self-concept and brand personality (Sirgy 1982; Aaker 1999; Malär et al. 2011).

**Actual Self-Congruity:** Actual self-congruity reflects the consumer's perception of the fit between the actual self and the brand personality (Sirgy 1982; Aaker 1999; Malär et al. 2011).

**Ideal Self-Congruity:** Ideal self-congruity indicates the consumer's perception of the fit between the ideal self and the brand personality (Sirgy 1982; Aaker 1999; Malär et al. 2011).

**Social Self-Congruity:** Social self-congruity shows the consumer's perception of the fit between the social self and the brand personality (Sirgy 1982; Aaker 1999; Malär et al. 2011)

**Brand Experience:** Brand experience is defined as "subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings and cognitions) and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications and environments" (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009, 53). This concept consists of four dimensions that are sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioural experiences.

**Brand Loyalty:** Brand loyalty is "a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior" (Oliver 1999, 34).

**Attitudinal Brand Loyalty:** Attitudinal loyalty refers to customers' degree of dispositional commitment and their attitude toward the brand (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001).

**Behavioural Brand Loyalty:** Behavioral loyalty refers to repeat purchases of the brand as well as their repeated intention to purchase it in the future (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001).

**Self-Regulatory Focus:** A theory that describes individuals' differences in how they view their goals and how they pursue these goals (Higgins 1997, 1998). There are two self-regulatory states, which are promotion focus and prevention focus.

**Promotion Focus:** Promotion focus functions to serve the need for growth and accomplishment. Individuals with promotion-focus are sensitive to the presence or absence of positive outcomes, in the form of gains or non-gains (Idson, Liberman and Higgins 2000; Higgins and Tykocinski 1992) and thus regulate their behaviors to approach desired end states eagerly (Crowe and Higgins 1997).

**Prevention Focus:** Prevention focus functions to serve the need for safety and security. Prevention-focused individuals concentrate on the presence or absence of negative outcomes, in form of losses or non-losses (Idson, Liberman and Higgins 2000). They regulate their attitudes and behaviors toward avoiding undesirable end states vigilantly (Crowe and Higgins 1997).

**Consumers' Need for Uniqueness:** Consumers' need for uniqueness reflects "individuals' trait of pursuing differences relative to others through the acquisition, utilization and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one's self-image and social image." (Tian et al. 2001, 52). The concept comprises of three dimensions that are creative choice counter-conformity, unpopular choice counter-conformity, and avoidance of similarity

**Creative choice counter-conformity:** Creative choice counter-conformity refers to consumers' choice of products that create unique personal identities that remain socially acceptable (Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001).

**Unpopular choice counter-conformity:** An unpopular choice counter-conformity reflects the use of products differing from social norms (Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001).

**Avoidance of similarity:** Avoidance of similarity indicates the avoidance of consuming widely adopted products or discontinued use of products that are perceived to be commonplace (Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001).

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIP

Much like the relationships between humans, consumers also build deep, meaningful and lasting relationships with brands. Indeed, this 'brand as a person' concept is widely acknowledged in the marketing literature (e.g., Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak and Sirgy 2012; Fournier 1998). For example, a consumer may form a special relationship with his or her first brand of car because the car provides important meanings and memories apart from symbolizing his or her achievement. Fournier (1998) describes these relationships as committed partnerships or best friendships. One critical reason for creating relationships with brands is to cultivate and express one's self-concept. Brand relationships also help consumers to maintain harmonious relationships with significant others (Escalas and Bettman 2003; 2005). Therefore, to advance the knowledge of the underlying processes, unprecedented levels of research has concentrated on understanding consumers' relationships with brands (e.g., Aaker, Fournier and Brasel 2004; Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Escalas and Bettman 2005; Fournier 1998).

The outset of this research stream continues to be inspired by the original work of Fournier (1998), who examines the consumer-brand relationship through an anthropomorphic view. Specifically, Fournier (1998) suggests that consumers form relationships with brands in the same way they form relationships in a social context. Subsequently, innumerable constructs have been presented to understand consumer-brand relationships, including brand-self connections (Escalas and Bettman 2005) brand attachment (Belaid and Temessek 2011; Malär et al. 2011; Park et al. 2010; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005), brand passion (Albert, Merunka and Valette-Florence 2013), brand romance (Patwardhan and Balasubramanian 2011), brand relationship orientation (Aurier and Séré de Lanauze 2012), brand trust and brand commitment (Fournier and Yao 1997; Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001; Sung et al. 2014), brand love (Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi 2012; Carroll and Ahuvia 2006) and brand loyalty (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001; Oliver 1999). Despite the attention given over the last two decades, consumer-brand relationship research remains in its early stages,

and further work is needed to understand when and how consumers relate to brands in the same fashion they relate to people (Alvarez and Fournier 2016).

In the recent research, the conceptualisation of consumer-brand relationship strength has shifted from attitudinal dispositions such as customer commitment and brand loyalty to conception that qualifies the relationship bond, such as that of emotional attachment (Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005), brand attachment (Park, MacInnis and Priester 2006; Park et al. 2010), brand love (Bagozzi, Batra and Ahuvia 2017; Carroll and Ahuvia 2006) and brand passion (Bauer, Heinrich and Martin 2007). Brand attachment is at the core of all strong brand relationships because the construct implicates the self in the relationship (Alvarez and Fournier 2016). Noticeably, brand relationships are stronger when a brand reflects the consumer's self-concept (Escalas 2004; Fournier 1998; Park et al., 2010)

Attachment theory in the realm of parent-infant relationships describes the emotion-laden target-specific bond between an individual and an attachment figure (Bowlby 1980). Interactions with attachment figures promote a sense of connectedness and result in the strong reliance on the attachment figures (Mikulincer and Shaver 2005). Drawing from attachment theory, Park et al (2010, 2) denote that brand attachment is referred to "the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self". Rooted in attachment theory, the key tenet of brand attachment is the bond between the brand and the self. The brand-self relationship is stronger when the brand reflects the consumer's sense of self (Alvarez and Fournier 2016; Fournier 1998; Park et al. 2010), similar to the brand-self connection research (Escalas 2004; e.g., Escalas and Bettman 2003). Besides, brand attachment as a means to build relationships with consumers can be cultivated whereas attachment styles are individual difference variables and thus are non-actionable by marketers. Furthermore, brand attachment has the ability to predict the intention to perform difficult behaviours, purchase behaviours, brand purchase share, and need share (Park et al., 2010). Accordingly, it has been labeled the "ultimate destination for brand relationships" (Park et al., 2010, 2). As a result, the brand attachment has garnered the significant academic interest of late (Frasquet, Mollá Descals and Ruiz-Molina 2017; Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016; Park et al., 2010; Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013).

Notably, brand attachment is a complex process as consumers attach to brands that are related to their self-concepts. Moreover, this process involves past and present brand experiences. This study proposed a direct influence of actual, ideal and social self-congruity on brand attachment and the mediating effect of brand experience in these relationships. Brand attachment will further pose a positive effect on brand loyalty. Also, the study proposes a regulatory focus and the need for uniqueness as moderators of the relationship between self-congruity and brand attachment.

This chapter reviews the current literature and studies on brand attachment, self-congruity, brand experience, brand loyalty as well as the need for uniqueness and a regulatory focus. Firstly, the concept of brand attachment is presented. Next, the concept of self and self-congruity are reviewed, followed by an explanation of the effects of self-motives on the development of brand attachment. Then, the concept of brand experience is examined, and the relationships between self-congruity, brand experience and brand attachment are discussed, by applying the self-expansion theory (Aron and Aron 1996; Aron, Aron and Norman 2001). The outcome of brand attachment that is brand loyalty is then reviewed, and finally, the literature on consumers' regulatory focus and need for uniqueness are presented. Also, their influences on the process of brand attachment are examined. The section is concluded by highlighting the potential research gaps.

## **2.2 BRAND ATTACHMENT**

Brand attachment has been described as a crucial concept in relationship marketing in order to build a strong connection with consumers (Schmalz and Orth 2012). A strong brand attachment results in positive consumer behaviour such as; purchase intentions, actual purchase behaviours (Park et al. 2010), future commitment (Fournier 1998), brand defence (Park et al. 2010) and loyalty (Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). Furthermore, brand attachment contributes to brand profitability or customer lifetime value (Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005) and the success of brand extensions (Fedorikhin, Park and Thomson 2008). Despite its importance to marketers, research in brand attachment is still elusive (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016). This section offers a critical review of the concept of brand attachment and its dimensions which is followed

by a review of the existing research on brand attachment focusing on its antecedents and outcomes. The section concludes with a synthesis of the current state of brand attachment and research gaps. Accordingly, this offers the foundation upon which this thesis aims to extend the knowledge of brand attachment further.

### **2.2.1 Attachment Theory**

In psychology literature, attachment theory is first introduced to explain interpersonal relationships where, attachment is described as the emotion-laden bonds existing between infants and their caretakers (Bowlby 1979, 1980). Continuing on from the infant-caretaker relationships, scholars argue that attachment can be used to explain romantic relationships (Hazan and Shaver 1994), kinships and friendships (Trinke and Bartholomew 1997). The main tenet of attachment theory is that individuals' are inherently motivated to assure proximity to attachment figures as ways to protect themselves from possible physical and psychological threats and harm and to promote affect regulation (Bowlby 1979, 1980). Interactions with attachment figures that are available and supportive promote a sense of connectedness and result in the strong reliance on the attachment figures (Mikulincer and Shaver 2005). Moving from the attachment within interpersonal relationships, it is argued that attachment can also be developed with possessions (Ball and Tasaki 1992) and brands (Fournier 1998). Consumers form brand-self connections with a brand due to its ability to express their identities. They feel distressed at losing the relationship with the brand. A good example that illustrates such a relationship is the New Coke [brand] fiasco. When the Coca-Cola Company introduced a new formula for its flagship soft drink after 99 years, 'old Coke' drinkers of America felt angry and disappointed. Over the years, the 'old Coke' drinkers had formed a deep and meaningful attachment to the 'old Coke' and saw the 'old Coke' [brand] as part of their regional identity. When consumers are strongly attached to a brand, they are willing to sacrifice their time, effort and money to maintain the relationship with the brand (Park et al. 2010). For instance, Apple fans queued for days outside Apple stores to buy the newly released Apple iPhone X, despite it being the most expensive iPhone to date. They felt excited to own the smartphone because Apple, based on their previous experiences, fulfills their entertaining-related goals and represents part of who they are (Gibbs 2017).

Most of the time, products and objects have been regarded as a means for self-extension (Belk 1988). Further, brands with symbolic meaning are used to help consumers to construct and communicate their identities. Indeed, consumers integrate brands and their resources into the self and build a strong brand-self connection (Escalas and Bettman 2003). Thus, the attachment is characterized as a bond between the consumer and the brand. Thomson, MacInnis, and Park (2005) extend the application of attachment to brands and develop a measure of emotional brand attachment. They conclude that consumers form attachments to brands in ways similar to how they form attachments to people. Over time, the concept of brand attachment has evolved in branding literature (e.g., Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016; 2014; Malär et al. 2011; Park et al. 2010).

### **2.2.2 The Concept of Brand Attachment**

Brand attachment is a marketing construct that illustrates the relationship between the consumer and the brand. Keller (2001) describes brand attachment as a strong affection for the brand. Consumers who are resonated with a brand through attachment will love the brand and feel proud of the brand. Generally, the literature on brand attachment has identified two conceptualizations of attachment: emotional attachment (Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005) and brand attachment (Park et al. 2010). Emotional attachment encapsulates the positive emotional outcomes of a strong bond between the consumer and the brand (Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). These emotional states are accompanied by “hot” effects, consisting of deep feelings such as connections, affection and passion (Park et al. 2010; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). Therefore, emotional attachment reflects merely the emotional responses linked to the attached brand.

Park et al. (2010) extended the attachment concept by including cognitive elements. Brand attachment involves the formation of mental schemas and exemplars that incorporate the integration of the brand into the cognitive aspects of self (Mikulincer and Shaver 2005; Park et al. 2010) and makes the brand more accessible in one’s memory (Park et al. 2010). The authors define brand attachment as “the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self” (Park et al. 2010, 2). Two dimensions describe the conceptual properties of attachment constructs, namely brand-self connection and brand prominence. Brand-self connection is the subjective belief on the relevance of the

brand and the self, whereas brand prominence refers to the ease and frequency of this connection to be brought into the consumers' mind (Park et al. 2010). Furthermore, brand attachment captures not only emotional bonding but also cognitive bonding. To illustrate, when a consumer is emotionally attached to a brand, the consumer will have strong feelings of love, passion and connection with the brand. Starbucks' advertising campaign in 2016 emphasizes a sense of home at Starbucks. Moreover, this campaign creates a deep emotional attachment to Starbucks as customers feel safe and secure in a home relaxed setting (Smith 2018). In contrast, when a consumer forms a cognitive bond with a brand, the consumer forms a rich memory network that incorporates brand-self cognitions and other brand-related memories (Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Park et al. 2010). In this case, Starbucks provides 'Starbucks Experience' that creates strong connections with customers through its ability to provide hedonic or aesthetic brand-self linkages. In particular, consumers develop a sense of oneness with Starbucks and establish cognitive links that connect the brand with the self. This makes Starbucks a top-of-mind brand when people think of premium coffee.

Recently, Park, Eisingerich, and Park (2013) further refined brand attachment with the conceptualization of the attachment-aversion (AA) model. In the AA model, Park, Eisingerich, and Park (2013) capture both positive (attachment) and the negative version of attachment (aversion). For example, for a consumer to become attached to a brand, the brand must be close to the consumer and salience in the consumer's mind.

#### **2.2.2.1 Brand Attachment Dimensions**

As mentioned earlier, two unique dimensions of brand attachment are brand-self connection and prominent brand thoughts. The brand-self connection serves as the central factor in brand attachment, while brand prominence is seen as a supplemental, yet important, component. However, the inclusion of both dimensions is crucial in facilitating the full representation of brand attachment (Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013; Park et al. 2010).

Accordingly, brands with different images and associations (Fournier 1998; Muniz and O'Guinn 2001; Schouten and McAlexander 1995) provide resources that help consumers to achieve their goals (Reimann and Aron 2014). Consumers' adopt brand associations such as brand user characteristics or brand personality and incorporate

them into their self-concepts (Chaplin and John 2005). For example, consumers draw from the image or personality of Montblanc as exclusive and prestige (resources) and include them in the self when they own Montblanc products. Specifically, a consumer extends his or her self-concept to the brand (Belk 1988; Kleine and Baker 2004) through the inclusion of the brand in the self-concept (Aron and Aron 1996) and develops a bond between the brand and the self (Chaplin and John 2005; Escalas 2004; Escalas and Bettman 2003). This connection is termed as a 'brand-self' connection (Park et al. 2010; Park, MacInnis and Priester 2006). Brand-self connection, on the one hand, can be described as a cognitive link that is made when the consumer includes the brand into his or her self-concept and develops a sense of oneness with the brand (Escalas and Bettman 2003; 2005; Park et al. 2010). On the other hand, this connection is inherently emotional as it is self-relevant (Mikulincer and Shaver 2007). Notwithstanding, this emotional connection involves deep feelings or a 'hot affect' to the brand (Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). Thus, the attachment is described as the cognitive and emotional bond that connects a brand with the self (Escalas 2004; Escalas and Bettman 2003; Park et al. 2010).

Brand prominence refers to individuals' perceived accessibility of personally related memories about the brand (Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013; Park et al. 2010; Park, MacInnis and Priester 2006). Further, it exhibits the prominence of the cognitive and affective bond that connects the consumer with the brand (Park et al. 2010). Consistent with the self-expansion theory, attachment to a particular brand makes a consumer feel secure and feeling a sense of comfort as the resources of the attachment brand are linked to the consumer (Aron and Aron 1996; Reimann and Aron 2014). Thus, the consumer's thoughts and feelings about the attachment brand and its resources are more salient than those who are not attached to the brand (Collins 1996; Mikulincer 1998). In this regard, consumers perceive a close relationship with the brand when brand-related memories are easily accessible.

Park et al.'s (2010) conceptualization of brand attachment is chosen in this study for two reasons. Firstly, brand attachment involves both the cognitive and emotional bond that connects the self with the brand. However, representing brand attachment based on positive feelings may not entirely capture the key conceptual properties of the brand attachment construct (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2014; Park et al. 2010). Secondly,

brand prominence has a strong influence on consumers' judgment and choice (Alba and Marmorstein 1987). The inclusion of brand prominence should enrich the conceptual properties of brand attachment. Consumers who have a strong brand-self connection and brand prominence should have stronger brand attachment compared to those who are strong in brand-self connection but weak in brand prominence (Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013; Park et al. 2010). Therefore, it is important to include both dimensions in measuring brand attachment.

#### **2.2.2.2 Distinctions between Brand Attachment and Other Brand Constructs**

It is crucial to distinguish brand attachment from other brand constructs such as brand attitude, brand commitment, brand loyalty and brand love. While these constructs share similarities, they are conceptually different. Brand attachment is different from brand attitude (Park et al. 2010; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). Brand attachment involves self-implications, while, in contrast, brand attitude reflects consumers' evaluations and judgments about the brand without involving the self (Park et al. 2010). Moreover, brand attachment results in a strong commitment towards sustaining the relationship with the brand, but not a strong brand attitude. Furthermore, attachment is based on experiences that are developed over a period of time, whereas attitude strength does not involve experiences and time (Japutra et al. 2014). Therefore, brand attachment is a better predictor of consumers' actual purchase behaviour (Park et al. 2010). Brand love is regarded to be similar to brand attachment (Vlachos and Vrechopoulos 2012) as both constructs examine strong and positive emotions toward a brand. In contrast, Loureiro, Ruediger, and Demetris (2012) argue that love and attachment are entirely different constructs. Brand love is an emotion that characterizes the self-brand bond, not the bond itself (Park, MacInnis and Priester 2006). Although consumers may feel the love with the attached brand, brand attachment is more than just feeling of love but a sense of oneness with the brand and the automatic retrieval of thoughts and feelings about the brand. Recent empirical studies (e.g., Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi 2012; Bagozzi, Batra and Ahuvia 2017; Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2014) advocates that consumers' attachment to the brand result in a strong love for the brand. Thus, these constructs should be empirically discriminable.

Notably, brand attachment and brand commitment are conceptually different (Tsai 2011; Fournier 1998; Park, MacInnis and Priester 2006). Brand commitment is related

to a consumer's devotion to maintaining a brand relationship (Fournier 1988; Park, MacInnis and Priester 2006; Tsai 2011) whereas brand attachment describes the psychological state of mind which include a strong self-brand connection and brand prominence. Therefore, brand attachment predicts brand commitment (Japutra et al. 2014; Loureiro, Ruediger and Demetris 2012; Park, MacInnis and Priester 2006; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). Park and colleagues (2006) further argue that commitment is not self-relevance and may be formed out of contractual obligations or lack of competing alternatives and hence is less effective in predicting higher order relationship-based behavior such as investment in the brand. Finally, brand attachment and brand loyalty are distinct constructs. Brand attachment highlights an emotional and cognitive bond that connects the brand with the self, whereas brand loyalty focuses on the evaluative judgments that result in the development of affective and cognitive responses (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2014). This means brand loyalty does not include the facet of self-brand connection (Fournier 1998). In fact, brand loyalty is generally regarded as outcomes of brand attachment (Bahri-Ammari et al. 2016; Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005).

### **2.2.3 Key Studies Related to Brand Attachment**

Over the past two decades, scholars have been attracted to and interested in understanding the determinants of strong brand attachment. Research, across different contexts such as hospitality services (Kaczmarek 2009; Bahri-Ammari et al. 2016; Hyun and Han 2015; Kang et al. 2016), retailers (Dolbec and Chebat 2013; Orth, Limon and Rose 2010; Vlachos et al. 2010), higher education (Dennis et al. 2016), sports management (Funk and James 2006; Robinson et al. 2005) and products (Grisaffe and Nguyen 2011; Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016; Malär et al. 2011; Proksch, Orth and Cornwell 2015) has empirically tested the antecedents and outcomes of brand attachment. The majority of these empirical studies have given importance to an individual's conception of self in the development of strong brand attachment.

Park et al. (2006) denote self-related benefits as determinants of brand attachment. Specifically, they propose that consumers tend to attach to brands that offer functional benefits (self-enablement), experiential benefits (self-gratification) and emotional benefits (self-enrichment). The positive effects of these three self-related benefits on brand attachment have been empirically proved in the retailing context (Vlachos et al.

2010) as well as in the context of branding (Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013). Recently, researchers asserted that self-congruity (that is a match between brand personality and self-concept; Sirgy 1982) plays an important role in creating an attachment to the brand (e.g., Huang, Zhang and Hu 2017; Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016; Malär et al. 2011). Relying on self-congruity theory (Sirgy 1982), Huber, Eisele and Meyer (2018) propose that consumers form an emotional attachment to brands that have personalities congruent with their actual and ideal self-concepts. While in contrast, Malär et al. (2011) prove otherwise. These authors empirically demonstrate that only actual self-congruity contributes to brand attachment, while the ideal self-congruity does not. One of the reasons for these inconsistent findings might be due to the fact that the relationship between self-congruity and brand attachment can be affected by product categories (Hong and Zinkhan 1995; Huang, Zhang and Hu 2017) as well as levels of brands within the same product categories (e.g. conspicuous or inconspicuous, hedonic or utilitarian) (Huang, Zhang and Hu 2017; Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Jamal and Goode 2001). For example, conspicuous brands provide symbolic values which might lend themselves to consumers' ideal self-concept whereas consumers tend to link less conspicuous brands to their actual self-concept. However, Malär et al. (2011) do not consider these differences and investigate brand attachment using 167 brands across different product categories. Therefore, this study identifies the limitations of current studies. To assess further the predictive power of different type self-congruity and brand attachment, this study examines brand attachment on experiential brands that are publicly consumed among consumers who are familiar with the brands.

Park, MacInnis, and Priester (2006) assert that the strength of brand attachment may be affected by consumers' experiences with the brand. Brand experience evokes rich cognitive schemata that connect the brand with the self (Park et al. 2010). Accordingly, consumers are more likely to attach to brands with memorable experiences that gratifies, enables and enriches the self (Park, MacInnis and Priester 2006; Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013). This relationship is supported by Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009). Japutra, Ekinci, and Simkin (2016), in their empirical study, find that sensory experience significantly predicts brand attachment. In a retailing context, Dolbec and Chebat (2013) also evidence that brand experiences influence customers' emotional attachment to the store.

Research interests are not only directed toward the understanding of antecedents of brand attachment but also toward examining outcomes of consumers' attachment to brands. Prior research has closely investigated the role of brand attachment in influencing consumer behaviour. These studies demonstrate the significance of brand attachment in inspiring brand loyalty (Bahri-Ammari et al. 2016; Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). Notwithstanding, it has been argued that brand attachment can explain a higher level of consumer behaviour such as defending brands to others (Johnson and Rusbult 1989), willingness to pay a higher price for the brand (Park et al. 2010; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005) and involving brand communities (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). Subsequently, Park et al. (2010) show that the consumer's intention to perform difficult behaviours; actual purchase, purchases a share, and needs share is influenced by brand attachment. Fedorikhin, Park, and Thomson (2008) suggest that brand attachment contributes to the success of brand extensions. Moreover, consumers' attachment to brand significantly affects consumers' share-of-requirements (Rossiter and Bellman 2012). Also, highly attached consumers are not just loyal to the brand but are advocates for the brand (Elbedweihy et al. 2016; Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar and Sen 2012) and ignore negative information regarding the brand (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016). Brand attachment, therefore, can diminish the impacts of negative information or influence of unethical firm behaviour (Schmalz and Orth 2012).

## **2.3 SELF-CONGRUITY**

Early research in consumer behaviour attempts to integrate the self-concept in the consumer behaviour domain. For example, Grubb and Grathwohl (1967) relate the self-concept to product meanings and brand images. This view is supported by the notion of product symbolism, stating that individuals' sense of self is associated with the products they consume (Levy 1959). In a more recent work, Belk (1988) views possessions such as products or brands as extensions of one's self-concept. In this case, a brand with a particular image communicates symbolic meanings to individuals and others (Aaker 1999; Belk 1988). Consumers, therefore, purchase and use brands as a mean to express different aspects of self (Aaker 1999; Escalas and Bettman 2005) such as actual self, ideal self and social self. For instance, consumers choose a hybrid car because (1) they see themselves as eco-friendly (actual self), (2) they would like to be eco-friendly (ideal self) or (3) they wish others to see them as eco-friendly (social self). Nonetheless, what is important in this case is the match or fit between the consumer's self and the brand's personality or image (Aaker 1999; Sirgy 1982). This fit is termed as 'self-congruity' (e.g., Sirgy 2018; Sirgy 1982; Sirgy, Grewal and Mangleburg 2000; Sirgy et al. 1991; Sirgy, Lee and Yu 2016). As noted by Roy and Rabbane (2015) the term self-congruity, self-image congruence and image congruence, interchangeably are used to describe this phenomenon. Accordingly, self-congruity theory integrates two important concepts, which are the self-concept and the concept of brand personality. In the following sections, a review of the concept of the self and brand personality is represented. What follows is the explanation of the self-congruity theory and its applications in consumer and marketing research.

### **2.3.1 The Self-Concept**

The self-concept research originated during the 1960s (e.g., Birdwell 1968; Grubb and Hupp 1968; Grubb and Grathwohl 1967) to explain consumers' behaviours. This is because the conception of self often dictates specific behaviours (Onkvisit and Shaw 1987). However, what self-concept is referring to is still ambiguous (Oyerman, Elmore and Smith 2012). Scholars in sociology and psychology studies use the term self-concept and identity synonymously (e.g., Erikson 1951; 1968; Swann and Bosson 2010) and other times differently (e.g., Oyerman, Elmore and Smith 2012). In marketing literature, these two terms are used interchangeably (Escalas and Bettman 2005;

Kennedy and McGarvey 2008; Orth et al 2010; Sung and Choi 2010). However, in self-congruity studies, the term self-concept is generally used (e.g., Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Malär et al 2011; Sirgy 2018).

Self-concept has been defined as 'the totality of an individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object' (Rosenberg 1979, 7). In other words, the conception of self reflects individuals' understandings of whom they are resulting from others' perceptions as well as through self-evaluation and social experiences (Markus and Wurf 1987). As a result, the self-concept is not an objective entity that is developed in isolation but rather, through social interactions (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967). Therefore, this study adopts Rosenberg's (1979) definition because it includes how individual processes internalized aspects of the self (private self) and how social integration affects the construction of the self (social self). Moreover, this definition is widely adopted in consumer research (e.g., Fox et al. 2017; Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Malär et al. 2011; Rhee and Johnson 2012; Sirgy 1982).

The self-concept has been treated from different perspectives. The symbolic interactionism theory postulates the development of self as a function of interpersonal interactions (Cooley 2011; Mead 1934) whereas cognitive theory conceives the self as knowledge structure processing information about the self (Markus 1983, 1977). Other views, as noted by Sirgy (1982), for example, the psychoanalytic theory assumes the self as a self-system inflicted with conflicts and behavioural theory which emphasizes the self as a bundle of conditioned responses. In line with the past research in the marketing domain (e.g., Malär et al. 2011; Sirgy 1982; Sirgy and Su 2000), this study adopts a cognitive view of the self-concept, whereby the self can be viewed as a knowledge structure in memory (Kihlstrom and Klein 2014). As highlighted by Sirgy (1982), the self-congruity theory is developed based on the cognitive theory's metaphorical conceptualization of a self-image schema. Furthermore, it explains how individuals respond when the self-image schema is activated in a specific consumption situation. In empirical studies, Sirgy and Su (2000), for example, treat the self-concept as a cognitive referent to evaluate symbolic cues.

### **2.3.1.1 Types of Self-Concept and Self Motives**

The self-concept has been recognized as being an important factor in determining brand perception and choice (Birdwell 1968; Dolich 1969; Grubb and Hupp 1968), purchase intention (Birdwell 1968; Landon 1974), and advertising effectiveness (Hong and Zinkhan 1995). Despite numerous self-concept studies found in the marketing literature, most of these studies treat the self-concept as a single dimension entity, generally referring to the actual self (Birdwell 1968; Grubb and Stern 1971; Grubb and Hupp 1968). However, this conceptualization of self has overlooked the fact that an individual might have more than one self-aspect (Markus and Nurius 1986; Markus and Wurf 1987). For instance, an individual could be a mother, a daughter, a manager, a part-time student and a Christian. Psychologists have long been interested in the concept of self. They are inspired to examine different dimensions of the self, such as actual self and ideal self (e.g., Higgins 1987; Markus and Nurius 1986; Markus and Wurf 1987), ought self (Higgins et al. 1994; Higgins 1987), feared self and possible self (e.g., Markus and Nurius 1986), and spiritual self and material self (James 1890). In the domain of marketing, Dolich (1969) is the primary proponent of the dual dimensional view of the self-concept, which includes the actual and ideal self-concept. Based on this view, a significant number of empirical studies in the marketing domain have operationalized self-concept as having dual dimensions (e.g., Belch and Landon 1977; Ekinici and Riley 2003; Koo, Cho and Kim 2014; Kressmann et al. 2006; Malär et al. 2011; Sirgy et al. 1997).

Over the years, Markus and Wurf (1987) denoted that the self-concept is developed not in isolation but through social interactions. This means, people, not only refer to who they are as individuals but also refer to who they are in relation to significant others and make an effort to ensure that they are consistent with how others see them (Brewer and Gardner 1996; Rosenberg 1979). The social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 2004) presumes that social groups affect how individuals define their self-concept. In a similar vein, the self-categorization theory further elaborates that an individual's self-concept can be reshaped by significant others (Turner et al. 1987). The theory also suggests that when an in-group is salient, individuals see themselves more as interchangeable exemplars of the social category rather than as unique individuals. Building on this view, the social dimension of self has been treated as another important dimension of

the self-concept (e.g., Baumeister and Tice 1986; Munson and Spivey 1980; Tesser and Paulhus 1983). Cooley's (2011) describe social self as 'looking-glass self' which is a dimension of self that is constructed based on the interaction of the individual with other people. This dimension of the self-concept is manifested in the presence of others, and thus, it is sensitive to the evaluations of others (Greenwald and Pratkanis 1984).

Not surprisingly, scholars have acknowledged the importance of the social dimension of the self in consumer research (e.g. Malhotra 1988; Onkvisit and Shaw 1987; Reed 2002; Sirgy 1982). The theoretical roots of the significance of the social self can be reverted to dimensions of the self-concept initially proposed by James (1890), who describe social self as the impression given to significant others (Greenwald and Pratkanis 1984). This implied that consumers' behaviours are influenced by 'impression management' (Goffman 1959) which contends that consumers are motivated to maintain a positive self-concept that is projected to others. Evidently, consumers tend to act in accordance with the type of person they want significant others to see them as and hence, influencing their consumption behaviours (Rosenberg 1979; Malhotra 1988). Recent studies distinguish social self with ideal social self (e.g., Han and Back 2008; He and Mukherjee 2010; Sirgy 1982; Sirgy, Grzeskowiak and Su 2005). Sirgy (1982) describe social self as how consumers believe others view them while ideal social self as how a person would like to be viewed by others. Several studies have documented the effects of social and ideal social self on product choice and store or customer loyalty (e.g. Han and Back 2008; He and Mukherjee 2007). However, the effect of ideal social self on consumer attitude and loyalty is less significant compared to social self (e.g., He and Mukherjee 2007; Sirgy et al. 2000).

In the context of a consumer-brand relationship, several researchers have highlighted the importance of social influences (Fournier 2009; Rosenbaum et al. 2007; Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). Fournier (2009) argue that consumers often value social links coming from brand relationships. Specifically, they develop relationships with brands to gain new social connections or to level out their connections in some significant way. Research in place attachment also supports the relationship between commercial social support and a consumer's sense of attachment to a third place such as Starbucks (Rosenbaum et al. 2007). In fact, several researchers have attempted to include social

influences in a brand-self relationship framework (Escalas and Bettman 2003; Huber, Eisele, and Meyer 2018; Loureiro, Ruediger, and Demetris 2012). For example, Loureiro, Ruediger and Demetris (2012) assert that consumers tend to create love and passion for self-expressive brands that reflect their inner and social self. Likewise, Escalas and Bettman (2003) argue that consumers are likely to form connections with brands used by consumer reference groups. Nonetheless, these studies do not treat social influence as a part of the self-concept itself. As a result, the current study attempts to fill this gap by empirically testing the effect of social self on brand attachment.

To sum up, this study adopts the view that the self-concept is multifaceted. In line with Reed's (2002, 236) denotation that social dimension of the self 'is a particularly meaningful yet underutilized approach in consumer research', this study progresses beyond the duality dimension of self-concept by including social self. Specifically, this study focuses on the tripartite view of self-concept; actual, ideal and social self. Actual self-concept refers to how individuals perceive themselves, which is 'who I am' whereas ideal self-concept denotes how individuals would like to view themselves, which is 'how I would like to be?' (Markus and Nurius 1986; Sirgy 1982). Actual self-concept and ideal self-concept are also recognized as a private self, which is the way a person understands himself or herself without the inclusion of others' evaluations (Greenwald and Pratkanis 1984). Social self refers to how individuals present themselves to others, which is 'whom I would like others to see me' (Malhotra 1988; Sirgy 1982). It is also known as public self as it emphasizes on cognition of how others view an individual's self-concept (Greenwald and Pratkanis 1984). The tripartite view of the self-concept allows the examination of the independent influences of both private self (i.e., actual self and ideal self) and public self (social self) on individuals' brand choice and behaviours.

It is noteworthy that each self-concept independently affects an individual's behaviour (Markus and Nurius 1986; Markus and Wurf 1987). Moreover, which aspect of the self-concept is more accessible, and dominant depends on an individual's self-motives (Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak and Sirgy 2012; Sirgy 1982; Sirgy, Grewal and Mangleburg 2000). Accordingly, human behaviours are guided mainly by different self-motives (Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak and Sirgy 2012; Markus and Wurf 1987).

Consumers differ regarding how strongly they feel the need to satisfy each self-motive. In other words, self-motives determine which self-concept type has the strongest effect on an individual's behaviours (He and Mukherjee 2007; Malär et al. 2011). For example, the actual self might be more accessible when an individual wants to verify his or her existing self-concept whereas the ideal self might be more salient when the individual is motivated towards enhancing his or her current self to achieve certain ideals. Self-motive is described as the mechanism to develop and maintain a particular state of self-concept (Leary 2007). In conjunction with self-concept types, three underlying self-motives exist; self-consistency (actual self-concept), self-enhancement (ideal self-concept) and social consistency (social self-concept).

Consumers' actual selves drive their behaviours aspired through the need for self-consistency. Self-consistency theory posits that individuals identify with cognitive and behavioural activities that are consistent with their self-views. Whereas, self-verification theory diverges from self-consistency theory, claiming that individuals are motivated to verify their current held self-perception because they have a strong belief in their own identities, values, beliefs, lifestyles, and habits (Swann, Stein-Seroussi and Giesler 1992). Furthermore, self-verification heightens one's self-confidence, supports social interactions and results in positive attitudes towards the product (Swann, Stein-Seroussi and Giesler 1992). Thus, individuals tend to engage in ways that are contributory in achieving goals that maintain their real identity (actual self-concept). On the contrary, individuals are motivated to attain the desired self (ideal self), resulting in positive self-regard. This self-enhancement motive improves one's feelings of self-worth (Sedikides and Strube 1995; Sirgy 1982). Conversely, the need for social consistency reflects an individual's need to conform to group norms. Apparently, individuals are more likely to engage in ways that conform to images that others have of them (Sirgy 1982; Swann 1983), leading to social verification of their self-concept (Swann et al. 2003).

Once a consumer is motivated by the self-motive and decides which self-concept to express, he or she then looks for ways to express it. In doing so, the consumer may use brands to communicate his or her self-concept (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Sirgy 1982). To illustrate, a consumer who sees himself as dull and boring and would like to be more adventurous may purchase a Harley Davidson motorbike to reflect being adventurous. In this case, purchasing and driving a Harley Davidson may help him to

attain his ideal self and boost his self-esteem. Although, it is argued that brand cues involve images that may activate a self-concept involving the same images (Sirgy 1982). Therefore, given this argument, Sirgy (1982) claims that a fit between such self-concept and brands influences brand preferences and other brand-related outcomes. This fit is conceptualized as brand-self-image congruity or self-congruity.

### **2.3.2 Self-Congruity**

The self-congruity theory (Sirgy 1982) is essential to this study as it offers the theoretical foundation on which to examine the relationship between self-congruity types and brand attachment. Concerning self-categorization theory, an individual's conception of the self is critical in explaining the individual's behaviours. This is because a salient self-concept is associated with values and beliefs that can significantly influence the individual's attitudes and behaviours (Turner et al. 1987). Similarly, cognitive consistency theory further elaborates this notion and posits that individuals tend to seek coherent beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviours (Swann 1983). Therefore, applying these theories to consumer behaviour, consumers tend to hold a set of beliefs about themselves (i.e., self-concept) and are motivated to behave in ways that are consistent with their beliefs. Furthermore, it has been found that consumers tend to prefer products or brands that are consistent with their self-concept. Building on this notion, Sirgy (1982) develops the theory of self-congruity which postulates that consumers compare their perception of a brand personality or brand image with their own self-concept (Sirgy 2018). Notwithstanding, when a consumer perceives his or her self-concept matches a brand's image, he or she experiences greater congruency between the brand and the self. This state of the brand-self congruity results in a positive attitude towards the brand (Ebrahim et al. 2016; Jamal and Al-Marri 2007; Kressmann et al. 2006; Sirgy et al. 1997) because symbolic characteristics of the brand reinforce and validate the individual's self-concept (Swann, Stein-Seroussi and Giesler 1992). The central concepts in the self-congruity model are consumers' self-concepts and brand image. The self-concept has been described in the previous section, the concept of the brand image is next discussed.

According to Assael (1987), the brand image is an overall perception of the brand or a set of beliefs about the brand. For example, Harley-Davidson motorcycles are associated with tough men, and a Toyota Prius is a signal or image of an

environmentally friendly car. These images can be formed by associations such as brand-user image and human-like brand personality (Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak and Sirgy 2012; Sirgy 1982). The brand-user image is a stereotyped perception of a generalized user of a brand. For example, users of Marlborough cigarettes are associated with American cowboys that signify freedom and individuality. Brand personality, on the other hand, is a set of human traits such as sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness associated with a brand. For instance, the brand personality of Virgin Airlines is excitement whereas Levi's jeans are associated with blue-collar, rugged Americans. Hence, brand personality reflects the symbolic benefits of the brand (Keller 1993; Aaker 1999) and is derived from the consumers' perception of a brand through direct contact (e.g. contact between the consumer and brand users, the people of the organisation or brand endorsers) and indirect contact (e.g. contact between the consumer and the tangible or intangible brand attributes with that brand (Aaker 1997; Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak and Sirgy 2012; Sirgy 1985). Prior research has argued that brand personality provides a more comprehensive self-congruity evaluation than brand-user image (Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak and Sirgy 2012). This is because a prominent brand personality can be carried over to the brand user and hence, affects perceptions of the personality of the brand user (Fennis and Pruyn 2007). In other words, brand personality enables consumers to express their own selves, consistent with Escalas and Bettman's (2003) denotation that consumers associate with brands and form connections between the self-concept and the brand image. Thus, brand personality plays a vital role in building brand-self relationship (Hayes et al. 2006). Accordingly, this study conceptualized self-congruity as a cognitive match between the consumer's self-concept and brand personality.

### **2.3.2.1 Self-Congruity Types**

As discussed earlier, self-concept is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct reflecting actual self-concept, ideal self-concept, and social self-concept. Whereas, self-congruity is treated multi-dimensionally with three types of self-congruity; actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity, and social self-congruity. Actual self-congruity reflects the consumer's perception of the fit between the actual self and the brand personality whereas the fit between the ideal self and the brand personality regarding social self-congruity, is the match of the brand's personality with the consumer's social self (Aaker 1999; Malär et al. 2011; Sirgy 1982). In this regard, an actual self-congruent brand

refers to the brand's personality that reflects who the consumer actually is. While the ideal self-congruent brand refers to the brand's personality that reflects whom the consumer would like to be and a social self-congruent brand refers to the brand's personality that reflects whom the consumer would like to be seen by others.

It is recognized that self-congruity type underlies a distinct self-motive (e.g., He and Mukherjee 2007; Kressmann et al. 2006; Sirgy 1982). In other words, the importance of an individual place on a specific self-concept type is determined by the self-motive, which in turn guides his or her behaviour. In this case, actual self-congruity influences consumer behaviour through the activation of self-consistency motive and ideal self-congruity guides consumer behaviour through the operation of self-enhancement motive. Similarly, social self-congruity influences consumer behaviour through the underlying social consistency motive (Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak and Sirgy 2012; He and Mukherjee 2007; Sirgy 2018; Sirgy 1982) and self-motive needs can be satisfied through the consumption of brands (Sirgy 1982). For instance, if a consumer experiences ideal self-congruity (actual self-congruity or social self-congruity), his or her need for self-enhancement (need for self-consistency or need for social consistency) tends to motivate the consumer to use a brand.

### **2.3.3 Self-Congruity in Consumer and Marketing Research**

An extant review of the studies on self-congruity research in marketing reveals that most studies conceptualize self-concept regarding actual self (e.g., Roy and Rabbane 2015; Liu et al. 2012; Sirgy et al. 1997). Evidently, actual self-congruity results in positive outcomes such as brand attitude and brand loyalty (Liu et al. 2012), positive self-perceptions and intention to reuse (Roy and Rabbane 2015). On the other hand, scholars argue that ideal self-concept is an important dimension of self-congruity as consumers are also motivated to self-enhance in order to maintain the positivity of their self-concepts (Leary 2007; Sedikides and Strube 1997). Since then, researchers have become interested in exploring the effect of both actual and ideal self-congruity on consumer behaviour. According to Shamah et al. (2017), actual self-concept and ideal self-concept are the most explored dimensions in self-congruity research. This stream of research interestingly shows that both actual and ideal self-congruity lead to positive outcomes such as brand preference (Hong and Zinkhan 1995), brand attitude (Helgeson and Supphellen 2004), emotional brand attachment (Malär et al. 2011) and

brand loyalty (Kressmann et al. 2006; Shamah et al. 2017; Wallace, Buil and de Chernatony 2017).

The relationship between social self-congruity and consumer behaviour is generally neglected (Han and Back 2008; Back 2005). Indeed, this is due to the arguments whereby the effects of actual and ideal self-congruity are more significant in positive brand outcomes compared to those of social self-congruity (Sirgy 1982). However, social group acceptance and membership are also imperative (Lachance, Beaudoin and Robitaille 2003). Rhee and Kim (2012), for example, challenge the previous view on the prominence of actual and ideal self-concept. Their findings suggest that consumers use brands to shape the views of others concerning them rather than to express ideas about actual or ideal selves to others. Thus, the social aspect of self is equally important in expressing and communicating one's self-concept. Similarly, He and Mukherjee's (2007) study protests that customers' loyalty is closely related to social self-congruity. Likewise, Back (2005), as well as Han and Back (2008), investigate the relationship between the social aspects of self-congruity, concluding that social self-congruity strengthen customers' loyalty. Accordingly, not only the actual and ideal self-congruity but also the social self-congruity needs to be considered when investigating the relationship between self-congruity and consumer behaviour.

Numerous studies adopt an overall score by aggregating self-congruity types and compare the effect of different types of self-congruity as a whole (e.g. Kang et al. 2016; Shamah et al. 2017; Wallace, Buil and de Chernatony 2017). However, self-congruity types have independent effects on brand-related outcomes (Ekinci and Riley 2003; He and Mukherjee 2007; Hong and Zinkhan 1995; Malär et al. 2011). On the other hand, He and Mukherjee (2007), argue that actual self-congruity and social self-congruity rather than ideal self-congruity are better indicators of store loyalty. Recent studies, such as Kang et al. (2012), stress the essence in order to account for the independent effect of each self-congruity types. This study broadens the exploration of the self-congruity to include the role of social self in the development of brand attachment. Specifically, the study investigates the individual effects of actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity and social self-congruity on brand attachment.

Additionally, numerous studies have recognized that self-congruity improves affective, attitudinal and behavioural consumer responses to brands (e.g., Kressmann et al. 2006; Malär et al. 2011). Therefore, to develop brand attachment, it is suggested that the consumer's self-concept must be involved (Chaplin and John 2005; Malär et al. 2011; Park et al. 2010). Accordingly, self-congruity should play an essential role in creating brand attachment.

