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LOVEBRAND EXPLICATIVE MODEL: ZARA CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

A lovebrand is as a brand that succesfully fosters deep emotional connections with its customers, serving as a key differentiator in competitive markets. This study delves into the concept of brand attachment and e-brand love, examining the factors that drive these emotional bonds and their influence on consumer advocacy behaviors, such as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), brand pride, and brand defense. Through a comprehensive literature review, this research identifies brand coolness, social media marketing activities (SMMA), and celebrity endorsement as key antecedents that contribute to brand attachment. A quantitative methodology was employed, collecting data through an online survey targeting a diverse sample of fashion consumers. The findings, analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), provide insights into how brands can foster stronger emotional connections with their customers through digital engagement and branding strategies. Additionally, this study investigates the case study of Zara the leading fashion brand in the fashion market in Spain. By analyzing consumer perceptions and behaviors toward Zara, the research aims to uncover the emotional and psychological mechanisms that strengthen brand attachment and ultimately enhance brand love.

Keywords: Brand Attachment, E-Brand Love, eWOM, Brand Coolness, Social Media Marketing Activities, Celebrity Endorsement, Brand Pride, Brand Defense, Fast Fashion, Zara

INTRODUCTION I.1 CONTEXTUALIZATION AND TOPIC SELECTION

In today's competitive marketplace, brands strive to establish deep emotional connections with consumers to foster loyalty and long-term engagement. The concept of brand love has gained significant traction in marketing literature, highlighting the ways in which consumers form strong affective bonds with brands that resonate with their self-identity and values. Among the many factors that contribute to brand love, brand attachment plays a crucial role, serving as a bridge between a consumer's emotions and their behavioral intentions.

This study aims to explore the mechanisms that drive brand attachment and brand love, particularly in the fashion industry. The fast fashion sector, known for its rapid trend adoption and affordability, presents a unique landscape for analyzing consumer-brand relationships. That is why we chose Zara for our case study. Being one of the most influential fast fashion brands globally, provides us with the perfect opportunity to examine how brand attachment is cultivated and how it translates into brand love and advocacy behaviors such as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), brand defense, and brand pride.

By integrating the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework, this research investigates the antecedents (stimuli) and consequences (responses) of e-brand love. Factors such as brand coolness, social media marketing activities (SMMA), and celebrity endorsement are analyzed as key contributors to brand attachment. Understanding these dynamics is essential for both academics and industry practitioners seeking to enhance brand-consumer relationships in the digital era.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this research is to develop an explanatory model of brand love in the fashion industry. Using Zara as our theoretical case study.

As to our specific goals we outline the following;

• Analyze the relationship between brand attachment and e-brand love, exploring how emotional bonds influence consumer behaviors.

- Investigate key antecedents of brand attachment, including brand coolness, social media marketing activities (SMMA), and celebrity endorsements.
- Examine the impact of e-brand love on consumer advocacy behaviors, such as eWOM, brand pride, and brand defense.
- Apply the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model to structure and validate the relationships among these constructs.
- Provide managerial insights for fashion brands on how to foster stronger emotional connections and enhance customer engagement through digital and branding strategies.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

To achieve our objectives, we employed a quantitative research approach. Our methodology follows structured steps.

First of all, we developed a conceptual model, building it from previous research by incorporating the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model, with brand attachment as the central construct linking antecedents (brand coolness, SMMA, and celebrity endorsement) to outcomes (eWOM, brand defense, and brand pride).

Secondly, we designed a survey that was developed based on validated scales from previous studies. The study was distributed online through social media apps (WhatsApp and Instagram), targeting customers of the fashion industry, specially those who had had experience with Zara.

Afterwards, the data collected through the questionnaire was analysed. A total of 117 respondents were collected and analyzed using the PLS-SEM to test the hypothesized relationships, that will be outlined in this report. The study examines key validity and reliability measures, including convergent and discriminant validity, before proceeding with hypothesis testing.

Finally, we conducted an empirical study of Zara, in order to contextualize our study. Analyzing Zara's branding strategies, digital presence, and consumer engagement, providing a real-world application of the conceptual model.

1.4 REPORT STRUCTURE

This report is structured into five main chapters. The first chapter, Introduction, provides an overview of the research topic, explains its relevance, outlines the research objectives, describes the methodology, and presents the overall structure of the report. The second chapter, Theoretical Framework and Model Explanation, examines the theoretical foundation of the study, reviews key concepts related to the research variables, and introduces the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model, which serves as the conceptual framework for this research. The third chapter focuses on the Zara Case Study Analysis, providing a theoretical examination of Zara, exploring its brand strategies and consumer perceptions. The fourth chapter, Empirical Analysis, details the research methodology, including the data collection process, a descriptive analysis of the survey results, and an examination of both the conceptual and structural models. Finally, the fifth chapter, Conclusions, summarizes the key findings, discusses their implications, and suggests directions for future research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: MODEL EXPLANATION

This study employs a conceptual model proposed by Iftikhar (2024) but including some of the theoretical proposals of the Gupta (2017). This model analyses the relationship between brand attachment and e-brand love. Also, the model includes the antecedents (stimulus) of brand attachment, as well as the outcomes (response) of e-brand love measures in terms of ewom, and brand defense and pride.

We studied different hypotheses that were evaluated with our model. We stated them as follows:

H1: Brand Attachment is positively associated with E-Brand Love

H2: Brand Coolness is possitively associated with Brand Attachment

H3: SMMA is possitively associated with Brand Attachment

H4: Celebrity Endorsement is possitively associated with Brand Attachment

H5: e-Brand Love is possitively associated with e-WOM

H6: e-Brand Love is possitively associated with Brand Pride

H7: e-Brand Love is possitively associated with Brand Defense

These hypotheses will be justified in the following sections.

Moreover, we used the Stimuli-Organism-Response model. According to Hewei and Youngsook (2021), this is a framework which shows the Stimulus (S), external environmental factors that influence an individual and the Organism (O), representing the psychological process through which a person internalizes and interprets these stimuli as meaningful information. And finally, the Response (R), which signifies the individual's behavioral reaction to the external stimulus and the information it conveys. In Figure 1 the components of our model can be seen.

Figure 1: Stimuli-Organism-Response model.



Empirically, we will analyze the case of Zara.

2.1. BRAND ATTACHMENT

Attachment can be defined as "an emotion laden target-specific bond between a persona and a specific object" (Thomson et al., 2005). In the same lime, Park et al. (2010), define it as "the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self".

Two key dimensions define this concept; the brand-self connection, which signifies the emotional and cognitive ties between the brand and the consumer, and brand prominence, which highlights how readily thoughts and feelings about the brand come to the consumer's mind (Park et al., 2010). Together, these dimensions demonstrate the deeprooted importance of the brand in the consumer's identity and daily experiences.

Unlike mere brand attitudes, which can range from positive to negative, brand attachment inherently involves a positive emotional connection. This connection is strengthened over time through repeated interactions and meaningful experiences with the brand. Consumers who develop a strong attachment to a brand are more likely to engage in behaviors that require significant effort or resources, such as defending the brand in discussions, paying a premium for its products, or consistently choosing the brand over competitors. These behaviors demonstrate the motivational power of attachment, which is driven by the emotional and self-relevant implications of the bond (Iftikhar, 2024).

Self-expansion theory further explains brand attachment by suggesting that consumers incorporate the brand into their self-concept, seeing the brand's resources and values as extensions of their own. This theory posits that attachment is not merely about receiving benefits from the brand but also about investing personal resources—time, energy, and even emotional effort—into maintaining the brand relationship. These reciprocal dynamics underscores the depth of the consumer-brand relationship, making attachment a critical factor in fostering loyalty, advocacy, and long-term brand success (Park et al., 2010; Iftikhar, 2024).

According to Ghorbanzadeh and Rahegagh (2021), consumers who develop an emotional attachment to a brand are more likely to experience strong feelings of love and devotion toward it. Emotional brand attachment is recognized as a key driver of brand love, as it fosters a deep psychological bond between consumers and brands. When consumers perceive a brand as an extension of themselves, their attachment translates into feelings of warmth, affection, and passion, ultimately leading to brand love. Reserach from Hwang & Kandampully (2012) states that when consumers perceive a brand as aligned with their identity, they experience heightened emotional responses, which ultimately foster brand love. Moreover, emotional aspects such as self-concept connection, attachment, and brand love play a crucial role in maintaining consumer-brand relationships, particularly among younger consumers, as they seek brands that resonate with their personality and values (Hwang & Kandampully, 2012). Given this foundation, we propose:

H1: Brand Attachment is positively associated with E-Brand Love

2.2. E-BRAND LOVE

E-brand love refers to the deep emotional attachment consumers feel toward a brand, particularly in an online context. This attachment goes beyond mere satisfaction, involving feelings such as passion, affection, and a sense of identity with the brand. According to Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), e-brand love is often rooted in the brand's ability to evoke strong emotions and offer symbolic value to consumers. Digital platforms amplify this connection by providing spaces where consumers can interact with brands, share their experiences, and engage in personalized content. This creates a reciprocal relationship where consumers feel understood and valued, further intensifying their love for the brand (Iftikhar, 2024).

Several factors contribute to the development of e-brand love. Consumers are more likely to experience this emotional connection when the brand aligns with their personal values and aspirational identity (Sirgy, 1982). Additionally, brands that foster engagement through social media offer memorable experiences, and maintain consistent authenticity are more likely to evoke feelings of love. The outcomes of e-brand love are significant, including increased loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and active brand advocacy (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). In the digital age, these behaviors are amplified, as consumers actively promote their favorite brands online, enhancing their reputation and visibility (Iftikhar, 2024).

ANTECEDENTS OF BRAND ATTACHMENT

According to Iftikhar (2024) model, there are different antecedents of brand attachment: brand coolness, social media marketing activities and celebrity endorsements. We will analyze their definitio and the hypothesis associated with each of them.

2.3. BRAND COOLNESS

Being "cool" can be determinant to a brand's succes, that is why understanding the determinants of it is essential. As to what we understand by cool, Warren and Campbell's (2014,544) define coolness as "a subjective and dynamic, socially p. attributed cultural objects constructed *positive* trait to inferred to be appropriately autonomous". What makes a brand cool is the extent to which the

consumers think it is (Warren et al., 2019). Cool brands are perceived as autonomous, innovative, and capable of creating meaningful experiential interactions with consumers (Sundar et al., 2014). Furthermore, brand coolness serves as a symbolic recognition space, allowing consumers to integrate the brand's values into their self-identity, reinforcing their social image during brand interactions (Grove & Fisk, 1992).

