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**Brand Polarization: Conceptualisation, Antecedents and
Outcomes**

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This thesis advances the understanding of brand polarization, a nascent concept in the marketing and branding academic literature. Brand polarization is defined as an affective phenomenon that involves passionate positive and negative feelings and offers a new analytical lens to the consumer-brand relationship knowledge. The current thesis addresses the nature, drivers and outcomes of the brand polarization phenomenon and answers three research questions.

To better understand brand polarization, the theoretical development involves a systematic literature review of five related concepts (polarization in political science, polarization in social psychology, brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate) and lie foundation for the development of a new conceptual model. The empirical analysis adopts a sequential mixed-methods research design with a qualitative and a quantitative study, where data is first collected via 22 semi-structured interviews, followed by a survey of 1,238 lovers and haters of polarizing brands in three different product categories. Consistent with the RQ2 and RQ3, the qualitative study utilises semi-structured interviews to identify the key antecedents and outcomes of brand polarization, and these preliminary insights inform the dimensionality of the phenomenon and the finalised conceptual model. Survey data was used to confirm the relationships hypothesised in the conceptual model and answer the RQ2 and RQ3.

The thesis findings show the multi-dimensional nature of brand polarization, which consists of brand passion, self-brand benchmarking, intra-group identification and inter-group dissociation, and offer a new reliable measurement for the phenomenon. The results also identify five drivers of brand polarization, namely brand strength, brand uniqueness, association with important issues, ideological compatibility/incompatibility and sense of community. Finally, the evidence supports the role of brand polarization in pairs of oppositional concepts including complimenting and complaining behaviours; brand loyalty and disloyalty; using pro and anti-brand merchandise; participation in a brand and anti-brand community; forgiveness and retaliation behaviours; positive and negative WoM; and defending and attacking the brand. The research offers several theoretical, methodological and managerial implications.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature: 

Print name: Sergio Andrés Osuna Ramírez

Abbreviations

AVE	Average variance extracted
CFA	Confirmatory factor analysis
CFI	Comparative fit index
CMIN/DF	Chi-square statistic
CR	Construct reliability
EFA	Exploratory factor analysis
EM	Expectation maximisation method
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy
MLE	Maximum likelihood estimation
MTurk	Amazon Mechanical Turk
PCA	Principal component analysis
Pclose	P of close fit
ProA	Prolific Academic
RMSEA	Root mean square error of approximation
RQ	Research question
SEM	Structural equation modelling
SRMR	Standardized root mean square residual
TLI	Tucker-Lewis index
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
WoM	Word-of-mouth

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research focus

This thesis aims to contribute to the consumer-brand relationship scholarship by exploring the brand polarization phenomenon, its dimensionality, drivers and outcomes. It is acknowledged in the literature that consumers tend to develop and value interpersonal-like relationships with brands (Fournier, 1998; Ghantous, 2016). Research has recognised the strategic importance for managers of understanding the nature of such relationships (Veloutsou & Guzmán, 2017). Importantly, the developed relationships between consumers and brands range from weak to strong and from positive to negative feelings (Alvarez & Fournier, 2016; Fetscherin et al., 2019).

Past literature has recognised both positive and negative outcomes of relationships with brands. For example, studies have identified beneficial outcomes of positive relationships with brands, such as brand loyalty (Wallace et al., 2017), brand commitment (Albert & Merunka, 2013), positive WoM (Khandeparkar & Motiani, 2018), resistance to negative information (Turgut & Gultekin, 2015) and willingness to pay a price premium (Bairrada et al., 2018). On the other hand, negative relationships with brands may cause unfavourable consequences like patronage reduction/cessation (Zarantonello et al., 2016), brand avoidance (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017), negative WoM (Romani et al., 2012), complaining (Zarantonello et al., 2016) and retaliation behaviours (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017). Research has mainly focused on the efforts brands should make to develop strong and positive emotional feelings among consumers (Veloutsou, 2015). However, scholars have largely not acknowledged the importance of managing negative feelings towards brands (Azer & Alexander, 2018; Grappi et al., 2019; Veloutsou & Guzmán, 2017).

Existing research has tended to divide the relationships consumers develop with brands into two mutually exclusive categories: positive or negative (Fetscherin & Heinrich, 2014). However, many brands simultaneously encounter a large group of lovers and a large group of haters. Examples are found in diverse product categories like fast food restaurants (Luo et al., 2013a), music artists (Outram, 2016), politicians (Wood & Jordan, 2018), news media (Armstrong, 2017) and sport teams (Grohs et al., 2015). These brands, which concurrently generate simultaneous passionate positive and negative emotions, are known as polarizing brands (Monahan et al., 2017), and are considered to be the basis of the brand polarization

phenomenon. Brand polarization occurs when a brand simultaneously encounters a large group of passionate lovers and a substantial and contrasting group of fervent haters.

Consumers demonstrate their polarizing feelings towards brands through positive and negative attitudes and behaviours, such as brand loyalty (Cho et al., 2018) or patronage reduction/cessation (Zarantonello et al., 2016), positive (Khandeparkar & Motiani, 2018) or negative (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017) WoM, active engagement (Sarkar & Sreejesh, 2014) or complaining and protest behaviours (Zarantonello et al., 2016), and brand forgiveness (Hegner, Fenko, et al., 2017) or brand retaliation (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017). Polarizing brands themselves recognize that they have lovers and haters and try to control the damaging effects generated from the haters (Luo et al., 2013b) and boost the positive effects that the lovers bring (Mafael et al., 2016). Other stakeholders potentially affected by brand polarization include sponsors, who can be supported or boycotted by association (Dalakas & Phillips-Melancon, 2012; Davies et al., 2006), participants in some sort of brand alliance, who are also classified in accordance with the polarizing brand they associate with (Armstrong, 2017; Walsh, 2017), and even investors, since polarizing brands are associated with lower variation in stock price (Luo et al., 2013b).

Polarizing brands seem to have specific characteristics that could be of benefit for the companies behind them. Research suggests that such brands might be a resource in various managerial tasks, including segmentation, differentiation and positioning (Luo et al., 2013a; 2013b) and in the planning and implementation of the communications strategy (Monahan, 2017; Monahan et al., 2017). A brand's polarizing nature could be also used to strengthen the bonds with its loyal passionate followers (Luo et al., 2013a).

Despite its potential application in the marketing and branding fields, brand polarization remains notably under-researched, and its dimensions, drivers and outcomes seem to be largely unexplored. The concept of brand polarization seems to lack of a clear definition (Mafael et al., 2016), the academic research on the topic is scant and the existing academic literature has primarily focused and analysed the concept of *polarizing brands* (Luo et al., 2013a; 2013b; Jayasimha & Billore, 2015; Monahan, 2017; Monahan et al., 2017), or *polarizing products* (Rozenkrants et al., 2017). Polarizing products are seen as "*products that some people like a great deal and other people dislike a great deal*" (Rozenkrants et al., 2017, p.759).

To appreciate the potential of the simultaneous positivity and negativity expressed by consumers towards a specific brand, an enhanced understanding of the concept of brand polarization is necessary (Luo et al., 2013a; 2013b). Further, the drivers and outcomes of the brand polarization phenomenon need to be better understood and organized (Luo et al., 2013b).

1.2 Research purpose and objectives

The study aims to explore the brand polarization phenomenon more holistically, to examine its nature, causes and consequences. This thesis responds to the recent calls in the literature that suggests that the increased negativity towards brand needs to be further examined (Veloutsou & Guzmán, 2017) and that hate does not have to harm brands (Monahan et al., 2017). To this end, current thesis examines diverse streams of literature to better conceptualise brand polarization, highlighting its potential opportunities for brands and individuals.

Three core objectives guide the present research:

1. To explore the nature of the brand polarization phenomenon. In this regards, current research aims to refine the existing conception of brand polarization and develop an instrument to measure it.
2. To examine the factors that drive brand polarization.
3. To investigate brand polarization's outcomes on consumers' relationships with brands.

1.3 Research methodology

To address the research objectives, the thesis adopts an exploratory sequential mixed methods research design. Such design involves the collection of qualitative data using semi-structured interviews, which are analysed via thematic analysis method (Study 1). The qualitative phase is then followed by the quantitative data collection in the form of an analytical survey (Studies 2 and 3). The survey data analysis involves Structural Equation Modelling (SEM).

The selected empirical approach reflects the stated research objectives. In line with the first objective, this study adopts a qualitative methodology to explore the nature of the brand polarization phenomenon. Consistent with the second and third research objectives, the

qualitative stage is further used to identify the key motivations behind brand polarization, and the potential outcomes of this phenomenon for consumers' relationships with brands. The qualitative phase thereby informs the quantitative phase also by helping to develop the second research instrument (survey) and finalise the conceptual model. Finally, the updated conceptual model is then tested in the quantitative stage.

This thesis adopts a research design that involves three distinct studies. Study 1 (qualitative) explores the dimensions, antecedents and outcomes of brand polarization and develops the conceptual model; Study 2 (quantitative) focuses on the measurement development; and Study 3 (quantitative) tests the research hypotheses in line with the conceptual model.

1.4 Expected contributions

Current thesis expects to make theoretical, methodological and practical contributions to the consumer-brand relationship scholarship. First, this research aims to contribute to the conception of brand polarization, a notably under-researched construct. To this end, the study summarises what is known about polarizing brands and evaluates other closely-related literatures in order to enrich the understanding of the phenomenon through a more advanced conceptualisation. Further, the study expects to provide a more holistic conception of the dimensionality of brand polarization. Available literature suggests two dimensions of political polarization: affective and ideological (Webster & Abramowitz, 2017). However, given that the extreme ends of brand polarization (brand love and brand hate) are affective in nature (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), additional research needs to be conducted to uncover the dimensionality of the phenomenon.

Secondly, this study intends to provide a methodological contribution by developing a measurement scale to capture the specific features of brand polarization. Although the literature on polarizing brands suggests the use of brand dispersion as a way to determine how polarizing a brand is (Luo et al., 2013b), and the political science and social psychology literatures offer different alternatives to measure political and group polarization (e.g. Krizan & Baron, 2007; Paddock, 2010; Rogowski & Sutherland, 2016; Wojcieszak, 2011), a specific method to measure the brand polarization phenomenon is missing.

Thirdly, the current thesis aims to advance the consumer-brand relationship research in the context of brand polarization by uncovering the causes of the development of the

phenomenon. The analysis of existing literature shows a multiplicity of potential antecedents of political polarization (e.g. Baldassarri & Bearman, 2007; Garner & Palmer, 2011), group polarization (e.g. Harton & Latané, 1997; Landemore & Mercier, 2012), brand love (e.g. Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012; Wallace et al., 2014), and brand hate (e.g. Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017; Zarantonello et al., 2016). Nonetheless, specific drivers of brand polarization are largely missing in the current literature.

Additionally, this research intends to contribute to marketing theory and practice by empirically examining the role of brand polarization in facilitating consumers' relationships with brands. Although existing research acknowledges different consequences of political polarization (e.g. Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Lau et al., 2017), brand love (e.g. Albert & Merunka, 2013; Fetscherin et al., 2014) and brand hate (e.g. Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017; Zarantonello et al., 2016), little is currently known about the specific consequences of brand polarization. Specifically, this research hopes to uncover potential outcomes of brand polarization through the qualitative stage and to test the relationships in the quantitative stage further.

Finally, the study aims to explore more holistically the potential opportunities of brand polarization for brands and individuals over and above the already noted segmentation, differentiation (Luo et al., 2013a; 2013b) and marketing communications choices (Monahan et al., 2017). It also aims to identify potential benefits and opportunities of brand polarization for the parties affected by the phenomenon.

1.5 Thesis structure

Current thesis includes 11 chapters, which are structured as follows. Following the introduction to the thesis, Chapter 2 provides a review of what is known about brand polarization and polarizing brands and conducts an in-depth exploration of the literatures on polarization in the political science and social psychology disciplines, brand rivalry, brand love, and brand hate.

Chapter 3 presents the overall research design and approach to the research that guides the collection and analysis of empirical data. The chapter starts with the discussion of philosophical considerations pertinent to the current research, addressing the appropriate ontological and epistemological positions. Additionally, the chapter presents the chosen research context and addresses the arguments for the chosen analytical approach.

Chapter 4 concerns methodology adopted in the qualitative study of this thesis. The chapter starts with an overview of the sampling design used in the qualitative study. The chosen method of data collection and approach to the qualitative data analysis, in line with specific requirements for the rigour in qualitative research are also addressed.

Chapter 5 presents the results of the qualitative study. The chapter addresses the findings pertinent to the first, second and third research objectives concerning the dimensionality, drivers and outcomes of brand polarization. The chapter provides examples from the qualitative interviews to corroborate the findings.

Chapter 6 outlines the conceptual model developed on the basis of the results from the qualitative study and the issues identified in the literature review. In line with the second and third research objectives, this chapter presents and defines the key antecedents and outcomes of the brand polarization phenomenon. The conceptual model identifies the theoretical relationship between the constructs and stipulates the relevant hypotheses to be tested in the quantitative study.

Chapter 7 is dedicated to the design of quantitative data collection and analysis, and covers the issues applicable to the research design of the quantitative study in its hypothesis testing section. The chapter presents the quantitative research instrument and outlines the process of questionnaire development. Questionnaire structure is presented, followed by the discussion of sampling design and issues related to questionnaire administration. Finally, the chapter addresses the the steps undertaken to ensure the suitability of the collected data and the data analysis methodology adopted for hypothesis testing.

Chapter 8 outlines the specific steps employed in the scale development section of the quantitative study and the findings associated with the RQ1 – the nature of brand polarization. Specifically, the chapter presents the rationale behind the development of new measurement scales for brand polarization and three other constructs included in the conceptual model. It outlines the issues related to the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the brand polarization dimensions and three additional research constructs. Finally, the chapter discusses the evaluation of psychometric properties of the newly developed measures.

Chapter 9 presents the results of the hypothesis testing section of the quantitative study. The chapter begins with the assessment of the overall measurement model. In line with

the RQ2 and RQ3, the chapter addresses the results of hypothesis testing related to the influence of specific drivers of brand polarization, as well as the effect of brand polarization on the identified outcome variables.

Chapter 10 provides an in-depth discussion of study findings vis a vis the research questions stated in this thesis based on the evidence from the qualitative and quantitative studies. Specifically, here the results of the studies are compared to the evidence from the existing research on polarization, brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate, and their correspondence with or deviation from the existing literature is explained.

Finally, Chapter 11 addresses the key contributions of this thesis. It discusses the theoretical and methodological contributions of the current research, followed by the overview of the implications for the marketing practice. The chapter closes with a discussion of limitations of the current research and potential avenues for future enquiries.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews past evidence concerning brand polarization. Accordingly, this chapter presents a review of what is known about brand polarization and polarizing brands through an in-depth exploration of the literature of the concept of polarization in the political science and social psychology disciplines in order to apply this knowledge, when appropriate, to the marketing field. The literatures of brand rivalry, brand love, and brand hate, concepts closely-related to brand polarization, are also reviewed and analysed.

The importance of the literature review is threefold. Firstly, the analysis of the bodies of literature mentioned above is essential in the identification of research gaps, necessary in the formulation of the research questions that guide the present thesis. Secondly, it is the base for designing, conducting and interpreting the qualitative study explained in later chapters. Further, it also supports the development of the conceptual model, which is in turn the foundation in the design of the quantitative phase.

The chapter is structured in three main sections. The first section evidences what is known to date about brand polarization, its definitions and relevant existing research on the topic. This section explores applications of brand polarization suggested in the literature and an alternative method to measure how polarizing a brand is.

The second section includes an in-depth analysis of the literature on the concept of polarization in the political science and social psychology disciplines. The section illustrates the different definitions of the concept in both disciplines, comparing and contrasting the commonalities and differences. It also presents the dimensions, contexts, drivers, outcomes and measures of polarization found in the literature of the political science and social psychology disciplines.

The third section presents an analysis of three closely related constructs to brand polarization: brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate. The analysis of these concepts aims to identify the link between brand polarization and brand rivalry, and to provide an overview of the two extreme feelings related with the concept of brand polarization, brand love and brand hate. Definitions, dimensions, antecedents and outcomes of brand love and brand hate are further analysed in this section. At the end of the section, an advanced definition

of brand polarization that incorporates useful insights of the political science and social psychology disciplines and of the concepts of brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate is presented.

The chapter concludes with the research gaps derived from the review of brand polarization, polarization, brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate. The research gaps lead to the enunciation of the research questions that guide the present study.

2.2 Review of the brand polarization concept

2.2.1 What is known about brand polarization

In a number of contexts, consumer brands are not simply tools that improve the recognisability of the offer and facilitate transactions, but have become relationship partners to which consumers are emotionally attached and try to develop bilateral, interpersonal-like connections (Fernandes & Moreira, 2019; Fournier, 1998). Recently, research has recognised that the relationships consumers develop with brands vary in terms of strength and valence, ranging from weak to strong and from positive to negative emotions (Fetscherin et al., 2019). Understanding the nature of consumer-brand relationships and their consequences for brands is of strategic importance for managers, as it is the new way that consumers and brands interact in the current environment (Veloutsou & Guzmán, 2017).

Existing research on consumer-brand relationships typically distinguishes between positive and negative relationships. Most studies suggests that when customers share a common emotional disposition toward brands, positive with loved brands (e.g, Albert & Merunka, 2013; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) or negative with hated brands (e.g. Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017; Zarantonello et al., 2016), they engage differently depending on their brand feelings (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014). In principle, positive feelings towards brands are considered to be 'good' for the brand, because they facilitate positive word of mouth (WoM) (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), make consumers more loyal (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Veloutsou, 2015), are more willing to forgive a brand that misbehaves (Hegner, Fenko, et al., 2017) and to pay a price premium (Albert & Merunka, 2013). Consumers' negative feelings towards brands are often thought of as 'bad' for the brand because they increase complaints (Zarantonello et al., 2016), negative WoM (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017; Zarantonello et al., 2016), and protests (Zarantonello et al., 2016),

reduce patronising (Zarantonello et al., 2016) and make consumers more likely to ask for revenge (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017). Although the majority of studies focuses on the effects of consumer-brand relationships on brands, having strong relationships of a positive or negative nature is also good for consumers because it promotes their self-signalling (Alvarez & Fournier, 2016), increases self-esteem (Trudeau & Shobeiri, 2016), provides a sense of self-worth (Fournier, 1998) and allows them to self-express (Fournier, 1998; Trudeau & Shobeiri, 2016). Past research tends to suggest that brands should try to develop strong and positive relationships with their consumers (Veloutsou, 2015) and only a few studies have drawn attention to the fact that negativity towards brands also needs to be managed (Grappi et al., 2019; Jain & Sharma, 2019; Zarantonello et al., 2018).

Despite the fact that nearly all of the existing research indicates that consumers form only, or primarily, a positive or negative relationship with a specific brand, the reality is somewhat different. Many brands simultaneously have a significant group of lovers and a substantial group of haters. Evidence of the phenomenon often comes from sectors where self-expression is important (Rozenkrants et al., 2017), like sports teams (Grohs et al., 2015; Mares & Blackburn, 2019), political candidates (Großer & Palfrey, 2019), artists (Partridge, 2014) and religious organizations (Reimer, 2017), but also other sectors such as food, petrochemicals and news media, where it is not expected. For instance, brands such as Trump Hotels, CNN and NBC News in the US (Armstrong, 2017) or McDonald's, Starbucks and BP (Luo et al., 2013a; Thompson et al., 2006) are reported to have large numbers of supporters and opposers. Other brands, such as Facebook, feature on most loved (Morning Consultant, 2017) and most hated brands lists (Stebbins et al., 2018). Further, as explained by the concepts of Double Jeopardy (Ehrenberg et al., 1990) and Negative Double Jeopardy (Kucuk, 2008), strong and valuable brands may attract a bigger base of loyal customers, but also more anti-brand hate attention than less valuable brands. These brands, rated with a widely dispersed attitude ranging from bad to excellent or from love to hate are considered to be polarizing brands (Jayasimha & Billore, 2015).

Polarization, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is the "division into two sharply contrasting groups or sets of opinions or beliefs" (Oxford Dictionaries," n.d.). Polarizing brands are defined as brands that have considerable amounts of fervent supporters and passionate detractors at the same time (Luo et al., 2013a; Monahan et al., 2017). In similar vein, Jayasimha & Billore (2015) define polarizing brands as brands which consumers rate with a widely dispersed attitude (bad/excellent, love/hate). In summary, brand polarization

occurs when a specific brand possesses an ample group of consumers expressing emotions on the positive extreme of the consumer-brand relationship (love), and a substantial and contrasting group of consumers on the opposite end of the emotional scale (hate).

2.2.2 Existing research on brand polarization

Although important and applicable to the marketing and branding strategies, the concept of brand polarization seems to be notoriously under-researched and its consequences are largely unknown. The academic research on the topic is scant and the existing academic literature has primarily focused and analysed the concept of *polarizing brands* (Jayasimha & Billore, 2015; Luo et al., 2013a; Luo et al., 2013b; Monahan, 2017; Monahan et al., 2017), or *polarizing products* (Rozenkrants et al., 2017). Polarizing products are seen as “*products that some people like a great deal and other people dislike a great deal*” (Rozenkrants et al., 2017, p. 759) and operationalized as products with “*bimodal rating distributions*” (Rozenkrants et al., 2017, p. 759). However, research provides very limited evidence on whether these products possess other properties except the bimodal ratings. Brand polarization as a concept is not clearly defined (Mafael et al., 2016). The journal article by Luo et al. (2013b) attempts to measure the level of polarization of a brand through brand dispersion, or variance in ratings across consumers of a specific brand. Brand dispersion helps to reflect the existence of polarization into brand lovers and haters: the higher the dispersion, the more polarized the brands’ cross-consumer ratings (Luo et al., 2013b). The conclusions of this work, however, are concerned about the impact of brand dispersion on financial indicators, such as stock prices, returns and firm risk. In the marketing literature, the polarization index is used to measure changes in the heterogeneity of consumer choice, signalling higher or lower brand loyalty (Casteran et al., 2019; Fader & Schmittlein, 1993).

The existing research on brand polarization suggests some application of the concept. While some brands seem to have a polarizing nature –e.g. sports teams (Grohs et al., 2015), political candidates (Wood & Jordan, 2018) and religious organizations (Migheli, 2019)–, for others, polarization strategy is intentionally developed as a segmentation and/or differentiation method –e.g. Miracle Whip, Marmite and Strongbow (Luo et al., 2013a)–. Luo et al. (2013a) assert that brand polarization might be useful in the segmentation strategy, as it facilitates the identification of brand lovers in order to enhance their relationship with the brand, and also to respond more efficiently to the actions of brand detractors. The authors explain three alternative paths to be considered when managing a

polarizing brand: placate the haters, tease the haters or amplify a polarizing attribute. Placating the haters refers to trying to change the haters' negative opinion of the brand by fixing the reasons for their hate. Teasing the haters is deliberately antagonizing with the haters of the brand in order to strengthen the connection with brand lovers. Lastly, in order to increase the differentiation point, hopefully augmenting brand lovers' loyalty, some brand managers develop new products emphasizing on the unique characteristics of the brand (Luo et al., 2013a).

