UNDERSTANDING BRAND ADDICTION: UNRAVELING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR, BRAIN PROCESSES AND SOCIETAL IMPACT

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to delve into the complex world of brand addiction by conducting a comprehensive survey of existing literature. We will explore the intricacies of consumer behavior, uncover the neurological basis of brand loyalty, and investigate the larger societal implications of intense brand attachment. By combining insights from psychology, marketing, neuroscience, and sociology, this study seeks to provide a deep understanding of how individuals form strong connections with specific brands. Additionally, we will examine the role of marketing strategies in cultivating brand addiction and explore the potential impact on personal well-being and societal dynamics. Through this comprehensive examination, we hope to shed light on this fascinating phenomenon and its far-reaching consequences. Brand addiction, a captivating aspect of consumer behavior that goes beyond mere brand loyalty, is explored in this literature review. With businesses increasingly prioritizing the development of strong brand identities, it becomes crucial to comprehend the psychological and emotional dimensions of brand addiction. By integrating findings from various academic domains including marketing, psychology, sociology, and neuroscience, this review offers a comprehensive overview of the present understanding of brand addiction.

The survey also looks into the causes and effects of brand addiction, examining aspects such as brand attachment, brand personality, and the influence of advertising on consumer perceptions. It investigates how social and cultural elements shape brand addiction, as well as the impact of technological advancements like social media and personalized marketing on intensifying brand relationships.

Furthermore, the review addresses the potential negative consequences of brand addiction, exploring situations where excessive brand attachment can lead to compulsive buying, financial strain, or social isolation. It also discusses the ethical considerations associated with brand addiction, highlighting the responsibility of businesses in managing and mitigating potential harm resulting from fostering strong connections with their brands.

By synthesizing existing literature, this review provides valuable insights for scholars, marketers, and policymakers seeking a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding brand addiction. Additionally, it concludes with suggestions for future research directions and practical implications for businesses aiming to cultivate meaningful and sustainable brand-consumer relationships in an ever-changing market landscape.

KEYWORDS: *Brand addiction, Consumer behaviour, Brand loyalty, Cultural elements, and Policy makers.*

INTRODUCTION

Consumers have a unique way of connecting with brands, brand addiction is a key factor in this relationship [1]. We found a gap in the literature when it comes to addiction. Most of the research has focused on understanding what it means and how to measure it when looking at different types of products and fashion brands in general. But there's still a lack of specific research in this area[2]. In today's competitive market, where numerous brands and products are vying for attention, relying solely on price reductions and loyalty programs may not be enough to stand out. It might be more fruitful to focus on cultivating deep connections with customers, as these strong consumer-brand relationships are thought to be the key to creating brands that last.

According to Hwang and Kandampully (2012), the current landscape is flooded with brands and products that are quite similar to one another. This makes it challenging for businesses to differentiate themselves based on price reductions or loyalty plans alone. To truly make a lasting impact, it is essential to help customers develop intense connections with the brand. Studies have shown that these strong consumer-brand relationships play a crucial role in fostering sustainable brands (Park et al., 2006). By establishing a deep bond with customers, brands can create a sense of loyalty that extends beyond the conventional parameters of pricing and rewards [3]. Brand loyalty is a concept that goes hand in hand with brand addiction, according to researchers (Cui et al., 2018). In the field of brand management, most studies examine brand loyalty as a mix of behavioral loyalty and attitudinal loyalty (Pourazad et al.,