## **2.4 BRAND EXPERIENCE**

Marketing and consumer research has long been focusing on consumption experiences. Carter and Gilovich (2012) stress the dependence of satisfaction on consumers' experiences. While, Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) further corroborate that consumers use products in various playful leisure activities and thus, increasing demand for consumption experiences such as fantasy, feelings and fun. Further, neglecting the experiential aspects of consumption limits the understanding of consumer behaviour. As noted by Holt (1995), brands are marketing tools for creating consumer experiences (Holt 1995). Consumers are frequently seeking products or brands that fulfill functional benefits, but they are just as often aiming to achieve pleasurable experiences delivered by products or brands (Schmitt 1999). In other words, the value does not only dwell on the utilitarian aspects of the product but are also embedded in the experiences created when consumers' interact with the brand (Tynan and McKechnie 2009). These experiences may lead to a deep, meaningful relationship established between consumers and brands (Fournier 1998). Apparently, marketing scholars have come to realize the importance of providing appealing brand experiences in order to position and differentiate their brands in the competitive environment (e.g., Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009; Ponsonby-McCabe and Boyle 2006; Schmitt 1999; Schmitt and Zarantonello 2013;).

In this review, the definitions of brand experience are identified followed by presenting the dimensions of brand experience. The review is then concluded with a discussion on the current research on brand experience and gaps.

### **2.4.1 The Concept of Brand Experience**

The term 'experience' has been defined differently across many different disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, anthropology, marketing and management (see Schmitt and Zarantonello 2013, for the definitions). Furthermore, early studies generally define experience as accumulated knowledge (Abbott 1955). However, the experience is formed when people interact with their environments. Notwithstanding, experiences also involve not just intellectual aspects resulting from knowledge but pleasurable perceptions as well (Dewey 1925) such as intellectual, emotional, social and physical pleasures (Dubé and Le Bel 2003). Inspired by these studies, Holbrook and Hirschman

(1982) propose the experiential aspects of consumption where consumption involves fun, and sensory pleasures or aesthetic value attained from the product. Their proposal overcomes the limitation of the traditional view of consumers as rational decision-makers who rely on the functional attributes to justify their purchase choices. This view of consumption highlights the symbolic, hedonic and aesthetic nature of consumption that aims to pursue fantasy, feeling and fun. In this instance, fantasy refers to aspects of experientially oriented cognitions that are derived from the sensory or aesthetic elements of a product. Whereas, feelings relate to the pleasure-seeking aspects of moods, emotions and other consumption-related effects and a fun focus on play-oriented activities that provide product enjoyment (Holbrook 2000; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Some examples include a romantic vacation, an adventurous off-road ride, a visit to Disneyland and a memorable dinner.

The concept of customer experience becomes more relevant to the fore by related theoretical work on the experiential economy (Pine and Gilmore 1998) and experiential marketing (Schmitt 1999). From the perspective of evolutionary economic development, Pine and Gilmore (1988, 98) argue that an experience is “planned, communicated, staged and delivered to the customers, aiming to educate, entertain and offer an escapist and aesthetic encounter” and describe an experience as a new economic product. Subsequently, Schmitt (1999) suggests a shift in marketing activities from ‘functional-based marketing’ to ‘experiential marketing’. This suggestion is based on the notion that consumers are both emotional and cognitive decision makers, who seek for functional attributes of the brand and subsequently seek enjoyment. Experience, as defined by Schmitt (1999, 60), is “the private events that occur in response to stimulation and often result from direct observation and or participation in events, providing sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and relational value that replaces functional ones”. In this case, it seems that experiences reflect consumers’ responses to certain stimulation induced by particular events.

More recently, a focus on the brand experience has been developed in sources closer to branding and brand management in the marketing literature (e.g., Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009; Nysveen, Pedersen and Skard 2013; Ponsonby-McCabe and Boyle 2006; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Zarantonello and Schmitt 2010). In the literature, brand experience is defined as “subjective, internal consumer responses

(sensations, feelings and cognitions) and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications and environments" (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009, 53). Brand experiences involve consumers' participation, either direct interactions (e.g., product trial or usage) or indirect contacts (e.g., advertisement, celebrity endorsement) between consumers and brands (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009). Besides, the experience with the brand is personal and unique to the consumer (Gentile, Spiller and Noci 2007; Pine and Gilmore 1998; Schmitt 1999). This experience is memorable and yields lasting memories (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009; Pine and Gilmore 1998). For example, Starbucks provides a 'Starbuck Experience' that creates a strong connection with customers through its ability to provide hedonic or aesthetic brand-self linkages, and the experience is holistic in nature (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009; Gentile, Spiller and Noci 2007; Holbrook 2000; Schmitt 1999). Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009) state that brand experience follows when consumers search for products, shop for them and receive service, and when consuming them. In sum, brand experience occurs when consumers interact with brand-related stimuli that induce internal and behavioural responses. Also, an experience captures different dimensions of consumers' responses.

#### **2.4.2 Dimensions of Brand Experience**

The multi-dimensionality of brand experience is widely recognized in marketing and management literature (e.g., Pine and Gilmore 1998; Gentile, Spiller and Noci 2007; Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009; Schmitt 1999). Numerous typologies have been proposed to account for possible similarity and differences between experiential dimensions (e.g., Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Table 1 summarises brand experience definitions and dimensions discussed in the extant literature.

Although different dimensions have been proposed, some overlap of these dimensions can be noted. Pine and Gilmore (1998) propose four types of pleasurable experiences which are aesthetics, education, entertainment and escapism experiences, whereas Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) suggest fun, fantasy and feelings of consumption. Schmitt (1999) on the other hand, argues for consumers' involvement with experiences labeled as sensory, affective, cognitive, behavioural and relational experiences. As noted by Holbrook (2000), these dimensions overlap with those proposed by Holbrook

and Hirschman (1982). Sensory and cognitive experience reflects Holbrook and Hirschman's Fantasy (including experientially related cognitions). Affective experience is similar to Holbrook and Hirschman's Feelings, and behavioural dimension corresponds to Fun (related to the leisure-oriented aspects of behaviour).

Verhoef et al. (2009) propose affective, cognitive, emotional, physical and social responses as experiential dimensions. However, their dimensions mirror those dimensions in the work of Schmitt (1999). Alternatively, Gentile, Spiller, and Noci (2007) add pragmatic and lifestyle dimensions to Schmitt's conceptualization of experience. Although, these two dimensions are related to Schmitt's (1999) act dimension (Nysveen, Pedersen and Skard 2013). Drawing from the prior works, Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) conceptualize brand experience by including all dimensions except for the relational dimension and view these dimensions as internal (sensory, affective and cognitive) and behavioural responses.

Table 2.1: Definitions and Dimensions of Brand Experience

Source	Study Context	Definition	Dimension
Holbrook & Hirschman (1982)	Conceptual	The pursuit of fun, feelings and fantasy of consumption.	Fun, feelings and fantasies
Pine & Gilmore (1998, 98)	Conceptual	An experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event.	Entertainment, educational, esthetic and escapist
Schmitt (1999, 60)	Conceptual	The private events that occur in response to stimulation and often result from direct observation and / or participation in events, providing sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and relational value that replaces functional ones.	Sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and relational value.
Gentile et al. (2007, 397)	Empirical (Consumer brands)	The interaction between a customer and a product, a company, or party of its organization, which provokes a reaction.	Cognitive, emotional, sensorial, pragmatic, lifestyle and relational dimensions

Verhoef et al. (2009, 32)	Conceptual	Experience is holistic in nature and involves the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the retailer.	Cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses
Brakus et al. (2009, 53)	Empirical (consumer goods)	Subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications and environments.	Sensory, emotional, intellectual and behavioural experience

This study conceptualizes brand experience based on the work of Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009). It is argued that brand experience is a superior construct compared to customer experience (Nysveen, Pedersen and Skard 2013; Zarantonello and Schmitt 2010). Brand experience captures the experiences of the customer and non-customer and thus spans across different contexts (Nysveen, Pedersen and Skard 2013). Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009) put forward four experiential dimensions, which are sensory, affective, cognitive and behavioural experiences. The first dimension, sensory experience, reflects the consumer's perceptions of the brand through senses such as sound, sight, smell, taste and touch, which draws certain images in his or her mind (Hultén 2011). In this regard, sensory stimulations can be used as a tool to differentiate and position the brand in the consumer's mind (Hultén 2011). Sensory experiences provide aesthetical pleasure, excitement and a satisfied mood which may influence a consumer's emotional state (Gentile, Spiller and Noci 2007; Schmitt 1999). For example, a unique logo that creates a distinct brand identity. Affective experiences refer to consumers' moods, feelings and emotions which may range from temperate positive moods to intense emotions of joy and pride. Therefore, it is an important dimension as it creates an affective relationship with the brand (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009; Gentile, Spiller and Noci 2007). A brand engages consumer emotions and feelings by creating an atmosphere that places him or her in a positive mood (Schmitt 1999). These emotions and mood may affect consumers' learning processes and memories (Bagozzi, Gopinath and Nyer 1999) and hence, create a strong emotional bond to the brand (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009).

Also, individuals are motivated to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Therefore, a brand that provides affective experiences can build strong brand loyalty (Schmitt 1999).

Intellectual experience involves thinking and conscious mental processes that encourage consumers to use their creativity or problem-solving abilities to revise assumptions about a brand (Gentile, Spiller and Noci 2007). According to Schmitt (1999), brands enhance consumers' intellectual experiences by engaging consumers' convergent and divergent thinking through surprise, intrigue and provocations. Behavioural experience, the last dimension of brand experience, is related to consumers' physical behaviours and lifestyle. Indeed, brands enrich consumers' physical experiences, demonstrating alternative ways of doing things and thus, influence their behaviour and lifestyle (Schmitt 1999). Gentile, Spiller and Noci (2007) further assert that brands enhance the pragmatic experience, changing the practical act of doing things and extending the brand usability. Moreover, experiencing a brand is a means of holding certain values and beliefs which are shared by the consumer and the brand as a consequence of the consumer's lifestyle.

### **2.4.3 Antecedents and Outcomes of Brand Experience**

Numerous prior studies have concentrated on understanding the antecedents of brand experience as well as examining the outcomes of the brand experience. The antecedents of brand experience have been discussed in various contexts. For example, in the product domain, brand knowledge (Ebrahim et al. 2016) and product attributes (Sheng and Teo 2012) are found to enhance brand experience. In an advertising context, Roswinanto and Strutton (2014) postulate the attitude toward brand name, connectedness to celebrity endorsers, message fit and visual imagining as antecedents to brand experience. In a retailing context, store image, uniqueness and atmosphere can impact consumers' brand experience (Dolbec and Chebat 2013; Klein et al. 2016; Verhoef et al. 2009). Even more, brand name, price, advertising, employees, services, word of mouth, mood and perceived quality affect tourists' experiences (Ismail 2011; Rageh, Melewar and Woodside 2013;)

It is argued that consumers' connections with particular brands influence their experiences (Hultén 2011) as interactions with brands are considered as an expression of one's self-concept (Fu, Kang and Tasci 2017). Several studies, particularly those in

the context of tourism and hospitality, show that consumers' perceived brand-self congruity influence their experiences (e.g., Fu, Kang and Tasci 2017; Hosany and Martin 2012; Hudson and Ozanne 1988). Hudson and Ozanne (1988), for example, demonstrate that self-congruity influences consumers' online brand experiences toward the hotel brand. The authors advocate that consumers assign a symbolic value to brands, preferring to interact with brands that reflect their self-concepts. When the perception of brands is similar to their self-concepts, consumers achieve self-consistency that brings about positive reinforcement (Aaker 1997). It is noted that product and service experiences are different (Nysveen, Pedersen and Skard 2013). The relationships between self-congruity and brand experience in a product brand context should be validated.

Prior studies also show that brand experience may become part of consumers' long-term memory in the form of brand associations (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009; Carson et al. 2001). These associations may influence brand preference (Ebrahim et al. 2016), brand attitude (Roswinanto and Strutton 2014), brand equity (Biedenbach and Marell 2010; Cleff, Lin and Walter Nadine 2014; Delgado-Ballester and Fernandez Sabote 2015) and brand loyalty for products (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009; Francisco-Maffezzoli, Semprebon and Prado 2014; Iglesias, Singh and Batista-Foguet 2011; Ramaseshan and Stein 2014;) and services (Ismail 2011; Nysveen, Pedersen and Skard 2013; Rageh, Melewar and Woodside 2013). Furthermore, superior brand experiences build a strong brand relationship (Chang and Chieng 2006) such as brand attachment (Ramaseshan and Stein 2014). Moreover, brand experience has a significant impact on online brand trust (Chen-Yu, Cho and Kincade 2016), brand engagement (Mollen and Wilson 2010) and purchase behaviour (Gabisch 2011).

## **2.5 BRAND LOYALTY**

The importance of brand loyalty has a long history among academic and marketing practitioners. Brand loyalty is the ultimate goal of companies as it establishes a sustainable competitive advantage such as brand equity (Creswell 2014), willingness to pay a premium price (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001), and also creates positive word of mouth and resistance to switching brands (Dick and Basu 1994).

### **2.5.1 The Concept of Brand Loyalty**

A review of the past literature reveals that the concept of brand loyalty has not been uniquely defined and operationalized (Gounaris and Stathakopoulos 2004). Brand loyalty can be conceptualized from two different dimensions; attitudinal and behavioural brand loyalty.

Most of the early research relates brand loyalty as the act of consumers repeat purchase behaviour, focusing on the behavioural perspectives of brand loyalty (e.g., Cunningham 1956; Thomas 2006; Silverman 2006). These studies considered issues such as repeat purchase of one brand (Ehrenberg, Goodhardt and Barwise 1990), the proportion of purchase (Cunningham 1956) as well as purchase frequency (Kahn, Kalwani and Morrison 1986). However, this conceptualization of brand loyalty is being criticized for its inadequacy (Hanson and Grimmer 2007; Fournier and Yao 1997; Oliver 1999). Measuring behavioural dimension of loyalty captures merely the static outcome of a dynamic loyalty process and is unable to truly understand the underlying factors of brand loyalty (Kerlinger and Lee 2000). In fact, some authors argue that repeat patronage is considered as spurious loyalty (Dick and Basu 1998) where purchases are due to habit or convenience, and not true loyalty.

Inspired by the work of Jacoby and Kyner (1973), who view brand loyalty as consisting of repeat purchases that are induced by a strong internal disposition toward the brand, numerous researchers propose to include then attitudinal dimension in the original conceptualisation of behavioural loyalty (e.g., Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001; Dick and Basu 1994; Jacoby and Chestnut 1978; Oliver 1999). Oliver (1999) stresses the importance to assess belief, affect and intention within the consumer attitude structure in order to detect true brand loyalty. Other proponents of this idea are Dick and Basu (1994). These authors indicate that both positively balanced attitude and repeat purchases are required for true brand loyalty. This notion of attitudinal connection to the brand is consistent with the work of Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) who emphasize the importance of commitment to developing true brand loyalty. In this regard, true loyalty represents those consumers who purchase a particular brand repeatedly and are firmly committed to it. As noted by Amine (1998), true brand loyalty can only be understood if

the traditional definition of behavioural loyalty is extended to include the attitudinal dimension.

In accord with these arguments, this study adopts Oliver's (1999, 34) definition of brand loyalty as "a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronise a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour". This definition encompasses two different aspects of brand loyalty, which are behavioural and attitudinal loyalty. Thus, it overcomes the limitations of prior research by modeling both the behavioural and attitudinal dimensions of brand loyalty. Behavioural loyalty refers to repeat purchases of the brand as well as the customer's repeated intention to purchase the brand in the future whereas attitudinal loyalty refers to customers' degree of dispositional commitment and their attitude toward the brand (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001).

### **2.5.2 Brand Loyalty in Consumer-brand Relationship**

During the past few decades, brand loyalty research has been quite popular in marketing literature. Due to the essence of brand loyalty, researchers are motivated to investigate factors contributing to brand loyalty formation. Dick and Basu (1995) identified three categories of antecedents of brand loyalty, including cognitive, affective and conative. Cognitive antecedents are those related to informational determinants as a result of cognitive evaluation processes such as brand knowledge or attribute beliefs. Affective antecedents are related to the feeling and emotion states involving the brand such as brand affect or brand satisfaction. Finally, conative antecedents, relating to behaviour dispositions toward the brand include costs and expectations. The cognition-affect-conation antecedents receive support from Oliver (1999). The author further highlights the relationship between attitude and behaviour. In this case, attitudinal brand loyalty develops as a consequence of consumers' cognitive and affective responses to a brand, in turn, affecting behavioural loyalty towards the brand. Indeed, numerous empirical studies have identified cognitive and affective antecedents to consumers' brand loyalty including brand trust and brand affect (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001; Evans and Mathur 2005), brand characteristics (Gounaris and Stathakopoulos 2004), brand conviction and brand credibility (Lam et al. 2013), brand association and

perceived value (Jang, Kim and Lee 2015), brand satisfaction (Back 2005), brand experience (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009; Ramaseshan and Stein 2014).

It is Fournier (1998) who first transferred the concept of relationship strength into brand loyalty research. Building on the consumer-brand relationship approach, Tsai (2011) denotes that brand loyalty can be fostered through brand attachment which emphasizes self-relevance bonds connecting the brand and the consumer. For example, a highly attached consumer demonstrates a passion for the brand and a willingness to make sacrifices in order to acquire the brand, thus, elevates the higher level of brand loyalty (Park et al. 2010; Tsai 2011). Since then, a growing body of research has noted the relationship between brand attachment and brand loyalty (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016, 2014; Loureiro, Ruediger and Demetris 2012; Orth, Limon and Rose 2010; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005; Vlachos et al. 2010). For instance, it has been shown that brand attachment is positively related to actual purchases (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2014; Park et al. 2010) as well as attitudinal loyalty, like positive word of mouth (Vlachos et al. 2010), intention to repurchase and to recommend (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2014) and willingness to pay a premium price (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001). However, there have been few empirical studies examining the effect of brand attachment on a specific dimension of brand loyalty simultaneously.

## **2.6 SELF-REGULATORY FOCUS**

Self-regulatory focus theory is a theory of motivation, postulating that consumers vary in how they view their goals and how they pursue these goals (Higgins 1987, 1998). Specifically, this theory proposes two self-regulatory states, which are promotion focus and prevention focus. Promotion focus performs to serve the need for achievements and accomplishment whereas prevention focus functions to provide the need for safety and security. These regulatory foci influence consumers cognitive processes, the emotions experienced and the behaviours adopted (Boesen-Mariani, Gomez and Gavard-Perret 2010). Past research has documented their influences on consumer product preference, choice and purchase intention (Aaker and Lee 2006; Pham and Avnet 2004). Accordingly, Huber, Eisele and Meyer (2018) suggest linking self-congruity to self-regulatory focus theory as this theory is related to consumer's self-

concept. To this end, it is assumed that consumers with different regulatory foci (e.g., promotion-focused or prevention-focused) may activate the pursuit of different self-motives (e.g., self-verification, self-enhancement and social consistency). For example, consumers with a prevention focus tend to be persuaded by brands congruent with their actual self or social self, whereas consumers with a promotion focus are drawn towards ideal self-congruent brands. As a result, the self-regulatory focus provides a good background to understand the effect of self-congruity. Despite its relevance, no study has investigated whether different regulatory foci influence the self-congruity effect on brand attachment.

### **2.6.1 Self-Regulatory Focus Theory**

The hedonic principle has dominated psychologists understanding of individuals' motivation towards pleasure and avoids pain (Aaker and Lee 2001; Higgins et al. 1997). Higgins (1997), on the other hand, criticises the unitary view of the hedonic principle in explaining individuals' motivation. As an extension to the hedonic principle, regulatory focus theory (Higgins 1998, 1997) proposes two distinct types of regulatory foci through which individuals may approach pleasure and avoid pain. While pursuing their goals, individuals can be oriented toward promotion focus or prevention focus.

According to Higgins (1998; 1997), individuals under promotion focus have needs associated with advancement, aspirations and growth. Moreover, they align themselves with their ideal selves and are more sensitive to the presence or absence of positive outcomes, in the form of gains or non-gains (Idson, Liberman and Higgins 2000; Higgins and Tykocinski 1992). Striving for hopes and aspirations, promotion-focused individuals eagerly regulate their behaviours to approach desired end states (Crowe and Higgins 1997). On the other hand, prevention-focused individuals are concerned with the needs for safety and security, thus they are motivated to align themselves with their ought selves. Further, their goals are represented as the fulfilment of duties, obligations, and responsibilities. Such individuals are more concentrated on the presence or absence of negative outcomes, which are losses or non-losses (Idson, Liberman and Higgins 2000) and regulate their attitudes and behaviours toward avoiding undesirable end states vigilantly (Crowe and Higgins 1997). Furthermore, prevention-focused individuals tend to engage in exploratory behaviour, think more abstractions and are more creative and playful. Conversely, prevention-oriented

individuals are more analytical, focus more on detail and concrete information and are more cautious in their behaviours (Friedman and Förster 2001; Semin et al. 2005).

Fundamentally, these regulatory foci can be seen as either a chronic predisposition of individuals or it can be a situationally induced state that is triggered through a variety of situations (Aaker and Lee 2001; Higgins et al. 2001; Semin et al. 2005). The existing studies on regulatory focus can be divided into two streams. The first stream of research has studied regulatory focus as a chronic individual personality feature (e.g., Haws, Dholakia and Bearden 2010; Higgins 1998, 1997; Higgins et al. 2001; Werth and Foerster 2007) whereas, other scholars treat regulatory focus as a temporary state induced by momentary situations (Avnet and Higgins 2006; Friedman and Förster 2001; Zhou and Pham 2004). This study has treated regulatory focus as being chronic individual differences, or personality traits that are emerged through socialization or interaction with significant others (Higgins and Silberman 1998; Manian et al. 2006). Although promotion-focused and prevention-focused co-exist in every individual, it is believed that one orientation tends to be chronically salient and is the dominant regulatory-orientation of the individual (Higgins et al. 2001; Zhou and Pham 2004).

### **2.6.2 Self-Regulatory Focus in Consumer and Marketing Studies**

Research on regulatory focus has gained significant attention in marketing because it is able to explain consumer behaviour (Westjohn et al. 2016). Further, previous studies have been documented with respect to brand attitude (Keller 2006), willingness to pay (Avnet and Higgins 2006), attitude towards pricing (Lee, Choi and Li 2014), information processing related to persuasion, judgment, and choice (Aaker and Lee 2001; Lee and Aaker 2004), brand extension (Yeo and Park 2006) and global consumption orientation (Westjohn et al. 2016). Recent theorizing and empirical support suggest that different regulatory foci shape consumers' product evaluations and brand choice decisions consumers' evaluations and behaviours (e.g., Berinsky, Margolis and Sances 2014; Higgins 2008; Bourque and Fielder 2003; Higgins, Shah and Friedman 1997). Specifically, consumers are more interested in elaborate information that is consistent with their regulatory orientations. Hence, they can recall information that is compatible with their regulatory foci better. For example, Yeo and Park (2006) found that regulatory focus moderates the relationship between parent-extension similarity and evaluations on brand extension. The authors relate this discrepancy to different weights attached to

the perceived risk. Specifically, individuals with prevention focus are more careful and hence less prepared to take risk compared to promotion focus (Crowe and Higgins 1997; Friedman and Förster 2001; Werth and Foerster 2007). Huber (2018)

The regulatory focus theory is a theory of motivation that posits consumers vary in how they view their goals and adopt different ways to achieve these goals (Higgins 1987; Higgins et al. 1994). The regulatory focus has been suggested as an important moderator of different self-congruity and brand attachment (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Malär et al 2011). A consumer's preference for actual, ideal or social self-congruence is affected by his or her internalized strategies of promotion or prevention goal attainment. It is presumable that brands congruent with one's ideal self as being promotion goals whereas brands congruent with one's actual and social self as prevention goals. Accordingly, consumers with a promotion focus react favourably to brands congruent with his or her ideal self. Thus, the regulatory focus could be a possible moderator of actual, ideal or social self-congruity and brand attachment.

## **2.7 CONSUMERS' NEED FOR UNIQUENESS**

Consumers' need for uniqueness is another promising moderator of the self-congruity effect. According to Markus and Wurf (1987), self-concept is a knowledge structure consisting of information about one's self based on subjective perceptions. For example, individuals may seek validation of their beliefs and behaviours by behaving similarly to others such as choosing clothings of the same brand that their friends wear (Chan, Berger and Van Boven 2012; Snyder and Fromkin 1980). Others tend to be more different from others and stress the uniqueness of their beliefs and behaviours (Simonson and Nowlis 2000; Snyder and Fromkin 1980; Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001). Given that brands are extensions of self (Belk 1988), consumers tend to select and use brands to express their need for uniqueness (Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001, 52). Therefore, consumers' need for uniqueness is germane to the context of the present study as the motivation to pursue differentness with others through their consumption behaviours which may also influence the relationship between self-congruity types and brand attachment. Despite recent research into the roles of consumers' need for uniqueness in affecting consumers' attitudes and behaviours (e.g.,

Ku et al. 2014; Lynn and Harris 1997), no study has examined the effect of consumers' need for uniqueness on self-congruity types and brand attachment.

### **2.7.1 Consumers' Need for Uniqueness and Its Dimensions**

Evolving from the theory of uniqueness, Tian, Bearden, and Hunter (2001, 52) define consumers' need for uniqueness as "the trait of pursuing differentness relative to others through the acquisition, utilization and disposition of consumer goods to develop and enhancing one's self-image and social image". This theory summarises that individuals are inherently intended to be different from others. Moreover, consumers' self-concepts are threatened when they feel that they are highly similar to others, specifically those consumers' where the need for uniqueness is high. Notwithstanding, this threat will drive them to seek ways to reclaim their identity through self-distinguishing behaviours (Lynn and Harris 1997; Snyder and Fromkin 1977; Tian, Bearden, and Hunter 2001). As noted by Snyder (1992), individuals are motivated to acquire extrinsic rewards in society compared to those who are unique while at the same time, they experience inner satisfaction when they consider that they are different from others. However, the pursuit of dissimilarity is restrained by the need for social acceptance (Fromkin and Snyder 1980; Ruvio 2008). Therefore, this means that consumers are striving to be unique in a manner that does not provoke social isolation or sanctions (Ruvio, Shoham and Brencic 2008; Snyder and Fromkin 1980).

For the most part, consumers' need for uniqueness is conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct, consisting of three behavioural dimensions that are creative choice counter-conformity, unpopular choice counter-conformity, and avoidance of similarity (Ruvio, Shoham and Brencic 2008; Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001; Tian and Mckenzie 2001). Creative choice counter-conformity refers to consumers' choice of products that create unique personal identities that remain socially acceptable. This means, consumers, seek distinction from most others but make choices that are considered as good choices by these others (Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001; Snyder and Fromkin 1980). In contrast, consumers make an unpopular choice, counter-conformity through the use of products differing from social norms. To pursue this uniqueness, consumers are likely to bear the risk of social disapproval but enjoy enhanced self and social image (Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001). Indeed, these consumers are not concerned about social criticism, yet, they tend to make

unconventional choices (Simonson and Nowlis 2000). Lastly, avoidance of similarity indicates the avoidance of consuming widely adopted products or the discontinued use of products that are perceived to be commonplace (Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001). In fact, to establish uniqueness, consumers tend to distance themselves from choices that are similar to others and opt for those that are considered to be peculiar (Simonson and Nowlis 2000).

### **2.7.2 Consumers' Need for Uniqueness in Consumer and Marketing Research**

From a psychological perspective, it is widely documented that individuals' need for uniqueness influences their behaviours (e.g., Baird 1981; Burns and Brady 1992; Imhoff and Erb 2009; Joubert 1987; Lynn and Harris 1997; Snyder 1992; Snyder and Fromkin 1977; Tian and McKenzie 2001). Notably, individuals with a high desire and need for uniqueness tend to seek thrills, adventure and unavailable experiences (Bartikowski and Cleveland 2017). Moreover, they emphasize a sense of independence, dissimilarity, achievement and self-esteem (Snyder and Fromkin 1977) and are also more self-expressive and status conscious (Tian and McKenzie 2001). Nevertheless, individuals with a high need for uniqueness are associated with low social interest and loneliness, and hence they are not likely to think and conduct themselves in normative ways (Usakli and Baloglu 2011). This is a notion of individuals' differences in the need for uniqueness that has been supported in subsequent empirical studies (Imhoff and Erb 2009; Lynn and Snyder 2002).

Numerous studies in consumer and marketing have attested to variations in consumers' need for uniqueness and its influence on consumption behaviour (e.g., Chandrashekar et al. 2007; Cheema and Kaikati 2010; Moldovan, Steinhart and Ofen 2015; Reibstein, Day and Wind 2009; Simonson and Nowlis 2000). Prior research has widely recognized that consumers satisfy their motivation regarding uniqueness through acquiring and possessing unique products (Snyder and Fromkin 1977; Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001). For example, Tian, Bearden and Hunter (2001) denote that consumers with a high need for uniqueness are more likely to choose products that are relatively scarce, customized, innovative or new products as these products appear to be a way in which to maintain their distinctiveness. Furthermore, they are willing to select products and brands that deviate from group norms, and thus risk social disapproval. Comparatively, consumers with a low need for uniqueness are more likely

to seek conformity with others in their choices and follow the behaviour of social norms (Cheema and Kaikati 2010; Lynn and Harris 1997; Simonson and Nowlis 2000).

Moreover, consumers with a high need for uniqueness are likely to minimize their consumption of a product or discontinue using a product when having a high level of adoption (Irmak, Vallen and Sen 2010). As a result, they are reluctant to share or recommend innovations to others due to the fear of limitations (Cheema and Kaikati 2010; Moldovan, Steinhart and Ofen 2015). Research has also found significant effects of consumers' need for uniqueness on consumers attitudes toward particular brands (Bian and Forsythe 2012; Rhee and Johnson 2012; Roy and Sharma 2015; Thomson 2006;), brand associations (Ross 1971), brand community identification (Reibstein, Day and Wind 2009), product involvement (Bhaduri and Stanforth 2016) and word of mouth (Cheema and Kaikati 2010; Moldovan, Steinhart and Ofen 2015).

More recently, the moderating effect of consumers' need for uniqueness on brand attitudes and purchase intentions has been recognized across different contexts, such as branding (Bartikowski and Cleveland 2017; Ku et al. 2014) and advertising (Roy and Sharma 2015). Roy and Sharma (2015) stipulate that the need for uniqueness moderates the effect of scarcity appeal on consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions. Specifically, consumers with a high need for uniqueness show greater effects on supply scarcity appeal in advertising on their attitudes and purchase intentions as supply-driven scarcity is perceived as exclusive which emphasize one's uniqueness (Snyder 1992). On the other hand, consumers with a low need for uniqueness prefer demand scarcity appeal that signifies majority influences (Imhoff and Erb 2009). Similarly, Ku et al. (2014) find that consumers' need for uniqueness moderates the effect of stock-out options on consumer preferences. Consumers with a high need for uniqueness prefer a product that is unavailable due to short supply to their original choice whereas those with low need for uniqueness prefer demand-based stock-out options.

Scholars also link the need for uniqueness to the concept of self by arguing that the expression of the need for uniqueness depends on the self-perceived degree of uniqueness, which is related to self-concept (Burns and Brady 1992). Aaker and Schmitt (2001) argue that the need for uniqueness is related to individuals' self-concept,

particularly self-construal (independent self versus interdependent self). According to the authors, individuals with a dominant interdependent self-construal have a lower need for uniqueness than individuals with a dominant independent self. Furthermore, consumers with interdependent self-view are more concerned about their similarity with others, showing the low need for uniqueness, and tend to seek distinctiveness through variations in the in-group's preferred product choices (Marsh 1989). It can be said that the need for uniqueness depends on the self-perceived degree of uniqueness, which is related to self-concept. Since the need for uniqueness is related to self-concept, it is presumable that this variable will moderate the relationship between the self-congruity types and brand attachment.

## **2.8 RESEARCH GAPS**

In synthesis, the extant literature offers empirical evidence on the determinants and outcomes of brand attachment (e.g., Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016; Huang, Zhang and Hu 2017; Malär et al. 2011; Park et al. 2010; 2013; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). Although, the brand attachment paradigm, as a relatively new development, has yet to mature in either conceptual construction or measurement instrumentation (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2014; 2016). Park and colleagues (2010; 2013) challenge the view of conceptualizing brand attachment merely based on emotions (Dolbec and Chebat 2013; Huang, Zhang and Hu 2017; Malär et al. 2011; Schmalz and Orth 2012; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005; Vlachos et al. 2010). Furthermore, the authors advocate that attachment captures not only the emotional bond but also brand-self cognitions, thoughts and memories that measures of emotions may not fully capture (Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Park et al. 2010). The authors further stress the essence of integrative understanding of the drivers of brand attachment, fostering brand-self connection and brand prominence. Although some studies have considered the impact of self-congruity on brand attachment, there are still various gaps evidenced in the literature.

Prior research has indicated the importance of self-concept in affecting consumer behaviours. Particularly, the self-congruity hypothesis posits that the match between the consumers' self-concept and the brand's personality influences emotional brand

attachment (e.g., Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016, 2014; Malär et al. 2011). These studies have focused on actual, ideal self (e.g., Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016, 2014; Malär et al. 2011) and ought self (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018). However, the self is not limited to these dimensions (Markus and Wurf 1987; Sirgy 1982). In the marketing literature, apart from the actual and ideal self, the social self is another dimension of self that is widely recognized (e.g., Malhotra 1988; Onkvisit and Shaw 1987; Sirgy 2018; Sirgy 1982; Sirgy, Grewal and Mangleburg 2000). Indeed, this is because consumers are motivated in order to maintain a positive self-concept that is projected to others (i.e., social self). Accordingly, the social dimension of the self may demonstrate similar relevance to the relationship between self-congruity and brand attachment. In line with this, Malär et al. (2011) implied the relevance of the social dimension of self by considering public self-consciousness as a moderator of the effect of self-congruity on brand attachment. However, public self-consciousness is not treated as a part of self-concept itself. Including social dimension of the self in consumer research is meaningful (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Reed 2002), which is why including the social self into the self-congruity framework is a promising avenue for future research.

Brand experiences evoke rich cognitive schemata that connect the brand with the self (Park et al. 2010). A brand experience that gratifies, enables and enriches the self, creates a strong attachment to the brand (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009; Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013; Park, MacInnis and Priester 2006). Based on these arguments, it is assumable that consumers' experiences with the brand may determine the strength of brand attachment. Although Japutra, Ekinci, and Simkin (2016) indicated that brand experience affects emotional brand attachment, their study only examines one dimension of brand experience which is the sensory experience. The relationship between other dimensions of brand experience and brand attachment remains uncertain. Consumers' experience toward brands is a recent topic of interest (Schmitt 2013). Thus, the inclusion of brand experience in the study of brand attachment is highly appealing. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this research is the first attempt to examine the influences of actual, ideal and social self-congruity on brand experience in building strong brand attachment, filling an existing gap in the brand attachment literature.

Accordingly, this research aims to provide a comprehensive framework of brand attachment by investigating the antecedents and outcomes of brand attachment. Current empirical studies either investigate the antecedents of brand attachment (e.g., Dolbec and Chebat 2013; Malär et al. 2011; Orth et al. 2010) or the outcomes of brand attachment (Park et al. 2010; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). However, to date, little or no empirical study has been conducted to examine the effect of brand attachment on the specific dimensions of brand loyalty simultaneously. Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin (2016) and Belaid and Behi (2011) study the relationship between brand attachment and brand loyalty without investigating the individual effect of the dimensions of brand loyalty. More recently, Ramaseshan and Stein (2014) examine the consumer-brand relationship (e.g., brand trust, brand attachment and brand commitment) on the individual effects of brand loyalty dimensions. Nonetheless, they did not consider the specific effect of brand attachment on brand loyalty dimensions.

The existing literature on brand attachment has provided notable evidence for product-related context variables such as product involvement (Malär et al. 2011) and product nature (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018) as moderators for the effect of self-congruity on brand attachment. Nonetheless, the understanding of motivational variables as boundary conditions for the effect is limited. Huber, Eisele and Meyer (2018) suggest future studies should link self-congruity with consumers' self-regulatory focus (Higgins 1998). Therefore, taking into account the regulatory orientations (promotion versus prevention focus) as factors for differentiating the effects of self-congruity types and brand attachment might be promising. Another possible moderator is consumers' need for uniqueness. The expression of the need for uniqueness depends on the self-perceived degree of uniqueness, which is related to self-concept. To this end, it is believed that individuals with a high need for uniqueness prefer brands congruent with their ideal self and individuals with a low need for uniqueness are drawn toward actual or social self-congruent brands. An examination of the current literature shows that no study at this stage has empirically tested whether differences in consumers' regulatory focus and the need for uniqueness affect the implications of self-congruity types on brand attachment.

## **2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The preceding literature review brings to light the importance of developing a brand attachment that inspired brand loyalty. Although several studies have been conducted in the brand attachment arena, the relationship between brand personality (targeting on consumers' actual, ideal and social self) and brand experience has not been fully explored. Furthermore, the chapter discussed the importance of considering the moderating effects of consumers' need for uniqueness and self-regulatory focus. The next chapter presents the conceptual framework and hypotheses for the current study.

## **CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES**

### **3.1 OVERVIEW**

This chapter presents the conceptual framework derived from the literature. The conceptual framework is used to investigate the effect of the three self-congruity types (actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity and social self-congruity) and brand experience as the antecedents of brand attachment. In turn, this will explain the influential role of brand attachment to brand loyalty. The framework also explains the effect of the self-congruity types on brand attachment for consumers with different regulatory focus and need for uniqueness. The chapter is organized as follows. Section 3.2 discusses the theoretical background. Section 3.3 describes the conceptual framework and rationale behind the hypotheses structure and the last section offers the conclusion of the chapter.

### **3.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

Fournier's (1998) interpersonal relationship theory posits that the relationships that form between consumers and brands are similar to a human relationship. Furthermore, the author provides new insights into the existing consumer-brand relationship knowledge. From this perspective, the brand is not just a passive object of marketing transactions but is a significant contributor to the relationship dyad. Consumers tend to assign personality traits to inanimate brand objects by thinking about brands as if they are human characters (Aaker 1997). This theory has been applied to study the consumer-brand relationship such as brand attachment, brand passion, brand commitment, brand love and brand loyalty (Albert, Merunka and Valette-Florence 2013; Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi 2012; Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001; Fournier and Yao 1997; Oliver 1999; Park et al. 2010; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). Drawing from the interpersonal relationship theory, this study adopts the human relationship metaphor to examine brand attachment. Accordingly, three core theories, which are attachment theory, self-expansion theory and self-congruity theory are used to examine how consumers perceive congruence between brand personality and self-concept, how

they experience the brands, form attachment with the brands and become loyal to the brands.

The key construct that describes consumer-brand relationships is brand attachment (Alvarez and Fournier 2016) and is described as the strength of the connection between the brand and the consumer's self-concept (Park et al. 2010). Attachment theory as proposed by Bowlby (1980) provides a rationale for consumer attachment to brands. The key principle of attachment theory is that individuals' are inherently motivated to assure proximity to attachment figures for the protection and promotion of affect regulation (Bowlby 1979, 1980). Interactions with attachment figures foster a sense of connectedness on the attachment figures (Mikulincer and Shaver 2005).

The key assumption, in this case, is that brands, based on their associations with a specific set of personality traits, are used as a mean for self-definition and self-expression (Aaker 1999; Belk 1988). The self-congruity theory and self-expansion theory are used to support the hypothesized relationship between self-congruity, brand experience, brand attachment and brand loyalty. Wherefore, the self-congruity theory provides a solid ground for this proposal. According to self-congruity theory, individuals have a greater preference for brands that have a cognitive match between brand personalities and their self-concepts (Sirgy et al. 1991). The state of self-congruity leads to attachment to brands (Huang, Zhang and Hu 2017; Japutra, Ekinici and Simkin 2016; Malär et al. 2011). Actual, ideal, and social self-congruity influence a consumer's brand attachment independently (Malär et al. 2011). The self-congruity effects are related to the underlying types of self-motives which in turn, determine the consumer's behaviour (Malär et al. 2011; Sirgy 1982). Specifically, the self-consistency motive is the underlying self-motive of actual self-congruity, while the self-enhancement motive is the corresponding self-motive of ideal self-congruity, and social-consistency motive serves the same function for social self-congruity (Sirgy 1982). The effects of regulatory focus and need for uniqueness affect consumer behaviours and result in different brand-related outcomes (Bartikowski and Cleveland 2017; Ku et al. 2014; Lee and Workman 2014; Ruvio, Shoham and Brencic 2008; Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001; Yeo and Park 2006). Therefore, it is expected that a consumer's dominant self-regulatory focus and need for uniqueness will influence which of the three types of self-congruity has the greatest impact on brand attachment.

Not limited to self-congruity theory, self-expansion theory explains how an attachment to a brand develops (Fournier 1998; Malär et al. 2011; Park et al. 2010). The self-expansion theory postulates that individuals are inherently motivated towards the expansion of their self-concept in order to improve their potential efficacy (Aron and Aron 2001; Aron and Aron 1996). This motive drives them to include brands into their conception of self (Reimann and Aron 2014). The more a brand is included in the self, the closer is the bond that connects them, and the more salient is the brand in their memories. As a result, attachment to the brand develops over time through experiences (Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013; Park et al. 2010), which reflects consumers' internal responses evoked by brand (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009). In the process of self-expansion, an attached consumer tends to actively invest their own resources in the brand in order to maintain the relationship (Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013; Park et al. 2010) and they are more likely to commit to the relationship with the brand (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016; Ramaseshan and Stein 2014).

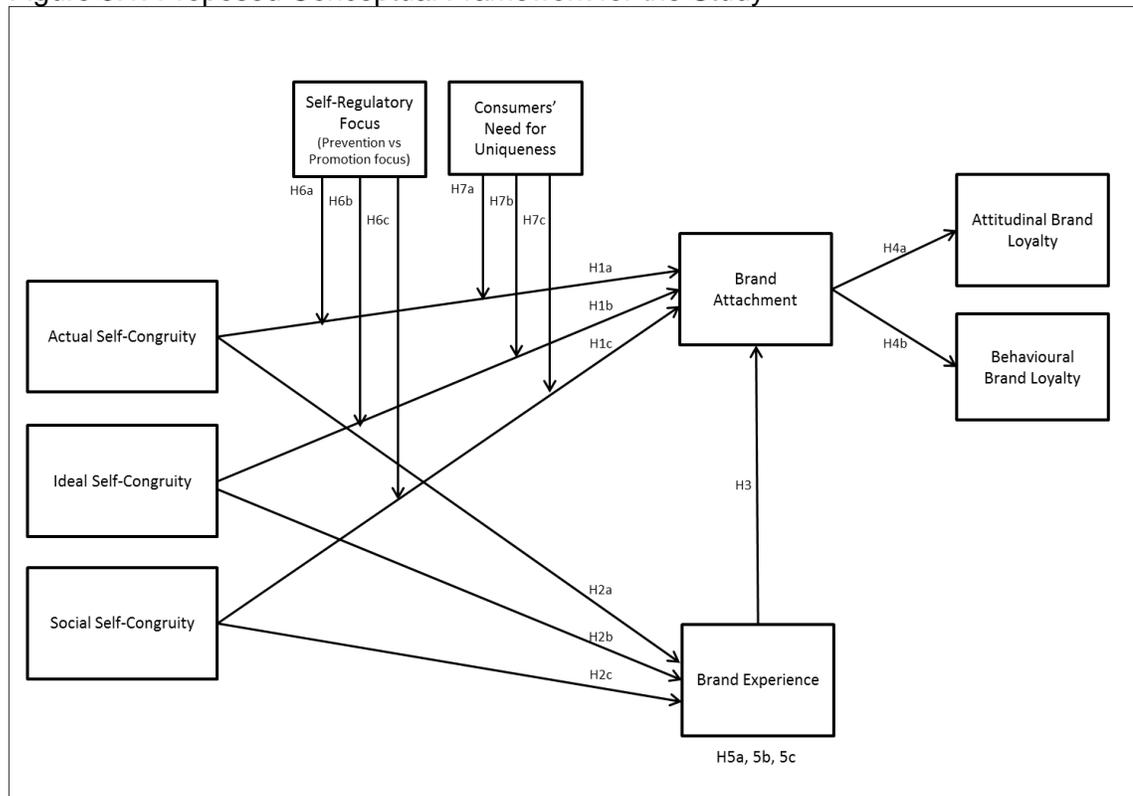
### **3.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES**

In line with the problem statement and research questions, this study aims to contribute to the consumer-brand relationship literature by examining the relationship between actual, ideal and social self-congruity, brand experience, brand attachment and brand loyalty. Furthermore, this study also depicts the condition boundaries for the relationship between actual, ideal and social self-congruity on brand attachment by investigating the moderating role of self-regulatory focus and consumers' need for uniqueness. The inter-relationships of these variables are presented in Figure 3.1, forming the proposed conceptual framework for this study.

