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LOUVAIN SCHOOL OF
MANAGEMENT

and

KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT LEUVEN

FACULTEIT ECONOMIE EN
BEDRIJFSWETENSCHAPPEN



LOUVAIN
School of Management

The Antecedents of Brand Love in the Clothing Industry

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Research Master's Thesis

Submitted by **Pirot Charlotte**

With a view of getting the degrees

Master in de toegepaste economische
wetenschappen: handelsingenieur

Master en ingénieur de gestion

ACADEMIC YEAR 2015 -2016

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank the KU Leuven and the Louvain School of Management for allowing me to write my Master's thesis partly in Leuven and partly in Louvain-la-Neuve. More specifically, I thank my promotors, Prof. Luk Warlop and Prof. Anne-Laure Bartier, for guiding me throughout this thesis. I had the chance to have not one but two promotors who each gave me valuable advice and feedback. I am particularly grateful to Anne-Laure Bartier for making me discover the Brand Love topic which I immediately found very interesting. I really enjoyed working on it during those last months.

Besides my promotors, I would like to thank my assistant at the KUL, Olga Tsoumani, who helped me conducting my research and analyzing the data I collected.

Finally, I would also like to thank my family and friends, and more specifically my mother and boyfriend who supported me in moments of stress. They both proofread my Master's Thesis and gave me new insight on elements that could be improved.

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1 Introduction

The aim of this Master's Thesis is to investigate the antecedents of brand love in the clothing industry. In the present introduction, my choice of brand love as general subject will be motivated and an overview of the following chapters will be given.

Brand love is, in my view, of great significance in the marketing field. The concept is associated with many desirable post-consumption behaviors, among which positive word of mouth, brand commitment and the willingness to pay a premium price for the brand. The importance of brand love is furthermore emphasized in the context of our current society. People continuously attach more importance to brands, to who wears what, to who has what type of phone, what type of car or what type of watch. Brands play a big role in our daily environment and are seen everywhere.

With the existence of so many brands in each different product category, we may ask ourselves on what ground consumers choose one brand over another. *Why do different customers love different types of brands? But also, why does the majority of the population often wish to possess the same brand, like Apple or Nike?* In this context, it is essential to make a brand stand out and differing from the competition. Brand love can respond to this need. A marketer who manages to make his brand be loved, by triggering the right determinants, will enjoy all the positive consequences and will assure a future for his brand.

Those are the two main reasons that justified my selection of brand love as topic: First, our current environment full of brands among which consumers sometimes do not know which to choose. Secondly, the fact that a marketer can simply act upon specific variables to induce the brand love feeling and make his brand be different and stand out in the eyes of customers. On top of that, the concept is quite recent and not yet the subject of abundant researches, which added my envy to choose it as research subject.

More particularly, I decided to investigate the antecedents of brand love in the *clothing* sector. It seemed justified to analyze a concept like brand love in a product category that is of great importance to many customers. In fact, especially the younger part of customers value clothing brands and spend a lot of time and money in shopping. Therefore, this research will be focused on brand love in the clothing industry amongst the younger part of the population.

Next, I also decided to analyze two additional factors that could influence love in the clothing industry. First, it will be tested whether the perceived fashionability of a clothing brand plays a role in how strongly a customer will love that brand.

Second, an aspect from social psychology will be included in the research: self-esteem. Not all customers value the same brands for the same reasons. Some customers love 'special' brands which are not well-known and will be very loyal to them. Others will prefer the 'it-brands' that enable them to be like everyone and probably feel more accepted by society. This paper will investigate whether the customer's personality, more specifically his level of self-esteem, could provide a valuable explanation to this observation.

The structure of this thesis will be as follows. This first part gives an overview of the purpose of the investigation. The second part summarizes the existing literature about brand love and its antecedents, as well as findings regarding the clothing sector. Part 3 presents the researched hypotheses, the scales used to measure the variables as well as the sample and data collection. The fourth part gives an overview of the pre-test that was conducted and the fifth of the main results of the research. Finally, the last part presents some conclusions that can be made regarding the investigation as well as the managerial implications and the limits of the research.

2 Literature study

The present part will give an overview of the existing literature about the brand love construct and how it relates to the clothing industry. In the first time, three important studies about customer brand relationships that were made before the brand love concept emerged will be presented, and the concept will be compared to interpersonal love. Secondly, a definition will be given for the construct and some of its antecedents will be summarized. Finally, it will be positioned in the context of the clothing industry.

2.1 Brand Love – History of the definition

Brand love is a relatively recent construct and has only been the subject of intense discussion since a few years. It can be decomposed into two separate terms: 'brand' and 'love'.

A *brand* is defined as "a distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods from those of competitors" (Aaker, 1991, p.66). A brand is more than just a product; it includes all mental associations held by the consumer about that product. A consumer will include those associations in his purchasing decisions when he has to choose between a set of products of the same category. Hence, the brand adds important value to a product.

The second term, *love*, is a strong feeling typically associated to a particular type of relationship between two human beings; interpersonal love. This type of relation has been defined by Sternberg (1986) in his 'Triangular Theory of Love' as being the combination of three components: intimacy, passion and decision/commitment.

When two people love each other, they are bonded and feel really close and connected to their partner. In this way, they feel *intimate* with another person which is the emotional basis of love. *Passion* is the motivational component: "the drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, sexual consummation, and related phenomena in loving relationships" (Sternberg, 1986, p.119). Finally, the *decision* composite refers to the short-term awareness of a person of the love she feels for another one. Linked to this composite is the *commitment* aspect: the intention of the partner to make that love last in the longer-term.

Studies on interpersonal love are numerous. However, recently in marketing more attention has been paid to another kind of feeling: love for brands. In those studies the 'brand love' term did not emerge directly. The first few researches were centred on the possible existence of relations between consumers and consumption objects. A consumption object can be a brand but also includes more broadly products, services, stores, and so on. The scope of research later narrowed to focus on brands only and to conclude that consumers can experience a strong feeling towards them that can be called love.

With the aim to better understand this feeling, it is essential to go back to studies that have been conducted before brand love was introduced in 2006 by Carroll and Ahuvia. More specifically, the work of Shimp & Madden (1988), Ahuvia (1993), and Fournier (1998) will be discussed, that oriented research in marketing towards brand love. Each of these studies used interpersonal love as an analogy to explain the extra-ordinary existing interactions between consumers and consumption objects.

2.1.1 Consumer-Object Relations – Shimp and Madden (1988)

According to Shimp and Madden (1988) consumer-object relationships are similar enough to interpersonal relations in order to state the analogy between both. Their study is based on Sternberg's 'Triangular Theory of Love' (1986) and suggests that the same psychological processes (emotion, motivation and cognition) that are at the basis of interpersonal love also form the basis of consumer-object relationships, only expressed differently. This assumption leads to a conception of consumer-object relations that consists of liking, yearning and decision/commitment. The *liking* component refers to feelings of connection, bondedness and attachment. Customers can also experience some kind of desire for the consumption-object in the sense of self-esteem, submission, affiliation or self-actualization; *yearning*. The last component, decision/commitment, is very similar in both types of relations.

Different combinations of the three composites lead to eight kinds of consumer-object relations. The closest to love identified relation is loyalty, including all dimensions and defined as a relation where "the consumer feels an intimate relation with a particular brand, has a strong yearning to purchase or repurchase the brand, and is committed, at least in the short term, to support a particular brand" (Shimp and Madden, 1988, p.176). The authors state that the liking, yearning and decision/commitment of a customer who is loyal to a consumption object are as strong as in the case of two people loving each other: "consumers form relations with consumption objects [...], which range from feelings of antipathy, to slight fondness, all the way up to what would, in person-person

relations, amount to love” (Shimp and Madden, 1988, p.163). However, they do not yet describe this customer-object relationship as love, but use the word loyalty instead.

2.1.2 Conditional Integration Theory of Love – Ahuvia (1993)

In his ‘Conditional integration theory of love’ Ahuvia describes love as a function of not three but two variables: the actual level of integration into the self and the desired level of integration into the self. The starting point of his theory is Aron and Aron’s research (1986) in which interpersonal love is function of one factor: the inclusion of others within the self. But a consumer does not only love an object when it is part of him, but when it is also *desired* as such. Ahuvia added therefore a second variable to the observation: the desired level of self-integration. In this way, he came to the conclusion that love happens in the situation where both levels of self-integration with the love object are high. To be loved, the love object must be part of the consumers’ life, and also desired as such (Ahuvia, 1993).

2.1.3 Brand relationship quality model – Fournier (1998)

Fournier discovered a connection between consumers’ behaviours, relations and life issues, and brand behaviours. Indeed, customers tend to reflect their life experiences and histories in their attitudes towards brands. Starting from the results of three in-depth interviews, she developed a model of brand relationship quality. This model identifies six types of strong consumer-brand interactions. One of them, *love and passion*, refers to a situation where a consumer experiences strong affect for a brand, a much more intense feeling than simple preference. Consumers that are in this type of relationship feel like they lack something when they do not use the brand for some time. Moreover, they feel distress or are very anxious when they are separated from it for a long period. They consider the brand as irreplaceable and unique (Fournier, 1998).

Shimp and Madden (1988)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research level : consumption objects ▪ <i>Loyalty</i> = liking + yearning + decision/commitment
Ahuvia (1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research level : consumption objects ▪ <i>Love</i> = high level of actual self-integration + high level of desired self-integration
Fournier (1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research level : brands ▪ <i>Love and passion</i>

Table 1: Early researches on relationships in a consumption context

2.1.4 Consumer-product Love versus Interpersonal Love

A clear distinction needs to be made between interpersonal love and love in a consumption context. This distinction will make it easier to understand the brand love definition that will be presented further in this thesis.

In the first time, it is interesting to compare both concepts by using two of the four elements that qualify interpersonal relationships: reciprocity and meaning provision (Hinde, 1995).

Interpersonal love occurs between two interdependent partners and is hence bidirectional or *reciprocal*. On the contrary, authors believe that product love is unidirectional and hence different from interpersonal love in this respect (Shimp and Madden, 1988; Ahuvia, 1993; Whang et al., 2004; Batra et al., 2012). Indeed, persons have the ability to feel emotions and to react to them, but brands will never be capable of loving back.

Next, interpersonal relationships are *purposive*: they need to give some benefit to the engaged partners and, more specifically, provide meaning to both their lives. This element is also found in the love for consumption objects which is often partly the result of the ability of the love object to give meaning to the consumer (Ahuvia, 1993; Fournier, 1998). Furthermore, Batra et al.'s (2012) brand love prototype includes the dimensions of life meaning and intrinsic reward'. They point out that brands are more likely to be loved when they are associated to something deeper.

Next to these two themes, an additional element is essential in interpersonal love but is often considered to lack brand love: *altruistic behaviour* (Batra et al, 2012). When in a relation between persons altruistic concern for the loved one is central, it would not exist in consumer-brand relationships. Consumers would only be interested in what the brand can do for them and would never intend to act in the interest of the brand instead. However, this view should not be accepted without question. The practice of co-creation, for instance, enables consumers to help developing a product, a name or a slogan for a brand. This can be interpreted as the customer expressing his personality through this one but can also be understood as the customer acting for the benefit of the brand and showing concern for it. In this sense, customers may show altruistic concern for the brand and it does not always have to be the opposite.

Finally, passion is a component of both product and interpersonal love but with some variation. For instance, romance and physical attraction are relevant to interpersonal love but cannot take place in the consumption context (Shimp and Madden, 1988).

2.1.5 Conclusion

It is clear from those early studies that the interest in relations in the consumption context already existed years ago. The authors stressed that consumers can and do enter special relationships with brands.

However, researches remained closely linked to interpersonal love and did not explore consumer-object relations as a new, significantly different concept. There was a need for more practical researches that would study love for brands as a construct on its own, moving away from the idea people have of personal relations. This will be the object of the next sections that will introduce a brand love definition and a literature review of its dimensions, antecedents and outcomes.

2.2 The definition of Brand Love

Nowadays, still no agreement exists on what brand love exactly is. Many authors developed their proper definition of the subject as well as, in some cases, a measurement scale for the construct. This section will present a deeper analysis of the brand love's definition, while the scale used to measure the construct will be detailed in the third chapter.