2019)[4]. People often turn to compulsive buying in order to deal with the various stressors they face on a daily basis and to bring about a sense of positive emotions. Compulsive buying refers to the habit of repeatedly and excessively purchasing consumer goods that are not actually necessary[5]. Brand awareness refers to how well consumers can identify or recognize a brand. It encompasses brand recognition, brand recall, and brand identification. Experts have defined it as the ability for consumers to easily recall and associate a brand with its products or services. So, in simpler terms, when we talk brand awareness, we are basically considering how familiar people are with a particular brand. It's like asking yourself, "Do I know this brand? Have I heard of it before?" This familiarity can be measured by assessing consumers' ability to remember the brand or recognize its logo or name. It's an important aspect for businesses because the more awareness a brand has, the more likely it is to attract customers and gain their trust[6]. This study explores the impact of self-congruence on compulsive buying behavior and introduces brand attachment as a mediator between self-congruence and compulsive buying behavior. While brand attachment has been known to bring positive outcomes for companies, it can also have negative effects[7]. n these times of economic uncertainty and excessive consumption, certain aspects like corporate social responsibility, public well-being, and most importantly, individual happiness gain significance. Happiness, or subjective well-being, is linked to how someone chooses to behave within society[8]. It's becoming increasingly crucial to identify the elements that impact brand loyalty in today's highly competitive business landscape, as highlighted by Chiu et al. in their study conducted in 2012[9]. Consumers often exhibit consistent behavior when repeatedly purchasing the same brand. There are several reasons that can explain this behavior. It could be due to factors like loyalty to a particular store, lower prices, or a limited range of options. On the other hand, this behavior may also indicate an emotional attachment to the brand or a belief in its superiority over competing brands in terms of functionality, symbolism, or psychological attributes. In reality, the decision to consistently buy a specific brand depends on the perceived benefits that consumers associate with maintaining their relationship with the brand, such as reduced search efforts or increased satisfaction[10]. If brand loyalty was completely random, there wouldn't be any point in studying it scientifically. Random events, while intriguing, are difficult to predict or manage[11]. Revenue and profit derived from a deep emotional connection with customers are less likely to be impacted by external factors. When this bond is particularly strong, it cultivates a sense of unwavering loyalty, prompting customers to stay committed to a product or service even when faced with tempting offers or circumstances that may typically lead to switching to an alternative option (Oliver, 1999)[12]. The true measure of a brand's triumph lies in the ability of its community to empower consumers' self-expression through the brand. To facilitate this, countless companies have created virtual brand communities, which can be easily accessed via the company's website or online platform[13]. Brand love and brand attachment have been extensively studied in the field of marketing. However, recent research by Suarez (2019) and Palusuk et al. (2019) points out that the line between these two concepts remains unclear and challenging to distinguish even today. It seems like there's some confusion around understanding the differences between brand love and brand attachment[14].

RELATED RESEARCH WORK

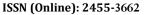| S.No.	Area of study	Focus	Reference
1.	Consumer behaviour	Brand love by linking brand personality	Cristela Mala Bairrada,September,2018
2.	Brand retention	Through sales and service efforts.	Peter C.Verhoef,2007
3.	Loyalty programmes	value perception of the loyalty program affects customer loyalty.	Y Yi Jeon,2003
4.	Emotional Branding	Marketers long lasting attachment for the customers	Ali EKber AKgun,November ,2013
5.	Neuroimaging Studies	concept for building a relationship between brands and consumers	S Watanuki,,2020

OBJECTIVES

1. To explore unique consumer-brand relationships
2. To extend understanding of addiction beyond product categories and fashion brands.
3. To Identify and analyzes factors contributing to brand addiction.
4. To provide insights for businesses in competitive market

METHODOLOGY

Conducting a literature survey on brand addiction involves systematically reviewing and analyzing existing research and scholarly works related to the topic. The current study is based on a thorough assessment of recently published relevant papers found using a variety of search engines, such as Research Gate, Google Scholar, and others.

This study clearly defines the objectives of your literature survey. Specify the scope of study, including the time frame, geographical focus, and any specific criteria for including or excluding sources. Synthesize the information gathered from the literature to develop a coherent narrative. Identify patterns, connections, and overarching themes that emerge from the reviewed studies.

***To explore Unique Consumer-Brand Relationships**.
Marketers will benefit from this systematic literature review because they invariably deal with various types of relationships that consumers have with their brands. They need not only to foster one or more desired brand relationship types, but also prevent undesired ones. Managing a portfolio of brand relationships demands integrated knowledge across types [15].