We can define a cool brand with many different subdimensions. According to Warren et al. (2019) we define those such as:

- **Subcultural:** Subcultural coolness arises from a brand's alignment with niche lifestyles or countercultural movements, which fosters a sense of belonging within cubgroups (Belk et al., 2010). This helps consumers create emotional bonds with brands that resonate with their personal and social identities. Moreover, it allows consumers to express their unique identities and distinguish themselves from the common culture (Warren et al., 2019).
- **Popular:** This dimension relates to a brand's ability to resonate widely and become culturally significant. According to Dar-Nimrod et al. (2012), coolness often aligns with social desirability, where popular brands are perceived as trendy and widely accepted within peer and cultural groups. This popularity contributes to their coolness by reflecting social approval and alignment with current trends. Popular brands are often associated with qualities like friendliness and positivity, reinforcing their mass appeal.
- **High Status:** The aspect of brand coolness is all about how a brand can make someone feel prestigious and socially distinguished. Belk et al. (2010) explain that brands often act as social markers, showing who's "in" and who's "out" within a group. For example, in some peer groups, wearing certain clothes can instantly signal belonging to a high-status circle. Like the use of flashy jewelry and accessories ("bling"), which is a way to show off wealth and success. This aligns with Dar-Nimrod et al. (2012), who describe a form of coolness tied to socially desirable traits and elevated status. Essentially, high-status brands are seen as cool because they help people stand out, boost their social standing, and signal their place in a group.
- Extraordinary: The extraordinary dimension of brand coolness highlights a brand's ability to stand out through exceptional qualities or experiences that

captivate consumers. Warren et al. (2019) describe extraordinary brands as those offering unique value or innovative products, which allow consumers to feel special and enhance their personal identity. Similarly, Belk et al. (2010) emphasize that extraordinary brands often break from the mundane by creating memorable experiences or embodying qualities that feel unattainable to the average consumer, making them aspirational. Dar-Nimrod et al. (2012) add that this element of coolness stems from the brand's ability to evoke admiration and distinguish itself from competitors. Extraordinary brands not only provide functional value but also elevate emotional and symbolic associations, reinforcing their coolness in the eyes of consumers.

Since the perception of coolness can be linked to a product's enhanced quality and functionality, consumers who perceive a higher level of coolness are more likely to interact with brands and share their positive experiences with others. This increased engagement reflects their appreciation for the brand's uniqueness and values, thus increasing consumer's brand attachment (Attiq et al., 2022). Chen and Chou (2019) also support the idea that perceived coolness strengthens attachment, as demonstrated in their study of the tourism context. Given these findings, we propose:

H2: Brand Coolness is possitively associated with Brand Attachment

2.4. SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ACTIVITIES (SMMA)

Social media refers to a collection of online platforms and tools that facilitate the creation, sharing, and exchange of content among users. These platforms enable users to interact, communicate, and collaborate in a virtual environment. Social media encompasses various forms, including social networking sites, video sharing sites, photo sharing sites, bookmarking sites, discussion forums, and wikis (Chugh & Ruhi, 2019). The widespread proliferation of social media has significantly reshaped communication, information dissemination, and social interaction, making it an integral part of modern society (Paul & Paul, 2024).

Social media activities involve leveraging online platforms to foster communication, collaboration, and content sharing. _They are an integral part of marketing strategies, allowing brands to engage directly with consumers, build relationships, and share their offerings in creative and impactful ways (Kim & Ko, 2012).

These activities include various elements such as sharing trends, providing customized content, and offering entertainment to create engaging brand experiences. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter enable brands to promote their products more effectively, influence customer perceptions, and encourage word-of-mouth sharing (Mohammadpour et al., 2014).

With these activities, a new form of marketing has arisen, and it has revolutionized how brands connect with consumers, turning platforms into essential tools for communication and promotion. These platforms not only help businesses reach millions of users globally but also create opportunities for meaningful interactions between brands and their audiences (Iftikhar, 2024).

According to Kim et al. (2012) social media presents different dimensions:

- **Trendiness**: this aspect refers to the ability to deliver the latest and most fashionable information to consumers. Trendy content not only keeps the audience updated but also aligns the brand with current cultural and societal movements, thereby enhancing its appeal. According to Kim and Ko (2012), incorporating trendy elements helps brands remain relevant and strengthens their relationship with younger audiences, who are often at the forefront of adopting new trends.
- Customization: this allows brands to tailor their content and messages to the specific preferences and needs of their audience. This personalized approach creates a sense of individual connection and improves the overall user experience. As noted by Mohammadpour et al. (2014), offering tailored services and information through social media enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty, making consumers feel valued and understood.
- Interaction: this measures how the social media of the brand facilitates a twoway communication between brands and their audience. This includes sharing opinions, giving feedback and initializing discussions, all of this creating deeper connections (Kim & Ko, 2012).
- Entertainment: this item involves providing engaging, enjoyable, and fun content that captures the audience's attention. This provides users with entertaining experiences, which allows brands to build stronger emotional connections with their consumers. Kim and Ko (2012) highlight that entertainment-driven content not only fosters positive emotions but also boosts brand equity by creating memorable and delightful brand interactions.

When analyzing the effects of social media marketing activities, we find that they play a crucial role in fostering brand attachment by creating engaging and interactive experiences for customers. According to Kuo and Chen (2023), when brands utilize highly interactive marketing strategies, such as engaging posts, live interactions, and user-generated content, they enhance consumers' perceived brand experience, which in turn strengthens their emotional connection to the brand. In their Stimulus-Organism-Response framework, they found that SMMA serves as a stimulus that positively influences consumers' perceptions (organism), leading to greater brand attachment as they feel more connected and involved with the brand. In the same line, Bilgin (2018) highlights in his research the significance of social media as a powerful marketing platform, demonstrating that personalized and engaging brand interactions enhance consumer connection and brand advocacy. To further analyze the relationship, we propose:

H3. SMMA is possitively associated with Brand Attachment

2.5. CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT

McCracken (1989) defines a celebrity endorser as an "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement". Moreover, Stafford et al. (2003) defines it as "a famous person who uses public recognition to recommend or co-present with a product in an ad". In the same line, Schimmelpfennig (2018), defines a celebrity endorser as a celebrity endorser is a well-known personality recognized by the general public, who leverages their fame to promote a product or brand.

Celebrity endorsement has become a powerful marketing strategy in highly competitive markets, allowing brands to create a distinctive advantage and foster positive impressions in the minds of consumers. The endorsers have unique and appealing qualities, that is why companies invest in them in order to transfer these qualities to their products through marketing communications (Erdogan, 1999). These activities not only increase consumer appeal, but they also help boosting the recall of advertising messages, purchase intention and levels of attention (Gupta y Kishor, 2017). However, to increase the chances of success of this strategy, it is essential to select the correct celebrity endorser. As Erdogan (1999) explains, a good alignment between the celebrity and the brand's values is crucial to avoid mismatches.

When reviewing the literature, we find numerous scales that serve as a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of a celebrity endorser. For this study, we have used the scale presented by Gupta (2017), which we believe presents a global approach to measuring the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumer behaviour.

This scale includes 5 dimensions:

- Expertise: it refers to the perceived ability of a celebrity endorser to make credible and valid assertions about the product or service they promote. It encompasses qualities such as knowledge, experience, and skills developed by the endorser in a related field, which contribute to their credibility (Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1991). The audience's perception of their expertise plays a significant role in determining the endorsement's effectiveness. It influences how consumers evaluate the product, as an expert endorser is often seen as more trustworthy and capable of delivering reliable information.
- Attractiveness: it includes not only physical appearance, but also other admirable qualities like intellectual abilities, personality traits, lifestyle or athletic talent. As Erdogan states (1999), the more physically attractive an endorser is, the more effective communication can be.
- Trustworthiness: this has been defined by Ohanian (1990) as "the listener's degree of confidence in, and level of acceptance of, the speaker and the message." It includes the extent to which and endorse is reliable, honest or credible among other attributes.
- **Popularity:** The popularity of a celebrity endorser is shaped by factors such as a large fan base, a history of successful achievements, public admiration, a positive and uncontroversial image, and being perceived as a role model (Gupta et al., 2017). An endorser is typically someone with a noticeable personality and significant recognition within the community, ensuring their influence captures public attention and directs it toward the promoted brand. A celebrity's popularity, often referred to as visibility, combined with their fame, can effectively boost brand awareness, especially when the goal of communication is to enhance recognition and recall (Ahmed et al., 2014).

• **Relevance**: this refers to the product or brand the celebrity is endorsing. It is determined by the connection between both, including whether the celebrity shares similarities with the product or brand and whether there is a significant and meaningful link between them (Gupta et al., 2017).

Additionally, celebrity endorsements play a crucial role in shaping brand attachment, as consumers often transfer their emotional connection with a celebrity to the brands they endorse. Research has shown that celebrity attachment significantly influences brand attachment, meaning that when individuals develop a strong emotional bond with a celebrity, they are more likely to feel connected to the associated brand (Özer et al., 2022). They explain this process through attachment theory and the meaning transfer model, where consumers internalize the values, identity, and perceived qualities of a celebrity and associate them with the endorsed brand. This evidence leads us to formulate the following hypothesis for our study:

To examine this relationship, we propose:

H4. Celebrity Endorsement is possitively associated with Brand Attachment

CONSEQUENCES OF E-BRAND-LOVE

According to Iftikhar (2024) model, there are three consequences of e-brand love.

2.6. EWOM

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) refers to the digital exchange of opinions, recommendations, and experiences among consumers through various online platforms, such as social media, blogs, and review sites. This form of communication enhances traditional word-of-mouth by allowing messages to reach a much broader audience instantly (Litvin et al., 2008).

Through eWOM, individuals share self-relevant content and provide valuable insights that influence the decision-making process of others, especially in industries like foodservice and hospitality, where reviews and recommendations significantly impact consumer choices (Kim et al., 2015).