Caroll and Ahuvia (2006) were the first to put a name on the feeling of love of consumers for brands: brand love. They investigated this new marketing concept within a population of 334 adult consumers from at least 21 years old and analyzed their love for consumer packaged goods. The authors define brand love as "the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name. It includes passion for the brand, attachment to the brand, positive evaluation of the brand, positive emotions in response to the brand, and declarations of love for the brand" (Caroll and Ahuvia, 2006, p.81). This definition was built on Ahuvia's previous research that stated that consumers can be strongly emotionally attached to love objects, being any kind of object as long as it is different from a person (Ahuvia, 2005).

Caroll and Ahuvia (2006) depict brand love as a certain mode of satisfaction; a feeling that, some but not all, satisfied consumers can experience as the result of a long-term relationship with a particular brand. Brand love, in this case, is conceptualized as a construct narrower than satisfaction and differing from satisfaction in many ways. Hence, satisfaction is a *condition* for brand love, but does not always lead to this emotion. A consumer who loves a brand has a strong envy to declare his love, contrary to a merely satisfied consumer. In addition, the loved brand is integrated into the

consumer's identity, which is not the case when a consumer is merely satisfied (Caroll and Ahuvia, 2006).

According to Batra et al. (2012, p.2), different cognitions, emotions and behaviors come into play when a consumer loves a brand that "include, but go beyond, brand attachment and self-brand connections". The authors developed a prototype listing the different elements that customers associate with brand love. It gives an overview of what customers actually mean when they say they love a brand, and hence an interesting definition of this concept. The brand love prototype consists of ten associations: *great quality/qualities, strongly held values and existential meaning, intrinsic rewards, self-identity, positive affect, passionate desire and sense of natural fit, emotional bonding and anticipated heartbreak, willingness to invest and frequent thought and use.*

2.3 Antecedents of Brand Love

Lots of studies have been investigating the variables that can lead to the brand love feeling. Those antecedents, positively influencing brand love, will be reviewed in this chapter.

2.3.1 Hedonic benefits

It seems that some brands are predisposed to be loved by consumers (Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010). Those brands usually have a hedonic character and primarily provide fun, pleasure or enjoyment to the customer (Caroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Researches showed that the most cited product categories, when consumers are asked about a brand they love, include clothes, shoes, cars, watches, lingerie, perfume, music, cigarettes, food, etc. (Albert et al., 2008, 2009). Most of them can be considered as providing hedonic benefits like described above.

2.3.2 Great quality beliefs

The perceived quality of a brand is another important factor in determining brand love (Batra et al., 2012). A product that is considered as superior and as 'the best' in its category is more likely to be loved (Ahuvia, 1993). Consumers love brands that provide them with benefits, that have the greatest performance and that are the most attractive. Furthermore, they will stop loving a brand if they esteem it is not the best anymore (Batra et al., 2012).

2.3.3 Brand identification

Brand identification is defined as “the extent to which the consumer sees his or her own self-image as overlapping with the brand’s image” (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006, p.49). When a consumer considers a brand’s image or personality as close to his own personality, he will be more likely to love that brand (Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010; Albert and Merunka, 2013). Brand identification can be distinguished from the self-expressive benefit that will be detailed below. On the one hand, brand identification suggests the fit of the brand image with how the customer sees his own personality. On the other hand, brands with self-expressive benefits really allow the customer to *show* other people who he is inside or/and enable him to reflect a better image to society. Hence, customers can actually express something (their personality or a certain image) by buying a brand, while they simply recognize themselves in a brand’s personality in the case of brand identification.

2.3.4 Brand trust

Another factor that positively influences brand love is given by Albert and Merunka (2013): brand trust. Similarly to interpersonal relationships, a love feeling will have more chances to appear between a consumer and a brand when the consumer feels that he or she can rely on that brand and that this one will not disappoint him.

2.3.5 Brand image

A positive brand image was found to have a positive impact on brand love (Ismail and Spinelli, 2012). Brand image is defined as “the perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory” (Keller, 1993, p.3). Consequently, positive associations with the brand result in positive brand image.

2.3.6 Self-expressive benefits

A self-expressive brand is defined as “the consumer’s perception of the degree to which the specific brand enhances one’s social self and/or reflects one’s inner self” (Caroll and Ahuvia, 2006, p. 82). The self-expressive benefits can be of two types. The brand can either reflect a consumer’s *inner self*, allow him to express his personality and to show other people who he really is inside, or enhance the consumer’s *social self* by giving him a better image to society and improving what other people think of him (Caroll and Ahuvia, 2006). In the latter case, the loved brand will probably reflect the kind of person the customer wishes to be rather than the customer’s real personality.

This antecedent can be interpreted at the product-level. For instance, customers can express their personality through the way they dress, their makeup or even their perfume. These products can furthermore enhance the customer's image; when you wear fashion clothes that are 'in' and trendy, they will contribute to your image and improve the way society views you. Brands within these kinds of product categories can be characterized as having self-expressive benefits.

Those brands are furthermore expected to be more lovable as they help the consumers to build up their identity (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). This result is consistent with previous researches that already mentioned that consumers' love should be greater for brands that help them in affirming their personality or in solving personal life's issues (Ahuvia, 1993; Fournier, 1998). However, a brand that reflects a personality trait that the customer has but does not like, or that the customer simply does not want to have is expected to be more hateable than lovable.

2.3.7 Sense of community

Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) uncovered an additional actionable, individual-level variable which influences brand love positively: the sense of community that a consumer may feel. Sense of community is defined as the "the kinship or affiliation a customer feels with other people associated with the brand" (Keller, 2003, p.121). It should be underlined that the *sense* of community influences brand love and not the community *membership* (Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010). As a result, any consumer can experience this feeling of being part of a bigger group even if he is not an actual member of a club or if he does not belong to a community of brands.

2.3.8 Conclusion

Lots of antecedents of brand love were uncovered in past researches. However, at this step of the literature review, only two of them were chosen to be further analyzed in this thesis: sense of community and self-expressive benefits. The reason for this choice was twofold.

First, it will be clear from the following section that these two antecedents are expected to particularly apply to the clothing industry. The clothing style is something that other people see, that is symbolic and defines the customer's identity in the eyes of others. Those will in turn categorize this customer in a certain 'box' based on his clothes. Related to this social aspect of clothing, the sense of community and self-expressive benefits particularly make sense and are expected to lead customers to prefer certain types of brands over others.

Furthermore, researches about sense of community as determinant of brand love are scarce, which motivated my choice to add to the work of Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) on that topic and to do so with a practical case in the clothing sector. The same reason holds for the self-expressive benefits as developed by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) that were not yet analysed as such in the context of brand love in the clothing industry.

2.4 The Clothing Industry

In this chapter, the scope of the literature review shifts from brand love in general to brand love at the level of the clothing sector. First of all, a short definition of fashion and the major characteristics of decision-making in the clothing industry will be given. Then, specific attention will be paid to the antecedents of brand love this research will focus on; sense of community and self-expressive benefits. They will be related to the fashion industry in this part of the literature review.

2.4.1 Fashion and the clothing industry

The term *fashion* is well known by everyone. However it may be difficult to give it some specific attributes or describing it with words. First of all, it should be noted that not only clothes, shoes or bags refer to fashion. The adjective can be used for any type of product category as long as the product of interest is associated with “change, ambivalence, novelty and added value” (Hourigan and Bougoure, 2012, p.127). Furthermore, a fashionable product is “popular, stylish and trendy, informally, cool, in and hot” (Chen and Lin, 2015, p.4).

Although customers will often agree on the clothing brands that are more fashionable than others, fashionability is function of the way the customer personally sees the brand. It has been proven that different customers make different judgments about the same clothing brand (Auty and Elliott, 1998). The fashionability of a brand is *perceived* by a customer and can hence differ from one individual to another. The perceived fashionability is the extent to which a product, in this case clothing, is considered as fashionable by a customer (Chen and Lin, 2015).

Another important element to consider when analyzing the love for clothing brands is the customer’s fashion consciousness: “the degree of involvement an individual has with the latest styles, fashions of clothing, and the desire for up-to-date styles and frequent changes in one’s wardrobe” (Mandhachitara and Piamphongsant, 2016, p.137). Not all people are sensitive to fashion; some will pay more attention to the fashionability of clothing than others and will be more fashion conscious. Fashion consciousness has been found to be an important determinant in the purchasing decision of

fashion clothing (Mandhachitara and Piamphongsant, 2016) and will hence be an important variable in the context of customer's love for clothing brands.

From the literature review, an additional factor appeared to strongly influence clothing decisions: the *self-esteem* of customers. Self-esteem is defined as "a person's global, evaluative view of his/her self" (Akande 2009, p.591). On one hand, people with low self-esteem are usually trying to adapt to society and will choose clothing that are seen as valuable and accepted by the majority. On the other hand, very confident people with high self-esteem are more looking to express their own identity through clothing (Khare and Rakesh, 2010). Consistent with this research, Parker et al. (2004) uncovered a difference in clothing decisions between American and Japanese teens. American teens, originating from a Western society, tend to be more individualistic and will hence look to express their uniqueness through clothing. On the contrary, Confucian societies like Japan tend to pay attention to other's expectations and will try to answer to these ones. Therefore, they will purchase fashion clothes to be accepted by the group (Parker et al., 2004).

2.4.2 Sense of community in the clothing industry

The purchase of clothes includes an important social aspect. By wearing a certain fashion brand, customers feel like they become part of a larger group with specific characteristics (Khare and Rakesh, 2010). They can purchase the right fashion brand that will allow them to feel like a member of the group they desire to be part of, and will avoid choosing brands that are associated with people they don't want to be compared to (Auty and Elliott, 1998). Another study uncovered that people who desire to be part of a certain social group tend to take on the group's attitudes and opinions, among which the clothing style that they perceive to be the norm in that group (Littrell and Eicher, 1973).

This paper will analyze the *sense* of community that customers may feel when purchasing clothing brands even without being actually member of a club or community. However, it should be noted that actual communities *are* created through clothing styles, like the 'gothic' community or the 'punk' community.

2.4.3 Self-expressive benefits and clothing brands

Research on literature about self-expressive benefits, as explicitly developed by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), in the clothing industry did not result in many findings. However, closely linked elements were found, enabling to confirm the existence of those benefits in the context of clothes and their influence in the purchasing choice of customers.

Fashion clothing is used by customers as “a code, as a visual language and as an image that allows a message to be created and selectively understood” (Vieira 2009, p. 182). Clothes can be assumed to provide customers with self-expressive benefits. These benefits were already found to be of two types, reflecting the inner self and enhancing the social self (Caroll and Ahuvia, 2006), and are considered to apply to fashion clothing.

First, customers use clothing to reflect their own identity and show other people who they are inside. Fashion acts as a symbol for customers, who tend to materialize and communicate their self-image through the purchasing of clothing brands (Newholm and Hopkinson, 2009; Khare and Rakesh, 2010). Secondly, customers can use fashion to reflect a positive image to society with the aim to be accepted socially and to be judged positively by others, even if this image does not represent who they really are inside. In this way, clothes are used as “a means of conforming and harmonizing with the group” (Parker et al. 2004, p.184). Purchasing fashion brands can ensure acceptance by society and avoid the risk of being rejected (Khare and Rakesh, 2010).

3 Conceptual Model

In this third part, the conceptual model of this thesis will be described. First, the hypotheses that are tested in the research as a result of the literature review will be presented and motivated. Then, the different variables that are measured as well as their scales will be detailed.

3.1 Tested Hypotheses

The main purpose of this research is to identify the determinants of brand love in the clothing industry. As previously mentioned and motivated, it was concluded from the literature review that two elements are expected to prevail in the creation of love for clothing brands. First, clothes are assumed to provide customers with self-expressive benefits, and those benefits would lead to love for clothing brands. As already detailed, this variable is composed of two dimensions: a brand can either reflect the customer's inner personality (the inner self dimension) or improve the customer's social self by contributing to his societal image (the social self dimension). Hence, the first hypothesis will analyze to what extent the self-expressive benefits of clothing brands influence the love feeling of customers for those brands.