Consumers, companies and various stakeholders are affected by brands or acknowledge the existence of polarization through their behaviour. Individuals demonstrate their polarizing feelings towards brands through positive and negative attitudes and behaviours (Jain & Sharma, 2019), such as brand opposition or brand loyalty (Kuo & Hou, 2017; Wolter et al., 2016), generation of negative WoM (Luo et al., 2013b), willingness to harm a brand although others love it (Dalakas & Phillips-Melancon, 2012) and join groups which clearly separate them from others who have exactly the reverse feelings towards the same brand (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009; Popp et al., 2016). Managers of polarizing brands recognize that they have lovers and haters and try to control the damaging effects generated from the haters (Luo et al., 2013b) and boost the positive effects that the lovers bring (Mafael et al., 2016). Other stakeholders potentially affected by brand polarization include sponsors, who can be supported or boycotted by association (Dalakas & Phillips-Melancon, 2012; Davies et al., 2006), participants in some sort of brand alliance, who are also classified in accordance with the polarizing brand they associate with (Armstrong, 2017; Walsh, 2017), and even investors, since polarizing brands are associated with lower variation in stock price (Luo et al., 2013b).

Polarizing brands seem to have specific characteristics that could be of benefit for the companies behind them. Research suggests that such brands might be a resource in various managerial tasks, including segmentation, differentiation and positioning (Luo et al., 2013a; 2013b) and in the planning and implementation of the communications strategy, as hate-acknowledging advertising increases the positive WoM behaviour among the lovers of a polarizing brand (Monahan, 2017; Monahan et al., 2017). A brand's polarizing nature could be also used to strengthen the bonds with its loyal passionate followers (Luo et al., 2013a).

The review of the literature reveals the lack of a clear definition of brand polarization. Research using the term brand polarization is not clearly defining it, and operationalises it as brand attitude (Mafael et al., 2016). This approach does not really provide justice to the complex nature of the phenomenon. To conceptualize brand polarization, it is necessary to look how polarization has been approached in other disciplines.

The polarization phenomenon has been extensively researched in the area of political science, considering it from diverse contexts like political parties (e.g. Gordon & Landa, 2018), presidential elections (e.g. Wood & Jordan, 2018), religious polarization (e.g. Ribberink et al., 2018), ethnic differences (e.g. McDoom, 2012), among others. As such, the review of the political polarization concept is deemed to be important in the conceptual development of the brand polarization phenomenon. Furthermore, group polarization has also been widely investigated in the social psychology discipline (Isenberg, 1986). Different group polarization theories have been presented in the last few decades (e.g. Brady & Wu, 2010; Dandekar et al., 2013; Landemore & Mercier, 2012). These theories might provide a useful view in the development of the brand polarization concept from a discipline belonging to the social sciences.

Additionally, the scholarship on three branding-related concepts, namely brand/team rivalry, brand love and brand hate was further reviewed. The concept of brand/team rivalry was chosen as it shares some common points with brand polarization. The literature on brand love and brand hate was analysed because these two concepts represent the two extreme opposite feelings associated with brand polarization.

2.3 Polarization in the political science and social psychology disciplines

2.3.1 Search and elimination process of the articles

The concept of polarization has been extensively researched in the political science and social psychology disciplines in the last decades. A review of the polarization literature in the two disciplines was conducted, with “polarization” as the search term in peer-reviewed, journal articles in English in the last five decades. The Worldwide Political Science Abstracts database was used to search for the articles in the political science discipline. For the articles on polarization in the social psychology discipline, the search was conducted using EBSCO’s Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection database. Using appropriate inclusion and exclusion criteria that were determined after discussion

with three academic experts in each one of the fields of political science, social psychology and marketing, a data sample of forty-eight articles on polarization in the political science discipline and thirty articles in the social psychology discipline was identified and analysed. Table 1 shows the elimination process of the articles in both disciplines.

Table 1 Search process and inclusion criteria (polarization in political science and social psychology).

	Political science	Social psychology
Inclusion criterion #1 Database(s)	Worldwide Political Science	EBSCO's Psychology and Behavioral Sciences collection
Inclusion criterion #2 Search term(s)	"Polarization"	"Polarization"
Inclusion criterion #3 Document type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Peer-reviewed journal articles
Inclusion criterion #4 Language	English	English
Inclusion criterion #5 Time period	1967 – 2018	1967 – 2018
Initial number of identified articles (inclusion criteria)	2.528	1.046
Exclusion criterion # 1	Articles about polarization in areas different than political science	Articles about polarization in areas different than social psychology
Excluded	1.942	857
Survived	586	189
Exclusion criterion # 2	Editorials, duplicated articles and articles having polarization as a peripheral theme	Editorials, duplicated articles and articles having polarization as a peripheral theme
Excluded	457	141
Survived	129	48
Exclusion criterion # 3	Articles that did not present a definition of polarization	Articles that did not present a definition of polarization
Excluded	81	18
Final sample	48	30

For the data extraction process, a spreadsheet was used as a proforma. The proforma included the name of the author(s), the article title, publishing year, journal, area of research, main ideas, definition of polarization, drivers of polarization, outcomes of polarization, context, measures of polarization, and country where the research was conducted.

2.3.2 Definitions of polarization

2.3.2.1 Definitions of polarization in political science

Polarization in political science is more frequently defined as strong or extreme ideological disagreement, difference or distance (Papageorgiou & Autto 2015; Lupu 2015; Rogowski & Sutherland 2016). This definition (PPS1 in Table 2) views polarization as a rational process, in which the distance between two groups at opposite ends of the spectrum increases based on the difference or disagreement of ideas (Lee, 2015; Wronski, 2016). The ideological distance also alters the partisans feelings towards the opposing party and its candidates (Banda & Kirkland, 2018). Partisans go through a process of self-categorization to define the ideology they identify with (Hoffarth & Hodson, 2016). As the distance between the groups becomes larger, partisans' identity grows stronger (Harrison, 2016) and attitudes become more internally consistent (Lelkes, 2016).

Another common definition of polarization in political science relates to Tajfel's (1974) social identity theory, and states that political polarization includes both positive evaluations of the own party and negative evaluations of the opposing party (PPS2 in Table 2) (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Jordan & Bowling, 2016; Strickler, 2018). Having constructive appraisals of co-partisans and negative assessments and discrimination against opposing partisans is a common scenario in the political arena (Esteban & Schneider, 2008; McCoy et al., 2018). Polarization is determined by homogeneity within a group and heterogeneity among groups (Clark, 2009) and derives in strong feelings such as in-group favouritism and out-group hatred (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015).

A more behavioural political science definition, also related to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974), affirms that polarization is the extent to which partisans develop a sense of belonging with other like-minded people while distancing themselves from the supporters of the opposing party, who are viewed as a disliked out-group (PPS3 in Table 2) (LaMothe, 2012; Lau et al., 2017; Wood & Jordan, 2018). Political polarization leads to bias and can influence hostile behaviours and judgements against the out-group in non-political situations (Lau et al., 2017). Self-categorization, or the incorporation into the individual's self-concept of the membership to a group, is observed in the polarization phenomenon (Suhay, 2015).

For other political science authors, polarization concerns simply moving from the centre toward the extremes of the ideological spectrum, or bimodality (PPS4 in Table 2) (Fiorina

& Abrams, 2008; Levendusky & Pope, 2011; Peterson & Spirling, 2018). This clustering of preferences near the poles might be caused by the salience of the issue (issues that generate passion), and can stimulate participation and engagement among partisans (Evans, 2003; Hetherington, 2009). Preference differences can also be a motive for polarization (Dixit & Weibull, 2007).

Mason (2013) provides a somewhat different political science approach and defines polarization as rising partisan strength, partisan bias, activism, and anger (PPS5 in Table 2). This means a cognitive (partisan bias), affective (feelings of anger) and behavioural (activism) view of the phenomenon. While issue polarization is typified by an increased extremity of issue positions, behavioural polarization is characterized by a progressively biased, active, and angry electorate (Mason, 2013). The definitions of polarization in the political science discipline are shown in Table 2.

2.3.2.2 Definitions of polarization in social psychology

Polarization has also been examined in social psychology. The most recurrent definition in the social psychology discipline describes the group polarization phenomenon as the tendency of individuals to become more extreme in the direction of the initial leanings after group discussion (PSP1 in Table 2) (Abril, 2018; Landemore & Mercier, 2012; Liu & Latane, 1998). This definition encompasses a rational element (points of view becoming more extreme) and a behavioural element (group discussion) (Burton et al., 2006; Flint et al., 2006; Wojcieszak, 2011). Social influences, or the desire to be favourably perceived by other group members, act as one of the main drivers of group polarization (Landemore & Mercier, 2012). Another determinant of the phenomenon is issue relevance (Krizan & Baron, 2007). Self-categorization and social differentiation also play important roles in the element development of polarization. To be more representative of the in-group, individuals try to be similar to in-group members and different from out-group members (Friedkin, 1999).

Research in social psychology offers four more definitions of polarization. Some suggest that polarization is the degree of opposition or conflict on a certain issue among the members of a population (PSP2 in Table 2) (Dandekar et al., 2013; Edvardsson & Vegelius, 1975). When combined, opinion formation and higher interaction between similar minded individuals result in polarization (Dandekar et al., 2013). In a similar vein, Baliga et al. (2013) also consider that polarization occurs when beliefs and/or actions go in opposite

directions after observing the same evidence (PSP3 in Table 2). Polarization is a response to ambiguity aversion (Baliga et al., 2013). Kalai & Kalai (2001) assert that polarization is observed when similarly-minded people tend to take opposite positions located at the extreme poles of distribution (PSP4 in Table 2). According to the authors, in game theory, polarization happens when players choose drastically opposing strategies. The last definition in the social psychology discipline describes polarization as separate piles of opinions at the extreme poles of distribution (PSP5 in Table 2) (Harton & Latané, 1997; Rohde, 1974). As involvement leads to polarization, additional information or thought on an issue might drive individuals with moderate attitudes to become more involved and more extreme (Harton & Latané, 1997).

Table 2 **Definitions of polarization**

Def.	Evidence of strong/ extreme ends	Thinking	Feeling	Action	References
PPS1	✓	Ideological disagreement Ideological difference Ideological distance Self-categorization			Banda & Kirkland (2018); Carroll & Kubo (2018); Gordon & Landa (2018); Lauka et al. (2018); Moore, (2018); Webster & Abramowitz (2017); Harrison (2016); Hoffarth & Hodson (2016); Lelkes (2016); Rogowski & Sutherland (2016); Wronski (2016); Farina (2015); Lee (2015); Lupu (2015); Papageorgiou & Autto (2015); Ezrow et al. (2014); Wang (2014); Dettrey & Campbell (2013); Tepe (2013); Ura & Ellis (2012); Brown et al. (2011); Rehm & Reilly (2010); Fiorina et al. (2008); Layman et al. (2006); DiMaggio et al. (1996)
PPS2		Positive evaluation of the in-group and negative evaluation of the out-group	In-group favouritism and out-group hatred		LeBas (2018); McCoy et al. (2018); Strickler (2018); Jordan & Bowling (2016); Iyengar & Westwood (2015); Pildes (2011); Clark (2009); Esteban & Schneider (2008).
PPS3		Self-categorization	Sense of belonging to a group of followers Sense of distancing from the group of supporters of the rival		Ridout et al. (2018); Wood & Jordan (2018); Lau et al. (2017); Suhay (2015); LaMothe (2012).
PPS4	✓				Peterson & Spirling (2018); Levendusky & Pope (2011); Hetherington (2009); Levendusky (2009); Berrebi & Klor (2008); Fiorina & Abrams (2008); Dixit & Weibull (2007); Evans (2003); Kuhn & Lao (1996).
PPS5	✓	Partisan bias	Anger	Activism	Mason (2013).
PSP1	✓	Becoming more extreme in the views Self-categorization		Joint discussion	Abril (2018); Landemore & Mercier (2012); Wojcieszak (2011); Krizan & Baron (2007); Lee (2007); Burton et al. (2006); Flint et al. (2006); Sunstein (2002a); Sunstein (2002b); Mendelberg (2002); Friedkin (1999); Liu & Latane (1998); Chandrashekar et al. (1996); Williams & Taormina (1993); Rao & Steckel (1991); Abrams et al. (1990); Hogg et al. (1990); Nowak et al. (1990); Turner et al. (1989); Isenberg (1986); Mackie (1986), Hinsz & Davis (1984); Myers (1978); Myers & Lamm (1976).
PSP2	✓	Opposition or conflict			Dandekar et al. (2013); Edvardsson & Vegelius (1975).
PSP3	✓	Opposing beliefs		Opposing actions	Baliga et al. (2013).
PSP4	✓	Opposite positions			Kalai & Kalai (2001).
PSP5	✓	Opposing opinions			Harton & Latané (1997); Rohde (1974).

PPS: Polarization in Political Science, PSP: Polarization in Social Psychology

2.3.2.3 Comparing the definitions of polarization

Three important insights emerge from the synthesis of the definitions of polarization presented in the literature of the political science and social psychology disciplines. These include (1) the importance of the in-group and out-group incidence on polarization (social identity theory) (e.g. Esteban & Schneider, 2008; Mackie, 1986); (2) the extremeness of opinions when polarization occurs, which leads to strong ideological disagreements and conflict (e.g. Dandekar et al., 2013; Farina, 2015); (3) the observed bipolarity/bimodality as the result of the polarization process (e.g. Hetherington, 2009; Rohde, 1974). The discussion below expands these points.

Considering the first point, in-group and out-group incidence on polarization, Mackie (1986) explains the three steps of the social identification process. In the first step, known as social categorisation, the self and others are identified to represent different social groups. The second step is the acknowledgement of the common and/or representative attributes, behaviours, and norms that differentiate one group from others and which results in stereotypical extremeness of the groups. The third step is self-stereotyping or conforming to the in-group attributes, behaviours and norms.

Attitude polarization is caused when the individual conforms to the perceived extreme group norm –intragroup identification– and simultaneously tends to distance herself from a disliked out-group norms –intergroup alienation– (Clark, 2009; Mackie, 1986; Suhay, 2015). In summary, from the social identity theory perspective, polarization occurs when members exhibit in-group conformity in the direction of the majority and out-group separation, often showing signs of hostility and dislike towards out-group members (Lau et al., 2017; Suhay, 2015).

Regarding the second point, extremeness of opinions when polarization occurs is recurrent theme in the political science literature. For example, Hoffarth & Hodson (2016) define polarization as extreme ideological differences. Similarly, Wronski (2016) states that polarization refers to ideological extremeness between the political parties, which leads to disconnection from one another. In the social psychology literature, the common definition of group polarization posits that following group discussion, individuals tend to become more extreme in the views favoured by the group (e.g. Landemore & Mercier, 2012; Lee, 2007).

Finally, regarding bipolarity/bimodality, Rohde (1974, p.207) states that polarization refers to “completely separate piles of opinions at the extreme poles of distribution”. More recent works, especially in the political science discipline, substitute this bipolarity for bimodality, stating that polarization refers to the movement from the centre toward the extremes (e.g. Dixit & Weibull, 2007; Levendusky & Pope, 2011).

2.3.3 Dimensions of polarization

In the political science literature, different authors have distinct approaches to the dimensions of polarization. DiMaggio et al. (1996) and Evans (2003) agree on four dimensions of polarization: dispersion, bimodality, consolidation and opinion constraint. When opinions are more widely dispersed, it is more difficult to establish and maintain centrist consensus. Dispersion is measured with variance (DiMaggio et al., 1996; Evans, 2003). Bimodality refers to distribution of opinions. The more opinions move towards separate modes, the higher the probability of polarization and conflict. Bimodality is measured with kurtosis (DiMaggio et al., 1996; Evans, 2003). Consolidation is associated to “the extent to which social attitudes become correlated with salient individual characteristics or identities” (DiMaggio et al., 1996, p.693). Consolidation is measured with the difference in the mean of variables between groups (Evans, 2003). The opinion constraint dimension refers to how opinions on one item are associated with opinions on another. This dimension indicates ideological cohesion, and it is measured with Cronbach’s alpha (DiMaggio et al., 1996; Evans, 2003).

Webster & Abramowitz (2017) present another view regarding the dimensions of polarization. The authors state that polarization has two dimensions, affective and ideological. Affective polarization is closely related to group conflict theory, and emphasizes the importance of group membership. Affective polarization is the reason for which members of a group show negative feelings towards members and leaders of the opposing party. Ideological polarization relates to the extent a party moves towards the ideological left or right (Webster & Abramowitz, 2017). The left dimension is often associated with the liberal philosophy and the right dimension with the conservative philosophy (Dalton, 2006; Devine, 2012). In similar vein, Freire (2015) differentiates between two dimensions of polarization: identification and competition. The dimension of identification is linked to economic values orientations and non-economic values orientations (for example, religion vs social liberalism values or laissez-faire vs protection of the environment values). The

other dimension, a dimension of competition, structures the rivalry between parties and sets the basis for inter-group polarization. Tepe (2013) presents as dimensions what appear to be types of polarization: issue polarization, ideological polarization, individual level polarization, and affective polarization or polarization driven by emotions. Table 3 presents the dimensions of polarization found in the literature of the political science discipline.

Table 3 Dimensions of polarization in the political science discipline

Dimensions of polarization	Author(s)
Affective and ideological	(Webster & Abramowitz, 2017)
Identification and competition	(Freire, 2015)
Dispersion, bimodality, consolidation and opinion constraint	(DiMaggio et al., 1996; Evans, 2003)
Distance and overlap	(Baldassarri & Bearman, 2007; Levendusky & Pope, 2011)
Left and right	(Dalton, 2006; Devine, 2012; Papageorgiou & Autto, 2015; Rehm & Reilly, 2010)

2.3.4 Contexts of polarization

The most frequent context of polarization observed in the social psychology literature is the occurrence of the phenomenon in the group decision-making process (e.g. Abrams et al., 1990; Hogg et al., 1990; Krizan & Baron, 2007). In this context, it is argued that when making decisions, groups often rely in social comparison and persuasive argumentation, which combined produce polarization (Isenberg, 1986). Group members also tend to conform to extreme group norm, which causes the polarization of attitudes (Mackie, 1986).

In the political science literature, the most recurrent contexts of the polarization phenomenon relate to relevant or highly involving issues, such as political candidates or parties (40% of the articles), religious polarization (12% of the articles), polarization and ethnic differences (9% of the articles), presidential elections (9% of the articles), and polarization on global warming and climate change (8% of the articles). Some authors suggest that polarization between the parties in the electorate develops on three issues: social welfare, racial and cultural (Layman et al., 2006; Layman & Carsey, 2002). Other authors consider different issues for the occurrence of the polarization phenomenon, such as religious issues (Kibris, 2014; Reynal-Querol, 2002), economic issues (e.g. Fiorina & Abrams, 2008; Spies, 2013), and foreign issues (Devine, 2012).

Highly important issues seem to be a prerequisite for the appearance of polarization in the political science and social psychology disciplines. Conforming to the extreme group norm on these relevant issues provides the appropriate environment for the development of the polarization phenomenon.

2.3.5 Drivers of polarization

The political science and social psychology literature identify several drivers of polarization. The most frequently mentioned are social identity/social categorization, self-identity/self-categorization and issue importance. Social categorization is often observed in in-group behaviour, as group members want to be different from and better than other members, so they tend to polarize their opinions in the direction valued by the group (Lee, 2007; Mendelberg, 2002). However, conforming to the in-group norm is not sufficient. For polarization to occur, individuals also tend to distance their views away from those held by members of a disliked out-group in an attempt to maintain distinctiveness (Suhay, 2015).

Self-categorization as a driver of the polarization phenomenon states that after group members define the group's social identity and comply with it, they tend to conform to a prototypical position of the group (Friedkin, 1999). By doing so, individuals "provide subjectively valid evidence about the external world" (Hogg et al., 1990, p.79). Self-categorization in in-group and out-group tends to enhance in-group similarity and out-group differentiation (Van Knippenberg et al., 1990). The perceived and valued attributes of the in-group are applied to the self and a process of conformity to the norm is observed (Mackie, 1986). From the self-categorization point of view, polarization is "a function of the salient subjective frame of reference and to some extent the degree of identification with the group" (Hogg et al., 1990, p.96).

Issues categorized as relevant or important cause attitude polarization (Ridout et al., 2018) as people tend to feel more intensely about them (Hetherington, 2009). Increased level of involvement with an issue (involvement understood as personal importance) motivates the polarization of attitudes (Harton & Latané, 1997). Higher level of involvement frequently means higher complexity, so people rely on outside information in order to collect knowledge about the issue to finally act on their own conviction (Garner & Palmer, 2011; Mullinix, 2016). Table 4 presents the drivers of polarization from the political science and social psychology literatures.