Consumer-brand relationships are all about the connections and interactions between consumers and the brands they choose to engage with. It's more than just a simple transactional agreement, it's a complex and multifaceted that involves emotions, thoughts, and actions. To truly delve into these unique relationships, we need to understand the dynamics and factors that contribute to the special connections individuals form with specific brands. So, let's dig a little deeper and explore some key aspects that are worth considering

Emotional Connection
Have you ever felt a strong attachment to a particular brand? It's not just about the product itself, but also about the personality and values that brand represents. When a brand aligns with our core beliefs and resonates with us, we develop an emotional bond. This connection creates a sense of identification and loyalty, making us more likely to choose that brand time and time again.

Brand Trust
In the consumer-brand domain, there's a lack of research on the relationship between consumers and brands. That's why the authors of this article put their focus on exploring Brand Trust. It's quite surprising that there isn't a widely accepted way to measure this concept, considering that trust is seen as the foundation and one of the most desirable qualities in any relationship. Moreover, it's the most crucial aspect for any brand to possess.

To address this gap, the authors conducted a multi-step study to create and validate a multidimensional brand trust scale. They drew inspiration from trust conceptualizations in various academic fields. Through psychometric tests conducted at different stages, they were able to demonstrate the reliability and validity of this new brand trust scale[16].

Trust is the foundation of any successful relationship, and the same goes for our relationship with brands. We put our trust in brands that consistently deliver on their promises and meet our expectations. When a brand goes above and beyond to fulfill our needs, it builds trust and strengthens our connection. We feel confident and positive about our choice, knowing that we can rely on that brand.

Brand Loyalty
This study dives into the relationship between brand trust, brand, and brand performance outcomes such as share and relative price. The main focus is to understand how brand loyalty comes into play in this linkage. Additionally, we explore the impacts of two product-level control variables,

hedonic and utilitarian value, on brand trust and brand affect. Moreover, we examine how brand differentiation and share of voice, two brand-level control variables, affect market share and relative price. Through this research, we aim to gain deeper insights into the dynamics of these factors and their influence on brand success[17].

Choosing a brand repeatedly is a clear sign of loyalty. When we consistently select a particular brand over its alternatives, it showcases our dedication. This loyalty doesn't arise out of thin air. It stems from positive experiences, the value we perceive in the brand, or even the emotional connection we have with it. In fact, some of us become true advocates for our favorite brands, eagerly recommending them to others with enthusiasm.

Personalization and Customization
We all appreciate when a brand takes the time to make us feel special. That's where personalization and customization come into play. Brands that tailor their experiences to our individual preferences make us feel valued. Whether it's personalized products, targeted marketing, or exclusive offers, these thoughtful gestures enhance our connection with the brand. We feel like our needs are understood, and that makes a significant difference.

User Experience
Have you ever encountered a brand that just makes everything easy for you? Brands that prioritize a seamless and enjoyable user experience leave a lasting impact. Whether it's a user-friendly interface, responsive customer service, or hassle-free transactions, these elements contribute to a positive association. We appreciate when a brand makes our lives easier and more pleasant, and that strengthens our bond with them.
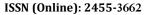
Innovation
Change is inevitable, and brands that embrace it thrive in our ever-evolving world. The ones that continuously innovate and adapt to meet our changing needs maintain a fresh and dynamic relationship with their customers. We appreciate when a brand stays ahead of the game, anticipating what we might want or need next. This sense of innovation creates excitement and reinforces our connection with the brand.

Community and Social Aspect
Belonging to a community is a fundamental human need, and brands can fulfill that desire. Some brands foster a sense of community among their customers, providing a space for like-minded individuals to connect. When we feel part of something bigger, it enhances our overall experience with the brand. Additionally, brands that show their commitment to social and environmental causes often strike a chord with consumers who share similar values. This genuine dedication to making a positive impact strengthens our connection and gives us a sense of purpose.

Establishing an emotional connection with consumers goes beyond the basic transactional relationship. Brands that possess distinct personalities and values, prioritize trust, offer personalized experiences, prioritize user experience, showcase

innovation, build communities, and demonstrate social responsibility create a powerful and enduring bond with their customers. So, the next time you find yourself drawn to a particular brand, take a moment to reflect on the emotional connection you have with it.