The motivation for consumers to engage in eWOM often stems from a personal and emotional connection with the product or service. Research suggests that consumers are more likely to share their experiences when the product or service aligns with their selfidentity or fulfills self-presentation goals. This means they see eWOM as an opportunity to present a positive image of themselves to their social circles. For example, individuals might share content that reflects their lifestyle, preferences, or values, using platforms like social media to establish and communicate their identity (Kim et al., 2015). This self-relevance adds a layer of meaning to eWOM beyond simple product reviews. This highlights the importance of consumers' trust in the brand and their sense of belonging, which encourage them to engage in eWOM activities.

The effectiveness of eWOM is often shaped by several factors, including the content's relevance and clarity, the perceived credibility of the communicator, and the receiver's existing knowledge or involvement with the product or brand. For example, recommendations from trusted sources, such as opinion leaders or experienced users, are seen as more reliable and persuasive. Additionally, eWOM's ability to spread rapidly across digital networks makes it particularly impactful in industries where consumer feedback significantly influences decision-making (Iftikhar, 2024).

Research has found eWOM can be stimulated by e-Brand love. Shen et al. (2021) provide empiral support that customers who develop strong emotional connections with a brand are more inclined to shre their positive experiences online, thereby promoting the brand through digital platforms. Their study also highlights that fostering strong emotional bonds with customers can lead to increased online promotion and positive word-ofmouth, particularly among specific demographic group. We will examine this relationship with the following hypothesis:

H5. E-Brand Love is possitively associated with eWOM

2.7. BRAND DEFENSE

According to Dalman et al. (2019), brand defense is a behavior where consumers actively protect a brand they are emotionally attached to, particularly when the brand faces negative publicity or ethical challenges. This behavior goes beyond passive support and involves actions such as countering criticism, promoting the brand's reputation, and advocating for its value in the face of adversity. Consumers who engage in brand defense often have a strong emotional bond with the brand, which motivates them to shield it from criticism.

This proactive behavior is closely tied to the concept of brand love, a powerful emotional connection that can influence consumer actions even under extreme circumstances. Studies highlight that when consumers love a brand, they may either defend it directly by supporting its reputation or choose not to share negative information, an act known as "sin of omission." Both actions serve to protect the brand but reflect different levels of engagement and effort (Dalman et al., 2019; Ehsan, 2024).

In situations involving ethical scrutiny, the strength of the consumer-brand relationship determines the extent of brand defense. Consumers who see the brand as part of their identity feel personally threatened by attacks on it and are more likely to defend it. However, this defense is not unlimited; extreme unethical behavior may push even the most loyal consumers to reconsider their support. For brands, fostering emotional connections with consumers is crucial for building a loyal base that will advocate for the brand in challenging times (Dalman et al., 2019; Ehsan, 2024).

To provide evidence that supports the relationship between these variables, we propose:

H6. E-Brand Love is possitively associated with Brand Defense

2.8. BRAND PRIDE

Brand pride refers to a positive and self-conscious emotion that arises when individuals associate themselves with a brand that they perceive as successful, reputable, or socially valued (Helm, 2012). It reflects the pleasure derived from being affiliated with a brand, whether due to its public recognition, achievements, or alignment with personal ideals (Helm, 2012). This pride influences not only customers but also employees, fostering positive emotional connections that enhance brand loyalty and advocacy.

The theory of self-congruity (Sirgy, 1982) explains that individuals are drawn to brands that align with their ideal self-image. When this alignment occurs, they feel a deeper emotional connection to the brand, often resulting in brand pride. Such pride strengthens their engagement with the organization and reinforces their loyalty to the brand's reputation and goals.

The present study proposes the following hypothesis related to this matter:

H7: E-Brand Love is possitively associated with Brand Pride

Graphically the model is the one shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Graphical visualization of the model.

3. METHODOLOGY – ANLYSIS CASE STUDY: ZARA

With all the variables defined, we developed a survey specifically designed to study brand love in the context of a clothing brand. The focus of this study is ZARA, the flagship brand of Inditex and a global leader in the fast fashion industry. So before exploring in greater depth the model used and the results derived from it, we will delve deeper into ZARA's operations, strategies, and branding practices to gain a comprehensive understanding of the brand and its systems.

3.1. THE TEXTILE AND FASHION INDUSTRY: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

ZARA operates in the textile and fashion industry, which is a dynamic and highly competitive sector encompassing diverse activities, from fiber production to ready-to-wear clothing manufacturing. As of 2022, the European market for textiles and fashion included over 15,000 companies, generating revenues of approximately €11.8 billion and employing more than 84,000 individuals (Ministerio de Industria, Comercio y Turismo, 2024). Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) dominate this landscape, playing a crucial role in exports despite the sector's negative trade balance. Challenges such as high labor costs and dependence on imports are mitigated by innovation and sustainability trends (Ministerio de Industria, Comercio y Turismo, 2024).

In the context of Spain, the fashion industry contributed 2.9% to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), marking an increase from 2.8% in 2022 and 2.7% in 2021, thereby matching its historical peak (Observatorio del Textil y la Moda, 2024). The Economic Report on Fashion in Spain, driven by the Observatorio del Textil y la Moda and Modaes, also shows that in 2023, the sector generated 3,7% of empleability and its exports represent 8,2% of the total sales of goods to other countries. In total, these exports sum to 23.574 million euros. The report also highlights retail, pricing, and e-commerce as resurging trends in the sector. In fact, focusing on the online channel, its share of total fashion expenditure by Spanish consumers rose to 22.8% in 2023, up from 21.1% in the previous year.

If we look at the landscape of the industry in Spain, we find its longtime leader Inditex. This is the parent company of Zara, who embodies a transformative approach to fast fashion. Established in 1985 and headquartered in Arteixo, Spain, Inditex operates in more than 6,400 stores across 215 markets, with a growing emphasis on e-commerce (Inditex, n.d.). Its business model prioritizes vertical integration, enabling rapid adaptation to market demands while incorporating sustainability at its core. For example, in 2021, 47% of Inditex's products were part of the "Join Life" initiative, which highlights the company's commitment to environmentally friendly practices (Inditex, n.d.).

In recent years, Inditex has achieved key milestones, such as launching virtual fitting rooms and entering the metaverse through digital collaborations. These initiatives underscore the company's ability to adapt to emerging trends in technology and retail (Inditex, n.d.). Moreover, its leadership team, under Marta Ortega Pérez since 2022, emphasizes innovation and corporate responsibility, further solidifying Inditex's reputation as a global industry leader (Inditex, 2022).

As of its results of 2024, Inditex achieved a turnover of \in 35.947 billion, an EBITDA of \notin 9.85 billion, and a net profit of \notin 5.381 billion. Strengthening its position as a leader both in the Spanish and global markets (Modaes, 2024).

3.2. ZARA: THE FLAGSHIP BRAND OF INDITEX

Inditex, as mentioned before, is a group formed by many brands: Zara, Zara Home, Stradivarius, Pull and Bear, Bershka, Massimo Dutti, Oysho, Uterqüe y Leftires (Business Insider, 2024). However, there is a clear winner among this list, what we call its flagship brand: Zara. This brand was founded in 1975 and has become a global leader in the fast

fashion industry and the principal asset of Inditex, accounting for approximately 70% of the group's sales (Tungate, 2012). In 2021, this share accounted for \notin 19.6 billion in revenue (Inditex, n.d.).

3.2.1 GEOGRAPHIC PRESENCE AND GLOBAL EXPANSION

Although Inditex started its operations in 1985, it didn't open its firt international store until 1989. This global expansion took first place in Oporto, followed by France, New York and London in the following decade (Tungate, 2012). It continued to establish itself in other markets, until now, where Zara operates over 2000 stores in more than 90 countries across Europe, the Americas, Asia, Africa and Oceania, strengthening its presence in nearly all major markets worldwide, becoming a leader in the fast-fashion segment (Business Insider España, 2019).

3.2.2 OMNICHANNEL STRATEGY

The brand's business model core is its stores, offering exquisite physical experience to its customers. These stores are built strategically in the main shopping areas of the cities where they are placed, becoming a reference point for those cities (Blasco Sánchez, 2015). In fact, its flagship stores (Madrid, Paris, Lisbon and London) are exclusively located in some of the world's most prestigious and high-value real estate areas (Jangid, 2022). Moreover, their designs are crucial to shaping consumer behavior and improving customer experience. That is why their layout is planned to detail to guide customers through a visual and physical journey. For this purpose, we can find in the stores characterictics like spacious aisles, strategically planned focal points, accentuated lighting or neutral colors. Besides, their strategic product placement in the stores is key to influence purchase decisions (Mirror Spectrum, 2024). Moreover, its stores are vertically integrated in the company, which translates into providing the same nevironment and experiences for customers in all of the stores, as Zara is the one who makes all the decisions and the operations (Nguyen, 2020).

On top of this, Zara has seamlessly integrated the online channel into its operations, opening its online boutique on September 2010 (Jangid, 2022). Zara's success in the online channel is rooted in its innovative approach to integrating technology and user experience into its business model. Although Zara was slower than competitors to embrace e-commerce, it developed a unique omnichannel strategy that treats online and physical stores with equal importance. This seamless integration allows customers to

enjoy the same services across platforms, such as purchasing unavailable items and choosing between in-store pickup or home delivery (IE Insights, 2017).

In addition, Zara uses its online platform not only as a sales channel but also to showcase its latest fashion styles and offer unique services such as virtual fitting and professional online consultation. These features save customers the time of visiting physical stores while maintaining the same product and pricing strategy across all channels, ensuring fairness and consistency for consumers. Zara further enhances the shopping experience by providing flexible options like online ordering, in-store pick-up, and hassle-free returns or exchanges, reinforcing its commitment to convenience and customer satisfaction (Chunling, 2020). Furthermore, Zara leverages advanced data analytics to tailor its offerings based on customer preferences and regional demographics. For instance, inventory is adjusted by analyzing local demand, ensuring stores stock the right sizes and styles for their specific audience. This personalized, technology-driven approach not only enhances customer satisfaction but also optimizes operational efficiency and sets Zara apart as a leader in the fast-fashion industry (Business Insider España, 2020).