H1: The self-expressive benefits of clothing brands will have a positive effect on the love for those brands.

It furthermore appeared from past researches that customers are influenced by their self-esteem in their choice of clothes. Customers with low levels of self-esteem usually try to adapt to society and to adopt a clothing style that is accepted by the majority of the population. A link can be made between this finding and the social self dimension of the self-expressive benefits of Carroll and Ahuvia. The same can be done for the second dimension: confident customers were found to choose clothing brands with which they can express their uniqueness. This observation can be related to the inner self. To conclude, self-esteem is expected to act as a moderator in the relationship between the two dimensions of the self-expressive benefits and brand love, and the two following hypotheses were made.

The effect of the social self on brand love is expected to be stronger for customers with a low level of self-esteem. Indeed, customers with low self-esteem, being not confident and having a low image of themselves, are expected to love fashion brands that enhance their image and that enable them to be accepted by others.

H2: The effect of the social self dimension of self-expressive benefits on brand love is expected to be stronger for customers with low self-esteem.

On the contrary, customers with high self-esteem are expected to love brands relatively more because of the inner self rather than the social self. They are looking for brands through which they can reflect their great personality they are so confident about.

H3: The effect of the inner self dimension of self-expressive benefits on brand love is expected to be stronger for customers with high self-esteem.

The second antecedent of love for clothing brands that will be analyzed is the sense of community. The literature highlighted the social aspect of buying fashion brands. A customer who feels part of a larger group when wearing a specific clothing brand and who feels close to people he associates with that brand is expected to love it more.

H4: Sense of community will have a positive effect on the love for clothing brands.

The perceived fashionability of the different clothing brands is expected to have an influence on the relationship between the two antecedents and brand love. For brands that are perceived as highly fashionable, the two antecedents would lead to greater brand love. In addition, this effect is expected to happen only, or more intensely, for customers who care more about fashion; customers who have a high level of fashion consciousness.

H5: Perceived fashionability will act as a moderator of the relationship between the inner self and brand love for people who are more fashion conscious.

H6: Perceived fashionability will act as a moderator of the relationship between the social self and brand love for people who are more fashion conscious.

H7: Perceived fashionability will act as a moderator of the relationship between sense of community and brand love for people who are more fashion conscious.

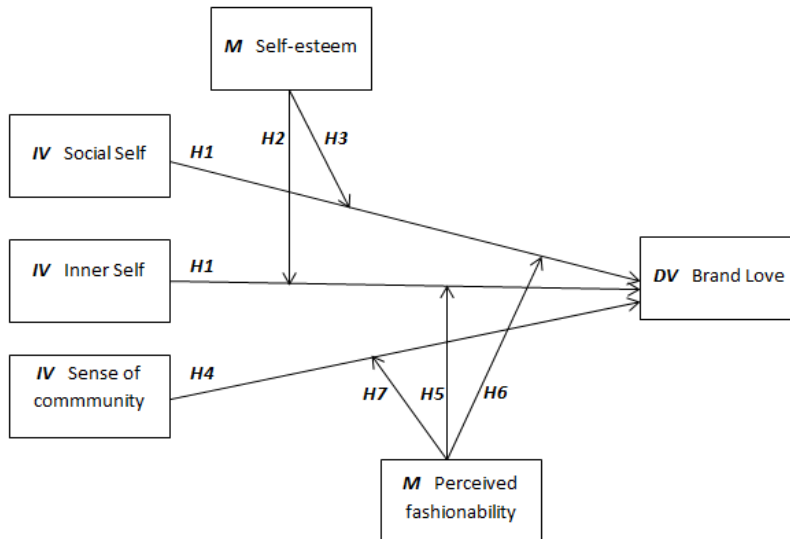


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

3.2 Scales and measurement

3.2.1 Sense of Community

Sense of community will be measured at the hand of three items developed by Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010). Like previously mentioned, the feeling of being part of a community is analyzed in this paper, not the actual membership of a brand community.

Items Sense of Community
Do you feel like you belong to a 'club' with other users of /BRAND/?
Do you identify with people who use /BRAND/?
To what extent is /BRAND/ used by people like yourself?

Table 2: Sense of community scale (Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010)

3.2.2 Self-expressive benefits

The self-expressive benefits of a brand will be measured by using the scale developed by Caroll and Ahuvia (2006). Both dimensions of self-expressiveness will be analyzed; the extent to which the brand enables the customer to express his inner self, and the extent to which it enhances his social self.

Inner Self	Social Self
<i>This brand symbolizes the kind of personality I really am inside.</i>	<i>This brand contributes to my image.</i>
<i>This brand reflects my personality.</i>	<i>This brand adds to a social 'role' I play.</i>
<i>This brand is an extension of my inner self.</i>	<i>This brand has a positive impact on what other think of me.</i>
<i>This brand mirrors the real me.</i>	<i>This brand improves the way society views me.</i>

Table 3: Self-expressive brands scale (Caroll and Ahuvia, 2006)

3.2.3 Brand Love

Several brand love scales were developed over the years, some unidimensional (Whang et al., 2004; Caroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010) and others multi-dimensional (Albert et al., 2008, 2009; Batra et al., 2012; Thomson et al., 2005). Studies go from a conceptualization of biker's love for their motorcycle (Whang et al., 2004) to an investigation of customer's emotional attachment (Thomson et al., 2005). Concretely, some similarities can be found between all those measurement scales. First, they all include a measure of the declaration of affect from the customer for the loved brand. Passion is furthermore present in most cases (Thomson et al., 2005; Albert et al., 2008, 2009; Batra et al., 2012). Other frequently found elements of the brand love measurements are connection/attachment to the brand, the duration of the relationship, the separation distress and the extent to which customers can identify themselves with the brand.

The strength of the brand love feeling that customers experience for brands will be measured at the hand of Albert et al.'s (2009) scale in this paper. This measurement is supposed to apply to all product categories, but its validity in the case of clothing brands will be verified with a factor analysis.

Albert et al. (2009) identified brand love as composed of seven first-order dimensions, and two second-order factors. Starting with 17 exploratory interviews, followed by an internet survey of 825 respondents, the authors developed a new scale to measure the brand love construct. They believe that studies around brand love should not start from interpersonal love theories, claiming that none of those could possibly represent the complexity of the brand love phenomenon. Investigations should start with a pure exploratory analysis intended to determine how consumers experience their feelings towards brands. Only then should the results be compared with existing interpersonal love theories or consumer-brand love theories. Another specificity of Albert et al.'s (2008, 2009) researches is that they do not want the word 'love' to bias respondents' answers to the asked

questions. In order to circumvent that limit, the word only appears at the very end of their exploratory data collections.

Second-order dimensions	First-order dimensions	Items
Passion	<i>Pleasure</i>	<i>By buying this brand, I take pleasure.</i> <i>Discovering new products from this brand is a pure pleasure.</i> <i>I take a real pleasure in using this brand.</i> <i>I am always happy to use this brand.</i>
	<i>Idealization</i>	<i>There is something almost 'magical' about my relationship with this brand.</i> <i>There is nothing more important to me than my relationship with this brand.</i> <i>I idealize this brand.</i>
Affection	<i>Uniqueness</i>	<i>This brand is special.</i> <i>This brand is unique.</i>
	<i>Intimacy</i>	<i>I have a warm and comfortable relationship with this brand.</i> <i>I feel emotionally close to this brand.</i> <i>I value this brand greatly in my life.</i>
	<i>Duration</i>	<i>(I feel that) this brand has accompanied me for many years.</i> <i>I have been using this brand for a long time.</i> <i>I have not changed brand since long.</i>
	<i>Memories</i>	<i>This brand reminds me someone important to me.</i> <i>This brand reminds me memories, moments of my past (childhood, adolescence, a meeting).</i> <i>I associate this brand with some important events of my life.</i>
	<i>Dream</i>	<i>This brand corresponds to an ideal for me.</i> <i>I dream about that brand since long.</i> <i>This brand is a childhood dream.</i> <i>I dream (or have dreamt) to possess this brand.</i>

Table 4: Brand love dimensions and measurement scale (Albert et al., 2009)

The first dimension resulting from the study is *uniqueness*: a consumer loving a brand considers this one as special and different from others. Secondly, a consumer loves a brand that provides him with *pleasure*. *Intimacy* is another dimension of brand love, which “underlines the proximity between the consumer and its brand” (Albert et al., 2009, p.302). Next, the consumer *idealizes* the loved brand that has become the most important thing in his/her life. The relationship between the customer and the brand is usually *during* for quite a long time before it starts to be identified as love. The brand also reminds the consumer of important persons or situations of his life; the sixth dimension is the

memories evoked by the brand. Finally, the ‘*dream*’ dimension refers to the strong presence of the brand in the consumer’s mind (Albert et al., 2009).

The choice to use this specific conceptualization was made for two reasons, the first one being culture. Indeed, culture appeared to be an important factor that influences the way people express their love for persons and for brands (Albert et al., 2008).

From all authors mentioned in this part, almost all are American. Albert et al., however, are French. The American culture will lead to other expressions of love and to different types of loved brands than the European one. Hence, it can be assumed that a French scale to measure brand love in Belgium will lead to more accurate results than an American one. Furthermore, the dimensions of brand love uncovered by Albert et al. (2009) would also be closer to what a Belgian study would have found.

Secondly, Albert et al.’s research method is really relevant to the study object. Indeed, they systematically start with an exploratory study, brand love being a relatively new and rather vague subject. Using projective methods is the best way to try to understand how people experience their love for brands, which they are not always aware of. However, the authors do not forget the advanced interpersonal love theories. They compare the results of their researches to those theories, trying to uncover matching elements. Such research methodology can be considered to lead to correct brand love dimensions as well as to a precise measurement scale.

3.2.4 Perceived fashionability

The measure for perceived fashionability is a scale developed by Chen and Lin (2015) as part of a study about websites’ fashionability, from which the items were slightly adapted to suit the present research. The measurement scale was developed based on a method using the dictionary definition of fashionability, and is expected to be qualified in the case of clothing brands too. Its validity will be verified with a factor analysis.

Items Perceived fashionability
<i>Wearing this clothing brand is fashionable.</i>
<i>It is trendy to wear this clothing brand.</i>
<i>This clothing brand is very popular.</i>

Table 5: Perceived fashionability (Chen and Lin, 2015)

3.2.5 Fashion Consciousness

The 'fashion consciousness' variable will be measured by using 4 items developed by Shim and Gehrt (1996).

Items Fashion consciousness
<i>I usually have one or more outfits that are of the very latest style.</i>
<i>When I must choose between the two, I usually dress for style, not comfort.</i>
<i>An important part of my life and activities involves dressing stylishly.</i>
<i>Fashionable, attractive styling is very important to me.</i>

Table 6: Fashion consciousness (Shim and Gehrt, 1996)

3.2.6 Self-esteem

The unidimensional self-esteem scale of Rosenberg (1965) will be adopted in this thesis. It consists of 10 items measuring both positive and negative feelings regarding the self.

Items Self-esteem
<i>On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.</i>
<i>At times I think I am not good at all.</i>
<i>I feel that I have a number of good qualities.</i>
<i>I am able to do things as well as most other people.</i>
<i>I feel I do not have much to be proud of.</i>
<i>I certainly feel useless at times.</i>
<i>I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.</i>
<i>I wish I could have more respect for myself.</i>
<i>All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.</i>
<i>I take a positive attitude towards myself.</i>

Table 7: Self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965)

All items of the scales previously mentioned were accompanied by a seven point Likert-type scale in the questionnaire, going from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 7 ('strongly agree').

4 Pre-Test

There exists plenty of clothing brands, varying from one another with respect to their image, positioning or customer target. Brands can furthermore be perceived as more fashionable, or less, depending on the customer. The extent to which a brand is perceived as fashionable by a customer is expected to have an influence on brand love and this variation should hence be taken into account in the research. Therefore, respondents will be asked to answer the questionnaire for three brands, expected to have a different level of perceived fashionability. In this way, customers should normally be attracted by and understand the community of users of at least one of the three brands. The identification of those brands that will be included in the main study is the purpose of the pre-test.

