

Editorial Note

## Research dialogue introduction

How consumers perceive and relate to brands has become a question fundamental to Consumer Psychology. Research over the past twenty years has developed the insight that consumers both perceive brands to possess personalities (e.g., Aaker, 1997; Kervyn, Fiske, & Malone, 2012) and develop relationships with brands (e.g., Fournier, 1998; Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010). Much of recent research has focused on how to best conceptualize and measure such relationships: the target paper of this Research Dialogue advances this topic. Specifically, C. Whan Park, Andreas Eisingerich, and Jason Park present the “Attachment–Aversion (AA) Model of Consumer–Brand Relationships.” This model represents the entire spectrum of the consumer–brand relationships by measuring customer aversion, indifference and attachment to a brand based on two key components, brand–self distance and brand prominence. It thus allows for a more complete representation of valence experienced by consumers towards brands. The paper develops the model both conceptually and empirically; differentiating the model from other approaches, identifying three types of self-relevant benefits and liabilities as antecedents to brand attachment and aversion, and introducing the role of customer age as a meaningful moderator to the customer–brand relationship.

Three commentaries are provided by leading researchers in the area of Consumer–Brand Relationships. Bernd Schmitt (2013-this issue) challenges the authors to better integrate their model with other currently accepted brand models. In addition, Schmitt points out that the model focuses on self-related cognitions and feelings as antecedents. Schmitt asks Park et al. to consider how marketing factors influence such cognitions and feelings. Schmitt also offers a key question for the area of consumer–brand relationships in general. Specifically, Schmitt questions whether and how brand relationships differ from person relationships. Susan Fournier and Claudio Alvarez (2013-this issue) provide an extensive commentary that focuses upon the negative relationships advanced by the AA model. Fournier and Alvarez suggest that greater specification is available both for differentiating 1) among different types of negative relationships and 2) between neutral versus ambivalent reactions towards brands. Joseph Alba and Richard Lutz (2013-this issue) provide the third commentary. Their commentary first raises the question of how the conceptualization of customer–brand relationship provides insight above and beyond those theories of brand that did not include the notion of relationship. Alba and Lutz then

disentangle the construct of brand–self distance from that of evaluative valence, resulting in three, rather than two, dimensions by which to consider how customers relate to brands. Park, Eisingerich, and Park (2013-this issue-a,b) provide a thoughtful response that considers the various points and questions raised by the commentaries.

Given the rise of consumer–brand relationship as a lens to which to understand Consumer Psychology, we hope that this Research Dialogue is helpful in providing insight into what is currently known, and what questions remain to be answered.

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