Table 4 Drivers of polarization

Driver	Political science	Social psychology	Reference(s)
Social identity / Social categorization / Social influences / Social comparison	✓	✓	(Abrams et al., 1990; Burton et al., 2006; Flint et al., 2006; Friedkin, 1999; Hart & Nisbet, 2012; Hogg et al., 1990; Isenberg, 1986; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Landemore & Mercier, 2012; Lee, 2007; Liu & Latane, 1998; Mackie, 1986; Mason, 2015; Mendelberg, 2002; Paicheler & Bouchet, 1973; Rao & Steckel, 1991; Suhay, 2015; Sunstein, 2002a, 2002b; Van Boven et al., 2012)
Self-identity / Self-categorization (in-group/out-group)	✓	✓	(Abrams et al., 1990; Friedkin, 1999; Hoffarth & Hodson, 2016; Hogg et al., 1990; Jackson & Hymes, 1985; Krizan & Baron, 2007; Lau et al., 2017; Mackie, 1986; Mackie & Cooper, 1984; Turner et al., 1989; Van Boven et al., 2012; Van Knippenberg et al., 1990; Wronski, 2016)
Issue importance / Issue relevance	✓	✓	(Baldassarri & Bearman, 2007; Dixit & Weibull, 2007; Evans, 2003; Garner & Palmer, 2011; Harton & Latané, 1997; Hetherington, 2009; Isenberg, 1986; Krizan & Baron, 2007; Layman et al., 2006; McCright & Dunlap, 2011; Mullinix, 2016; Ridout et al., 2018; Wojcieszak & Price, 2010)
Persuasive arguments		✓	(Flint et al., 2006; Friedkin, 1999; Harton & Latané, 1997; Isenberg, 1986; Landemore & Mercier, 2012; Mendelberg, 2002; Semin, 1975; Sunstein, 2002a, 2002b; Van Swol, 2009)
Ethnic conflict	✓		(Assies & Salman, 2005; Grose, 2007; Kibris, 2014; McDoom, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2009; Reynal-Querol, 2002)
Informational influence		✓	(Burton et al., 2006; Hinsz & Davis, 1984; Lee, 2007; Liu & Latane, 1998; Rao & Steckel, 1991)
Religious identity	✓		(Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; McTague & Pearson-Merkowitz, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2009; Reynal-Querol, 2002; Tepe, 2013)
Biased assimilation / Biased processing	✓	✓	(Dandekar et al., 2013; Taber et al., 2009)
Ambiguity aversion		✓	(Baliga et al., 2013)
Dissonance avoidance	✓		(Vraga, 2015)
History	✓		(Pildes, 2011)
Homophily		✓	(Dandekar et al., 2013)
Institutions	✓		(Pildes, 2011)
Mere exposure		✓	(Myers, 1978)
Motivated reasoning	✓		(Hart & Nisbet, 2012)
Naïve realism	✓		(Van Boven et al., 2012)
Normative explanation		✓	(Van Swol, 2009)
Persons	✓		(Pildes, 2011)
Political orientations	✓		(Hart & Nisbet, 2012)
Populism	✓		(Corrales, 2005)
Positivity of available information		✓	(Harton & Latané, 1997)
Preference differences	✓		(Dixit & Weibull, 2007)
Psychological attachment	✓		(Lau et al., 2017)
Terrorism	✓		(Berrebi & Klor, 2008)

2.3.6 Outcomes of polarization

The review of literature in political science highlights some positive and some negative outcomes of polarization. The positive outcomes of polarization are partisan identity (e.g. Harrison, 2016), increased likelihood of civic action (e.g. LeBas, 2018), activism (Mason, 2015) and stronger party brands (e.g. Lupu, 2015). For example, high polarization means stronger partisanship salience and enlarged risk of partisan bias (Harrison, 2016). Polarized individuals tend to identify strongly with their party, which serves as a mean of attitude protection (Lupu, 2015; Mullinix, 2016). Polarization is also related to civil participation and voter engagement. If citizens perceive a considerable difference between candidates and/or parties, they are likely to be more engaged, as their concern in the outcome of the elections will be greater (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Abramowitz & Stone, 2006; LeBas, 2018). A polarized society will react with higher emotional vehemence to political events. When partisans align with ideological identities, this alignment motivates bias and activism (Mason, 2015). Lastly, party polarization can produce positive outcomes like clearer decisions that drive to firmer mass attachments with parties (Lupu, 2015). This results in stronger parties in the electorate (Layman et al., 2006).

Among the main negative outcomes of polarization are inter-group hostility (i.e. Lau et al., 2017), violence (e.g. Esteban & Schneider, 2008), and gridlock (e.g. McCoy et al., 2018). Affective polarization causes partisans to view members of the opposite party as a disliked out-group, signalling growing inter-party hostility (Lau et al., 2017; Lelkes, 2016). Polarization and ideological extremism can cause then greater animosity and antipathy towards members of the out-group (Wronski, 2016). This animosity is often times demonstrated with violent behaviour and increased riots and demonstrations (Ezrow et al., 2014). McDoom (2012) states that in an ethnic conflict, group polarization is the attitudinal component while group violence is the behavioural.

Gridlock is frequently mentioned as a consequence of political polarization. For the person or institution in power, polarization can become an obstacle, as gridlock and policy inaction negatively affects governability (Layman et al., 2006; Lee, 2015). Table 5 exhibits the outcomes of political polarization.

Table 5 Outcomes of polarization in the political science discipline

Outcome	Positive / Negative	Reference(s)
Inter-group hostility	Negative	(DiMaggio et al., 1996; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; LaMothe, 2012; Lau et al., 2017; Lelkes, 2016; McCoy et al., 2018; Wronski, 2016)
Partisan identity	Positive	(Harrison, 2016; Layman et al., 2006; Lupu, 2015; Mason, 2015; Mullinix, 2016; Wronski, 2016)
Violence / Riots and demonstrations	Negative	(Corrales, 2005; Esteban & Schneider, 2008; Ezrow et al., 2014; McDoom, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2009; Reynal-Querol, 2002)
Gridlock	Negative	(Dar & Lee, 2014; Frymer, 2011; Layman et al., 2006; Lee, 2015; Lupu, 2015; McCoy et al., 2018)
Increased likelihood of civic action	Positive	(Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Abramowitz & Stone, 2006; Hetherington, 2009; LeBas, 2018; McCoy et al., 2018; Van Boven et al., 2012)
Accentuated conflict	Negative	(Brown et al., 2011; Cini, 2002; Esteban & Schneider, 2008)
Anger	Negative	(Mason, 2013, 2015; Webster & Abramowitz, 2017)
Incivility	Negative	(Dixit & Weibull, 2007; Layman et al., 2006; Lupu, 2015)
Instability	Negative	(Cini, 2002; Dar & Lee, 2014; Lupu, 2015)
Activism	Positive	(Abramowitz & Stone, 2006; Mason, 2015)
Stronger party brands	Positive	(Carroll & Kubo, 2018; Layman et al., 2006; Lupu, 2015)
Discrimination	Negative	(Lau et al., 2017; McCoy et al., 2018)
Disengagement	Negative	(Lupu, 2015)
Ideological extremism	Negative	(Wronski, 2016)
Negative out-group stereotypes	Negative	(Iyengar & Westwood, 2015)

2.3.7 Measures of polarization

The review uncovers several approaches to measuring polarization. A common form to measure polarization found in the social psychology literature is the pre-test-post-test difference scores (e.g. Krizan & Baron, 2007; Liu & Latane, 1998; Spears et al., 1990). With this method, the mean pre-test score is subtracted from the mean post-test score in a controlled experiment that measures a condition before and after treatment. Mean variation for each participant is computed by averaging variations across all scenarios, and data is analysed by comparing the treatments with respect to their post-test measurements. This method allows the researcher to compare participant groups and measure the

variation occurring as a result of treatment (for reference, see Krizan & Baron, 2007). An alternative form to measure the results using this method is to calculate the absolute difference of each rating from the middle category or neutral point of the scale and summing it over all the items (e.g. Van der Pligt & Van Dijk, 1979; Wojcieszak, 2011).

In the political science literature, a frequently used method to measure polarization is the difference between means (e.g. Banda & Kirkland, 2018; Rehm & Reilly, 2010). Paddock (2010), for example, calculated mean ideological scores for each of the two main political parties in the United States (Democratic and Republican) and subtracted one mean ideology score from the other to construct interparty ideological differences and polarization. This method is useful to measure how far apart in ideology are two political groups in certain pre-established categories (for reference, see Paddock, 2010).

Another frequent manner to measure polarization is the analysis of variance (e.g. Baldassarri & Bearman, 2007; Dixit & Weibull, 2007). This method is used to analyse the differences between group means and the variation or deviation between sample groups. The analysis of variance, Levendusky & Pope (2011) argue, is more complete, since it covers two dimensions of polarization: the degree of heterogeneity (covered by the difference between means) and also overlap in preferences (covered by the variance of the sample).

The feeling thermometer evaluations are also used to measure polarization in the political science discipline. This tool is used to find and compare the respondents' feelings about a candidate, a party or a specific issue. The method uses a feeling thermometer and respondents express their feelings in terms of temperature, ranging from 0, very cold (respondent dislikes the candidate, party or issue) to 100, very warm (respondent likes the candidate, party or issue). Polarization is calculated as the absolute difference in candidate, party or issue thermometer ratings (e.g. Rogowski & Sutherland, 2016; Strickler, 2018).

2.4 Brand polarization and other constructs

To develop the notion of brand polarization, the scholarship on branding-related concepts was analysed. Firstly, the literature on brand/team rivalry was reviewed, as this concept shares some common points with the brand polarization phenomenon. Brand/team rivalry was chosen because this concept, like brand polarization, usually involves strong, passionate feelings and convictions towards the associated brands (Marticotte et al., 2016).

The most notorious difference is that, while in brand polarization only one brand provokes such intense opposite emotions, there are at least two brands implicated when considering brand/team rivalry. The analysis of the brand/team rivalry literature can provide helpful insights in the examination of the nature of brand polarization. Additionally, the literatures on brand love and brand hate were also reviewed. Brand love and brand hate are the two extreme opposite feelings related to brand polarization. The analysis of these two concepts can shed light on the dimensionality of the brand polarization phenomenon, but also on its possible drivers and outcomes.

2.4.1 Search and elimination process of the articles

To place brand polarization within a wider nomological context, a review of the literature was extended to cover concepts closely-related to the phenomenon, namely brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate. The search focused on journal articles published in English and included in the EBSCO and Emeraldinsight databases. Using the inclusion and exclusion criteria outlined in Table 6 below, a sample of eighteen articles on brand rivalry, fifty-four articles on brand love and eight articles on brand hate was identified and analysed. An additional exclusion criterion was used in the review of the brand rivalry literature. Given that brand rivalry was included to support the conceptualisation of the brand polarization phenomenon, only articles that presented a definition of the construct were included in the analysis. Table 6 shows the elimination process of the articles of the three concepts.

Table 6 Search process and inclusion criteria (brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate)

	Brand rivalry	Brand love	Brand hate
Inclusion criterion #1 Database(s)	EBSCO & Emeraldinsight	EBSCO & Emeraldinsight	EBSCO & Emeraldinsight
Inclusion criterion #2 Search term(s)	“Brand rivalry”, “team rivalry” and “rivalry”	“Brand love”	“Brand hate”
Inclusion criterion #3 Document type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Peer-reviewed journal articles
Inclusion criterion #4 Language	English	English	English
Inclusion criterion #5 Time period	1987 - 2018	N.A.	N.A.
Initial number of identified articles (inclusion criteria)	1.542	137	26
Exclusion criterion # 1	Articles about rivalry outside the scope of the branding/marketing areas	Articles outside the scope of the branding/marketing areas	Articles outside the scope of the branding/marketing areas

	Brand rivalry	Brand love	Brand hate
Excluded	1.337	8	3
Survived	205	129	23
Exclusion criterion # 2	Editorials, duplicated articles and articles having brand rivalry as a peripheral theme	Editorials, duplicated articles and articles having brand love as a peripheral theme	Editorials, duplicated articles and articles having brand hate as a peripheral theme
Excluded	159	75	15
Survived	46	54	8
Exclusion criterion # 3	Articles that did not present a definition of brand rivalry/team rivalry	N.A.	N.A.
Excluded	28	0	0
Final sample	18	54	8

2.4.2 Brand polarization and brand rivalry

Though scholarship in marketing has thus far largely overlooked polarization, some aspects of the phenomenon can be found in the concept of brand rivalry, which seems a special case of polarization. Brand rivalry relates to attitude polarization which occurs when the individual conforms to the perceived extreme group norm (intragroup identification) but simultaneously tends to distance herself from a disliked out-group norms (intergroup alienation) (Clark, 2009; Mackie, 1986; Suhay, 2015). From the social identity theory perspective, polarization and brand rivalry occur when members exhibit in-group conformity in the direction of the majority and out-group separation, often showing signs of hostility and dislike towards out-group members (Havard et al., 2016; Lau et al., 2017; Suhay, 2015). Brand rivalry appears to be a case of brand polarization where two brands (the preferred and its main rival) are involved, and these confronted brands provoke strong feelings of love and hate among supporters and detractors. These feelings are reflected in acceptance and support towards other in-group members and negative stereotyping and rejection towards out-group members (Hickman & Ward, 2013). Cases of intense brand rivalry are documented in the literature, for example Apple versus Microsoft (Phillips-Melancon & Dalakas, 2014), Coke versus Pepsi (Muniz & Hamer, 2001), and Ford versus GM (Ewing et al., 2013). However, a stronger brand rivalry can be evidenced in the sports teams literature (e.g., Angell et al., 2016; Grohs et al., 2015; Wenger & Brown, 2014), as team identification causes sports fans to display vigorous positive and negative emotions and actions towards the favourite and rival teams (Luellen & Wann, 2010).

In the sports context, rivalry is often associated with an intense, variable and antagonistic relationship between two teams and/or their supporters (R1 in Table 7) (Havard & Reams, 2016; Karanfil, 2016; Tyler & Cobbs, 2015). The focus of this conceptualization is the relationship between the two opposing brands (Benkwitz & Molnar, 2012; Havard et al., 2013b), where feelings of joy for the favourite team's success are salient (Havard et al., 2013a). A link with Tajfel's (1974) social identity theory is observed, as identification with the in-group (other supporters of the team) enhances the individual's self-esteem, and separation from the out-group (fans of rival team) helps to build stronger identification with the in-group (Havard & Reams 2016). The intensity of social identification with the brand and against the opposing brand leads to obscure behaviours like negative WoM and intergroup stereotyping (Ewing et al., 2013).

A more attitudinal conceptualization of rivalry assumes that it relates to strong, hostile attitudes and feelings towards the supported team's rivals, its supporters and/or its sponsors (R2 in Table 7) (Angell et al. 2016; Dalakas et al. 2015; Havard et al. 2013b). Rivalry enhances the individual's self-expression and the perceptions of public collective self-esteem, in-group cohesion and in-group distinctiveness, as intergroup competition increases the salience of social identification (the "us" versus "them" phenomenon in the social categorization process) (Berendt & Urich, 2016; Grohs et al., 2015). The feelings of pleasure for the rival's misfortune are frequently observed when rivalry is strong (Dalakas et al., 2015). In a rivalry situation, the sponsors of the involved teams can also be affected, as in certain situations the negative feelings fans have against the rival might transfer to its sponsor (Bergkvist, 2012).

Other authors emphasize that team rivalry could involve hostile feelings and/or behaviours towards the supported team's rivals, its supporters and/or its sponsors (R3 in Table 7) (Kuo & Feng, 2013; Marticotte et al., 2016; Phillips-Melancon & Dalakas, 2014). Rivalry can lead to negative attitudes towards the opposing brand, such as feelings of pleasure for the rival's misfortune or *schadenfreude* (Phillips-Melancon & Dalakas, 2014) and desire to harm (Marticotte et al., 2016). It also can induce negative behaviours like trash-talking, or negative communication about a brand with which the individual does not have experience (Marticotte et al., 2016). Followers of a brand "*may intentionally degrade or ridicule the rival brands or challenge adopters or followers of these brands*" (Kuo & Feng 2013, p.952). In fact, Verboven (1999) defines brand rivalry as intense competition and a high degree of

differentiation between two or more brands (R4 in Table 7). The author states that if brand rivalry is sufficiently intense, premium products will have higher percentage mark-ups than base products when consumer information is limited (Verboven, 1999).

The fifth definition of rivalry focuses on the competing aspect of the concept, and defines it as a brand competing with other brands within the same product spectrum (Gius, 1993; R5 in Table 7). In this work, brand rivalry is categorized in localized and generalized. Localized rivalry happens when the product competes only with close brands in the same product category. Generalized rivalry happens when the product competes with all brands in the product category (Gius, 1993).

Table 7 **Definitions of brand rivalry**

Def.	Evidence of strong/ extreme ends	Thinking	Feeling	Action	References
R1	✓		Antagonistic relationship Pleasure for the favourite brand's success		Havard & Reams (2016); Karanfil (2016); Tyler & Cobbs (2015); Ewing et al. (2013); Havard et al. (2013a); Benkwitz & Molnar (2012).
R2		Self-expression	Hostile attitudes & feelings Pleasure for the rival's misfortune		Angell et al. (2016); Berendt & Uhrich (2016); Dalakas et al. (2015); Grohs et al. (2015); Havard et al. (2013b); Bergkvist (2012).
R3			Hostile attitudes & feelings Pleasure for the rival's misfortune	Hostile behaviours	Marticotte et al. (2016); Phillips-Melancon & Dalakas (2014); Kuo & Feng (2013); Thompson & Sinha (2008).
R4	✓		Opposing brand preference	Competing	Verboven (1999)
R5				Competing	Gius (1993)
R: Rivalry					

Team identification and rivalry lead to polarization, as passionate fans concurrently love and support their favourite team and energetically dislike or even hate the rival team (Bergkvist, 2012; Branscombe & Wann, 1992). Rivalry is especially salient in sport teams (Davies et al., 2006; Grohs et al., 2015), as well as polarization, given the extremity of passionate emotions that such brands generate among fans. Given the presence of strong, opposite emotions (Havard & Reams, 2016) and of intra-group identification and inter-group dissociation (Dalakas et al., 2015) in the appearance and development of brand rivalry, the concept seems to be closely related to brand polarization. The level of intensity of the rivalry between a polarizing brand and its main competitor might be connected with the causes that facilitate the development of the brand polarization phenomenon.

2.4.3 Brand love and brand hate: the extreme emotions of brand polarization

Brand polarization occurs when a brand possesses a significant number of lovers and a significant number of haters at the same time (Luo et al., 2013a). Despite the fact that the literature on brand polarization is limited, the literature on the two extreme emotions associated with the concept, brand love and brand hate, is more abundant, especially on the former. Brand love is “the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name” (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006, p.81). Brand love is a deeper and longer-lasting feeling than simple preference (Vernuccio et al., 2015). When the values represented by the brand are consistent with consumers’ beliefs, and these values enlarge the consumers’ self-image and social image, the brand-consumer relationship can be as strong and powerful as love (Kaufmann et al., 2016). A loved brand is used as a self-expressiveness tool, through which consumers express their selves to others (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Huber et al., 2015). Brand love is also usually associated with hedonic products, since, as stated by Karjaluoto et al. (2016, p.530), “consumers are more strongly attached to brands that offer hedonic value than to more functional value-oriented brands”. Batra et al. (2012) recognise seven dimensions of brand love: self-brand integration, passion-driven behaviours, positive emotional connection, long-term relationship, anticipated separation distress, attitude valence, and attitude strength. Table 8 exhibits the dimensions of brand love found in the literature.

Table 8 **Dimensions of brand love**

Dimensions	Authors
Passion, attachment, positive evaluation, positive emotions, declarations of love	(Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006)
Passion, duration of the relationship, self-congruity, dreams, memories, pleasure, attraction, uniqueness, beauty, trust and declaration of affect	(Albert et al., 2008)
Intimacy, idealization, pleasure, duration, uniqueness, dream and memories (second order). Passion and affection (first order)	(Albert et al., 2009)
Positive attitude valence, positive emotional connection, self-brand integration, passion-driven behaviours, long-term relationship, anticipated separation distress and attitude strength	(Batra et al., 2012; Ahuvia et al., 2014; Rauschnabel & Ahuvia, 2014; Bagozzi et al., 2017)
Liking, yearning and decision commitment	(Long-Tolbert & Gammoh, 2012; Sarkar et al., 2012; Roy et al., 2013; Banerjee & Banerjee, 2015)
Friendship, contentment, admiration, commitment and yearning	(Turgut & Gultekin, 2015)

Brand hate, a less-researched concept than brand love, is defined as “an extreme form of dislike of the brand” (Zarantonello et al., 2016, p.13). Bryson et al. (2013, p.395) define brand hate as “an intense negative emotional affect towards the brand”, and consider the construct to be “the extreme negative affective component of attitude towards a brand”. Zarantonello et al. (2016) recognize six dimensions of brand hate: anger, contempt & disgust, fear, disappointment, shame, and dehumanization. Table 9 presents the dimensions of brand hate found in the literature

Table 9 **Dimensions of brand hate**

Dimensions	Authors
Dislike, sadness, discontent, worry, anger and embarrassment	(Romani et al, 2012)
Anger and contempt/disgust (active brand hate). Fear, disappointment, shame and dehumanization (passive brand hate)	(Zarantonello et al., 2016)
Devaluation and diminution (cold hate); negation of intimacy and disgust (cool hate); anger and fear (hot hate)	(Kucuk, 2016)

As in brand polarization, extreme and passionate positive and negative emotions towards the brand are reported in the definitions and dimensionality of brand love and brand hate (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Bryson et al., 2013). Further, of the recognised dimensions of brand love (Batra et al., 2012), passion driven behaviours, attitude valence and attitude strength are present in the concept of brand polarization. The dimensionality of brand love and brand hate can provide support in the exploration of the nature of the brand polarization phenomenon and help with its understanding.

There are several antecedents of brand love. Among the main ones are self-brand identification, or the degree in which the consumer expresses his or her self to others through the brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Huber et al., 2015; Karjaluoto et al., 2016). In addition, the social identity is also an antecedent reflecting the extent to which the brand helps consumers enhance their position in their social surrounding (Huber et al., 2015; Wallace et al., 2014). Moreover, brand love is preceded by satisfaction, which represents consumers' evaluation of the performance of the brand (Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012). Finally, social responsibility, social support (Long-Tolbert & Gammoh, 2012) and sustainable marketing (Sarkar, 2014) are also important antecedents of brand love.

On the opposite end, there are several antecedents of brand hate. Chief amongst them are incongruity between brand's symbolic meaning and consumer's sense of self (Bryson et al., 2013; Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017; Zarantonello et al., 2016), high levels of dissatisfaction with the brand's performance and negative past experience (Bryson et al., 2013; Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017), and corporate behaviours and actions considered wrong or immoral by consumers (Bryson et al., 2013; Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017; Zarantonello et al., 2016). Of the analysed articles, thirty six on brand love and six on brand hate presented antecedents and/or outcomes of the constructs. Table 10 shows the antecedents of brand love and brand hate.

