Chapter 5
Consumer–Brand Relations:
An Investigation Into the Concept of Brand Hate

Ruchi Garg
BML Munjal University, India

Ritu Chikkara
BML Munjal University, India

Himanshu Suman
Hero Motocorp, India

Shashan Pande
Axis Bank, India

Rahul Sharan
Hero Motocorp, India

Tapan Panda
Jindal Global Business School, India

ABSTRACT

This research adapted Stemberg's (2003) triangular theory of hate to explore consumer brand relationships. Authors discussed that the protean character of Consumer brand relations (CBRs) in negative way has not been explored by prior conceptualizations in consumer research. The study conceptual scheme, in conformity with Stemberg's theory, was centred on the view that three psychological processes such as motivation, cognition, and emotion interact in several combinations to govern the nature of consumers' relations with brands. Authors' conceptualized eight kinds of CBRs by considering every combination of the three underlying psychological components. Authors have adopted the scale of hate from interpersonal relationship literature and tested it in context of consumer brand relationship. The managerial and theoretical implications, limitations, and future research directions are discussed in detail.

INTRODUCTION

Businesses enjoy many benefits by forming an image of their products/services in such a way that consumers start developing a strong emotional relationship with the brand (Albert *et al.*, 2013; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). This helps brands to reap benefits in the form of positive word of mouth, brand trust, repurchase intention, consumer citizenship behaviour, and so on (Batra *et al.*, 2012; Albert *et al.*, 2013; Garg *et al.*, 2015). Hence, brand is an important asset for the success of any business (Aaker, 1991). Just as the consumer's emotional connection with a brand could generate loyalty, one could also speculate the influence of a negative emotional connection of consumer and brand in the consumer's perception, brand loyalty, and on the profitability of the business (Zarantonello, Romani, Grappi, & Bagozzi, 2016).

Despite an increased interest in the relationship between consumers and brands, it can be argued that brand hate has been rather neglected and has received almost zilch amount of attention in the marketing and consumer behaviour literature (Bosse, 2014; Bryson, Atwal, & Dreissig, 2010; Dalli *et al.*, 2006; Delzen, 2014; Lee *et al.*, 2009; Romani *et al.*, 2012; Salvatori, 2007, Zarantonello *et al.*, 2016). Research on negative evaluations of products and brands is very limited, especially when compared to the existing research on positive attitudes (Zarantonello *et al.*, 2016). This asymmetry in research is understandable, particularly in the marketing field as companies and institutions are greatly interested in the practical consequences of positive forms of knowledge (Dalli, Romani, & Gistri, 2006).

However, even as it is important to study the concepts of brand loyalty and brand love, it is also important to understand why consumers dislike brands, or even develop hatred towards them. As a prevalent phenomenon, brand hate could lead to several repercussions for the brand, such as negative word of mouth, brand avoidance, negative brand image, and so on. This can tarnish the image of the brand and, hence, create a possibility of losing a big chunk of market in spite of having very good products/services. The study of brand hate and its measurement scale is therefore of stark importance in marketing.

Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) have indicated that brand hate is not the opposite of brand love. Interestingly, according to them, the lower bound for brand love is not its logical opposite (brand hate), but it is the absence of an emotional response, like satisfaction, for the particular brand (Sternberg, 2005). Marketing literature is full of studies that have examined brand avoidance, anti-consumption, brand dislike, negative emotions etc., in the past few years (Banister & Hogg, 2001; Lee *et al.*, 2009; Rindell, Strandvik, & Wilen, 2013, Romani, Grappi, & Dalli, 2012). Researchers have explored the concept of brand hate (Zarantonello *et al.*, 2016) only on the affective dimension of brand hate. A better understanding of brand hate and how it develops is necessary, particularly because of the growing complex nature of consumer-brand relationships.

This research integrates interpersonal relationship and consumer-brand relationship literature around the concept of hate and conceptualizes the concept of brand hate. Authors have adopted the 'hate' scale that is established in interpersonal relationship literature (Sternberg, 2003) and tested whether it can be applied in the context of consumer-brand relationship. Once its validity is established in consumer-brand relationship, the concept of brand hate is described as composing of motivation, cognition, and emotional components

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section discusses literature review on the concept of hate in the interpersonal relationship and consumer-brand relationship literature. The second section describes the research methodology employed in the paper and the subsequent section offers discussion.

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