* To extend understanding of addiction beyond product categories and fashion brands:
In order to truly grasp the concept of addiction, it is essential to look beyond the usual associations with substances or even fashion brands. Rather than confining addiction to specific categories, we should consider it in a more encompassing manner, including various behaviors, experiences, and even virtual interactions that lead to repetitive and compulsive engagement. This broader perspective acknowledges that addictive tendencies can appear in different aspects of life, going beyond traditional understanding of substance abuse or attachment to consumer brands.

When viewed in this context, addiction can manifest in activities like social media usage, gaming, gambling, work, or even relationships. These behaviors can trigger the same neurological and psychological responses as traditional addictions, involving a compulsive need, loss of control, and negative consequences.

By reimagining addiction in this expansive way, we understand that the driving forces behind addictive behaviors aren't limited to specific product categories. This viewpoint encourages a more comprehensive exploration of the psychological, social, and environmental factors contributing to addictive tendencies across a range of human experiences. It recognizes that addictive behaviors can emerge in various domains and promotes a nuanced understanding of the underlying mechanisms, triggers, and consequences associated with these diverse forms of addiction.

*To Identify and analyzes factors contributing to brand addiction
Better knowledge and predictions of purchase topics, as well as purchase motivations and frequency, are made possible by study on consumer behavior (Schiffman, Kanuk 2004). People frequently purchase things based on their subjective perceived worth rather than their primary function, according to one of the key assumptions that now underpin consumer behaviour research[18].

Table No.1 Comprehensive Brand Evaluation Factors

Factor	Description
Product Quality	Examining the overall quality, durability, and performance of the brand's products.
Brand Image	Assessing the perception and reputation of the brand, including its values, ethos, and identity.
Customer Experience	Analyzing the level of satisfaction and engagement customers experience throughout their journey.
Marketing Strategies	Evaluating the effectiveness of the brand's marketing efforts in creating awareness and desirability.
Innovation	Investigating the brand's commitment to innovation, staying relevant, and offering new experiences.
Social media presence	Analyzing the brand's presence on social media platforms and its influence on customer engagement.

*To provide insights for businesses in competitive market.
Businesses frequently use an organization centric perspective in business-customer relationships, posing queries such "what can we sell customers and how can we make money from them?" that are akin to those stated by Osterwalder (2010: 129). But according to Salzman (2003), this methodology hardly ever assumes market success.[19]

Business Strategy Overview
- Understanding Target Audience: Conduct market research to understand customer preferences and expectations.
- Differentiation Strategy: Identify unique features, quality, pricing, or customer service to set your business apart.
- Competitive Analysis: Monitor competitors' activities and identify market gaps.
- Continuous Innovation: Invest in research and development and introduce new products to stay competitive.
- Customer Experience: Provide exceptional customer experience to build loyalty and positive word-of-mouth.

- Efficient Operations: Streamline internal processes and optimize supply chain for timely delivery and cost reduction.
- Businesses have several opportunities and problems in a competitive market. The following important realizations can help companies prosper in such a setting:

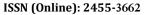**Customer-Centric Approach and Market Research**
- Understanding customer needs and preferences.
- Providing excellent customer service to build loyalty.
- Utilizing customer feedback for product and service improvement.

Differentiation
- Identifying unique selling points and distinguishing brand from competitors.
- Focusing on innovation for market competitiveness.

Market Research
- Monitoring market trends and competitors.

- Conducting regular market research to identify new opportunities.

Agile Adaptation
- Quickly responding to customer feedback and industry developments.
- Embracing new technologies for efficiency.

Quality Products/Services
- Maintaining high standards and consistently delivering value.
- Cost Management
- Optimizing operational costs without compromising quality.
- Adapting pricing strategies based on market conditions.