Table 10 Antecedents of brand love and brand hate

Antecedent	Brand love	Brand hate
Self-brand identification	Self-expressive brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Huber et al., 2015; Karjaluoto et al., 2016; Loureiro et al., 2012; Sarkar & Sreejesh, 2014; Wallace et al., 2014, 2017)	Negative stereotypes of users of the brand (Bryson et al., 2013; Dalli et al., 2006)
	Brand identification (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Alnawas & Altarifi, 2016; Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010)	Symbolic incongruity (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017)
	Brand image/brand prestige (Bairrada et al., 2018; Cho et al., 2018; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012; Kim & Kim, 2018; Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012; Maisam & Mahsa, 2016)	Taste system (Zarantonello et al., 2016)
	Inner-self (Khandeparkar & Motiani, 2018)	
	Social-self (Khandeparkar & Motiani, 2018)	
	Brand surrealism (Sarkar, 2014)	
	Nostalgic marketing (Sarkar, 2014)	
	Social identity	Social identity (Vernuccio et al., 2015)
Sense of community (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010)		
Social self (Huber et al., 2015; Wallace et al., 2014)		
Perceived subjective norm (Hegner, Fenko, et al., 2017)		
Satisfaction	Satisfaction (Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012; Sreejesh et al., 2018; Tsai, 2014)	Consumer dissatisfaction (Bryson et al., 2013; Dalli et al., 2006)
	Level of quality/perceived quality (Bairrada et al., 2018; Rauschnabel & Ahuvia, 2014)	Negative past experience (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017)
	Affordability (Hegner, Fenko, et al., 2017)	Violation of expectations (Zarantonello et al., 2016)
	Perceived destination ability (Lee & Hyun, 2016)	Product/service failures (Kucuk, 2018)
Social responsibility	Social support (Long-Tolbert & Gammoh, 2012)	Corporate social performance (CSP) (Bryson et al., 2013)
	Sustainable marketing (Sarkar, 2014)	Corporate social responsibility (Kucuk, 2018)
		Corporate wrongdoings (Dalli et al., 2006; Zarantonello et al., 2016)
		Ideological incompatibility (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017)
Brand personality	Brand personality (Roy et al., 2016)	
	Propensity to anthropomorphise (Hegner, Fenko, et al., 2017; Rauschnabel & Ahuvia, 2014)	

Antecedent	Brand love	Brand hate
Attachment feelings	Affective brand experience (Sarkar et al., 2012)	
	Attitude towards a brand (Hegner, Fenko, et al., 2017)	
	Brand affection (Albert & Valette-Florence, 2010)	
	Brand attachment (Loureiro et al., 2012)	
	Brand likeability (Nguyen et al., 2013)	
	Brand passion (Albert & Valette-Florence, 2010)	
	Romanticism (Sarkar et al., 2012)	
Trust	Brand trust (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Karjaluoto et al., 2016; Turgut & Gultekin, 2015)	
	Partner quality (Long-Tolbert & Gammoh, 2012)	
Hedonic product	Hedonic product (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Huber et al., 2015; Karjaluoto et al., 2016; Sarkar, 2014; Sarkar et al., 2012)	
Gratitude	Gratitude (Long-Tolbert & Gammoh, 2012)	
Country of origin		Country of origin of the brand (Bryson et al., 2013)

The antecedents of brand love and brand hate reveal some commonalities at the opposite ends of the consumer-brand relationship spectrum. Through loved and hated brands consumers send a message about who they are (Alnawas & Altarifi, 2016) and who they are not (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017). Also, love or hate for a brand is a consequence of satisfaction (Sreejesh et al., 2018) or dissatisfaction (Bryson et al., 2013) with it and of high (Bairrada et al., 2018) or low (Zarantonello et al., 2016) perceived levels of quality. Furthermore, love or hate for the brand appears when, from the consumers' point of view, the company is socially responsible (Sarkar, 2014) or irresponsible (Kucuk, 2018). Therefore, the review of the antecedents of brand love and brand hate is potentially useful in the exploration of the nature of brand polarization.

One relevant outcome of brand love is loyalty and buying intentions, which includes brand loyalty (Albert et al., 2009), brand commitment (Albert & Merunka, 2013), purchase intentions (Fetscherin, 2014), and impulse buying (Sarkar, 2014). Positive WoM, one of the most salient behaviours of active engagement (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010), is another

important outcome of brand love (Maisam & Mahsa, 2016). Among the outcomes of brand hate are brand avoidance either by purchasing a competitor's brand or by stopping its consumption (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017; Zarantonello et al., 2016) and negative WoM –unfavourable communication about the brand (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017)–. Table 11 shows the outcomes of brand love and brand hate.

Similar to the review of the antecedents, the analysis of the outcomes of brand love and brand hate shows some antagonistic points at the extreme poles. For instance, as a result of loving or hating a brand, consumers become more loyal (Cho et al., 2018) or reduce or stop purchasing the brand (Zarantonello et al., 2016). Further, additional consequences of love or hate for a brand are positive (Khandeparkar & Motiani, 2018) or negative (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017) WoM, active engagement (Sarkar & Sreejesh, 2014) or complaining and protest behaviours (Zarantonello et al., 2016), and brand forgiveness (Hegner, Fenko, et al., 2017) or brand retaliation (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017). Hence, the analysis of the outcomes of brand love and brand hate appears to be relevant in the study of the brand polarization phenomenon.

Table 11 Outcomes of brand love and brand hate

Outcome	Brand love	Brand hate
Loyalty and buying intentions	Brand loyalty (Albert et al., 2009; Alnawas & Altarifi, 2016; Bairrada et al., 2018; Batra et al., 2012; Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Cho et al., 2018; Fetscherin, 2014; Fetscherin et al., 2014; Lee & Hyun, 2016; Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012; Loureiro et al., 2012; Roy et al., 2016; Tsai, 2014; Wallace et al., 2017)	Patronage reduction/cessation (Zarantonello et al., 2016)
	Brand commitment (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Albert & Valette-Florence, 2010; Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012; Loureiro et al., 2012)	Brand avoidance (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017)
	Purchase intentions (Fetscherin, 2014; Fetscherin et al., 2014; Sarkar et al., 2012; Sarkar & Sreejesh, 2014; Turgut & Gultekin, 2015)	Switching (Romani et al., 2012)
	Impulse buying (Sarkar, 2014)	
Active engagement	Positive WoM (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Albert et al., 2009; Bairrada et al., 2018; Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Fetscherin, 2014; Fetscherin et al., 2014; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012; Karjaluoto et al., 2016; Khandeparkar & Motiani, 2018; Maisam & Mahsa, 2016; Roy et al., 2013; Sarkar et al., 2012; Wallace et al., 2014, 2017)	Negative WoM (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017; Romani et al., 2012; Zarantonello et al., 2016)
	Active engagement (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Sarkar, 2014; Sarkar & Sreejesh, 2014)	Complaining (Romani et al., 2012; Zarantonello et al., 2016)
	Passion-driven behaviour (Kim & Kim, 2018)	Protest (Zarantonello et al., 2016)
Forgiveness	Brand forgiveness (Hegner, Fenko, et al., 2017)	Brand retaliation (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017)
	Acceptance of wrongdoing (Wallace et al., 2014)	
	Resistance to negative information (Batra et al., 2012; Turgut & Gultekin, 2015)	
Trust	Brand trust (Albert et al., 2009; Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012; Loureiro et al., 2012)	
Willingness to pay a price premium	Willingness to pay a price premium (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Bairrada et al., 2018)	
Physiological response	Cardiac deceleration maintenance (Maxian et al., 2013)	
	Self-reported arousal (Maxian et al., 2013)	
Brand jealousy	Brand jealousy (Sarkar & Sreejesh, 2014)	
Brand attitude	Brand attitude (Addis et al., 2018)	

2.5 Brand polarization: advanced definition

The conceptions of polarization in the political science, social psychology, marketing and rivalry research show significant overlaps. Table 2 and Table 7 clearly evidence that there are profound commonalities in the definition and dimensions of polarization in the three analysed disciplines. For example, there seems to be a consensus that polarizing views require two different extremes to be present. These stem from feelings and ideological disagreements or opposing opinions of those involved (Webster & Abramowitz, 2017). The opposition evokes emotions, such as anger and other contrasting attitudes and feelings, such as love and hate (Kuo & Feng, 2013; Marticotte et al., 2016). The cognitive and emotional involvement with the brand and the issues associated with it will lead to actions that can take various forms, such as competition, activism or belonging to groups to further enhance the preferred view (Baliga et al., 2013; Mason, 2013). These characteristics suggest that polarization is a complex phenomenon and incorporates a cognitive, emotional and behavioural component, although not all definitions embrace all three dimensions. When compared with the cognitive and emotional aspects, the behavioural aspects listed in Table 2 and Table 7 are the least prominent. In this study they are approached as outcomes of brand polarization, rather than dimensions of the phenomenon. Because of the cognitive and emotional characteristics of brand polarization expressed in individual and group level, consumers engaged with the polarizing brands are willing to engage with specific behaviours.

Several elements of the polarization and brand rivalry literature can contribute to the enhancement of the definition and to the better understanding of brand polarization. While polarization can be described as moving from the centre to the extremes (Fiorina & Abrams, 2008), brand polarization means moving from moderate or neutral feelings to extreme feelings in the consumer-brand relationship valence (love-hate). Polarization happens when beliefs and/or actions go in opposite directions after observing the same evidence (Baliga et al., 2013). In the same vein, brand polarization is observed when a considerable group of people shows feelings of love and an ample group of people shows feelings of hate for the same brand. Brand rivalry can be considered a special type of brand polarization in which, instead of one brand, strong feelings of love and hate among supporters and detractors of two opposing brands are taken into consideration. Table 12

compares and contrasts the concepts of brand love, brand hate, brand rivalry and brand polarization on different aspects.

Table 12 Comparison of concepts

Aspect	Brand love	Brand hate	Brand rivalry	Brand polarization
Valence of strong feelings	Positive	Negative	Positive and negative	Positive and negative
Number of brands analysed	One	One	Two	One
Individual or group level	Individual	Individual	Group	Group
Intragroup identification and intergroup alienation	No	No	Yes	Yes
Passionate feelings involved	Yes – positive	Yes – negative	Yes – positive and negative	Yes – positive and negative

Evidence of the link between polarization and Tajfel's (1974) social identity theory was found in the analysis of the literature. Polarization is related to in-group norm conformity and out-group differentiation (Hogg et al., 1990). It leads to positive evaluations of the own 'party' (intragroup identification) while viewing the other 'party' as a disliked out-group (intergroup alienation) (Suhay, 2015). Brand polarization causes bimodality or clear separation between lovers and haters of a brand and it can be associated with the affective dimension of polarization presented by Webster & Abramowitz (2017). Affective polarization relates to social identity theory, and explains why consumers tend to identify with other supporters of the preferred brand while out-group members who have an opposite view are disliked and considered rivals (Webster & Abramowitz, 2017).

Building on previous research, this thesis offers an enhanced definition of brand polarization. Accordingly, brand polarization is defined here as ***an affective and cognitive phenomenon where beliefs and emotions of a significant number of individual consumers induce a simultaneous move to the extremes involving passionate positive and negative feelings and convictions towards the brand, like-minded consumers, and opposite-minded consumers.*** Rival brands tend to be polarizing, as they generate extreme and antagonistic feelings of love and hate among supporters and detractors. Brand polarization is different from brand ambivalence. In brand ambivalence,

mixed positive and negative feelings about the brand are observed from the same consumer or group of consumers (Park et al., 2013a). Brand ambivalence demonstrates how indecisive or conflicted a consumer or group of consumers is with respect to a specific brand (Park et al., 2013b). In contrast, in the brand polarization phenomenon there are clearly two groups of consumers: lovers and haters of the brand.

2.6 Gaps and research questions

Considering the scarcity of the literature on brand polarization, the preceding discussions reveal some visible gaps related to the concept. While practitioners are implementing brand polarization strategies, academia needs to research the concept in order to clarify its definition, causes, outcomes and applications. A first gap is related to the dimensionality of brand polarization, which is still unclear. The marketing literature focuses on polarizing brands (Monahan et al., 2017) or polarizing products (Rozenkrants et al., 2017). This attention to the objects waves aside the investigation of brand polarization as a phenomenon. The analysis of the polarization literature in the political science discipline indicates the existence of two dimensions of the construct: affective and ideological (Webster & Abramowitz, 2017). While affective polarization explains why group members exhibit positive feelings towards the in-group and negative feelings towards the out-group, ideological polarization refers to the extent a group moves towards the ideological poles of the spectrum (Webster & Abramowitz, 2017). However, since the extremes in brand polarization, brand love and brand hate, are affective in nature (Bryson et al., 2013; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), it is feasible that this bi-dimensionality is not applicable to the concept.

The scarcity of literature on brand polarization generates a major gap that relates to an appropriate manner to measure the concept. In the marketing literature, the polarization index is used as a measure of brand loyalty (Casteran et al., 2019; Fader & Schmittlein, 1993). Luo et al. (2013b) use brand dispersion to measure how polarizing a brand is. Further, Rozenkrants et al. (2017) operationalise polarizing products with bimodal rating distributions. Again, the focus on the objects disregards the measurement of brand polarization as a phenomenon. Alternative forms to measure group polarization (e.g. Krizan & Baron, 2007; Wojcieszak, 2011) and political polarization (e.g. Levendusky & Pope, 2011; Paddock, 2010; Strickler, 2018) are found in the literature. However, these measurement methods do not seem to be appropriate to capture the complexity of the

brand polarization phenomenon. Hence, the question of how can brand polarization be measured in a way to capture all its facets accurately remains unanswered.

On the basis of this lack of conceptual clarity and empirical validation of a measure of brand polarization, the first research question of this thesis is:

RQ1: What is the nature of brand polarization?

The second research gap is related to the antecedents of brand polarization, which to the author's best knowledge, have not yet been investigated. For instance, in their work, Luo et al. (2013b) acknowledge the need of behavioural investigation of the causes of brand dispersion, a method to measure how polarizing a brand is. Ideas about the causes of brand polarization can be taken from the political science and social psychology literatures on the antecedents of political and group polarization (e.g. Abrams et al., 1990; Isenberg, 1986; Krizan & Baron, 2007). Drivers of polarization in these two disciplines, such as issue importance (e.g. McCright & Dunlap, 2011; Mullinix, 2016), self-categorization (e.g. Hoffarth & Hodson, 2016; Wronski, 2016) and social-categorization (e.g. Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Mason, 2015) can guide the research of the antecedents of the brand polarization phenomenon. Further, given the similarities between brand rivalry and brand polarization (Dalakas et al., 2015; Havard & Reams, 2016), the analysis of the former can be helpful to clarify what motivates the development of the latter.

The review of the antecedents of brand love and brand hate, the two extreme, passionate and opposite emotions that derive from brand polarization, shows some common factors at both ends of the spectrum. Brand identification (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010)/symbolic incongruity (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017) and satisfaction (Tsai, 2014)/dissatisfaction (Bryson et al., 2013) are two examples. Understanding the antecedents of brand love and brand hate can help to recognize the drivers of the brand polarization phenomenon.

Based on the incipient state of the brand polarization literature, it therefore appears to be a priority to further explicate the traits that drive the development of the phenomenon. The literatures on political polarization, group polarization, brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate can be useful to support this aim. The second research question of this thesis is thus formulated:

RQ2: What are the features that drive brand polarization?

A third research gap is associated to the behavioural outcomes among lovers and haters of a polarizing brand. Existent research has covered possible actions to enhance the relationship with the lovers while dealing with the haters of a polarizing brand (Luo et al., 2013a). However, researchers have not been concerned about consumers' attitudes and behaviours that result from the brand polarization phenomenon.

The political science literature on polarization presents positive and negative consequences of the concept (e.g. Abramowitz & Stone, 2006; Esteban & Schneider, 2008; Layman et al., 2006). Furthermore, attitudinal and behavioural outcomes of brand love (e.g. Albert et al., 2009; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012) and brand hate (e.g. Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017; Romani et al., 2012; Zarantonello et al., 2016) have also been researched. This literature could be useful to understand the consequences of brand polarization. The link between brand rivalry and brand polarization can also help to clarify the outcomes of the latter. Consequences of brand rivalry are explored in the literature (e.g. Dalakas et al., 2015; Hickman & Ward, 2013). The analysis of this literature could be fruitful to identify the attitudinal and behavioural outcomes for lovers and haters of a polarizing brand.

Confirming the explanatory potential of the brand polarization outcomes is thus an urgent requirement. This leads to the formulation of the third research question driving this thesis:

RQ3: What are the attitudinal and behavioural outcomes of the brand polarization phenomenon?

2.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the literature that can be useful to better understand the brand polarization phenomenon. It began reviewing what is known about brand polarization and polarizing brands by analysing the existing research on these two concepts. Given the scarcity of the literature on the brand polarization phenomenon, the chapter further explored the literatures on polarization in the political science and social psychology disciplines and on closely-related marketing concepts, such as brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate.

The analysis of the polarization concept in the political science and social psychology disciplines, its definitions and dimensionality, together with the analysis of the concept of brand rivalry, supports the development of the advanced definition of brand polarization presented in the chapter. Further, the drivers and outcomes of polarization, brand love and brand hate are reviewed and analysed in order to explore possible applications in the conception of brand polarization.

The literature review revealed that brand polarization as a concept is not clearly defined (Mafael et al., 2016), and the phenomenon's dimensionality, antecedents and consequences are largely unknown. As such, the final section of the chapter presented the three research questions that guide the current study. The different research methodologies and methods employed to answer these questions are detailed in the following chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 3 Analytical approach

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the general plan of the procedures and methodological approaches followed in this study to collect and analyse the empirical evidence necessary to answer the formulated research questions. Decisions regarding methodology (Bryman & Bell, 2015) are presented in this chapter. Care is given to each aspect of the methodology, ensuring that they are consistent with one another and with the research questions articulated in this study.

The first section of the chapter explains the ontological and epistemological assumptions that guide the process of data collection and analysis, discussing the chosen research paradigm in line with the study aims and objectives. Then, the chapter describes the specific methods used to collect and analyse empirical data. Lastly, the specific research context is disclosed and justified.

3.2 Research paradigm

A research paradigm is an interpretative framework guided by a set of beliefs about how the world should be understood and studied (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This set of beliefs and principles is useful in the interpretation of the collected data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Such principles cover ontology, or assumptions about the nature of reality and epistemology, or assumptions about what comprise legitimate and valid knowledge (Krauss, 2005). Understanding different research paradigms allows researchers to identify which areas of knowledge require investigation and directs them towards choosing the appropriate methodology (Deshpande, 1983). The research paradigm, research ontology and research epistemology constitute the starting point when selecting the methodological choice, the research strategies and the techniques and procedures (Saunders et al., 2016).

Different classifications of research paradigms can be found in the literature. A common categorisation acknowledges the existence of four research paradigms in social sciences: positivism (naïve realism), post-positivism (critical realism), interpretivism (constructivism) and pragmatism (Wahyuni, 2012).

The positivist paradigm is grounded in the scientific method of investigation and relies on deductive logic (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The ontological position of positivism is realism, which states that “objects have an existence independent of the knower” (Scotland, 2012, p.10). The epistemological position of positivism is objectivism, which considers that only observable phenomena can provide credible data (Scotland, 2012; Wahyuni, 2012).

Post-positivism questions positivists’ belief of absolute truth, relying on generalisation but admitting that “knowledge is a result of social conditioning” (Wahyuni, 2012, p.71). Post-positivism’s ontological position is critical realism, which considers “reality as external and independent, but not directly accessible through our observation and knowledge of it” (Saunders et al., 2016, p.139). The epistemological position of post-positivism is relativism (Saunders et al., 2016), which considers knowledge as tentative. More than sense-data, post-positivism is interested in participants’ perspectives, and “hypotheses are not proved but simply not rejected” (Scotland, 2012, p.10).

For the interpretivist paradigm, reality is “subjective and differs from person to person” (Scotland, 2012, p.11) and socially constructed through language and culture (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Epistemologically, interpretivism focuses on stories, narratives, perceptions and interpretations (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

Pragmatism relies on a mixture of ontology and epistemology to understand the social phenomena, viewing the objectivist and subjectivist perspectives as complementary (Wahyuni, 2012). For pragmatists, reality is the practical consequences of ideas, and the focus is on problems and how to solve them (Bell et al., 2015).

The present research adopts a post-positivist position, as it “concerns multiple perceptions about a single, mind-independent reality” (Bisman, 2010, p.9). It also admits that the knowledge of reality results from social conditioning and depends on the involved social actors (Saunders et al., 2016). In line with the post-positivist paradigm, the study aims to disclose objective reality acknowledging the possibility of multiple interpretations of such reality (Henderson, 2011). Considering these ontological and epistemological grounds, the study aims to apprehend reality as closely as possible but admits that this cannot be done perfectly due to the fallibility of observations. In order to maintain objectivity and reduce bias, the study relies on critical traditions, questioning if the findings ‘fit’ with pre-existing knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Critical multiplicity is adopted as the study’s

methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), using qualitative and quantitative data to answer the formulated research questions.

The choice of the post-positivist position is justified by the nature of the study. As specified in the second and third research questions, the study seeks to reveal objective, generalisable knowledge. The second and third research questions aim to expose the causal relationships between brand polarization and its antecedents and outcomes, which requires a positivist epistemology, as positivism often uses a deductive approach of inquiry to test general law (Bryman, 2016). Simultaneously, as stated in the first research question, the study also seeks to explore the nature of the brand polarization phenomenon, its dimensions, and an alternative way to measure it. To answer this research question, an exploratory approach is considered to be more appropriate to investigate the essence of the brand polarization phenomenon and analyse its different components. There is an exploratory and subjective aspect associated with the exercise of creating a measure of brand polarization. Prior to reaching an adequate measurement of the concept, it is important to engage in qualitative research in order to inform the quantitative phase and create adequate items to measure the phenomenon. The first research question therefore requires a modified approach to the positivistic epistemology inherent to the second and third research questions.

Like logical positivism, post-positivism is often associated with quantitative research and favours deductivism and hypothesis testing for theory verification (Creswell & Clark, 2011). In this sense, post-positivists pursue objectivity. However, they also acknowledge that we can only approximate nature. While positivists believe that the researcher and the researched person are independent of each other, post-positivists accept that theories, background, knowledge and values of the individuals can influence what is observed (Robson & McCartan, 2016) and that nature can never be fully understood. Overall, post-positivists consider one reality, but several perceptions of that reality must be combined to obtain a better picture of it (Healy & Perry, 2000).

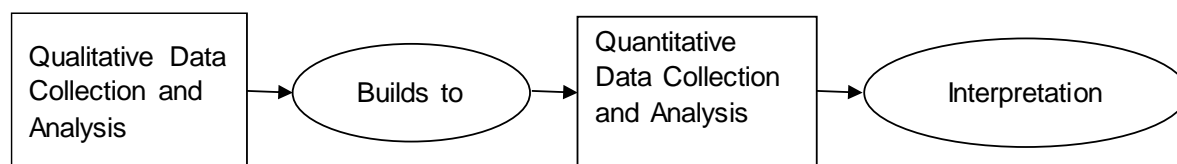
The combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies justifies the adoption of the post-positivist paradigm, as this worldview considers that a range of methods and data types is acceptable to address the research questions (Saunders et al., 2016). The flexibility in the research design offered by the post-positivist stance seems to be suitable

for researching the nature of a novel construct such as brand polarization and its causal relationships.