Three brands were pre-selected and assumed to score differently on the variable: *Adidas*, *Zara* and *C&A*. They are well-known by the majority of the population and widely distributed (*Zara* and *C&A* in their own retails, while *Adidas* is mostly distributed through other retailers in addition to *Adidas* shops).

Adidas is expected to be perceived as the most fashionable brand of the three. It has a very strong image which is partly due to its intense marketing strategy. *Adidas* clothes are originally sports clothes, but young customers are increasingly wearing them on a daily basis. They are very popular and 'in' currently, which is the reason why the brand is expected to be seen as highly fashionable. *Adidas'* customers are, besides athletes, young trendy people with their own clothing styles who can afford to pay for the brand, which is less affordable than *Zara* or *C&A*.

Zara is a major retailer, with a favourable image, in which the majority of the population goes shopping. It offers trendy fashion clothes at accessible prices, but that are not unique or of a special style. In fact, the brand offers clothes for all tastes: any customer could be able to find a set of clothing pieces he likes in a *Zara* retailer. At the light of these observations, *Zara* was expected to be perceived as fashionable, but not as strongly as *Adidas*.

C&A is also a major retailer like *Zara* but lacks an attractive fashion image compared to *Zara* and even more compared to *Adidas*. *C&A* clothes are less trendy, more basic and much lower-priced. Shopping at *C&A* is actually price-driven rather than driven by quality and style. *C&A* customers are seen as people with a lower income level, people who do not care about fashion or mothers shopping cheap clothes for the whole family.

4.1 Data Collection

The above expectations were tested at the hand of a short online questionnaire using *Google Forms*, and furthermore analyzed with *IBM SPSS Statistics 23*. Respondents were asked to rate the items of the perceived fashionability scale (developed in section 3.2.4).

The sample consisted of 20 respondents, among which 14 women and 6 men aged 16 to 25 years ($M = 21.7$, $SD = 2.37$). 15 respondents were students at university or high school, 3 were students at secondary school and 2 were working.

Like previously mentioned, younger people will be the target of this paper; many studies have shown them to be especially sensitive to fashion and to value clothing brands more intensely compared to older people (Auty and Elliott, 1998; Parker et al., 2004).

4.2 Results

In order to test if there was a significant difference between the means of the three variables, data were analyzed using a *repeated measures ANOVA* with a within-subjects factor of perceived fashionability (perceived fashionability Adidas, perceived fashionability Zara, perceived fashionability C&A). The values for the three brands are represented in Table 8.

Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had not been violated ($X^2(2) = 4.80$, $p = .091$). The results show that there was a significant difference in the level of perceived fashionability depending on the type of brand ($F(2, 38) = 87.2$, $p < 0.001$). The perceived fashionability of Adidas ($M = 5.77$, $SD = 1.12$) and Zara ($M = 5.40$, $SD = 0.82$) did not significantly differ from each other, $F(1, 19) = 1.53$, $p = .231$, while the perceived fashionability of Zara ($M = 5.40$, $SD = 0.82$) was significantly different from the perceived fashionability of C&A ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 0.76$), $F(1, 19) = 221$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, the perceived fashionability of Adidas ($M = 5.77$, $SD = 1.12$) was significantly different from the perceived fashionability of C&A ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 0.76$), $F(1, 19) = 119$, $p < .001$.

	N	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
Perceived Fashionability Adidas	20	5.77	1.12
Perceived Fashionability Zara	20	5.40	0.82
Perceived Fashionability C&A	20	2.58	0.76

Table 8 : Results Pre-test

The results of the pre-test showed that, while Adidas and Zara were significantly different from C&A regarding the perceived fashionability, the two brands' scores were not significantly different from each other. However, since the three brands have very different brand images and customers like detailed above, they were assumed to be different enough in order to compare results among them and were all three included in the research.

5 Main Study

5.1 Data Collection

The data for this research were collected using an online questionnaire, created with *Qualtrics*, in which the scales from chapter 3.2 were tested. The variables 'Perceived fashionability', 'Sense of community', 'Self-expressive benefits' and 'Brand love' were rated by respondents for each of the 3 selected brands.

The questionnaire was spread on the Internet to collect the observations. It was posted on Facebook pages on which second-hand clothes, shoes and accessories are sold from customers to customers. In addition, each respondent was asked to send the questionnaire to 10 other persons who were part of the target group.

The collected data was analyzed using the program *IBM SPSS Statistics 23*. The data set consisted of 176 respondents, 19 men and 157 women aged 16 to 36 years ($M = 22.6$, $SD = 3.96$). Women are much more represented in the sample, which is not a problem as the research aims at fashion clothing; something women care about more than men. Furthermore, 162 participants originated from Belgium while 13 had another European nationality and 1 was non-European. 104 respondents were students at high school or university and 25 at secondary school. The rest of the sample consisted of 43 respondents who were working and 4 unemployed.

5.2 Results

Before starting to test the hypotheses, the data were corrected for missing values. In addition, the codes of negatively worded items were reversed. Secondly, the internal consistency of each construct was verified to make sure their measurement scales were reliable. Then, a repeated measures test was conducted to make sure the results of the pre-test were replicated. Finally, the hypotheses were tested.

5.2.1 Internal Consistency

The internal consistency of each construct was verified with the Cronbach's alpha. Scales were assumed to be reliable if this value was superior or equal to 0.70. The Cronbach's alpha values are represented in Table 9 below. Two scales needed to be adapted (details in appendix 7.1):

- The third item of the perceived fashionability scale of C&A (“*This clothing brand is very popular*”) was deleted as this meant a significant increase in the Cronbach’s alpha value from 0.711 to 0.841.
- The third item of the sense of community scale of Zara (“*This brand is used by people like myself*”) was removed in order to have a Cronbach’s alpha value higher than 0,70.

	α	NUMBER OF ITEMS
Self-esteem	0.820	10
Fashion Consciousness	0.769	4
Perceived Fashionability Adidas	0.844	3
Perceived Fashionability Zara	0.768	3
Perceived Fashionability C&A	0.841	2
Sense of Community Adidas	0.811	3
Sense of Community Zara	0.725	2
Sense of Community C&A	0.711	3
Self-expressive benefits Adidas	0.951	8
- Inner Self	0.941	4
- Social Self	0.934	4
Self-expressive benefits Zara	0.945	8
- Inner Self	0.939	4
- Social Self	0.903	4
Self-expressive benefits C&A	0.956	8
- Inner Self	0.951	4
- Social Self	0.926	4
Brand Love Adidas	0.963	22
- Passion Adidas	0.911	7
- Affection Adidas	0.944	15
Brand Love Zara	0.954	22
- Passion Zara	0.890	7
- Affection Zara	0.930	15
Brand Love C&A	0.956	22
- Passion C&A	0.907	7
- Affection C&A	0.935	15

Table 9: Cronbach’s alpha values

5.2.2 Perceived fashionability

In order to verify that the three brands included in the research were actually different in their level of perceived fashionability, a *repeated measures ANOVA* with a within-subjects factor of perceived fashionability (perceived fashionability Adidas, perceived fashionability Zara, perceived fashionability

C&A) was conducted similar to the pre-test. The mean values obtained for the three variables are represented in Table 10.

	N	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
Perceived Fashionability Adidas	176	5.23	1.28
Perceived Fashionability Zara	176	5.17	0.98
Perceived Fashionability C&A	176	2.65	1.11

Table 10: Perceived fashionability Adidas, Zara and C&A

Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated ($X^2(2) = 9.12, p = .010$). Hence, degrees of freedom were corrected using Greenhouse-Geisser estimates of sphericity ($\epsilon = 0.951$). The results show that there was a significant difference in the level of perceived fashionability depending on the type of brand, $F(1.90, 333) = 315, p < .001$. The perceived fashionability of Adidas ($M = 5.23, SD = 1.28$) and Zara ($M = 5.17, SD = 0.98$) did not significantly differ from each other, $F(1, 175) = 0.232, p = .631$, while the perceived fashionability of Zara ($M = 5.17, SD = 0.98$) was significantly different from the perceived fashionability of C&A ($M = 2.65, SD = 1.11$), $F(1, 175) = 478, p < .001$. Furthermore, the perceived fashionability of Adidas ($M = 5.23, SD = 1.28$) was significantly different from the perceived fashionability of C&A ($M = 2.65, SD = 1.11$), $F(1, 175) = 399, p < .001$.

Those results replicate the findings of the pre-test. Adidas and Zara did not score differently from each other despite the larger sample size used in this study compared to the pre-test study. However, the two brands have still very different characteristics, especially regarding their image and type of customers, as mentioned in the pre-test part. Hence, Adidas, Zara and C&A can be considered as three different brands and the hypotheses will be analyzed for the three of them.

As previously mentioned, the level of perceived fashionability is expected to have an influence on the brand love for the three brands. Therefore, the three variables (perceived fashionability Adidas, perceived fashionability Zara, perceived fashionability C&A) will be included as covariates to test hypotheses 1 to 4. Concerning the testing of the three last hypotheses, these covariates will not be included as perceived fashionability will already be tested as moderator.

5.2.3 The determinants of brand love in the clothing industry

The combined analysis of the antecedents of brand love was repeated three times, for each of the brands included in the research. The analyses of this section and the following ones will be performed at the brand level considering that Adidas, Zara and C&A have strongly different

personalities. As previously explained, their customer target and brand image are very different from each other. Hence, even though Zara and Adidas do not have a different perceived fashionability, the results of the analyses are expected to be different for those two brands as their image and customer type differs.

5.2.3.1 Combined analysis of the antecedents of brand love

In order to test if the three antecedents have a positive impact on brand love for the three brands, a hierarchical multiple regression was conducted for each brand with brand love as dependent variable, the antecedents as independent variables and the perceived fashionability of the brand as covariate. Results are shown in Table 11.

Adidas

For Adidas, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed with the love for Adidas as dependent variable. The perceived fashionability of the brand was included at stage one as covariate, and the sense of community, the inner self and the social self for Adidas were included at stage two as predictors. Tests for multicollinearity indicated that there was no multicollinearity problem ($VIF = 1.55$ for perceived fashionability, 2.26 for sense of community, 2.72 for inner self, and 3.27 for social self). The perceived fashionability was found to significantly influence brand love ($F(1) = 74.4, p < .001$). The variable accounts for 29.9% of the variability as indexed by the R^2 statistics. The second model was also statistically significant ($F(4) = 106.2, p < .001$), with the majority of influence held by the antecedents, accounting for 41.4% of variability. However, the social self did not significantly impact the love for Adidas ($p = .052$). The hierarchical regression hence indicates that, sense of community and inner self positively influence the love for Adidas after controlling for the effect of the perceived fashionability of the brand. It was shown that the inner self is the strongest determinant of brand love ($\beta = .503$).

Zara

The same analysis was then repeated for Zara. Tests for multicollinearity indicated that there was no multicollinearity problem ($VIF = 1.27$ for perceived fashionability, 1.35 for sense of community, 2.64 for inner self, and 2.86 for social self). The covariate was found to significantly influence brand love ($F(1) = 47.8, p < .001$) and to account for 21.6% of variability as indicated by the R^2 statistics. The second model was also found to be significant ($F(4) = 59.6, p < .001$) and indicates that the inner self, the social self and the sense of community positively influence the love for Zara after controlling for the effect of perceived fashionability. Those antecedents account for 36.7% of variability as indicated

by the R² statistics. The self-expressive benefits have the strongest relationship to brand love, with the inner self ($\beta=.337$) being slightly more important than the social self ($\beta=.262$).

	Adidas			Zara			C&A		
	b	SE b	β	b	SE b	β	b	SE b	β
<i>Step1</i>									
Constant	-0.105	0.335		0.370	0.423		1.067	0.169	
Perceived fashionability	0.537	0.062	.547*	0.556	0.080	.464*	0.352	0.059	.413*
<i>Step2</i>									
Constant	-0.103	0.219		0.238	0.313		0.379	0.151	
Perceived fashionability	0.164	0.050	.168*	0.192	0.067	.161*	0.098	0.051	.115
Sense of community	0.150	0.055	.168*	0.165	0.052	.184*	0.217	0.055	.242*
Inner self	0.474	0.064	.503*	0.263	0.063	.337*	0.158	0.078	.191*
Social self	0.115	0.059	.145	0.210	0.067	.262*	0.267	0.072	.341*

Notes: ADIDAS: R² = 0.29 for Step1, $\Delta R^2 = 0.41$ for Step2 ($p < .001$). * $p < .05$.