The proposed conceptual framework is constructed based on the theoretical foundations in brand attachment, (with emphasis on brand-self connections and brand prominent), self-congruity, brand experience, brand loyalty, self-regulatory focus and consumers' need for uniqueness. As discussed in Chapter 2, most of the prior studies concentrate on emotional bonding between the brand and the consumer (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009; Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Japutra et al. 2018; Malär et al. 2011; Ramaseshan and Stein 2014). To date, limited research has been

conducted to investigate brand attachment with emphasis on brand-self connections and brand prominent proposed by Park et al. (2010). In addition, past research has generally emphasized on actual and ideal self-congruity and thus, ignored the effect of social self-congruity on brand attachment (e.g., Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009; Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Japutra et al. 2018; Malär et al. 2011). In light of this, this study aims to examine the effect of actual, ideal and social self-congruity on brand attachment, thereby enhancing brand-self connections and brand prominence. Moreover, this study examines the effect of actual, ideal and social self-congruity on brand experience and brand attachment. Furthermore, consumers' differences in the need for uniqueness and self-regulatory orientations, as possible moderating factors affecting the relationship between actual, ideal and social self-congruity and brand attachment, are denoted. Consecutively, the role of brand attachment in motivating brand loyalty is illustrated, as the profitability of a company depends to a large extent on brand loyalty. The relationships of these variables as presented in Figure 3.1, constitute the proposed conceptual framework for this study.

Figure 3.1: Proposed Conceptual Framework for the Study



As illustrated in Figure 3.1, the relationships between these variables are outlined. The brand loyalty in terms of behavioural and attitudinal brand loyalty is designated as the outcome of brand attachment. To gauge brand attachment, self-congruity play a direct role as well as an indirect role through brand experience. The interactions between actual, ideal and social self-congruity and both self-regulatory focus (prevention and promotion focus) and the consumers' need for uniqueness in enhancing brand attachment are presented. The following section presents the hypotheses of this study.

### **3.3.1 Self-Congruity and Brand Attachment**

In the literature, it has been documented that self-congruity affects brand attachment (Kressmann et al. 2006; Malär et al. 2011), based on the notion of self-expansion theory (Aron and Aron 1996). The self-expansion theory, proposed by Aron and Aron (1986), postulates that individuals are inherently motivated to expand their self-concept to attain physical and social resources, perspectives and identities that foster one's ability to achieve goals (Aron, Aron and Norman 2001, 478). It is argued that in the service of self-expansion, individuals tend to include others as part of their self-concept.

Self-expansion theory was originally developed to explain close relationships between people. In a close relationship, an individual tends to include the other (or partner) into his or her self-concept to the extent that the other's resources, perspectives, and identities are assessable to him or herself. This means that the other's resources, perspectives, and identities seem like his or her own. The process of self-expansion leads to a strong positive effect associated with the others or partners due to the expected increase in self-efficacy. Eventually, the individual becomes attached to others (Aron, Aron and Norman 2001). In line with this argument, Pyszczynski, Greenberg, and Solomon (1997) denote that expansive activities are motivating because of the pleasure that "engagement [in them] provides" (p. 6).

In the context of brand relationships, it has also been argued that consumers create relationships with brands much like building a relationship with people (Fournier 1998; Reimann and Aron 2014). Consumers use brands to construct and communicate their self-concepts and in doing so, create brand-self relationships (Escalas and Bettman 2005). The need for self-expansion drives consumers to incorporate brands into their self-concepts. According to Reimann and Aron (2014), brands serve as resources,

perspectives, and identities which consumers include in the self and perceive them as their own. As resources, brands provide both symbolic and utilitarian benefits. Besides, brands' specific positions provide perspectives where consumers may consciously or unconsciously experience when they include brands in their self. For identity, as discussed earlier, brands with specific identities are used to express one's self-concept. The inclusion of a brand into the self makes the brand's identity as part of the cognitive structure of the owner's self. Hence, the brand-self connection is evoked when consumers use brands with personalities (includes resources, perspectives, and identities) consistent with their self-concept to construct and communicate their self-concept to others (Escalas and Bettman 2005). In summary, close brand-self relationships broaden consumers' perception about themselves through self-expansion, results in high levels of positive affect and in turn, leads to attachment to brands. Hence, the more a brand is part of a consumer's self-concept (self-congruity); the closer is the bond connecting the brand and the self (Malär et al. 2011).

Furthermore, research suggests that expanding one's self through the inclusion of others (brands in this context) may incorporate cognitive evaluation (Aron and Aron 2001; Aron, Aron and Norman 2001; Aron et al. 1991; Reimann and Aron 2014). Additionally, evidence suggests that brand attachment is built through interactions with the brand and consequently, the brand becomes integrated into the cognitive aspects of self (Escalas and Bettman 2003; Lastovicka and Sirianni 2011; Park et al. 2010). The notion of self-congruity itself belongs to a broader class of cognitive consistency theories (Malär et al. 2011). Combined, this suggests that cognitive aspects may underlie the relationship between self-congruity and brand attachment (Aron et al. 1991; Park et al. 2010) in addition to emotional attachment (Malär et al. 2011).

As discussed above, consumers tend to include brands into their conception of self due to the need for self-expansion. The more a brand is part of a consumer's self-concept; the greater is the attachment to the brand. As suggested by Park et al (2010), attachment to brands occurs when consumers view the brand as part of themselves, reflecting their identity. In this study, it is argued that when the brand reflects the consumer's self-concept (i.e., self-congruity), his or her personal bond with the brand is strengthened. Likewise, the thoughts and feelings towards the brand become more salient. This argument applied to all self-congruity types proposed earlier. Though, what

differentiates them is the self-motive underlying each self-congruity type. The following sections present detailed explanations on the impact of actual, ideal and social self-congruity on brand attachment.

### **3.3.1.1 Actual Self-Congruity and Brand Attachment**

Consumers' actual self-concept influences consumer behaviour through the self-consistency or self-verification motive. The self-verification theory has posited that individuals are motivated to verify, affirm, and sustain their current self-concepts. In this regard, individuals are actively seeking to search for experiences that validate their conception of the self as self-verifying information resulting in stable self-concept (Swann 1983; Swann, Stein-Seroussi and Giesler 1992). Failing to behave consistently results in negative feelings that may threaten consumers' beliefs about the self (Sirgy 1985). Furthermore, Swann, Stein-Seroussi, and Giesler (1992) observe that the innate motivation for self-verification occurs even with a negative self-concept. In order to facilitate self-verification, individuals may choose to interact with others who confirm their identities (Swann, Pelham and Krull 1989). For example, when others (brands) verify their self-concepts, they begin to see others as dependable and develop an attachment to others (Burke and Stets 1999). In the current context, the inclusion of the brands that verify one's actual self-view (self-congruent) results in positive self-evaluation and positive thoughts and feelings about brands and the brand's relationship to the self. Indeed, by associating oneself with such brands and experiencing positive reinforcement (Malär et al. 2011), consumers are more likely to connect the brand with the self and view these brands as more salient and, thus, elicit attachment to that brand. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

***H1a: Actual self-congruity has a positive effect on brand attachment.***

### **3.3.1.2 Ideal Self-Congruity and Brand Attachment**

Concerning ideal self-congruity, the self-enhancement motive is the underlying self-motive that guides consumers' behaviours. The self-enhancement theory posits that people are motivated to facilitate their feelings of personal worth (Sedikides and Strube 1997), which drives them to approach their ideal self and to foster their self-esteem (Higgins 1987). To protect a positive self-concept, self-serving attribution research suggests that individuals tend to attribute positive outcomes to their own self and those

negative outcomes to circumstances unrelated to self (Blaine and Crocker 1993). This bias supports the findings that self-enhancers seek information that confirms their self-esteem (Ditto and Lopez 1992). Another important aspect of self-enhancement is described by Collins (1996) where the author suggests that individuals tend to compare themselves with similar or superior others and assimilate their performances to those superior others. Assimilating oneself with better-off others is self-enhancing because it allows individuals to bask in the reflected glory of the other's achievements (Brown, Collins and Schmidt 1988; Tesser 1988; Tesser and Collins 1988). Specifically, assimilations with superior others in self-relevant domains bolster their own self-concept (Brown, Collins and Schmidt 1988; Markus and Wurf 1987) and in turn, results in a positive affect such as feelings of pleasure and satisfaction (Collins 1996). In the branding literature, Escalas and Bettman (2009) argue that consumers guided by a self-enhancement motive tend to form brand-self connections with brands used by aspirational groups. In supporting their arguments, they demonstrate that brands provide self-esteem and generate a feeling of closeness to one's ideal self (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967). During the process of using brands to cultivate the concept of self, positive personalities portrayed by brands are linked to the consumers' mental representation of self. In other words, the activation of self-enhancement goals the extent to which brand personality influences brand-self connection (Escalas and Bettman 2003) and brand prominent. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

***H1b: Ideal self-congruity has a positive effect on brand attachment.***

### ***3.3.1.3 Social Self-Congruity and Brand Attachment***

Concerning social self-congruity, a consumer's social self-drives their behaviour through the need for social consistency. Consumers rely on the opinions of significant others such as reference groups as sources of reliable information for evaluating their beliefs about the world and themselves (Escalas and Bettman 2003). They manage their presentation of self in accordance with the type of person they wish the significant others to see them as (Malhotra 1988; Sirgy 1982). Such a notion is in agreement with the social consistency motive, explaining that individuals need to be consistent with social norms (Sirgy 1982; Sirgy, Grzeskowiak and Su 2005), as it allows them to verify their social self (Swann et al. 2003). It is argued that maintaining images perceived by significant others helps to reduce the risk of social conflict (Sirgy and Su 2000).

Perhaps for this reason, they are motivated to engage in behaviours that assure the social image to gain positive reactions and approval from others. It follows that such behaviours are likely to include connecting themselves with brands that have personalities consistent with their social self. Interestingly, brands can be used as tools for social integration to cultivate and express one's self-concept to others (Escalas and Bettman 2009). Also, consumers are motivated to ensure that the meaning of their brand choice conforms to the norms of their reference group (Sirgy, Grzeskowiak and Su 2005). Moreover, the need for social consistency drives them to use brand associations derived from social groups to construct their self-concepts. Rewards such as group conformity and acceptance may lead to emotional and cognitive attachment to brands that have personalities which they think, consistent with the social self. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

***H1c: Social self-congruity has a positive effect on brand attachment.***

### **3.3.2 Self-Congruity and Brand Experience**

As discussed previously, the crux of self-congruity relates to a desire to express oneself using the brand whose personality matches the self-image (Malär et al. 2011; Ramaseshan and Stein 2014; Sirgy 1982). This desire may affect the consumer's experience with the brand. Self-concept serves as a selection mechanism in information processing that guides individuals to select, interpret and recall self-conforming information (Aaker 1999; Markus 1977; Markus and Wurf 1987). In this regards, consumers are more likely to selectively interact with brands that are consistent with their self-concepts (Sirgy 1982). Additionally, they are motivated by different self-motives, which are self-verification, self-enhancement and social consistency to interact with these brands (Malär et al. 2011; Sirgy 1982). For instance, consumers who are motivated by self-enhancement motive prefer to interact with brands representing their ideal self whereas consumers with high self-verification need react favourably to brands congruence with actual self. The interactions with such brands, in turn, bring about subjective, internal consumer responses and behavioural responses (brand experience). Research in the tourism domain has long asserted that tourists' experiences are influenced by the perception of self-congruity with particular destination brands (Fu, Kang and Tasci 2017; Hosany and Martin 2012). For example, Hosany and Martin (2012) argue that self-congruity with images of other tourists heightens cruise

experiences and positively influences tourists' satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Likewise, in a retailing context, Dolbec and Chebat (2013) state that an image construct (e.g., store image) could impact customers' in-store experiences and thus, foster personal brand experience. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

***H2 (a): Actual self-congruity has a positive effect on the brand experience.***

***H2 (b): Ideal self-congruity has a positive effect on the brand experience.***

***H2 (c): Social self-congruity has a positive effect on the brand experience.***

### **3.3.3 Brand Experience and Brand attachment**

The previous section of this study has argued on the direct effects of self-congruity and brand attachment. However, a careful investigation indicates that the arguments implicitly assume a role of brand experience. As denoted by Park et al. (2010), brand attachment is developed over time through consumers' experiences with the brand. Hence, brand experience occurs when consumers directly or indirectly interact with the brand (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009).

As discussed earlier, individuals are motivated to cultivate close relationships to expand their self by incorporating others in the self as self-expansion processes are affectively positive. Self-expansion also occurs when individuals seek experiences that increase their efficacy (Leary 2007). Indeed, experiences are more closely connected to the self than possessions because an individual's experiences remain in their memories (Carter and Gilovich 2012). Therefore, extending these findings to the current context, it is claimed that the self-expansion process through the inclusion of the brand in the self induces positive psychological and behavioural responses (i.e., brand experience) that lead individuals to view the brands as desirable, which in turn enhances the inclusion process. Hence, thinking about experiences with the brand forge connections between the brand and the self, and as a consequence, foster consumers' attachment to the brand. Furthermore, brands trigger meaningful memories through sensory, aesthetic, emotional, cognitive and behavioural benefits (Krishna 2012; Shapiro and Spence 2002). Access to such positive brand-related memories, in turn, enhances brand prominence (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016; Park et al. 2010; Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013). Additionally, momentous brand experience leads to cognitive and affective self-evaluation that is similar to the mechanism of developing interpersonal

relationships (Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013; Schmitt 2013). Drawing from this notion, consumer research instills rich evidence for the influences of experiential dimensions on consumer-brand relationships (e.g., Chang and Chieng 2006; Francisco-Maffezzoli, Semprebon and Prado 2014; Park and Kim 2014; Schmitt 2013). For instance, Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, and Sen (2012) find that consumers are more likely to identify with a brand if they have greater memorable brand experience. Consistently, Japutra, Ekinci, and Simkin (2016) show that brand attachment is positively influenced by sensory brand experience. These findings imply that brand experience is a key factor in the development of strong attachments. Therefore, it is proposed that brand experience evoke positive memories that enhance the development of brand attachment in that:

***H3: Brand experience has a positive effect on brand attachment.***

#### **3.3.4 Brand Attachment and Brand Loyalty**

Brand loyalty is incorporated in this conceptual framework as the outcome variable to offer a better explanation of the practical implications of the effects hypothesized. It is anticipated that consumers' brand loyalty is higher when the brand attachment is strong. This proposition stems from the self-expansion theory where consumers are more willing to allocate resources to sustain relationships with brands that are connected to their self. To maintain a brand-self relationship, attached consumers who perceived oneness with the brand should be persistent to possess the brands and, therefore, elevate higher brand loyalty. In a similar vein, Tsai (2011) asserts that brand loyalty can be fostered through committed and attached relationships. The author further elaborates that brand attachment reflects a deep passion for the brand and a willingness to make sacrifices in order to acquire the brand. Numerous empirical studies also support the notion that brand attachment contributes to favourable attitudinal outcomes such as the intention to pay a high price for the brand (Jiménez and Voss 2014; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005) and willingness to recommend and resistance to negative information about the brand (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2014). Prior studies reveal that brand attachment predicts behavioural outcomes, for example, repurchase intention and actual purchase (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2014, 2016; Park et al. 2010). Hence, it is therefore predicted that:

***H4 (a): Brand attachment has a positive effect on attitudinal brand loyalty.***

***H4 (b): Brand attachment has a positive effect on behavioural brand loyalty.***

### **3.3.5 Mediating Effect of Brand Experience**

Following the notion that brand attachment involves consumers' perceptions of self-congruity with the brand as well as their experiences with the brand and that self-congruity fosters brand experience suggests, this suggests that self-congruity not only has a direct effect on brand attachment, but it may generate brand attachment through the dimensions of brand experience. In other words, consumers, motivated by a specific self-motive, prefer to interact with brands that have personalities consistent with their self-concepts (Malär et al. 2011; Sirgy 1982). The more the brand reflects the consumer's self and the more positive the personal experiences with the brand, the stronger his or her brand attachment becomes.

Recent empirical studies have implied that self-congruity might have an indirect impact on brand attachment through brand experience (e.g., Dolbec and Chebat 2013; Ramaseshan and Stein 2014). Brand experience involves creating vivid linkages with the brand in the mind of the consumers (Fournier 1998). Accordingly, these linkages may motivate consumers to engage with brand-related stimuli in sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioural ways (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009). Such brand experiences have also been known to involve brand personality (Ramaseshan and Stein 2014), and are found to mediate the relationship between an image construct (e.g. store image) and brand attachment (Dolbec and Chebat 2013). In summary, past research has implied that self-congruity may help to bridge the gap between brand self-congruity and brand attachment. This effect would be in addition to the direct effect of self-congruity on brand attachment as hypothesized (H1). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed.

***H5 (a): Brand experience mediates the effect of actual self-congruity on brand attachment.***

***H5 (b): Brand experience mediates the effect of ideal self-congruity on brand attachment.***

***H5 (c): Brand experience mediates the effect of social self-congruity on brand attachment.***

**3.3.6 Moderating Effects of Self-Regulatory Focus and Consumers' Need for Uniqueness**

The hypothesized effects in H1 may not be equally prominent for all consumers since it may be influenced by individuals' motivational differences (Malär et al. 2011). Notwithstanding, it has also been shown that such individual differences can amplify the impact of a certain dimension of self-congruity in comparison to others in the decision-making process (Jamal and Goode 2001; Sirgy and Johar 1999). Based on extant literature (e.g., Malär et al. 2011; Roy and Rabbanee 2015), this study examines the moderating role of consumers' regulatory focus and need for uniqueness.

Regulatory focus influences consumer behaviour through the selection of regulation strategies which affect consumers' cognitive processes, the emotions experienced and adopted behaviour (Boesen-Mariani, Gomez and Gavard-Perret 2010). This study contended that self-congruity types (actual, ideal and social self-congruity) and regulatory focus would determine consumers' attachment to brands. Consumers regulate their behaviours in pursuing goals and hence, prevention or promotion goals influence consumers' preferred modes of goal attainment and subsequently their behaviours (Higgins 1996; Shah and Higgins 1997; Higgins 2008). Grounded in this theoretical approach, this study proposed that individual differences in prevention and promotion focus will moderate the relationship between self-congruity and brand attachment.

**3.3.6.1 *The Moderating Effect of Self-Regulatory Focus***

As hypothesized in H1, actual self-congruity strengthens brand attachment because it supports consumers in their aims for self-verification. In this study, it is argued that a prevention focus will activate the pursuit of self-verification, a motive which emphasizes confirming and stabilizing individuals' current self-concept. This motive leads individuals to behave in ways consistent with how they view themselves (Sirgy 1986; Sirgy et al. 2008; Sirgy and Su 2000). In a similar vein, prevention focus is associated with the need for safety, conformity and security (Higgins 1997). Furthermore, individuals high in

prevention focus are more vigilant in avoiding undesired outcomes. In fact, changes are regarded as potential risks that may bring about negative outcomes and hence, they are more reluctant to change when the outcomes are uncertain (Kark and Van Dijk 2007; Liberman et al. 1999; Westjohn et al. 2016). In this regard, prevention-focused individuals prefer to continue their current behaviours in the future as to guard against potential losses and thereby maintain their desired state (Fuglestad, Rothman and Jeffery 2008). Complementing prevention focus, promotion focus concentrates on the accomplishments, aspirations and achievements (Higgins 1997). Highly promotion-focused individuals tend to eagerly pursue desired outcomes. Hence, they are more willing to engage in behavioural change. In other words, people high in promotion focus find it easier to initiate changes than prevention focus. The motivation for self-verification through fortifying individual's feelings of security and certainty (Swann, 1990) and avoiding negative outcomes like uncertainty (Swann, Pelham and Krull 1989) are more consistent with a prevention-focused than a promotion-focused.

Furthermore, the goals of the self-verifiers are characterized by confirming and enduring their actual self-concept, aiming to act in accordance with their self-identity (Stryker and Burke 2000). The self-verifier seeks to affirm and sustain their actual self-concepts through self-verifying information which results in stable self-concept (Swann 1983; Swann, Stein-Seroussi and Giesler 1992). Failing to behave consistently evoke negative feelings that may threaten an individual's belief about their self-view (Sirgy 1985). Similarly, a prevention focus is tied to identifying and maintaining a confidently held self-concept (Leonardelli, Lakin and Arkin 2007). Grounded in this argument, it is expected that individuals high in prevention focus tend to be persuaded by self-verification motives. Indeed, the empirical study by Sengupta and Zhou (2007) indicate that consumers with a prevention focus are reluctant to seek-out risky opportunities such as making hedonic purchases that may provide an opportunity for self-enhancement (Sengupta and Zhou 2007). Consistently, Leonardelli, Lakin, and Arkin (2007) provide evidence that a prevention focus rather than a promotion focus is associated with the pursuit of self-verification.

Accordingly, consumers tend to prefer self-verifying brands (i.e., with a high actual self-congruence) when prevention goals drive them. Prevention-focused consumers are also likely to notice and recall information relating to the avoidance of failure (Higgins

and Tykocinski 1992) and tend to show high motivation and persistence on tasks that are framed in terms of prevention (Shah, Higgins and Friedman 1998). Further, they are also particularly well-attuned to emotions relating to the successful or unsuccessful avoidance of negative outcomes such as quiescence and anxiety (Higgins, Shah and Friedman 1997). It is expected that consumers in this state of mind will be especially susceptible to the brand that has personality consistent with their actual self to avoid negative outcomes (e.g., uncertainty, agitations). On the basis of self-verification processes, consumers with high prevention focus perceive their actual self as being more positive and they are likely to make a personal connection with brands that reflect their actual self. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

***H6a (i): Prevention focus strengthens the relationship between actual self-congruity and brand attachment.***

***(ii): Promotion focus weakens the relationship between actual self-congruity and brand attachment.***

In the case of ideal self-congruity, it is argued that promotion goals strengthen the impact on brand attachment. As discussed in the context of H1b, consumption of ideal self-congruent brands strengthen the consumer's brand attachment through the self-enhancement process. Self-enhancement is related to individuals' desire to improve the positivity of their self-concept (Higgins 1996; Leary 2007; Sedikides and Strube 1997). Consumers who are motivated by self-enhancement motive tend to attain, maximize and regulate positive self-views. Furthermore, self-enhancement increases motivation to succeed and improve performance (Higgins 1996; Taylor and Brown 1988). Individuals with a promotion focus highlight success-related outcomes which is consistent with the motivations for self-enhancement. It is generally agreed that promotion-focused individuals tend to engage in self-enhancement activities (Hepper, Gramzow and Sedikides 2010; Higgins 1996; Leonardelli, Lakin and Arkin 2007). In contrast, individuals with a prevention focus are less likely to pursue self-enhancement goals but are motivated to prevent negative outcomes and potential failures (Higgins 1996). Hence, it is expected that consumers with high promotion focus will pursuit the self-enhancement motive, whereas the converse is true for consumers with a high prevention focus.

In addition, promotion-focused individuals concentrate on accomplishments, achievements and aspirations in life (Higgins 1997; Higgins, Shah and Friedman 1997) and that promotion focus activities contribute to the broadening of individuals' perspectives and capacities and cultivate the development of self (Mikulincer and Shaver 2005). Such focus regulates individuals to move towards their ideal selves (Brockner and Higgins 2001). Concentrating on the ideal self, in turn, may motivate promotion-focused individuals to seek opportunities for self-enhancement (Aaker and Lee 2001). In other words, the motive of the ideal self toward self-enhancement through achieving success is consistent with a promotion focus. It is expected that a brand with a personality that reveals consumers' ideal selves will be consistent with their self-enhancement motives and therefore, supports a promotion focus (Aaker and Lee 2001).

Consumers who are driven by promotion goals may look for information that is related to the pursuit of growth and achievements and tend to notice and recall information relating to the pursuit of success by others (Higgins and Tykocinski 1992). Therefore, it is obvious that people in this state of mind will be especially susceptible to brands that enhance their self-concept and provide access to ideals and aspirations. A study by Strauman and Higgins (1988) posits that depression is related to greater actual-ideal discrepancies. Therefore, it is possible to believe that consumers might eagerly seek brands with personalities consistent with their ideal self (ideal self-congruence brand) to reduce such discrepancies. Integrating the brand's characteristics or personalities to self-concept enables a consumer to perceive that the actual self is closer to the ideal (Belk 1988). Pursuing such brands may exemplify positive outcomes by encouraging the pursuit of symbolic self-improvement. This may, in turn, lead to the inclusion of the brand into consumers' self-concept, causing stronger brand attachment. As a consequence, the following is hypothesized:

***H6b (i): Prevention focus weakens the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment.***

***(ii): Promotion focus strengthens the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment.***

The social self is guided by social consistency motives, aimed at obtaining group acceptance and approval (Claiborne and Sirgy 1990; Sirgy, 1982). Social consistency

motive fosters self-knowledge based confidence which leads to smooth social interactions. It is proposed in this study that a prevention focus rather than a promotion focus is concerned with the pursuit of social consistency. The first line of reasoning is based on the denotation of Kark and Van Dijk (2007) that promotion-focused individuals are guided by their inner ideals and not by external forces, whereas prevention-focused individuals are more influenced by social pressure, obligations and social responsibilities. In a similar vein, Gu, Bohns, and Leonardelli (2013) suggest that prevention-focused consumers who are not promotion-focused, evaluate their outcomes in relation to the outcomes of others' outcomes. Additionally, consumers with a prevention focus are more concerned about avoiding a negative identity by living up to their responsibilities (Higgins et al. 1997). Further, they tend to meet their perceived social obligations, duties and responsibilities to avoid shame (Higgins 1997; Higgins, Shah and Friedman 1997). Prior research in cultural psychology reveals that the interdependent self tends to be prevention focused (Aaker and Lee 2001; Higgins 1996; Lee, Aaker and Gardner 2000). Interdependent self-view refers to the view of oneself as intimately defined by group membership and social roles (Markus and Kitayama 1991), whereas social self-view is the perception of the self as an interchangeable exemplar of some social category (Turner et al. 1987) that includes the interest and accomplishment of others (Brewer 2001). This conceptual overlap advocate that prevention-focused individuals are more prompt to social self-definition because prevention focus encourages individuals to consider the relationships with members of the social group (Singelis 1994).

Highly prevention-focused people tend to be socially anxious when they believe that others perceive them negatively (Higgins 1987) and are aware of the need to fulfill social expectations. Negative views about their self-concepts can result in negative emotions. Therefore, to avoid social disapproval, a prevention-focused consumer, motivated by social consistency motive, tends to be attracted to the brand with a personality consistent with his or her social self (social self-congruence brand). Therefore, they tend to build a strong attachment to such brands. Hence, the following is hypothesized:

***H6c (i): Prevention focus strengthens the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment.***

***(ii): Promotion focus weakens the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment.***

### **3.3.6.2 The Moderating Effect of Consumers' Need for Uniqueness**

As proposed in the context of H1, self-congruity strengthens brand attachment because it facilitates consumers in their aims for self-verification, self-enhancement or social-consistency. Consumers tend to express their distinctiveness through the consumption of unique products or brands. This study proposed a differential impact of actual, ideal and social self-congruity on consumers who are driven by high versus low consumers' need for uniqueness (CNFU) on brand attachment.

Consumers with a high need for uniqueness prefer products that help them to differentiate themselves from others. In this study, the differential impacts of actual, ideal and social self-congruity on consumers who are driven by the need for uniqueness are examined. Past research has evidenced that individuals with high need for uniqueness do not yield to majority influence and thus, do not conform to a social opinion (e.g., Imhoff and Erb 2009; Simonson and Nowlis 2000). For example, Simonson and Nowlis (2000) stipulate that consumers with a high need for uniqueness prefer unconventional choices and are less likely to be persuaded by advertising puffery. Further, they are resistant to majority influence. In contrast, consumers with a low need for uniqueness tend to compromise options in their consumption choices (Imhoff and Erb 2009). This is evidenced in Simonson and Nowlis (2000) where respondents with a low need for uniqueness are more persuaded by advertising puffery and compromise options in their choices. Based on this notion, individuals with a high need for uniqueness tend to prefer brands with personality consistent with their ideal self-congruity as it signifies their distinctiveness. In contrast, an individual with a low need for uniqueness is likely to prefer a brand with personality consistent with their social self as it signifies majority influence.

Actual self-congruity strengthens brand attachment because it facilitates consumers in their aims for self-verification (Johar and Sirgy 2015; Sirgy 1986; Sirgy et al. 1991; Sirgy, Lee and Yu 2016). Self-verification literature posits that individuals are motivated to preserve their self-concept and maintain consistency between their self-concepts and new self-relevant information (Swann, Pelham and Krull 1989; Swann 1990). Moreover,

they prefer certainty, familiarity, predictability, and risk reduction (Swann 1983; Swann et al. 1987) whereas, self-verifiers will choose products and brands that are similar to their actual self (London 2003; Rosenberg 1979; Swann 1983).

Pursuing differentness requires a willingness to change past behaviours and dispose of preferences in order to avoid similarity (Nail 1986; Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001). The pursuit of uniqueness counters the motivation of self-verifier to be consistent and predictable (Swann 1983; Swann et al. 1987). Therefore, self-verification processes result from the consumption of actual congruent brands that counter the underlying motivation to be unique and different from others. It is postulated that consumers with a high need for uniqueness are less likely to make the connection between the brand and their actual self and therefore are less likely to form a brand attachment, which leads to the following hypothesis:

***H7a: Consumers' need for uniqueness weakens the relationship between actual self-congruity and brand attachment.***

In the case of ideal self-congruity, it is argued that the consumers' need for uniqueness strengthens the effect on brand attachment. As discussed earlier in H1b, the process of self-enhancement due to the consumption of ideal self-congruent brands strengthens consumers' attachment to brands. Consumers' need for uniqueness may moderate this relationship.

Based on self-enhancement theory, individuals are persuaded to promote the positivity of their self-concepts and to protect their self-concepts from negative information (Sedikides and Strube 1997). This motive encourages individuals' to seek experiences that improve or bolster their self-concepts (Leary 2007). For those consumers' high in need for uniqueness, high similarity to others diminishes self-esteem and triggers self-esteem-restoring behaviours (Irmak, Vallen and Sen 2010). One approach to regain a positive self-image is through the use of products and brands. Specifically, the use of unique products and brands that increase one's self-view as different from 'the crowd' and results in a more positive perception of the self than of others, and hence, enhances one's self-concept (Tesser 1988). Furthermore, the positive feedback received from others as one who is special and unique provides the intrinsic satisfaction

that in turn enhances one's self-concept (Fromkin and Snyder 1980; Snyder 1992; Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001). Probably this notion justifies the denotation of Snyder and Fromkin (1977; 1980) in that, consumers' need for uniqueness is their self-esteem driven by the need to maintain a sense of uniqueness. In a similar vein, Ruvio, Shoham, and Brencic (2008) argue that consumers' uniqueness puts them in the powerful position of guiding others' consumption behaviour, by acting as an opinion leader or by being imitated. The motivation to demonstrate opinion leadership reflects a desire to enhance consumers' sense of self (Taylor, Strutton and Thompson 2012).

It is worth noting that the pursuit of a unique identity is part of the self-expansion process (Deci and Ryan 1991) that improves one's self-view and results in self-worth (Simon et al. 1997). For these individuals, the feeling of differentness to 'the crowd' serves as an intrinsic satisfaction (Snyder 1992) that in turn enhances their self-concept. Thus, consumers with a high need for uniqueness are more likely to prefer self-enhancing brands (i.e. with ideal self-congruity). On the basis of the self-enhancement processes, consumers with a high need for uniqueness are likely to make the connection with brands that are similar to their ideal self and thereby increase their brand attachment. As a result, the following hypothesis is proposed:

***H7b: Consumers' need for uniqueness strengthens the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment.***

It is documented that brands enable consumers to signal the affiliation with others in the social environment and thus convey a desired social identity (Belk 1988; Chan, Berger and Boven 2012; Escalas and Bettman 2005). A social self-congruent brand facilitates the development of brand attachment through the activation of consumers' motivation for social consistency. Social consistency motive (Johar and Sirgy 2015; Sirgy, Grewal and Mangleburg 2000; Sirgy, Johar and Claiborne 2015) suggests that individuals are motivated to maintain an image others have of them and to facilitate smooth social interactions and approval (Swann, Stein-Seroussi and Giesler 1992). Prior research on social interactions (e.g., Baumeister 1982; Guerin 1986; Snyder and Fromkin 1977) argues that individuals tend to conform to others and gain their approval in order to avoid criticism and rejection. These individuals may also have a strong need for approval where they desired to receive positive feedback from others to support one's

self-concept. To express one's social self, consumers are likely to engage in products and brands that conform to the relevant others (e.g., Brewer 1991; Reingen et al. 1984). Obviously, a social consistency motive counters the motivation to be unique or distinct relative to others.

Similarly, Snyder and Fromkin (1980) argue that the need for social acceptance constrains the pursuit of uniqueness. Consumers with low need for uniqueness tend to conform to social norms and pursue similarity with others in their choices (Simonson and Nowlis 2000). Furthermore, Escalas and Bettman (2005) found that individuals who focus on social self (interdependence self-construal) tend to have a lower brand-self connection with a brand that is highly associated with out-groups compared with those who emphasize on personal self (independent self-construal). Therefore, social consistency processes result from the consumption of social congruent brands that counter the underlying motivation to be unique and different from others. In this regard, consumers with a high need for uniqueness are less likely to form connections with the brand that is consistent with their social self, and hence the following hypothesis is proposed:

***H7c: Consumers' need for uniqueness weakens the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment.***

### **3.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter explains the conceptual framework and hypotheses developed for this study. The proposed conceptual framework is constructed based on three core theories, which are attachment theory, self-expansion theory and self-congruity theory. Supported by the core theories, actual, ideal and social self-congruity and brand experience are identified as the antecedents of brand attachment. Brand attachment is then linked to the outcome variables of attitudinal brand loyalty and behavioural brand loyalty. Further, this study examines the mediating role of brand experience on the relationships between actual, ideal and social self-congruity and brand attachment. The framework integrates self-regulatory theory and uniqueness theory by assessing the moderating effects of self-regulatory focus (prevention versus promotion focus) and

consumers' need for uniqueness on the relationships between actual, ideal and social self-congruity on brand attachment. Seven main hypotheses are developed to reflect the hypothesized relationships between the constructs. The next chapter will discuss the research method used to test the proposed hypotheses.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the research philosophy and presents the methodology used to undertake the systematic examination of the proposed relationships in the conceptual framework. The chapter is organized into nine major sections; research philosophy, research approaches, research design, research strategy, sampling design, research instruments, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations. The chapter begins with an introduction to different types of research philosophy and the underlying assumptions underpinning the research methodology. The next section presents a description of research approaches, strategies and choices. Subsequent sections outline the procedures for the data collection and data analysis, followed in the last section by discussing the ethical considerations, concluding with a summary of the chapter.

### **4.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY**

Research philosophy reflects the researcher's beliefs concerning the nature of reality (ontology), knowledge that informs the research (epistemology) and the means by which knowledge is valued (axiology) (Bryman and Bell 2015). These beliefs are important in any social science research as these are inherent in the research process and justify the methodology adopted (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). The following section explains the concept of ontology, epistemology, and axiology.

#### **4.2.1 The Concept of Ontology, Epistemology and Axiology**

Ontology reflects a researcher's belief in the nature of reality, and about how the world functions (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). Ontological assumptions can be categorized as objective and subjective ontologies. Objective researchers view reality made up of objects that can be explained and measured through scientific methodologies (O'Gorman and MacIntosh 2015). Thus, the reality is independent of the

researchers. Conversely, subjective researchers assume that reality is a blend of perceptions and interactions of living subjects (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). Epistemology, on the other hand, is the study of knowledge and attempts to identify what knowledge is acceptable in a discipline (Bryman and Bell 2015; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). Lastly, axiology is concerned with researchers' judgments about the value and is directly engaged in the evaluation of the researcher's own values at every single stage of the research process.

#### **4.2.2 Philosophical Perspectives**

Research philosophies can be categorized into four different perspectives: (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016), pragmatism, positivism, realism, and interpretivism. Accordingly, these research philosophies are governed by three assumptions as described in the previous section, namely ontology, epistemology and axiology. Notwithstanding, a philosophical approach provides a theoretical and practical framework that directs the nature of the examination (Broido and Manning 2002).

Positivism is grounded in the natural sciences and entails the scientific approach towards the development of reality (Bryman and Bell 2015) and seeks facts or causes of social phenomena based on the assumption that reality is viewed as the independence of researchers and theories provide the basis for explanation (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). Positivist researchers assert that individuals' behaviours can be observed, measured and analyzed based on a structured methodology (Gratton and Jones 2010) and emphasize on structured methodology in order to facilitate replication and generalizations (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016).

In contrast, the interpretivists deny that one single reality exists and claim that reality is socially constructed and as such, is subjective and multiple (Hudson and Ozanne 1988). The crux of realism is that what we sense is interpretivist reality whereby this belief also assumes a scientific approach towards the development of knowledge. Pragmatists acknowledge that there are different ways of interpreting the world and conducting research. Hence, the use of multiple methods of research is often possible.

#### **4.2.3 Justification on the Choice of Research Philosophy**

This study explores the role of self-congruity, brand experience, self-regulatory focus and consumers' need for uniqueness in fostering brand attachment and brand loyalty by theoretically conceptualizing its relations with these key constructs underlying the process of brand attachment formation. This requires empirical testing of the proposed model and research hypotheses by employing a structured methodology. Thus, this study adopted a positivist approach. Positivism is popularly associated with studies in brand attachment studies (Huang, Zhang and Hu 2017; Malär et al. 2011; Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013; Park et al. 2010). However, positivism has been criticized for its insufficient or lack of understanding of social phenomena as it fails to identify the meaning that people attach to such phenomena. Additionally, it has a clear theoretical focus from the beginning that guides the hypothesis development. Therefore, due to its emphasis on the objective scientific method, it is able to produce replicable and generalizable results.

With reference to the positivist ontological and epistemological assumptions, the researcher in this study believes that reality could be discovered through robust and replicable methods. Thus, this study has adopted a structured methodology by formulating hypotheses from existing theories and a deductive research approach by analyzing quantitative data using statistically valid techniques before making generalizations and conclusions (Creswell 2014). Following the positivist axiological assumptions, this study was undertaken in a value-free way where the researcher was independent of the data (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). Also, during the data collection process, the researcher and the participants did not influence each other (Hudson and Ozanne 1988).

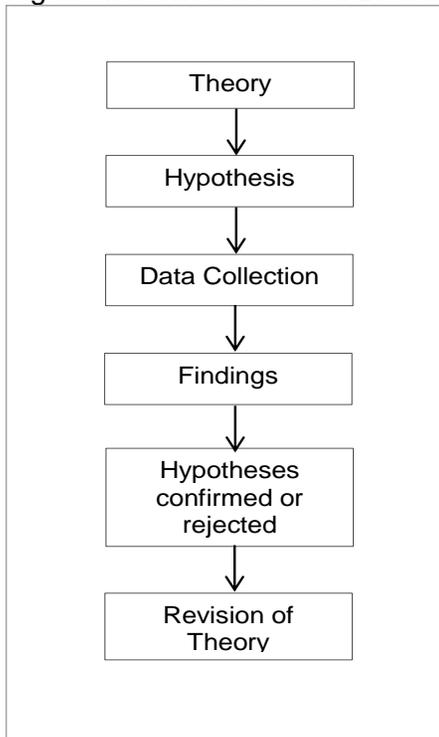
In addition to understanding the research philosophy, comprehending the methodological differences is also crucial. Therefore, in choosing the methodology, it must be compatible with the theoretical and practical traditions of the research philosophy. The following section discusses the process for selecting the research methodology.

### **4.3 RESEARCH APPROACH: DEDUCTIVE RESEARCH**

A review of the social science research methodologies identified two principal methods that are widely recognized and adopted; an inductive and deductive research approach (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). The induction research approach aims to describe, to uncover deep meaning or to build theory. With this approach, data are collected, and theories are developed as a result of the data analyses. With the deductive approach, theories and hypotheses are constructed to enable a research strategy to be formulated in order to test the hypothesis. The deductive research attempts to explain the causal relationships between concepts, which need to be operationalized in such a way that enables facts to be measured quantitatively (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). Accordingly, this means that data are collected in relation to the concepts that make up of hypotheses (Bryman and Bell 2015). The deductive approach assumes that data is objective and neutral. Therefore, in this case, generalization is possible. Such an approach involves a structured methodology to facilitate replication and to ensure reliability.

This study has adopted the positivism philosophical assumption whereby reality can be interpreted by employing a structured methodology and using a deductive research approach. Accordingly, this study aims to explain the determinants of brand attachment and its subsequent effect on brand loyalty. The existing theories and theoretical frameworks from the marketing, branding, and consumer behaviour literature provide the theoretical foundations of the proposed conceptual framework and hypotheses in this study. For example, the relationship between self-congruity and brand attachment can be explained based on the self-expansion theory (Aron, Aron and Norman 2001) and the self-congruity theory (Sirgy 1982). Therefore, it is feasible, to begin with, the theories which underpin the development of the hypotheses which, justifies the deduction approach and process as outlined by Bryman and Bell (2015) (see Figure 4.1). The research began with the theories, followed by formulating the hypotheses that drove the data collection process. The research findings were then used to support or reject the hypotheses, and the results were fed back into the theory.

Figure 4.1: The Process of Deductive Research



Source: Figure reproduced from Bryman and Bell (2015, 23)

#### 4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN: QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

The research design plan outlines the structure of the research undertaken in this study. The design incorporates; the objectives derived from the research questions, and explain and justify sources of information, methods of data collection, data analyses, sampling strategy, research constraints and possible ethical issues (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). There are two types of research design, namely qualitative and quantitative research design which are discussed in the following section.

##### 4.4.1 Quantitative versus Qualitative Research

Quantitative research is generally associated with positivism and adopting a deductive approach (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). Notably, this involves the examination of objective theories by assessing the causal relationship between variables (Creswell 2014). Likewise, it is concerned with numerical data that can be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Importantly, quantitative findings can be replicated and be used to ensure generalizability (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). However,

as noted by Silverman (2014), quantitative research cannot provide in-depth explanations of the research problems, and its arbitrary operationalization of the variables tends to vary from the context-settings (Silverman 2014). On the other hand, qualitative research involves interpretivism philosophy using an inductive approach (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). Notably, qualitative data contains richer information from the respondents. However, due to its subjectivity, the qualitative data is challenging to replicate and thus, lacks generalizability (Bryman and Bell 2015).

#### **4.4.2 Justification on the Choice of Quantitative Research**

This study has adopted a quantitative research design, which is guided by positivism philosophical terminology which assumes that reality is interpreted through a structured methodology as mentioned earlier. The application of quantitative research design has been generally recognized as the dominant design used in marketing and academic research (Hanson and Grimmer 2007). As denoted by Hunt (1983), good marketing research should emphasize ‘law-like generalizations that are empirically testable’. Given this study aims to test the hypothesized relationships formulated based on existing theories, the quantitative method is well suited for testing the hypotheses and providing evidence of reliability and validity (Hair et al. 2010). This is in accordance with Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016) denotation that selection of the research design should be in accordance with the research questions and the objectives of the study.

#### **4.5 RESEARCH STRATEGY: SURVEY**

Developing a sampling strategy is essential for increasing the validity and the representativeness of the data collected (Bryman 2004). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016) identify seven types of research strategies; experiment, survey, case study, action research, grounded theory, ethnography and archival research. This study employed a cross-sectional survey where the data were collected at a single point in time. A survey, which is commonly associated with the deductive research approach, is used to collect quantitative data in order to measure individuals’ thoughts, attitudes and behaviours (Kerlinger and Lee 2000). Indeed, the survey is a suitable research strategy when the study includes several variables (Iacobucci and Churchill 2010). As this study aims to explain the relationships between self-congruity, brand experience and brand

attachment, the survey approach is deemed as an acceptable strategy in conducting the research to test the proposed hypotheses. Several prior studies in the marketing domain have also used this approach to examine brand attachment (e.g. Malär et al. 2011; Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013; Park et al. 2010).

#### **4.5.1. Online Panel Survey**

This study employed an online panel survey, where a pool of respondents who are pre-recruited to participate in a survey (Comley and Beaumont 2011; Dennis 2001). The sample used in this study was recruited by Asia Pacific Digital Limited (apd), a digital services provider, which specializes in digital marketing research. It is also one of the largest marketing service providers located across six countries in the Asia Pacific region. The value of this company is noted for several reasons: (1) having an active panel of 220,000 Australian members with access to 1.6 million Australian households; (2) the panellists have good representation of the Australian census population, especially the distribution of the panel members in each region (or city) (see Table 4.1) and (3) the quality of the panel members. The company closely monitors the members to avoid potential fraudulent behaviours.

The applications of the online panel survey have gained increasing popularity in marketing research since the last decade (Dennis 2001; Evans and Mathur 2005; Jang, Kim and Lee 2015; Lam et al. 2013; Li and Petrick 2008). Moreover, the online panel survey is the preferred tool and approach used for data collection in this study due to five reasons. Firstly, internet penetration in Australia has reached 88.2% (Internet World Stats 2017). This statistic increases the ability to reach target respondents.

Secondly, an online survey is faster with the ability to achieve a high response rate, at a relatively low cost compared to face-to-face interviews and telephone surveys (Babin and Zikmund 2015; Comley and Beaumont 2011; Sue and Ritter 2011). Thirdly, it allows respondents to complete the survey in their own time and pace. This method addresses the limitations of using 'traditional' methods like face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews or postal panels. For example, youngsters are difficult to contact via the telephone and working adults are hard to reach via face-to-face methods, given their busy schedule and commitments (Comley and Beaumont 2011). Fourth, an online survey promises anonymity as the respondents are directed to a website or an online

survey platform to complete the questionnaire. Lastly, an online survey using self-administered questionnaires without the presence of interviewers can reduce socially desirable responses (Sue and Ritter 2011).