3.3 Research design

The present study follows a research design, or a general plan of the steps to be pursued to answer the formulated research questions (Bell et al., 2015). Such broad template provide direction for specific procedures and approaches in the study (Saunders et al., 2016) to answer the research questions and to control variance (Blaikie, 2010). An exploratory sequential mixed methods design is adopted in the current research (Creswell, 2014). Given the limited available research on brand polarization, after reviewing the literature of key related concepts such as polarization in political science and social psychology, brand rivalry, brand love, and brand hate, an exploratory phase using qualitative interviews was conducted to better conceptualise the phenomenon and to explore its dimensions. Based on the findings of the qualitative phase, the dimensions of brand polarization and a conceptual model with the antecedents and outcomes of the phenomenon were developed. Two quantitative studies were then implemented in order to develop a scale to measure brand polarization and to test the hypotheses developed in the conceptual model. The quantitative studies aimed “to see if data from a few individuals (in qualitative phase) can be generalized to a large sample of the population (in quantitative phase)” (Creswell, 2014, p.276). The exploratory sequential mixed methods design followed in this study had a developmental purpose, as “a qualitative study was used to develop constructs and hypotheses and a quantitative study was conducted to test the hypotheses” (Venkatesh et al, 2013, p.26). The exploratory sequential mixed methods design for this research is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Exploratory sequential mixed methods design



Source: Adopted from Creswell (2014)

Current study adopts a predominantly mixed-methods strategy using abductive reasoning. This is associated with the specifics of the research problem, where the purpose is neither to purely test an existing theory, nor to generate new theory. Rather, the researcher seeks to fill in specific gaps in the existing literature and clarify the phenomenon which is currently not fully captured by the existing theory (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The abductive approach means that the researcher moved back and forth from theory to data to theory, hence combining induction and deduction (Saunders et al., 2016). This approach “involves back-and-forth engagement with the social world as an empirical source for theoretical ideas, and with the literature” (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.27).

Initially, the design involves collection of detailed qualitative data to explore in greater depth the nature of brand polarization, its dimensions, drivers and outcomes. After integrating these explanations in an overall conceptual framework, thus developing theory about the phenomenon, hypotheses are tested using the evidence provided by the literature and by primary quantitative data.

Different studies were conducted to answer the formulated research questions. The first study had a qualitative data collection and analysis approach and aimed to explore the nature of the brand polarization phenomenon and to develop the conceptual model. The second study combined qualitative and quantitative methods and aimed to develop the scale to measure the dimensions of brand polarization identified in the first study and other constructs included in the conceptual model for which an appropriate measurement scale could not be found in the existing literature. This second study was split in a survey sent to experts and a survey to test the items that measured the different constructs. The third study was quantitative and aimed to test the hypotheses included in the conceptual model concerned with the causal relationships between brand polarization and its drivers and outcomes.

The qualitative phase was considered to be appropriate to explore the nature and dimensions of a novel concept as brand polarization. As explained in the literature review chapter, the available literature on brand polarization is scarce and does not offer a clear definition of the phenomenon, its dimensionality, its drivers or its outcomes. Current research focuses on the objects -*polarizing brands* (Jayasimha & Billore, 2015; Luo et al., 2013a; Luo et al., 2013b; Monahan, 2017; Monahan et al., 2017), or *polarizing products*

(Rozenkrants et al., 2017)-, and not on brand polarization as a phenomenon. The qualitative study was then undertaken to:

- 1) Better conceptualise the brand polarization phenomenon and capture its dimensionality.
- 2) Inform the conceptual model, including the identification of the key drivers and outcomes of brand polarization to be tested in the quantitative study.
- 3) Develop alternative measures of the dimensions of brand polarization, as well as of other variables included in the conceptual model.

The quantitative phase consisted of two studies. The first quantitative study aimed to test the measurement scale developed for brand polarization that reflected the identified dimensions of the construct. Further, the study also tested measures for other constructs included in the conceptual model for which no appropriate measurement scales could be found. The second quantitative study aimed to test the hypotheses included in the conceptual model and developed after the analysis of the qualitative data.

In summary, the reasons for adopting a quantitative phase in the study were:

- 1) To confirm the hypothesised dimensions and measurement of the brand polarization construct (RQ1);
- 2) To test the causal relationships between the drivers identified in the qualitative study and the brand polarization construct (RQ2);
- 3) To test the causal relationships between brand polarization and the outcomes identified in the qualitative study (RQ3).

Further chapters discuss the qualitative and quantitative studies in more detail. Appendix A shows a summary of the data collection methods employed in this research.

3.4 Chapter summary

The chapter explained the research philosophy and the study's overall research design. Justified by the nature of the study, this research adopts a post-positivist stance. An exploratory sequential mixed methods design, that combines the use of qualitative and quantitative data, was chosen for the collection and analysis of the empirical information. Different studies were conducted, aiming to answer the research questions. The qualitative

study intended to explore the nature of brand polarization and to develop the conceptual model. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used in the development of the brand polarization measurement scale. Finally, a quantitative phase was conducted to test the hypotheses developed in the conceptual model. Three product categories, depending on the level of perceived rivalry intensity, were chosen as the research context. The following chapters explain in detail each of the studies presented in this chapter.

Chapter 4 Research methodology – qualitative phase

4.1 Introduction

The initial phase of this research consists of a qualitative, exploratory study. This chapter outlines the methods used in the qualitative phase of this project. It describes the process followed in the planning and execution of data collection and analysis. Specifically, it outlines how interview data was collected for the study and how it was analysed, following thematic analysis techniques. Strategies used to guarantee the trustworthiness of the qualitative study are also presented.

4.2 Interviews

Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are useful to understand the context in an exploratory phase and to comprehend how variables relate in an explanatory phase (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). They allow flexibility and “freedom of movement in the formulation of questions, follow-up strategies and sequencing” (Hopf, 2000, p.204). Aiming to collect qualitative data in a flexible manner through interviews and give interviewees the ability to better explain or build on their responses, semi-structured interviews were conducted to grasp a clearer understanding of the brand polarization phenomenon (Bell et al., 2015). Semi-structured interviews were the chosen data collection tool because the researcher’s interest was to capture participants’ stories, experiences and examples in detail. In this tool, the number and the order of questions may vary according to the conversation’s flow (Saunders et al., 2016).

Appendix B presents the interview guide used for the qualitative study. The review of the literatures on polarizing brands, polarization in political science and social psychology, brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate was the base to develop the interview guide. The structure of the interview guide is as follows: in the first part, participants were asked to think about brands for which they had strong positive and negative feelings and knew that many people felt the opposite way. This was extended to brands for which they had neutral feelings and for industries or sectors simultaneously having a strong base of passionate followers and detractors. In the second part, participants were asked to focus on the loved brand, the reasons for this feeling, the attitudinal and behavioural outcomes of the relationship with the brand and their thoughts about other supporters and detractors of the

brand. The third part focused on the hated brand, the reasons and outcomes of this relationship and their thoughts about other detractors and supporters of the brand. The fourth part focused on common characteristics of all these brands (loved, hated and neutral feelings) that cause extreme and opposite feelings and behaviours. In line with the first objective of this research, the interview guide included questions that explored the reasons for the strong positive and/or negative feelings towards the mentioned brand, in order to identify possible dimensions of the brand polarization phenomenon. Further, and related with the second and third objectives, the interview guide also contained inquiries regarding the causes and consequences of the strong positive and/or negative feelings towards the brand(s) and other consumers related to them. Two marketing experts provided valuable comments for the elaboration of the interview guide.

Interviews were conducted mostly face-to-face. Skype was also used to interview participants located far away from the researcher. Potential interviewees were contacted by the researcher to explain the general purpose of the study and the main themes of the interview. The interviews were conducted in English, audio-recorded and transcribed. The interviews produced between 1,385 and 6,402 words each and a total of 68,925 words (136 pages) of transcription.

The interviews began by reminding the interviewees of the general purpose of the study along with the core themes of the interview. Participants were advised that confidentiality would be granted according to the regulations of the University of Glasgow Ethics Committee. It was also explained that the interview should not be longer than one hour and that they would be able to request additional clarification about the process of the study if needed. Interviewees were consumers who admitted to have strong feelings towards at least one polarizing brand, were willing to disclose the brands and discuss them. In order to reduce bias, the principal aim of the study was not shared with the informants. A Plain Language Statement was also provided. When participants agreed to take part in the study, a Consent Form was signed upon the interviewee's agreement.

4.3 Selection of participants

The recruitment of participants for the qualitative study followed purposive and snowball approaches. The purposive approach is a non-probability technique in which participants are selected based on a specific purpose (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Using the purposive

approach, participants are selected due to the qualities they possess, as they are capable and willing to provide the information because of their knowledge or experience (Etikan et al., 2016). Since the study focused on brand polarization, participants were selected if they fulfilled the following criteria:

- a) Be 18 years of age or older
- b) Have strong passionate feelings (positive or negative) towards at least one brand they knew other people had the opposite feeling

To approach participants who satisfied the described criteria, the researcher initially reached his contacts, to later use a snowball approach. This is a type of convenience, non-random approach that “identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.28). Using the snowball approach guarantees that recruited participants will meet the defined criteria for the study, so they are willing to provide useful insights to address the research questions. However, among the shortcomings of the snowball approach are selection bias and lack of diversity (Woodley & Lockard, 2016). Since participants are hand-chosen, representativity is a limitation (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). Further, the snowballing approach is limited to existing networks, so the lack of diversity of subjects brings issues concerning the generalisability of results (McCormack, 2014). While some of the researcher’s contacts helped suggesting potential participants who satisfied the defined criteria, others were also willing to participate as interviewees.

The sampling progressed until theoretical saturation was reached. This is, when no new data, no new themes or no new coding emerged from the interviews (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

4.4 Characteristics of participants in the qualitative study

Table 13 below summarises participants’ demographics in the qualitative study. Aiming to collect information from UK residents with diverse background and depending on the proximity and the informant’s preference, 22 semi-structured interviews lasting between 16 and 65 minutes were conducted face-to-face or over Skype in a period of 13 weeks. Informants indicated and provided information on 27 loved and 28 hated polarizing brands from diverse product categories. Of the 22 interviews, 12 participants were female and 10 were male. Loved and hated brands mentioned by participants belong to different product

and services categories, such as sport teams, soft drinks, airlines, technology, retail stores and apparel, among others, signalling that the brand polarization phenomenon might appear in a wide range of sectors.

Participants were diverse in terms of age, nationality and occupation. Participants' average age is 36 years, 39 for females and 33 for males. The youngest interviewee belongs to the 18-25 age group, while the oldest belongs to the 66-75 age group. This indicates that brand polarization might appear independently of age and other demographic factors. For anonymity purposes, the names of participants are presented as 'F' if female or 'M' if male, followed by a number from 1 to 12.

Table 13 **Participants' demographics, qualitative study**

Name	Gender	Age group	Nationality	Occupation	Loved brand(s)	Hated brand(s)	Way of contact	Number of words (transcript)	Interview duration (minutes)
F1	Female	26-35	Ukraine	Working part-time	EasyJet	Pepsi, Ryanair	Face-to face	5.169	50
F2	Female	26-35	Iran	Student	Mango, Zara	Mourinho, Primark	Face-to face	6.422	65
M1	Male	26-35	Pakistan	Student	Hassan Nisar (Pakistani journalist)	Nawaz Sharif (former Prime Minister of Pakistan)	Skype	3.252	32
F3	Female	26-35	Slovenia	Student	Fat Face	Pizza Hut	Face-to face	2.865	32
M2	Male	26-35	China	Student	Liverpool Football Club	Manchester United	Face-to face	1.385	16
M3	Male	26-35	Italy	Student	Apple, Waitrose	Samsung, Iceland	Face-to face	2.783	39
M4	Male	26-35	Colombia	Working full-time	Harry Potter	Samsung	Face-to face	3.864	35
M5	Male	36-45	Colombia	Working full-time	Coca-Cola	Claro (Colombian telecommunications brand)	Face-to face	3.238	32
M6	Male	56-65	UK	Working full-time	Royal Mail	Ryanair	Face-to face	2.067	20
F4	Female	26-35	UK	Working full-time	ASDA	Pepsi	Face-to face	1.700	17
F5	Female	26-35	UK	Working full-time	McDonald's	Nestlé	Face-to face	1.725	17
M7	Male	18-25	UK	Student	Rangers FC, Nike	Starbucks, Apple	Face-to face	3.795	30
M8	Male	18-25	UK	Working part-time	Arsenal FC	Tottenham FC	Face-to face	2.719	30
M9	Male	36-45	USA	Working full-time	Washington Redskins	Dallas Cowboys	Face-to face	3.522	37
F6	Female	18-25	USA	Student	Apple	Lululemon	Face-to face	2.780	25
M10	Male	36-45	Malta	Working full-time	Classic FM (radio station), Roma FC	Starbucks, Facebook	Skype	4.374	42
M11	Male	18-25	Romania	Working full-time	Real Madrid	McDonald's	Face-to face	2.963	28
F7	Female	66-75	UK	Retired	Scottish Frasers Power,	Tesco, PC World	Face-to face	3.590	31
F8	Female	66-75	UK	Retired	Rangers FC	Celtic FC	Face-to face	2.617	51
F9	Female	46-55	UK	Working full-time	Celtic FC	Rangers FC	Face-to face	2.974	27
M12	Male	26-35	UK	Working full-time	Nike	BP	Face-to face	2.975	25
F10	Female	26-35	Egypt	Student	Underground music group in Egypt	Nike	Face-to face	2.146	21

4.5 Qualitative data analysis

Thematic analysis, which is widely accepted and adopted within the post-positivist paradigm (McGregor & Murnane, 2010), was the chosen method to analyse the 22 semi-structured interviews. This method is useful for “identifying, analysing and interpreting patterns of meaning (‘themes’) within qualitative data” (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 297). This qualitative approach to analysis is considered to be reliable and involves the systematic identification of common points and ideas across a set of interviews (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

Thematic analysis offers flexibility to the researcher in terms of application across diverse theoretical frameworks, sample size and generation of meaning (Clarke & Braun, 2017), as unlike other methods of qualitative analysis, it is not tied to particular epistemological approach and theoretical framework, and may be adopted by researchers taking either a realist or constructionist stance (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis further offers flexibility in the process of data analysis. Different from grounded theory, where theory is generated inductively and based solely on the qualitative data (Creswell, 2007), thematic analysis allows searching for patterns and themes within the data, going back and forth to the literature and data to make sure that the analysis is solid and thorough (Clarke & Braun, 2017). It is not necessary for a theme to appear a certain number of times in the data to be considered as relevant and be coded, as in thematic analysis the researcher’s judgement is deemed as important (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An important condition in identifying and coding themes is that they provide valuable insight to the research questions (Boyatzis, 1998). This does not mean that the analysis becomes superficial and incomplete, as the themes are revisited multiple times, with the sub-themes emerging, and the data being organized in the most adequate and thorough way (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Thematic analysis is a convenient means of finding insightful themes when a large amount of text is involved (Granot et al., 2013).

Following the procedures of thematic analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013), the analysis of the qualitative data aimed to uncover both manifest and implicit themes that needed further interpretation. As such, the analysis not only focused on the explicitly acknowledged motivations as they were mentioned in the interviews but also on the examples that were not so explicit. Qualitative data was coded following a combination of inductive and deductive approaches. Drivers of brand polarization were coded mainly inductively or data

driven (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and then contrasted with the literatures on polarizing brands, polarization, brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate. An inductive approach was also used in the process of coding the characteristics of polarizing brands given that, to the researcher's best knowledge, there is no literature available on this matter.

Conversely, a deductive approach was followed when coding the outcomes of brand polarization. Theoretical assumptions from the literatures on brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate were contrasted with the qualitative data in order to identify common themes (Guest et al., 2012). This combined approach to coding was followed because "no theme can be entirely inductive or data driven", and the researcher's prior knowledge and assumptions will always affect the way the data is coded (Joffe & Yardley, 2004, p.58).

As themes emerged from the interviews, the literature was revisited and reanalysed. The newly emerged themes and subthemes were then compared with those in the preliminary research framework, and further, the literature was reanalysed. These steps were repeated, where the researcher would go from the interview data back to the literature to constantly compare and justify the grouping of subthemes into higher-order themes using theoretical basis. The process of data analysis thereby represented a continuous refinement and going back to the literature, with new categories and motives emerging and the motives being categorised in the most appropriate way so as to reflect the underlying category closely. Finally, it was decided that enough theoretical evidence supported the grouping of the themes and subthemes, as the new conceptual model was developed. Codes were contrasted with the literature to ensure the coherence of their definitions. Appendix C shows an example of the thematic analysis developed for the qualitative data examination.

4.6 Trustworthiness of the qualitative research

In order to ensure qualitative rigour (Gioia et al., 2012) or trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004) several actions were implemented in the planning and execution of the qualitative study. These are divided in actions to guarantee credibility or truth value and actions to guarantee confirmability or neutrality (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004).

Seeking for credibility or truth value (Guba, 1981), the study was conducted using semi-structured in-depth interviews, a well-established and widely-used research method

(Saunders et al., 2016). As explained before, purposive sampling was adopted to reflect the diversity in the population and to have control, “rather than being at the mercy of any selection bias inherent in pre-existing groups” (Barbour, 2001, p. 1115-16). To ensure the validity of the findings from the perspective of the researcher, the qualitative phase was followed by the quantitative data collection, which was aimed at confirming or disconfirming the hypothesised relationships. To obtain honest answers (Shenton, 2004), participants were free to take part, free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and were advised that there were no right or wrong answers to the interview questions. Finally, debriefing sessions were held with the researcher’s supervisors, as suggested by Shenton (2004).

Seeking for confirmability or neutrality (Hays et al., 2016), the researcher assured that the results of the study reflect the experiences and perspectives of participants, avoiding interference from his own theoretical views (Barbour, 2001). Participants were thus invited to speak freely and to provide as much detail as possible in their answers. Also, special care was taken in the development of the interview protocol, focusing on the research questions and avoiding asking biased and/or leading questions to participants, as suggested by Gioia et al. (2012).

4.7 Chapter summary

The chapter detailed the steps followed in the planning and execution of the qualitative study. This study recruited 22 participants using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Interviewees were adult consumers, residents in the UK who admitted to have strong feelings towards at least one polarizing brand, were willing to disclose the brands and discuss them. Thematic analysis was used to systematically identify, analyse and interpret patterns of ideas and meaning (common points or ‘themes’) of distinguishable dimensions, drivers and outcomes of brand polarization for brands in the data (Vaismoradi et al., 2013; Clarke & Braun, 2017). Actions to guarantee credibility and confirmability of the qualitative study (Shenton, 2004) were implemented in the collection and analysis of the data, in line with the post-positivist paradigm.

Chapter 5 Findings – qualitative phase

5.1 Introduction

The qualitative findings are relevant for determining the dimensionality of brand polarization and developing the conceptual model. This chapter outlines the findings of the qualitative study related to the dimensions, antecedents and outcomes of brand polarization. The chapter initially suggests the dimensions of brand polarization. Then, the drivers or causes of the phenomenon are presented. Next, the outcomes of brand polarization on both extremes of the consumer-brand relationship valence are depicted. Following this, the chapter offers findings on the moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationship between the brand polarization phenomenon and its antecedents. Finally, key points addressed in the chapter are summarised.

5.2 Dimensions of brand polarization

Investigating the dimensionality of brand polarization was crucial to answer the RQ1 and to find a suitable manner to measure the phenomenon. The use of qualitative data is not uncommon in the scale development process, as the inductive approach is useful when there is “little theory involved at the outset” (Hinkin, 1995, p.969). Given the scarcity of the brand polarization literature, exploratory qualitative efforts were necessary to uncover the dimensionality of the brand polarization phenomenon.

The combination of literature review and qualitative data indicate the existence of five dimensions of brand polarization, including brand passion, self-brand benchmarking, intra-group identification, inter-group dissociation, and generation of strong feelings for the achievement or misfortune of the brand. Each dimension is further defined and discussed.

5.2.1.1 Dimension 1: Brand passion

Passionate positive and negative feelings towards the brand were evidenced in the interviews as a key component of the brand polarization phenomenon. Brands with a polarizing nature generate strong, passionate emotions for and against them, as mentioned by interviewees:

"I'm a Roma fan and Lazio would be the crosstown city rival, so two brands where there's some strong feelings" (M9, 39).

"So, a shop that I absolutely loathe is Tesco, and I know a lot of people who love Tesco and shop in Tesco and do online shopping from Tesco and they say Tesco is amazing. I just think it's a dreadful shop" (F7, 74).

"I suppose the Tottenham would be very much against it and will have quite deep, you know, deep passions towards or against them" (M8, 21).

Happiness was among the passionate positive feelings mentioned by one of the interviewees:

"I love Coca Cola, because it's a possibly similar taste but there is something there that makes me happy" (F1, 28).

In contrast, extreme negative feelings like depression were mentioned by another interviewee:

"If I have to go into the shop I feel that black cloud of depression hitting me from the top down" (F7, 74).

In the literature, brand passion is commonly associated with strong positive feelings, leaving out the opposite side of the spectrum. Batra et al. (2012) define brand passion as a strong desire for a brand that reflects its most exciting features.

Das et al. (2018) refer to brand passion as a strong emotional connection to a certain brand. Similarly, Füller et al. (2008) state that passion is an extreme and emotional form of a relationship. Further, Herrando et al. (2017) define brand passion as an extremely positive and primarily affective attitude toward a brand that drives to emotional attachment. Recent research views brand passion as the core of the emotional connection between consumers and brands (Pourazad et al., 2019).

Vallerand et al. (2003) define passion as a strong inclination toward an activity liked and considered important by individuals. The authors identify two types of passion: harmonious (autonomous internalisation of the activity into the individual's identity) and obsessive (controlled internalisation of the activity into the individual's identity) (Vallerand et al., 2003).

Lastly, Ortiz et al. (2013) developed the concept of consumer devotion, which they defined as a state of passionate dedication to a brand that partially supports consumer's definition of his or her identity.

In line with Albert et al. (2013), in this study brand passion is considered to be a psychological phenomenon constituted of excitation, infatuation, and obsession for a polarizing brand.

5.2.1.2 Dimension 2: Self-brand benchmarking

The qualitative data reveal that the match or mismatch between the consumer's identity and the brand's identity helps to explain the strong positive or negative feelings towards such brand. This dimension of brand polarization is discussed by one of the participants:

"...they have worked strong on developing a brand that people can identify with... if you can identify yourself with the brand or you can't identify yourself with the brand you will create these strong positive or negative feelings towards this brand" (M4, 28).

Strong positive feelings towards the brand are observed when there is a connection between the identities of the individual and the brand, as stated by interviewee F2:

"So, I find the designs, the colours, the ranges of things that they provide, even the accessories I like the style much more, it's more me" (F2, 26).

Further, a mismatch between the consumer's identity and the brand's identity results in strong negative feelings towards the brand:

"[In the hated brand] You find coffees of all shapes and flavours that are very far away from the old style... which I find myself closer to" (M10, 42).

Consumer-brand identification is defined as the consumer's cognitive perception of the connection between the brand's identity and his or her own identity (Davvetas & Diamantopoulos, 2017). Other authors view consumer-brand identification as a psychological state in which the consumer perceives, feels and values his/her belongingness with a brand (Lam et al., 2013; Popp & Woratschek, 2017). Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012) define consumer-brand identification as the state of oneness with a brand perceived by the consumer.

An equivalent concept to consumer-brand identification is self-brand connection. Self-brand connection is defined as “the extent to which individuals have incorporated brands into their self-concept” (Escalas & Bettman, 2003, p.340). Similarly, Dwivedi et al. (2015) define self-brand connection as the establishment of meaningful and strong ties between a consumer’s self-identity and a brand.