ZARA: R² = 0.22 for Step1, $\Delta R^2 = 0.37$ for Step2 ($p < .001$). * $p < .05$.

C&A: R² = 0.17 for Step1, $\Delta R^2 = 0.34$ for Step2 ($p < .001$). * $p < .05$.

Table 11: Combined Analysis of the antecedents of brand love at the brand level

C&A

Finally, a similar hierarchical regression analysis was performed for C&A. Tests for multicollinearity indicated that there was no multicollinearity problem ($VIF = 1.26$ for perceived fashionability, 1.33 for sense of community, 3.09 for inner self, and 2.99 for social self). Perceived fashionability did significantly influence brand love in the first model ($F(1) = 35.7, p < .001$), but did not in the second. The second model was statistically significant ($F(4) = 44.5, p < .001$) and indicated that sense of community, the inner self and the social self significantly influence love for C&A after controlling for the effect of perceived fashionability. Those antecedents account for 34% of variability as indicated by the R² statistics. The social self ($\beta=.341$) and sense of community ($\beta=.242$) are shown to have the strongest effect on love for C&A.

Conclusion

Three conclusions can be made after conducting the above analyses. First, the inner self and the sense of community are antecedents of brand love for the three brands. The social self was only found to influence the love for Zara and C&A. However, overall, hypotheses 1 and 4 can be confirmed: the self-expressive benefits and sense of community have a positive impact on brand love. Secondly, the analyses confirm that the extent to which respondents perceive a brand as fashionable has some effect on the love for that brand. This confirms that it was justified to include perceived fashionability as covariate in the analyses. Finally, while the self-expressive benefits are

more important in determining the love for Adidas and Zara, there seems to be an important social aspect in the love for C&A. The strongest antecedent of love for Adidas is the inner self, while for Zara both self-expressive benefits are the most important antecedents. In the case of C&A however, the sense of community and the social self are the strongest antecedents and their effect is furthermore higher than in the case of the two other brands.

5.2.3.2 The effects of the antecedents on the different dimensions of brand love

The brand love construct being multidimensional, it was interesting to investigate if the antecedents of brand love have the same impact on its different dimensions. Therefore, the above hierarchical multiple regressions were repeated for each brand on the two second-order dimensions of the brand love construct: passion and affection.

Effect of the antecedents on the passion dimension of brand love

First, a hierarchical multiple regression was performed for each brand with the passion as dependent variable, the three antecedents as independent variables and the perceived fashionability as covariate. The results are shown in Table 12.

For Adidas, tests for multicollinearity indicated that there was no multicollinearity problem ($VIF = 1.55$ for perceived fashionability, 2.25 for sense of community, 2.72 for inner self, and 3.27 for social self). The second model was statistically significant ($F(4) = 105, p < .001$) and indicated that the three antecedents have a positive impact on the passion dimension of love for Adidas when controlling for the effect of perceived fashionability of the brand. All three antecedents had a significant impact on the passion for Adidas, with the inner self having a much stronger relation to passion than the two others.

Tests for multicollinearity in the case of Zara indicated that there was no multicollinearity problem ($VIF = 1.27$ for perceived fashionability, 1.35 for sense of community, 2.64 for inner self, and 2.86 for social self). The second model was statistically significant ($F(4) = 55.6, p < .001$) and indicated that the antecedents have a positive impact on passion for Zara. All three antecedents had a statistically significant effect on the dimension, with the self-expressive benefits being more important than the sense of community.

	Adidas			Zara			C&A		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β
<i>Step1</i>									
Constant	-0.312	0.343		0.230	0.435		0.867	0.165	
Perceived fashionability	0.583	0.064	.569*	0.598	0.083	.481*	0.406	0.057	.472*
<i>Step2</i>									
Constant	-0.299	0.230		0.098	0.332		0.241	0.154	
Perceived fashionability	0.202	0.053	.198*	0.239	0.071	.192*	0.177	0.053	.206*
Sense of community	0.158	0.058	.170*	0.165	0.055	.177*	0.193	0.057	.213*
Inner self	0.461	0.067	.469*	0.272	0.066	.336*	0.164	0.079	.197*
Social self	0.128	0.062	.154*	0.194	0.071	.234*	0.222	0.074	.281*

Notes: ADIDAS: $R^2 = 0.32$ for Step1, $\Delta R^2 = 0.39$ for Step2 ($p < .001$). * $p < .05$.

ZARA: $R^2 = 0.23$ for Step1, $\Delta R^2 = 0.33$ for Step2 ($p < .001$). * $p < .05$.

C&A: $R^2 = 0.22$ for Step1, $\Delta R^2 = 0.27$ for Step2 ($p < .001$). * $p < .05$.

Table 12: Combined Analysis of the antecedents on the passion dimension of brand love

For C&A, tests for multicollinearity indicated that there was no multicollinearity problem ($VIF = 1.26$ for perceived fashionability, 1.33 for sense of community, 3.09 for inner self, and 2.99 for social self). Results indicated that the three antecedents significantly influence the passion dimension for C&A ($F(4) = 41.7$, $p < .001$). The three antecedents have a positive impact on the passion for the brand, with the social self ($\beta = .281$) and the sense of community ($\beta = .213$) being the most important.

Effect of the antecedents on the affection dimension of brand love

To test the effects of the antecedents of brand love on the affection dimension, a hierarchical multiple regression was conducted for each brand. The affection dimension was the dependent variable, the three antecedents the independent variables and the perceived fashionability the covariate. The results are shown in Table 13 for Adidas, Zara and C&A.

For Adidas, tests for multicollinearity indicated that there was no multicollinearity problem ($VIF = 1.55$ for perceived fashionability, 2.25 for sense of community, 2.72 for inner self, and 3.27 for social self). The second model was statistically significant ($F(4) = 47.8$, $p < .001$) and indicated that the antecedents have a positive impact on the passion dimension of love for Adidas when controlling for the effect of perceived fashionability of the brand. However, only the sense of community and the inner self had a significant impact on the affection for Adidas, with the inner self being much stronger than the sense of community.

	Adidas			Zara			C&A		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β
<i>Step1</i>									
Constant	-0.023	0.345		0.426	0.434		1.160	0.179	
Perceived fashionability	0.519	0.064	.523*	0.539	0.082	.444*	0.331	0.062	.374*
<i>Step2</i>									
Constant	-0.025	0.236		0.294	0.328		0.434	0.161	
Perceived fashionability	0.149	0.054	.150*	0.174	0.070	.143*	0.066	0.055	.075
Sense of community	0.147	0.059	.162*	0.166	0.054	.182*	0.227	0.059	.243*
Inner self	0.480	0.068	.503*	0.259	0.066	.328*	0.155	0.083	.181
Social self	0.110	0.063	.137	0.216	0.070	.266*	0.285	0.077	.351*

Notes: ADIDAS: $R^2 = 0.27$ for Step1, $\Delta R^2 = 0.40$ for Step2 ($p < .001$). $*p < .05$.

ZARA: $R^2 = 0.20$ for Step1, $\Delta R^2 = 0.36$ for Step2 ($p < .001$). $*p < .05$.

C&A: $R^2 = 0.14$ for Step1, $\Delta R^2 = 0.34$ for Step2 ($p < .001$). $*p < .05$.

Table 13: Combined Analysis of the antecedents on the affection dimension of brand love

Tests for multicollinearity in the case of Zara indicated that there was no multicollinearity problem ($VIF = 1.27$ for perceived fashionability, 1.35 for sense of community, 2.64 for inner self, and 2.86 for social self). The second model was statistically significant ($F(4) = 53.6$, $p < .001$) and indicated that the antecedents have a positive impact on passion for Zara. All three antecedents had a statistically significant effect on the dimension, with the self-expressive benefits being more important than the sense of community.

For C&A, tests for multicollinearity indicated that there was no multicollinearity problem ($VIF = 1.26$ for perceived fashionability, 1.33 for sense of community, 3.09 for inner self, and 2.99 for social self). Results indicated that the second model was statistically significant ($F(4) = 39.5$, $p < .001$). Only the social self and the sense of community positively influence affection for C&A, with the first antecedent being much more important ($\beta = .351$) than the second one ($\beta = .243$).

Conclusion

The analyses of the effects of the antecedents on the two dimensions of brand love enabled to make some additional observations. First, the social self has a positive impact on the passion for Adidas, while it is not an antecedent of the affection dimension. On the other hand, the inner self has a bigger impact on the affection ($\beta = .503$) than on the passion ($\beta = .469$) for Adidas.

Secondly, in the case of C&A, the social self antecedent has a lower impact on passion for the brand ($\beta = .281$) than on affection for the brand ($\beta = .351$). In addition, while the inner self was a significant antecedent of love for C&A, when analyzing it on both dimensions it appears to have no effect on the affection dimension.

Regarding Zara, no additional observations were made. For both dimensions the results are similar to those of the analyses of the antecedents on brand love globally.

5.2.4 Self-esteem as a moderator of the relationship between self-expressive benefits and brand love

In order to test the moderating effect of self-esteem in the relationship between the inner self and brand love and the social self and brand love, moderating analyses were done using the *PROCESS macro* (model 1) for *SPSS* for each of the three brands of the research.

The first three analyses included brand love for the respective brand as dependent variable, the inner self for the brand as independent variable, self-esteem as moderator and the perceived fashionability of the brand as covariate.

ADIDAS	b	SE b	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	1.321*	0.225	.000	0.876	1.766
Self-esteem	-0.082	0.070	.243	-0.221	0.056
Inner self	0.645*	0.051	.000	0.544	0.745
Self-esteem*Inner self	-0.060	0.049	.224	-0.156	0.034
Perceived fashionability	0.263*	0.043	.000	0.178	0.348

Note : $R^2 = 0.69$ ($p < .001$).

	b	SE b	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	1.571*	0.279	.000	1.020	2.122
Self-esteem	-0.143	0.082	.083	-0.305	0.019
Social self	0.507*	0.050	.000	0.407	0.607
Self-esteem*Social self	-0.076	0.051	.142	-0.178	0.026
Perceived fashionability	0.216*	0.054	.000	0.109	0.323

Note : $R^2 = 0.60$ ($p < .001$).

ZARA	b	SE b	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	1.887*	0.379	.000	1.138	2.635
Self-esteem	-0.003	0.086	.973	-0.172	0.166
Inner self	0.469*	0.051	.000	0.368	0.569
Self-esteem*Inner self	0.112	0.068	.099	-0.021	0.245
Perceived fashionability	0.269*	0.074	.000	0.124	0.415

Note : $R^2 = 0.54$ ($p < .001$).

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	2.062*	0.412	.000	1.239	2.884
Self-esteem	-0.068	0.094	.470	-0.253	0.117
Social self	0.472*	0.055	.000	0.362	0.581
Self-esteem*Social self	0.044	0.071	.541	-0.097	0.184
Perceived fashionability	0.231*	0.079	.004	0.075	0.387

Note : $R^2 = 0.51$ ($p < .001$).

C&A	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	1.564*	0.117	.000	1.334	1.794
Self-esteem	0.006	0.088	.946	-0.167	0.179
Inner self	0.450*	0.072	.000	0.307	0.593
Self-esteem*Inner self	0.048	0.105	.652	-0.160	0.256
Perceived fashionability	0.170*	0.043	.000	0.085	0.254

Note : $R^2 = 0.43$ ($p < .001$).

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	1.593*	0.134	.000	1.329	1.858
Self-esteem	-0.036	0.079	.646	-0.191	0.119
Social self	0.448*	0.071	.000	0.308	0.588
Self-esteem*Social self	-0.045	0.097	.643	-0.238	0.147
Perceived fashionability	0.157*	0.048	.001	0.063	0.251

Note : $R^2 = 0.44$ ($p < .001$).