Table 4.1: Characteristics of Asia Pacific Digital Limited Member Profile and Australian Census Data

Demographic Variable		Australian Census Data (2017) (%)	apd User Data (%)	Difference (%)
Gender	Male	54	49.8	4.2
	Female	46	50.2	-4.2
Age	Below 25	28	30.6	-2.6
	25-54	65	41.5	23.5
	55-64	5	11.8	-6.8
	Above 65	2	16.1	14.1
Region (population)	New South Wales	29	31.9	-2.9
	Victoria	28	25.7	-2.3
	Queensland	20	20	0
	South Australia	10	7	3
	Western Australia	9	10.5	-1.5
	Australian Capital Territory	1	1.7	-0.7
	Tasmania	2.5	2.1	0.4
	Northern Territory	0.5	1	-0.5

Source: apd Market Research Panel Book and Australian Bureau of Statistics

Though, online panel survey is not without has its constraints. Sampling bias may be a potential weakness in an online survey. For instance, only those respondents with internet access are invited to participate in the survey which may leave out certain sample population that does not have internet access. Also, while participants do accept to partake in the online survey, not all end up participating for various reasons. Moreover, not all panelists that are invited will respond (Duffy et al. 2005). These sampling biases may lead to non-representativeness of the sample to the total population (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). However, past research has compared online and face-to-face surveys (Duffy et al. 2005) as well as mail surveys (Deutskens et al. 2006) where the results reveal the reliable response and quality of online surveys. Therefore, it can be concluded that despite the potential sampling biases generated by online panel surveys, it remains a reliable and efficient survey method to employ for this study.

## **4.6 SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT**

An important step in designing the questionnaire is to determine the information required to achieve the research objectives (Iacobucci and Churchill 2010). With reference to the information developed from the conceptual framework, research questions and hypotheses, the conceptual and operational definitions of the constructs were formulated and used as guidelines in developing the questionnaire. Questionnaires are commonly used in a survey to collect quantifiable data as to investigate the patterns of associations with two or more variables (Bryman and Bell 2015; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016).

### **4.6.1 Survey Questionnaire Design**

Careful attention has been directed toward designing the questionnaire in order to obtain accurate and plausible responses. While formulating the questions, simple language and familiar words specifically related to the topic were used to structure the questions accordingly. In order to enhance the engagement of respondents, the questionnaire was designed in line with the recommendations of Comley and Beaumont (2011). Firstly, the length of the questionnaire should be of an appropriate length; taking no more than 15 minutes to complete. Secondly, to improve the aesthetics and layout of the questionnaire, simple grid questions, along with shading of alternative rows was used (Kaczmarek 2008). Also, in line with Sallows' (2011) suggestions, each question was kept to 140 characters to facilitate easy reading. An attention check question was also included to test whether the respondents were carefully reading the questions (Berinsky, Margolis and Sances 2014; Oppenheimer, Meyvis and Davidenko 2009). The following question was included mid-way through the survey as a 'screening' question; "I hope this survey is interesting and I still have your attention. If I still have your attention, please select agree".

The questionnaire started by listing three brands and asking the respondents to select the most familiar brand. In the pre-test, the respondents identified these brands and product categories. Notably, brand familiarity is assured, given brand attachment is formed when an individual interacts with the brand (Park et al. 2010; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005) and consequently, the respondents should be familiar with at least one of the focal brands (Malär et al., 2011).

The next section consisted of brand-related questions where the respondents were requested to answer the questions based on the brand selected in the earlier question. These questions measured the respondent's actual, ideal and social self-congruity, brand attachment, brand experience, and brand loyalty regarding the specific brand. This was followed by questions that measured the consumer's regulatory focus orientations as well as their need for uniqueness. The questions related to the demographic variables were placed at the end of the questionnaire, following the recommendations by (Bourque and Fielder 2003). These questions collected information about each respondent's age, gender, income, education, and place of residence. Each section contained instructions at the beginning on how to respond to each question. A cover letter describing the purpose of the study, the researcher's contact details and ethics approval were also included on the first page of the questionnaire. It is important to include a cover letter as it anticipates and helps to answer any questions that the respondent may have regarding the survey and also facilitate in increasing the response rate (Bourque and Fielder 1995).

#### **4.6.2 Operationalization of the Constructs**

This section presents the conceptualization and operationalization of the main variables used in this study. A concept specifies ideas derived from a model (Silverman 2014) or a name is given to a variable to organize its main characteristic (Bryman and Bell 2015). Conceptualization refers to the process of defining the variable (Iacobucci and Churchill 2010), whereas operationalization reflects the process through which the concepts are translated into indicators used to measure empirically (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). This study involved three independent variables (actual, ideal and social self-congruity), two dependent variables (brand attachment and brand loyalty), one mediating variable (brand experience) and two moderating variables (self-regulatory focus and consumers' need for uniqueness). A review of relevant studies was conducted with a particular focus on brand attachment, brand experience, brand loyalty, self-congruity, consumers' need for uniqueness and regulatory focus on the key constructs' definitions and measurements for the main studies in the domain.

The constructs were operationalized using Likert-type scales. A Likert-type scale is a common approach employed to measure a wide variety of latent constructs as it is reliable and easy to use (Iacobucci and Churchill 2010). Additionally, using a Likert-type

scale may reduce the presence of extreme outliers as item scales are arranged in groups according to the constructs (Treiblmaier and Filzmoser 2011). In this study, the seven-point Likert-type scale anchored by (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree was employed. According to Adelson and McCoach (2010), scales with a midpoint have greater reliability than even-numbered scales. Considering scales with a midpoint, the seven-point Likert-type scale provides more robust parametric and multivariate statistical analyses (Hair et al. 2010). Furthermore, research shows that the seven-point Likert-type scale is ideal as it provides better sensitivity compared to the three-point or five-point Likert scale (Preston and Colman 2000). Moreover, the seven-point Likert-type scale is applied in numerous studies in brand attachment (e.g., Dolbec and Chebat 2013; Dunn and Hoegg 2014; Ramaseshan and Stein 2014).

The measurements used in this study stem from empirically validated scales based on the extensive review of the literature (see Table 4.2). The selected measurements used were slightly adapted or re-worded to accommodate the sample of this study. The following sections discuss the operationalization of all the constructs used in this study.

Table 4.2: Summary of Constructs' Measurements used in Selected Key Studies

Source	Conceptual Definition	Study context	Dimension	No. of Item
<b>Brand Attachment</b>				
Thomson, McInnis and Park (2005)	Emotional bonding between a consumer and a brand	Consumer goods	3 dimensions (affection, connection and passion)	10
Park et al. (2010; 2)	The strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self	Consumer goods and services	2 dimensions (brand-self-connection and brand prominence)	10
Park, Eisingerich and Park (2013; 230)	Attachment-Aversion relationship describes the perceived distance of a brand from the self and accessibility of the brand memories.	Consumer goods and services	2 dimensions (Brand-self distance and brand prominence)	4
<b>Self-congruity</b>				
Huber, Eisele and Meyer (2018)	A match between the brand personality with consumer's actual, ideal and ought self.	Consumer goods	3 dimensions (actual, ideal, ought self-congruity)	6
Malär et al (2011)	A match between the brand personality with the consumer's actual and ideal self.	Consumer goods	2 dimensions (actual and ideal self-congruity)	4
Sirgy et al (1997)	A match between the product-user image and the consumer's self-image	Consumer goods	1 dimension	5
<b>Brand Experience</b>				
Nysveen et al (2012)	Subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings and cognitions) and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications and environments.	Consumer services	5 dimensions (sensory, emotional, intellectual, behavioural and relational experience)	15
Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello	Subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings and	Consumer goods and services	4 dimensions (sensory, emotional,	12

(2009; 53)	cognitions) and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications and environments.		intellectual and behavioural experience)	
Chang and Chieng (2006; 931)	Experience is private events that occur in response to stimulation or direct observation in events.	Retailing	2 dimensions (individual and shared experiences)	15
<b>Brand Loyalty</b>				
Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001)	Brand loyal consists of attitudinal loyalty that involves a commitment to the brand and behavioural loyalty that refers to repeated purchase.	Consumer goods	2 dimensions (attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty)	4
Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996)	Loyalty is referred to consumers' behavioural intentions that are reflected in their preference for a company over others, intentions to repurchase and to increase business with it in the future	Consumer services	1 dimension	5
Wirtz, Mattila and Lwin (2007)	Attitudinal loyalty reflects the consumer's psychological attachment toward the brand	Consumer services	1 dimension	3
<b>Consumers' Need for Uniqueness</b>				
Ruvio, Shoham and Brencic (2008)	The trait of pursuing differences relative to others through the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing ones' self-image and social image (Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001; 52)	Consumer goods	3 dimensions (creative choice, unpopular choice, avoidance of similarity)	12
Tian, Bearden and Hunter (2001; 52)	The trait of pursuing differences relative to others through the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of	Consumer goods	3 dimensions (creative choice, unpopular choice, avoidance of similarity)	31

	developing and enhancing ones' self-image and social image.			
Lynn and Harris (1997)	The degree to which consumers differ in their personal and self-expressive goals, and the desire for experiences that few others possess.	Consumer goods	1 dimension	8
<b>Self-Regulatory Focus</b> (source: Haws, Dholakia and Bearden 2010)				
Carver and White (1994)	Based on regulating aversive/appetitive motivations and approach/avoidance regulatory systems in which individuals wish to approach pleasant outcomes and avoid unpleasant outcomes. Emotional reactions are emphasized.	Events	2 dimensions (Prevention focus and Promotion focus)	12
Higgins et al (2001)	It highlights anticipatory reactions to goals resulting from the individual's past success in promotion and prevention goal attainment and the resulting pride from these successes	Events	2 dimensions (Prevention focus and Promotion focus)	11
Lockwood, Jordan and Kunda (2002)	It measures the primary tenets of regulatory focus theory account for accessibility of ideal and ought self-guides, individual's subjective experiences of success in obtaining past prevention and promotion goals	Role models	2 dimensions (Prevention focus and Promotion focus)	18
Haws, Dholakia and Bearden (2010)	A composite scale that distinguishes between approach/avoidance within each regulatory focus (RFQ items), measuring cognitive and emotional responses (BIS/BAS items) and describing self-regulatory for promotion and prevention focus (Lockwood items)	Consumer goods and services	2 dimensions (Prevention focus and Promotion focus)	10

#### **4.6.2.1 Operationalization of Self-Congruity**

Self-congruity is referred to as a match between the consumer's self-concept and the brand's personality (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Malär et al. 2011; Sirgy 1982). Two important approaches have been adopted in the previous studies to measure self-congruity, which are a direct and indirect approach (Sirgy et al. 1997). The indirect approach uses a gap scoring formula to compute the self-congruity which subtracts the difference between the self-concept and the perceived image measure (Sirgy 1982; 1985) whereas the direct approach asks the respondents to rate their overall perception of the degree of match or mismatch between the brand personality and their own self-concept. Past research generally adopted the indirect method (e.g., Hong and Zinkhan 1995; Mehta 1999). However, direct approach is getting its popularity in the recent research (e.g., Kang et al. 2017; Malär et al. 2011; Roy and Rabbane 2015). This might be due to the ability of the direct method to capture the psychological experience of self-congruity directly and demonstrate a better predictive validity on consumer behaviours (Malär et al. 2011; Sirgy et al. 1997).

Actual self-congruity indicates the consumer's perception regarding the match between the actual self and the brand's personality while ideal self-congruity refers to the consumer's perception of the fit between the ideal self and the brand personality (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Malär et al. 2011). In contrast, social self-congruity indicates the consumer's perception of the fit between the actual self and the brand personality (Sirgy 1982). Consistent with other similar studies (e.g., Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Malär et al. 2011), actual and ideal self-congruity were measured by adapting the scale of Sirgy et al (1997). The wordings of each item were adjusted following Malär et al. (2011), and the scales were adapted to assess social self-congruity. The direct approach was operationalized in two phases with reference to Malär et al. (2011). Firstly, in the first phase to measure actual self-congruity, the respondents were asked to think about the brand of their choice (brand x) as if it were a person and think of a set of human traits associated with this brand. Next, the respondents were instructed to think about how they see themselves and their personality (e.g., actual self). Several examples of personality traits were given to help the respondents to imagine the brand personality more succinctly. For instance, honest, wholesome, up-to-date, reliable, charming, successful and upper-class were provided. Finally, the respondents were requested to indicate the degree of match or mismatch

between how they see the brand's personality and how they see themselves. Five items were used to measure actual self-congruity. The same procedure was used for ideal and social self-congruity. The operationalization of self-congruity is presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Operationalization of Actual, Ideal and Social Self-Congruity

Code	Item	Source
<b>Actual Self-Congruity</b>		
ASC1	The personality of Brand X is consistent with how I see myself.	Malär et al. (2011), Sirgy et al. (1997)
ASC2	The personality of Brand X is a mirror image of me.	
ASC3	The personality of Brand X reflects how I see myself.	Sirgy et al. (1997)
ASC4	The personality of Brand X is very much like me.	
ASC5	The personality of Brand X is similar to me.	
<b>Ideal Self-Congruity</b>		
ISC1	The personality of Brand X is consistent with how I would like to be.	Malär et al. (2011), Sirgy et al. (1997)
ISC2	The personality of Brand X is a mirror image of the person I would like to be.	
ISC3	The personality of Brand X reflects how I would like to be.	Sirgy et al. (1997)
ISC4	The personality of Brand X is very much like who I would like to be.	
ISC5	The personality of Brand X is similar to who I would like to be.	
<b>Social Self-Congruity</b>		
SSC1	The personality of Brand X is consistent with how other people see me.	Sirgy et al. (1997)
SSC2	The personality of Brand X is a mirror image of how other people see me.	
SSC3	The personality of Brand X reflects how other people see me.	
SSC4	The personality of Brand X is very much like how other people see me.	
SSC5	The personality of Brand X is similar to how other people see me.	

#### 4.6.2.2 Operationalization of Brand Experience

Brand experience is defined as “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings and cognitions) and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications and environments” (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009, 53). Extant literature discovered that brand experience is a multidimensional construct (e.g., Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009; Gentile, Spiller and Noci 2007; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982;

Schmitt 1999). In this study, brand experience is operationalized as a four-dimensional construct, sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioural experience. .Sensory experiences provide aesthetical pleasure, excitement and a satisfied mood which may influence a consumer's emotional state (Gentile, Spiller and Noci 2007; Schmitt 1999). Affective experiences refer to consumers' moods, feelings and emotions (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009; Gentile, Spiller and Noci 2007), while intellectual experiences involve thinking and conscious mental processes that encourage consumers to use their creativity or problem-solving in order to revise assumptions about a brand (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009; Gentile, Spiller and Noci 2007). Lastly, behavioural experiences are related to consumers' physical behaviours and lifestyle (Gentile, Spiller and Noci 2007; Schmitt 1999). Twenty items were used to measure this construct which was adopted from Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) as well as Chang and Chieng (2006). Following the suggestion of Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009), these items were loaded on the second-order factors, which are a sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral experience. The scale items had been re-worded by including the words 'positive' as suggested by Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009). According to Holbrook (2000) and Iglesias, Singh, and Batista-Foguet (2011), items in each dimension of brand experience should have the same polarity. Hence, all the items that were polarity reversed had been re-worded to have the same polarity as the rest of the items. The operationalization of brand experience is presented in Table 4.4.

#### **4.6.2.3 Operationalization of Brand Attachment**

Brand attachment is conceptualized as the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self (Park et al. 2010; 2). This construct is operationalized as a construct comprised of two dimensions that are a brand-self connection and brand prominence (Park et al 2010). Brand-self connection is the subjective belief on the relevance of brand and the self, whereas brand prominence refers to the ease and frequency of this connection to be brought into the consumers' mind (Park et al 2010). These dimensions were measured on an 11-item scale adapted from Park et al. (2010). Following the lead of Park et al. (2010), these items were loaded on the second-order factors, which are brand-self connections and brand prominence. The operationalization of brand attachment is presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.4: Operationalization of Brand Experience

Code	Item	Source
<b>Sensory Experience</b>		
EXS1	Brand X makes a strong positive impression on my visual sense or other senses.	Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009)
EXS2	Brand X gives me interesting sensory experiences.	
EXS3	Brand X appeals to my senses in positive ways.	
EXS4	Brand X positively excites my senses.	Chang and Chieng (2006)
EXS5	Brand X has positive sensory appeal.	
<b>Affective Experience</b>		
EXE1	Brand X induces positive feelings and sentiments.	Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009)
EXE2	I have strong positive emotions for Brand X.	
EXE3	Brand X evokes positive emotions.	
EXE4	Brand X tries to put me in a positive mood.	Chang and Chieng (2006)
EXE5	Brand X tries to be affective.	
<b>Behavioural Experience</b>		
EXA1	I engage in positive physical actions and behaviors when I use Brand X.	Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009)
EXA2	Brand X results in positive bodily experiences.	
EXA3	Brand X is action-oriented in a positive way.	
EXA4	Brand X reminds me of activities I can do.	Chang and Chieng (2006)
EXA5	Brand X represents my lifestyle.	
<b>Intellectual Experience</b>		
EXT1	I engage in a lot of positive thinking when I encounter Brand X.	Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009)
EXT2	Brand X makes me think positively.	
EXT3	Brand X stimulates my curiosity and problem-solving.	
EXT4	Brand X excites my curiosity.	Chang and Chieng (2006)
EXT5	Brand X stimulates my thinking in doing things in creative ways.	

Table 4.5: Operationalization of Brand Attachment

Code	Item	Source	
<b>Brand-Self Connection</b>			
BAC1	Brand X says something to other people about who I am.	Park et al. (2010)	
BAC2	I feel personally connected to Brand X.		
BAC3	I feel emotionally bonded to Brand X.		
BAC4	Brand X is part of me or can represent me.		
BAC5	Brand X is part of who I am.		
<b>Brand Prominence</b>			
BAP1	My thoughts and feelings toward Brand X are often automatic, coming to my mind seemingly on their own.		
BAP2	My thoughts and feelings toward Brand X come to my mind naturally.		
BAP3	Brand X automatically evokes many positive thoughts about the past, present, and future.		
BAP4	I have many thoughts about Brand X.		
BAP5	My thoughts and feelings toward Brand X come to mind so naturally and instantly that I don't have much control over them.		

#### 4.6.2.4 Operationalization of Brand Loyalty

The outcome of brand attachment proposed in the conceptual framework was brand loyalty. Brand loyalty is referred to as “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing behaviour, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour” (Oliver 1999, 34). Furthermore, brand loyalty is operationalized as a two-dimensional construct consisting of behavioural and attitudinal loyalty. Attitudinal loyalty refers to customers’ degree of dispositional commitment and their attitude toward the brand whereas behavioral loyalty refers to repeat purchases of the brand as well as their repeated intention to purchase it in the future (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001). In line with Ramaseshan and Stein (2014), attitudinal loyalty was measured using five items borrowed from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), Ha et al. (2011) and Wirtz, Mattila, and Lwin (2007) and, five items drawn from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), Ha et al (2011) and Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996) were used to measure behavioral brand loyalty.

Table 4.6: Operationalization of Brand Loyalty

Code	Item	Source
<b>Behavioral Brand Loyalty</b>		
BLB1	I will buy Brand X the next time I buy a product that Brand X offers.	Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001)
BLB2	I intend to keep purchasing Brand X.	
BLB3	I do not buy from other brands if Brand X is available.	Ha et al. (2011), Zeithaml et al. (1996)
BLB4	I always purchase Brand X instead of other brands that offer similar products.	
<b>Attitudinal Brand Loyalty</b>		
BLA1	I would be willing to pay a higher price for Brand X over other brands.	Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001)
BLA2	I am committed to Brand X.	
BLA3	I say positive things about Brand X to other people.	Ha et al (2011), Zeithaml et al (1996)
BLA4	I would recommend Brand X to friends and family.	
BLA5	I consider Brand X as my first choice to buy.	
BLA6	I use Brand X because it is the best choice for me.	Wirtz et al. (2007)

#### 4.6.2.5 Operationalization of Self-Regulatory Focus

Self-regulatory focus postulates that consumers vary in how they view their goals and how they pursue these goals (Higgins 1987, 1998). There are two self-regulatory states, which are promotion focus and prevention focus. Being a promotion focused, one is sensitive to the goals related to aspirations and accomplishments and hence regulates his or her behavior to approach desires and ideals. On the other hand, prevention-focused individuals emphasize safety-related goals. They regulate their attitudes and behaviors towards avoiding undesirable end states vigilantly (Higgins 1997; Crowe and Higgins 1997). To assess consumers' prevention or promotion self-regulatory focus, this study adopted the composite scale of Haws, Dholakia and Bearden's (2010). This scale is developed based on comparisons among five of the most influential measurement scales for chronic self-regulatory focus based on criteria such as theoretical coverage, internal consistency, homogeneity, stability, and predictive ability. The authors then suggest a composite scale that selectively used measures from the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (RFQ) (Higgins et al. 2001), BIS/BAS (Carver and White 1994) and Lockwood scales (Lockwood, Jordan and Kunda 2002) to overcome limitations found in each of the scales. According to Haws, Dholakia and Bearden

(2010), the composite scale covers the crux of regulatory focus theory, which includes differentiating between approach and avoidance within each regulatory focus (RFQ items), explaining key concepts in the measures like ideal and ought selves (Lockwood items), and measuring regulatory focus for promotion and prevention focus. Furthermore, the composite scale considers both cognitive and emotional measures (BIS/BAS items) and uses items that are past, present, and future-oriented. It is not surprising that Boesen-Mariani, Gomez, and Gavard-Perret (2010) describe the composite scale as being more reliable compared to other scales for measuring regulatory focus. The negatively worded items (item PM1 and PV2) were reverse coded before data analysis. The ten-item scale measuring consumers' chronic regulatory focus orientation is shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Operationalization of Self-Regulatory Focus

Code	Item	Source	
<b>Promotion Focus</b>			
PM1	When it comes to achieving things that are important to me, I find that I don't perform as well as I would ideally like to do.(R)	Haws, Dholakia and Bearden (2010)	
PM2	I feel like I have made progress toward being successful in my life.		
PM3	When I see an opportunity for something I like, I get excited right away.		
PM4	I frequently imagine how I will achieve my hopes and aspirations.		
PM5	I see myself as someone who is primarily striving to reach my "ideal self"—to fulfill my hopes, wishes, and aspirations.		
<b>Prevention Focus</b>			
PV1	I usually obeyed rules and regulations that were established by my parents.		
PV2	Not being careful enough has gotten me into trouble at times.(R)		
PV3	I worry about making mistakes.		
PV4	I frequently think about how I can prevent failures in my life.		
PV5	I see myself as someone who is primarily striving to become the self I "ought" to be – fulfill my duties, responsibilities and obligations.		

Note: R: Reversed coded item

#### 4.6.2.6 Operationalization of Consumers' Need for Uniqueness

The consumers' need for uniqueness is conceptualized as the individuals' trait to be different and distinct from others. This concept comprises of three dimensions that are

creative choice counter-conformity, unpopular choice counter-conformity, and avoidance of similarity (Ruvio, Shoham and Brencic 2008; Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001; Tian and Mckenzie 2001). Creative choice counter-conformity refers to the consumers' choice of products that create unique personal identities that remain socially acceptable whereas, an unpopular choice counter-conformity reflects the use of products differing from social norms. Lastly, avoidance of similarity indicates the avoidance of consuming widely adopted products or the discontinued use of products that are perceived to be commonplace (Ruvio, Shoham and Brencic 2008; Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001). Tian, Bearden, and Hunter (2001) originally developed a 31-item scale to measure the consumer's need for uniqueness. Later, Ruvio, Shoham, and Brencic (2008) developed a shorter version of the consumers' need for uniqueness scale that has good psychometric properties and external validity. Furthermore, this version of the scale is more parsimonious and does not have distinct cultural-dependent meanings (Ruvio, Shoham and Brencic 2008). As a result, it was chosen for the current study. This 12-item scale captures three conceptually related dimensions of consumer's need for uniqueness as shown in Table 4.8.

## **4.7 SAMPLING DESIGN**

This section focuses on defining the target population and other key sampling design areas, including the sample frame, sampling techniques and sample size.

### **4.7.1. Sample Selection**

The population is the entire set of units from which the sample is selected (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). A sample is described as a representative group of an entire population (Bryman 2012) and is a good alternative when surveying on the total population is impractical (Iacobucci and Churchill 2010; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). The sample for this study comprises online panel consumers aged between 25-60 years old in Australia. This group of consumers possess higher disposal income compared to those below 24 and above 65 years of age (Beech et al. 2014) and thereby are seen to have better purchasing power. Furthermore, this group of consumers represents the largest population in Australia (53% of the total population) that covers three different segments of the market, which are Generation X, Y and Baby

Boomers. A closer investigation of brand attachment studies shows that brand-self relationship may differ based on age (Fournier 1998; Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013). Lambert-Pandraud and Laurent (2010) argue that older consumers are attractive targets given they are likely to remain attached to a brand much longer. However, prior studies in branding have suggested younger consumers are important consumer segments for various brands because they possess a higher propensity to spend on brands especially self-expressive brands and hence they tend to build strong attachment with such brands (Hwang and Kandampully 2012; O'Cass and Choy 2008). Therefore, assessing consumers of various ages may provide additional insights to marketers on how to strengthen brand attachment (Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013).

Table 4.8: Operationalization of consumers' need for uniqueness

Code	Items	Source
<b>Creative Choice</b>		Ruvio, Shoham and Brencic (2008)
NFUC1	I often combine possessions in such a way that I create a personal image that cannot be duplicated.	
NFUC2	I often try to find a more interesting version of run-of-the-mill products because I enjoy being original.	
NFUC3	I actively seek to develop my personal uniqueness by buying special products or brands.	
NFUC4	Having an eye for products that are interesting and unusual assists me in establishing a distinctive image.	
<b>Unpopular Choice</b>		
NFUP1	When it comes to the products I buy and the situations in which I use them, I have broken customs and rules.	
NFUP2	I have often violated the understood rules of my social group regarding what to buy or own.	
NFUP3	I have often gone against the understood rules of my social group regarding when and how certain products are properly used.	
NFUP4	I enjoy challenging the prevailing taste of people I know by buying something they would not seem to accept.	
<b>Similarity Avoidance</b>		
NFUA1	When a product I own becomes popular among the general population, I begin to use it less.	
NFUA2	I often try to avoid products or brands that I know are bought by the general population.	
NFUA3	As a rule, I dislike products or brands that are customarily bought by everyone.	
NFUA4	The more commonplace a product or brand is among the general population, the less interested I am in buying it.	

Bryman and Bell (2015) describe the sampling frame as the list of all elements in the population from which the sample will be drawn. In this study, it is not possible to obtain a list of the sampling frame from an online panel company due to the need to protect the panel members' privacy. To minimize sampling frame errors, age had been used as a screening criterion to filter out respondents who do not satisfy the characteristics of the target population.

#### **4.7.2 Focal Brands Selection**

As discussed in Chapter 1, the main objective of this study is to examine consumers' attachment to brands, specifically to brands that convey symbolic or self-expressive benefits as these benefits are related to consumers' motives to communicate and enhance their self-concept (Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Keller 1993). Brand attachment rarely exists in the brand that is unable to induce self-expressive benefits (Tsai 2011). Hence, two conditions guided the selection of the target product category. First, self-expressive benefits are related to the needs for social approval or personal expression and are especially relevant to social visible products (Keller 1993). In this regard, publicly consumed products were chosen. Publicly consumed products refer to those products that can be viewed by others when the products are being consumed (Bearden and Etzel 1982). Second, fast-moving consumer products were not included in the target product category. Although past research in brand attachment has used these product categories (Park et al. 2010; Ramaseshan and Stein 2014), fast-moving consumer products such as cereal, beverages and candy are not the preferred category for evaluating brand-self connection as these product brands were less capable of creating one's self-concept (Chaplin and John 2005; Onkvisit and Shaw 1987).

A review of the recent branding literature was conducted to select target product categories, which were the ones that fit the two basic conditions mentioned above. This results in the selection of three product or service categories: smartphones (e.g., Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013; Park et al. 2010); sport shoes (e.g., Chernev, Hamilton and Gal 2011; Park et al. 2010; Swaminathan, Stilley and Ahluwalia 2009) and airlines (e.g., Brodie, Whittome and Brush 2009). These product or service categories are selected because they have self-expressive benefits and are usually consumed publicly in highly visible social situations.

Three criteria determine the selection of the focal brands. Firstly, the brands selected should have high brand awareness (Leuthesser, Kohli and Harich 1995). In this case, Australian consumers should be aware of the brands selected. Following the lead of Malär et al. (2011), Interbrand rankings (The Best 100 Brands 2015) were used to select brands that are sufficiently well-known to consumers. One of the requirements for the formation of attachment is an individual's interaction with a brand and their experiences (Park et al. 2010; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). To account for this requirement, only experiential brands identified by Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) were chosen which is in line with current brand attachment research (Ramaseshan and Stein 2014). These brands were compared with the brands listed in Interbrand rankings which resulted in a selection of two brands for each of the product or service categories across smartphones (Apple and Samsung), sports shoes (Nike and Adidas) and airlines (Virgin and Qantas). Finally, the selected brands were then assessed regarding consumers' perceived brand familiarity on a brand familiarity scale from Kent and Allen (1994). Next, a preliminary study was conducted to test the suitability of the selected product categories and brands. Procedures of the preliminary study are discussed in Section 4.9.1.

#### **4.7.3 Sampling Technique**

The decision to adopt probability or non-probability sampling is a key decision in sampling design (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). There are two main types of sampling: probability and non-probability sampling techniques. The elements which constitute a probability sample are selected by chance, and the techniques include simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified random sampling, and cluster sampling. For non-probability sampling, the chance of selecting an element is unknown. Non-probability sampling techniques include convenience sampling, quota sampling, judgmental sampling and snowball sampling (Bryman and Bell 2015; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). The unavailability of an appropriate sampling frame led the study to rely on non-probability sampling (Malhotra and Birks 2007; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016), specifically convenience sampling. The major drawback of using non-probabilistic sampling is that it does not have the benefits of a random choice of the sample as in probability sampling. However, several researchers advocate that online panels and traditional research methods generate equivalent results (Dennis 2001; Deutskens, de Ruyter and Wetzels 2006; Duffy et al. 2005). Since representativeness

of public opinion is not the major concern of this research, the nonprobability online panel is an acceptable alternative to traditional probability-based sampling (Baker et al. 2010; 2013). Furthermore, Hair et al (2011) describe convenience sampling as one of the most frequently used non-probability sampling methods. It is an easy, quick, and cost-effective technique (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016) which is adopted in numerous empirical studies in marketing (e.g., Ismail 2011; Jamal and Al-Marri 2007; Jang, Kim and Lee 2015)

#### **4.7.4 Sample Size**

According to Churchill and Iacobucci (2002), the sample size should be determined before the study begins. Nevertheless, determination of the sample size depends on several factors, for instance, the margin of error, the degree of certainty, size of the population and the statistical techniques (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). The large sample size is preferable as they are more representative of the population, but they are expensive and more difficult to collect (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). Also, the minimum sample size may vary depending on the statistical techniques applied to data analysis.

Considering that Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used for data analysis, the minimum threshold for the sample size needs to be satisfied. Bentler (1995) and Kline (2011) suggest a minimum sample size of 200 in order for the results to be interpreted with an acceptable degree of confidence. Hair et al. (2010), on the other hand, increase the minimum requirement of the sample size to 300. For the current study, a sample size of 450 is considered to be adequate as the targeted sample size exceeds 200 as suggested by Kline (2011) and also satisfies a conventional requirement of five cases (respondents) for each item (66 items) (Hair et al. 2010)

### **4.8 DATA COLLECTION: METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

Data collection is dependent on the research design adopted (Bryman and Bell 2015). This process is important in the research process as it contributes significantly towards the study's reliability and validity (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). Data collected can be primary or secondary data. Primary data refer to data collected from the

respondents in a survey, whereas secondary data is derived from the work or opinions of other researchers or scholars (Bryman and Bell 2015). Secondary data was collected to develop and justify the relationships proposed in the conceptual framework, and primary data was collected to test and verify the relationships proposed in this study.

A self-administered survey questionnaire was employed for data collection as this approach is suitable for measuring self-reported beliefs and behaviours (Li and Petrick 2008; Neuman 2013;). Items for the constructs used in this study, such as self-congruity, brand attachment, brand experience and brand loyalty, are assumed to be measurable in a self-reporting manner. Furthermore, the self-administered survey is one of the most frequently used approaches in brand attachment studies (e.g., Frasquet, Mollá Descals and Ruiz-Molina 2017; Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016; Kim and Joung 2016).

The survey questionnaire was designed and administered using Qualtrics, an online survey platform that provides survey building tools. Qualtrics was chosen because it provides an easy and intelligent user interface. Moreover, it is capable of preventing multiple submissions from a respondent, controlling the flow of questions based on consumers' responses. These features are necessary for an online survey (Yun and Trumbo 2000). Besides, forced-response was imposed where respondents have to answer each question before proceeding to the next question. In this case, a 'next' button is placed on each screen to prevent the respondent from proceeding if the answer has not been given to the questions presented on the screen. Forced-response results in a higher dropout rate without affecting the data quality (Stieger, Reips and Voracek 2007) and minimizes the possibility of non-response of a question (Vicente and Reis 2010). Accordingly, a forced-response procedure is pertinent in surveys where a complete data set is crucial (Stieger, Reips and Voracek 2007; Vicente and Reis 2010). SEM, the statistical analysis technique adopted in this study requires that the datasets to be analyzed are free from missing values (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Thus, it is essential to include the procedure to force response to all questions.

Initially, the panel company sent an email invitation including the hyperlink of the survey to panel members. Panelists who were interested in participating then proceed via the hyperlink to the actual web-survey hosted by Qualtrics. A short introduction describing

the study's academic purposes and a confidentiality statement were additionally provided. Then, consent to participate in the survey was obtained before directing respondents to the questionnaire. To minimize the sampling frame error, respondents were screened for age as participation was limited to those who were between 24-65 years of age.

## **4.9 PRELIMINARY STUDIES**

Before data collection for the main study, a preliminary test and pilot study were conducted. These tests are explained in the following sections.

### **4.9.1 Preliminary Study: Selection of the Focal Brands**

In line with previous research (e.g., Ramaseshan and Stein 2014; Sirgy and Johar 1999; Sung and Choi 2012), a preliminary study serves to research suitable product categories and to select suitable brands within the product/service categories to be used in the main study. Before the preliminary study was conducted, a review of the recent brand literature was conducted to select the product categories and brands to be included in the preliminary test.

A questionnaire, comprising a description of the survey, question items and demographic variables were used in this study. Two question-items were asked. Firstly, an item of publicly or privately consumed brand scale (Bearden and Etzel 1982) was used to test the suitability of the target product category as publicly consumed or as a socially visible product category when consumed. Selection of the focal brands was then evaluated on a three-item brand familiarity scale adopted from Kent and Allen (1994). Table 4.9 provides a summary of the survey instruments for the preliminary study.

Table 4.9: Survey Instruments for the Preliminary Study

Item (Likert-type scale anchored by 1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)	Source
<b>Publicly or Privately consumed product</b>	
Most people I know would probably consider a <product or service category> to be a publicly consumed product or service	Bearden and Etzel (1982)
<b>Brand Familiarity</b>	
I am very familiar with the <brand>.	Kent and Allen(1994)
I feel very experienced with the <brand>	
I know the product (s) or service(s) of the <brand>.	

The online preliminary study was undertaken by respondents recruited from the online panel company. Following the suggestion by Shan and He (2012), respondents recruited for the preliminary study shared similar demographic characteristics with those in the main study, being Australian consumers aged between 24-65 years old. A sample of the survey instrument used for the preliminary study can be found in Appendix A. The data were collected during the same week of September 2016 with a total of 50 respondents completing the survey. This number was determined with reference to the sample size used for focal brand selections in previous studies (e.g., Ramaseshan and Stein 2014; Sirgy and Johar 1999; Sung and Choi 2012). None of the responses included missing values and hence all the responses were considered valid responses and retained for the subsequent data analysis. Among 50 respondents, 32 (64%) were women and 18 (36%) were men. Of the respondents, 34% were aged between 45-54 years. Most of the respondents were from Melbourne (24%) Sydney (18%).

The collected data was next transferred to the 'Statistical Package for the Social Sciences' (SPSS) version 21 and the data were coded from 1 to 7 to capture the responses of the 7-point Likert-type scales used. No issues pertaining to data input accuracy and missing values were encountered because the Qualtrics survey tool allowed the data to be transferred automatically to SPSS and specified that each question had to be answered before respondents were allowed to move onto the next question. Accordingly, all the responses were considered valid responses and retained for the subsequent data analysis.

For publicly or privately consumed product scale items (Bearden and Etzel 1982), which measure the extent to which consumers consider a product category as a publicly consumed product, all three product or service categories had mean scores higher than 3.5 as shown in Table 4.10. The results indicate that smartphones, sports shoes and airlines are publicly consumed products or services and therefore, satisfy the condition of the target product category examined in this preliminary study.

Table 4.10: Results of the Preliminary Study for Product Categories Selection

	<b>Smartphones</b>	<b>Sports shoes</b>	<b>Airlines</b>
Publicly/Privatey consumed product category	5.34 (1.48)	5.22 (1.52)	5.38 (1.47)

*Note: Mean scores and standard deviations (in parentheses)*

The brand familiarity scale of Kent and Allen (1994) was used to select the focal brands from the product or service categories. The mean scores of the items were calculated to examine brand familiarity with these brands. Guided by Malär et al. (2011), only brands that have an overall mean at 0.5, above the neutral point of the scale are acceptable for further analysis. Therefore, with a 7-point Likert-type scale, only the brands that had brand familiarity means above 4.5 were used in the next stage of the analysis. This resulted in the selection of three brands: Samsung (smartphones), Nike (sports shoes) and Qantas (Airlines). The remaining brands were omitted from the main study. The results of the preliminary study are presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Results of the Preliminary Study for Brand Familiarity

	Apple	<b>Samsung</b>	<b>Nike</b>	Adidas	Virgin	<b>Qantas</b>
Brand familiarity	4.49 (1.80)	<b>4.79</b> <b>(1.62)</b>	<b>4.62</b> <b>(1.47)</b>	4.60 (1.53)	4.35 (1.68)	<b>5.17</b> <b>(1.44)</b>

*Notes: Mean scores and standard deviations (in parentheses)*

#### 4.9.2 Pilot Testing of the Questionnaire

Before using the questionnaire to collect data for the main study, the questionnaire should be pilot tested (Reynolds and Diamantopoulos 1998; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). The purpose of the pilot study is to assess the validity and reliability of the instruments (Iacobucci and Churchill 2010; Hair et al. 2010) and refine the questionnaire (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). Specifically, a pilot study is

undertaken to screen items for appropriateness of the scales borrowed from various studies.

To assess whether the scale is accurately (validly) measures what it is intended to measure is crucial in questionnaire design (Hair et al. 2010). To undertake this assessment, content validity and face validity were examined. Content validity refers to the extent to which a question represents a proper sample of the theoretical content domain of a construct (Hardesty and Bearden 2004; Loureiro, Ruediger and Demetris 2012; Vigneron and Johnson 2004). Furthermore, the content validity of the questionnaire was assessed by seeking the judgments of experts on the representativeness of the questions to the desired constructs (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). A panel of two marketing academics from an international university was invited to evaluate the questionnaire independently.

Face validity refers to the extent to which a question appears logically and reflects accurately what it is intended to measure (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). Face validity was examined by collecting feedback on the wordings and structures of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to five Australian consumers selected conveniently. Respondents in this phase were asked to complete the questionnaire and report on the clarity of the questions, instructions, wordings, layout, and time required to complete the questionnaire. Suitable revisions and amendments were accordingly made based on the comments received. For example, brand personality traits such as intelligent, reliable, spirited, up-to-date, successful, upper-class were given in the description of questions for self-congruity in section D in the questionnaire. A definition of brand experience was provided in the description of questions for brand experience in section E of the questionnaire. Finally, the wording of the selected brand using 'this brand' was changed to 'Brand X'. The design and layout of the questionnaire were enhanced based on the comments. Overall, it took 10-15 minutes for the respondents to complete the questionnaire, in line with the recommended duration for a survey (Galesic and Bosnjak 2009).

The revised questionnaire was posted on the Qualtrics online survey platform following the same procedure used in the pre-test. The questionnaire comprised of a description of the study, question items for the main constructs, and items for demographic

variables. Respondents were required to select the most familiar brand from a list of two brands in three different categories. Respondents had identified these brands in the preliminary test (N=50). The questionnaire for the pilot study is presented in Appendix B.

Target respondents for the pilot study were Australian consumers recruited by the online panel company. The panel company automatically screened those who were willing to participate in the survey for age (24-65 years old) and speed. Speeders were identified, and their responses were removed from the dataset. Speeders refer to the respondents who finished the questionnaire in less than 30% of the median time (Greszki, Meyer and Schoen 2014). These respondents are more than likely not reading or answering the questions appropriately. Hence, the cutoff point for speeders was set as 30% of the median time for completing the survey.

A total of 121 responses were collected during the same week of October 2016. The responses were checked for data input accuracy and missing data. After data cleaning, the valid responses were 100, which met the suggested guidelines for a sample size of a pilot study (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). The pilot study sample profile comprised of 45 male and 55 female respondents. The age of respondents ranged from 25 to 65 years of age, with the majority 55 % ranging from 35 to 54 years old. Further, 44 % of respondents held a bachelor's degree or higher and 69 % had a personal annual income less than \$70,000. Most of the respondents were from Sydney (17 %), Melbourne (17 %) followed by Adelaide (13 %) and Brisbane (12 %). A total of 82 % of respondents had used one of the brands for more than one year.

The SPSS software was used to check the internal reliability of each construct. Reliability was measured in three ways: Cronbach's alpha for each construct, inter-item correlations and corrected item-to-total correlation. Cronbach's alpha examines the consistency of the whole scale with value ranges between zero and one (Hair et al. 2010). However, the value of alpha may be influenced by the number of items and may result in misleading results (Field 2013). Therefore, to assess the reliability, the inter-item correlation and corrected item-to-total correlation were examined, rather than merely depending on a single measure (Hair et al. 2010). Inter-item correlation reflects the correlation among items, whereas corrected item-to-total correlation refers to the

correlation of the item to the summated scale score. Hair et al. (2010) suggest that inter-item correlations should exceed 0.30 and corrected item-to-total correlations should exceed 0.50.

For all constructs, the Cronbach's alpha values exceed the threshold value of 0.7 recommended by Hair et al. (2010), except promotion focus ( $\alpha = 0.656$ ) and prevention focus ( $\alpha = 0.532$ ). One item from prevention focus (PV1) and one item from promotion focus (PM2) were removed from the main study (based on Cronbach's alpha if item deleted). The removal of PV1 and PM2 is consistent with Xie and Kahle (2014). A careful examination of the inter-item correlations had shown that several measures have inter-item correlations higher than 0.9. When inter-item correlations are high, the item is redundant with other items in the respective scales (Nunnally 1978; Zaichkowsky 1994). Eleven items with high inter-item correlations (inter-item correlation > 0.9) were eliminated, specifically, three items from the self-congruity scale (ASC5, ISC5, SSC5), four items from the brand experience scale (EXS5, EXA5, EXT5 and EXE5), two items from the attitudinal brand loyalty scale (BLA5 and BLA6) and brand attachment scale (BAC5 and BAP5). Table 4.12 presents Cronbach's Alpha values for the constructs.

Table 4.12: Cronbach's Alpha for the Constructs

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>No. of Items</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
Brand experience	Sensory experience	4	0.959
	Affective experience	4	0.955
	Behavioural experience	4	0.934
	Intellectual experience	4	0.967
Brand attachment	Brand-self connection	4	0.967
	Brand prominence	4	0.932
Regulatory focus	Promotion focus	4	0.864
	Prevention focus	4	0.734
Need for uniqueness	Creative choice	4	0.920
	Unpopular choice	4	0.930
	Similarity avoidance	4	0.942
Actual self-congruity		4	0.975
Ideal self-congruity		4	0.982
Social self-congruity		4	0.976
Behavioural brand loyalty		4	0.936
Attitudinal brand loyalty		4	0.912

## **4.10 DATA ANALYSIS**

This section presents the data analysis approach used in this study. The data analysis started with a data screening using SPSS software to prepare the data for subsequent analysis. This was followed by SEM analysis to validate the measurement instruments, evaluate the structural model and to test the hypotheses. Table 4.13 presents a summary of the statistical techniques used for the main survey.