At the opposite pole of the spectrum, Hegner, Fetscherin, et al. (2017) state that symbolic incongruity is observed when the image represented by a brand is undesired and incongruent with the consumer’s self-concept.

Adapting Davvetas & Diamantopoulos' (2017) definition, the present research considers self-brand benchmarking as the degree consumers compare their self-identity with the identity of the polarizing brand.

5.2.1.3 Dimension 3: Intra-group identification

Interview data evidenced that identification with like-minded consumers (who are considered as an in-group) is a dimension of the brand polarization phenomenon. This sense of identification with other group members was evidenced in the interviews:

"Yes, certainly that there's a camaraderie and a togetherness. And you know, I feel that certainly like me, they're, we're holding on to hope together, hope that things can turn around for the team, hope that our hopes will be vindicated. So, there's a unity I think of mutual respect" (M9, 39).

"I feel like myself among them... when you talk to somebody of those you feel like, 'oh they share the same ideas'" (F10, 32).

From Tajfel's (1974) social identity theory, group identity refers to the individual’s sense of belongingness to a group and the value derived from this group membership (Bartels & Hoogendam, 2011; Chiang et al., 2017).

Ellemers et al. (1999) state that group identity determines the individual’s inclination to behave in terms of his or her group membership, and Dholakia et al. (2004) define group identity as a psychological state in which the individual views him or herself as belonging to the group.

In line with Dalakas et al. (2015), in this study intra-group identification refers to the extent to which an individual associates him or herself with people who share the same feelings for the polarizing brand.

5.2.1.4 Dimension 4: Inter-group dissociation

It was observed from the qualitative data that a sense of dissociation with opposite-minded consumers (who are considered as an out-group) could be considered as a dimension of the brand polarization phenomenon. Such dissociation was evidenced in the interviews:

“...the thing I don't like about them [hated brand] most is the loyalty behind it, is the people who love it. I just think that they are a bit stupid to queue for to pay a thousand pounds for a phone... I think that the kind of people that attract or are attracted to Apple are the kind of people that I don't want to, you know, be associated with” (M7, 22).

“So, at home I went to the University of Kentucky, and our big rival is the Indiana Hoosiers. And so, we have this perception that their fans are certain ways. So, I think that kind of goes back to identity, like they are going to be loud and obnoxious and they're like out of control. I think there's a certain identity that comes with associating when you have certain brands” (F6, 23)

Weiss & Lang (2012) define group dissociation as the individual's tendency to put psychological distance between himself or herself and members of a certain group. Dalakas et al. (2015) refer to out-group dissociation as the separation from the rival brand's supporters.

In line with Dalakas et al. (2015), in this study inter-group dissociation refers to the extent to which an individual detaches him or herself from people who have opposite feelings about the polarizing brand.

5.2.1.5 Dimension 5: Generation of strong feelings for the achievement / misfortune of the brand

Another dimension of brand polarization evidenced from the qualitative data relates to the feelings of pleasure for the achievement or misfortune of the brand. In a highly competitive environment, pleasure is not only achieved through the good performance of the loved

brand, but also from the hated brand's misperformance, as manifested by some participants:

"[If the hated brand does not perform well] you feel very strong, very passionate about your own brand. Gives you even more support than before. Yeah, it basically feels good... because it's the rival you don't want to see success" (M8, 21).

"It's not just that I root for the Redskins, it's that I will actively root against the Dallas Cowboys... maybe in an online, if I'm online, in like a chat group or sort of, you know, kind of a Redskins fan section I might express displeasure or say negative things about the Cowboys and their performance or some of their players" (M9, 39).

Schadenfreude, or feelings of pleasure for another's misfortune (Hickman & Ward, 2007), was evidenced in the qualitative data:

"[If the hated brand does not perform well feels] Overjoyed, of course, because every time they lose, they're losing three points, so there's less chance for them" (F8, 68).

"[If hated brand does not perform well] I'm quite pleased" (F9, 49).

In the literature, *schadenfreude* is defined as the pleasure felt by one party at the adversity of another (Berndsen et al. 2017; Cobbs et al. 2017; Dalakas & Phillips-Melancon 2012; Feather & Sherman 2002; Marticotte & Arcand 2017). Japutra et al. (2018, p.1190) add to this definition stating that the feelings are of "malicious pleasure".

Adapting Hickman & Ward's (2007) definition of *schadenfreude*, the present study considers the extreme emotions felt by consumers in response to the polarizing brand's achievements or the misfortunes as a key dimension of brand polarization.

5.3 Drivers of brand polarization

In line with the RQ2, one of the aims of this study is to investigate the antecedent variables that drive the development of the brand polarization phenomenon (Olobatuyi, 2006). Qualitative data was mainly used to determine such antecedent variables, as the analysis of the literature provided limited evidence on the matter. The analysis of the interview data revealed a total of eight drivers that give rise to the brand polarization phenomenon. These eight drivers were divided in four different themes: product-related drivers, brand-related

drivers, personal-related drivers and group-related drivers. The next section discusses the identified drivers of brand polarization and their corresponding categories.

5.3.1 Theme 1: Product-related drivers of brand polarization

The interview data suggests the presence of one product-related driver of brand polarization, product involvement. Participants implied that involvement with the product category the polarizing brand belongs to motivates the appearance of the brand polarization phenomenon. The findings that emerged from the qualitative data related to this driver are presented below.

5.3.1.1 Product involvement

The data seems to expose the importance of involvement with the product category in the development of brand polarization. Prior studies defined product involvement as the enduring perceptions of the consumers about how relevant the product category is for them, considering their needs, values and interests (Belanche et al., 2017; Bian & Moutinho, 2011; Hong, 2015). The qualitative findings seem to reveal that involvement with the product category motivates brand polarization, as extreme feelings are more likely to happen in product categories considered important by consumers:

"It's just because I value food a lot, because I love to cook and I love to just do whatever in the kitchen, and I also can compare to other good quality pizza places, which are even cheaper than them" (F3, 26).

"I quite like technology and I like looking at the phones and computers and tablets and that kind of things, so in that sense I'm still like kind of engaged with Apple" (M7, 22).

High perceived value and price were also said to be motivators of the development of brand polarization, as declared by interviewees M7 and F6:

"I think they are quite expensive as well... if I spend 800 pounds on a phone then I may as well try and engage with the brand. It's quite a commitment to spend that much money on something so I guess people, you know, they try to make it worthwhile, they try to validate why they spent 800 pounds on a phone" (M7, 22).

“I think all of them [polarizing brands] are overpriced items... I think most of those are quality products, or they have quality associated with them” (F6, 23).

Involvement with the polarizing brand's product category was recurrent in the qualitative analysis. Polarizing brands mentioned by participants frequently belonged to highly-involving product categories, like football teams, technology and food. This implies that product involvement might be one of the antecedent variables that drive the development of brand polarization.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Brand-related drivers of brand polarization

The qualitative data analysis indicates that four drivers of brand polarization, brand strength, brand uniqueness, perceived quality and association with important issues are included in this category. All these drivers seem to be directly connected with the polarizing brand itself. Exploratory data findings for each of the drivers of this category are explained below.

5.3.2.1 Brand strength

Previous research suggests that a brand is considered strong if it is well known and perceived to be remarkable by consumers (Wymer et al., 2016). According to Casidy & Wymer (2015), brand strength comprises brand familiarity (the extent of knowledge consumers have about the brand) and brand remarkability (the degree to which consumers consider the brand to be extraordinary). Data reveals that simultaneously having a large group of lovers and a considerable group of haters seems to be reserved for widely-known, strong brands. Strong brands were considered by interviewees to cause the appearance of the brand polarization phenomenon, as they associated big, leading and well-known brands with consumers' extreme passionate feelings:

“...those brands that have so many supporters and so many detractors... you just see that situation in really big or massive brands, really big companies” (M5, 39).

“I think, you know, if you look at some of the biggest brands being, you know, McDonald's or Apple or, you know, some of the big, Windows, maybe, they are all... they do seem to really follow a certain pattern and, you know, passion, desire. That causes the divide or, you know, to either like or hate” (M8, 21).

Participants linked this big size of polarizing brands with being global or internationally well-known, as stated by interviewees F1, M10 and M11:

“They probably are very well known, internationally” (F1, 28).

“They are global. So, you have a global audience out there with a broad express of opinions” (M10, 42).

“I think they are all well-known brands... They are large, global companies that have operations in many countries and many people know about them” (M11, 25).

Other than big and global, polarizing brands are seen as successful brands. As pointed by participant M9, achieving this level of success usually means becoming the target of consumers' surveillance:

“I think if there's a common thread, it is just success. Any time something achieves a certain level of success that is almost like a pendulum swing like there's got to be a balance, that, I don't know, if it's out of envy or just the sense of wanting to go against the flow... at some point all of these brands have met with great success and with that spotlight probably comes more scrutiny” (M9, 39).

Related to the big size, participants also mentioned that polarizing brands have a large customer base as well. Interviewees F7 and M12 highlighted this point:

“Because a lot of people use them, so there's more opportunity for people to either enjoy their experience or hate it because they have so many customers, all of them” (F7, 74).

“Being big... the bigger you are, the larger group you're exposed to, the more likely there's going to be people that are going to like and dislike you” (M12, 34).

In summary, interviewees manifested that strong, big, global and successful brands are related to having groups of fervent supporters and passionate detractors at the same time. This suggests that brand strength is behind the brand polarization phenomenon.

5.3.2.2 Brand uniqueness

Brand uniqueness is commonly defined as consumers' set of associations or perceptions of a brand being different and exceptional relative to competitors (Liljedal & Dahlén, 2018; Mühlbacher et al., 2016; Netemeyer et al., 2004; Song Southworth & Ha-Brookshire, 2016; Su & Chang, 2018). Brand uniqueness "reflects the degree to which a brand stands out so that it can be easily noticed, recognized, and recalled over competing brands" (Dwivedi et al., 2018, p.102).

Data suggests that brands being unique, focused and differentiated is a motivator of brand polarization. Participant F2 related polarizing brands with a very particular, unique and authentic way of doing things:

"...that uniqueness, that authenticity that he has and the way he does things can seem controversial to some people like me, but some people absolutely love it" (F2, 26).

Being differentiated can cause the divide between supporters and detractors, as expressed by interviewee F10:

"They are differentiated... when you choose your area and stick to it, there are some people who agree and some people who disagree" (F10, 32).

Interviewees pointed that behind the brand polarization phenomenon there are brands with a clear focus and strategy. Such brands have clearly defined their target market, and concentrate their efforts on pleasing their supporters, even if this means further distancing from their detractors. As stated by participants M3 and M8, polarizing brands are aware that they will not be liked by everybody, so their centre of attention is satisfying their supporters:

"...they know they can't make everybody happy" (M3, 27).

"They don't make compromises, they continue to do what they think works and it gives them a big following. But also has, you know, the people that really do like that idea and some others just don't like that idea" (M8, 21).

Participants highlighted that polarizing brands stand out as being distinct and have their particular way of doing things, which gives them a strong base of supporters and detractors.

This indicates that brand uniqueness could be a driver of the brand polarization phenomenon.

5.3.2.3 Perceived quality

This study defines perceived quality as the assessment of the consumers about the excellence or superiority of the product being considered (Gatti et al., 2012; Konuk, 2018). This customer-centred approach bears on the brand's ability to satisfy consumers' needs, stated or implied (Calvo-Porrá et al., 2013). Perceived quality is the evaluation of the brand founded on consumer's own experience when comparing it with other options (Cheung et al., 2015).

The qualitative data uncovered that consumers associate the development of brand polarization with the brand's perception of quality:

“Another positive thing is their quality, so even if the price is higher, is worth investing in the products of these companies because they keep a difference, so it's kind of you know you get something good... I would say that if you go to Waitrose, you are somebody who is willing to invest on high quality food” (M3, 27).

“I would say they [followers of the hated brand] value like quality athletic wear” (F6, 23).

Interview data exposed the link between consumers' perceptions of a brand's level of quality and the development of simultaneous passionate positive and negative feelings towards it. Hence, perceived quality appears to be one of the drivers of the brand polarization phenomenon.

5.3.2.4 Association with important issues

Association with important issues relates to the connection consumers build between the brand and topics considered to be relevant (Mullinix, 2016). Previous research shows that issues seen as important tend to cause the polarization of attitudes (Garner & Palmer, 2011; McCright & Dunlap, 2011; Wojcieszak & Price, 2010). Brands related to issues considered important for participants were seen as motivators of extremity in feelings, as declared by interviewees M1 and M3:

"[Loved and hated brands are about] issues related to our common political problems, social problems" (M1, 31).

'...if you go to Waitrose, you are somebody who is willing to invest on high quality food... people who go there is because they do believe in the importance of the good that is sold by this brand' (M3, 27).

Interviewees also associated relevant issues, such as religion and family tradition, with the development of brand polarization:

"I mean, the religious divide goes way back. Rangers Football Club when it was first established, it would never sign in any Roman Catholics. Celtic Football Club was organised for the Roman Catholics" (F8, 68).

"I've grown up with it through my family, so we all share the love for this brand, so it's a strong family affiliation" (F9, 49).

Brands with a polarizing nature were associated with religion and faith, as participants M2 and F8 affirm:

"I think this brand is like a faith... So, this brand is like church to me, is like faith" (M2, 28).

"You know, football really is like a religion. And just as with religions, you'll get your fanatics who will think that their way is the right way... Same in religion" (F8, 68).

The data evidenced that brands related to issues considered meaningful by participants generate a divide between lovers and haters. Among these issues, participants mentioned religion, politics, food, well-being and products with high perceived value and price. Therefore, the interview data indicates that association with important issues could be a driver of the brand polarization phenomenon.

5.3.3 Theme 3: Personal-related drivers of brand polarization

The exploratory findings uncovered two drivers of brand polarization included in the personal-related category: expected positive/negative experience and ideological compatibility/incompatibility. Both drivers associate with consumers' personal aspects in

their relationship with polarizing brands. The qualitative findings for each of these two drivers are detailed next.

5.3.3.1 Expected positive/negative experience

In this study, expected positive/negative experience relates to anticipated good or bad performance of the product, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the offering or positive or negative country of origin associations (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017). The qualitative findings imply that consumers' expected positive or negative experience with the brand causes passionate feelings of love or hate:

"...relates to the way a customer is feeling when they're having the brand's products. And it goes from the restaurants that are quite dirty and, you know. There have been stories in the past about having all sorts of animals in the restaurants like rats and bugs and that kind of things. So, overall, not nice customer experience" (M11, 25).

"I think their staff is very well trained to cope with people... our personal experience actually makes us think or feel positively about it" (F7, 74).

Positive or negative experiences with brands were recognised by participants as a motivator of extreme favourable or unfavourable feelings towards them. For instance, interviewee M5 identified having had adverse experiences with the brand as an explanation for their hate:

"They have operational problems, big operational problems... So, for me, it's a really strong negative feeling about the brand associated with the bad service, a bad product... When you need to communicate with the service line the people that get the calls, I think they're badly trained, they usually don't give you a really good answer for your problem" (M5, 39).

Furthermore, participant F1 views the detractors of the loved brand as unfortunate for having had a negative experience:

"They [detractors of the loved brand] are just normal people but they would be unlucky to have had the disappointment... I think they're the same people but they were unlucky to have had the negative experience" (F1, 28).

Positive experiences were also mentioned by interviewees as a justification for their strong favourable feelings, as pointed by two participants:

“...when I walked into the stadium and there were 50.000 people in the stadium and they were singing the team anthem holding the scarf in the air and all of the people sing the anthem it was a magical feeling” (M2, 28).

“So, it's beautifully lit and it's...you walk in the door, beautiful smells because all the perfumes actually laid out... I mean a lot of the stuff I could not afford to buy but it makes you feel good in the shop. As you go through it, it just makes you feel good... this is just to your senses” (F7, 74).

Exploratory findings suggest the link between expected positive or negative experience with the polarizing brand and extreme feelings of love or hate towards it. The positive and negative experiences mentioned by participants involve physical evidence in a service setting (e.g. stadium, restaurant or retail store) or the service provided by the staff representing the brand. Thus, the interview data denotes the causal relationship between expected positive or negative experience and brand polarization.

5.3.3.2 Ideological compatibility/incompatibility

This research considers ideological compatibility/incompatibility as the extent to which consumers believe that the brand follows or violates moral and ethical standards (Dalli et al., 2006; Yim & Fock, 2013). Previous research shows that, while ideological compatibility relates to perceived social responsibility (Yim & Fock, 2013), ideological incompatibility is based on legal, social or moral corporate wrongdoing (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017). Compatibility or incompatibility between the brand's core values and actions and the consumer's moral and ethical standards was frequently mentioned by interviewees as one of the causes of extreme, opposite emotions. Ideological compatibility results in strong positive feelings towards the brand, as stated by one of the participants in the qualitative study:

“In terms of the transfers that Real Madrid does you would never question anything on that because everything is very open and very honest. So, they do this with integrity” (M11, 25).

On the opposite pole of the spectrum, ideological incompatibility drives consumers to strong negative feelings towards the brand, as manifested by interviewees F5 and M7:

“...because of the practices in the past ethically... They're just a big business but I don't think in the past they've necessarily cared about people that much. And they're also pretty bad for the environment still... their recycling policies are pretty bad” (F5, 30).

“Starbucks, I would say it's... just a big corporation that doesn't really care about the world, I guess. I think is very false. I think it tries to portray itself as like an environmentally conscious and it cares about its workers and this like where its coffee is from and all that, and the farmers, but I don't think it does” (M7, 22).

Participants were aware that the way a brand behaves conditions the appearance of strong positive and negative feelings among consumers. As participant F1 stated, the feelings towards a brand can move from one extreme to the other depending on its actions and behaviours:

“...could be also that the brand is very well known very well liked, but then they do something that, you know, becomes a scandal and a large part of the population will decide 'oh that that's it'. How the brand behaves is very important” (F1, 28).

Controversial behaviours could derive in a substantial group of lovers and a considerable group of haters at the same time, as pointed by participants F2 and F6 for the brands Primark and Lululemon:

“...like Primark, exploiting people all around the world to make them clothing. Because let's be honest, why can you buy a scarf for one pound in Primark? If there is a cost of production to that thing, right? So, if it's that cheap, it definitely means that somebody has sacrificed something along the way, and not just one person, a lot of people within that supply chain” (F2, 26).

“...because of statements they've made excluding people, like our clothes are only for a certain group of people and that's just tough luck if you don't fit that mould. And I think that's very offensive... you shouldn't completely exclude based on body type” (F6, 23).

Qualitative findings indicate that these types of 'on the edge' behaviours can simultaneously bring the lovers closer and further disappoint the haters of the brand. Hence, it is implied that ideological compatibility/incompatibility is one of the drivers of the brand polarization phenomenon.

5.3.4 Theme 4: Group-related drivers of brand polarization

Exploratory findings reveal that sense of community is the driver of brand polarization included in this category. This driver is related to the feeling of belongingness to a group of like-minded individuals who share the same ideas about a polarizing brand. The qualitative findings for this driver are detailed below.

5.3.4.1 Sense of community

Sense of community is defined in this thesis as the extent to which the supporters or detractors of a brand perceive relational bonds with other like-minded consumers (Carlson et al., 2008; Swimberghe et al., 2018). The perceived membership to a certain brand or anti-brand community results in identification or dissociation with that group (Füller et al., 2008; Qu & Lee, 2011). The interview data suggests that sense of community elicits intense positive or negative feelings towards the polarizing brand, as expressed by one of the participants:

"...everyone is unified by the team and so there's a sense of community... There's a sense of community, everyone is getting unified and excited around the team" (M9, 39).

Feeling part of a community of individuals who share ideas, sentiments and values towards a polarizing brand was considered important by participant M10:

"...a lot of people who are Roma fans feel strongly positively about it, because it kind of represents a community. A community of people who share some things... So, there is a community with a certain degree of identity and shared values" (M10, 42)

Interviewees indicated that the feelings of belonging to a community of like-minded individuals was a reason for loving or hating a polarizing brand. It is then implied that sense of community might be one of the drivers of the brand polarization phenomenon.

5.4 Outcomes of brand polarization

Seven outcomes of brand polarization are uncovered from the analysis of the qualitative data. These outcomes are divided in three different categories: approach the brand, avoid/follow the brand and act. The literatures on brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate and the analysis of the interview transcripts supported the identification of these outcomes. Each outcome of brand polarization is detailed next.

5.4.1 Theme 5: Approach the brand

The qualitative findings denote that one outcome of brand polarization, complementing/complaining, is included in this category. As a result of brand polarization, consumers might decide to approach the loved or hated brand according to their feelings. The complimenting/complaining outcome is explained below.

5.4.1.1 Complimenting/complaining

Complimenting and complaining represent the positive and negative behavioural responses driven by perceived satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a consumption event targeted directly to the brand's representatives (Liu & McClure, 2001). Such behaviour happens when the consumer compliments or complains directly to the company through official channels (e.g. face-to-face in store, telephone and company website) (Istanbulluoglu et al., 2017). It is implied from the interview data that one of the outcomes of having simultaneous brand lovers and brand haters was complimenting the loved brand and/or complaining about the hated brand:

“So, I went there, purchase things, review them, helped them and they are helping me. You get a voucher to spend at their stores and you get your voice being heard as well” (F2, 26).

“...I would tell the service line that I'm not happy with the service” (M5, 39)

Participants were willing to express their positive or negative feelings and convictions about the brand directly with the company and its representatives. The interview data suggests then that consumers approach the brand's representatives to compliment or complain about the polarizing brand as a result of brand polarization.

5.4.2 Theme 6: Avoid/follow the brand

Qualitative findings reveal that this theme includes three outcomes of the brand polarization phenomenon: brand loyalty/disloyalty, using pro/anti-brand merchandise and participation in a brand/anti-brand community. The interview data evidences that, as a result of brand polarization, consumers express themselves by following the brand for which they have passionate positive feelings and/or avoiding the brand for which they have passionate negative feelings. Details of the three outcomes belonging to this theme are explained below.

5.4.2.1 Brand loyalty/disloyalty

In this study, brand loyalty and disloyalty are conceptualised as *behavioural* loyalty and disloyalty, focusing on purchasing or avoiding to purchase the brand over time (Menidjel et al., 2017; Veloutsou & McAlonan, 2012). Behavioural loyalty/disloyalty relates to action loyalty/disloyalty, which refers to the conversion of intentions to action (El-Manstrly & Harrison, 2013). Interviewees who claimed to love a polarizing brand affirmed to be behaviourally loyal to it. Participants highlighted their willingness to frequently purchase and support the loved brand, as it can be observed in the following examples:

"I'm just buying things from them regularly" (F2, 26).

"Well, be their loyal customer" (F3, 26).

"...continuing to purchase their products" (F6, 23).