Zara's omnichannel strategy exemplifies the seamless integration of physical and online stores to enhance customer satisfaction and operational efficiency. By adopting practices such as "Buy Online, Pick Up In-Store" (BOPIS) and flexible delivery options, Zara ensures that customers enjoy a consistent shopping experience across all platforms. This approach aligns with the brand's goal of "unifying the retail experience across different touchpoints and allowing shoppers to transition from digital to physical in the most seamless way possible, without breaking the experience" (Rizzo, 2019). Such strategies not only cater to diverse consumer preferences but also enable Zara to strategically guide customers toward the most cost-effective and profitable purchasing channels, optimizing resource allocation and enhancing profitability. Such strategies reflect Zara's ability to adapt to the evolving retail landscape, reinforcing its position as a leader in the fashion industry (Cai & Choi, 2023)

3.2.3 ZARA'S CUSTOMERS

To fully comprehend Zara's success as a global fashion leader, it is essential to explore its customer base, their preferences, and how the brand has cultivated loyalty both in Spain and internationally. Zara's ability to identify and cater to key demographic segments, align with the unique preferences of its consumers, and build a strong global brand perception underscores its strategic approach to customer-centric fashion. By examining the characteristics of Zara's customers, their loyalty drivers, and the brand's reputation across diverse markets, we can gain valuable insights into the foundations of its enduring appeal and market dominance.

Regarding the **demographic segments**, Zara's target customers are from a younger age range, around 20-30 years old, who are interested in fashion but seek affordable in-style clothes (Ton, Corsi, & Dessain, 2010). As Lai Chunling (2020) explains, Zara takes this need into account and designs a price strategy of "affordable fashion", sticking to prices that represent a small fraction of the price of luxury labels. This way they satisfy the need of good fashion, while also offering something the customers can buy.

Furthermore, the **customers' behaviour** is very distinct, as the average Zara shopper visits a store 17 times a year, compared to 3-4 times for competing brands (Jangid, 2022). This is due to Zara's unique business model, which offers rapid inventory turnover, introducing new designs very often. This strategy creates a sense of urgency and exclusivity in customers, as they also offer limited quantities of each item. Therefore, encouraging immediate purchases and creating a habit of frequent visits to the physical and online store. We can affirm that this regular engagement with the brand reinforces Zara's connection with its customers, making it a preferred destination for fashion-forward consumers seeking new trends and styles.

The report of *Tendencias del Consumidor Español* (2018) gives us some insights about the evolving **preferences** and behaviors of Spanish consumers, particularly regarding their approach to shopping, that can be related to the case of Zara:

- Nearly 45% of consumers engage in online shopping, with clothing, fashion and personal accessories being the most frequenty purchased items (66%). This reinforces the importance of offering integrated physical and online channels for customers to make their purchases. Which Zara has done successfully.
- Some of the key decision-making drivers are the balance between price and quality, convenience, and the availability of trendy and innovative products. Zara offers a well-balanced combination of competitive pricing, high-quality products, and a constantly updated selection of trendy and innovative styles, ensuring

convenience and satisfaction for its customers. Therefore satisfying most of the preferences of the customers.

In addition, we should look at how consumers feel **brand loyalty** towards Zara. It is defined as "consumer's preference to buy a particular brand in a product category" (Ishak & Abd. Ghani, s.f.). This loyalty may lead to reapeated purchases, developing a long-time history of product usage and trust, built through consistent experiences. Some studies highlight that some factors influence customer loyalty, specifically, perceived sustainable developmet positively impacts Zara's perceived value and, consequently, consumer loyalty. (Antequera Restrepo & Gamboa Barrera, 2023). Even though there is a clear perception that brand loyalty is essential for their success, in the market research carried out by Jangid (2022), we find that brand loyalty is not a predominant factor for Zara's customers, in fact, most of the respondents qualified "brand loyalty" as "Little important" or "Very little important".

Lastly, we need to understand what consumers think about Zara, what the public perception of the brand is. The public perception of Zara highlights its position as a brand that prioritizes innovation, accessibility, and fast adaptation to fashion trends. Consumers generally view Zara positively for its ability to deliver up-to-date styles at affordable prices. Customers associate the brand with a strong focus on product rotation and accessibility (Clara, 2024). However, loyalty toward Zara is more functional than emotional, with customers valuing the practicality of its offerings rather than a deep attachment to the brand itself. This functional loyalty stems from its quick supply chain and wide availability, making Zara a convenient choice for many buyers.

On the other hand, research conducted by López de la Cruz and Clemente Mediavilla (2023) indicates some areas where Zara's customer experience could improve. For instance, issues like long waiting times at checkouts and fitting rooms, as well as occasional dissatisfaction with customer service, are commonly mentioned by consumers. These factors can make the shopping experience less enjoyable, especially during busy periods such as sales seasons. Moreover, some customers note that store crowding and the lack of mirrors in physical locations detract from their overall satisfaction. Addressing these challenges could strengthen Zara's brand image and foster deeper customer loyalty.

In addition, a report by ABC Economía (2019) underscores how Zara is perceived as a brand that represents dynamism and a connection with contemporary culture. It is ranked

as one of the most recognizable brands in Spain, with consumers associating it with innovation and trendsetting in the fashion industry. The article also notes Zara's ability to appeal to a broad audience, cementing its place as a go-to brand for diverse consumer groups. However, it emphasizes the importance of Zara continuing to communicate its efforts in sustainability and technological advancements, as these areas are increasingly valued by modern consumers.

In conclusion, Zara is widely regarded as a brand that excels in convenience, trend adaptation, and technological innovation. While its loyalty remains largely functional, addressing areas of customer dissatisfaction and improving communication about its sustainability initiatives could enhance its public perception and foster deeper connections with its customer base (Clara, n.d.; López de la Cruz & Clemente Mediavilla, 2023; ABC Economía, 2019).

3.2.4 SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

The digitalization of society, including the retail industry, not only involves the way brands sell their products, but also how they adress/communicate with their customers and engage with them. This is thanks to social media platforms, like Instagram or Facebook, which have revolutionized how communication in the fashion industry works. The main factors to its success are the immediacy and closeness they provide (García Alcoba, 2020).

A social media strategy is a structured plan used by businesses to detail how they will be using social media platforms to achieve their marketing and business objectives. The strategy usually includes many actions such as content creation, audience targeting, brand positioning, and performance analysis. The goal of this strategy is to take advantage of digital channels to increase brand visibility, foster customer loyalty and drive business growth. Moreover, according to Fondevila et al. (2012), social media channels have become central to brand reputation management, with companies using them to engage with consumers in real-time while shaping their digital identity.

In the case of fast fashion brands like Zara, social media serves as an essential extension of their business model. Zara has rapidly adopted this mindset and has integrated a social media strategy into its core, which has helped the brand to reinforce its first position in the fast fashion industry.

Their many social accounts can be found on Instagram (with 62.2 million followers) and on Tikotk (with 12.7 million). An element that's important to highlight is their highquality and visually appealing content, that shows neutral and minimalistic aesthetic, alligning with its in-store experience.

Additionally, it can be said that their Instagram feed attracts fashion seekers, and they constantly adapt to new fashion trends, providing new updates and serving as a catalog for people looking for new trends (Wang, 2023). This reinforces their position as leaders in the fashion industry.



Figure 3: Zara's Instagram feed

Source: Screenshot taken from Zara's official Instagram account

Apart from their content strategy, Zara employs different actions on their social media accounts that aim at increasing sales and driving conversions. One of them is their integration of visuals with direct purchasing links. These links enable customers who were initially looking for inspiration on Instagram to convert naturally into a purchase on the website (Digital Orks, n.d.). This is a great example of how they leverage their social media accounts into fostering higher engagement and sales.

Figure 4: Example of Zara's Instagram story with shopping link



Source: Screenshot taken from Zara's official Instagram account

Lastly, a key asset of their social media strategy is their use of influencer marketing. This has become a common practice for brands due to the digitalization and the veolving behavior of consumers. This strategy allows us to take advantage of the trust built between influencers and their audiences, using it as a channel to bring their messages to the customers in a way they will listen. This aligns with the preferences of modern consumers who value relatable content (Biaudet, 2017).

Specifically, Zara targets micro-influencers, as they value their concentrated influence in their niche communities. For example, during the launch of their South African online store, Zara collaborated with 552 micro-influencers, resulting in their branded hashtag ("#DearSouthAfrica" reaching over six million individuals in just one day. This approach highlights Zara's ability to leverage influencers to authentically engage audiences and drive impactful campaigns (Wang, 2023).

Another example of the influencer marketing they use is their strategy of providing monthly gift cards worth €150 to selected content creators. These gift cards are intended for influencers to purchase products from Zara and other Inditex brands, allowing them to showcase and promote the latest trends on their platforms. The do so, for example, with

the creation of "Zara hauls" posting videos both on Instagram and Tiktok. The goal of this strategy is to increase brand visibility and drive sales by leveraging influencers' reach and audience engagement.

However, such practices can sometimes lead to controversy, as illustrated by the case of the influencer Mada Mariño in October 2024. This girl revealed this collaboration publicly, sparking debates on social media. This incident highlights how influencer marketing, despite its effectiveness, can occasionally stir public criticism and spark discussions about ethical practices and brand transparency (El Independiente, 2024).



Figure 5: Zara Haul Example on TikTok

Source: Screenshot taken from @madamarino's official TikTok account

4. EMPIRICAL STUDY: QUESTIONNAIRE

Once we have explained the case of Zara, this chapter focuses on the thorough analysis of the details of the questionnaire designed for this study and the results obtained. Our goal with this questionnaire was to use the model created in Ehsan's (2024) thesis for the specific case of fashion retail, with our focus set on Zara. With this model, we aim to provide a framework to assess the brand love toward a brand, with insight about consumer behaviors, preferences and perceptions related to Zara, among other brands.

To reach a broad audience the questionnaire was shared through social media such as Whatshapp and Instagram. Using these channels our goal was to get responses from various demographic groups, including colleagues, friends and family, ensuring we got data from different perspectives. In total, 108 people completed the survey, giving us an adequate dataset to work on. We assessed this sample size as sufficient to extract meaningful analyses and conclusions for our study's objectives.

4.1. METRICS

For this study, we used measurements inspired by other research studies that helped us define the scope of our analysis. We used eights constructs in total: Brand Coolness, Social Media Marketing Activities, Celebrity Endorsement, Brand Attachment, Brand Love, eWOM, Brand Defense, and Brand Pride. Each of them measured with their correspondent items. To facilitate the responses of the particiants of the survey, we constructed each question with a Five-Point Likert scale. The Likert scale functions by offering respondents a range of agreement or disagreement options for a given statement, allowing for the quantification of subjective preferences in a structured manner. We specifically used a scale from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). It is often debated whether a Five-Point scale is optimal, as some researchers argue that a Seven-Point scale provides greater granularity, reducing response ambiguity and increasing reliability (Joshi et al., 2015). However, the Five-Point scale remains widely utilized due to its balance between ease of use and sufficient response variability.