### **4.10.1 Preliminary Data Analysis**

Hair et al. (2010) emphasize the importance of data screening before conducting data analysis. The process of data screening in this study was conducted using SPSS, a widely accepted software package to screen the data (Preacher and Hayes 2008). With reference to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), the data were screened or checked for (1) data input accuracy and missing values; (2) respondents' attention; (3) outliers; (4) normal distribution; and (5) linearity.

The collected data were first examined for data input accuracy and any missing data. Missing data are the unavailable values on one or more variables and occurs when a respondent fails to answer one or more questions in a survey (Hair et al. 2010). The next step involved an evaluation of the respondents' attention through the attention checks question included in the questionnaire (Oppenheimer, Meyvis and Davidenko 2009). Identification of outliers follows. There are two types of outliers, namely univariate outliers and multivariate outliers. Univariate outliers have an extreme value on a single variable, while multivariate outliers have extreme values on two or more variables (Kline 2011, Tabachnick and Fidell 2013). Accordingly, univariate outliers were assessed by converting data values to standard scores. The multivariate outliers were detected by examining Mahalanobis Distance (Hair et al. 2010). Finally, a test of normality was performed. Normality refers to the extent to which the distribution of the sample data follows a normal distribution (Hair et al. 2010). In this case, the shape normality of variables was measured by the skewness and kurtosis as suggested by researchers (e.g., Hair et al. 2010; Tabachnick and Fidell 2013). Kurtosis describes the peakedness of the distribution while skewness describes the balance of the symmetry of the distribution (Tabachnick and Fidell 2013). Details of these steps and the procedures can be found in chapter 5 of this study.

Table 4.13: Summary of the Statistical Techniques Employed

Analysis	Technique	Software	Cutoff point	Source
<b>Data screening</b>				
Missing Data	Descriptive statistics	SPSS	Random missing data <10%	Hair et al. (2010)
Univariate Outliers	Standardized scores (z)	SPSS	$z < \pm 3.29$	Tabachnick and Fidell (2013); Hair et al. (2010)
Multivariate outliers	Mahalanobis Distance (MD)		$MD < X^2$ at $p < 0.001$ $D^2/df < 2.5$	
Normality	Skewness and kurtosis	SPSS	Values $\leq \pm 2.58$	Hair et al. (2010)
<b>Structural equation model</b>				
<b>Confirmatory Factor Analysis</b>				
Measurement model goodness of fit	Absolute fit indices	AMOS	$\chi^2$ – insignificant value GFI $\geq 0.9$ RMSEA $\leq 0.08$ SRMR $\leq 0.08$	Hair et al. (2010), Kline (2011)
	Incremental fit indices		TLI $\geq 0.9$ CFI $\geq 0.9$	
	Parsimony fit indices		$\chi^2: df \leq 3:1$	
Measurement model validity and reliability	Convergent validity	AMOS	AVE $\geq 0.5$	Hair et al. (2010)
	Discriminant validity		Square root of AVE > inter-construct correlations	
	Reliability		CR $\geq 0.7$ Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7	
Structural model	Hypotheses testing	AMOS	Level of significance $p < 0.001$ $p < 0.05$	
<i>Note: AVE: Average Variance Explained, CR: Composite Reliability</i>				

#### 4.10.2 Structural Equation Modeling

SEM using confirmatory factor analysis was selected to test the hypothesized relationships among the constructs. SEM methodology allows testing of multiple and interrelated dependence relationships among independent and dependent construct simultaneously (Hair et al. 2010). This means that SEM is capable of estimating the direct and indirect effects of independent variables on dependent variables in a single attempt. Therefore, it is suitable for empirical model building (Bollen and Long 1992) to test the theory and the hypotheses (Tabachnick and Fidell 2013). In addition, SEM

improves the statistical estimation of relationships between constructs through the inclusion of latent variables, which control for the measurement errors (Hair et al. 2010). Moreover, SEM allows for testing of measurement characteristics of each construct, including convergent and discriminant validity. Due to these advantages, Thomson and Johnson (2006) describe SEM as the most appropriate and convenient approach to test hypothesized relationships and has been widely used in brand attachment studies for statistical estimation (Huang, Zhang and Hu 2017; Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016; Malär et al. 2011).

The statistical software used to perform the structural equation modeling is Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS) v 21.0. The rationale for choosing this covariance based software is based on its suitability for theory testing and development. Notwithstanding, this study also adopted validated measurements from prior studies and hence, the premise of this study is more about theory testing. AMOS is gaining its popularity due to the usage of a graphical user interface (GUI) for all commands instead of syntax or computer codes. Therefore, it is more user-friendly (Hair et al. 2010).

A two-stage SEM approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) was adopted. This approach suggests establishing the most appropriate measurement model (stage 1), followed by the structural model (stage 2) to examine the hypothesized structural relationships among the variables. The two-stage model is a better approach to follow in comparison to a one-step approach (Anderson and Gerbing 1988; Hair et al. 2010;). In the first step of the SEM approach, measurement models were developed to assess the uni-dimensionality, reliability and validity of the measures used in the model. Then, the structural model is built to specify the hypothesized causal relationships among the latent variables or factors (Hair et al. 2010; Kline 2011).

#### **4.10.3 Measurement Model**

The measurement model specifies the relationships between the indicators and latent variables. The validity of the measurement model can be assessed by performing a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), a multivariate statistical method. CFA is applied when the number of constructs and their assigned variables is known and is developed based on existing theories and empirical studies (e.g., Chan, Berger and Boven 2012; Tajfel and Turner 1986). In this study, CFA was employed to test two pooled

measurement models, which are first order and second order measurement models. The measurement model's validity depends on assessment of acceptable levels of goodness-of-fit (GOF) and attainment of construct validity and reliability. In general, the closer the values of the estimated and observed matrices are, the better the level of fit. Construct validity and reliability can be assessed by testing construct unidimensionality, construct reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity (Hair et al. 2010).

#### **4.10.3.1 The Goodness-of-fit**

The goodness-of-fit (GOF) refers to the similarity between the observed covariance matrix and estimated covariance matrix (Tabachnick and Fidell 2013). Evaluating the GOF is critical because it assesses how well the model tested is supported by the sample data. GOF indices can be categorized into three groups, namely absolute fit indices, incremental measures and parsimony measures (Hair et al. 2010; Kline 2011). In this study, the fit of the measurement model was examined using multiple GOF indices in line with Hair et al. (2010).

Absolute fit indices are direct measures of the fit between the specified model and observed data (Hair et al. 2010). This category of indices does not make a comparison between models (Hu and Bentler 1995). This study uses Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ), Goodness-of-fit index (GFI), Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and Standardized root mean residual (SRMR) to assess the absolute fit of the hypothesized model. Incremental fit indices assess the fitness of the estimated model by comparing it with a null model, which is an alternative baseline model (Hair et al. 2010). This study used Comparative fit index (CFI), Normed fit index (NFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) to assess the fit of the hypothesized model and the alternative models. Finally, Parsimony fit indices are the ratio between the degrees of freedom of a model to the total degrees of freedom of the used model (Hair et al. 2010). The parsimony normed fit index was used in this study. Table 4.14 presents the description of fit indices and their acceptable fit.

Table 4.14: Summary of Fit Indices and the Level of Acceptance

Fit Index	Description	Level of Acceptance
<b>Absolute Fit Indices</b>		
Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ )	The fundamental statistically based SEM measure calculates the difference between the observed and estimated covariance matrices	$p > 0.05$
CMIN/DF	It is the ratio of chi-square and degree of freedom. A ratio of 3:1 or less indicates a better fit model.	CMIN/DF < 3
Goodness-of-fit (GFI)	It estimates the proportion of covariance in the sample data matrix explained by the model. Its value ranges from 0 to 1, the higher the value means a better fit.	GFI > 0.9
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	It represents how well the model fits a population and the sample used for estimation. It is badness of fit index; therefore, the lower values close to zero mean a good fit	RMSEA < 0.08
Standardized root mean residual (SRMR)	It measures the mean absolute correlation residual as the difference between the observed and estimated correlation. It is also a badness of fit index	SRMR < 0.08
<b>Incremental Fit Indices</b>		
Comparative fit index (CFI)	It compares proposed and null models and adjusts for degrees of freedom. It is a normed index with values ranges from 0 to 1. Higher value suggests a better fit model	CFI > 0.9
Normed fit index (NFI)	It compares the difference in the chi-square value for the fitted model and a null model divided by the chi-square value for the null model. Its value ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicates a good fit model	NFI > 0.9
Tucker Lewis index (TLI)	It compares the difference between the normed chi-square values for the estimated and null model. Its value ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicates a good fit model	TLI > 0.9
<b>Parsimony Fit Indices</b>		
Parsimony normed fit Index (PNFI)	It is the adjusted NFI. High values represent a better model fit.	PNFI > 0.7
Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI)	It is the adjusted GFI. Its value ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicates a good fit.	AGFI > 0.9
Source: Hu and Bentler (1995), Hair et al. (2010); Kline (2011)		

According to Hair et al. (2010), reliability refers to the degree to which instruments are consistent in what they intend to measure. Accordingly, construct reliability should be

established before construct validity can be assessed. Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha were used to test the scale's internal consistency (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Constructs with C.R. scores that exceed 0.7 are reliable (Nunnally and Bernstein 2010; Anderson and Gerbing 1988; Fornell and Larcker 1981; Hair et al. 2010).

#### **4.10.3.2 Reliability and Validity**

It is essential to establish content validity and construct validity alongside unidimensionality and reliability when developing any scale (Hair et al. 2010). Validity refers to the extent to which research instruments accurately measure the concept of study while reliability is described as the degree to which instruments are consistent in what they intend to measure (Hair et al. 2010). Content validity has been judged qualitatively by the experts' opinions during the pilot testing as discussed earlier.

As for construct validity, both convergent and discriminant validity of a measurement model needs to be assessed before testing for structural models (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Factor loadings' significance and average variance extracted (AVE) were assessed for convergent validity. Convergent validity is supported when the items load on their respective latent factors with loadings is greater than 0.7 (Hair et al. 2010) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) scores for each latent constructs is above 0.5 (Anderson and Gerbing 1988; Fornell and Larcker 1981; Hair et al. 2010).

In contrast, discriminant validity indicates the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs (Hair et al. 2010). In this regard, individual items should represent one construct only (Hair et al. 2010). Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion for assessing discriminant validity is one of the most recommended methods to test the constructs' distinctiveness (Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt 2015). According to Fornell and Larcker's (1981), discriminant validity can be assessed by comparing the square root of the AVE and the correlations of the construct with any other construct in a measurement model. If the square root of AVE exceeds the inter-correlations of the construct with any other construct, discriminant validity is achieved (Fornell and Larcker 1981). The results of the construct validity are reported in the next chapter.

#### **4.10.3.3 Common Method Variance**

Given the current study was a cross-sectional study where the measures for independent and dependent variables were drawn from the same source at the same time, the potential effect of common method variance (CMV) was accounted for. CMV is “the variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the constructs the measure represent” (Podsakoff et al. 2003, 879). Indeed, the presence of common method biases may inflate or deflate the relationship between two constructs and hence, lead to invalid research conclusions (MacKenzie and Podsakoff 2012). With reference to suggestions given by MacKenzie and Podsakoff (2012), several measures were adopted before and after data collection. The questionnaire was carefully designed and administered to avoid social desirability, lengthy scales and ambiguous wordings or statements. Accordingly, dependent and independent variables were on different pages of the electronic questionnaire, to reduce the chances for the respondents to infer cause-effect relationships among the constructs. Furthermore, information confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed to avoid the possibility that the individuals responded dishonestly. Post-hoc statistical remedies were also used to detect for possible CMV. Two techniques suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003) were used. First, Harman’s single-factor test was conducted by loading all items into an exploratory factor analysis using SPSS. CMV exists when a single factor emerges from the factor analysis. Next, a common latent factor (CLF) was added to the measurement model to capture the common variance among the observed variables.

#### **4.10.4 Structural Model**

In the second stage of the analysis, the structural model is specified by estimating the standardized regression. The hypotheses are characterized by the specified relationships among constructs. Here, the nature and strength of these relationships are established (Hair et al. 2010). In other words, standardized regression was used to indicate the strength of the hypothesized relationships among the causal constructs (Tabachnick and Fidell 2013).

##### **4.10.4.1 Testing Mediation**

Mediation refers to a hypothesized causal chain in which one variable affects the other variable that, in turn, affects a third variable (Baron and Kenny 1986). Mediation analysis helps researchers to understand how an effect of the predictor variables (X) on

the outcome variables (Y) operates. Applying this concept to the current study, an examination of the mediating role of brand experience enriches the understanding of how actual, ideal and social self-congruity influence brand attachment. In this case, two approaches were adopted to test the mediation effect, namely Baron and Kenny's causal steps test and Bootstrapping estimates (Bollen and Stine, 1990, Shrout and Bolger, 2002). The Baron and Kenny (1986) test is the most commonly used test of mediation in brand relationship research (e.g., Rauschnabel and Ahuvia 2014; Lopez et al. 2017; Huang, Zhang and Hu 2017). However, this approach has been criticized for not being able to test the indirect mediation (Type 1 error) and the possibility of missing some true mediation effects (Type II error). Likewise, the statistical power of this approach has been questioned, specifically when the sample size is small (Hayes 2017; Zhao, Lynch and Chen 2010; Shrout and Bolger 2002). Bootstrapping approaches are a popular alternative in testing the mediation effect. Apart from having a higher level of power and reasonable control over the Type 1 error rates (Hayes 2017; Zhao, Lynch and Chen 2010), the bootstrapping approach is preferred as it does not require the normality assumption to be met (Shrout and Bolger 2002).

#### ***4.10.4.2 Testing Moderation***

Moderation implies an interaction effect where a moderating variable (W) changes the magnitude of the relationship between predictor variables (X) and dependent variables (Y) (Little et al. 2012; Hayes 2017). Mediation analysis focuses on how a causal effect operates while, moderation analysis is used to understand when or under what conditions or for what types of individual effect exist or does not, and in what magnitude (Hayes 2017 ). Moreover, testing a moderating effect helps to establish the boundary conditions of an effect. In this study, moderation influence was measured continuously (moderator and predictor variables are latent variables), and hence an interaction-moderation approach is applied (Aiken and West 1991; Cohen et al. 2013; Little et al. 2012). Here, the moderating effect was modeled by constructing a new variable, termed as an interaction term (XW), by multiplying the predictor variable (X) and the moderator variable (W). This interaction term (XW) consequently entered into the path model after the linear main effect on the outcome (Y) of the moderator variable (W) and predictor variables (X) are estimated (Little et al. 2012). Before constructing the interaction term (XW), X and W are mean-centered (e.g., Aiken and West 1991; Little et al. 2012) in order to reduce the adverse effects of multicollinearity of multiplicative terms.

Subsequently, unstandardized estimates were generated from the structural model. For a better interpretation of the moderating effect, the results were plotted based on the guidelines given by Cohen et al. (2003). In particular, the relationship between the predictor variable and the outcome variable was plotted when levels of the moderator variable were one standard deviation below and one standard deviation above the mean for that variable (i.e. the moderator).

#### **4.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Research ethics refers to the norms, principles and standards of behaviors that provide guidelines for responsible conduct of research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). In other words, ethics in research require the entire research process to be conducted in a responsible way. The conduct of this research is guided by Curtin University's ethical guidelines that are in compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research (2007). Since this study involves collecting data from people, an approval from Curtin University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) was obtained before data collection commenced. To respect participants' rights to engage in this survey, potential participants were assured that participation in the research is voluntary and they may withdraw from the survey at any time without fear of prejudice or negative consequences. Their responses are kept anonymous and will be used for academic research purposes only. Informed consent from a participant is essential prior to data collection. As explained by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016) as consent given by a participant based on full information about participation rights and data usage. To obtain consent, a Participant Information Sheet, following guidelines developed by Human Research Ethics Office was used to brief potential participants about the purpose, procedures, risks and benefits of the survey and researchers' contacts. A copy of Participation Information Sheet is provided in Appendix D. To confirm that participants have read and understood the information about the survey and they agree to participate, they were requested to check the following statement before proceeding to the questionnaire:

*I have read the Participant Information Statement provided and I understand its contents. I believe I understand the purpose, extent and possible risks of my involvement in this project and I voluntarily consent to take part in the study.*

Informed consent was obtained before collecting data for two preliminary studies and the main survey.

Ethical issues related to data processing and storing were considered. The data collected were processed for a research purpose and are kept securely. Participants' personal information is used in statistical percentages for the whole sample, not the individual level that identifies any participants. Researchers should not misrepresent the data collected in analyzing and reporting process (Bryman and Bell 2015; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). The data should be reported honestly based on the analysis. Issues stem from the plagiarism and referencing was checked.

The other ethical considerations stem from data storage. The data collected from the questionnaire were transformed into SPSS spreadsheets and analyzed using AMOS software. SPSS spreadsheets and Amos outputs were sort according to date and saved in a password-protected folder. To safeguard these data, they are stored in several storage devices such as in the researcher's personal computer, external USBs and Curtin's R: drive. All hard copy research data will be kept in a locked cabinet at Curtin University Malaysia for a period of seven years after the date of the thesis publication.

#### **4.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter outlined the methodology used to address the research questions and objectives of this study. The chapter started with an overview of the research philosophy position (positivism) and research approach (deductive approach) adopted. Quantitative research was also conducted. A cross-sectional survey design was used to collect data. A preliminary test was carried out to select the focal brands and product categories. This was followed by a pilot study of the questionnaire to access the content validity and reliability of the questionnaire. A non-probability, convenience sampling technique was used due to the unavailability of the sampling frame. Data were collected

from respondents recruited from an online consumer panel company to pilot and test the self-administrated online questionnaire. Subsequently, this chapter explained the preliminary data analysis approach using SPSS software. It also described the assessment of validity and reliability of the measurement model through CFA which was then converted to a structural model for hypotheses testing. This stage was conducted using structural equation modeling, AMOS software. The chapter also outlines the ethical considerations as the study involved data collected from individuals. Ethical principles and guidelines provided by Curtin University were considered at each phase of the research. The collected data were managed and stored in multiple locations including Curtin University's R: Drive and the data will be retained for seven years after the date of the thesis publication. Data analyses and results will be discussed in Chapter Five.

## **CHAPTER 5: ANALYSES AND RESULTS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes the analysis conducted and presents the empirical results of the examination of the research hypotheses proposed in Chapter 3. The data analysis consists of two phases, namely preliminary data analysis and structural equation modeling. The chapter begins by reporting the results of preliminary data analysis (section 5.2). This is followed by a description of the sample characteristics. Section 5.4 provides an evaluation of the overall measurement model using confirmatory factor analysis and follows by a discussion on the structural model and hypotheses testing. The mediating effects of brand experience are tested. Finally, the moderating effects of consumers' regulatory focus and need for uniqueness are examined. The last section, section 5.5 offers the conclusion of the chapter.

### **5.2 PRELIMINARY DATA ANALYSIS**

The first phase of the data analysis involves data screening procedure to verify the quality of the collected data for further statistical analyses. Guided by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), the data were screened for respondents' attention, data input accuracy, and missing values. Other preliminary data analyses performed were an assessment of outliers, normality, and linearity. This phase of data analysis employed the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21.0. The procedures used for these data analyses were discussed in this section.

#### **5.2.1 Data Screening**

An attention check was performed based on the attention check question included in the questionnaire. 74 respondents (15%) did not select the specified option, indicating that they were not reading the questions attentively. These respondents were excluded from further analysis. Next, data were screened for data input accuracy and missing data were examined. No issue related to data input accuracy because Qualtrics allowed the transfer of the data automatically to SPSS. Since data was collected through an

online panel, only full responses were being logged whereas incomplete responses were be disregarded. Besides, the implementation of force responses to each question reduced the problem of missing data. In this regards, all the remaining 428 cases were then screened for outliers and distribution normality.

### 5.2.2 Assessment of Outliers

In considering the significant effects of outliers in pulling the mean away from the median, it is essential to assess for potential outliers. An outlier refers to a variable with an extreme value (a univariate outlier) or two or more variables with a strange combination of scores (multivariate outlier) (Kline 2011; Tabachnick and Fidell 2013). To detect univariate outliers, actual scores in the dataset were converted to standardized (z) scores (Hair et al. 2010; Tabachnick and Fidell 2013). With reference to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), a standard (z) score value exceeding  $\pm 3.29$  is considered as a univariate outlier. In this study, standardized scores were calculated by SPSS descriptive using a cut-off point of  $\pm 3.29$ . As presented in Table 5.1, only 2 cases had extreme values exceeding the threshold, and none of the cases were reported as outliers on more than one variable. However, Hair et al. (2010) recommend a  $z > 4$  as an extreme observation. None of the variables exceeded this threshold and hence, all the variables were retained.

Table 5.1: Results for Univariate Outliers Detection

Variables	Cases with standardized values exceeding +3.29	Standardized score (Z)
Promotion Focus	125	-3.709
	241	-3.709

Multivariate outliers were identified by computing Mahalanobis distance ( $D^2$ ) as suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). Mahalanobis distance is “the distance of a case from the centroid of the remaining cases where the centroid is the point created at the intersection of the means of all the variables” (Tabachnick and Fidell 2013, 74). Mahalanobis distance was examined using SPSS Regression. The results were compared to Critical Values of Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) (as in the Chi-Square Table) with degrees of freedom equal to the number of variables at a probability of  $p < 0.001$ . A case with Mahalanobis above Critical Values of Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) is considered as a multivariate outlier. As shown in Table 5.2, 17 cases exceeded the critical value of Chi-

square ( $X^2$ ) of 39.252 at  $p < 0.001$  and thus were identified as multivariate outliers. According to Hair et al. (2010), a  $D^2/df > 3.5$  represents potential multivariate outliers. An examination of  $D^2/df$  for all cases indicated 15 cases exceeded the threshold. The influence of these outliers was assessed by Cook's distance statistic before proceeding with outliers' deletion (Pallant 2013). All the outliers had values lower than one; therefore, they were not deleted (Tabachnick and Fidell 2013). This decision is in line with the suggestion by Hair et al. (2010) that outliers should be removed if there is evidence that they are not representative of the population, and to retain as many data as possible for further analysis. Consequently, these outliers were kept in the sample for further analysis.

Table 5.2: Results of Multivariate Outliers Detection

Cases	Mahalanobis Distance ( $D^2$ )	$D^2/df$
299	66.159	4.13
197	59.699	3.73
413	59.593	3.72
258	55.507	3.47
585	54.657	3.42
224	52.107	3.26
54	50.802	3.18
138	46.135	2.88
148	44.675	2.79
221	43.212	2.70
589	42.924	2.68
233	42.527	2.66
339	41.233	2.58
11	41.140	2.57
335	40.177	2.51
79	39.665	2.48
568	39.291	2.46

Note:  $df$  (degree of freedom) = 16 (number of variables)

### 5.2.3 Assessment of Normality

Another important assumption in maximum likelihood estimation is that the data are normally distributed (Hair et al. 2010; Kline 2011). Normality refers to the distribution of the data for a specific variable (Hair et al. 2010). Assessment of normality involves analysis of univariate normality (the distribution of individual variable) and multivariate normality (the joint distribution of all the variables in the sample). Univariate normality can be assessed by examining the degree of skewness and kurtosis values

(Tabachnick and Fidell 2013). The data is normally distributed if skewness is between  $\pm 2$  and the range value of kurtosis is  $\pm 7$  (Kline 2011). As presented in Table 5.3, both skewness and kurtosis values of items were within the suggested range, suggesting that the data were univariate normal. Appendix E offers the detailed item-by-item results of obtained skewness and kurtosis values for the data set.

Table 5.3: Constructs' Skewness and Kurtosis and Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	S. D.	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	S.E.	Statistic	S.E.
ASC	3.946	1.407	-0.197	0.118	-0.235	0.235
ISC	4.209	1.457	-0.326	0.118	-0.307	0.235
SSC	3.794	1.435	-0.064	0.118	-0.393	0.235
BBL	4.392	1.473	-0.273	0.118	-0.349	0.235
ABL	4.338	1.421	-0.424	0.118	-0.193	0.235
NFUA	3.299	1.449	0.336	0.118	-0.441	0.235
NFUP	3.686	1.353	-0.065	0.118	-0.431	0.235
NFUC	4.158	1.278	-0.344	0.118	-0.016	0.235
PV	4.864	1.201	-0.485	0.118	0.113	0.235
PM	4.885	1.047	-0.363	0.118	0.502	0.235
BAP	4.114	1.387	-0.209	0.118	-0.255	0.235
BAC	4.027	1.460	-0.290	0.118	-0.404	0.235
EXS	4.584	1.391	-0.738	0.118	0.388	0.235
EXE	4.713	1.385	-0.788	0.118	0.483	0.235
EXT	4.466	1.411	-0.590	0.118	0.092	0.235
EXA	4.409	1.457	-0.461	0.118	-0.009	0.235

Note: ASC: Actual self-congruity, ISC: Ideal self-congruity, SSC: Social self-congruity, BBL: Behavioural brand loyalty, ABL: Attitudinal brand loyalty, NFUA: Need for uniqueness-Similarity avoidance, NFUP: Need for uniqueness-Unpopular choice, NFUC-Creative choice, PV: Prevention focus, PM: Promotion focus, BAP: Brand Prominence, BAC: Brand-self connection, EXS: Sensory brand experience, EXE: Emotional brand experience, EXT: Intellectual brand experience, EXA: Behavioural brand experience.  
*N=428. All items are measured using a 7-point Likert-type scale. S.D.: Standard deviation*

To assess multivariate normality, Mardia's normalized estimate of multivariate kurtosis was used to assess the multivariate normality (Byrne 2016; Tabachnick and Fidell 2013). Critical Ratios (C.R.) provided by Amos output as attached to kurtosis represents Mardia's normalized estimate for multivariate kurtosis. If critical ratio values of multivariate kurtosis are greater than 5, the data are not normally distributed. The results indicated that the multivariate normality assumption is violated. However, it is generally agreed that perfectly normal data were difficult to obtain in social sciences (Hughes and Sharrock 1997; Veal 2005). In this study, all the variables were retained without transformation. This is because the Maximum Likelihood (ML) method of

estimation in SEM analysis was used in subsequent sections of the data analysis. This method has been widely recognized for its robustness in handling violations of the assumption of multivariate normality (e.g., Byrne 2016; Kline 2011; Lei and Lomax 2005; Marsh, Hau and Wen 2004; McDonald and Ho 2002).

#### **5.2.4 Assessment of Linearity**

According to Hair et al (2010), linearity refers to the consistent slope of change that predicts the relationship between a dependent and an independent variable. One most common way to assess linearity is to examine the deviation from linearity in ANOVA using SPSS software (Hair et al. 2010; Tabachnick and Fidell 2013). With reference to Hair et al (2010), if the significant value for Deviation from Linearity is more than 0.05, the relationship between the dependent and independent variable is considered as linear. To assess linearity between variables, the relationship between dependent and independent variables in Hypothesis 1 to Hypothesis 4 were tested. Based on the results shown in the ANOVA tables presented in Appendix F, the significant values for Deviation from Linearity were all above 0.05. Therefore, the dependent and independent variables were linearly related.

### **5.3 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS**

The data for the main survey was collected over a period of a week in the month of November 2016 using the self-administered questionnaire in Appendix C. The questionnaire was posted on Qualtrics online platform following the same procedures adopted in the pilot study (see section 4.8). It comprised of a description of the study, filter questions, question items for the main constructs, and items for demographic variables. Respondents were required to select the most familiar brand from a list of three brands in three different product categories. These brands had been identified by respondents in the pretest (N=50) and a pilot study (N=100). A total of 545 responses were collected. However, after data screening, only 428 responses were retained for further analysis.

Table 5.4 presents a descriptive summary of respondents' characteristics. Within the sample, female respondents represented 61.7% of the sample, whilst male represented

38.3% of the sample. The respondents were of different ages, which were categorized as young adults, ages 25-39 (24%), middle-aged adults, ages 40-54 years (34%) and older adults, ages 55-65 years (41.5%). The personal annual income level showed that 20.8% of the sample had earned below \$20,000 (20.8%) whereas 17.3% had earned above \$80,000. In terms of the highest education level achieved, 7% held a postgraduate degree, 28.5% had an undergraduate degree, 32.2% had attended some colleges and 26.2% were high school qualified. Most of the respondents were from Melbourne and the rest of Victoria (29%) and Sydney and the rest of New South Wales (26.2%) followed by Brisbane and the rests of Queensland (22.1%). In terms of the most familiar brand chosen in response to the survey questions, 43.9% chosen Qantas Airways, 41.6% chosen Samsung smartphone and the remaining 14.5% chosen Nike sports shoes.

### **5.3.1 Sample Selection Bias**

The use of a representative sample of the defined population is important to ensure generalizability (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). A common issue that may affect the generalizability of the results of the survey is sample selection bias which results from giving certain groups higher or lower chances for selection than other groups (Blair and Zinkhan 2006). In doing so, frequencies of the sample's places of residence were compared to the resident population in the Australian Census 2017 using Australian Bureau of Statistics population estimates (ABS 2017). Table 5.5 shows the differences between the percentage of Australian total population by state and sample by state. The results shown in Table 5.5 indicate that places of residence in the sample were slightly differed from the population, suggesting that the respondents of this study were good representations of the research population, who are consumers, reside in Australia.

Table 5.4: Descriptive Summary of Sample Characteristics

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>		
25-29	24	5.6
30-34	34	7.9
35-39	45	10.5
40-44	48	11.2
45-49	45	10.5
50-54	54	12.6
55-59	83	19.4
60-65	95	22.2
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	164	38.3
Female	364	61.7
<b>Annual Income</b>		
Below AU\$20,000	89	20.8
AU \$20,000 - AU \$29,999	66	15.4
AU \$30,000 - AU \$39,999	47	11.0
AU \$40,000 - AU \$49,999	47	11.0
AU \$50,000 - AU 59,999	24	5.6
AU \$60,000 - AU \$69,999	26	6.1
AU \$70,000 - AU \$79,999	32	7.5
Above AU \$80,000	74	17.3
I do not have personal income	23	5.4
<b>Education</b>		
Less than high school	26	6.1
High school graduate	112	26.2
Some college	138	32.2
Bachelor's degree	122	28.5
Master's degree	27	6.3
Doctoral degree	3	0.7
<b>States (and Cities)</b>		
Sydney	71	16.6
Rest of NSW	41	9.6
Melbourne	87	20.3
Rest of VIC	37	8.6
Brisbane	42	9.8
Rest of QLD	53	12.4
Canberra	8	1.9
Rest of ACT	0	0
Adelaide	32	7.5
Rest of SA	11	2.6
Perth	31	7.2
Rest of WA	8	1.9
Darwin	0	0
Rest of NT	0	0
Hobart	2	0.5
Rest of TAS	5	1.2

Note: n=428

Table 5.5: Comparison between Australian Population and Sample by State

<b>States</b>	<b>Australian Census 2017</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Difference</b>
	(%)	(%)	(%)
New South Wales	31.9	26.2	5.7
Victoria	25.7	28.9	-3.2
Queensland	20	22.2	-2.2
Australian Capital Territory	1.7	1.9	-0.2
South Australia	7	10.1	-3.1
Western Australia	10.5	9.1	1.4
Northern Territory	1	0	1.0
Tasmania	2.1	1.7	0.4

#### 5.4 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS OF MEASUREMENT MODELS

The second phase of data analysis involves the application of SEM. The data collected were analyzed through structural equation modeling following the two-stage approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). In the first stage, measurement properties of the SEM were evaluated. The uni-dimensionality of each latent variable, model re-specification or modification, a test of reliability and validity of the measurement properties were assessed by using Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). CFA is recognized as a rigorous technique that facilitates the examination of factorial properties of the posited measurement models (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). The second stage of the SEM approach involves specification of the paths relationship between latent constructs. Upon achieving good model fitness, the structural model is ready for hypotheses testing. Each of these stages is now discussed.

The measurement model composed of 16 constructs measured by 64 items. The constructs and their items are shown in Table 5.3. CFA was run with all variables linked to one another indicated by double-headed arrows. The double-headed arrow represents covariance between variables. Brand experience and brand attachment were operationalized as second-order constructs. Specifically, the brand experience was operationalized as a four-dimension second-order construct and the brand attachment as a two-dimension second-order construct. To assess the measurement

model with higher-order constructs, conducting a hierarchy confirmatory factor analysis is recommended (Marsh 1991). Thus, in this study, an initial examination of the first-order CFA is then followed by a second-order measurement model to examine the proposed second-order factor structure of brand experience and brand attachment. The reason for conducting the hierarchy CFA is to assess the ability of higher-order factors to explain relations among first-order factors (Marsh 1991).

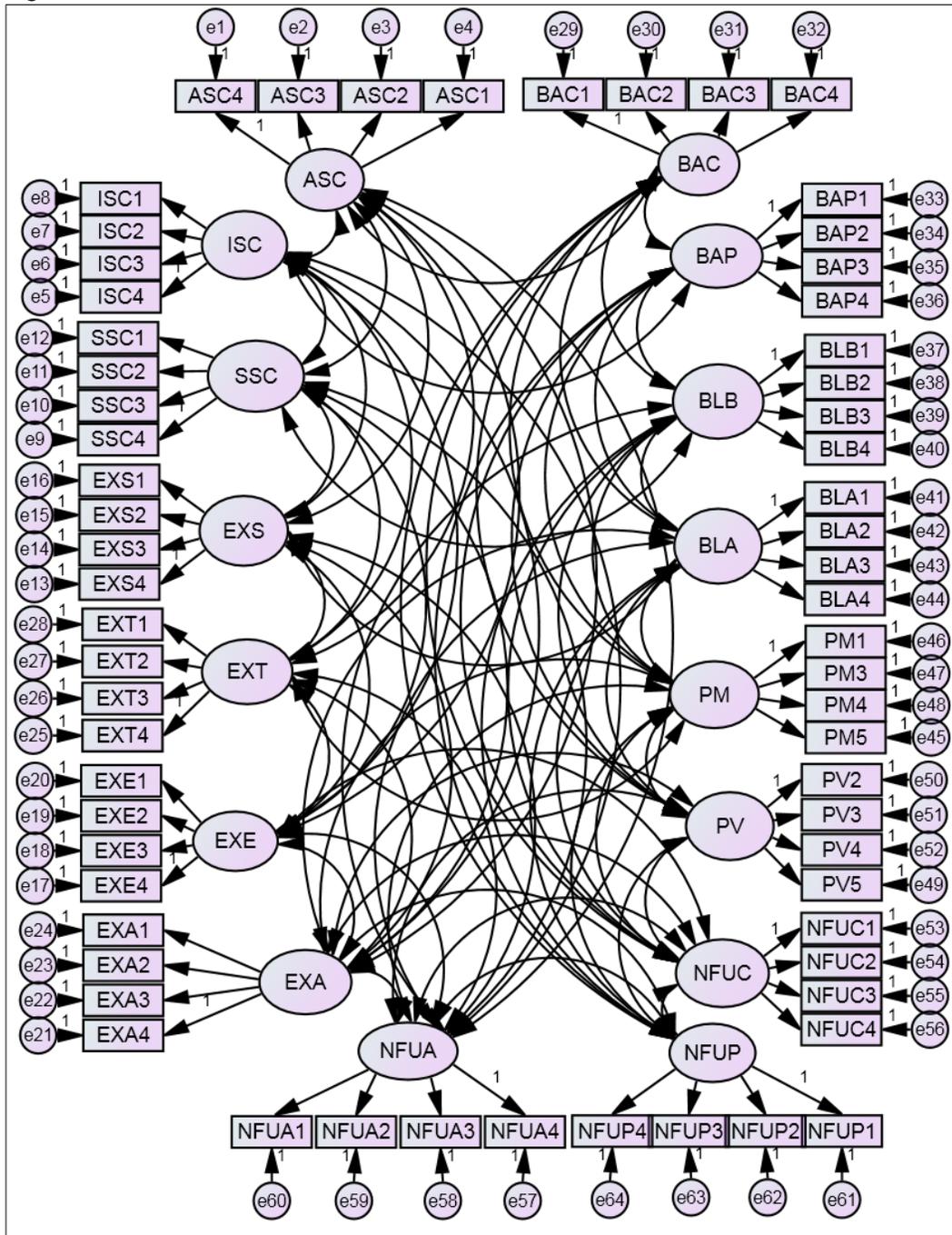
Table 5.6: Constructs in the Measurement Model

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Items</b>
Actual self-congruity	ASC1-4
Ideal self-congruity	ISC1-4
Social self-congruity	SSC1-4
Brand experience	
Sensory brand experience	EXS1-4
Emotional brand experience	EXE1-4
Behavioral brand experience	EXA1-4
Cognitive brand experience	EXT1-4
Brand attachment	
Brand-self connection	BAC1-4
Brand prominence	BAP1-4
Attitudinal brand loyalty	BLA1-4
Behavioural brand loyalty	BLB1-4
Prevention focus	PV2-5
Promotion focus	PM1,3,4,5
Creative choice	NFUC1-4
Unpopular choice	NFUP1-4
Similarity avoidance	NFUA1-4

#### 5.4.1 First-order CFA Measurement Model

A confirmatory factor analysis was performed with latent factors modeled simultaneously as correlated first-order factors (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: First-order CFA Measurement Model



Following the guidelines outlined in Table 4.14, the results of the initial estimate as shown in Table 5.7 indicates a need for model refinement. The model was refined by a thorough examination of the standardized regression weights, squared multiple correlations, standardized residual covariances and modification indexes (Hair et al. 2010). In the current run of CFA, PM1 (SRW=0.484; SMC=0.234) and PV2 (SRW=0.240; SMC=0.058) has low SRW (0.6) and SMC (SMC<0.4). This resulted in the deletion of these items. After dropping these items the Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) was improved. However, the model was not desirable.

Modification indices (MI) were examined to find theoretically justifiable re-specifications (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Modification indices are estimated for all non-estimated parameters. These indices are used to diagnose correlations between measurement errors and constructs that are not be initially specified in the model. MI of 4.0 or greater suggests possible mean of improving model fit (Hair et al. 2010). Accordingly, a series of model modifications were made based on standardized residual covariance and modification indices. This re-specification process strictly followed recommended procedures (Bentler and Chou 1987; Byrne 2016; Hair et al. 2010) where items with measurement errors highly correlated with multiple error terms of other items were omitted from the measurement model, one at a time until the acceptable fitness of model is achieved (see Table 5.7). This resulted in the correlation of error terms of BLA1 and BLB4 as well as BLA1 and BLB3. The error terms were correlated because both of the items described brand loyalty. Besides, nine items from the measurement model were omitted. These items include EXA4, EXT4, SSC2, ISC2, ASC4, BLA2, BLB2, BAP3 and NFUP1. After dropping these items, the measurement model indicated an acceptable fit as shown in Table 5.4. The normed chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ ) is 2.23, less than the threshold of 3, as specified by Hair et al (2010) and Kline (2011). The other two absolute fit indices, RMSEA, and SRMR were 0.054 and 0.046 respectively, indicating a good fit (Hair et al. 2010; Kline 2011). The incremental fit indices, such as CFI, NNFI, and NFI were higher or equal to 0.9, demonstrating a good fit (Bagozzi and Yi 1988; Hair et al. 2010; Kline 2011). The exceptions were GFI which was slightly below 0.90 and the chi-square statistic which was significant,  $\chi^2$  (2571.33,  $p<0.01$ ). However, GFI was created early to provide a fit index less sensitive to sample size, it is still sensitive to sample size and less reliable to be used to support the model fit (Hair et al. 2010). Similarly, Chi-square is sampled based (Kline 2011) and hence in the study

with a large sample and a large number of observed variables, the chi-square statistic frequently rejects valid models. Therefore, the model should not be rejected based on a  $\chi^2$  test (Bagozzi and Yi 1988; Hair et al. 2010). To conclude, it is evidenced that the first-order measurement model has a good model fit.

#### **5.4.1.1 Construct Validity**

Construct validity was evaluated through convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity can be supported by assessing factor loadings, composite reliability and the average variance extracted (AVE) each measurement item (Hair et al. 2010). As shown in Table 5.8, all the items were loaded highly, above 0.7 on their corresponding factors, which indicating the independence of the constructs and provided strong empirical evidence of their convergent validity (Hair et al. 2010). However, BLA1 (0.68) and PM3 (0.631) were slightly below the threshold suggested. Hair et al. (2010) suggested a factor loading of above 0.7 as ideal, while loadings greater than 0.6 is acceptable. Thus, the two items were kept in the model. Convergent validity is achieved when AVE equals or above 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker 1981). In this study, AVE scores for all constructs were greater than 0.5, hence realizing the convergent validity.

To assess the discriminant validity, Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that the square root of the AVE for a given variable is compared with the correlations between that variable and all other variables in the model. Table 5.9 depicts that the square root of the AVE scores (diagonal elements) was above the correlations of the construct with any other construct (off-diagonal elements) demonstrated discriminant validity.

Table 5.7: Goodness-of-Fit for the First-Order Measurement Model

Criteria	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	RMSEA	SRMR	CFI	TLI	NFI	PNFI	AGFI
Initial model	5132.902	1832	2.803	0.700	0.065	0.055	0.903	0.894	0.858	0.780	0.659
Drop PV1 and PM2	4837.854	1709	2.831	0.702	0.065	0.055	0.908	0.898	0.865	0.781	0.660
Drop EXT4	4555.086	1649	2.762	0.712	0.064	0.055	0.912	0.903	0.870	0.784	0.670
Drop BLA2	4186.021	1590	2.633	0.736	0.062	0.054	0.920	0.911	0.878	0.788	0.696
Drop ISC2	3925.664	1532	2.562	0.784	0.060	0.055	0.924	0.915	0.882	0.790	0.709
Correlate e39 and e41	3846.489	1531	2.512	0.756	0.060	0.055	0.927	0.918	0.884	0.791	0.718
Drop NFUP1	3605.822	1474	2.446	0.766	0.058	0.048	0.932	0.923	0.890	0.794	0.729
Drop EXA4	3354.213	1418	2.365	0.774	0.057	0.047	0.936	0.928	0.895	0.796	0.736
Drop SSC2	3164.556	1363	2.322	0.780	0.056	0.047	0.939	0.931	0.898	0.795	0.742
Drop BAP3	2959.020	1309	2.261	0.788	0.054	0.044	0.943	0.935	0.902	0.795	0.750
Drop BLB2	2740.671	1256	2.182	0.797	0.053	0.044	0.947	0.940	0.907	0.796	0.760
Drop ASC4	2661.964	1204	2.211	0.799	0.053	0.044	0.946	0.939	0.907	0.792	0.761
Correlate e39 and e40	2590.112	1203	2.153	0.804	0.050	0.044	0.950	0.945	0.910	0.795	0.766

$\chi^2$ : Chi-Square, df: Degree of Freedom,  $\chi^2/df$ : Normed Chi-Square, GFI: Goodness-of-Fit Index, RMSEA: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, SRMR: Standardized Root Mean Residual, CFI: Comparative Fit Index, NFI: Normed Fit Index, TLI: Tucker-Lewis Index, PNFI: Parsimony Normed Fit Index, AGFI: Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index.

#### **5.4.1.2 Construct Reliability**

The aim of assessing construct reliability is to examine the consistency in measurement items. Cronbach's Alpha values of all the measurement models (variables) were estimated by using SPSS software, and the values are shown in Table 5.8. Cronbach's Alpha values for all the measures were well above the recommended cutting point of 0.70, indicating the reliability of the constructs (Hair et al. 2010; Kline 2011). Another evidence for internal consistency of a construct is when composite reliability value meets the recommended level of 0.60 (Hair et al. 2010). From Table 5.8, composite reliability for all the constructs exceeded cut-off values of 0.6, exhibiting high internal consistency (Fornell and Larcker 1981; Hair et al. 2010).