A stronger level of loyalty was observed when the loved brand had a clear hedonic component, such as movie characters (M4) and sport teams (M11 and F8):

"I paid hundreds of pounds to buy merchandising of Harry Potter... it was very expensive in that store. And I decided to buy a lot of different things just to feel like I was there in the place where the film was filmed, you know where the movie was made" (M4, 28).

"I'm going and see their football games as many times as I can" (M11, 25).

"I got the season ticket for the club deck" (F8, 68).

Further, interviewees reported disloyalty with the hated brand, as manifested in avoiding the brand's products. Avoiding the hated brand emerged as a common outcome of brand polarization across different product categories, such as retail stores (F2 and M3), restaurants (F3 and M11), airlines (M6), and soft drinks (F4), among others:

"I don't go to Primark, I don't buy things from Primark" (F2, 26).

"I just don't value the seller, I just completely avoid it" (M3, 27).

"I don't go eat there" (F3, 26).

"I just don't eat McDonald's... I just don't use their products" (M11, 25).

"I just avoid them I just don't travel with them" (M6, 61).

"So, I actively avoid buying it. I don't like going to restaurants that sell Pepsi instead of Diet Coke. I don't like that. So, I kind of try to avoid the brand altogether" (F4, 29).

Interviewees who loved a polarizing brand declared their intention to be loyal to it, while participants who hated a polarizing brand clearly expressed their disloyalty behaviour. Thus, the qualitative findings imply that in the positive and negative feelings extremes of brand polarization, behavioural loyalty and disloyalty are predictable outcomes of the phenomenon.

5.4.2.2 Using pro/anti-brand merchandise

Passionate consumers are willing to express their feelings through the purchase and use of name-brand products (Chan & Wang, 2015). Interviewees manifested their willingness to use pro- or anti-brand merchandise to publicly show their feelings for the brand:

"You're willing to sort of publicly brand yourself and publicly associate with them" (M9, 39).

"...buy merchandise, I have merchandise, you know, the shirt" (M8, 21).

"In the case of Roma, hopefully sometime next year I will go to see them with my son... I bought my son a T-shirt of Roma, I bought some T-shirts myself" (M10, 42).

"...just buying a T-shirt or seeing some football games on the stadiums" (M11, 25).

“...purchase scarves and things like that, so all of the kinds of merchandise” (F9, 49).

Participants expressed their willingness to brand themselves and use relevant merchandise to let others know their convictions towards the polarizing brand. The qualitative data indicates that consumers might use pro or anti brand merchandise to express their feelings towards the loved or the hated brand as an outcome of brand polarization.

5.4.2.3 Participation in a brand/anti-brand community

This study sees participation in a brand/anti-brand community as the level of engagement with a community of consumers who have similar attitudes and feelings towards a brand (Casaló et al., 2007). A brand community exerts influence among its members, as it increases their affective connection to the brand (Kuo & Feng, 2013). While commitment with the brand community refers to the members' attitude toward the community and the desire to maintain their relationship with it (Hur et al., 2011; Kuo & Feng, 2013), engagement to the brand community refers to members' interaction with each other or with the brand (Baldus et al., 2015; Martínez-López et al., 2017).

Belonging and participating in a community of supporters or detractors of the loved or the hated brand was evidenced from the qualitative data as a consequence of extreme positive and negative feelings towards the brand:

“Try, you know, start a conversation with people. You know it's one of those things that you bring up with people, you know, who they support, you know, you find someone saying, you can kind of connect with them” (M8, 21).

“Probably networks of people they are associated with, if they have family or friends that feel really positive about those brands, and there's a group acceptance, you know, there is a social dimension to it” (M9, 39).

Participating in the community around the polarizing brand give consumers a sense of being connected with the in-group:

“I always like seeing someone that supports the same team as me or has the same views as me in this, you know, if you have a wee bit of a connection if you have the

same views it's easier to get along with them. You always have something to talk about" (M7, 22)

Interviewees who claimed to love or hate a polarizing brand expressed their willingness to participate in a community of like-minded consumers. Therefore, the qualitative data highlights that participation in a community of consumers who have similar attitudes and feelings towards a brand is a possible outcome of the brand polarization phenomenon.

5.4.3 Theme 7: Act

Qualitative findings reveal that three outcomes of brand polarization belong to this particular theme: forgiveness/retaliation behaviours, positive/negative WoM and defending/attacking the brand. Together, they conform the behavioural group of outcomes of the brand polarization phenomenon. Each of these three outcomes are explained next.

5.4.3.1 Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours

This study considers forgiveness/retaliation behaviours as the willingness to grant pardon to the loved brand and the desire to reciprocate against the hated brand (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Hegner, Fenko, et al., 2017). Consumer forgiveness refers to the willingness of the consumer to act constructively after a brand's violation of trust (Trampe et al., 2014; Xie & Peng, 2009). On the other hand, brand retaliation refers to active and direct actions in an effort to punish a brand and make it pay for the damages it has caused (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006, 2008; Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017).

Interviewees manifested their willingness to forgive the loved brand and their desire to punish the hated brand after an eventual brand's misperformance or misbehaviour:

"I don't think I would complain if something wasn't good enough. I think I just kind of accept it really. But I would be surprised... I would still go back" (F4, 29).

"[If the loved brand does not perform well] there's certainly a sense of disappointment... But there's a sense of disappointment but there's also a sense of, I think of loyalty in that you know, you identify with the team and you identify with the brand so up or down, good or bad, you're going to continue to be there" (M9, 39).

“...protesting, demonstrating against the brand. Even sabotage sometimes, like destroying things, it’s a bit extreme, but I have seen that. Like they go and throw paint, they write graffiti on the shop or things like that” (F2, 26).

Two types of forgiveness of the loved brand emerged from the qualitative data. The first type could be described as ‘unconditioned forgiveness’, in which consumers are willing to forgive the loved brand independently of the kind and/or frequency of the misperformance. Unconditioned forgiveness was particularly evident in product categories such as movie characters and sport teams:

“...I think that the brand remains, the brand's value remains, how can I say it, even in the performance of this activity or brand activity like the case of producing this new book wasn't that good wasn't that accurate or something like that, I feel like the story is so profound, the brand is so strong, that can actually overcome any kind of bad behaviour or bad performance” (M4, 28).

“I feel sorry in the sense that they [Roma] don't win the league. Last year they came in second, it was a close call, and you feel bad about it. But this doesn't make me feel as if I'm going to abandon the brand because they never win the league. So, there is a loyalty to them. A great respect for what they do” (M10, 42).

The second type of brand forgiveness could be characterised as ‘conditioned forgiveness’, in which the willingness to forgive the loved brand depends on the kind and/or the frequency of the brand’s misperformance. Interviewees F2 and F5 provided examples of conditioned forgiveness depending on the kind of misperformance of the loved brand:

“Well, it depends how bad the catastrophe is. If it’s a very bad scandal, then I might re-think about everything” (F2, 26).

“...if they did something wrong I wouldn't like stand up for them at all costs... if they did do something really bad I would probably stop going there” (F5, 30).

Whereas participants F3 and F7 described scenarios of conditioned forgiveness depending on the frequency of the mentioned misperformance:

“I don't think immediately, after just one bad experience, but if the same instance continues or like repeats itself, then I would definitely change, the loyalty, how I would

talk about it to people... Also, probably will not be as committed to them as I used to be before” (F3, 26).

“If the brand does not perform well then I would be very disappointed... it needs to be more than once it needs to be a couple of times actually... I'm not into support forever if the whole thing breaks down” (F7, 74).

Participants pointed that they were capable of forgiving the loved brand or retaliating against the hated brand if it misbehaved. Thus, the qualitative data evidenced the willingness to forgive the loved brand and the desire to retaliate against the hated brand as consequences of brand polarization.

5.4.3.2 Positive/negative WoM

Past studies suggest that WoM communication is the process that allows consumers to share information and thoughts about a brand, product or company in an informal, person-to-person fashion (Ismail & Spinelli, 2012; Roy et al., 2013; Wallace et al., 2014). WoM can be positive or negative (Alexandrov et al., 2013). Positive WoM refers to the consumer's willingness to share positive things about a brand (Alexandrov et al., 2013; Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Negative WoM refers to the consumer's efforts to communicate poorly about a brand with others (Alexandrov et al., 2013; Grégoire & Fisher, 2006; Hegner, Fetscherin et al., 2017).

Sharing the experiences with the loved and/or the hated brand was mentioned by interviewees as a key outcome of brand polarization:

“...posting things about them, posting about my experience with them... I will definitely spread the word of mouth, electronic word of mouth about the brand, so I would post things, I would share things, I would talk about that with other people” (F2, 26).

“I think also word of mouth, like sharing your experiences, like discussing the product to other people” (F6, 23).

Participants emphasised their willingness to talk positive things about the loved brand with other people:

“Leave a good review, I think, you know, on the Internet. Recommend it to others. Just talking to people about it” (F3, 26).

“Talking, sharing my positive experience or my recognition of these brands” (M3, 27).

Further, the willingness to talk negatively about the hated brand with other people was also highlighted:

“If there is a conversation about brands, values and things like that, I’d say that I’m against [of] what they do. So, let’s put it this way, I openly communicate about that to disassociate myself with the products of those brands” (F2, 26).

“I definitely know a lot of people that do purchase there, and when I see them wear it, I’m kind of vocal about why I won’t wear it” (F6, 23).

Sharing with others the constructive and/or the adverse feelings towards the polarizing brand was a common behavioural outcome of extreme positive and negative feelings towards it among the participants of the qualitative study. Hence, the exploratory findings denote the link between brand polarization and positive/negative WoM.

5.4.3.3 Defending/attacking the brand

While committed consumers are willing to advocate for the brand they support (Fullerton, 2005), they are also capable of boycotting a disliked brand when strong negative emotions are involved (Shin & Yoon, 2018).

Interviewees pointed the tendency some consumers have to defend and support the brand they love and to attack and boycott the brand they hate:

“Defending Apple as a company from my friend that thinks they are just about the money” (M3, 27).

“...most of my friends are actually haters of Harry Potter. So, I argue with them. I mean, that’s my way of supporting the brand... so, I try to defend my point of view by arguing with them. I will argue, if I can I will defend my brand” (M4, 28).

“Things like boycotting the brand” (F2, 26)

“...creating memes, in social media they’ll make fun of everyone who is supporting the brand, they will create jokes to make you feel you’re stupid or you’re childish... They’ll even create content against the brand” (M4, 28).

“I think they do things like sending messages in social networks, like in Facebook. Sometimes you find memes or messages explaining why Coca-Cola is a bad product that they use for cleaning tools or cleaning toilets and how the product destroys some things. They are able to do that just to show how bad Coca-Cola is. Maybe I can say they attack the brand directly in social networks” (M5, 39).

Participants highlighted their intention to advocate for the loved brand or to conduct harmful behaviors directed against the hated brand. Thus, defending and/or attacking the polarizing brand was an exposed outcome of brand polarization when analysing the qualitative data.

5.5 Moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity

Perceptions of rivalry intensity refer to the recognised adversarial relationship between a polarizing brand and its main opponent (Karanfil, 2016). The qualitative findings suggest that rivalry enhances brand polarization. Traditional rivalries like Coca-Cola vs Pepsi or between sport teams were recognised to increase the passionate feelings of love and hate towards such brands:

“[Pepsi] is not to my taste... it has been competition to Coca Cola for years... I know that there are a lot of people who love it, but the product to me is not attractive... I love the taste of Coca-Cola and I know that people actually say the other thing, the opposite... There is a lot of competition” (F1, 28).

“I think when you personally identify with the brand and then you have a competing brand, you can feel negative towards the competing brand because you take it too personally, it’s like a personal threat. If your identity is wrapped up in this thing, and someone is competing with that thing, wanting to push that thing aside, then you take it personally, so you feel like there is a conflict, like it’s a zero-zone kind of game where there has to be a winner and there has to be a loser. So, it’s the threat of you personally feeling like a winner or like a loser” (M9, 39)

Interviewees suggested that the causes of the development of passionate positive and negative feelings towards a polarizing brand may be enhanced by the intensity of the rivalry between it and its most relevant opponent. As evidenced from the qualitative data, consumers' perceptions of antagonism between a brand and its main competitor seems to be a moderator between brand polarization and its antecedents.

5.6 Implications of the qualitative study

The qualitative study has several implications. Firstly, the interview data has brought to light the dimensions of brand polarization. As a result of the qualitative data analysis, five dimensions of the phenomenon (brand passion, self-brand benchmarking, intra-group identification, inter-group dissociation, and generation of strong feelings for the achievement or misfortune of the brand) are suggested.

Secondly, the qualitative data has uncovered a set of drivers of brand polarization. A total of eight drivers of the phenomenon across four different categories (product-related, brand-related, personal-related and group-related) are presented. The brands chosen by participants belonged to an ample range of product categories.

Thirdly, the exploratory findings have revealed some outcomes of brand polarization. Specifically, seven outcomes of the phenomenon that emerged from the data were analysed. These outcomes were classified in three different categories: approach the brand, avoid/follow the brand and act.

Additionally, the moderating role of '*perceptions of rivalry intensity*' in the relationship between the brand polarization phenomenon and its antecedents was analysed. The qualitative data revealed that the relationship between brand polarization and its antecedents may be enhanced in high rivalry conditions.

The qualitative findings are fundamental in the process of determining the dimensionality of brand polarization and structuring the conceptual model. Given the scarcity of the literature on the dimensions of brand polarization, these were implied from the analysis of the interview data. The review of the literatures on polarization and brand rivalry suggests the existence of two drivers of brand polarization, namely association with important issues and sense of community (Grohs et al., 2015; Lau et al., 2017; Mullinix, 2016), which were corroborated by the qualitative data. Based on the evidence provided by the exploratory

data, six more drivers of the phenomenon (product involvement, brand strength, brand uniqueness, perceived quality, expected positive/negative experiences and ideological compatibility/incompatibility) were added for consideration. Regarding the outcomes of brand polarization in the conceptual model, the qualitative data informed consequences of the phenomenon in three categories: approach the brand (complimenting/complaining), avoid/follow the brand (brand loyalty/disloyalty, using pro/anti-brand merchandise and participation in a brand/anti-brand community) and act (forgiveness/retaliation behaviours, positive/negative WoM and defending/attacking the brand). The literatures on brand love and brand hate were useful in the analysis of these six outcomes of brand polarization. The detailed conceptual model with the relations between variables is covered in the next chapter.

5.7 Chapter summary

The present chapter displayed the findings of the qualitative study, which consisted of 22 semi-structured interviews to adults who had strong passionate positive and negative feelings towards at least one brand. The chapter explained the dimensions, drivers and outcomes of the brand polarization phenomenon. Also, moderation in the relationship between brand polarization and its antecedents was addressed. Table 14 summarises the qualitative study findings.

Table 14 Summary of findings – Qualitative study

Theme	Sub-theme
Dimensions of brand polarization	Brand passion
	Self-brand benchmarking
	Intra-group identification
	Inter-group dissociation
	Generation of strong feelings for the achievement / misfortune of the brand
Product-related drivers of brand polarization	Product involvement
Brand-related drivers of brand polarization	Brand strength
	Brand uniqueness
	Perceived quality
	Association with important issues
Personal-related drivers of brand polarization	Expected positive/negative experience
	Ideological compatibility/incompatibility
Group-related drivers of brand polarization	Sense of community
Outcomes of brand polarization: Approach the brand	Complimenting/complaining
Outcomes of brand polarization: Avoid/follow the brand	Brand loyalty/disloyalty
	Using pro/anti-brand merchandise
	Participation in a brand/anti-brand community
Outcomes of brand polarization: Act	Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours
	Positive/negative WoM
	Defending/attacking the brand
Moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity	

The analysis of the qualitative data uncovers five dimensions of brand polarization (brand passion, self-brand benchmarking, intra-group identification, inter-group dissociation, and generation of strong feelings for the achievement or misfortune of the brand). Further, four categories of drivers of brand polarization (product-related, brand-related, personal-related and group-related) and a total of eight individual drivers are revealed. Each driver has been explained separately. Also, three categories of outcomes of brand polarization (approach the brand, avoid/follow the brand and act) were presented and a total of seven individual outcomes of the phenomenon were explained. Lastly, the implications of the qualitative study were highlighted.

Chapter 6 Conceptual model and research hypotheses

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conceptual model developed from the review of the literature described in chapter 2 and the analysis of the qualitative data reported in chapter 5. The conceptual model focuses on the relationships between brand polarization, the core concept in this study, and its drivers, outcomes and moderator. In this chapter, these proposed relationships are formally expressed in terms of research hypotheses. The hypothesised relationships are further tested using quantitative data. Results of hypothesis testing are presented in chapter 9.

6.2 Overall logic

Following the analysis of the qualitative data, the next step is to formulate hypotheses regarding the drivers, outcomes and moderators of brand polarization. The proposed model answers the research questions 2 and 3 formulated in section 2.6.

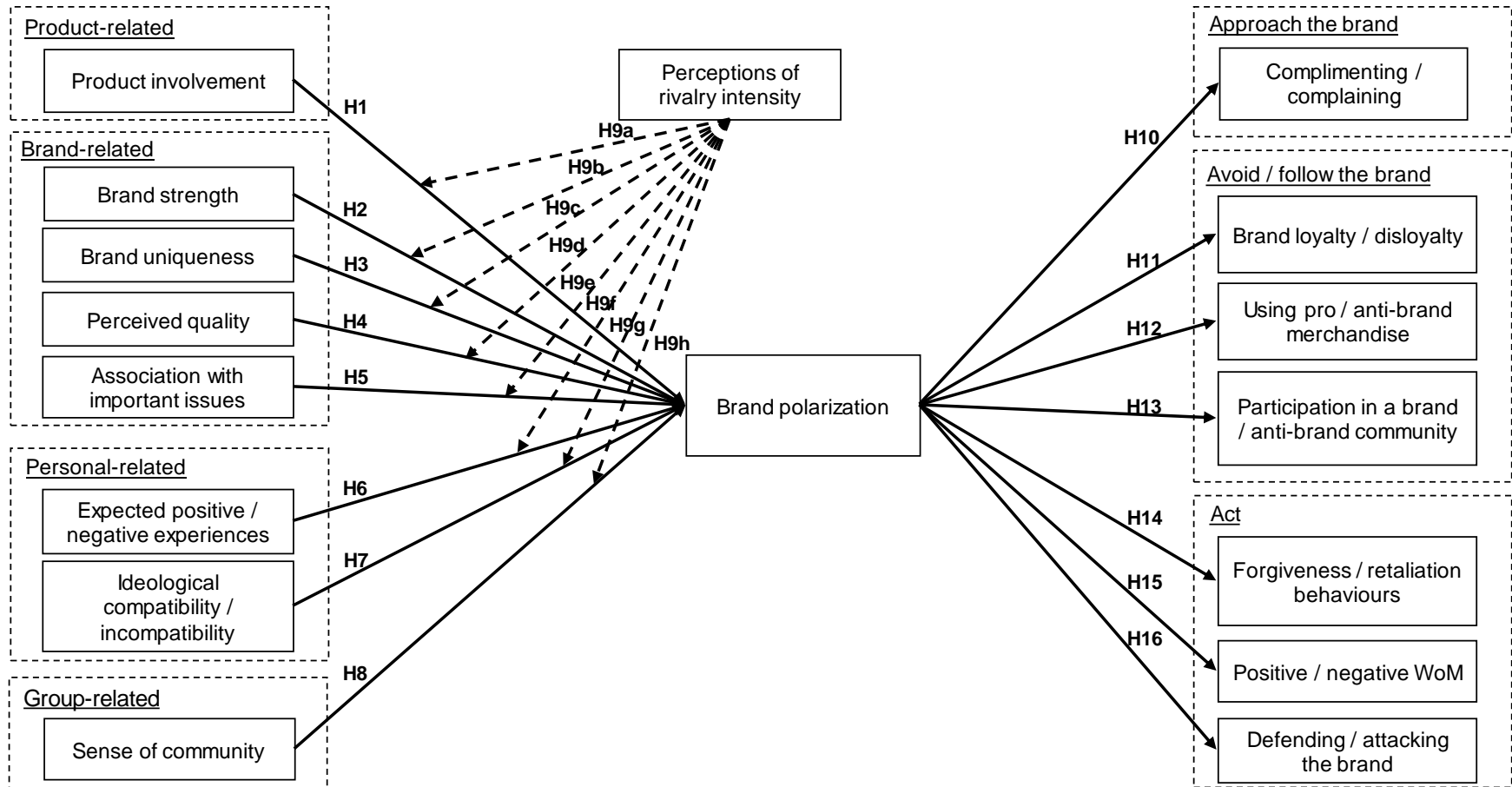
The model focuses on brand polarization, defined as *an affective and cognitive phenomenon where beliefs and emotions of a significant number of individual consumers induce a simultaneous move to the extremes involving passionate positive and negative feelings and convictions towards the brand, like-minded consumers, and opposite-minded consumers* (see section 2.5). The following sections of the chapter discuss the formulation of the hypotheses included in the study's conceptual model. These hypotheses were tested through the use of quantitative data.

According to the consumer-brand relationship theory (Fournier, 1998), consumers develop strong positive and negative personal-like bonds with brands. However, simultaneous strong positive and negative emotions towards brands have been largely unexplored (Osuna Ramírez et al., 2019). Given this, the review of the literatures on political polarization, group polarization, brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate, in addition to the analysis of the qualitative data, helped to uncover possible drivers, outcomes and moderators of brand polarization.

The qualitative findings reported in Chapter 5 reveal that the drivers of brand polarization can be grouped in different categories. A first category relates to the product type the polarizing brand belongs to. This category includes one antecedent – product involvement. A second category groups the drivers directly linked with the polarizing brand itself, including brand strength, brand uniqueness, perceived quality and association with important issues. The third category brings together factors related with the consumer. This category contains personal-related drivers, including expected positive/negative experience and ideological compatibility/incompatibility. The last category is concerned with the interaction between consumers related to the polarizing brand, and includes the antecedent sense of community. Exploratory findings also unveiled the role that perceptions of rivalry intensity might play moderating the relationship between brand polarization and its drivers.

The review of the literature and the analysis of the interview data were also useful to determine the outcomes of brand polarization. The conceptual model includes three categories of outcomes of the phenomenon. The first category refers to consumers directly approaching the polarizing brand. This category holds one outcome – complimenting/complaining. The second category consists of the outcomes related to avoiding or following the polarizing brand, including brand loyalty/disloyalty, using pro/anti-brand merchandise and participation in a brand/anti-brand community. The third category covers the outcomes of brand polarization related to act, including forgiveness/retaliation behaviours, positive/negative WoM and defending/attacking the brand. Given that, to the author's best knowledge, the antecedents and outcomes of brand polarization have not been yet investigated, the development of hypotheses relied mainly on the qualitative data analysis. The conceptual model comprises 16 hypotheses and 17 constructs. Figure 2 below illustrates the conceptual model, including the different categories of drivers and outcomes of brand polarization.