Variables	No. Of Items	Source
Brand Coolness	16	Adapted from Warren et al. (2019)
Social Media Marketing	9	Adapted from Kim and Ko's (2012)
Activities		
Celebrity Endorsement	27	Adapted from Gupta et al. (2017)
Brand Attachment	10	Adapted from Park et al. (2010)
E-Brand Love	10	Adapted from Carroll & Alluvia (2006)
eWOM	3	Adapted from Kim et al. (2015)
Brand Defense	3	Adapted from Dalman et al. (2019)
Brand Pride	5	Adapted from Helm et al. (2016)

Table 1: Summary of constructs and items

Source: Own elaboration

Table 1 presents a summary of the variables used in the model, along with the sources from which their measures were adapted. Brand coolness was assessed using 16 items across its four dimensions: subcultural, popular, high status, and extraordinary. Social media marketing activities were measured with 9 items, covering trendiness, customization, interaction, and entertainment. Celebrity endorsement was evaluated using 27 items, encompassing expertise, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and popularity. Brand attachment and e-brand love were each measured with 10 items. E-WOM and brand defense were assessed using 3 items each, while brand pride was measured with 5 items. All measures were adapted from prior research, from the sources shown in the table.

Accoding to Kuphanga (2024), the questionnaire method serves as an effective an adaptable approach to data collection across arious research fields. Its structured design ensures consistency in data gathering, organization, and analysis, making it particularly beneficial for quantitative studies. Additionally, this method is cost-efficient, easily accessible, and allows researchers to reach a wide and diverse audience, facilitating the collection of extensive and meaningful data.

4.2. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

First, we will analyze the demographic characteristics of the respondents who were asked about their gender, age, level of education, country of origin, personal style of clothing and preferred brand to buy from. In this section we will analyze the results of the 117 people that answered the questionnaire.

4.2.1 GENDER

The questionnaire offered three options to choose from: male, female, prefer not to say. In the population studied, 86 individuals (73.5%) identified as Female, and 31 individuals (26.5%) identified as Male.

Figure 6: Gender results



4.2.2 AGE

Respondents were offered 7 options to indicate in which age range they were located. Results showed that 2 individuals (1.7%) were "Under 18", 83 individuals (70.9%) were "between 18 and 24", 21 individuals (17.9%) were "between 25 and 34", 4 individuals (3.4%) were "between 35 and 44 years old", 1 individual (0.9%) was "between 45 and 54" and 2 individuals (1.7%) were "65 or older".

Being our most representative age range "between 18 and 24" years old and the least one "65 or older".



Figure 7: Age Statistics

4.2.3 LEVEL OF STUDIES

Respondents were asked about their educational backgrounds. The majority (55.6%) possess a bachelor's degree. A significant portion hold a master's degree (30.8%), reflecting a well-educated sample overall. Smaller groups include those with a high school diploma (6.0%), a Doctorate (4.3%) and other qualifications (3.4%).



Figure 8: Eduation Statistics

4.2.4 CLOTHING STYLE

In terms of their personal style of clothing, most of the respondents affirmed to have a "casual" clothing style (48.1%), which is often associated with versatility and comfort, making it a practical choice for everyday life. According to Fieito (2024), casual clothing is characterized by relaxed and adaptable pieces that allow individuals to move seamlessly between different activities while maintaining a polished appearance.

The second most common preference was the "classic" style (27.8%), reflecting a preference for timeless and elegant attire. This style is often chosen for its sophisticated and professional look, ensuring wearers feel appropriately dressed for various formal and informal settings. A notable portion of respondents (15.7%) identified their style as "modern," which aligns with contemporary fashion trends and reflects a willingness to adopt innovative and dynamic designs that emphasize individuality.

On the other hand, smaller segments of respondents preferred "streetwear" (4.6%) and "comfy" styles (3.7%). Streetwear, as described by Fieito (2024), is closely tied to urban

subcultures and bold statement-making designs, whereas comfy clothing prioritizes ease and physical relaxation, often associated with loungewear or athleisure.

These findings highlight a population primarily focused on practicality and timeless aesthetics, with smaller groups expressing niche or trend-driven style preferences.



Figure 9: Personal Style of Clothing Statistics

4.3. SHOPPING DATA

Secondly, we ask about the shopping behaviors and preferences of the respondents, including the respondent's preferred brand for shopping, their choice of shopping channels, and the frequency with which they make purchases.

4.3.1 SELECTED BRAND

Firstly, in order to guide the respondents into answering the questionnaire appropriately, we asked what brand they preferred to buy from. The most common one was "Zara", selected by 74 people, followed by Uniqlo with 5 responses, SHEIN and Mango with 4 responses and Massimo Dutti with 3. The rest of the brands were selected by only 2 or less people. Once the respondent had selected the preferred brand, all the following questions had to be answered according to it.

 Table 2: Distribution of selected brands

++		+	++
Brand	Number of Responses	Brand	Number of Responses
Zara	74	Vinted	1
Uniqlo	5	Abercrombie	1
SHEIN	4	Hugo Boss	1
Mango	4	mango, sfera, zara	1
Massimo Dutti	3	Stussy	1
Pedro del Hierro	2	Adolfo dominguez	1
H&M	2	Scalpers	1
Primark	2	Ese o ese	1
Nicoli	2	C&A	1
Ecoalf	1	Banana republic	1
love obsessed	1	Stradivarius	1
Vintage clothing	1	Bershka	1
Polo	1	Nike	1
Cortefiel	1	Estancias	1

4.3.2 SHOPPING CHANNELS

Figure 10 illustrates the sopping preferences of respondents between physical stores, online stores or a combination of both. Most of the respondents (52.1%) prefer shopping in physical stores, indicating a preference for in-person shopping experiences. Another significant portion of respondents (29.1%) prefer shopping through both channles, showing an inclination towards omnichannel behavior were customers value equally both channels. And the smaller group (18.8%) is represented by respondents who prefer shopping exclusively in online stores, which aligns with the ongoing digitalization of retail.



Figure 10: Distribution of Preferred Shopping Channel

4.3.3 FREQUENCY OF BRAND PURCHASES

Lastly, we asked about how often the participants purchased in their selected brand. Most of them (38.8%) answered that "once every three months", meaning every quarter. The next largests portion was "once a month", represented by 25.9% pf the respondents, which indicates a regular group of customers who interact with the brand on a frequent basis. We find smaller segments in the frequencies "rarely" with 18.1% of the answers, "several times a month" with 16.4% of the answers, and "more than once a week", answered by only one person. These results lead us to conclude that most of the respondents shop from the brand moderately, with a lean toward infrequent or seasonal shopping patterns.



Figure 11: Distribution of Shopping Frequency

4.4 DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

The survey included different questions that aimed to measure the variables explained in the first chapter with their correspondent items. We used the same variables and items used in the thesis of Iftikhar (2024), except for the variable "celebrity endorsement", where we used the scale created by Gupta et al. (2017).

The study examines brand coolness through four dimensions: Subcultural, Popular, High Status, and Extraordinary, using 4 items for each. Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) are assessed across four sub-dimensions: Trendiness, Customization, Interaction, and Entertainment, with 9 items.

Additionally, the study evaluates Celebrity Endorsement across Expertise, Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, and Popularity, comprising 16 items. Other variables include Brand Attachment (10 items), e-brand love (10 items), eWOM (3 items), Brand Defense (3

items), and Brand Pride (5 items). The total number of items across all variables is 83, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the constructs under investigation.

In Table 1 a summary of the variables and their items was provided.

4.5 PARTIAL LEAST SQUARE STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING (PLS-SEM)

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is a powerful analytical technique used to assess complex models by simultaneously evaluating both measurement and structural components. This method is particularly effective in minimizing error variance, making it a suitable choice for analyzing models with second-order constructs.

In this study, PLS-SEM was employed to test the proposed model, ensuring a comprehensive assessment of relationships between variables. To determine the statistical significance of loadings, weights, and path coefficients, a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was conducted. This resampling technique enhances the robustness of the findings by providing more reliable estimates of parameter significance (Hair et al., 2013),



Figure 12: Two step process of PLS Path Model Assessment

Source: Adapted from Henseler et al., (2009)

4.6 MEASUREMENT MODEL

As explained by Hair et al. (2013), the measurement model is used to assess the reliability and validity of the variables used in the model, before analyzing the relationships in the structural model.

To analyze these metrics, we use the following table as a base:

Criteria	Measures	Thresold values
Indicator Reliability	Factor Loading	> 0.7
Internal consistency	Composite Reliabilty	>0.7
Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	>0.7
Convergent Validity	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	> 0.5
		Square root of AVE
		of each construct
		should be higher
		than its highest
		correlation with any
	Fornell-Larker Criterion	other construct
Discriminate Validity	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)	<0.85

 Table 3: Measures and thresold values for assessment of measurement model

4.6.1 OUTER LOADINGS

Outer loadings in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) measure the strength of the relationship between an observed indicator and its corresponding latent variable, reflecting how well each indicator represents the underlying construct (Chin, 1998). Meaning they are the key indicator of reliability.

In order to interpret the model and understand the influence of the different subdimensions that make up the determinants of Brand Attachment, the model will be formulated, analyzing their direct influence on the dependent variable. This measure ranges from 0 to 1, and a commonly accepted threshold for reliability in PLS-SEM is 0.7 or higher, indicating that the indicator explains a substantial portion of the latent variable's variance.

In Figure 13 we can find our final measurement model. It is the result of a thorough analysis of each item of each varible and its outer loadings. The items shown in the graph are the ones that have been chosen at the final stage since they surpassed the outer loading thresold of 0.7. We will be analyzing the model in more detail in the following sections.

Figure 13: Measurement model



4.6.1.1 BRAND COOLNESS

This variable has four subvariables (Subcultural, Popular, High Status and Extraordinary), each measured with different items. All these subvariables have been chosen for the final model, but not every item used to measure them has.

For the dimension subcultural, all four items showed outer loadings higher than 0.7, so none were excluded. Table 4 shows its outer loadings.