Table 5.8: Convergent Validity for the First-Order Measurement Model

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>SRW</b>	<b>CA (above 0.7)</b>	<b>CR (above 0.6)</b>	<b>AVE (above 0.5)</b>
Self-Brand Connection	BAC1	0.869	0.929	0.952	0.908
	BAC3	0.915			
	BAC4	0.930			
Brand Prominence	BAP1	0.949	0.924	0.931	0.818
	BAP2	0.943			
	BAP4	0.815			
Sensory Brand Experience	EXS1	0.910	0.956	0.957	0.847
	EXS2	0.910			
	EXS3	0.962			
	EXS4	0.898			
Emotional Brand Experience	EXE1	0.910	0.957	0.958	0.883
	EXE3	0.954			
	EXE4	0.956			
Cognitive Brand Experience	EXT1	0.954	0.940	0.942	0.844
	EXT2	0.965			
	EXT3	0.934			
Behavioural Brand Experience	EXA1	0.912	0.941	0.941	0.842
	EXA2	0.918			
	EXA3	0.923			
Actual Self-Congruity	ASC1	0.885	0.949	0.950	0.825
	ASC2	0.870			
	ASC3	0.937			
	ASC4	0.954			
Ideal Self-Congruity	ISC1	0.930	0.967	0.968	0.909
	ISC3	0.975			
	ISC4	0.954			
Social Self-Congruity	SSC1	0.927	0.972	0.973	0.923
	SSC3	0.980			
	SSC4	0.972			
Attitudinal Brand Loyalty	BLA1	0.680	0.880	0.903	0.760
	BLA3	0.959			
	BLA4	0.950			
Behavioural Brand Loyalty	BLB1	0.894	0.902	0.907	0.766
	BLB3	0.762			
	BLB4	0.814			
Prevention Focus	PV3	0.737	0.834	0.834	0.629
	PV4	0.905			
	PV5	0.724			
Promotion Focus	PM3	0.631	0.822	0.820	0.606
	PM4	0.863			
	PM5	0.823			

<i>Need for uniqueness- Similarity avoidance,</i>	NFUC1	0.776	0.908	0.909	0.826
	NFUC2	0.842			
	NFUC3	0.866			
	NFUC4	0.896			
<i>Need for uniqueness- Unpopular choice</i>	NFUA1	0.864	0.950	0.950	0.826
	NFUA2	0.928			
	NFUA3	0.956			
	NFUA4	0.883			
Need for Uniqueness - Creative choice	NFUP2	0.812	0.904	0.905	0.760
	NFUP3	0.882			
	NFUP4	0.919			
<i>Note: SRW: Standardized Regression Weight; CA: Cronbach's Alpha; CR: Composite Reliability; AVE: Average Variance Explained</i>					

Table 5.9: Correlation Matrix for the First-Order Measurement Model

Construct	ASC	ISC	SSC	EXS	EXE	EXA	EXT	BAC	BAP	BLB	BLA	PM	PV	NFUC	NFUP	NFUA
ASC	<b>0.909</b>															
ISC	0.833	<b>0.953</b>														
SSC	0.817	0.732	<b>0.961</b>													
EXS	0.730	0.735	0.607	<b>0.920</b>												
EXE	0.725	0.726	0.612	0.892	<b>0.940</b>											
EXA	0.695	0.684	0.615	0.770	0.847	<b>0.918</b>										
EXT	0.708	0.708	0.613	0.827	0.892	0.872	<b>0.919</b>									
BAC	0.760	0.707	0.728	0.759	0.775	0.780	0.810	<b>0.905</b>								
BAP	0.596	0.576	0.574	0.610	0.640	0.726	0.702	0.842	<b>0.904</b>							
BLB	0.600	0.552	0.534	0.608	0.596	0.561	0.600	0.693	0.626	<b>0.875</b>						
BLA	0.596	0.615	0.503	0.745	0.768	0.666	0.749	0.739	0.671	0.779	<b>0.872</b>					
PM	0.443	0.362	0.387	0.472	0.489	0.471	0.530	0.466	0.432	0.325	0.436	<b>0.779</b>				
PV	0.370	0.410	0.301	0.440	0.449	0.425	0.472	0.372	0.363	0.304	0.378	0.616	<b>0.793</b>			
NFUC	0.517	0.420	0.478	0.520	0.487	0.492	0.507	0.567	0.463	0.452	0.461	0.588	0.461	<b>0.846</b>		
NFUP	0.190	0.133	0.229	0.166	0.188	0.241	0.208	0.271	0.245	0.248	0.165	0.236	0.266	0.476	<b>0.872</b>	
NFUA	0.160	0.101	0.209	0.076	0.063	0.159	0.128	0.215	0.162	0.176	0.038	0.153	0.155	0.478	0.565	<b>0.909</b>

Note: Square root of average variance extracted (AVE) is shown on the diagonal and in bold. Correlation coefficients are shown in the off diagonal; all correlations are significant at 0.001 level.

#### **5.4.2 Second-Order CFA Measurement Model**

For second-order CFA measurement model, brand experience and brand attachment was modeled as second-order constructs as shown in Figure 5.2. The fit indices indicated that the measurement model had adequate model fit with  $\chi^2 = 2724.381$ ,  $df = 1202$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.267$ , GFI = 0.789, RMSEA = 0.054, SRMR = 0.0483, CFI = 0.943, TLI = 0.936, NFI = 0.902, PNFI = 0.818 and AGFI = 0.758.

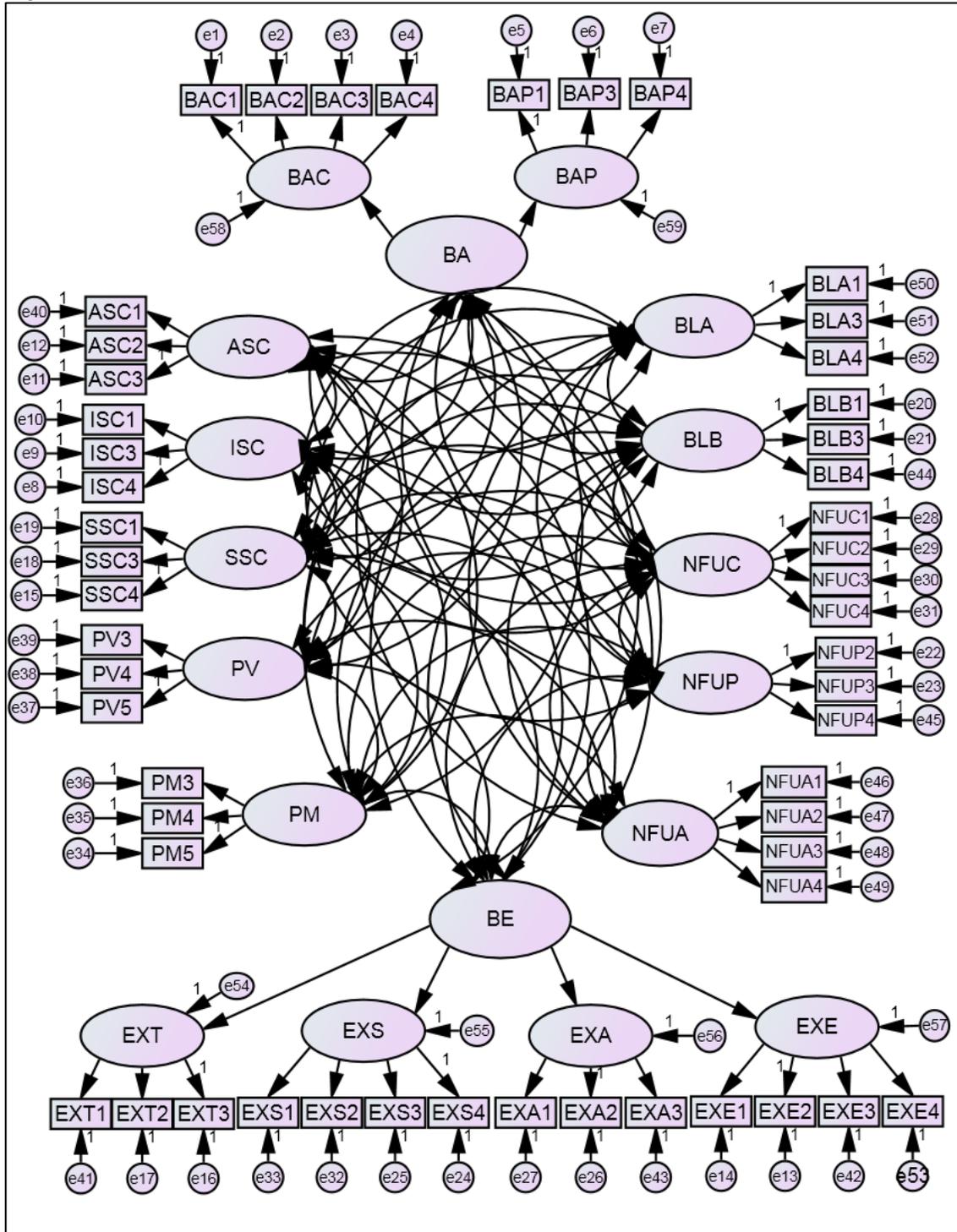
Composite variables for dimensions of brand experience and brand attachment were formed. Composite formation techniques are commonly adopted to reduce the number of estimated parameter in the model (Landis, Beal and Tesluk 2000; Little et al. 2002). Furthermore, composite variables represent the multiple dimensions of the construct while reducing the measurement error (Hair et al. 2010). Perhaps this advantage explains their popularity in marketing study (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009; Kim, Magnini and Singal 2011). A composite score is formed by combining the indicators into one underlying variable (Hair et al. 2010). In this study, for example, composite sensorial brand experience score was computed by averaging the scores of four sensory brand experience items (that is EXS1, EXS2, EXS3, and EXS4). The same procedures applied to compute emotional brand experience (4 items), intellectual brand experience (3 items) and behavioural brand experience (3 items), two brand attachment dimensions, which are brand-self connection (4 items) and brand prominence (3 items). The model fit indexes for the new measurement model with composite scores for brand experience and brand attachment demonstrated a better fit with  $\chi^2 = 1519.397$ ,  $df = 636$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.389$ , GFI = 0.841, RMSEA = 0.057, SRMR = 0.0497, CFI = 0.951, TLI = 0.943, NFI = 0.92, PNFI = 0.789 and AGFI = 0.805.

##### **5.4.2.1 Construct Validity**

Second order CFA was conducted to test whether the brand experience dimensions and brand attachment dimensions converged on their respective second-order latent factor. The CFA results indicated that the path coefficients between the second-order construct of brand experience and the four dimensions were all statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$ . The factors loadings of all four dimensions were above 0.7. Similarly, the path coefficients between brand attachment and the two dimensions were all significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) with factor loadings above 0.7. Furthermore, AVEs for brand experience and

brand attachment were above the recommended threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al. 2010). Table 5.10 shows the results of the second-order measurement model.

Figure 5.2: Second-order CFA Measurement Model



To test whether brand experience and brand attachment are concepts distinct from other constructs proposed in the measurement model, discriminant validity was assessed. As shown in Table 5.11, the square root of the AVE for each construct was greater than its correlation with other constructs, demonstrating support for discriminant validity.

Table 5.10: Convergent Validity of Second-order Measurement Model

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>SRW</b>	<b>CA (above 0.7)</b>	<b>CR (above 0.6)</b>	<b>AVE (above 0.5)</b>
Brand Attachment	BAP	0.859	0.902	0.906	0.829
	BAC	0.959			
Brand Experience	EXS	0.896	0.945	0.946	0.814
	EXE	0.939			
	EXA	0.860			
	EXT	0.913			
<i>Note: SRW: Standardized Regression Weight; CA: Cronbach's Alpha; CR: Composite Reliability; AVE: Average Variance Explained</i>					

#### **5.4.2.2 Construct Reliability**

To test the reliability of brand experience and brand attachment, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were assessed. Table 5.10 indicates that the two second-order constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.7 level of Cronbach's alpha (Nunnally 1978; Hair et al. 2010). Furthermore, the Composite Reliability was 0.906 for brand attachment and 0.946 for brand experience, supporting the 0.6 thresholds (Hair et al. 2010).

Table 5.11: Correlation Matrix for the Second-order Measurement Model

Construct	ASC	ISC	SSC	BE	BA	ABL	BBL	PM	PV	NFUC	NFU	NFUA
<b>ASC</b>	<b>0.909</b>											
<b>ISC</b>	0.833	<b>0.953</b>										
<b>SSC</b>	0.817	0.732	<b>0.961</b>									
<b>BE</b>	0.774	0.773	0.661	<b>0.902</b>								
<b>BA</b>	0.750	0.702	0.717	0.849	<b>0.911</b>							
<b>ABL</b>	0.600	0.553	0.535	0.650	0.707	<b>0.876</b>						
<b>BBL</b>	0.596	0.616	0.503	0.801	0.755	0.780	<b>0.872</b>					
<b>PM</b>	0.444	0.363	0.388	0.532	0.477	0.326	0.436	<b>0.779</b>				
<b>PV</b>	0.372	0.411	0.303	0.492	0.380	0.306	0.380	0.619	<b>0.793</b>			
<b>NFUC</b>	0.517	0.420	0.478	0.544	0.566	0.452	0.461	0.589	0.463	<b>0.846</b>		
<b>NFUP</b>	0.190	0.133	0.229	0.218	0.263	0.248	0.165	0.236	0.267	0.476	<b>0.872</b>	
<b>NFUA</b>	0.160	0.102	0.209	0.113	0.205	0.175	0.038	0.153	0.156	0.478	0.565	<b>0.909</b>

Note: Square root of average variance extracted (AVE) is shown on the diagonal and in bold. Correlation coefficients are shown in the off diagonal; all correlations are significant at 0.001 level. BE and BA are composite scores.

### 5.4.3 Common Method Variance

Common method variance may impose spurious relationships among constructs because the self-reported questionnaire was used to collect the study data. As discussed in Chapter 4, several measures were adopted in questionnaire design to reduce the potential effect of common method variance. For instance, respondents' anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed to minimize social desirability bias. Furthermore, items for brand attachment and brand experience were separated from those of brand loyalty by putting items in different pages of the questionnaire. This was done to yield an effect of psychological separation on the respondents (Podsakoff et al. 2003). An initial examination of the correlation matrix (Table 5.11) did not identify high correlations between constructs and hence, no evidence of possible common method bias (Bagozzi, Yi and Phillips 1991).

A Harman's single-factor test suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003) was conducted. Harman's single-factor test is one of the most commonly used methods for examining common method variance in single-method research design (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Here, all 64 items measuring 16 constructs were loaded into an exploratory factor analysis using SPSS software. The unrotated principal component factor analysis identified ten latent constructs, which explained 79.52% of the variance. A forced one-factor solution explained only 40.61% of the variance, which was less than 50% (Podsakoff et al 2003). The results suggested that no single factor accounts for the variance in the constructs. Therefore, no significant amount of common method variance seems to exist in the data.

Next, a common latent factor (CLF) was added to the CFA model to capture the common variance among the observed variables. The CLF was connected to all observed items in the measurement model. The standardized regression weights from this model were compared with the standardized regression weights of the model without the CLF (Podsakoff et al. 2003). If the differences between the models were small, then common method variance is not an issue. In this study, the differences in the standardized regression weights between the models ranged from 0-0.05 which was relatively small, indicating the impact of common method variance is not a problem.

## 5.5 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS OF STRUCTURAL MODEL

The stage two of the SEM involved specifying the structural model to test the effects of constructs on one another, directly and indirectly, based on theory (Byrne 2016; Hair et al. 2010). In this study, 7 main hypotheses were developed to answer the research questions addressed in Chapter One. These hypotheses can be categorized into three categories, namely (1) antecedents and outcomes of brand attachment (H1-H4); (2) the mediating effect of brand experience (H5) and (3) the moderating effects of regulatory focus and consumers' need for uniqueness (H6-H7). Prior to the examination of the proposed structural relationships, the goodness-of-fit of the structural model was assessed to confirm that the structural model fits the data.

### 5.5.1 Goodness-of-Fit Assessment of the Structural Model

As shown in Table 5.12, not all the goodness-of-fit indices fulfilled the threshold values. These values indicated that the structural model does not have adequate fit, specifically RMSEA was above the threshold of 0.08. On the basis of poor model fit, the measurement model was re-assessed to identify a better fitting model. Items associated with questionable modification indices, insignificant paths and large standardized errors are considered as candidates for deletion (Hair et al. 2010). A review of modification indices revealed that sensory brand experience and emotional brand experience contributed to the poor fit. The covariance paths of error terms of brand experience (EXS-EXE) were correlated. The refined model had a satisfactory model fit (please see Table 5.12). Although the  $\chi^2/df$  was higher than the cutoff of 3 (Hair et al. 2010), it was below the threshold of 5 as suggested by Marsh and Hocevar (1985) and Bollen (1989). The rest of the fit indices indicate that the model has a good fit. Collectively, the absolute goodness-of-fit indices, incremental fit indices and parsimony fit indices of the model lend sufficient empirical support that the structural model of this study adequately fits the data. In other words, the theory developed fits reality as represented by the sample data collected (Hair et al. 2010). Therefore, it can be concluded that the structural model is valid and acceptable for hypotheses testing.

Table 5.12: Goodness-of-Fit for the Refined Structural Model

Criteria	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	RMSEA	SRMR	CFI	TLI	NFI	PNFI	AGFI
Initial model	707.634	177	3.998	0.858	0.087	0.066	0.955	0.947	0.941	0.794	0.815

Refined model	674.583	176	3.833	0.867	0.082	0.066	0.958	0.950	0.944	0.791	0.825
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*χ<sup>2</sup>: Chi-Square, df: Degree of Freedom, χ<sup>2</sup>/df: Normed Chi-Square, GFI: Goodness-of-Fit Index, RMSEA: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, SRMR: Standardized Root Mean Residual, CFI: Comparative Fit Index, NFI: Normed Fit Index, TLI: Tucker-Lewis Index, PNFI: Parsimony Normed Fit Index, AGFI: Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index.*

## 5.6 HYPOTHESES TESTING

The structural model is presented by assigning relationships of constructs based on the proposed conceptual model (Hair et al. 2010) except the moderating relationships. As shown in Figure 5.3, all exogenous variables were correlated although no correlation hypothesized (Kline 2011). A causal path or relationship was indicated by the single-headed arrow. The structural model was tested using maximum likelihood estimation with path analysis by Amos. Maximum Likelihood Estimation (ML), the most widely used estimation procedures (Bollen 1989), was used for parameter estimation in this study. ML is recognized for its ability in handling complicated models and its robustness to non-normality (Bollen 1989).

### 5.6.1 Antecedents and Outcomes of Brand Attachment

To test the hypotheses, parameter estimates and coefficient values were assessed. When the critical ratio (C.R) of the standardized path estimate is higher than 1.96, the parameter is statistically significant at 0.05 level (Hair et al. 2010). Figure 5.3 presents a diagram of the structural research model, depicts the standardized path coefficients and path significance for nine hypotheses established. Nine hypothesized paths of antecedents and outcomes of brand attachment as shown in this model. The summary of the parameter estimates and hypotheses testing are presented in Table 5.13.

Figure 5.3: Structural Model for Antecedents and Outcomes of Brand Attachment

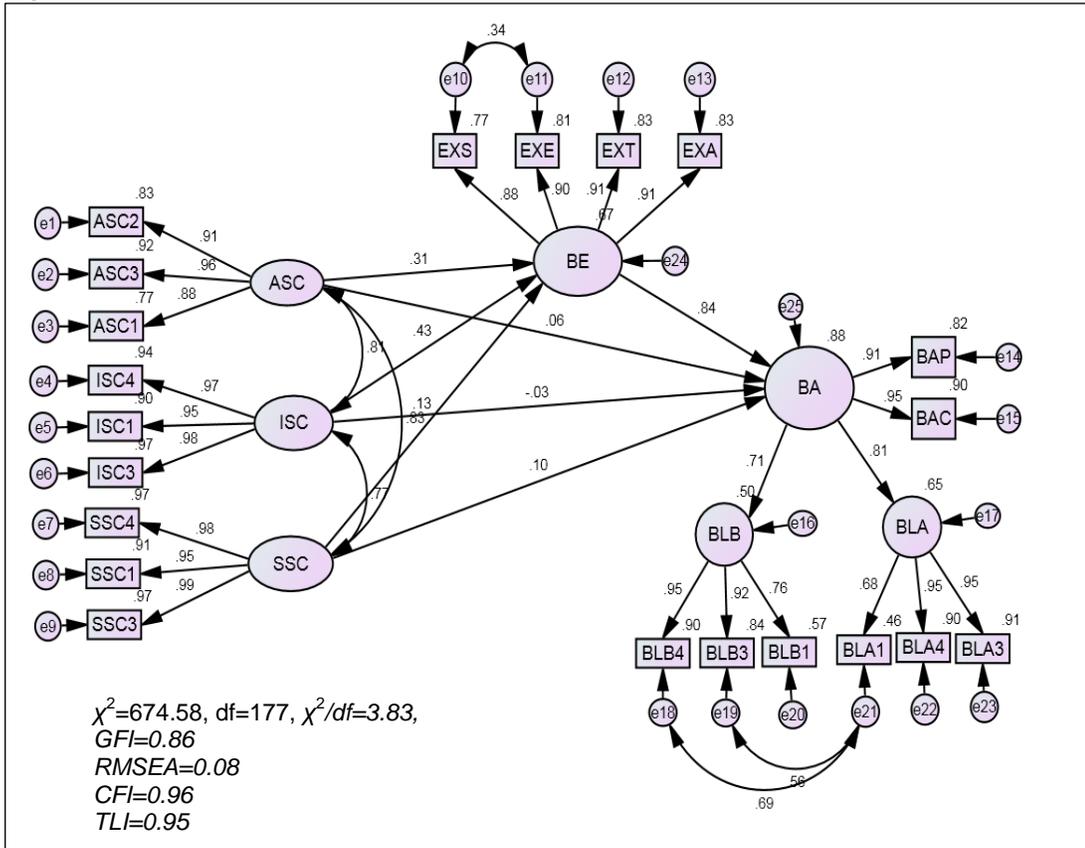


Table 5.13: Hypotheses Testing for Antecedents and Outcomes of Brand Attachment

	Hypothesis	Std. Est.	C. R.	p-value	Result
H1a	Actual Self-Congruity → Brand Attachment	0.063	1.095	0.273	Not supported
H1b	Ideal Self-Congruity → Brand Attachment	-0.028	-0.558	0.577	Not supported
H1c	Social Self-Congruity → Brand Attachment	0.100	2.089	**	Supported
H2a	Actual Self-Congruity → Brand Experience	0.312	4.197	***	Supported
H2b	Ideal Self-Congruity → Brand Experience	0.432	6.986	***	Supported
H2c	Social Self-Congruity → Brand Experience	0.126	1.996	**	Supported
H3	Brand experience → Brand Attachment	0.835	15.551	***	Supported
H4a	Brand Attachment → Attitudinal Brand Loyalty	0.809	20.329	***	Supported
H4b	Brand Attachment → Behavioural Brand Loyalty	0.711	13.112	***	Supported

Note: Std. Est.: Standardized path estimate ( $\beta$ ), C.R.: Critical Ratio. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$

As seen in Table 5.13 and Figure 5.3, the standardized path estimates illustrated that paths from actual self-congruity (H1a) and ideal self-congruity (H1b) to brand attachment were not statistically significant with  $\beta=0.063$ ,  $p>0.05$  and  $\beta=-0.028$ ,  $p>0.05$ , respectively. Therefore the data did not support these two hypotheses. Nonetheless, the standardized estimate for social self-congruity (H1c) was statistically significant with  $\beta=0.1$ ,  $p<0.001$ , supporting hypothesis 1c. Hence, the data indicated that hypothesis 1 was partially supported. Hypothesis 2 predicts that actual self-congruity (H2a), ideal self-congruity (H2b) and social self-congruity (H2c) are positively associated with the brand experience. The results presented in Figure 5.3 and Table 5.13 indicated that these three hypotheses were statistically significant and in the hypothesized direction. The three constructs, actual self-congruity ( $\beta=0.312$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), ideal self-congruity ( $\beta=0.432$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and social self-congruity ( $\beta=0.126$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) collectively explained 67% of the variation in brand experience. The preceding analysis of the model exhibited that brand attachment was significantly influenced by brand experience ( $\beta=0.835$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), providing evidence supporting hypothesis 3. The results revealed that brand experience was a stronger predictor ( $\beta=0.835$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) of brand attachment than self-congruity (actual, ideal and social). The four constructs account for 88% of the variation in the brand attachment.

The hypothesized relationships between brand attachment and the two brand loyalty constructs, attitudinal brand loyalty (H4a) and behavioural brand loyalty (H4b) were statistically significant. Thus, hypothesis 4a and 4b are supported. Brand attachment predicts attitudinal loyalty better ( $\beta = 0.809$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) than behavioural brand loyalty ( $\beta = 0.711$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Furthermore, the model explained 64.6% of the variance in attitudinal brand loyalty and 50.2% of the variance in behavioural brand loyalty.

As illustrated in Figure 5.3, brand experience, in the process of brand attachment development, serves to mediate the effect of actual, ideal and social self-congruity on brand attachment, while actual, ideal and social self-congruity has a direct relationship with brand attachment. While the direct relationships of actual self-congruity (H1a), ideal self-congruity (H1b) and social self-congruity (H1c) on brand attachment had been tested, the next section examines the indirect effects of these constructs on brand attachment through brand experience.

### **5.6.2 Mediating Effect of Brand Experience**

In the conceptual framework, the brand experience was hypothesized as a mediator that links the independent variables (i.e., actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity and social self-congruity) and the dependent variable (i.e., brand attachment). To test the mediation effects of brand experience (Hypothesis 4), two alternative structural models were estimated following the test procedures outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). To determine the existence of mediation, four conditions should be met. The first condition is met if the independent variable (i.e., actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity and social self-congruity) directly influences the dependent variable (i.e., brand attachment) without the presence of a mediator in a model (Model 1). The results of Model 1, shown in Table 5.13, demonstrated that actual self-congruity ( $\beta = 0.295$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), ideal self-congruity ( $\beta = 0.339$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and social self-congruity ( $\beta = 0.231$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) were significantly and positively related to brand attachment. Thus, the first condition had been satisfied.

The second condition requires that independent variables (i.e., actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity and social self-congruity) are significant predictors of the mediator (i.e., brand experience). With reference to Table 5.14, actual self-congruity ( $\beta = 0.312$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), ideal self-congruity ( $\beta = 0.432$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and social self-congruity ( $\beta = 0.126$ ,

$p < 0.05$ ) were significantly and positively related to the brand experience, fulfilling the second condition. The third condition is satisfied if the mediator (i.e., brand experience) directly influences the dependent variable (i.e., brand attachment). This condition was met as brand experience was significantly and positively related to brand attachment ( $\beta = 0.835$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) (see Table 5.14).

The last condition is met if; after the inclusion of the mediating variable (i.e., brand experience), the effect of the independent variable (i.e., actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity and social self-congruity) on the dependent variable (i.e., brand attachment) is significantly smaller (partial mediation) or become not significant (full mediation). As shown in Table 5.14, a comparison of the Model 1 and Model 2 indicated that, after brand experience was added to the model (that is Model 2), the direct paths from independent variables (i.e., actual, ideal and social self-congruity) and dependent variable (i.e., the brand attachment) weakened in their strength. Therefore, the fourth condition was also satisfied.

The findings support brand experience as a full mediator in the relationship between actual and ideal self-congruity and brand attachment. This is because the direct effect of actual self-congruity and ideal self-congruity became not significant after brand experience is introduced into the model. On the other hand, brand experience partially mediated the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment as the effect of social self-congruity on brand attachment is reduced (a change of  $\beta = 0.240$  to  $\beta = 0.1$ ) but remained significant after brand experience entered into the model as mediator.

Table 5.14: Results of Direct and Indirect Effects of Brand Experience

Path	Model 1			Model 2		
	Direct Effect without a mediator			Indirect Effect with a mediator		
	Std. Est.	t-value	p-value	Std. Est.	t-value	p-value
ASC → BA	0.297	3.924	***	0.063	1.095	0.273
ISC → BA	0.326	5.223	***	-0.028	-0.558	0.577
SSC → BA	0.240	3.744	***	0.1	2.089	**
ASC → BE				0.312	4.197	***
ISC → BE				0.432	6.986	***
SSC → BE				0.126	1.996	**

BE → BA				0.835	15.551	***
<i>Notes: Std. Est.: Standardized estimate (<math>\beta</math>), ASC: Actual Self-Congruity, ISC: Ideal Self-Congruity, SSC: Social Self-Congruity, (Independent Variables), BE: Brand Experience (Mediator), BA: Brand Attachment (Dependent Variable).</i> *** $p < 0.001$ ; ** $p < 0.05$						

Bootstrapping estimates were used to confirm the results of the mediation tests (Bollen and Stine 1990; 1992; Mallinckrodt et al. 2006; Shrout and Bolger 2002). Furthermore, it is performed to overcome the limitations of statistical approaches in this study, as bootstrapping estimates do not require the normality assumption to be met (Shrout and Bolger 2002). Bootstrapping has a higher level of power and reasonable control over the Type 1 error rates (Hayes 2017; Zhao, Lynch and Chen 2010). In line with the bootstrapping bias-corrected confidence interval (CI) procedure proposed by Preacher and Hayes (2008) and Zhao, Lynch and Chen (2010), 5000 bootstrapped samples with bias corrected at 95% confidence interval (CI) was performed to confirm the indirect effects of actual, ideal and social self-congruity on brand attachment through brand experience. If the CI excludes zero, the indirect effect is significant (MacKinnon, Lockwood and Williams 2004; Zhao, Lynch and Chen 2010).

The results as in Table 5.15 show a positive and significant indirect effect of actual self-congruity (H5a), ideal self-congruity (H5b) and social self-congruity (H5c) on brand attachment through brand experience, with 95% CIs [0.143, 0.39], [0.25, 0.487] and [0.016, 0.202] respectively. Specifically, the direct effect of actual self-congruity and ideal self-congruity were not significant, suggesting that brand experience fully mediate the positive relationship between actual self-congruity and ideal self-congruity on brand attachment. However, the direct effect of social self-congruity and brand attachment is significant, supporting the partial mediation effects of brand experience on the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment. Results obtained from bootstrapping estimates were consistent with mediation tests performed earlier. Therefore, it can be concluded that hypothesis 4 is partially supported.

Table 5.15: Results for the Mediation Test

Relationship	Direct effect			Indirect effect			Type of mediation
	$\beta$	LBCI	UBCI	$\beta$	LBCI	UBCI	
ASC → BE → BA	0.063	-0.041	0.181	0.260***	0.143	0.390	Full mediation
ISC → BE → BA	-0.028	-0.137	0.076	0.361**	0.250	0.487	Full mediation
SSC → BE → BA	0.100**	0.008	0.192	0.105**	0.016	0.202	Partial mediation

Notes: ASC: Actual Self-Congruity, ISC: Ideal Self-Congruity, SSC: Social Self-Congruity, BE: Brand Experience, BA: Brand Attachment, LBCI: lower bounds of CI, UBCI: upper bounds of CI  
 \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ , two-tailed significance

### 5.6.3 Moderating Effects of Self-Regulatory Focus and Consumers' Need for Uniqueness

To test the moderating effects of prevention focus, promotion focus (self-regulatory focus) and consumers' need for uniqueness on the relationships between actual, ideal and social self-congruity and brand attachment, an interaction-moderation approach was applied (Aiken and West 1991; Cohen et al. 2013; Little et al. 2012). The proposed moderating effects were modeled with latent interaction terms to indicate the latent interactions (Cortina, Chen and Dunlap 2001; Ping 1995). Actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity and social self-congruity were treated as predictors of brand attachment whereas prevention focus, promotion focus and need for uniqueness were three continuous moderating variables of brand attachment. The moderating effects of prevention focus, promotion focus and consumers' need for uniqueness were examined separately. These tests for interaction-moderation were executed in AMOS.

To perform this analysis, composite scores were formed by averaging the scores of the scale items under each latent variable. Next, predictor variables and moderators were mean-centered by subtracting the variable mean from each individual score on that variable and thus placing the new mean at zero (Little et al. 2012). Mean-centering helps to reduce multicollinearity among predictor variables (Aiken and West 1991; Cohen et al. 2013; Cortina, Chen and Dunlap 2001) without affecting the level of significance of the interaction terms (Holmbeck 1997). Then, interaction terms were constructed from products of predictor variables and moderators. These new interaction terms are included in the path model.

### 5.6.3.1 Moderating Effects of Self-Regulatory Focus

To test H6a(ii), H6b(ii) and H6c(ii), three interaction terms, namely, actual self-congruity and promotion focus (ASC x PM), ideal self-congruity and promotion focus (ISC x PM), social self-congruity and promotion focus (SSC x PM) were constructed. Then multicollinearity tests were performed to check for possible multicollinearity between the interaction terms developed. Variance inflation factors (VIF) were all lower than the cut-off point of 10 (Hair et al. 2010) in the regression model (see Appendix G), indicating that multicollinearity was not a problem in interpreting the results from regression parameter estimates.

An assessment of the model fit indicated that the model has acceptable goodness-of-fit as all the fit indices were higher than the threshold suggested ( $\chi^2 = 40.481$ ,  $df = 14$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.891$ , GFI = 0.982, SRMR = 0.04, RMSEA = 0.067, NFI = 0.989, CFI = 0.993 and TLI = 0.976). The initial results of the moderating effect of promotion focus are shown in Table 5.16.

Table 5.16: Initial Results of the Moderating Effect of Promotion Focus

Relationship	Unstandardized Regression	t-value	p-value
ASC → BA	0.209	3.535	***
ISC → BA	0.199	3.768	***
SSC → BA	0.276	5.477	***
PM → BA	0.258	5.612	***
ASC x PM → BA	0.083	1.644	0.1
ISC x PM → BA	-0.053	-1.184	0.236
SSC x PM → BA	0.033	0.687	0.492

Notes: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ ,  $N = 427$

The unstandardized regression weights obtained show that all three interaction terms were not significant in relation to brand attachment ( $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, the model was trimmed by deleting an insignificant path with the highest p-value. In doing so, it allows the most variance possible to be explained by the remaining paths, and hence increasing the likelihood of finding a significant interaction effect (Gaskin 2016; Padenga 2016). This resulted in deleting the path of ASC x PM → BA and followed by the path of SSC x PM → BA, one at a time. The model after deleting non-significant paths has an acceptable fit with  $\chi^2 = 45.549$ ,  $df = 16$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.847$ , GFI = 0.979,

SRMR = 0.043, RMSEA = 0.067, NFI = 0.987, CFI = 0.992, and TLI = 0.977. As shown in Table 5.17, promotion focus has a significant effect on the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment ( $\beta=0.053$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

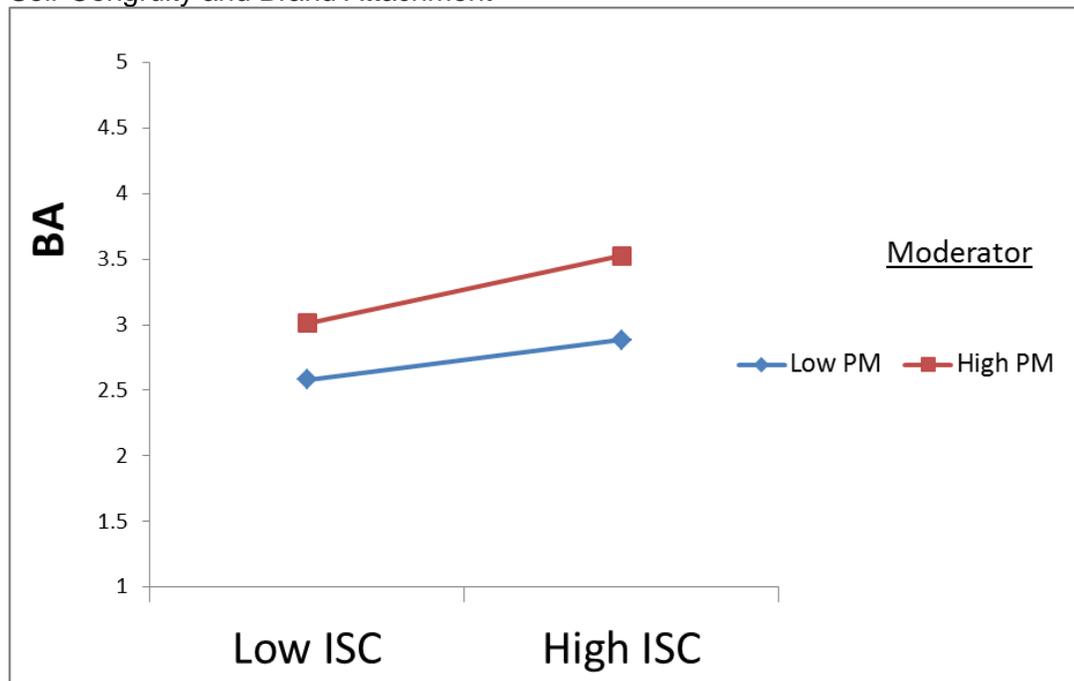
Table 5.17: Moderating Effect of Promotion Focus after Deletion of Non-significant Paths

Relationship	Unstandardized Regression	t-value	p-value
ISC → BA	0.205	3.827	***
PM → BA	0.269	5.561	***
ISC x PM → BA	0.053	1.956	**
BA → ABL	0.752	22.177	***
BA → BBL	0.702	17.763	***

Notes: \*\*\* $p<0.001$ , \*\* $p<0.05$

The significant moderating effect of promotion focus on the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment was further evaluated by using a simple slopes test (Figure 5.4), based on one standard deviation above and below the moderator. Based on Figure 5.4, there was a positive relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment. However, the rate of change was greater for high promotion focus compares to low promotion focus. This means high promotion focus has a more profound effect on the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment. Therefore, the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment is stronger when participants are highly promotion-focused, supporting H6a(ii).

Figure 5.4: Moderating Effect of Promotion Focus on the Relationship between Ideal Self-Congruity and Brand Attachment



Note: ISC: ideal self-congruity, PM: promotion focus, BA: brand attachment

To test the moderating effect of prevention focus on the relationship between actual (H6a(i)), ideal self-congruity (H6b(i)) and social self-congruity, (H6c(i)) and brand attachment, three interaction terms were constructed: actual self-congruity and prevention focus (ASC x PV), ideal self-congruity and prevention focus (ISC x PV), social self-congruity and prevention focus (SSC x PV). Multicollinearity was not identified when examining the VIF as all VIFs were lower than the cut-off point of 10 (see Appendix H). The goodness-of-fit indices were all above the suggested threshold. ( $\chi^2 = 30.355$ ,  $df = 14$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.168$ ,  $GFI = 0.986$ ,  $SRMR = 0.03$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.53$ ,  $NFI = 0.991$ ,  $CFI = 0.995$ , and  $TLI = 0.985$ ), indicating a good model fit. The initial results as presented in Table 5.18 demonstrated that there was no moderation-interactional effect of prevention focus on actual, ideal and social self-congruity and brand attachment ( $p < 0.05$ ). This led to the process of trimming the non-significant path.

Table 5.18: Initial Results of the Moderating Effect of Prevention Focus

Relationship	Unstandardized Regression	t-value	p-value
ASC → BA	0.197	3.197	**
ISC → BA	0.185	3.825	**
SSC → BA	0.343	6.271	***
PV → BA	0.143	3.462	***
ASC x PV → BA	-0.009	-0.153	0.879
ISC x PV → BA	0.012	0.248	0.804
SSC x PV → BA	0.045	0.867	0.386

Notes: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$

The model fit improved after the trimming the non-significant paths, which are the path of ASC x PV → BA and ISC x PV → BA ( $\chi^2 = 30.417$ ,  $df = 16$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.9$ , GFI = 0.986, SRMR = 0.03, RMSEA = 0.046, NFI = 0.991, CFI = 0.996, and TLI = 0.988). Here, the results confirmed the interaction effect of prevention focus ( $\beta = 0.049$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) on the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment as shown in Table 5.19.

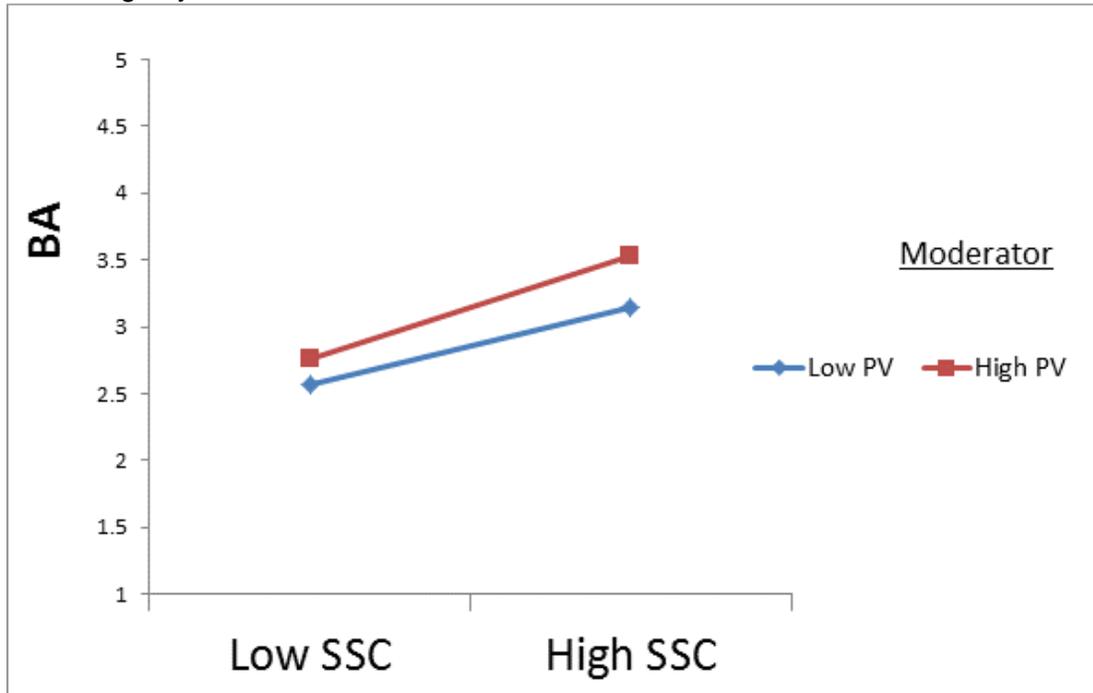
Table 5.19: Moderating Effect of Prevention Focus after Deletion of Non-significant Paths

Relationship	Unstandardized Regression	t-value	p-value
SSC → BA	0.34	6.411	***
PV → BA	0.143	3.462	***
SSC x PV → BA	0.049	1.946	**
BA → ABL	0.752	22.177	***
BA → BBL	0.702	17.763	***

Notes: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$

Figure 5.5 plots the moderation-interaction effect and shows that there was a positive relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment. The rate of change was greater for high prevention focus compares to low prevention focus. In other words, high prevention focus has a greater impact on the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment. This means prevention-focus strengthens the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment. Thus, hypothesis 6c(i) is supported.

Figure 5.5: Moderating Effect of Prevention Focus on the Relationship between Social Self-Congruity and Brand Attachment



### 5.6.3.2 Moderating Effects of Consumers' Need for Uniqueness

It was hypothesized that the relationship between actual, ideal and social self-congruity and brand attachment is moderated by consumers' need for uniqueness. To test this moderation-interaction effect, three interaction terms were constructed: actual self-congruity and need for uniqueness (ASC x NFU), ideal self-congruity and need for uniqueness (ISC x NFU), social self-congruity and need for uniqueness (SSC x NFU). Multicollinearity was assessed by referring to the VIFs, which were all lower than the cut-off point of 10 (see Appendix H), indicating that multicollinearity was not an issue. The model has adequate goodness-of-fit ( $\chi^2 = 40.143$ ,  $df = 14$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.867$ ,  $GFI = 0.982$ ,  $SRMR = 0.03$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.07$ ,  $NFI = 0.988$ ,  $CFI = 0.992$ , and  $TLI = 0.974$ ). Table 5.20 presents the results of the moderating effect of consumers' need for uniqueness on the relationship between actual, ideal and social self-congruity and brand attachment. The initial results show a statistical significance on the moderating effect of consumers' need for uniqueness on the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment ( $\beta = -0.082$ ,  $p < .05$ ). On the other hand, the moderating effects of consumers' need for uniqueness on the relationship between actual and ideal self-congruity and brand attachment were not significant.

Table 5.20: Initial Results of the Moderating Effect of Consumers' Need for Uniqueness

Relationship	Unstandardized Regression	t-value	p-value
ASC → BA	0.218	3.79	***
ISC → BA	0.248	4.693	***
SSC → BA	0.25	4.978	***
NFU → BA	0.204	4.79	***
ASC x NFU → BA	0.037	0.744	0.475
ISC x NFU → BA	0.046	1.014	0.311
SSC x NFU → BA	-0.082	-2.174	**

Notes: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$

The path of ASC x NFU → BA was then eliminated from the model. This led to an improved model fit ( $\chi^2 = 40.697$ ,  $df = 15$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.713$ , GFI = 0.982, SRMR = 0.03, RMSEA = 0.06, NFI = 0.988, CFI = 0.992, and TLI = 0.976). The computation of unstandardized estimates from the regression model confirms the moderating effect of consumers' need for uniqueness on ideal ( $\beta = 0.068$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and social self-congruity ( $\beta = -0.071$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and brand attachment as shown in Table 5.21.