Table 14: Self-esteem as moderator

Then, three other analyses were performed including brand love as dependent variable, the social self for the brand as independent variable, self-esteem as moderator and the perceived fashionability of the brand as covariate. Results demonstrate that self-esteem does not moderate the relationship between the inner self and brand love, and between the social self and brand love, for any of the three brands (Table 14). They, however, confirm the positive effect of the two antecedents on brand love.

5.2.4.1 Self-esteem as a moderator of the relationship between self-expressive benefits and the two second-order dimensions of brand love

The previous analyses were performed again, but on the two dimensions of brand love for the three brands.

First, in order to test the moderating effect of self-esteem in the relationship between the self-expressive benefits and the passion dimension, moderating analyses were done using the *PROCESS*

macro (model 1) for SPSS for each of the three brands of the research. The analyses included passion for the respective brand as dependent variable, the inner self (or the social self) for the brand as independent variable, self-esteem as moderator and the perceived fashionability of the brand as covariate. Results (Table 15) show that self-esteem has no moderating effect in the relationship between the inner self and passion as well as between the social self and passion.

ADIDAS	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	1.112*	0.239	.000	0.641	1.583
Self-esteem	-0.95	0.073	.193	-0.239	0.049
Inner self	0.65*	0.054	.000	0.540	0.752
Self-esteem*Inner self	-0.076	0.048	.120	-0.171	0.020
Perceived fashionability	0.309*	0.047	.000	0.216	0.402

Note : $R^2 = 0.69$ ($p < .001$).

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	1.393*	0.283	.000	0.835	1.951
Self-esteem	-0.159	0.087	.069	-0.331	0.012
Social self	0.512*	0.053	.000	0.408	0.617
Self-esteem*Social self	-0.053	0.056	.364	-0.164	0.058
Perceived fashionability	0.256*	0.056	.000	0.146	0.366

Note : $R^2 = 0.61$ ($p < .001$).

ZARA	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	1.735*	0.379	.000	0.988	2.483
Self-esteem	-0.004	0.096	.965	-0.193	0.185
Inner self	0.467*	0.052	.000	0.364	0.569
Self-esteem*Inner self	0.099	0.063	.117	-0.025	0.224
Perceived fashionability	0.313*	0.072	.000	0.170	0.456

Note : $R^2 = 0.52$ ($p < .001$).

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	1.893*	0.414	.000	1.076	2.709
Self-esteem	-0.072	0.101	.478	-0.272	0.128
Social self	0.463*	0.057	.000	0.350	0.576
Self-esteem*Social self	0.038	0.069	.582	-0.098	0.174
Perceived fashionability	0.278	0.077	.000	0.125	0.430

Note : $R^2 = 0.49$ ($p < .001$).

C&A	b	SE b	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	1.314*	0.192	.000	1.060	1.567
Self-esteem	0.038	0.089	.671	-0.137	0.213
Inner self	0.412*	0.071	.000	0.270	0.553
Self-esteem*Inner self	0.091	0.103	.377	-0.112	0.294
Perceived fashionability	0.240*	0.048	.000	0.145	0.335
<i>Note : R² = 0.44 (p <.001).</i>					
	b	SE b	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	1.337*	0.148	.000	1.045	1.628
Self-esteem	-0.005	0.081	.954	-0.166	0.156
Social self	0.398*	0.072	.000	0.256	0.541
Self-esteem*Social self	-0.006	0.095	.948	-0.199	0.186
Perceived fashionability	0.229*	0.054	.000	0.122	0.335
<i>Note : R² = 0.43 (p <.001).</i>					

Table 15: Self-esteem as moderator (passion dimension)

Secondly, the analyses were repeated for the three brands to test the moderating effect of self-esteem in the relationship between the self-expressive benefits and the second dimension of brand love: affection. The analyses included affection for the respective brand as dependent variable, the inner self (or the social self) for the brand as independent variable, self-esteem as moderator and the perceived fashionability of the brand as covariate. Results (Table 16) show that self-esteem has no moderating effect in the relationship between the inner self and affection as well as between the social self and affection.

ADIDAS	b	SE b	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	1.405*	0.239	.000	0.933	1.976
Self-esteem	-0.077	0.076	.309	-0.227	0.072
Inner self	0.644*	0.053	.000	0.538	0.749
Self-esteem*Inner self	-0.053	0.053	.315	-0.158	0.051
Perceived fashionability	0.245*	0.045	.000	0.156	0.334
<i>Note : R² = 0.66 (p <.001).</i>					
	b	SE b	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	1.642*	0.297	.000	1.055	2.229
Self-esteem	-0.137	0.086	.112	-0.306	0.032
Social self	0.505*	0.053	.000	0.400	0.610
Self-esteem*Social self	-0.085	0.053	.109	-0.190	0.019
Perceived fashionability	0.200*	0.057	.000	0.087	0.314
<i>Note : R² = 0.56 (p <.001).</i>					

ZARA	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	1.948*	0.400	.000	1.159	2.736
Self-esteem	-0.002	0.087	.978	-0.175	0.170
Inner self	0.469*	0.053	.000	0.364	0.575
Self-esteem*Inner self	0.117	0.073	.110	-0.027	0.261
Perceived fashionability	0.252*	0.078	.001	0.097	0.407

Note : $R^2 = 0.51$ ($p < .001$).

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	2.129*	0.436	.000	1.269	2.989
Self-esteem	-0.066	0.096	.489	-0.255	0.123
Social self	0.475*	0.057	.000	0.362	0.588
Self-esteem*Social self	0.046	0.075	.543	-0.102	0.194
Perceived fashionability	0.212*	0.083	.000	0.047	0.377

Note : $R^2 = 0.48$ ($p < .001$).

C&A	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	1.665*	0.127	.000	1.414	1.915
Self-esteem	-0.007	0.092	.941	-0.188	0.174
Inner self	0.465*	0.076	.000	0.315	0.616
Self-esteem*Inner self	0.030	0.109	.784	-0.186	0.246
Perceived fashionability	0.142*	0.047	.003	0.049	0.234

Note : $R^2 = 0.39$ ($p < .001$).

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
<i>Model</i>					
Constant	1.696*	0.142	.000	1.415	1.977
Self-esteem	-0.049	0.082	.553	-0.210	0.113
Social self	0.467*	0.073	.000	0.323	0.612
Self-esteem*Social self	-0.061	0.099	.542	-0.257	0.136
Perceived fashionability	0.128*	0.051	.013	0.027	0.229

Note : $R^2 = 0.42$ ($p < .001$).

Table 16: Self-esteem as moderator (affection dimension)

5.2.5 Perceived fashionability and fashion consciousness as moderators of the relationship between brand love and its antecedents

In order to test if perceived fashionability moderates the relationship between brand love and its antecedents in the case of people being more fashion conscious, a *moderated moderation analysis* will be performed using the *PROCESS macro* for *SPSS*. Model 3 will be used, testing the interactions represented in figure 2. X corresponds to the antecedent of brand love (inner self, social self or sense

of community), Y to brand love, M to perceived fashionability and W to fashion consciousness (categorical variable with 0 = low level of fashion consciousness and 1 = high level of fashion consciousness).

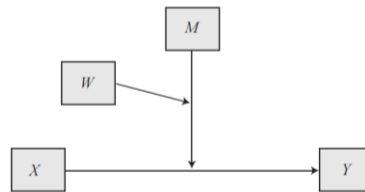


Figure 2: Model 3 PROCESS

The analysis was conducted three times for Adidas, each time including one of the three antecedents as independent variable. The first model analyzed the effect of the moderators in the relationship between the inner self and brand love. The model was found to be significant and to account for 70.91% of the variability in brand love ($F(7,168) = 62.3, p < .001$). As previously found, the inner self has a strong influence on love for Adidas, indicated by its coefficient, $b = 0.637$. Results (Table 17) show that both the perceived fashionability of Adidas and the fashion consciousness of customers also predict customers’ love for the brand in a positive way. In addition, a negative three-way interaction was found between the inner self, the perceived fashionability and fashion consciousness.

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>
<i>Model</i>		
Constant	2.693*	0.067
Perceived fashionability Adidas	0.263*	0.052
Inner self Adidas	0.637*	0.057
Inner self Adidas x Perceived fashionability Adidas	0.035	0.041
Fashion consciousness	0.284*	0.143
Inner self Adidas x Fashion consciousness	0.052	0.130
Perceived fashionability Adidas x Fashion consciousness	-0.193	0.112
Inner self Adidas x Perceived fashionability Adidas x Fashion consciousness	-0.222*	0.091

Note: $R^2 = 0.71$ ($p < .001$) * $p < .05$.

Table 17: Moderated moderation for the inner self (Adidas)

The conditional effects of the inner self on brand love, for different levels of fashion consciousness and perceived fashionability are given in Table 18. Results indicate that for people who are less

fashion conscious, the effect of the inner self on brand love increases with the perceived fashionability of the brand. For people who are more fashion conscious, the inner self will play a bigger role in defining brand love when the perceived fashionability of the brand is lower.

Fashion consciousness	Perceived fashionability Adidas	Effect of inner self on brand love
-0.65	-1.28	0.37
-0.65	0.00	0.60
-0.65	1.28	0.83
0.35	-1.28	0.71
0.35	0.00	0.66
0.35	1.28	0.60

Table 18: Conditional effects of the moderated moderation for the inner self (Adidas)

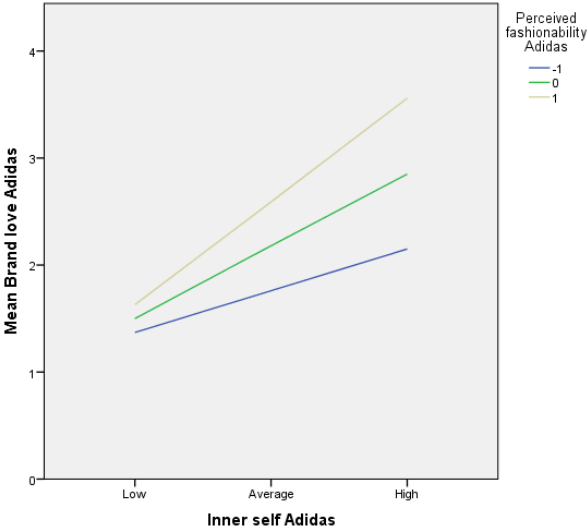


Figure 3: Perceived fashionability as moderator (Adidas)

A follow-up analysis was conducted to gain an even clearer picture of the three-way interaction. To this end, two moderation analyses using the first model of PROCESS were conducted to investigate the interaction between the perceived fashionability of the brand and the inner self, for each of the two levels of fashion consciousness separately. The moderation analysis was first performed for respondents who are less fashion conscious and then for respondents who are more. Results are shown in Table 19.

For respondents being less fashion conscious, the model was shown to be statistically significant ($F(3, 58) = 31.9, p < .001$). The interaction between the inner self of Adidas and the perceived fashionability of the brand accounts for 4.47% of variability ($F(1, 58) = 5.23, p = .026$). Hence, the perceived fashionability of Adidas moderates the relationship between the inner self and brand love.

When respondents with low fashion consciousness perceive the brand as more fashionable, the relationship between the inner self and brand love becomes stronger, as illustrated in figure 3.

For respondents being highly fashion conscious, the model was significant ($F(3, 110) = 89.8, p < .001$). However, no interaction was found between the inner self and the perceived fashionability of Adidas. To conclude, the perceived fashionability of Adidas moderates the relationship between the inner self and the social self only for respondents being less fashion conscious.