ITEMS	OUTER LOADINGS
BC1	0.868
BC2	0.861
BC3	0.911
BC4	0.822

Table 4: Outer Loading of Subcultural

The second dimension (Popular), which was measured by four items, only had two that exceeded the threshold: BC5 and BC8. Table 5 shows its outer loadings.

Table 5: Outer Loading of Popular

ITEMS	OUTER LOADINGS
BC5	0.935
BC8	0.78

For High Status, the third dimension, we maintain two items out of the four used: BC10 and BC11. Table 6 shows its outer loadings.

Table 6: Outer Loading of High Status

ITEMS	OUTER LOADINGS
BC10	0.824
BC11	0.972

Lastly, Extraordinary showed high reliability in three of its items: BC14, BC15 and BC16. Table 7 shows its outer loadings.

ITEMS	OUTER LOADINGS
BC14	0.74
BC15	0.782
BC16	0.882

Table 7: Outer Loading of Extraordinary

4.6.1.2 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ACTIVITIES (SMMA)

Social Media Marketing Activities are divided into the following four dimensions: trendiness, customization, interaction and entertainment. But the latter one was excluded for the model as none of its items had outer loading higher than 0.7.

From trendiness' items only one out of 2 survived our thresold: SMM2. In table 8 we can see its outer loading.

Table 8: Outer Loading of Trendiness

ITEMS	OUTER LOADINGS
SMM2	1

In the customization dimension, only one item out of two was selected for the model: SMM3, whose outer loading can be found in Table 9.

 Table 9: Outer Loading of Customization

ITEMS	OUTER LOADINGS
SMM3	1

And for the interaction dimension, we found SMM8 and SMM9 sufficiently reliable to use for the model. Table 10 shows its outer loadings.

ITEMS	OUTER LOADINGS
SMM8	0.943
SMM9	0.768

 Table 10: Outer Loading of Interaction

0.768

4.6.1.3 CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT (CE)

Celebrity endorsement, where we used the scale from Gupta, had 27 items accross five dimensions: expertise, attractiveness, trustworthiness, popularity and relevance.

The dimension expertise shows sufficient reliability in the items CE3, CE4, CE5, EC1 and EC2. In Table 11 we can find its outer loadings.

ITEMS	OUTER LOADINGS
CE3	0.736
CE4	0.884
CE5	0.824
EC1	0.807
EC2	0.892

 Table 11: Outer Loading of Expertise

The attractiveness dimension demonstrates adequate reliability in the items CE7, CE8, CE9, CE10, and CE11. Their outer loadings, presented in Table 12, confirm this reliability.

 Table 12: Outer Loading of Attractiveness

ITEMS	OUTER LOADINGS
CE7	0.893
CE8	0.917
CE9	0.846
CE10	0.817
CE11	0.839

The trustworthiness dimension exhibits sufficient reliability in its items CE12, CE13, CE14, CE15, CE16, CE17, CE18 and CE19. Their outer loadings, shown in Table 13, support this assessment.

Table 13: Outer Loading of Trustworthiness

ITEMS	OUTER LOADINGS

CE12	0.787
CE13	0.887
CE14	0.891
CE15	0.786
CE16	0.907
CE17	0.847
CE18	0.48
CE19	0.781

The popular dimension proves to be reliably measured through the items CE21, CE22, and CE24, as evidenced by their outer loadings presented in Table 14.

ITEMS	OUTER LOADINGS
CE21	0.816
CE22	0.865
CE24	0.87

As for the relevant dimension, we selected the items CE25, CE26 and CE27, as their outer loadings surpassed the threshold, as shown in Table 15.

ITEMS	OUTER LOADINGS
CE25	0.833
CE26	0.876
CE27	0.881

4.6.1.4 BRAND ATTACHMENT

The Brand Attachment dimension demonstrates strong reliability, as evidenced by the outer loadings of its indicators. As shown in Table 16, all items (BA1 to BA9) exhibit loadings above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7, indicating a strong relationship between the observed indicators and the latent construct. The outer loadings range from

0.709 (BA4, BA9) to 0.87 (BA5), confirming that the indicators meaningfully contribute to measuring brand attachment. These values suggest that the measurement model for this construct is robust and supports its validity within the study.

ITEMS	OUTER LOADINGS
BA1	0.738
BA2	0.839
BA3	0.852
BA4	0.709
BA5	0.87
BA6	0.782
BA7	0.815
BA8	0.768
BA9	0.709

 Table 16: Outer Loading of Brand Attachment

4.6.1.5 BRAND LOVE

The variable brand love was measured by 10 items, but only 8 of them survived our limit of 0.7 in the outer loading. These can be found in Table 17.

ITEMS	OUTER LOADINGS
BL1	0.825
BL2	0.801
BL3	0.801
BL5	0.857
BL6	0.848
BL8	0.722
BL9	0.833
BL10	0.744

 Table 17: Outer Loading of Brand Love

4.6.1.6 EWOM

E-Wom showed reliability in all the three items, so we will use them for the model. Table 18 shows their outer loadings.

ITEMS	OUTER LOADINGS
W1	0.961
W2	0.967
W3	0.953

 Table 18: Outer Loading of EWOM

4.6.1.7 BRAND DEFENSE

For Brand Defense, the outer loadings of its indicators—BD1 (0.927), BD2 (0.943), and BD3 (0.8)—indicate a strong relationship between the observed items and the latent construct. Since all values exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7, this suggests that the indicators reliably measure brand defense, contributing to the validity of the model.

 Table 19: Outer Loading of Brand Defense

ITEMS	OUTER LOADINGS
BD1	0.927
BD2	0.943
BD3	0.8

4.6.1.8 BRAND PRIDE

Similarly, Brand Pride demonstrates high outer loadings across the five items that we investigated, ranging from 0.799 (BP1) to 0.917 (BP4). These values confirm that the items effectively capture the construct, reinforcing its significance within the measurement model. The consistently high loadings across both constructs support their robustness in the study.

ITEMS	OUTER LOADINGS
BP1	0.799

BP2	0.877
BP3	0.857
BP4	0.917
BP5	0.875

4.6.2 RELIABILITY (INTERNAL CONSISTENCY)

Reliability, specifically internal consistency, refers to the extent to which an assessment tool consistently measures a construct across different instances under the same conditions. In Structural Equation Modeling using Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), two key methods are used to evaluate internal consistency reliability: composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (Hair et al., 2017).

On the one hand, composite reliability is primarily used to determine the consistency of latent constructs by examining their outer loadings. According to Hair et al. (2017), a CR value above 0.70 is considered acceptable, indicating strong internal consistency. The results from this study, shown in Table 21, show that composite reliability values for all latent variables range from 0.79 to 0.98, exceeding the recommended threshold and confirming the robustness of the measurement model. These findings align with previous research, reinforcing the reliability of the constructs examined.

Constructs	Composite reliability
BC_Extra	0,84
BC_Popular	0,824
BC_Status	1,273
BC_Subcultura	0,924
BRAND DEFENSE	0,874
BRAND PRIDE	0,917
BRAND_ATTACHMENT	0,926
BRAND_LOVE	0,924
CE_Expertise	0,911
CE_Popular	0,867
CE_Relevant	0,831

 Table 21: Composite Reliability

CE_atractitv	0,98
CE_trust	0,994
EWOM	0,959
SMM_Inter	0,882

On the other hand, cronbach's alpha also checks internal consistency reliability, but in this case, it assumes that all indicators measuring a construct have the same level of reliability and help determine whether the construct is consistently measured (Hair et al., 2017). A Cronbach's alpha score above 0.70 is typically considered reliable, showing that the construct has good internal consistency. In this study, Cronbach's alpha values mostly surpassed this thresold, except BC_Popular and SMM_inter wheth showed values around 0.67, which is very close to 0.7. This confirms that all latent variables are reliable and consistent. These results, found in Table 22, reinforce the strength of the measurement model, aligning with Hair et al.'s (2017) recommendation that constructs should maintain a high level of reliability.

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha
BC_Extra	0,747
BC_Popular	0,673
BC_Status	0,8
BC_Subcultura	0,892
BRAND DEFENSE	0,869
BRAND PRIDE	0,916
BRAND_ATTACHMENT	0,923
BRAND_LOVE	0,922
CE_Expertise	0,888
CE_Popular	0,817
CE_Relevant	0,829
CE_atractitv	0,92
CE_trust	0,945
EWOM	0,958
SMM_Inter	0,677

Table 22: Cronbach's Alpha

4.6.3 CONVERGENT VALIDITY

Convergent validity assesses whether the indicators of a construct are highly correlated and effectively measure the same concept. In this study, outer loadings (λ) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were used to evaluate the convergent validity of the measurement model. The results can be found in Table 23. The AVE values for all constructs exceeded 0.6, which is above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.5 (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). This indicates that the indicators explain more than half of the variance in their respective constructs, confirming strong convergent validity. Additionally, the outer loadings ranged from 0.70 to 1.0, signifying a high correlation between indicators and their constructs, further validating the measurement model's reliability. These results suggest that the constructs are well-defined, and the indicators effectively contribute to their measurement.

Constructs	Average Variance extracted (AVE)
BC_Extra	0,646
BC_Popular	0,741
BC_Status	0,811
BC_Subcultura	0,75
BRAND DEFENSE	0,796
BRAND PRIDE	0,75
BRAND_ATTACHMENT	0,622
BRAND_LOVE	0,648
CE_Expertise	0,69
CE_Popular	0,724
CE_Relevant	0,746
CE_atractitv	0,745
CE_trust	0,711
EWOM	0,922
SMM_Inter	0,74

Table 23:	Convergent	Validity
	()	

4.6.4 DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY

We also measured discrimant validity, which ensures that a construct is conceptually and statistically distinct from other constructs in a model. It confirms that indicators intended to measure one construct are not excessively correlated with indicators of different constructs. To evaluate it we used two methods in this study: the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT).

4.6.4.1 FORNELL-LARCKER CRITERIA

The Fornell-Larcker criterion is a way to check whether each construct in a model is truly different from the others. It does this by comparing how much a construct relates to its own indicators versus other constructs. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), for discriminant validity to be confirmed, the square root of the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) of a construct should be greater than its highest correlation with any other construct.

From the results in Table 24, we substract that all constructs meet this condition, indicating that each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs. For example, BC_Status has a square root of AVE of 0.901, which is higher than its correlations with BC_Extra (0.425) and BC_Popular (0.094), confirming its distinctiveness. Similarly, Brand Defense (0.892) and Brand Pride (0.866) also have diagonal values exceeding their inter-construct correlations, reinforcing discriminant validity.