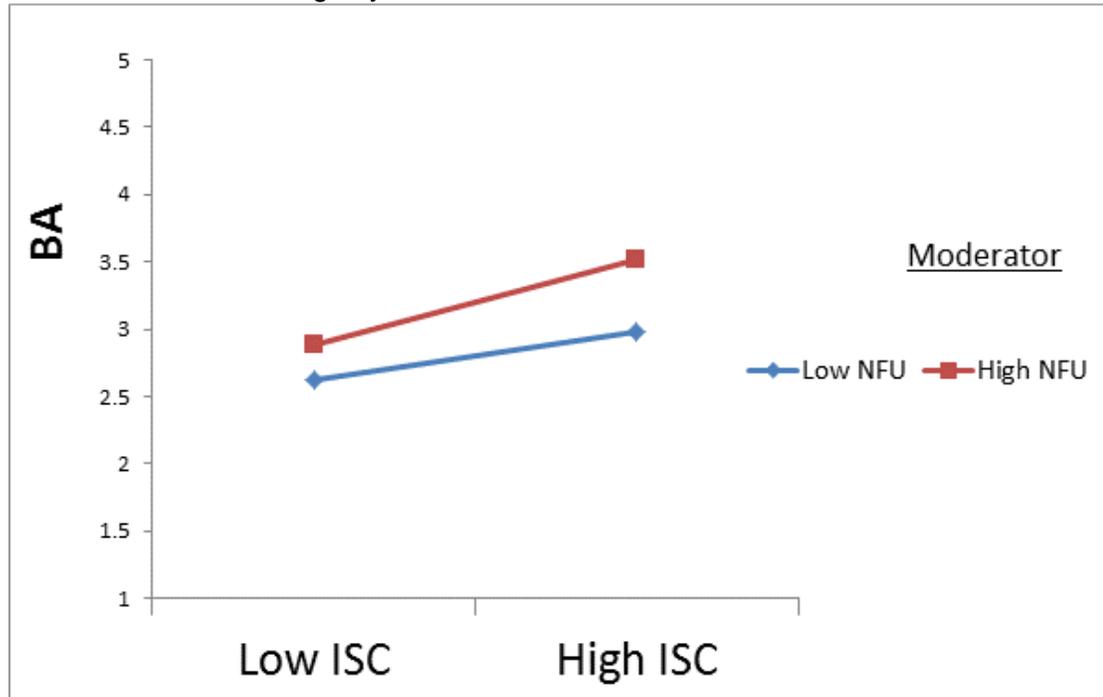
Table 5.21: Moderating Effect of Consumers' Need for Uniqueness after Deletion of Non-significant Paths

Relationship	Unstandardized Regression	t-value	p-value
ISC → BA	0.249	4.719	***
SSC → BA	0.25	4.98	***
NFU → BA	0.203	4.780	***
ISC x NFU → BA	0.068	1.947	**
SSC x NFU → BA	-0.071	-2.044	**
BA → ABL	0.768	22.9	***
BA → BBL	0.713	18.414	***

Notes: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$

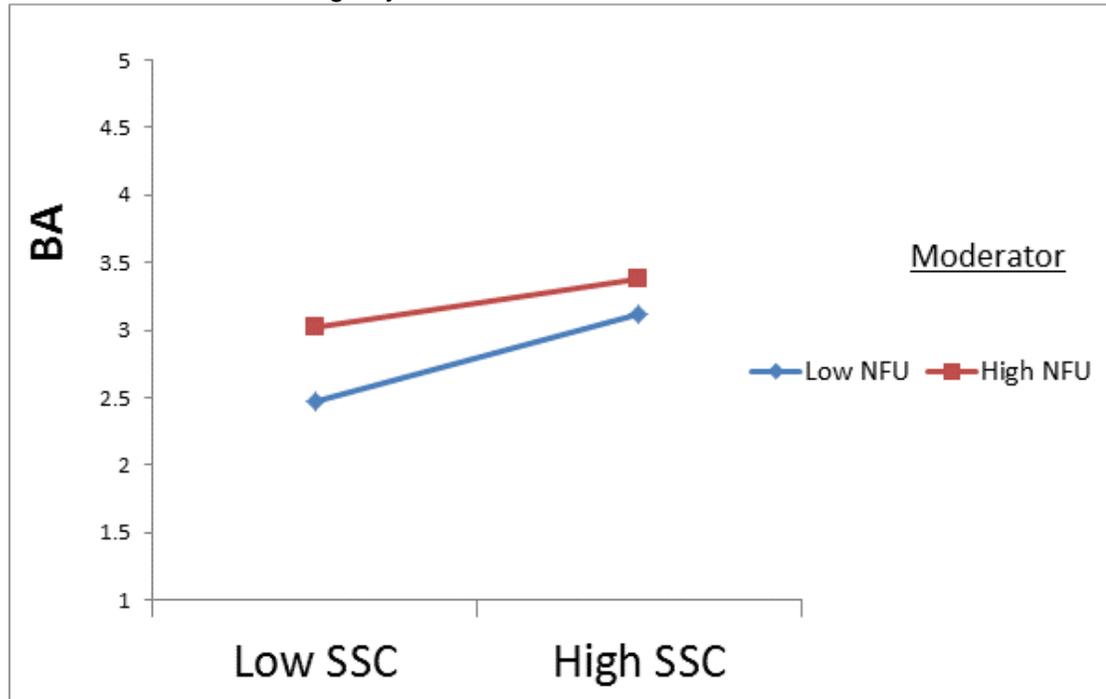
Figure 5.6 plots the moderation-interaction effect of consumers' need for uniqueness and shows that there was a positive relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment. The rate of change was greater for participants with a high need for uniqueness compare to low need for uniqueness. Thus, consumers' need for uniqueness strengthens the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment. Thus, hypothesis H7b is supported.

Figure 5.6: Moderating Effect of Consumers' Need for Uniqueness on the Relationship between Ideal Self-Congruity and Brand Attachment



The interaction plot in Figure 5.7 presents a positive relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment. The rate of change was greater when respondents have a low need for uniqueness compare to those with a high need for uniqueness, demonstrating that the consumers' need for uniqueness dampens the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment.

Figure 5.7: Moderating Effect of Consumers' Need for Uniqueness on the Relationship between Social Self-Congruity and Brand Attachment



## 5.7 SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES TESTING

A total of twenty-one hypothesized relationships were tested in this study. The results supported sixteen hypotheses. However, five hypothesized relationships were not supported. Table 5.22 summarizes the results.

Table: 5.22: Summary of Results of Hypotheses Testing

<b>Hypotheses</b>		<b>Result</b>
<b>Antecedents of brand attachment</b>		
H1a	Actual self-congruity has a positive effect on brand attachment.	Not supported
H1b	Ideal self-congruity has a positive effect on brand attachment.	Not supported
H1c	Social self-congruity has a positive effect on brand attachment.	Supported
H2a	Actual self-congruity has a positive effect on the brand experience.	Supported
H2b	Ideal self-congruity has a positive effect on the brand experience.	Supported
H2c	Social self-congruity has a positive effect on the brand experience.	Supported
H3	Brand experience has a positive effect on brand attachment.	Supported
<b>Outcomes of brand attachment</b>		
H4a	Brand attachment has a positive effect on attitudinal brand loyalty.	Supported
H4b	Brand attachment has a positive effect on behavioural brand loyalty	Supported
<b>The mediating effect of brand experience</b>		
H5a	Brand experience mediates the effect of actual self-congruity on brand attachment.	Supported
H5b	Brand experience mediates the effect of ideal self-congruity on brand attachment.	Supported
H5c	Brand experience mediates the effect of social self-congruity on brand attachment.	Supported
<b>The moderating effect of self-regulatory focus (prevention vs. promotion focus)</b>		
H6a(i)	Prevention focus strengthens the relationship between actual self-congruity and brand attachment.	Not supported
H6a(ii)	Promotion focus weakens the relationship between actual self-congruity and brand attachment.	Not supported
H6b(i)	Prevention focus weakens the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment;	Not supported
H6b(ii)	Promotion focus strengthens the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment.	Supported
H6c(i)	Prevention focus strengthens the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment;	Supported
H6c(ii)	Promotion focus weakens the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment.	Not supported
<b>The moderating effect of consumers' need for uniqueness</b>		
H7a	Consumers' need for uniqueness weakens the relationship between actual self-congruity and brand attachment.	Not supported
H7b	Consumers' need for uniqueness strengthens the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment.	Supported
H7c	Consumers' need for uniqueness weakens the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment.	Supported

## **5.8 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

This section presents the discussions of each construct followed by an examination of the hypothesized directional relationships between the constructs.

### **5.8.1 Brand Attachment**

Brand attachment is referred to as the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self (Park et al. 2010). In line with the emerging literature on brand attachment (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016, Park et al. 2010), brand attachment is conceptualized as a two-dimensional construct consisting of brand-self connection and brand dominance (Park et al 2010). The present study supports a second-order representation of brand attachment, with brand-self connection and brand prominence as component factors. These two dimensions exhibit high factor loadings (see Table 5.10), demonstrating that they are dimensions of the construct supporting the proposed conceptualization.

#### ***5.8.1.1 The Effect of Actual, Ideal and Social Self-Congruity on Brand Attachment (H1a-c)***

Self-concept theory asserts that individuals' self-concept is tied up in the brands they consume (e.g., Belk 1988; Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Levy 1999). Brands reflect one's identity (Belk 1988) and are perceived as a mean for self-expansion (Aron and Aron 1996, 1997; Aron and Aron 2001; Reimann and Aron 2014). As suggested by Kressmann et al. (2006), critical to understanding the relationship between the consumers and the brand is self-congruity. Self-congruity occurs when consumers perceive there to be a match between their self-concept and a brand's personality (Kressmann et al. 2006; Sirgy 1982). Prior research has also been concerned with the impact of consumers' actual and ideal self-congruity on positive outcomes such as brand attitude (Kang et al. 2017; Liu et al. 2012), brand loyalty (He and Mukherjee 2007; Kressmann et al. 2006; Sirgy 1982; Wallace, Buil and de Chernatony 2017) and emotional attachment (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2018; Malär et al. 2011). Therefore, in line with this, the present study examines the direct impact of self-congruity by considering the predictive power of actual, ideal and social self-congruity on brand attachment.

Unexpectedly, the direct impact of actual self-congruity (H1a) and ideal self-congruity (H1b) on brand attachment is not supported. This result partially differs from previous studies on the effects of actual and ideal self-congruity on brand attachment (e.g., Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Malär et al. 2011). For example, Huber, Eisele and Meyer (2018) prove the relationship between actual and ideal self-congruity and emotional brand attachment. However, Malär et al. (2011) fail to support the relationship between ideal self-congruity and emotional brand attachment. The divergent results may be explained by the differences in conceptualizing brand attachment in the studies. Past studies (e.g., Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Malär et al. 2011) relate brand attachment to deep feelings and affection for the brands. Accordingly, the authors measure brand attachment using Thomson, MacInnis and Park's (2015) Passion-Affective-Connection scale. This study assesses cognitively based brand attachment (where emotions are inherent to brand-self connection) using Park et al's (2010) scale as represented by brand-self connection and brand prominence. As suggested by Huber, Eisele and Meyer (2018), consumers incorporate actual and ideal self-congruent brands into their conception of self, personally connect and are affectively committed to these brands. However, when affective memories about the brand are not highly accessible, the consumer may not feel psychologically close or personally attached to the brand (Park et al. 2010; Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013).

Social self-congruity (H1c), on the other hand, has a significant direct effect on brand attachment. The results support the notion that consumers are motivated to focus on brands that are congruent with their social self because these brands motivate social-consistency processes (Sirgy 1982; Swann, Stein-Seroussi and Geisler 1992) and thus result in psychological benefits such as a feeling of social acceptance, leading to strong brand attachment. This is consistent with the social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 2004) that people are motivated to maintain positive social identities. Additionally, brands can be used as tools for social integration to present one's self-concept to others (Escalas and Bettman 2009). Consumers are motivated to ensure that the meaning of their brand choice conforms to the norms of their reference group (Sirgy, Grzeskowiak and Su 2005). The need for social consistency motivates consumers to conform to the norms and behave consistently with their social self to gain positive reactions or approval from significant others. When the brand is self-relevance,

consumers are likely to form brand-self connections that lead to strong brand attachment. In a similar vein, the opinions of significant others are treated as important sources of information for evaluating their beliefs about themselves (Escalas and Bettman 2005). This notion is supported by Andersen and Chen (2002), who agree that significant others are influential in shaping self-definition as it is expressed in relation to others. Consequently, consumers use brands to shape the views of others concerning them (i.e., social self) rather than to validate who they are (i.e. actual self) or the brand that enhances a better self (i.e. ideal self) (Rhee and Johnson 2012). This explains why social self-congruity is more dominant than actual and ideal self-congruity in predicting brand attachment. Another plausible explanation for the importance of social self-congruity is the conspicuousness of the product selected. For highly conspicuous products that are consumed publicly (e.g., Airlines, sports shoes and smartphones used in this study), consumers tend to be interested in impressing others through their act of consumption. Therefore, the social self is more closely related to product preference than actual and ideal self (Back 2005; Ross 1971). This is supported by He and Mukherjee (2007), who posit that social self-congruity is a better predictor of satisfaction and store loyalty than ideal self-congruity. Therefore, to conclude, the results of the study reveal partial support for the direct effect of self-congruity types on brand attachment, where actual and ideal self-congruity fails to create brand attachment.

### **5.8.2 Brand Experience**

Brand experience is described as being subjective, internal and behavioural consumer responses evoked by brand-related stimuli (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009). This study conceptualizes brand experience as a multi-dimensional construct comprising sensory, affective, cognitive and behavioural experience. The results presented in Chapter 5 provide strong evidence for the presence of an underlying second-order factor of brand experience that is manifested in sensory experience, affective experience, cognitive experience and behavioural experience. All four first-order indicators showed high factor loadings (see Table 5.10), indicating that they are significant indicators of the brand experience construct.

### **5.6.2.1 *The Effect of Actual, Ideal and Social Self-Congruity on Brand Experience (H2a-c)***

Based on the proposed conceptual model, the brand-related stimuli that consumers evoke their experiential responses, are presented by consumers' perceptions towards the fit between the brand's personality and their self-concepts (i.e. self-congruity). To investigate the effect of self-congruity on brand experience, this study hypothesized actual self-congruity (H2a), ideal self-congruity (H2b) and social self-congruity (H2c) to have a positive impact on the brand experience. The findings support the relationships between actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity and social self-congruity on brand experience. This means, the fit between the brand's personality and the self (actual, ideal or social self) is a significant factor evoking the state of experience, which is conceptualized by sensorial, emotional, intellectual and behavioural experience. A consumer who finds a match between the self and the brand may have a stronger sensorial impression and positive emotions on the brand. Furthermore, this brand may also induce the consumers' creativity and influence their behaviours and lifestyles. Hence, they form a strong bond with this brand and hold salience thoughts and feelings on the brand. These findings are consistent with past research in destination branding that self-congruity is an important antecedent of a memorable experience with a specific destination (Fu, Kang and Tasci 2017; Hosany and Martin 2012).

A closer examination of the finding reveals that ideal self-congruity generates higher levels of brand experience compared to actual and social self-congruity. Consumers' tend to include brands in their own self. Specifically, the attractiveness of a brand depends on the brand's potential for self-expansion (Aron and Aron 2001; Aron et al. 2005; Reimann and Aron 2014). This tendency is enhanced when the brand is perceived to be similar to one's own ideal self (Kressmann et al. 2006). Importantly, this finding echoes past studies by supporting that ideal self-congruity contributes more to customers' experiences (Hosany and Martin 2012). Similarly, Graeff (1996) advocates that conspicuous products consumed publicly (e.g. airlines, smartphones and sports shoes) are more influenced by ideal self-congruity.

### **5.8.2.2 *The Effect of Brand Experience on Brand Attachment (H3)***

A positive brand experience was hypothesized to contribute to the formation of consumers; attachment to brands (H3). The results provide empirical evidence

supporting this relationship. A closer examination of the effect of self-congruity types and brand experience indicate that brand experience has a much higher impact on brand attachment than self-congruity types. The significance of brand experience in influencing brand attachment is consistent with the prediction derived from the self-expansion theory developed in this study. Specifically, the findings support the explanation that interaction with a brand evokes positive psychological and behavioural responses (i.e., brand experience). In this case, these positive responses motivate the individual to include the brand's personality into their self-concept through self-expansion process. Thinking about experiences with the brand forges not only brand-self connection but also makes the brand-related memories more salient (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016; Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013; Park et al. 2010). Positive sensorial, emotional, intellectual and behavioural experiences hence create strong bonds connecting consumers and the brands. Similarly, this finding empirically confirms the proposition of Schmitt (2013) that brand experience is an antecedent of brand attachment.

### **5.8.3 The Mediating Effect of Brand Experience (H5a-c)**

The results of the conceptualization and testing of the model of brand attachment formation in the current study indicate that consumers' brand attachment is influenced by self-congruity, specifically social self-congruity. Also, the mediation results suggest that actual self-congruity (H5a), ideal self-congruity (H5b) and social self-congruity (H5c) contribute significantly to positive brand experience, which in turn fosters brand attachment. Therefore, in this study, brand experience serves as a mediator in the relationships between brand attachment and self-congruity types. The three direct predictors of brand attachment, which are actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity and social self-congruity and brand experience, were found to be statistically significant in creating brand-self connection and holding brand salience in the minds of consumers'.

A closer investigation of the relationships among the different types of self-congruity, brand experience and brand attachment suggests that their significance varies. The results show that actual self-congruity and ideal self-congruity does not have a direct positive effect on brand attachment but is fully mediated by brand experience. In contrast, brand experience partially mediates the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment. Consistent with self-expansion theory, the self-

expansion process through the inclusion of the brand into the self induces positive responses (i.e., brand experience) towards the attached brand that results in brand attachment (Aron and Aron 1986). Similarly, Hosany and Martin (2012) argue that a fit between the brand's personality and actual and ideal self results in positive experiences, which in turn forge a connection between the brand and the self and consequently foster the consumers' attachment to brands. Specifically, actual and ideal self-congruity does not have a direct positive effect on brand attachment but is fully mediated by brand experience. This might be explained by brand-self distance (Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013) which is the perceived distance between a brand and the self. When consumers do not have highly self-relevant cognitive and affective memories about a specific brand, the brand-self relationship might be distant. For example, when a consumer has a negative view of his or her actual self, brand congruence with his or her actual self might not be personally meaningful. Similarly, brand congruence with a consumer's ideal self might be out of reach where the consumer may feel that he or she is psychologically distanced from the brand and hence fail to form a connection with the brand. Notably, brand-self integration can be fostered through cognitive incorporation that involves learning, fantasizing and thinking about the brand to strengthen its importance in one's self-concept (Delgado-Ballester, Palazón and Pelaez-Muñoz 2017). Apply to this context, the brand experience that involves sensations, feelings, cognitions and behavioural responses evoked through brand-related stimuli, strengthen the brand-self integration. Therefore, self-verification and self-enhancement processes that enhance positive brand experience results in brand attachment. Without cultivating and delivering positive brand experiences, consumers may not build strong attachment with brands congruence with their actual or ideal self-concepts. As mentioned earlier, social self-concept is largely influenced by social roles that often contain the roles of others and that these roles can sometimes become part of the self (Markus and Kitayama 1991). However, on a social level, brands may be seen as a perceptual strategy for satisfying the desire for social affiliation. Thus, brands congruent with social self have a tendency to create stronger brand attachment.

#### **5.8.4 Outcome of Brand Attachment: Brand Loyalty (H4a-b)**

Brand attachment and brand loyalty are proposed to be hypothesized as related, given that both denote the intensity of consumer-brand relationships. However, these two constructs summarize distinct aspects of the consumers' relationship with brands.

Brand attachment highlights emotional and cognitive bonds whereas brand loyalty focuses on evaluative judgments that result in the development of affective and cognitive responses (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2014). Notable, brand loyalty encompasses two different dimensions that are attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001; Oliver 1999; Ramaseshan and Stein 2014). To examine the significance of brand connections in promoting the creation of favourable attitudinal and behavioural outcomes, this study hypothesized that brand attachment contributes to both attitudinal and behavioural loyalty. The findings reveal that brand loyalty has a strong positive influence on both attitudinal loyalty (H4a) and behavioural loyalty (H4b). These findings support Park et al.'s (2010) denotation that brand attachment can explain a higher level of consumer behaviours such as the investment in resources and commitment. Furthermore, this is consistent with the work in attachment theory where individuals perceive attached objects as irreplaceable (Bowlby 1980). Therefore, in this context, a strongly attached consumer incorporates a brand as part of his or her self and hold salient thoughts and feelings about the brand. On this basis, the consumer is likely to purchase the brand repeatedly and is firmly committed to it.

In addition, it is noted that the effect of brand attachment on attitudinal loyalty is more significant than that of behavioural loyalty thereby indicating that brand attachment can explain consumers' commitment to brand better than purchase loyalty. Past research supported this finding by summarising that brand attachment results in positive word of mouth (Vlachos et al 2010), the intention to repurchase and to recommend (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2014), resistance to negative information about the brand (Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016) and willingness to pay premium price (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001). Particularly, this is regarded a significant contribution as previous studies have only considered the relationship between brand attachment and brand loyalty (e.g., Bahri-Ammari et al. 2016; Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005) without exploring the different types of brand loyalty.

#### **5.8.5 Moderating Effect of Regulatory Focus (H6a-c)**

The centre of the regulatory focus theory is the concept of gain and loss. The predominant activation of one of the regulatory foci will guide their decisions. A promotion-focused individual is concerned with gain or non-gain while prevention-

focused individuals are concerned more about the loss or non-loss. Moreover, individuals' choice towards adopting a promotion or prevention focus will influence the types of emotions that are experienced, the perception of value and sensitivity toward positive or negative outcomes (Brendl, Higgins and Lemm 1995; Higgins, Shah and Friedman 1997; Markman and Brendl 2000). This study argues that self-congruity results in different cognitive and emotional processes by which brand attachments are formed when consumers' regulatory focus (a promotion focus versus a prevention focus) are taken into consideration.

#### **5.8.5.1 Self-Regulatory Focus and Actual Self-congruity (H6a)**

It is expected that prevention-focused consumers, motivated by the need for safety, conformity and security (Higgins 1997), tend to attach themselves to brands that verify their self-concept (actual self-congruity). In contrast, promotion-focused consumers, motivated by the need for aspirations, ideals and advancement (Higgins 1997), are likely to connect to brands that enhance their self-concept (ideal self-congruity). The study was unsuccessful in finding significant interaction effects of prevention focus or promotion focus on the relationship between actual self-congruity and brand attachment. The divergence between the prediction and finding might be due to the nature of the product's conspicuousness as highly conspicuous products were selected in the current study as the focal brand in order to illustrate their brand attachments. Past research (e.g., Back 2005; Hosany and Martin 2012; Ross 1971) suggest that actual self-images are relatively less significant in influencing consumers' behaviours such as brand preference, brand satisfaction and brand loyalty. This is supported by the finding in Section 5.5.1.1 whereby social self-congruity is more important than actual self-congruity in fostering brand attachment.

#### **5.8.5.2 Self-Regulatory Focus and Ideal Self-congruity (H6b)**

The results provide evidence that promotion focus strengthens the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment. Consumers with a promotion focus are guided by their inner ideals, emphasizing accomplishment and advancement (Higgins 1998; Lee et al 2000). Furthermore, consumers are more willing to engage in self-enhancement through brands that are congruent with their ideal self as these brands represent an opportunity to help them to achieve their ideal, hopes and aspirations. This finding is in line with the self-discrepancy theory that congruencies to ideals represent

the presence of gain. Therefore, when consumers' self-concept is enhanced through using brands with ideal self-congruity (i.e., a gain), they feel a strong connection with the brand, and hence, the brand-self connection is salient, leading to strong brand attachment.

Although it is expected that the prevention focus weakens the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment (H6b), in this case, the hypothesized moderating effect is not significant. The nature of prevention goals might be a plausible explanation for this divergent result. According to the regulatory focus theory, prevention-focused individuals concerned with goals related to safety and security (Higgins et al. 1997). The reference point of their behaviours is always towards negative outcomes (Higgins 1987), and hence, they regulate their behaviours distant from negative outcomes. In addition, goals related to aspirations and ideals (i.e. positive outcomes), in this case, might not be relevant to them. Therefore, brand and its information related to aspirations, achievements or ideals are less likely to be processed, evaluated and subsequently guide behaviours of prevention-focused consumers. Therefore, prevention focus does not moderate the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment. Similarly, Sassenberg and Hansen (2007) do not find moderating evidence of a promotion focus on the relationship between social discrimination and negative emotions. The authors argue that social discrimination is perceived as a loss (fitting a prevention focus) rather than a non-gain (fitting a promotion focus) and thus, a promotion focus does not impact on the responses to social discrimination.

#### ***5.8.5.3 Self-Regulatory Focus and Social Self-congruity (H6c)***

The results indicate that when a prevention focus is high, social self-congruity produces stronger brand attachment (H6c). Accordingly, prevention-focused consumers form attachments with brands that allow them to communicate the type of person they wish significant others to see them or to be consistent with their in-group. Furthermore, brands incongruent with their social self might cause adverse outcomes such as negative views of oneself which in turn leads to social anxiety (Higgins 1987). It is documented that prevention-focused individuals are associated with having an interdependent mindset (Aaker and Lee 2001; Lee, Aaker and Gardner 2000). Also, they are particularly sensitive to normative standards and are striving to avoid the

violation of a norm (Keller, Hurst and Uskul 2008). Therefore, to maintain social consistency, these consumers tend to connect to the brand that has the personality consistent with their social self (i.e. social self-congruity). Thoughts and feelings of the brand that are consistent with one's self-regulatory orientation are more prominent (e.g., Higgins, Shah and Friedman 1997; Wang and Lee 2006). Accordingly, the findings indicate that the adoption of a prevention focus can make a consumer more attached to the brand with social self-congruity and subsequently form brand loyalty.

On the other hand, the adoption of a promotion focus is associated with an independent mindset which is motivated by self-enhancement through achieving success and demonstrating their uniqueness (Aaker and Lee 2001). In this regard, promotion goals of achievement and ideals rather than prevention goals of the belonging and fulfillment of social standards impact their behaviours. Therefore, consumers may not perceive social consistency as a gain that they aspire to attain. Thus, a promotion focus is less willing to process and evaluate information and regulate their behaviours toward brands with social self-congruent.

To sum, the findings, as reflected through hypotheses H6a, H6b and H6c of this study, reveal that consumers differ in terms of their attachment to brands depending on their chronic regulatory focus. Consumers with a promotion focus tend to form an attachment with brands congruent with their ideal self (H6bii). Contrary, prevention-focused consumers are likely to attach themselves to brands congruent with their social self (H6ci). The findings in this study resonate with prior works on how different self-construal (i.e., dependent versus independent self) affects individuals' regulatory focus. Thus, it is posited that the ideal self activates the promotion focus and the social self activates the prevention focus (e.g., Aaker and Lee 2001; Lee, Aaker and Gardner 2000).

#### **5.8.6 Moderating Effect of Consumers' Need for Uniqueness (H7a-c)**

A central tenet of the uniqueness theory is the dispositional differences in the desire for uniqueness. The pursuit of uniqueness is a motivating force underlying consumer behaviour (Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001; Tian and Mckenzie 2001). Prior studies reveal that self-congruity strengthens consumers' attachment to brands. This study conjectures that these effects are shaped by the individuals' trait towards the need for

uniqueness. In particular, this study proposes that the differential effects of self-congruity on brand attachment are influenced by consumers' need for uniqueness.

#### **5.8.6.1 Consumers' Need for Uniqueness and Actual Self-Congruity (H7a)**

The finding of this study has revealed that consumers' need for uniqueness did not influence the relationship between actual self-congruity and brand attachment, similar to the moderating role of regulatory focus found in Section 5.5.5.1. This finding confirms that actual self-congruity is less significant in influencing consumers' attachment to brands. Also, these effects are not influenced by individuals' traits of regulation systems or need for uniqueness.

#### **5.8.6.2 Consumers' Need for Uniqueness and Ideal Self-Congruity (H7b)**

The finding of this study provides empirical support that consumers' need for uniqueness strengthen the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment. This is consistent with the theory of uniqueness (Snyder and Fromkin 1977) whereby consumers high in need for uniqueness pursued distinctiveness as a means to enhance their self-concept (Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001). Consumers' need for uniqueness is likely to be reflected in their consumption of products as a means for self-expansion (Aron and Aron 2001; Reimann and Aron 2014). On this basis, consumers with a high need for uniqueness tend to enhance their self-concept through the consumption of specific brands that have personalities consistent with their ideal selves.

#### **5.8.6.3 Consumers' Need for Uniqueness and Social Self-Congruity (H7c)**

Consumers' need for uniqueness weakens the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment. With reference to the social consistency motive (Johar and Sirgy 2015; Sirgy, Johar and Claiborne 2015; Sirgy, Grewal and Mangleburg 2000), consumers strive to maintain an image others have of them in order to facilitate social interactions and approval (Swann, Stein-Seroussi and Giesler 1992). Those with a high need for uniqueness are unlikely to engage in brands that conform to others. In this vein, consumers' need for uniqueness increases, the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment is weakened.

## 5.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the findings of the data analyses collected from 428 consumers. Preliminary data analysis was performed to address common issues associated with the application of SEM of which include screening missing data and the respondents' attention, assessing outliers, the univariate and multivariate normality of the data. The first-order and second-order confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to provide support for the performance of the measurement model. Subsequently, the overall structural model was conducted. Most of the hypotheses were supported except hypotheses 1a and 1b. The mediation test was performed supporting the full mediating effect of brand experience on the relationship between actual and ideal self-congruity on brand attachment. In contrast, brand experience was found to partially mediate the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment. Finally, the moderating analysis offered some support for the moderating effects of need for uniqueness and regulatory focus on self-congruity types and brand attachment. Furthermore, the chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of the results of the hypotheses testing. Specifically, those which amplify past research, provide new insights or contradict expectations. The analysis of the data revealed the following noteworthy findings:

- Social self-congruity has a significant positive effect on brand attachment. However, this effect is not significant for actual and ideal self-congruity;
- Actual, ideal and social self-congruity has a significant positive relationship with brand experience;
- Brand experience has a significant positive relationship with brand attachment;
- Brand experience fully mediates the relationship between actual and ideal self-congruity on brand attachment whereas it partially mediates the relationship between social self-congruity on brand attachment;
- Brand attachment has a positive effect on attitudinal and behavioural brand loyalty;
- The moderating effect of prevention focus and promotion focus on the relationship between actual self-congruity and brand attachment is not significant;

- Promotion focus strengthens the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment, but the moderating effect of prevention focus on the relationship is not significant;
- Prevention focus strengthens the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment, but the moderating effect of promotion focus on the relationship is not significant; and
- Consumers' need for uniqueness strengthen the relationship between ideal and social self-congruity. However, the moderating effect of consumers' need for uniqueness on the relationship between actual self-congruity and brand attachment is not significant.

## **CHAPTER 6: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a summary of the previous chapters and discusses the implications of the study. The chapter begins with a recapitulation of the study which is followed by the theoretical and managerial implications of the study. The next section provides a discussion of the limitations of the study and is concluded with recommendations for future research.

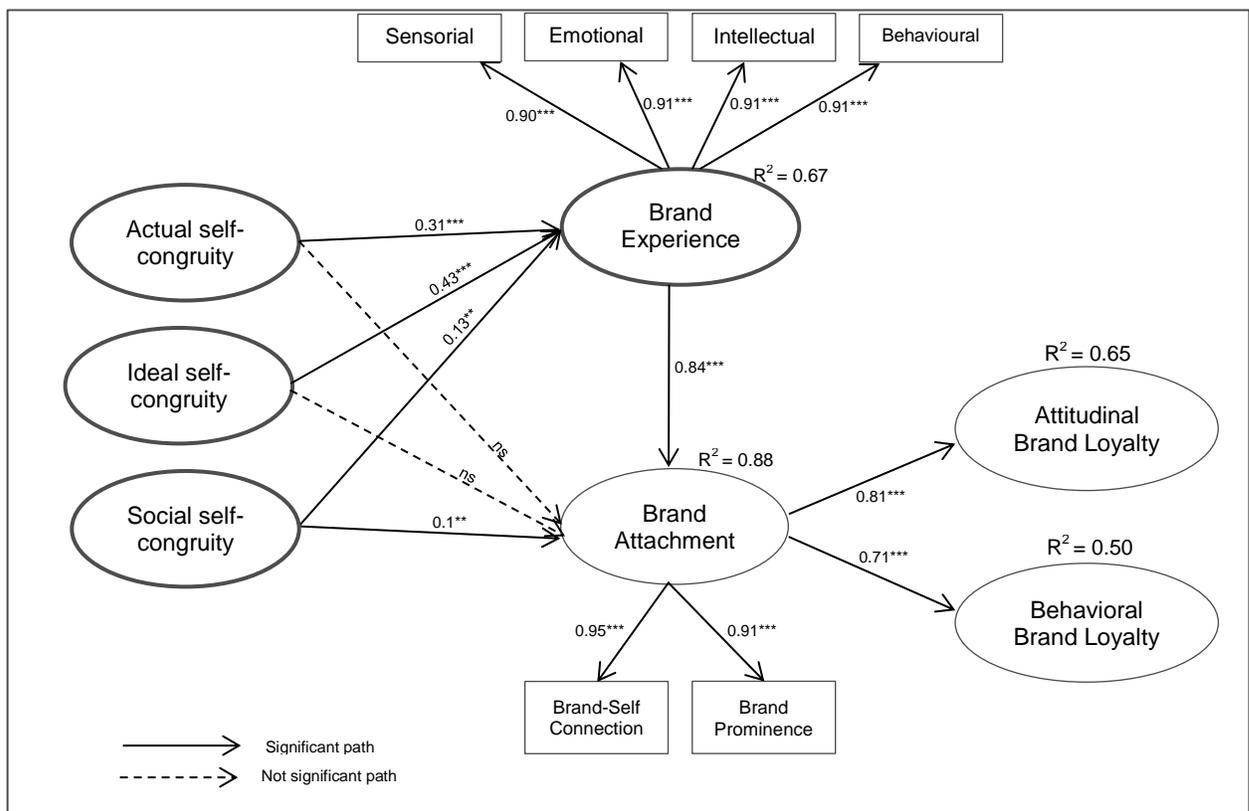
### **6.2 RECAPITULATION OF THE STUDY**

Considering the importance of brand attachment, it is surprising that little is known or understood about how brand attachment can be enhanced. Prior research suggests that self-congruity, which is the match between the consumer's self-concept and the brand's personality affects consumers' emotional attachment to brands (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Malär et al. 2011). However, what is unclear is the type(s) of self-congruity that should be matched with the brand's personality. The present study addresses these gaps by examining the influence of self-congruity types, including both personal (actual and ideal) and public (social) self-congruity on brand attachment, exploring the mediating role of brand experience and investigating the moderating influence of self-regulatory focus and need for uniqueness. Notwithstanding, it also examines the outcomes of brand attachment in terms of attitudinal and behavioural brand loyalty. Figure 6.1 re-presents the research model of the main study and results of the hypotheses testing.

The results of the study support the view that self-congruity can increase brand attachment. However, the types of self-congruity and consumer characteristics should be taken into consideration. Accordingly, brands with social self-congruity generate positive direct influence on brand attachment whereas brands with actual self-congruity and ideal self-congruity fail to exert a direct relationship with brand attachment but instead, indirect relationship through brand experience. Therefore, it can be said that

brand experience fully mediates the relationship between actual and ideal self-congruity on brand attachment. Brand attachment, in turn, contributes significantly to the development of both attitudinal and behavioural brand loyalty. Another important finding of this study is that the effect of consumers' regulatory focus orientation and need for uniqueness as moderators of the relationship between (actual, ideal and social) self-congruity and brand attachment is examined. More explicitly, promotion focus strengthens the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment. However, promotion focus does not significantly affect the impact of actual self-congruity and social self-congruity. Similarly, prevention focus is found to strengthen the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment. Nonetheless, prevention focus fails to assert significant influence on actual and ideal self-congruity. As hypothesized in this study, the effect of self-congruity on brand attachment is also influenced by consumers' need for uniqueness. Interestingly, regulatory focus and need for uniqueness fail to have a significant effect on actual self-congruity. While on a general level, these moderating variables are less successful in influencing the relationship between actual self-congruity and brand attachment.

Figure 6.1 Structural Model of Antecedents and Outcomes of Brand Attachment



### 6.3 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

With the growing recognition of consumer-brand relationships in recent research (e.g. Fournier 1998; Malär et al. 2011; Park et al. 2010), this study examines the concept of brand attachment, which refers to the affective and cognitive bond between the brand and the self (Park et al. 2010). The current research on consumer-brand relationships has largely been focused on consumers' emotional attachment to brands, such as their passion, affections and connection toward brands. Brand attachment encapsulates not only emotional responses but also brand-self cognitions, thoughts and memories where measures of emotions may not entirely capture (Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Park et al. 2010). Nonetheless, studies that 'can enhance brand attachment by fostering brand-self connection and its prominence' have generally been missed (Park et al. 2010; 36). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study to provide an integrative understanding of the antecedents and outcomes of brand attachment that foster brand-self connection and brand prominence. Furthermore, it synthesizes the different streams of research in marketing that have attracted research interests in this important and expanding domain during recent years. Specifically, it examines brand attachment and brand loyalty through brand experience and self-congruity types applying a framework that accounts for differences in self-regulatory focus and need for uniqueness.

Second, current findings provide novel insights to the brand attachment literature that enable the study to capture the elusive effects of actual, ideal and social self-congruity, which the previous research in brand attachment has not or failed in doing. Building upon the work of Malär et al. (2011) and Huber, Eisele and Meyer (2018), who did not explicitly consider the effect of social self-congruity in their examination of the relationship between self-congruity and emotional brand attachment, this study extends the self-congruity theory by accounting for the effect of both private self-congruity (actual and ideal) and public self-congruity (social) on brand attachment. Therefore, this study contributes to the theory by supporting the importance of incorporating social self in the consumer-brand relationship. More specifically, this study corroborates that consumers build stronger attachment to brands congruent with their social self. Inspired by the social consistency motive, they are motivated to achieve social conformity and acceptance (Sirgy 1982), leading to the preference for a brand that is consistent with

the social self. Such a brand may help consumers to manage their presentations of the self in accordance with the type of person they wish the significant others to view them as (Malhotra 1988; Sirgy 1982). Subsequently, consumers appropriate the brand personality and psychological benefit associations of the brand to meet a self-need, leading to a brand-self connection, from which brand-related thoughts and feelings are easily accessed. Similar to previous research on organizational behaviour where commitment can be based on normative pressure (normative commitment) (Wiener 1982). On the other hand, neither actual nor ideal self-congruity has a significant relationship with brand attachment. In fact, previous studies suggest positive effects of actual and ideal self-congruity on brand attachment (e.g., Huang, Zhang and Hu 2017; Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Malär et al. 2011). However, these studies only test the impact of actual and ideal self-congruity on emotional brand attachment without investigating the strength and salience of brand-self connections. Thus, it is assumed that a consumer's perception of the match between actual or ideal self and the brand may create positive emotions and feelings but not necessarily create a strong and prominent connection between the brand and the self. The brand-self connection is developed through experiences where the brand-related thoughts and feelings become part of a person's memory (Park et al. 2010; Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013). When affective memories about the brand are not highly accessible, the consumer may not feel psychologically close or personally attached to the brand (Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013). Comparing the predictive power of actual, ideal and social self-congruity reveal that social self-congruity predicts brand attachment better. Therefore, this implies that social self rather than actual and ideal self creates a stronger brand-self relationship, reminding of the brand's benefits better. Notably, this is consistent with the notion that consumers use brands as tools for social integration to shape views of others about them rather than to express their actual or ideal self (Escalas and Bettman 2009; Rhee and Kim 2012).

Third, the current study builds antecedents of brand attachment by including brand experience, which answers the call of Schmitt (2013) to explore the role of brand experience in brand attachment. The results denote that brand experience has a greater impact on brand attachment than self-congruity. Unique and memorable brand experiences cultivate the brand-self connections and enhance brand salience, thereby leading to stronger brand loyalty. This is consistent with the notion that a brand is not

just an identifier that offers specific brand identity but is also a provider of experiences (Schmitt, Brakus and Zarantonello 2014).

Although actual self-congruity and ideal self-congruity do not have a direct impact on brand attachment, they indirectly influence brand attachment through brand experience. Accordingly, this leads to a fourth pivotal contribution of this study that has not been investigated in the prior brand attachment studies, which is the mediating role of brand experience. The significance of brand experience in mediating the relationship between self-congruity types and brand attachment reveals the importance of experiencing the brand in order to transfer the brand personality to symbolic meanings related to the actual and ideal self-concept and hence to create brand attachment. These findings provide a plausible explanation of why actual and ideal self-congruity does not have a direct impact on brand attachment. Consistent with the prediction derived from the self-expansion theory (Aron and Aron 1997) that self-expansion process through the inclusion of the brand into the self induces positive responses (i.e., brand experience), which in turn, result in brand attachment. Therefore, without cultivating and delivering positive brand experiences, consumers may not build strong attachment with brands congruence with their self-concepts, especially actual and ideal self-concept. Consumers' cultivate their experiences through interactions with the brand and brand-related stimuli and generate feelings and thoughts about the brands that form part of their memories. Therefore, brand experiences deepen the brand-self connection and enhance its salience.

Although past research has suggested self-congruity as a stimulant of experience on the tourism context (Fu, Kang and Tasci 2017; Hosany and Martin 2012) or retailing context (Dolbec and Chebat 2013), this study is one of the first studies that provides empirical evidence on the role of self-congruity as an important determinant of consumers' experiences towards a brand. In this vein, the relationship between self-congruity and brand experience extends the present literature concerning brand experience by confirming that the experiential state is premised on a sense of 'extended self' (Belk 1988). Therefore, the role of brand experience cannot be neglected in the process of building a strong brand attachment. Additionally, these findings seem to provide the empirical support to the proposition of Park et al (2010, 3) that brand experience 'should deepen the brand-self bond and enhance its salience'.

Sixth, this study extends the knowledge of brand attachment by demonstrating the moderating effects of consumers' regulatory focus and need for uniqueness on the relationship between self-congruity types and brand attachment. This study answers the call of Huber Eisele and Meyer (2018) to study the moderating effect of self-regulatory focus. To this end, this study suggests that the prevention focus strengthens the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment. Prevention focus emphasizes preservation and safety and they are sensitive to information relating to the avoidance of failure (Higgins 1998; 2000). Brands congruent with one's social self highlight prevention strategies and motivate consumers to achieve their prevention goals by creating strong brand-self connections. On the other hand, promotion-focused consumers emphasize achievements and aspirations. An ideal self-congruent brand boosts motivation by providing a guide to achieving success. In other words, the positive personalities portrayed by brands generate a feeling of closeness to one's ideal self (Escalas and Bettman 2009) and illustrate the means for achieving one's ideal self. Therefore, pursuing ideal self-congruent brands exemplify positive outcomes by encouraging the pursuit of symbolic self-enhancement. This, in turn, leads to a desire for incorporating the brand into one's self-concept, causing stronger brand attachment.

The next theoretical implication concerns the moderating effect of consumers' need for uniqueness. The consumers' need for uniqueness provides a useful lens through which to predict brand attachment. Empirically, consumers need for uniqueness strengthened the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment but weakened the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment. When consumers' need for uniqueness is high, consumers form attachments with brands that allow them to express their ideal self. In contrast, socially self-congruent brands lead to a stronger brand attachment with consumers who have a low need for uniqueness. This is consistent with Aaker and Schmitt (2001) where the intensity of uniqueness motive depends on individuals' dispositional self-construal. Individuals with a dominant interdependent self-construal have a lower need for uniqueness than individuals with a dominant independent self-construal. This finding indicates that in addition to self-congruity, consumers' underlying motivations play an important if a not vital role in the development of brand attachment. To the best of my knowledge, the current research is the first to examine how consumers' regulatory focus orientations and need for uniqueness moderate the impact of self-congruity types on the brand attachment.

Exploration of these relationships enhances the understanding of how the effects of self-congruity on brand attachment vary according to self-regulatory focus orientations (a promotion focus versus a prevention focus) and levels of need for uniqueness (high versus low). The current findings add to the knowledge of the reasons whereby actual, ideal and social self-congruity work in different situations. Accordingly, the conceptualization of self should be more explicit about which target (actual, ideal or social self) and which regulatory focus (promotion or prevention) and which level of consumers' need for uniqueness is involved.

Complementing prior empirical studies (e.g., Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Malär et al. 2011), the present study offers new insights into the effect of brand attachment on both attitudinal brand loyalty and behavioural brand loyalty, which are not emphasized in existing brand attachment studies. The empirical findings of this study show that brand attachment has a positive relationship with both attitudinal and behavioural brand loyalty, consistent with Dick and Basu's (1994) argument that brand loyalty is greater when the consumer-brand relationship is stronger. According to the self-expansion theory (Aron and Aron 1997; Aron, Aron and Norman 2001), consumers are more willing to allocate resources such as time and efforts to maintain a relationship with the brand that satisfies self-needs. To maintain a close relationship with the brand, consumers would be more willing to repurchase the brand (behavioural brand loyalty) and also pay a premium price and recommend the brand to others (attitudinal brand loyalty). Instead, brand attachment has a greater impact on attitudinal brand loyalty, consistent with Fournier and Yao's (1997) denotation on the importance of attitudinal loyalty as the outcome of a strong consumer-brand relationship. This is a significant contribution to the consumer-brand relationship literature as prior studies only investigate the link between brand attachment and brand loyalty (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018), failing to capture both the attitudinal and behavioural component of brand loyalty.