Fashion consciousness (low)		<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>
<i>Model</i>			
Constant		2.179*	0.107
Perceived fashionability Adidas		0.331*	0.076
Inner self Adidas		0.527*	0.130
Perceived fashionability Adidas*Inner self Adidas		0.179*	0.078
<i>Note: R² = 0.74 (p < .001) *p < .05.</i>			
Fashion consciousness (high)		<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>
<i>Model</i>			
Constant		2.948*	0.078
Perceived fashionability Adidas		0.187*	0.065
Inner self Adidas		0.645*	0.059
Perceived fashionability Adidas*Inner self Adidas		-0.043	0.046
<i>Note: R² = 0.66 (p < .001) *p < .05.</i>			

Table 19: Moderation analysis (Adidas)

In a second time, social self was included as independent variable and the moderated moderation analysis was conducted again (Table 20). The model was significant ($F(7,168) = 40.9, p < .001$) and indicated that the perceived fashionability and the social self positively influence brand love. However, no interaction was found to be significant.

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>
<i>Model</i>		
Constant	2.720*	0.083
Perceived fashionability Adidas	0.226*	0.068
Social self Adidas	0.504*	0.055
Social self Adidas x Perceived fashionability Adidas	0.011	0.040
Fashion consciousness	0.121	0.182
Social self Adidas x Fashion consciousness	-0.012	0.120
Perceived fashionability Adidas x Fashion consciousness	-0.216	0.153
Social self Adidas x Perceived fashionability Adidas x Fashion consciousness	-0.170	0.092
<i>Note: R² = 0.60 (p < .001) *p < .05.</i>		

Table 20: Moderated moderation for the social self (Adidas)

Finally, the analysis was conducted with sense of community as independent variable. Results are represented in Table 21 and were similar to those for the social self antecedent. The model was significant ($F(7,168) = 33.3, p < .001$), but there was no statistical significance of interactions. However, perceived fashionability and sense of community were shown to be predictors of brand love for Adidas.

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>
<i>Model</i>		
Constant	2.728*	0.089
Perceived fashionability Adidas	0.241*	0.093
Sense of community Adidas	0.520*	0.078
Sense of community Adidas x Perceived fashionability Adidas	0.015	0.054
Fashion consciousness	0.203	0.198
Sense of community Adidas x Fashion consciousness	0.150	0.184
Perceived fashionability Adidas x Fashion consciousness	-0.433	0.223
Sense of community Adidas x Perceived fashionability Adidas x Fashion consciousness	-0.213	0.131

Note: $R^2 = 0.54 (p < .001)$ * $p < .05$.

Table 21: Moderated moderation for the sense of community (Adidas)

The above analyses were then performed in the case of the brand Zara. First, the inner self was included as independent variable (Table 22). The model was found to be statistically significant ($F(7,168) = 32.2, p < .001$) and indicated that the perceived fashionability of Zara and the inner self are predictors of brand love. However, none of the interactions were statistically significant.

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>
<i>Model</i>		
Constant	3.285*	0.068
Perceived fashionability Zara	0.221*	0.081
Inner self Zara	0.471*	0.051
Inner self Zara x Perceived fashionability Zara	-0.077	0.051
Fashion consciousness	0.187	0.152
Inner self Zara x Fashion consciousness	0.081	0.119
Perceived fashionability Zara x Fashion consciousness	-0.014	0.194
Inner self Zara x Perceived fashionability Zara x Fashion consciousness	0.085	0.123

Note: $R^2 = 0.55 (p < .001)$ * $p < .05$.

Table 22: Moderated moderation for the inner self (Zara)

Results of the analysis with the social self as independent variable for Zara are presented in Table 23. Again, the model was significant ($F(7, 168) = 28.3, p < .001$) but only indicated a predictive effect of perceived fashionability and social self on the love for Zara. Interactions were not statistically significant.

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>
<i>Model</i>		
Constant	3.248*	0.075
Perceived fashionability Zara	0.215*	0.093
Social self Zara	0.470*	0.057
Social self Zara x Perceived fashionability Zara	-0.019	0.054
Fashion consciousness	0.197	0.170
Social self Zara x Fashion consciousness	0.192	0.135
Perceived fashionability Zara x Fashion consciousness	-0.081	0.228
Social self Zara x Perceived fashionability Zara x Fashion consciousness	0.025	0.122

Note: $R^2 = 0.52 (p < .001)$ * $p < .05$.

Table 23: Moderated moderation for the social self (Zara)

The third analysis for Zara was done with sense of community as independent variable (Table 24). The model was significant ($F(7, 168) = 19.9, p < .001$). It indicated that, in addition to the perceived fashionability of the brand and the sense of community, the customer's fashion consciousness positively influence the love for Zara. None of the interactions was found to be statistically significant.

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>
<i>Model</i>		
Constant	3.247*	0.077
Perceived fashionability Zara	0.380*	0.076
Sense of community Zara	0.363*	0.054
Sense of community Zara x Perceived fashionability Zara	-0.005	0.049
Fashion consciousness	0.334*	0.167
Sense of community Zara x Fashion consciousness	0.087	0.115
Perceived fashionability Zara x Fashion consciousness	-0.072	0.169
Sense of community Zara x Perceived fashionability Zara x Fashion consciousness	-0.007	0.105

Note: $R^2 = 0.39 (p < .001)$ * $p < .05$.

Table 24: Moderated moderation for the sense of community (Zara)

Finally, the three analyses were performed for C&A. The model including the inner self as independent variable was statistically significant ($F(7, 168) = 13.7, p < .001$). Results (Table 25) show that both the perceived fashionability of C&A and the inner self positively influence the love for that brand, but that there is no interaction between variables.

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>
<i>Model</i>		
Constant	1.973*	0.053
Perceived fashionability C&A	0.167*	0.048
Inner self C&A	0.433*	0.061
Inner self C&A x Perceived fashionability C&A	0.057	0.054
Fashion consciousness	0.048	0.109
Inner self C&A x Fashion consciousness	0.075	0.125
Perceived fashionability C&A x Fashion consciousness	-0.097	0.088
Inner self C&A x Perceived fashionability C&A x Fashion consciousness	0.105	0.100

Note: $R^2 = 0.44$ ($p < .001$) * $p < .05$.

Table 25: Moderated moderation for the inner self (C&A)

When including the social self as independent variable (Table 26), the model was statistically significant ($F(7,168) = 18.1, p < .001$). Perceived fashionability and social self were found to have a positive impact on love for C&A. In addition, results show a positive three-way interaction between the social self, the perceived fashionability and fashion consciousness. The conditional effect of the social self on love for C&A for different levels of the moderators are presented in Table 27. For people who are less fashion conscious, the effect of the social self on brand love declines when the perceived fashionability increases. On the contrary, for people who are more fashion conscious, the effect of the social self on brand love increases with the perceived fashionability of C&A.

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>
<i>Model</i>		
Constant	1.970*	0.055
Perceived fashionability C&A	0.152*	0.050
Social self C&A	0.439*	0.064
Social self C&A x Perceived fashionability C&A	0.061	0.049
Fashion consciousness	-0.110	0.121
Social self C&A x Fashion consciousness	0.072	0.144
Perceived fashionability C&A x Fashion consciousness	-0.071	0.110
Social self C&A x Perceived fashionability C&A x Fashion consciousness	0.253*	0.115

Note: $R^2 = 0.49$ ($p < .001$) * $p < .05$.

Table 26: Moderated moderation for the social self (C&A)

Fashion consciousness	Perceived fashionability Adidas	Effect of social self on brand love
-0.65	-1.11	0.51
-0.65	0.00	0.39
-0.65	1.11	0.28
0.35	-1.11	0.30
0.35	0.00	0.46
0.35	1.11	0.63

Table 27: Conditional effects of the moderated moderation for the social self (C&A)

A follow-up analysis was conducted to gain an even clearer picture of the three-way interaction. To this end, two *moderation analyses* using the first model of *PROCESS* were conducted to investigate the interaction between the perceived fashionability of C&A and the social self, for each of the two levels of fashion consciousness separately. Results are shown in Table 28.

For respondents being less fashion conscious, the model was shown to be statistically significant ($F(3, 58) = 11.9, p < .001$). However, no interaction was found between the social self and the perceived fashionability of C&A.

Fashion consciousness (low)	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>
<i>Model</i>		
Constant	2.041*	0.100
Perceived fashionability C&A	0.208*	0.088
Social self C&A	0.373*	0.123
Perceived fashionability C&A*Social self C&A	-0.103	0.104
<i>Note: R² = 0.33 (p < .001) *p < .05.</i>		
Fashion consciousness (high)	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>
<i>Model</i>		
Constant	1.943*	0.065
Perceived fashionability C&A	0.135*	0.056
Social self C&A	0.450*	0.073
Perceived fashionability C&A*Social self C&A	0.150*	0.049
<i>Note: R² = 0.57 (p < .001) *p < .05.</i>		

Table 28: Moderation Analysis (C&A)

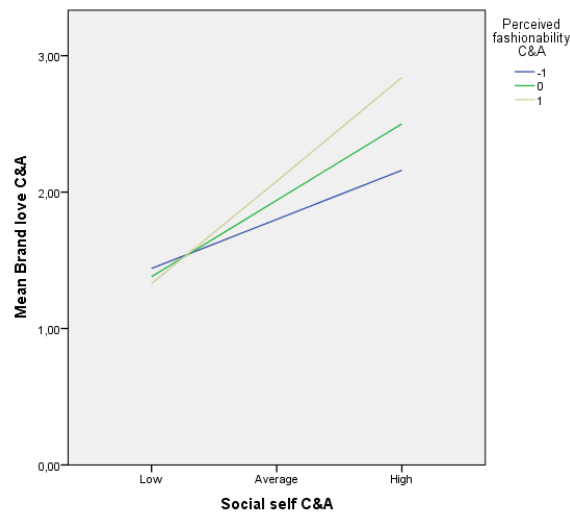


Figure 4: Perceived fashionability as moderator (C&A)

For respondents being highly fashion conscious, the model was significant ($F(3, 110) = 29.3, p < .001$). The interaction between the social self and the perceived fashionability of C&A was found to be significant and to account for 4.01% of variability ($F(1, 110) = 9.24, p = .003$). The perceived fashionability of the brand moderates the relationship between the social self and brand love for respondents being highly fashion conscious. When the perceived fashionability increases this relationship becomes stronger, as illustrated by figure 4.

Finally, the analysis was repeated with the sense of community for C&A as independent variable (Table 29). The model was significant ($F(7, 168) = 8.97, p < .001$) and indicated that the perceived fashionability of C&A and the sense of community have a positive influence on brand love.

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>
<i>Model</i>		
Constant	1.982*	0.062
Perceived fashionability C&A	0.234*	0.060
Sense of community C&A	0.362*	0.072
Sense of community C&A x Perceived fashionability C&A	0.076	0.064
Fashion consciousness	0.138	0.124
Sense of community C&A x Fashion consciousness	-0.066	0.151
Perceived fashionability C&A x Fashion consciousness	0.035	0.110
Sense of community C&A x Perceived fashionability C&A x Fashion consciousness	0.027	0.121

Note: $R^2 = 0.34 (p < .001)$ * $p < .05$.

Table 29: Moderated moderation for the sense of community (C&A)

6 Discussion

6.1 Conclusions of the research

The main purpose of the present research is to find out what actually triggers love for clothing brands. The results demonstrate support for both the self-expressive benefits (inner self and social self) and the sense of community as determinants of love for Zara and C&A. In the case of Adidas, only the inner self and the sense of community influence brand love. As will be detailed below, and like expected, the effects of the antecedents on brand love differ depending on the type of brand and its perceived fashionability. Furthermore, the antecedents were tested on the two dimensions of brand love for each brand. Results showed that, apart from two exceptions, the antecedents of brand love were also antecedents of each of its dimensions. In addition, the antecedents had a similar positive impact on each of the two dimensions. Hence, analyzing the antecedents on the level of the dimensions of brand love did not add much information and the results will be primarily discussed for the brand love construct as a whole.

Love for Adidas is not influenced by the social self. This could be due to the very strong image of Adidas which is not appreciated by everyone. In addition, while Adidas shoes are very trendy, the clothes are increasingly so but sometimes remain associated with young, underprivileged people who wear Adidas sports clothes on an everyday basis. Considering this (negative) way a part of the population views Adidas, customers will not expect to improve their societal image or to positively influence the way people think of them by wearing the brand. This will hence not be a factor in creating brand love. In addition, Adidas clothes have a sportive character, even though they are now worn daily by young trendy people. Adidas may only improve the social image of its customers in sportive contexts but not especially in other daily situations. Consequently, more occasions exist in which a customer could enhance his social image by wearing Zara or C&A than by wearing Adidas.