These findings suggest that all constructs in the model are well-differentiated, meaning that they measure unique concepts without excessive overlap. Therefore, based on the Fornell-Larcker results, discriminant validity is successfully established, supporting the reliability of the measurement model.

 Table 24: Results of Fornell-Lacker Criteria

	BC_Extra	BC_Popular	BC_Status	BC_Sub cultura	BRAND DEFENSE	BRAND PRIDE	BRAND_ATTA CHMENT	BRAND _LOVE	CE_Ex pertise	CE_Po pular	CE_Relev ant	CE_atra ctitv	CE_trust	EWOM	SMM_Cus	SMM_Inter	SMM_trend
BC_Extra	0,804																
BC_Popular	-0,02	0,861															
BC_Status	0,425	0,094	0,901														
BC_Subcultura	0,306	-0,468	0,235	0,866													
BRAND DEFENSE	0,107	0,244	0,024	0,034	0,892												
BRAND PRIDE	0,183	0,169	0,152	0,241	0,656	0,866											
BRAND_ATTACH MENT	0,203	0,159	0,215	0,255	0,527	0,696	0,789										
BRAND_LOVE	0,3	0,13	0,327	0,231	0,508	0,671	0,752	0,805									
CE_Expertise	0,306	0,179	0,319	0,053	0,192	0,212	0,241	0,27	0,831								
CE_Popular	0,039	0,213	0,136	-0,097	0,224	0,224	0,183	0,264	0,421	0,851							
CE_Relevant	0,202	0,058	0,265	0,197	0,171	0,326	0,291	0,376	0,221	0,534	0,864						
CE_atractitv	0,227	0,098	0,281	0,045	0,21	0,213	0,185	0,328	0,663	0,482	0,365	0,863					
CE_trust	0,354	0,091	0,248	0,134	0,237	0,307	0,258	0,333	0,679	0,326	0,158	0,564	0,843				
EWOM	0,237	0,068	0,123	0,221	0,548	0,518	0,585	0,501	0,132	-0,02	0,112	0,174	0,167	0,96			
SMM_Cus	0,084	-0,051	0,026	-0,004	-0,218	-0,208	-0,205	-0,201	-0,045	-0,14	-0,059	-0,152	-0,089	-0,135	1		
SMM_Inter	0,2	-0,017	0,115	0,113	0,071	0,212	0,209	0,157	0,167	0,128	0,163	0,078	0,197	0,219	0,361	0,86	
SMM_trend	0,23	0,06	0,215	0,026	-0,105	-0,019	-0,006	0,131	0,129	0,003	0,078	-0,019	0,094	0,136	0,478	0,388	1

4.6.4.2 HETEROTRAIT-MONOTRAIT RATIO (HTMT)

HTMT works by comparing the relationships between different constructs (heterotrait correlations) to the relationships within the same construct (monotrait correlations). If the HTMT value is below 0.85, it means that the constructs are clearly distinct from one another (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015).

Upon reviewing table 25, all HTMT values appear to be below the conservative threshold of 0.85, suggesting that there is no significant issue of construct overlap. For instance, Brand Attachment (0.809) and Brand Love (0.809) have relatively high HTMT values but still remain within the acceptable range. Additionally, constructs such as Brand Defense (0.736) and Brand Pride (0.756) show strong differentiation from other constructs, reinforcing the validity of the measurement model.

	BC_Extra	BC_Popular	BC_Status	BC_Sub cultura	BRAND DEFENSE	BRAND PRIDE	BRAND_ATTA CHMENT	BRAND	CE_Ex pertise	CE_Po pular	CE_Relev ant	CE_atra ctitv	CE_trust	EWOM	SMM_Cus	SMM_Inter	SMM_trend
BC_Extra																	
BC_Popular	0,114																
BC_Status	0,538	0,159															
BC_Subcultura	0,313	0,612	0,249														
BRAND DEFENSE	0,124	0,317	0,058	0,094													
BRAND PRIDE	0,203	0,224	0,167	0,251	0,736												
BRAND_ATTACH MENT	0,217	<mark>0,1</mark> 87	0,223	0,272	0,588	0,756											
BRAND_LOVE	0,322	0,171	0,38	0,238	0,563	0,728	0,809										
CE_Expertise	0,356	0,238	0,426	0,108	0,22	0,246	0,255	0,294									
CE_Popular	0,101	0,295	0,214	0,169	0,252	0,246	0,195	0,291	0,517	_							
CE_Relevant	0,246	0,083	0,354	0,217	0,203	0,373	0,324	0,431	0,27	0,648							
CE_atractitv	0,271	0,158	0,349	0,082	0,23	0,214	0,173	0,333	0,756	0,563	0,413						
CE_trust	0,384	0,12	0,286	0,122	0,232	0,293	0,22	0,308	0,752	0,367	0,177	0,602					
EWOM	0,262	0,135	0,127	0,236	0,603	0,553	0,623	0,529	0,132	0,052	0,126	0,163	0,138				
SMM_Cus	0,099	0,075	0,041	0,088	0,235	0,217	0,21	0,207	0,089	0,157	0,113	0,181	0,096	0,138			
SMM_Inter	0,257	0,093	0,145	0,134	0,088	0,257	0,246	0,193	0,215	0,174	0,243	0,083	0,209	0,237	0,483		
SMM_trend	0,266	0,095	0,261	0,065	0,111	0,075	0,065	0,137	0,139	0,036	0,116	0,042	0,098	0,138	0,478	0,508	

 Table 25: Results of Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)
 Participation

4.7 STRUCTURAL MODEL

After carefully analyzing the results of the measurement model, we have demonstrated its reliability and validity. Therefore, we will continue with the next step of our study: the structural model. This model analyzes the relationship between the items and its predictive capacity in the model.

This section of our study will follow five sequential steps, each of which will give us results that will be discussed.

Step1. Assessing the structrual model to identify potential issues related to collinearity

Each row of Table 26 represents a relationship between an independent variable (BC_Extra) and the dependent variable (e.g., BRAND_ATTACHMENT). The VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) values indicate the degree of multicolinearity, and the threshold we set to determine if there is a potential collinearity problem is higher than 5. We can conclude that collinearity is not a significant issue in this model as all VIF values are way belowe our threshold of 3. The highest values can be found in the variables CE_Expertise, CE_attractiv and CE_trust, showing a moderate level of correlation. Therefore, the independent variables can be considered adequately independent, meaning their effects on the dependent variables can be interpreted with confidence.

Table 26: Results of collinearity

	VIF
BC_Extra -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	1,472
BC_Popular -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	1,438
BC_Status -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	1,409
BC_Subcultura -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	1,633
BRAND_ATTACHMENT -> BRAND_LOVE	1,000
BRAND_LOVE -> BRAND DEFENSE	1,000
BRAND_LOVE -> BRAND PRIDE	1,000
BRAND_LOVE -> EWOM	1,000
CE_Expertise -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	2,576
CE_Popular -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	1,890
CE_Relevant -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	1,702
CE_atractity -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	2,218

CE_trust -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	2,133
SMM_Cus -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	1,465
SMM_Inter -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	1,347
SMM_trend -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	1,506

Step 2. Asses the significance and relevance of relationships within the structural model

Secondly, we will analyze the results of each hypothesis shown in Table 27. We assessed them using bootstraping, which is a resampling technique used in structural equation modeling (SEM) to assess the stability and reliability of parameter estimates without relying on strict distributional assumptions. By repeatedly drawing subsamples from the original data with replacement, bootstrapping generates empirical sampling distributions for model parameters, allowing for robust statistical inference even in complex models (Streukens & Leroi-Werelds, 2016). This process generates standard errors, t-values and p-values, which help determine whether relationships between variables are statistically significant. Moreover, the first column of Table 27 ("Original Sample (O)") contains the standardized regression coefficients obtained after running the PLS-SEM model. This value indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between two latent variables in the structural model, where a positive value means that an increase in the independent variable leads to an increase in the dependent variable, and a negative value suggests an inverse relationship

Following the studies of Hair et al. (2017), we used a threshold of 1.96 or higher for the t-values, at a 5% one-tailed signifance level (p-value) to analyze the hypotheses. Those that surpass this thresold have the p value highlighted in green.

	Original sample (O)	Average of the sample (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
BC_Extra -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	0,017	0,027	0,105	0,160	0,873

 Table 27: Results of the hypotesis testing

BC_Popular -> BRAND ATTACHMENT	0,268	0,253	0,116	2,315	0,021	
BC_Status ->						
BRAND_ATTACHMENT	0,035	0,043	0,105	0,337	0,736	
BC_Subcultura ->	0,292	0,289	0.115	2,532	0,011	
BRAND_ATTACHMENT						
BRAND_LOVE	0,752	0,755	0,040	18,868	0,000	
BRAND_LOVE -> BRAND	0,508	0,515	0,065	7,784	0,000	
DEFENSE BRAND LOVE > BRAND						
PRIDE	0,671	0,675	0,055	12,108	0,000	
BRAND_LOVE -> EWOM	0,501	0,506	0,071	7,101	0,000	
CE_Expertise -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	0,088	0,066	0,136	0,647	0,518	
CE Popular ->						
BRAND_ATTACHMENT	-0,035	0,004	0,118	0,296	0,767	
CE_Relevant -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	0,170	0,142	0,106	1,606	0,108	
CE_atractitv -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	-0,075	-0,071	0,123	0,612	0,541	
CE_trust -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	0,083	0,110	0,153	0,545	0,586	
SMM_Cus -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	-0,249	-0,240	0,100	2,493	0,013	
SMM_Inter -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	0,232	0,211	0,119	1,959	0,050	
SMM_trend -> BRAND_ATTACHMENT	-0,046	-0,040	0,106	0,434	0,664	

In the following Figure we can see a graphical representation of our final Structural Model. It only contains the items of the variables that were selected in the analysis of reliability in the measurement model section. Regarding the values of the arrows, the ones towards the items represent the factor loading of each item, and the ones that connect the variables correspond to the regression coefficients for each relationship, which can be found in Table 27.

Figure 14: Structural Model



With the results shown in Figure 14, we can decide whether we accept or not to accept our initial hypothesis. In Table 28 a list of our conclusions can be found. We accept all of them except H4.