#### **6.4 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Companies are continually striving to build a strong relationship with their customers. Brand attachment is an important component of such a relationship. However, consumers encounter and interact with many brands, but they only develop connections with a few brands (Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). Marketers have limited understanding of what really works to build strong brand attachment and whether their efforts will result in the desired or intended outcomes. The results of this study provide empirical evidence for practitioners in regard to whether, how and when they should invest in building strong brand attachment, fostering brand-self-connections and brand prominence. The findings further suggest that brand attachment is the key determinant of attitudinal and behavioural brand loyalty. Indeed, brand attachment is a vital component in a consumer-brand relationship. Given the opportunity to inspire brand loyalty, companies should pursue brand attachment as a tactical strategy.

Understanding brand attachment through the lens of self-congruity is important because it provides practitioners with knowledge about how and when they should manage their brand personality pertaining to actual, ideal or social self of consumers to build a strong connection with their customers. The results show that actual, ideal and social self-congruity are promising antecedents to brand attachment. However, the effect of self-congruity on brand attachment varies across the various types of self-congruity. Empirically, brand personality and its congruity with consumers' social selves (i.e., social self-congruity) is the most important factor in forming consumer's attachment to the brand. This suggests that a more effective strategy in building a brand personality seems to tailor to the social self-concept of the targeted consumers when trying to increase brand attachment. The findings indicate that consumers build connections with that satisfy the need for social consistency and social harmony with others. This explains why social self, which accounts for the influence of significant others or social groups gains its importance in marketing practices (Reed 2002). Here, marketers should imbue brands with a clear message that signals conformity and acceptance to certain reference groups or subculture. In light of this, the results of this study also provide support for affinity marketing, where group affiliation is used to generate a strong promotional program (Macchiette and Roy 1992). For example, marketers may introduce affinity or membership programs by communicating the message that "When I

buy brand x, I am part of a closed club of aficionados”. An affinity group creates a bond between the consumer and the company. Companies like Harley Davidson, Nintendo and Mary Kay have successfully used affinity groups to build connections with their customers.

The results of this study demonstrated a full mediation effect of brand experience in the relationship between actual and ideal self-congruity and brand attachment. Understanding these relationships is important for practitioners to strategize ways to use actual and ideal self-congruity and brand experience to form a strong brand attachment. Specifically, practitioners who wish to convey their brand’s personalities as a mean by which their customers can attain an actualized or idealized self-concept in creating brand attachment, efforts should be focused and directed toward exploiting personal and unique brand experiences which their customers desire to acquire. Consistent with Schmitt’s (2010) suggestion, brand managers should put place greater emphasis on experiential marketing in the development of marketing strategies. In doing so, systematic management of ‘brand-related stimuli’ which includes the brand’s design and identity, packaging, communications and environments (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009) should be developed. In terms of product design, practitioners may provide self-related experiences with brands through brand co-creation. For instance, consumers involved in brand co-creation in order to express their identities and communicate their strong congruity with the brand’s personalities (France, Merrilees and Miller 2015; Gyrd-Jones and Kornum 2013). This, in turn, leads to unique and personal brand experiences (France, Merrilees and Miller 2015) that can induce brand attachment. For instance, Lego allows customers to design and create any model they can imagine through ‘Lego Ideas’, an online community (Ramaswamy and Gouillart 2010). Consumers use the Lego brand to express their identity (as a creative person) and at the same time experience the joy of creating and personalizing their own Lego bricks. To create an attachment with aspirational brands (with brand personality congruence with the ideal self), personal and unique experiences also result in attachment to the brand. For example, luxury automakers such as Porsche, Audi, BMW and Mercedes-Benz provide driving experiences that provide consumers with the personal and memorable experience they might be looking for.

The next managerial implication concerns the moderating effect of regulatory focus. Different self-regulatory goals may affect consumers' attachment to brands congruence with their (actual, ideal and social) self. The effect of social self-congruity on brand attachment was more pronounced with a prevention focus, suggesting that a lot can be achieved through associating brands with the avoidance of negative outcomes such as negative views of oneself by others or the pain of social inconsistency such as social sanctions or disapproval. Here, marketers can connect consumers by emphasizing the consumption of the brand as part of group interaction. On the other hand, promotion focus strengthens the effect of ideal self-congruity on brand attachment. When promotion goals drive consumers, they are sensitive to positive information especially those related to the pursuit of success by others (Higgins and Tykocinski 1992). Marketers should relate brand personalities to consumers' ideals or aspirations and place more emphasis on the pleasure of attaining aspirations and achievements. Since ideal goals are generally perceived as being temporally distant (i.e., psychologically distance) from the present (Mogilner, Aaker and Pennington 2008), it is imperative to highlight how the brand with ideal self-congruity contributes towards reducing the gap between the actual and ideal self. For example, marketers may engage celebrities to demonstrate 'before' and 'after' scenarios using the brand.

The findings also reveal that consumers' need for uniqueness provides a useful lens through which to predict brand attachment. This study shows that consumers' need for uniqueness strengthens the relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment. Consumers with a self-enhancement need (i.e., ideal self-congruity) pursue uniqueness through consumption (Ruvio 2008; Ruvio, Shoham and Brencic 2008). Therefore, marketers can utilize promotional messages that emphasize the personal benefits of being unique or standing out from the others. Likewise, consumers with a high need for uniqueness tend to be opinion leaders as their uniqueness places them in a powerful position to influence others (Ruvio 2008). This, in turn, enhances one's self-image towards attachment to brands congruent with the ideal self. Indeed, there is an opportunity for marketers to develop brand opinion leaders to exert peer or group effects. Furthermore, marketers could encourage consumers to trial, review and recommend products (as opinion leaders) online through social media platforms such as blogs, social networking and sharing sites (i.e., Facebook, Twitter) and review sites. Additionally, the results also reveal that consumers with a low need for uniqueness

were motivated by the need for social consistency, and a tendency to attach to brands congruent with their social self. This is consistent with Simonson and Nowlis (2000) that consumers with a low need for uniqueness tend to desire social approval. This implied that significant others assert greater influence on consumers with a low need for uniqueness. In this case, rather than communicating the uniqueness of the brand, marketers should emphasize the social meanings of the brand's personality and connect with desirable social groups.

## **6.5 LIMITATIONS**

Although this study offers an understanding of the formation of brand attachment and its outcomes, it is not without limitations. Acknowledgment of the limitations should not negate the findings but rather establish boundaries within which the research was conducted. These limitations provide ideas for future research.

First, the influence of culture on consumers' attachment to brands is not examined. Culture differs in its levels of individualism and collectivism (Triandis and Gelfand 1998). Collectivists and individualists emphasize different self-concepts and demonstrate different consumption patterns (e.g., Cleaver, Jo and Muller 2015; Sirgy et al. 2014; Xiao and Kim 2009). For example, the individualistic cultures, such as in the context of the current study, individuals focus on themselves and are less concerned about social comparison (Choi, Lee and Kim 2005; Hofstede 2003). On the other hand, within collectivistic cultures, individuals are more influenced by others and emphasize social consistency and conformity (He and Mukherjee 2007). The cultural differences of self-concept are also highlighted by Markus and Kitayama (1991). As such, social self-concept might be particularly influential in a collectivist culture due to its underlying self-motive that emphasizes social consistency.

Second, the study used a cross-sectional design in its data collection. Cross-sectional data obtained in one time period, may not be appropriate in the examination of causal relationships between brand attachment and other key constructs. Furthermore, cross-sectional data might not be able to explain the complex and dynamic process in the development of brand attachment. However, past research has generally relied on

cross-sectional data examining the relationship between brand attachment and self-congruity (Huber, Eisele and Meyer 2018; Japutra et al. 2018; Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016; Malär et al. 2011). However, it seems realistic to use cross-sectional data to explain the causal relationships between brand attachment and other constructs.

The next limitation is related to the data collection method. The data was collected using an online panel survey. Reliance merely on an online panel survey might preclude consumers who are not panel members. This may limit the ability to assure the legitimacy of representing the research results to the population. While this may be a limitation, this data collection method is gaining its popularity in marketing and branding research to investigate a broad range of consumer behaviour (Jang, Kim and Lee 2015; Li and Petrick 2008; Xie and Kahle 2014), mainly because the online panel and traditional methodologies generate equivalent results (Dennis 2001; Deutskens, de Ruyter and Wetzels 2006; Duffy et al. 2005).

Likewise, this study focuses simply on the positive effects created by consumers' interactions with a brand. In other words, brand attachment measures strong and positive connections toward a brand but fails to capture the negative relationship that customers may have with the brand. Brand attachment develops over time and through multiple interactions with the brand. The formation process may be affected by interactions that cause negative responses in a consumers' mind. For instance, consumers may generate a negative outlook or view given a brand's failure to meet their needs due to inferior quality (Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013), inconsistency relating to the brand's image, the values held by other consumers (Hogg, Banister and Stephenson 2009) or its association with specific undesirable groups (White and Dahl 2007). This, in turn, may lead to adverse feelings and thoughts about the brand. Knowing such practical relevance, it might be noteworthy to know the possible negative effect created during the process of building attachment to brands.

Another possible limitation is related to brand experience and its dimensions. Following in the footsteps of others in the brand experience research (e.g., Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009; Iglesias, Singh and Batista-Foguet 2011), the current study examines the effect of an aggregated brand experience construct without addressing the unique effect of the various brand experience dimensions on brand attachment.

Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) suggest that different dimensions of brand experience might predict specific behavioural outcomes. For example, when interacting with a brand, behavioural experience may predict consumers' physiological reactions whereas affective experience may predict emotional responses. This implicitly may indicate that different dimensions of brand experience might have a different effect on brand attachment. This is particularly important to marketing and branding managers thereby adding a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the effects of different dimensions of brand experience on brand attachment, especially towards enhancing their understanding of how to improve brand attachment along all dimensions rather than on a single construct. In addition, this study conceptualized brand experience as a four-dimensional construct (i.e., sensory, affective, cognitive and behavioural experience) without considering the social aspect of brand experience. Social experience has been suggested in prior studies (e.g., Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009; Schmitt 1999) but its effect is not empirically supported in the study by Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009). However, social experiences might be important as consumers' interactions with brands are affected by their social relationship norms (Aggarwal and Law 2005). There is a reason, therefore, to assume that social experience might have a unique impact on brand attachment.

## **6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY**

On the whole, the findings of this study are promising and offer several managerial implications. Certainly additional questions are put forward and might serve as recommendations for future research priorities. First, it may be of interest to expand this research involving different cultures. The findings of this study were derived from Australian individuals who are highly individualistic. Future research should pursue a cross-cultural study by including samples from both individualistic (e.g., United States) and collectivist cultures (e.g., China) and examine whether different cultures have an impact on the relationships tested in this study. The results of this study were drawn from three product or service categories (smartphone, sports shoes and airlines). Future research should also examine other product categories such as retail brands, and corporate brands which may help to understand the richness of the process involved in the development of brand attachment.

Regarding the research design, future studies may use multiple survey methods (e.g., a mail survey and an online panel survey) for cross-validation purposes. More importantly, a study in brand attachment should be more longitudinal. This is because stronger brand attachment may develop over time through multiple interactions with a brand (Park et al. 2010). Future research should also examine longitudinal effects due to repeat purchase of the brand. Likewise, researchers could observe whether the intensity of the attachment changes over time and the factors that lead towards such a change. For example, when information about the self is introduced, will consumers' attachment towards the brand change to reflect the new self? In undertaking a longitudinal study, the relationship between self-congruity, brand experience and brand attachment can be further assessed and understood.

Additionally, further research should explore the unique effects of different dimensions of brand experience on brand attachment and implications. It is suggested that different dimensions of brand experience can predict specific behavioural outcomes, for instance, sensory experience may influence consumers' perceptions, affective dimension predicts emotional judgments, the intellectual dimension induces usage, and behavioural experience predicts actions when interacting with a brand (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009). Furthermore, it would be noteworthy to understand the relative strength of each of the brand experience dimensions of brand attachment and brand loyalty. This might be a promising avenue for future study for the very reason that marketers would be able to understand how to create experiences that build strong attachment to the brand through fine-tuning brand experience along with all four dimensions rather than on a single construct.

Finally, one additional suggestion for future research regards the relational experience. This study conceptualized brand experience as a four-dimensional construct as suggested by Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009). Relational experience is related to social experiences that result from relating to reference groups (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009; Schmitt 1999). Several researchers have suggested relational experience as an important dimension of brand experience (Nysveen, Pedersen and Skard 2013; Schmitt 1999). For example, in the service context, Nysveen, Pedersen, and Skard (2013) find that relational experience is an important dimension of brand

experience in addition to the other four dimensions. According to their study, these dimensions serve as important predictors of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Chang and Chieng (2006) also highlight the importance of social experience in the form of shared experience as an antecedent to consumer-brand relationships. Notwithstanding, from a managerial perspective, the growth of digital social media encourages customer-brand or customer-customer interactions about the brand (Schmitt, Brakus and Zarantonello 2014). Taking into account that the social experience could expand beyond the consumer's personal feelings and possibly relate to the broader social system, this could also be a promising avenue for future study.

Creating a strong brand-self connection with the brand may lead to strong attachment. However, once a brand disappoints a consumer, a previously positive relationship can transform into a negative relationship (Johnson, Matear and Thomson 2011). Fournier (1988: 362) describes such a negative relationship with the brand as an 'intensely involving relationship characterized by negative affect and desire to avoid or inflict pain on the other'. In light of this, (Park, Eisingerich, and Park (2013)) highlight the importance of investigating both the positive and negative relationship with brands. They further explain that when the self and a brand are distant from each other (i.e., far brand-self relationship), the relationship is negative while a close brand-self relationship is a positive relationship. Therefore, future research may wish to investigate the negative effects while cultivating consumers' attachment to brands and subsequently outcomes. Additionally, it might be interesting to investigate when and how brand attachment results in negative behaviours such as anti-brand behaviours, negative word-of-mouth and outrage. This can provide additional information to practitioners to effectively reduce negative brand feelings and thoughts and recover from such damages.

## **6.7 CONCLUSION**

In today's marketplace with informed savvy consumers, it is crucial that brands should focus on providing better interactions, fostering and maintain stronger relationships with consumers as these relationships generate meaningful attachment over time. While a growing number of studies have been carried out on brand attachment during the past decade, there is no universal answer as to why and how consumers build a relationship

with brands (Razmus, Jaroszyńska and Pałęga 2017). This is because little research has investigated key determinants to establish brand attachment. Previous studies focus on brand-self congruity as the key determinant of brand attachment (Malär et al. 2011; Japutra, Ekinici and Simkin 2014). However, prior research has not provided strong evidence on the relationship between self-congruity, brand attachment and brand loyalty.

The current study fills this gap by highlighting the relevance of actual, ideal and social self-congruity and brand experience on brand attachment and consequently brand loyalty. Furthermore, the study aims to understand how consumers' need for uniqueness and regulatory focus interact with their actual, ideal and social self-congruity and thereby affect their attachment to the brand. The empirical findings show that social self-congruity has a direct positive relationship with brand attachment. Also, brand experience fully mediates the relationship between actual and ideal self-congruity and brand attachment and brand attachment has a positive relationship with both attitudinal and behavioural brand loyalty. Finally, the influences of ideal self-congruity on brand attachment are stronger among consumers with a promotion focus and a high need for uniqueness. However, this relationship is weaker among consumers who are prevention oriented. In contrast, prevention focus strengthens the relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment. This relationship is weaker among consumers with a high need for uniqueness.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to empirically examine the relationships among perceived brand-self congruity, brand experience, brand attachment and brand loyalty. The results of the study make important theoretical and managerial contributions to the understanding of the formation of brand attachment through brand personality and brand experiences. To conclude, the present study confirms that self-congruity and brand experience leads to strong brand attachment and inspires brand loyalty. However, the relationships between self-congruity types and brand attachment differ by consumers' need for uniqueness and self-regulatory focus. A firm must continue improving and communicate with its customers to ensure a stable, continual and positive relationship is maintained and flourishes using all available resources.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Questionnaire for the Preliminary Study

---

#### Welcome

I am requesting your assistance to complete the survey as part of my PhD studies. The main objective of my study is to understand consumers' attachment towards brands. Your participation is truly appreciated and will remain anonymous and confidential. Please provide information that best represents your true feelings while completing the survey. The survey will take you approximately 2 minutes to complete. If you would like more information about this study please click on the following link.

[160521 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT.pdf](#)

**I have read the participant information statement provided and I understand its contents. I believe I understand the purpose, extent and possible risks of my involvement in this project and I voluntarily consent to take part in the study.**

Yes

No

**Q1 Please read the following two statements carefully before answering the questions that follow.**

**Statement 1: A *public* product/service is one that other people are aware you possess and use. If they want to, others can identify the brand of the product/service with little or no difficulty.**

**Statement 2: A *private* product/service is one used at home or in private at some location - except for your immediate family, people are unaware that you own or use the product/service.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Most of the people I know would probably consider smart phones as public products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of the people I know would probably consider sport shoes as public products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of the people I know would probably consider airlines as public services.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q2. For the remainder of the survey, please indicate your knowledge of a number of specific brands.**

**To begin with, please rate to what extent you *agree* or *disagree* with the following statements about the APPLE brand.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
I am very familiar with the APPLE brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel very experienced with the APPLE brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know the product(s) of the APPLE brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q3 Please rate to what extent you *agree* or *disagree* with the following statements about the SAMSUNG brand.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
I am very familiar with the SAMSUNG brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel very experienced with the SAMSUNG brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know the product(s) of the SAMSUNG brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q4.. Please rate to what extent you *agree* or *disagree* with the following statements about the NIKE brand.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
I am very familiar with the NIKE brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel very experienced with the NIKE brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know the product(s) of the NIKE brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q5 Please rate to what extent you *agree* or *disagree* with the following statements about the ADIDAS brand.**

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I am very familiar with the ADIDAS brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel very experienced with the ADIDAS brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know the product(s) of the ADIDAS brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q6 Please rate to what extent you *agree* or *disagree* with the following statements about the VIRGIN brand.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
I am very familiar with the VIRGIN brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel very experienced with the VIRGIN brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know the service(s) of the VIRGIN brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q7..Please rate to what extent you *agree* or *disagree* with the following statements about the QANTAS brand.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
I am very familiar with the QANTAS brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel very experienced with the QANTAS brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know the service(s) of the QANTAS brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**This section contains questions about you. These questions are for the purpose of aggregating data. Please be assured that the information you provide will remain completely confidential and will never be linked to you personally.**

**Q1. Where in Australia do you live?**

- Sydney
- Rest of NSW
- Melbourne
- Rest of VIC
- Brisbane
- Rest of QLD
- Canberra
- Rest of ACT
- Adelaide
- Rest of SA
- Perth

- Rest of WA
- Darwin
- Rest of NT
- Hobart
- Rest of TAS

**Q2. What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female

**Q3. What is your age?**

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-29
- 30-34
- 35-39
- 40-44
- 45-49
- 50-54
- 55-59
- 60-65
- 66 or older

**Thank you for your participation!**

## Appendix B: Pilot Study

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### Welcome

I am requesting your assistance to complete the survey as part of my PhD studies. The main objective of my study is to understand consumers' attachment towards brands. Your participation is truly appreciated and will remain anonymous and confidential. Please provide information that best represents your true feelings while completing the survey. The survey will take you approximately 15 minutes to complete. If you would like more information about this study please click on the following link.

[160521 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT.pdf](#)

**I have read the participant information statement provided and I understand its content. I believe I understand the purpose, extent and possible risks of my involvement in this project and I voluntarily consent to take part in the study.**

Yes

No

**Section A**

**Choose a brand that you are most familiar with.**

- Samsung smart phone
- Nike sports shoes
- Qantas Airways

**For the remainder of the survey, please answer the questions based on the brand that you have chosen in the above question. In the following questions, 'Brand X' refers to your chosen brand.**

The following questions describe the degree of matching between your self-concept and brand personality of 'Brand X'. Please take a moment to think about 'Brand X', as if it were a person and think of the set of personality traits associated with 'Brand X'. The personality traits that may describe 'Brand X' include honesty, wholesome, up-to-date, reliable, charming, successful, upper-class and others.

Now think about how you see yourself. What kind of person are you (your actual self)? How would you describe your personality? Once you have done this, indicate your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is consistent with how I see myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is a mirror image of me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' reflects how I see myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is very much like me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is similar to me. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Now think about how you would like to see yourself? What kind of person would you like to be (your ideal self)? Once you have done this, indicate your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements.**

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is consistent with how I would like to be.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is a mirror image of the person I would like to be.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' reflects how I would like to be.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is very much like who I would like to be.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is similar to who I would like to be.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Now think about how other people see you? What kind of person do other people see you as (your social self)? Once you have done this, indicate your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements.**

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is consistent with how other people see me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is a mirror image of how other people see me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' reflects how other people see me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is very much like how other people see me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is similar to how other people see me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The following questions describe your past and present experiences with 'Brand X'.

Here, experiences refer to your interactions with 'Brand X', such as usage experiences, physical touches, watching its advertisements or observing people using 'Brand X'.

Please indicate your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements describing how 'Brand X' evokes your sensations.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
' <u>Brand X</u> ' makes a strong positive impression on my visual sense or other senses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' gives me interesting sensory experiences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' appeals to my senses in positive ways.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' positively excites my senses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' has positive sensory appeal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The following statements describe your emotional experiences with 'Brand X'. Please indicate your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
' <u>Brand X</u> ' induces positive feelings and sentiments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have strong positive emotions for ' <u>Brand X</u> '.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' evokes positive emotions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' tries to put me in a positive mood.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' tries to be affective.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The following statements describe your behavioral experiences with 'Brand X'. Please indicate your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I engage in positive physical actions and behaviours when I use ' <u>Brand X</u> '.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' results in positive bodily experiences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' is action oriented in a positive way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' reminds me of activities I can do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' represents my lifestyle.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The following statements describe your intellectual experiences with 'Brand X'. Please indicate your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I engage in a lot of positive thinking when I encounter ' <u>Brand X</u> '.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' makes me think positively.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' excites my curiosity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' stimulates my thinking in doing things in creative ways.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The following statements describe your social experiences with 'Brand X'. Please indicate your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
' <u>Brand X</u> ' makes me think about social bonds.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can relate to other people through ' <u>Brand X</u> '.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' makes me think about relationship with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As a customer of ' <u>Brand X</u> ', I feel like I am part of a community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like I am part of the ' <u>Brand X</u> ' family.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The following statements describe your attachment to 'Brand X'. Please indicate your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
' <u>Brand X</u> ' is part of who I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel personally connected to ' <u>Brand X</u> '.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel emotionally bonded to ' <u>Brand X</u> '.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' is part of me or can represent me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' says something to other people about who I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My thoughts and feelings toward ' <u>Brand X</u> ' are often automatic, coming to my mind seemingly on their own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

My thoughts and feelings toward 'Brand X' come to my mind naturally.

My thoughts and feelings toward 'Brand X' come to mind so naturally and instantly that I don't have much control over them.

'Brand X' automatically evokes many positive thoughts about the past, present and future.

I have many thoughts about 'Brand X'.

The following statements describe your perceptions of your loyalty towards 'Brand X'. Please indicate your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I will buy ' <u>Brand X</u> ' the next time I buy a product that this brand offers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I intend to keep purchasing ' <u>Brand X</u> '.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will not buy from other brands if ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is available.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use ' <u>Brand X</u> ' because it is the best choice for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I always purchase ' <u>Brand X</u> ' instead of other brands that offer similar products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be willing to pay a higher price for ' <u>Brand X</u> ' over other brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am committed to ' <u>Brand X</u> '.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I say positive things about 'Brand X' to other people.

I would recommend 'Brand X' to friends and family.

I consider 'Brand X' as my first choice to buy.

The following questions are about your thoughts in your life. Then, please indicate your *agreement* or *disagreement* with the following statements that describe you.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
When it comes to achieving things that are important to me, I find that I don't perform as well as I would ideally like to do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like I have made progress toward being successful in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I see an opportunity for something I like, I get excited right away.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I frequently imagine how I will achieve my hopes and aspirations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I see myself as someone who is primarily striving to reach my "ideal self"—to fulfill my hopes, wishes, and aspirations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I usually obeyed rules and regulations that were established by my parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Not being careful enough has gotten me into trouble at times.

I worry about making mistakes.

I frequently think about how I can prevent failures in my life.

I see myself as someone who is primarily striving to become the self I "ought" to be – fulfill my duties, responsibilities and obligations.

Please indicate your *agreement* or *disagreement* with the following statements that best describe you.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I often combine possessions in such a way that I create a personal image that cannot be duplicated.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often try to find a more interesting version of run-of-the-mill products because I enjoy being original.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I actively seek to develop my personal uniqueness by buying special products or brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having an eye for products that are interesting and unusual assists me in establishing a distinctive image.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy challenging the prevailing taste of people I know by buying something they would not seem to accept.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When a product I own becomes popular among the general population, I begin to use it less.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**I would like you to indicate your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements that best describes you.**

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
When it comes to the products I buy and the situations in which I use them, I have broken customs and rules.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have often violated the understood rules of my social group regarding what to buy or own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have often gone against the understood rules of my social group regarding when and how certain products are properly used.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The more commonplace a product or brand is among the general population, the less interested I am in buying it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often try to avoid products or brands that I know are bought by the general population.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As a rule, I dislike products or brands that are customarily bought by everyone.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**The last section contains questions about you. These questions are for the purpose of aggregating data. Please be assured that the information you provide will remain completely confidential and will never be linked to you personally.**

**Q1. Where in Australia do you live?**

- Sydney
- Rest of NSW
- Melbourne
- Rest of VIC
- Brisbane
- Rest of QLD
- Canberra
- Rest of ACT
- Adelaide
- Rest of SA
- Perth
- Rest of WA

- Darwin
- Rest of NT
- Hobart
- Rest of TAS

**Q2. What is your age?**

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-29
- 30-34
- 35-39
- 40-44
- 45-49
- 50-54
- 55-59

- 60-65
- 66 or older

**Q3. What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female

**Q4.. What is your annual personal income before tax?**

- Below \$20,000
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$69,999
- \$70,000 - \$79,999

- Above \$80,000
- I do not have personal income

**Q5.. What is your highest level of education?**

- Less than high school
- High school graduate
- Some college
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree

**Thank you for your participation!**

## Appendix C: Questionnaire for the Main Survey

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### Welcome

I am requesting your assistance to complete the survey as part of my PhD studies. The main objective of my study is to understand consumers' attachment towards brands. Your participation is truly appreciated and will remain anonymous and confidential. Please provide information that best represents your true feelings while completing the survey. The survey will take you approximately 15 minutes to complete. If you would like more information about this study please click on the following link.

[160521 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT.pdf](#)

**I have read the participant information statement provided and I understand its content. I believe I understand the purpose, extent and possible risks of my involvement in this project and I voluntarily consent to take part in the study.**

Yes

No

**Section A**

**Choose a brand that you are most familiar with.**

- Samsung Smart Phone
- Nike Sports Shoes
- Qantas Airways

**For the remainder of the survey, please answer the questions based on the brand that you have chosen in the above question. In the following questions, 'Brand X' refers to your chosen brand.**

**Section B** The following questions describe the degree of matching between your self-concept and the personality of 'Brand X'. Please think of 'Brand X' as if it were a person and think of a set of human characteristics associated with 'Brand X'. For example, you may associate 'Brand X' with intelligent, reliable, spirited, up-to-date, successful, upper-class and others.

Now think about how you see yourself. What kind of person are you (your actual self)?

Please indicate your *agreement or disagreement* to the following statements describing your actual self and the personality of 'Brand X'.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is consistent with how I see myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is a mirror image of me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' reflects how I see myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is very much like me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Now think about how you would like to see yourself? What kind of person would you like to be (your ideal self)?**

**Please indicate your *agreement or disagreement* to the following statements describing your ideal self and the personality of 'Brand X'.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is consistent with how I would like to be.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is a mirror image of the person I would like to be.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' reflects how I would like to be.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is very much like who I would like to be.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Now think about how other people see you? What kind of person do other people see you as (your social self)?  
Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements regarding your social self and the  
personality of 'Brand X'.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is consistent with how other people see me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is a mirror image of how other people see me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' reflects how other people see me. (SSC3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is very much like how other people see me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Section C**

The following questions describe your past and present experiences with 'Brand X'.

Here, experiences refer to your interactions with 'Brand X', such as usage experiences, physical touches, watching its advertisements or observing people using 'Brand X'.

Please indicate your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements describing how 'Brand X' evokes your sensations.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
' <u>Brand X</u> ' makes a strong positive impression on my visual sense or other senses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' gives me interesting sensory experiences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' appeals to my senses in positive ways.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' positively excites my senses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements describing how 'Brand X' arouses your feelings.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
' <u>Brand X</u> ' induces positive feelings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have strong positive emotions for ' <u>Brand X</u> '.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' evokes positive emotions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' puts me in a positive mood.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements describing how 'Brand X' evokes your physical actions and behaviours.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
I engage in positive physical actions and behaviours when I use ' <u>Brand X</u> '.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' results in positive bodily experiences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' is action oriented in a positive way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' represents my lifestyle.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements describing how 'Brand X' stimulates your thoughts.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
I engage in a lot of positive thinking when I encounter ' <u>Brand X</u> '.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' makes me think positively.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' stimulates my thinking in doing things in creative ways.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Section D**

Please rate your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements describing your thoughts and feelings toward 'Brand X'.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
I feel personally connected to <u>Brand X</u> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel emotionally bonded to <u>Brand X</u> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<u>Brand X</u> is part of me or can represent me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<u>Brand X</u> says something to other people about who I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
My thoughts and feelings toward ' <u>Brand X</u> ' are often automatic, coming to my mind seemingly on their own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My thoughts and feelings toward ' <u>Brand X</u> ' come to my mind naturally and instantly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
' <u>Brand X</u> ' automatically evokes many positive thoughts about the past, present and future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have many thoughts about ' <u>Brand X</u> '.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Section E**

The following question is about your perceptions of your loyalty towards 'Brand X'.

Please indicate your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
I will buy ' <u>Brand X</u> ' the next time I buy a product that this brand offers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I intend to keep purchasing ' <u>Brand X</u> '.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not buy from other brands if ' <u>Brand X</u> ' is available.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I always purchase ' <u>Brand X</u> ' instead of other brands that offer similar products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
I would be willing to pay a higher price for ' <u>Brand X</u> ' over other brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am committed to ' <u>Brand X</u> '.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I say positive things about ' <u>Brand X</u> ' to other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would recommend ' <u>Brand X</u> ' to friends and family.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Section F**

The following two questions are about your thoughts in your life.

Please indicate the extent to which your *agreement or disagreement* with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
I feel like I have made progress toward being successful in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I see an opportunity for something I like, I get excited right away.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I frequently imagine how I will achieve my hopes and aspirations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I see myself as someone who is primarily striving to reach my “ideal self”—to fulfill my hopes, wishes, and aspirations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
I usually obeyed rules and regulations that were established by my parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I hope this survey is interesting. If I still have your attention, please select 'agree'	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about making mistakes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I frequently think about how I can prevent failures in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I see myself as someone who is primarily striving to become the self I "ought" to be – fulfill my duties, responsibilities and obligations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate your *agreement* or *disagreement* with the following statements that best describe your product or brand choice.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
I often combine possessions in such a way that I create a personal image that cannot be duplicated.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often try to find a more interesting version of run-of-the-mill products because I enjoy being original.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I actively seek to develop my personal uniqueness by buying special products or brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having an eye for products that are interesting and unusual assists me in establishing a distinctive image.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
I enjoy challenging the prevailing taste of people I know by buying something they would not seem to accept.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When it comes to the products I buy and the situations in which I use them, I have broken customs and rules.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have often violated the understood rules of my social group regarding what to buy or own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have often gone against the understood rules of my social group regarding when and how certain products are properly used.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
When a product I own becomes popular among the general population, I begin to use it less.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The more commonplace a product or brand is among the general population, the less interested I am in buying it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often try to avoid products or brands that I know are bought by the general population.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As a rule, I dislike products or brands that are customarily bought by everyone.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## **Section G**

**The last section contains questions about you. These questions are for the purpose of aggregating data. Please be assured that the information you provide will remain completely confidential and will never be linked to you personally.**

**Q1. Where in Australia do you live?**

- Sydney
- Rest of NSW
- Melbourne
- Rest of VIC
- Brisbane
- Rest of QLD
- Canberra
- Rest of ACT
- Adelaide
- Rest of SA
- Perth

- Rest of WA
- Darwin
- Rest of NT
- Hobart
- Rest of TAS

**Q2. What is your age?**

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-29
- 30-34
- 35-39
- 40-44
- 45-49

- 50-54
- 55-59
- 60-65
- 66 or older

**Q3. What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female

**Q4.. What is your annual personal income before tax?**

- Below \$20,000
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$49,999

- \$50,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$69,999
- \$70,000 - \$79,999
- Above \$80,000
- I do not have personal income

**Q5.. What is your highest level of education?**

- Less than high school
- High school graduate
- Some college
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree

**Thank you for your participation!**

## Appendix D: Participant Information Statement

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### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

<b>HREC Project Number:</b>	HRE2016-0109
<b>Project Title:</b>	The tie that binds: The impact of self-congruity and brand experience on brand attachment
<b>Principal Supervisor:</b>	Professor Piyush Sharma
<b>Co-Supervisor:</b>	Dr Russel Kingshott
<b>Student researcher:</b>	Fayrene Chieng
<b>Version Number:</b>	1
<b>Version Date:</b>	10/6/2016

#### **What is the Project About?**

Creating and sustaining brand attachment is gaining importance in today's marketing world. This is motivated by the finding that consumers' attachment to brands can lead to stronger brand loyalty and brand performance. It has been suggested that consumers form attachment to brands that are connected to their self-concept. This research project aims (i) to understand the influence of consumers' self and brand experiences on brand attachment and (ii) to gain insight into how the effect of self on brand attachment varies across different consumers.

#### **Who is doing the Research?**

This research is funded by Curtin University and is being conducted by Fayrene Chieng under the supervision of Professor Piyush Sharma and Dr Russel Kingshott from the School of Marketing at Curtin University. The results of this research project will be used by Fayrene Chieng to obtain a Doctor of Philosophy at Curtin University.

#### **Why am I being asked to take part and what will I have to do?**

I am inviting Australian consumers who are 18 years of age or older to take part in this survey. I would like to get your opinions on several questions related to your relationship with a brand that you are attached to. You would be required to complete an online questionnaire. Your input will greatly enhance the success and quality of this research.

#### **Are there any benefits' to being in the research project?**

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this research. However, if you have an interest in brand-related issues, then this could be an opportunity for you to contribute to research which could add to the knowledge we have about consumer-brand relationship.

#### **Are there any risks, side-effects, discomforts or inconveniences from being in the research project?**

There are no foreseeable risks from this research project.

#### **Who will have access to my information?**

The information collected in this survey will be non-identifiable. Your information is anonymous and will not include a code number or name. No one, not even the research team will be able to identify your information. Any information I collect and use during this research will be treated as confidential. Only the research team and the Curtin University Ethics Committee will have access to the information I collect in this research. Electronic data collected will be password-protected and hard copy questionnaires will be in locked storage. The information I collect in this study will be kept under secure conditions at Curtin University for seven years after the research has ended and then it will be destroyed. The results of this research may be presented at conferences or

published in professional journals. You will not be identified in any results that are published or presented.

**Will you tell me the results of the research?**

I will not be able to send you any results from this research as I do not collect any personal information to be able to contact you. However, I will make the results available on the project websites at the completion of the project.

**Do I have to take part in the research project?**

Taking part in this research project is entirely voluntary. It is your choice to take part or not. You do not have to agree if you do not want to. If you decide to take part and then change your mind, that is okay, you can withdraw from the project. You do not have to give me a reason; just tell me that you want to stop. Please let me know you want to stop so I can make sure you are aware of any thing that needs to be done so you can withdraw safely. If you choose not to take part or start and then stop the study, it will not affect your relationship with the University, staff or colleagues. If you chose to leave the study I will use any information collected (anonymously). I will be unable to destroy your information because it has been collected in an anonymous way.

If you decide to take part in this research, I will ask you to tick on a checkbox at the start of the questionnaire. Ticking the checkbox indicates you have understood the information provided here in the information sheet and you voluntarily consent to take part in this research project.

**Contact Information**

For further information about this search, please contact Fayrene Chieng by emailing [fayrene.chieng@curtin.edu.my](mailto:fayrene.chieng@curtin.edu.my).

***Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved this study (HREC number HRE2016-0109). Should you wish to discuss the study with someone not directly involved, in particular, any matters concerning the conduct of the study or your rights as a participant, or you wish to make a confidential complaint, you may contact the Ethics Officer on (08) 9266 9223 or the Manager, Research Integrity on (08) 9266 7093 or email [hrec@curtin.edu.au](mailto:hrec@curtin.edu.au).***

### Appendix E: Assessment of Normality

Variable	min	max	skew	c.r.	kurtosis	c.r.
BLA4	1	7	-0.842	-7.114	0.380	1.607
BLA3	1	7	-0.771	-6.515	0.352	1.487
BLA1	1	7	-0.123	-1.041	-0.988	-4.173
BLB4	1	7	-0.118	-0.994	-0.952	-4.018
BLB3	1	7	-0.045	-0.382	-0.882	-3.724
BLB1	1	7	-0.571	-4.826	-0.117	-0.492
PI1	1	7	-0.269	-2.269	-0.282	-1.193
PI2	1	7	-0.233	-1.966	-0.404	-1.705
PI3	1	7	-0.166	-1.402	-0.609	-2.572
PI4	1	7	-0.221	-1.871	-0.558	-2.358
PSC2	1	7	-0.324	-2.738	-0.629	-2.657
PSC1	1	7	-0.318	-2.688	-0.576	-2.433
NFUP4	1	7	-0.029	-0.242	-0.502	-2.120
NFUP3	1	7	0.049	0.416	-0.547	-2.311
NFUP2	1	7	-0.147	-1.239	-0.451	-1.904
NFUA4	1	7	0.352	2.969	-0.645	-2.724
NFUA3	1	7	0.407	3.438	-0.523	-2.209
NFUA2	1	7	0.255	2.150	-0.640	-2.703
NFUA1	1	7	0.433	3.659	-0.409	-1.727
NFUC4	1	7	-0.345	-2.916	-0.356	-1.504
NFUC3	1	7	-0.195	-1.645	-0.583	-2.462
NFUC2	1	7	-0.492	-4.152	0.045	0.192
NFUC1	1	7	-0.108	-0.913	-0.359	-1.516
RFPV5	1	7	-0.591	-4.992	0.365	1.543
RFPM5	1	7	-0.586	-4.949	0.365	1.541
RFPV4	1	7	-0.537	-4.534	-0.160	-0.676
RFPV3	1	7	-0.544	-4.594	-0.249	-1.052
RFPM4	1	7	-0.542	-4.577	0.578	2.440
RFPM3	1	7	-0.422	-3.566	0.856	3.614
BAP4	1	7	-0.079	-0.670	-0.618	-2.609
BAP2	1	7	-0.323	-2.731	-0.277	-1.169
BAP1	1	7	-0.280	-2.367	-0.250	-1.055

<b>Variable</b>	<b>min</b>	<b>max</b>	<b>skew</b>	<b>c.r.</b>	<b>kurtosis</b>	<b>c.r.</b>
BAC4	1	7	-0.272	-2.300	-0.500	-2.112
BAC3	1	7	-0.180	-1.520	-0.653	-2.760
BAC2	1	7	-0.188	-1.586	-0.643	-2.716
EXT1	1	7	-0.563	-4.757	0.013	0.054
EXT2	1	7	-0.602	-5.080	-0.005	-0.022
EXT3	1	7	-0.434	-3.669	-0.207	-0.875
EXT4	1	7	-0.435	-3.675	-0.226	-0.955
EXA1	1	7	-0.441	-3.727	-0.308	-1.301
EXA2	1	7	-0.260	-2.200	-0.471	-1.987
EXA3	1	7	-0.584	-4.929	0.025	0.106
EXE1	1	7	-0.843	-7.117	0.664	2.802
EXE3	1	7	-0.823	-6.951	0.432	1.824
EXE4	1	7	-0.689	-5.823	0.275	1.163
EXS1	1	7	-0.721	-6.090	0.270	1.141
EXS2	1	7	-0.574	-4.849	-0.105	-0.445
EXS3	1	7	-0.775	-6.541	0.322	1.361
EXS4	1	7	-0.568	-4.794	-0.057	-0.241
SE4	1	7	-0.749	-6.324	0.702	2.964
SE2	1	7	-0.919	-7.763	1.259	5.318
SE1	1	7	-0.994	-8.393	0.914	3.861
SSC4	1	7	-0.044	-0.374	-0.425	-1.793
SSC3	1	7	-0.073	-0.620	-0.541	-2.286
SSC1	1	7	-0.110	-0.925	-0.507	-2.141
ISC4	1	7	-0.326	-2.751	-0.462	-1.950
ISC3	1	7	-0.423	-3.572	-0.437	-1.845
ISC1	1	7	-0.507	-4.283	-0.250	-1.057
ASC4	1	7	-0.200	-1.686	-0.576	-2.431
ASC3	1	7	-0.197	-1.663	-0.506	-2.138
ASC2	1	7	0.086	0.727	-0.459	-1.936
ASC1	1	7	-0.542	-4.574	-0.220	-0.928
Multivariate					1062.412	123.363

## Appendix F Assessment of Linearity

### 1. Relationship between actual self-congruity and brand attachment

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BA * ASC	Between Groups	(Combined)	401.154	18	22.286	22.508	.000
		Linearity	377.456	1	377.456	381.207	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	23.698	17	1.394	1.408	.128
Within Groups			404.975	409	.990		
Total			806.129	427			

### 2. Relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand attachment

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BA * ISC	Between Groups	(Combined)	371.035	18	20.613	19.377	.000
		Linearity	360.854	1	360.854	339.212	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	10.180	17	.599	.563	.918
Within Groups			435.095	409	1.064		
Total			806.129	427			

### 3. Relationship between social self-congruity and brand attachment

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BA * SSC	Between Groups	(Combined)	388.691	18	21.594	21.157	.000
		Linearity	374.679	1	374.679	367.105	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	14.012	17	.824	.808	.685
Within Groups			417.439	409	1.021		
Total			806.129	427			

### 4. Relationship between brand experience and brand attachment

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BA * BE	Between Groups	(Combined)	658.685	198	3.327	5.167	.000
		Linearity	506.481	1	506.481	786.628	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	152.204	197	.773	1.200	.092
Within Groups			147.445	229	.644		
Total			806.129	427			

5. Relationship between brand attachment and behavioural brand loyalty

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BBL * BA	Between Groups	(Combined)	439.874	36	12.219	9.811	.000
		Linearity	410.221	1	410.221	329.396	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	29.653	35	.847	.680	.918
	Within Groups		486.941	391	1.245		
	Total		926.815	427			

6. Relationship between brand attachment and attitudinal brand loyalty

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
ABL * BA	Between Groups	(Combined)	497.663	36	13.824	14.807	.000
		Linearity	475.603	1	475.603	509.411	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	22.060	35	.630	.675	.922
	Within Groups		365.051	391	.934		
	Total		862.714	427			

7. Relationship between actual self-congruity and brand experience

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BE * ASC	Between Groups	(Combined)	412.102	18	22.895	29.443	.000
		Linearity	386.673	1	386.673	497.279	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	25.429	17	1.496	1.924	.015
	Within Groups		318.029	409	.778		
	Total		730.131	427			

8. The relationship between ideal self-congruity and brand experience

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BE * ISC	Between Groups	(Combined)	419.938	18	23.330	30.761	.000
		Linearity	395.681	1	395.681	521.718	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	24.257	17	1.427	1.881	.018
	Within Groups		310.193	409	.758		
	Total		730.131	427			

9. Relationship between social self-congruity and brand experience

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
BE * SSC	Between Groups	(Combined)	317.737	18	17.652	17.507	.000
		Linearity	301.696	1	301.696	299.213	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	16.041	17	.944	.936	.532
	Within Groups		412.394	409	1.008		
	Total		730.131	427			

## Appendix G    Multicollinearity Tests for Interaction Terms Developed

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**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	4.272	.081		52.749	.000		
ASC_X_PV	-.129	.185	-.098	-.695	.488	.133	7.496
ISC_X_PV	-.163	.157	-.125	-1.038	.300	.180	5.556
SSC_X_PV	.108	.176	.082	.610	.542	.145	6.877
ASC_X_PM	.273	.200	.211	1.364	.173	.109	9.143
ISC_X_PM	.095	.164	.070	.578	.564	.178	5.616
SSC_X_PM	-.157	.204	-.119	-.769	.442	.110	9.058
ASC_X_NFU	.087	.161	.068	.542	.588	.169	5.901
ISC_X_NFU	-.040	.172	-.028	-.235	.814	.184	5.442
SSC_X_NFU	.176	.145	.135	1.210	.227	.213	4.703