RESEARCH GAP
Despite the growing recognition of the concept of brand addiction and its implications on consumer behaviour, brain processes, and societal impact, there exists a notable gap in the current literature that requires further exploration. Specifically, the following areas merit deeper investigation

While studies have explored the neurological aspects of brand addiction, there is a need for more comprehensive research to unravel the specific neural mechanisms involved. Understanding how different types of brands elicit responses in the brain, and the neural pathways associated with brand addiction, can provide valuable insights into consumer decision-making processes.
Cross-Cultural Variations in Brand Addiction
- Research mainly focuses on specific cultural contexts.
- Exploring cross-cultural variations can reveal societal norms, values, and cultural factors.
- Provides a globally applicable understanding

RESEARCH AGENDA
1. How do brand addiction and intense brand loyalty impact consumer behaviour over an extended period, and what are the ethical implications of brand marketing strategies on vulnerable consumer segments?
2. What cross-cultural variations exist in the development and manifestation of brand addiction, and how do cultural factors influence the societal impact of brand attachment?
3. How do emerging technologies, such as augmented reality and virtual reality, impact the development of brand addiction, and what role do social media play in shaping brand attachment in the digital age?

These research questions aim to address key gaps in the existing literature on brand addiction, focusing on the long-term societal impact, ethical considerations, and cross-cultural variations associated with the phenomenon.

CURRENT ISSUE
The increased usage of social media platforms and their potential to cause brand addiction was one of the most common concerns. Despite its tendency to promote excessive brand attachment, social media is a tremendous instrument for brand visibility and engagement. Algorithms, tailored content, and social validation are frequently used by brands to increase user engagement and create a sense of belonging.
Ethical Concerns in Marketing
- Debate on psychological tactics in marketing fostering brand addiction.
- Critics argue these strategies exploit consumer vulnerabilities.
- Privacy and Data Concerns
- Collection and use of personal data for targeted advertising raises privacy concerns.
- Consumers may feel uneasy about brands influencing their preferences and behaviours.

SUGGESTIONS
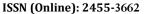Research Objectives and Methodology
- Clearly articulate study objectives: identify brand addiction patterns, analyze marketing strategies, propose responsible branding practices.
- Provide research methodology details: surveys, interviews, and existing datasets.
- Consider strengths and limitations of each method.
- A well-designed methodology enhances findings credibility.
- Cross-Cultural Analysis and Longitudinal Approach to Brand Addiction
- Incorporate cross-cultural analysis to understand brand addiction's universality or cultural specificity.
- Adopt a longitudinal approach to observe changes over time.
- Provide comprehensive understanding of brand addiction's evolution and adaptation to societal shifts.
- Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Brand Addiction Study
- Encourage collaboration from psychology, marketing, neuroscience, and sociology.
- Offer diverse perspectives for holistic understanding.
- Practical Implications
- Discuss how findings can improve marketing strategies.
- Explore societal implications and policymakers' role in addressing brand addiction challenges.

LIMITATIONS
Representativeness of the Sample: There may be issues with the study's sample's representativeness. It could be difficult to extrapolate the results to a larger context if the participants lack diversity or if they do not fairly represent the larger community.
Self-Report Bias: There could be bias introduced if self-report data is used. People may either over report or underreport their addictive behaviours as a result of inaccurate memories or social desirability. This can have an impact on the data collection's dependability and accuracy.
Social Desirability Bias in Qualitative Data: Participants' responses may be swayed by social desirability if the study uses open-ended questions or interviews to gather qualitative data. This could cause bias in how their experiences and actions are interpreted.

Absence of Longitudinal Data: The long-term trajectories of addictive behaviours may not be captured by a cross-sectional

study design. For a deeper understanding of the evolution and changes in compulsions throughout time, longitudinal data would be preferable.

Sensitive material may be involved in the course of investigating addiction and compulsion, rising ethical and privacy concerns. The extent of investigation into some aspects of these behaviours may be constrained by the need to ensure the ethical treatment of participants and handle privacy concerns[20].

CONCLUSIONS

This study explores brand addiction through an interdisciplinary approach combining psychology, marketing, neuroscience, and sociology. It highlights the profound impact of brands on individuals, highlighting the intricate interplay between brain reward systems and emotional resonance. Understanding the psychological mechanisms behind brand addiction can help explain intense attachments to specific brands.

The study explores the role of marketing strategies in cultivating brand addiction, emphasizing the importance of emotional branding and personal experiences. It highlights the societal implications of brand attachment, influencing social identity, cultural trends, and economic patterns. The findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of consumer behavior, fostering responsible marketing practices, and promoting a balanced approach to brand engagement.

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