HYPOTHESIS	ACCEPTANCE
H1: Brand Attachment is positively	Yes
associated with E-Brand Love	
H2: Brand Coolness is possitively	Yes
associated with Brand Attachment	
H3: SMMA is possitively associated with	Yes
Brand Attachment	
H4: Celebrity Endorsement is possitively	No
associated with Brand Attachment	
H5: e-Brand Love is possitively	Yes
associated with e-WOM	
H6: e-Brand Love is possitively	Yes
associated with Brand Pride	
H7: e-Brand Love is possitively	Yes
associated with Brand Defense	

 Table 28: Hypotesis acceptance

Step 3. Coefficient of determination (R2)

According to Gao (2023) the coefficient of determination (R^2) measures the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the predictor variables in a regression model. A higher R^2 value indicates that the model explains a greater portion of the variability in the outcome, while lower values suggest that other unmeasured factors contribute to the variance. He also states that R Squared adjusted provides a refined measure as it considerates the number of predictors in the model.

A more specific scale can be found in Chin (1998) that suggests that R^2 values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 indicate strong, moderate, and weak relationships, respectively. In the results of Table 29 we see that Brand Love (0.566) and Brand Pride (0.450) exhibit moderate explanatory power, suggesting that the predictors account for a reasonable portion of their variance. Meanwhile, Brand Defense (0.259), Brand Attachment (0.300),

and eWOM (0.251) fall within the weaker range, indicating that other unmeasured factors may have a greater influence on these variables.

	R – Squared values	R – squared values adjusted
BRAND DEFENSE	0,259	0,252
BRAND PRIDE	0,450	0,445
BRAND_ATTACHMENT	0,300	0,219
BRAND_LOVE	0,566	0,562
EWOM	0,251	0,244

 Table 29: R-Squared values for the latent endogenous variables

Step 4. Assessment of Efect size (f2)

In the fourth stage of the structural model measurement process we proceed with the analysis of f2. This measure, also known as effect size, quantifys the practical significance of relationships in a model by measuring the magnitude of effects, independent of sample size (Selya et al., 2012). According to Cohen (1988), an f2 value greater than 0.35 indicates a strong effect, while a value around 0.15 represents a moderate effect size. An f2 value close to 0.02 suggests a small effect, whereas values below 0.02 imply little to no observable effect. Table 29 presents the f2 results, where the color-coded values indicate the strength of the predictors' effects on the dependent variable. Red values (close to 0 or below 0.01) represent predictors with little to no impact. Black values (ranging from above 0.02 to below 0.35) signify a moderate effect, while green values (above 0.35) highlight key variables with a strong and substantial influence in the analys

 Table 30: Effect size results

	BC_Extra	BC_Popu lar	BC_Stat us	BC_Subc ultura	BRAND DEFENS E	BRAND PRIDE	BRAND_ ATTACH MENT	BRAND_LOVE	CE_Expe rtise	CE_Popu lar	CE_Relev ant	CE_atrac tity	CE_trust	EWOM	SMM_C us	SMM_Int er	SMM_tre nd
BC_Extra							0										
BC_Popular							0,071										
BC_Status							0,001										
BC_Subcultura							0,075										
BRAND DEFENSE																	
BRAND PRIDE																	
BRAND_ATTA CHMENT								1,303									
BRAND_LOVE					0,349	0,819								0,335			
CE_Expertise							0,004										
CE_Popular							0,001										
CE_Relevant							0,024										
CE_atractity							0,004										
CE_trust							0,005										
EWOM																	
SMM_Cus							0,06										
SMM_Inter							0,057										
SMM_trend							0,002										

Step 5. Determine the predictive value of Q2

As a last step, we carried out the technique of the Stone-Q2 Geisser's value, which is a technique that evaluates predictive relevance by sistematically omitting a subset of data from the analysis (Hair et al., 2013). Henseler et al. (2009) and Hair et al. (2017) state that a model with a Q2 value greater than zero (Q2>0) demonstrates predictive relevance, as determined by the Q2 test developed by Geisser (1974) and Stone (1974) to assess predictive capability. The results are presented in Table 31, where we can observe that every variable has a Q2 value is positive, meaning that they exceed the thresold of 0, which shows that all of them have predictive validity. However, among them we should highlight the following variables for having the highest values: BRAND_PRIDE and BRAND_LOVE.

	Q ² predict	RMSE	MAE
BRAND DEFENSE	0,067	0,979	0,802
BRAND PRIDE	0,167	0,929	0,752
BRAND_ATTACHMENT	0,078	0,976	0,793
BRAND_LOVE	0,133	0,948	0,711
EWOM	0,065	0,988	0,814

 Table 31: Q2 Results

5. Conclusions

This study explored the concept of e-brand love in the fast fashion industry using the SOR (Stimulus-Organism-Response) model, with Zara as the case study to provide a theoretical framework. Through the proposed model, we evaluated the relationship between key variables and their implications for consumer behavior. This section presents the conclusions drawn from our findings.

The results obtained through the PLS-SEM analysis confirm the validity and reliability of our model. It was demonstrated that Brand Attachment is a key determinant in the development of E-Brand Love, validating hypothesis H1. As shown in Figure 14, the beta coefficient of this relationship is 0.752, with a p-value of 0.000, confirming its significance.

Antecedents of Brand Attachment

- **Brand Coolness:** This factor significantly influences Brand Attachment. Specifically, the subdimensions of popularity and subcultural appeal showed a significant positive impact, with beta values of 0.292 and 0.268, respectively, both with p-values of 0.000, supporting H2.
- Celebrity Endorsement: Contrary to expectations, no significant relationship was found between Celebrity Endorsement and Brand Attachment. This refutes hypothesis H3 and suggests that in the case of Zara, brand attachment is influenced by other factors rather than the endorsement of public figures.
- Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA): The impact of social media marketing on Brand Attachment was observed through the Customization dimension. However, this relationship was negative (-0.292) and significant (p-value = 0.013), meaning that excessive customization of social media content may weaken consumer attachment to the brand. This does not support H4.

Consequences of Brand Love

Once we identified the factors that influence Brand Attachment and confirmed its direct impact on Brand Love, we analyzed the consequences of Brand Love. All proposed relationships were significant, leading to the acceptance of hypotheses H5, H6, and H7:

- E-WOM (Electronic Word-of-Mouth): Brand Love has a positive effect on e-WOM, with a beta of 0.501. This suggests that when consumers love a brand, they are more likely to share their experiences online, enhancing brand visibility and reputation.
- **Brand Defense:** A significant positive relationship (beta = 0.508) indicates that consumers with strong Brand Love actively defend the brand against criticism, which is particularly relevant in the fast fashion industry, where ethical and environmental concerns are prevalent.
- **Brand Pride:** Brand Love is strongly associated with Brand Pride (beta = 0.671), making it the second strongest relationship in our model. This means that when consumers develop strong emotional bonds with a brand, they take pride in their association with it, feeling a sense of belonging and validation from using its products.

In summary, we accept all of our initial hypothesis except H3, which is the one that suggests a relationship between Celebrity Engagement and Brand Attachment.

Managerial implications

Based on these findings, we outline several recommendations for brand management in the fast fashion industry:

- Enhancing Brand Coolness: Brands should focus on strengthening their perception as a cool brand, particularly in terms of popularity and subcultural appeal, to foster stronger Brand Attachment. This can be achieved by aligning with specific consumer groups, such as Gen Z, and staying relevant through trend-driven marketing strategies.
- **Optimizing Social Media Strategies:** Social media marketing should be carefully managed, particularly in terms of customization, as excessive personalization may negatively impact consumer attachment. Brands should focus on creating engaging yet broadly appealing content that resonates with a wide audience.
- **Rethinking Celebrity Endorsements:** While celebrity endorsements remain a popular marketing strategy in the fashion industry, their effectiveness in fostering Brand Attachment is not guaranteed. In the case of Zara, which already has a well-established identity, this should not be the fouc of their marketing strategy.
- Leveraging Brand Love for Long-Term Growth: Since Brand Love leads to significant benefits such as E-WOM, Brand Defense, and Brand Pride, brands should prioritize strategies that cultivate strong emotional connections with consumers. This will ultimately contribute to customer loyalty and long-term brand growth.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has certain limitations, primarily related to the sample size, which was relatively small. Future research should aim to expand the sample size and increase diversity to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, further studies could explore other factors that influence Brand Attachment and Brand Love, such as sustainability efforts and in-store experiences.

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7. USE OF CHATGPT'S DECLARATION

Por la presente, yo, Ángela Vallejo Mengod, estudiante de Doble Grado Administración y Dirección de Empresas y Business Analytics de la Universidad Pontificia Comillas al presentar mi Trabajo Fin de Grado titulado "Lovebrand Explicative Model: Case Study Zara" declaro que he utilizado la herramienta de Inteligencia Artificial Generativa ChatGPT u otras similares de IAG de código sólo en el contexto de las actividades descritas a continuación:

1. Brainstorming de ideas de investigación: Utilizado para idear y esbozar posibles áreas de investigación.

2. Crítico: Para encontrar contra-argumentos a una tesis específica que pretendo defender.

3. Referencias: Usado conjuntamente con otras herramientas, como Science, para identificar referencias preliminares que luego he contrastado y validado.

5. Interpretador de código: Para realizar análisis de datos preliminares

7. Constructor de plantillas: Para diseñar formatos específicos para secciones del trabajo.

8. Corrector de estilo literario y de lenguaje: Para mejorar la calidad lingüística y estilística del texto.

10. Sintetizador y divulgador de libros complicados: Para resumir y comprender literatura compleja.

13. Revisor: Para recibir sugerencias sobre cómo mejorar y perfeccionar el trabajo con diferentes niveles de exigencia.

14. Generador de encuestas: Para diseñar cuestionarios preliminares.

15. Traductor: Para traducir textos de un lenguaje a otro.

Afirmo que toda la información y contenido presentados en este trabajo son producto de mi investigación y esfuerzo individual, excepto donde se ha indicado lo contrario y se han dado los créditos correspondientes (he incluido las referencias adecuadas en el TFG y he explicitado para que se ha usado ChatGPT u otras herramientas similares). Soy consciente de las implicaciones académicas y éticas de presentar un trabajo no original y acepto las consecuencias de cualquier violación a esta declaración.

Fecha: 15/03/2025

Firma: _____Ángela Vallejo Mengod_____