Contrary to the social self, the inner self is a very strong determinant of love for Adidas, and much more important than for Zara or C&A. Adidas lovers are customers who understand the brand and its image, recognize themselves in the brand and hence feel like they can express their own personality by wearing it. Adidas having the strongest and most 'special' image compared to Zara and C&A, it is not surprising that customers feel like they can express their personality much more through it specifically. This strong image may be due to the fact that Adidas is more recognized as a brand than Zara and C&A. Indeed, those last two are major retailers in addition to being brands while Adidas is a more independent brand that is sold in many retailers besides Adidas shops. Furthermore, Adidas

has a real brand logo contrary to Zara and C&A. Hence, the brand is actually visible when a customer wears it publicly, which is not the case for the two others.

When analyzing the effects of the antecedents for passion and affection for Adidas separately, an additional observation can be made: while the social self is not an antecedent of love for Adidas, it is a determinant of customers' passion for the brand. However, its effect is not very strong and it is the weakest of the three antecedents for the same reasons as stated above.

Regarding the love for C&A, it seemed to include an important social aspect. Indeed, the sense of community and the social self have the strongest influence on brand love and are more important than for Adidas and Zara. The inner self on the other hand has a less important role, and even no role at all in determining the affection dimension of brand love. The latter observations can be explained by the image of the brand which is not very strong or positive. By wearing C&A, customers will not be able to express a lot of their personality considering less fashionable clothes and the brand image which is not strong and not telling a lot of the person who is wearing the brand's clothes. This is supported by the fact that it is not possible to recognize people who are wearing the brand, this one having no logo. In addition, a part of C&A's customers shop at the retailer primarily for price-reasons and not because they really like the C&A's clothing style or feel like they can express their inner self through them. The weak brand image and the price-driven purchases are two factors that can explain why the inner self is the weakest antecedent of love for C&A.

The importance of the sense of community and the social self in inducing love for C&A can be understood by looking at the brand's major customers; people with a lower income level who go to the retailer for price reasons or mothers who buy clothes for their children. Those customers will feel like part of a larger group with other C&A's customers who have the same background, who may also have financial difficulties or who are mothers too. C&A's customers have something specific in common which explains the importance of the sense of community. In the case of lower income level customers, they go to C&A instead of buying unknown cheap clothing brands. This is a way of showing people they can afford to buy from a big retailer despite their lower income level. In addition, paying attention to the way they dress will compensate their negative feeling of being less favored. They use clothes to improve the way people think of them and their image to society, which provides motivation for the social self as strongest antecedent. Mothers buying clothes at C&A for their children want their family to look good and to reflect a positive image. They too, will try to enhance their societal image by buying the brand. Furthermore, the social self seems to be a bit more important in defining customer's affection for C&A than customer's passion for the brand.

The third brand, Zara, positions itself between Adidas and C&A regarding the antecedents. The self-expressive benefits are more important than the sense of community, but none of the three antecedents are extreme compared to the two other brands; the inner self is more important for Adidas, and the social self and sense of community for C&A. Like previously mentioned, Zara is a brand with a positive image but not as strong or special as Adidas which explains the lower impact of the inner self on brand love than for Adidas but higher than for C&A. Then, Zara customers do not have something in common like the customers of C&A who feel like part of a specific community: almost everyone and all kind of people go to Zara retailers. This provides motivation for the lower importance of the sense of community in creating love for the brand. Furthermore, when comparing the three antecedents of love for Zara, the self-expressive benefits are clearly the most important. Customers will love the brand because they can express their personality with it and improve their social image. However, compared to Adidas, those self-expressive benefits are attributed to the Zara clothes that are trendy and fashionable, and not to the brand itself or its image.

To sum up, Adidas is the brand with the strongest image and the most recognized as 'brand' thanks to, among others, its logo. This seems to be the reason why the main antecedent of customers' love for the brand is the inner self. C&A is well-known for its low prices and its customers sharing lower income levels or a sense of family. This specificity that bonds the customers together justifies the importance of the sense of community. Both types of customers wish to reflect a positive image to society by buying C&A clothes which explains the strong impact of the social self on brand love. Finally, the antecedents of Zara are 'intermediate' compared to the two other brands. However, Zara loving customers will do so primarily because they feel they can express themselves and reflect a more positive image by wearing the brand's fashionable and stylish clothes.

Finally, there seems to be a link between the antecedents of brand love which are relatively more important and the perceived fashionability of the brand. Adidas and Zara were perceived as the most fashionable, more or less on the same level. For those brands, the inner self antecedent is the most important in inducing love; customers feel like they can express their personality by wearing the brands, and love them for that. In the case of C&A, which was not perceived as fashionable, the social aspect is more important. People who feel like they have something in common with other customers of the brand will feel greater love, but they also want to be able to reflect a positive image by wearing the brand.

A second element that this paper investigates is the effect of the level of self-esteem on the relationship between the self-expressive benefits and brand love. It was hypothesized that, for customers with lower levels of self-esteem, the relationship between the social self and brand love

would be stronger than for people with high self-esteem. On the other hand, for people with higher levels of self-esteem the relationship between the inner self and brand love would be stronger. However, none of those hypotheses were confirmed with the research. Results may not have been significant because people can have difficulties to talk about something as personal as their level of self-esteem. Especially those who are not self-confident may not want to tell the truth about it, even in an anonymous survey. Using other methods, like projective methods, to measure the actual level of self-esteem of respondents could have led to other results.

Finally, the study analyzes if the perceived fashionability of a brand has an impact on the relationship between the antecedents and love for that brand for people being fashion conscious.

First of all, the perceived fashionability of Adidas moderates the relationship between the inner self and love for the brand. However, this appeared to be the case for people who are less fashion conscious instead of the fashion conscious ones. The perceived fashionability of the brand could be a less important cue for fashion conscious people when judging the brand. They are supposed to know a lot about fashion and clothing and their love for a certain clothing brand will be influenced by lots of factors other than the perceived fashionability of Adidas. Some of those factors could be the design of the clothes, the material they are made of, the fashion magazines they appeared in, and so on.

Secondly, the hypothesis was confirmed for C&A regarding the relationship between the social self and brand love. For customers who are more fashion conscious, the social self becomes a stronger antecedent of brand love when they perceive C&A as more fashionable. A part of the customers who buy at C&A have a lower income level. However, some might be fashion conscious but constrained to buy from a less fashionable shop like C&A. Like mentioned above, those people love the brand mainly because they can improve their social image by wearing a known brand from a big retailer. In addition, having the complex of being less favored, they want to at least look good for society and attach great importance to their way of dressing. This relationship will be even stronger for fashion conscious customers when they perceive C&A clothes as more fashionable. Indeed, fashion matters to those customers, which mean they will attach even greater importance to the way they dress and the image they reflect to society. If they now perceive C&A clothes as more trendy, they will be satisfied with the brand, will not especially wish to shop elsewhere and will feel like they can improve their social image more by wearing the brand's clothes. The same conclusion holds for parents that buy clothes for their children at C&A. They may go to the retailer for price reasons too, because they have to dress up the whole family and because young children usually do not get to choose their clothing brands. Fashion conscious mothers care about fashion and they probably do not shop at

C&A for their own clothes. However, if they perceive C&A as more fashionable they will feel like they can reflect a more positive image to society by making their children wear the brand and this will positively impact their feelings for the brand.

6.2 Managerial implications

First of all, while both the self-expressive benefits and the sense of community appeared to be antecedents of love in the clothing industry, the most important antecedents seem to differ for the three brands included in the research depending on, among others, their level of perceived fashionability (Table 30). For brands perceived as fashionable, the self-expressive benefit(s) prevail, while for less fashionable brands the sense of community plays an important role in addition to the social self. Marketing recommendations will hence be specific to each type of clothing brand.

Main antecedent(s)	Brand	Perceived fashionability
The self-expressive benefits (inner self)	Adidas	High
The self-expressive benefits (inner self and social self)	Zara	High
The social aspect (social self and sense of community)	C&A	Low

Table 30: Main antecedents of Adidas, Zara and C&A

Managers responsible of a brand like Adidas, with a strong image and perceived as fashionable should be aware that the strongest influencer of brand love is the inner self. Customers who love the brand do so because they can reflect their own personality by wearing it and recognize themselves in its image and personality. Marketing managers should be aware of the specific dimensions of the brand’s image in which the target customers recognize themselves. They should strengthen advertising on those dimensions and sustain the strong and known image of the brand which will enable customers to actually express something by wearing it.

Managers of a brand like Zara, which is perceived as fashionable but is mostly considered as a major retailer rather than a ‘real’ brand like Adidas for instance, should focus on the self-expressive benefits in creating brand love. However, contrary to Adidas, which self-expressive benefits are linked to the brand’s image, the self-expressive benefits are rather *product*-related in this case. Zara, for instance, allows customers to express their inner self and to enhance their social image by wearing the brand’s clothes that are beautiful and trendy. By wearing Zara clothes, customers will express something through the *style* of the clothes rather than through the brand’s *image*. Indeed,

Zara clothes are fashionable and of different styles, which will enable each customer to find a piece he likes and to express himself through his way of clothing. However, when a customer wears Zara clothes, it is not visible to others. Furthermore, the brand is not associated to strong values that would tell a lot about the person who is wearing it (which is the case for Adidas for instance). Hence, customers will be able to express something primarily through the styles of Zara clothes rather than through the brand itself. In order to reinforce the self-expressive benefits and to create greater brand love, marketing managers should focus on advertising the products and their fashion qualities. Advertising should make the clothes look trendy and in, and should stay 'general' in order to reach the wide target of the brand.

Finally, when facing a brand like C&A, which is not perceived as fashionable and for which the social aspect and sense of community are essential in inducing brand love, marketing managers should again focus on different elements. First, they should maintain the sense of community among existing customers and create it among new ones. A way of doing this is through advertising, or through events bringing together the customers of the brand. In both cases, what makes the customers look alike and what they have in common should be highlighted. Furthermore, advertising should focus on creating a more positive image for the brand which will contribute to the social self. The feeling that, by wearing the brand, customers can enhance their image to society should be reinforced. In addition, the effect of the social self on brand love is even stronger for fashion conscious customers when the brand is perceived as fashionable. This is currently not the case for C&A and is usually an image difficult to introduce for brands that are primarily bought for price reasons. To improve the perceived fashionability of such brands, focus should be both on the product and on the brand's image. First, clothes should be adapted and be trendier rather than basic. This should not especially be done on all the brand's clothes, but a trendier product line could be created. Then, advertising should enlighten this line and its qualities and position the brand as more fashionable. C&A has already started to do so with new marketing campaigns aiming at repositioning the brand as more fashionable. The brand's style has been adapted too towards more up-to-date clothes. However, even though the brand is moving in the right direction, it will take time before it actually gets the reputation of being trendy and starts to be perceived as really fashionable.

6.3 Limitations of the study

The present study has some limitations that should be taken into account, and could be the basis of further research.

First of all, the research generalizes findings that are based on only three brands, each of which supposed to represent a different category of clothing brands. Those brands are certainly not representative of the entire fashion industry, or of its many different segments. Future research should include more brands, and could furthermore ask respondents to personally *choose* a brand they love in addition to the pre-selected ones. This would ensure respondents to answer the questions for at least one brand they really love. Furthermore, it would be interesting to compare the results of the present research with the antecedents of brand love in different product categories.

Secondly, it should be taken into account that the initial aim was to include three brands with a different level of perceived fashionability in the study. This was eventually not the case with two of the three brands considered as similar regarding their fashionability. However, Adidas, Zara and C&A were considered as different enough regarding their image and target audience which enabled to compare the results of each of them. Furthermore, the differing analyses' results confirmed that there was enough difference among the brands and that comparing them was interesting.

Finally, the sample at the basis of the research is mainly composed of women. Furthermore, the majority of them are students at either university or high school. This should be taken into account and further research could replicate the study with a larger, more diverse sample in which a bigger amount of the population is represented.

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