Figure 2 Conceptual model



6.3 Drivers of brand polarization

A total of eight drivers of brand polarization (product involvement, brand strength, brand uniqueness, perceived quality, association with important issues, expected positive/negative experience, ideological compatibility/incompatibility and sense of community) are included in the conceptual model in the four categories mentioned above. Hypotheses that link the mentioned drivers with the brand polarization phenomenon are presented next.

6.3.1 Product involvement

Product involvement is defined in the present study as consumer's perception of the importance of a product category based on his/her needs, values, and interests (Hong, 2015). Bhaduri & Stanforth (2016) view involvement as a relationship variable between an individual and an object. Specifically, the authors define involvement for clothing, a category that provokes strong passionate feelings among consumers (Khare & Rakesh, 2010) as the extent to which consumer's interest on clothing is considered a meaningful and engaging activity in his/her life (Bhaduri & Stanforth, 2016).

Involvement is not a property of the product category but a response of the consumer to the product category (Ferreira & Coelho, 2015). Such response can range from strong negative to strong positive sentiments (Fetscherin et al., 2019).

The analysis of the qualitative data revealed that brand polarization is more likely to happen in product categories viewed as important by consumers, as polarizing brands mentioned by participants frequently belonged to highly-involving product categories, like football teams, technology and food. This implies that product involvement might be one of the antecedent variables that drive the development of brand polarization. Strong feelings towards a brand are frequently associated with involvement with the product category the brand belongs to (Shimp & Madden, 1988).

It is then expected that involvement with the product category will be one of the causes of the brand polarization phenomenon. This is hypothesised as:

H₁: Product involvement is positively related to brand polarization.

6.3.2 Brand strength

In this study, brand strength is defined as the extent to which a brand is well known and perceived to be remarkable by a target group (Wymer et al., 2016). The qualitative data reveals that simultaneously having a large group of lovers and a considerable group of haters seems to be reserved for widely-known, strong brands. Strong brands were considered by interviewees to cause the appearance of the brand polarization phenomenon, as they associated big, leading and well-known brands with consumers' extreme passionate feelings. As such, strong and outstanding brands were apparently related to the brand polarization phenomenon.

These qualitative findings relate to previous research on brand strength. For example, according to Strandvik & Heinonen (2013), brand strength relates to intense thoughts, feelings and actions current, former, and potential customers have toward the brand and how they act in terms of communication and purchasing. The authors acknowledge that in order to gain a more relevant and realistic picture of the strength of a brand, not only its supporters, but also indifferent and negative customers and non-customers should be considered (Strandvik & Heinonen, 2013).

Brand strength relates to brand equity, as strong brands are brands with significant positive brand equity and weak brands are brands without significant positive brand equity (Ho-Dac et al., 2013). Other authors define brand strength as an evaluative or behavioural response that affects brand choice (Grohs et al., 2016; Mühlbacher et al., 2016). Given that brand strength is associated with an energetic response from the consumer (Mühlbacher et al., 2016) and that such response can be positive or negative (Fetscherin et al., 2019), it is hypothesised that:

H₂: Brand strength is positively related to brand polarization.

6.3.3 Brand uniqueness

This study considers brand uniqueness as the degree to which consumers feel the brand is distinct from competing brands (Su & Chang, 2018). Prior evidence suggest that unique brand associations are passionately evaluated by consumers and imply superiority over other brands (Keller, 1993).

Brand uniqueness is commonly defined as consumers' set of associations or perceptions of a brand being different and exceptional relative to competitors (Liljedal & Dahlén, 2018; Mühlbacher et al., 2016; Netemeyer et al., 2004; Song Southworth & Ha-Brookshire, 2016; Su & Chang, 2018). A unique brand has a strong point-of-difference that makes the brand stand out, so it can be easily noticed, recognised and recalled over competing brands (Dwivedi et al., 2018).

Based on the interview data, it is assumed that brands being unique, focused and differentiated is a motivator of the brand polarization phenomenon. Interviewees suggested that polarizing brands stand out as being distinct and have their particular way of doing things, which gives them a strong base of supporters and detractors. Therefore, it is anticipated that brand uniqueness would motivate the appearance of the brand polarization phenomenon. This is hypothesised as:

H₃: Brand uniqueness is positively related to brand polarization.

6.3.4 Perceived quality

Perceived quality has been defined as consumers' assessment of superiority or inferiority of the considered brand (Konuk, 2018). The concept has been extensively used in past research, and two streams are observed in the literature regarding perceived quality. The first stream, more product-centred, defines perceived quality as the sum of characteristics of a product or service that allow it to satisfy stated or implied needs (Calvo-Porrall et al., 2013). Following this perspective, San-Martín et al. (2017) state that, in the e-commerce context, perceived quality refers to the right product delivery within the promised time frame and with accurate product information disclosed on the website. The second stream is more customer-centred, and views perceived quality as the assessment of the consumers about the excellence or superiority of the product being considered (Gatti et al., 2012; Konuk, 2018).

Although no study has tested the relationship between perceived quality and brand polarization, the present study draws on strong positive and negative emotions felt by the consumer towards the brand as a result of the evaluation of the brand's superiority or inferiority. Interview data uncovered the link between consumers' perceptions of a brand's level of quality and the development of simultaneous passionate positive and negative

feelings towards it. This indicates that consumers might associate the development of the brand polarization phenomenon with the brand's perception of quality.

The assessment of the brand's superiority or inferiority is based on the consumer's own experience, comparing the focal brand with other alternatives (Cheung et al., 2015). It is presumed that perceived quality, or the evaluation of the brand's superiority or inferiority (Netemeyer et al., 2004) motivates the development of strong positive or negative feelings and convictions toward the brand. This is hypothesised as:

H₄: Perceived quality is positively related to brand polarization.

6.3.5 Association with important issues

The correlation between polarization and issue importance can be observed in the political science literature, as higher level of extremity is associated with higher level of importance of the issue (Evans, 2003; Harton & Latané, 1997; Hetherington, 2009; Layman et al., 2006; McCright & Dunlap, 2011; Wojcieszak & Price, 2010). Feelings tend to be more intense when the issues are considered important (Hetherington, 2009). These relevant issues lead to polarization, as people often engage in attitude protection (Mullinix, 2016) and higher level of extremity is associated with higher level of importance of the matter (Harton & Latané, 1997). This relationship between issue importance and brand polarization was also evidenced when conducting the analysis of the qualitative data, as interviewees frequently associated relevant issues, such as religion, politics and family tradition, with the development of the phenomenon.

In their research on the influence of a joint sponsorship of rival football teams on the attitudes and preferences of the fans, Davies et al. (2006) state that the supporters' love towards their team is influenced by issues considered important by them, such as football and religion. Other authors point that issues considered important, such as climate change (McCright & Dunlap, 2011), same-sex marriage (Wojcieszak & Price 2010), religion (Layman et al., 2006) and abortion (Baldassarri & Bearman, 2007; Evans, 2003) cause the polarization of attitudes.

It is found in the political science literature that issues considered important cause attitude polarization (Wojcieszak & Price, 2010). In this line, the present study presumes that linking

the brand with issues considered important by consumers lead to the development of brand polarization. This is hypothesised as:

H₅: Association with important issues is positively related to brand polarization.

6.3.6 Expected positive/negative experiences

Expected positive or negative experiences, viewed as perceived good or bad performance of the product, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the offering or positive or negative country of origin associations (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017), is presumed to be one of the drivers of the brand polarization phenomenon. This assumption was observed in the analysis of the interview data, as interviewees often associated positive or negative experiences with brands with passionate favourable or unfavourable feelings towards them. Exploratory findings suggest the link between expected positive or negative experience with the polarizing brand and extreme feelings of love or hate towards it. The positive and negative experiences mentioned by participants involve physical evidence in a service setting (e.g. stadium, restaurant or retail store) or the service provided by the staff representing the brand.

Prior research offers support for these findings. For example, Zarantonello et al. (2016) consider 'violation of expectations' or negative consumption experiences of the brand's product, service or any other consumers' brand touch points as one of the reasons for passionate negative feelings. For Lee (2000), past experience represents the consideration, use, and purchase of the product. The author points that past experience has often been defined in terms of prior knowledge or product familiarity (Lee, 2000). In their work on brand avoidance, Lee et al. (2009) state that negative brand consumption experiences involve unmet expectations, are negatively disconfirmed and lead to dissatisfaction. Yoo & Lee (2012) refer to past experience as past behaviour that generates repetition and inertial habit and becomes a better predictor of future behaviour than cognitive evaluations of alternatives.

In line with May So et al. (2005), this study asserts that past experience is observed when an individual acquires knowledge about a brand, which is then processed cognitively and used as an input in the persuasion stage to form strong favourable or unfavourable attitudes and behaviours towards it. It is hence hypothesised:

H₆: Expected positive/negative experience is positively related to brand polarization.

6.3.7 Ideological compatibility/incompatibility

In this research, ideological compatibility/incompatibility refers to the extent to which consumers believe that a brand follows or violates moral and ethical standards (Dalli et al., 2006; Yim & Fock, 2013). Compatibility or incompatibility between the brand's core values and actions and the consumer's moral and ethical standards was frequently mentioned by interviewees as one of the drivers of brand polarization.

Brown & Dacin (1997) define corporate social responsibility associations as cognitive associations that consumers hold for a company and are helpful when evaluating a brand. Such associations reflect the status and activities of the company compared with its perceived societal obligation (Brown & Dacin, 1997). Yim & Fock (2013) state that perceived social responsibility refers to the extent to which consumers consider that the firm's corporate actions make good impacts on society. Companies and brands must exert a positive impact and minimise its negative impact on society (Wagner et al., 2009).

On the other hand, ideological incompatibility is defined as a set of beliefs incompatible with the consumer, as he or she perceives that the brand has violated written or ethical norms (Dalli et al., 2006; Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017). From the qualitative data, it was observed that consumers' like-mindedness or opposition with a brand's values and actions might result in strong feelings of approval or rejection towards the brand. Therefore, it is hypothesised:

H₇: Ideological compatibility/incompatibility is positively related to brand polarization.

6.3.8 Sense of community

Sense of community is defined in this study as the degree to which an individual perceives relational bonds with other like-minded consumers (Carlson et al., 2008). Previous studies have linked sense of community with the appearance of strong feelings, either positive (Zhang, 2010) or negative (Mannarini et al., 2017). This is particularly notorious in the rivalry literature, where it is described how sense of community causes extreme emotions towards like-minded consumers and against opposite-minded consumers (Havard et al., 2016; Hickman & Ward, 2013).

Sense of community drives participants in a consumption community to perceive themselves as a different group from the supporters of a competitive brand (Fraering & Minor, 2006). The same sense of community describes a close bond between an individual and other like-minded consumers (Fraering & Minor, 2013).

The literature points that sense of community is achieved when individuals obtain the following benefits: (1) feeling of belonging; (2) sense of mattering; (3) integration and fulfilment of needs; and (4) shared emotional connections (Rosenbaum et al., 2005). Further, some authors consider that sense of community is observed when community members coexist in peacefulness (Sierra et al., 2017).

The analysis of the qualitative data has revealed that sense of community might provoke passionate positive feelings towards like-minded consumers and passionate negative feelings towards opposite-minded consumers. Interviewees indicated that the feelings of belonging to a community of like-minded individuals was a reason for loving or hating a polarizing brand, implying that sense of community might be one of the drivers of the brand polarization phenomenon. As such, it is hypothesised:

H₈: Sense of community is positively related to brand polarization.

6.4 Moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity

The analysis of the qualitative data revealed that the brand polarization phenomenon might be enhanced when the perceived intensity of the rivalry between the focal brand and its main competitor is high. Traditional rivalries like Coca-Cola vs Pepsi or between sport teams were recognised by interviewees to increase the passionate feelings of love and hate towards such brands. In the literature, brand rivalry is commonly defined as an antagonistic view of competitors (e.g. Ewing et al., 2013; Marticotte et al., 2016; Phillips-Melancon & Dalakas, 2014). Marticotte et al. (2016) state that consumers tend to desire to harm rival brands when they are perceived as a threat to the supported brand.

Rivalry has been widely researched in the sports context (e.g. Angell et al., 2016; Dalakas et al., 2015; Grohs et al., 2015; Havard et al., 2013), where team rivalry is defined as intense and hostile views and behaviours towards a rival team and its supporters (Berendt & Urich, 2016; Kuo & Feng, 2013).

Perceived rivalry is associated with crucial positive and negative effects for brands and consumers (Berendt & Uhrich, 2016). In this line, the present study intends to capture consumers' perceptions of antagonism between a brand and its main competitor as a moderator between brand polarization and its antecedents. Therefore, it is hypothesised:

H_{9a}: Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between product involvement and brand polarization.

H_{9b}: Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between brand strength and brand polarization.

H_{9c}: Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between brand uniqueness and brand polarization.

H_{9d}: Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between perceived quality and brand polarization.

H_{9e}: Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between association with important issues and brand polarization.

H_{9f}: Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between expected positive/negative experiences and brand polarization.

H_{9g}: Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between ideological compatibility/incompatibility and brand polarization.

H_{9h}: Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between sense of community and brand polarization.

6.5 Outcomes of brand polarization

Seven outcomes of brand polarization (complimenting/complaining, brand loyalty/disloyalty, using pro/anti-brand merchandise, participation in a brand/anti-brand community, forgiveness/retaliation behaviours, positive/negative WoM and defending/attacking the brand) in the three categories explained in section 6.2 (approach the brand, avoid/follow the brand and act) are hypothesised in this study. The following sections discuss the hypothesised connections linking brand polarization and its outcomes.

6.5.1 Complimenting/complaining

In this study, complimenting and complaining behaviours are regarded as the positive and negative behavioural responses driven by perceived satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a consumption event targeted directly to the brand's representatives (Liu & McClure, 2001). Goetzinger et al. (2006) define compliments as an expression of praise usually driven by delight or great satisfaction. In the same study, the authors define a complaint as "an expression of pain or an articulation of dissatisfaction or resentment toward companies and/or third parties" (Goetzinger et al., 2006, p.194).

Complaining behaviour, defined as non-behavioural and behavioural responses driven by perceived dissatisfaction with a consumption event (Liu & McClure, 2001; Moliner Velázquez et al., 2010) is classified in private responses, complaining responses and responses to third parties (Moliner Velázquez et al., 2010). Further, complaining responses can be direct voice (face-to-face) or indirect voice (e.g. e-mail or company's homepage) (Oh, 2004; 2006).

Complimenting/complaining is hypothesised to be related to brand polarization based on the qualitative data analysis, as no previous evidence was found linking these two constructs. Interviewees were willing to express their positive or negative feelings and convictions about the polarizing brand directly with the company and its representatives. The analysis of the interview data suggests that participants tend to approach the brand's representatives to compliment the loved brand and/or to complain about the hated brand. Hence, it is hypothesised:

H₁₀: Brand polarization is positively related to complimenting/complaining.

6.5.2 Brand loyalty/disloyalty

The concept of brand loyalty has been extensively researched by marketing scholars (e.g. Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; El-Manstrly & Harrison, 2013; Odin et al., 2001; Oliver, 1999). Oliver (1999, p.34) defines loyalty as "a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing". Jacoby & Chestnut (1978, p.80) state that loyalty is "the biased (i.e., non-random) behavioural response (i.e., purchase) expressed over time by some decision-making units with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands".

Some authors categorise loyalty in attitudinal (feelings of attachment to the brand) and behavioural (repeated purchases of the same brand) (Fatma et al., 2016; Krystallis & Chrysochou, 2014; Menidjel et al., 2017; Zheng et al., 2015). This categorisation is similar to Odin et al.'s (2001) approaches of loyalty: the determinist approach (loyalty is an attitude) and the stochastic approach (loyalty is a behaviour). Other authors, such as Harris & Goode (2004) and El-Manstrly & Harrison (2013) categorise the construct into cognitive loyalty (beliefs of superiority of a brand), affective loyalty (favourable attitudes towards a brand), conative loyalty (behavioural intentions of repurchasing a brand), and action loyalty (the conversion of intentions to action).

Veloutsou & McAlonan (2012) define loyalty as the consumer's willingness to invest or sacrifice something to enhance the relationship with the brand, and disloyalty as avoiding the use of certain brand. In the present study, brand loyalty and disloyalty are conceptualised as behavioural loyalty and disloyalty, focusing on purchasing or avoiding to purchase the brand over time (Menidjel et al., 2017; Veloutsou & McAlonan, 2012).

Evidence of the link between brand loyalty/disloyalty and brand polarization could not be found in the literature. However, behavioural loyalty to the loved brand and/or behavioural disloyalty to the hated brand seem to be an outcome of the brand polarization phenomenon, as it was frequently mentioned by participants in the qualitative study. Interviewees who loved a polarizing brand declared their intention to be loyal to it, while participants who hated a polarizing brand clearly expressed their disloyalty behaviour. Behavioural brand loyalty is a well-documented practice for the lovers of a brand (e.g. Batra et al., 2012; Sarkar & Sreejesh, 2014). Polarization and rivalry usually mean that the individual identifies with a group that shares the same feelings, opinions and ideas. Feeling part of a respected, cohesive and distinct group results in enhanced behavioural loyalty (Berendt & Urich, 2016). Further, polarization drives individuals to adversely view and disconnect from the rejected brand and its followers (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). Given this, it is hypothesised:

H₁₁: Brand polarization is positively related to brand loyalty/disloyalty.

6.5.3 Using pro/anti-brand merchandise

It is recognised in the literature that marketers use branded merchandise as a way to increase sales and enhance relationships with target consumers (Jones, 2016). Previous research has linked the use of branded articles of clothing and other personal items with the public demonstration of feelings towards a brand or activity (McClure et al., 2006). Devoted consumers are prone to express their convictions through the purchase and use of name-brand products (Chan & Wang, 2015).

To the researcher's best knowledge, the relationship between brand polarization and using pro/anti-brand merchandise has not been previously studied. Notwithstanding, the analysis of the qualitative data reveals that participants might be willing to publicly brand themselves in order to show their sentiments about a brand. Participants expressed their willingness to brand themselves and use relevant merchandise to let others know their convictions towards the the loved or the hated brand. The qualitative data indicates that consumers might be inclined to use pro or anti brand merchandise to express their extreme positive or negative sentiments. This expression of feelings could be driven by the polarizing nature of the focal brand. Thus, it is hypothesised:

H₁₂: Brand polarization is positively related to using pro/anti-brand merchandise.

6.5.4 Participation in a brand/anti-brand community

The analysis of the interview data informed the possible association between the brand polarization phenomenon and actively taking part in a community of people who share feelings and convictions towards a brand. Participating in a community of supporters or detractors of the loved or the hated brand was evidenced from the qualitative data as a consequence of extreme positive and negative feelings towards the brand. A brand community is defined as "a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand" (Muniz & O'Guinn 2001, p.412).

Individual's level of engagement with a brand community depends on his or her relationship with other community members and with the brand (Martínez-López et al., 2017). Engagement with a brand community serves as a mechanism to build brand trust (Habibi et al., 2014).

Members of a brand community not only support and stand up for the brand they love but also develop antagonistic sentiments towards the rival brand and its followers (Kuo & Hou, 2017). As Wong et al. (2018) point, brand community behaviours involve extreme positive (pro-brand) and extreme negative (anti-brand) sentiments towards the focal brand.

This study intends to explore the individuals' level of engagement with a community of consumers who have similar attitudes and feelings towards a brand (Baldus et al., 2015; Kuo & Feng, 2013) as one of the outcomes of the brand polarization phenomenon. As such, it is hypothesised:

H₁₃: Brand polarization is positively related to participation in a brand/anti-brand community.

6.5.5 Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours

Consumer forgiveness refers to the willingness of the consumer to pass up retaliation, alienation and other vicious behaviours and act constructively after a brand's violation of trust (Trampe et al., 2014; Xie & Peng, 2009). Love for and identification with a brand often mean that the consumer is willing to accept brand wrongdoings (Wallace et al., 2014) and to forgive the brand (Hegner, Fenko, et al., 2017). When consumers love a brand and consider to have a high-quality relationship with it, they are more willing to forgive its mistakes, as they evaluate the costs and risks of not forgiving, like distress and anxiety (Hegner, Fenko, et al., 2017). Wallace et al. (2014) confirmed that strongly engaged consumers are willing to accept any wrongdoing by the preferred brand.

On the other hand, brand retaliation refers to active and direct actions in an effort to punish a brand and make it pay for the damages it has caused (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006, 2008; Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017). Brand retaliation is closely related to the concept of desire for revenge, as both refer to the motivation to punish the brand and both are driven by feelings of anger (Antonetti & Maklan, 2017). Polarization relates to hostile feelings towards the out-group party and the out-group partisans (DiMaggio et al., 1996). Extreme partisan identity could lead to this inter-group hostility (Wronski, 2016), and it sometimes translates in desire to harm and incivility actions (Dixit & Weibull, 2007).

Brand retaliation is observed when consumers feel the need to punish a brand for the damages they consider it caused them, and it is motivated by the desire of hurting this

disliked brand (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006). The desire for revenge towards the brand is confrontational, and it is the source of nearly all vindictive behaviours (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006). Brand retaliations consists on active actions directed to the brand, and can take the form of “complaints to brand’s employees, stealing from the brand or damaging the brand’s property” (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017, p.7).

The qualitative data suggests consumers’ willingness to forgive the supported brand and to retaliate against the disliked brand in the event of the brand’s misbehaviour. This research views the willingness to forgive the loved brand and the desire to retaliate against the hated brand as consequences of brand polarization. Therefore, it is hypothesised:

H₁₄: Brand polarization is positively related to forgiveness/retaliation behaviours.

6.5.6 Positive/negative WoM

WoM communication allows consumers to pass positive or negative information and thoughts about a brand, product or company in an informal, person-to-person fashion (Alexandrov et al., 2013; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012; Roy et al., 2013; Wallace et al., 2014).

Positive WoM is defined as the extent to which a consumer expresses warm approval or admiration of the brand to others (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). A consumer who is in love with a brand is more likely to tell other people about his or her positive experiences with it (Albert et al., 2013). Activism, understood as trying to influence other people’s vote, attending political meetings, working for a party or candidate, displaying a candidate’s button or sticker and/or donating to a candidate’s campaign, is considered an outcome of polarization in the political science literature (Mason, 2015). It can be seen from the definitions of the concepts that activism closely relates to WoM.

Negative WoM, or spreading adverse information about a brand, happens when people express opinions about a brand with which they had a negative ordeal (Marticotte et al., 2016). ‘Consumers’ intend to hurt the brand’s reputation by sharing the negative experience with other people, and hope to make them reconsider their relationship with the brand (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006). Activists are a force behind polarization that constitute an important structure that supports ideologically extreme positions, spreading the word on the advantages of the own party’s policy positions and the disadvantages of the opposing party’s policy positions (Layman et al., 2006).

The qualitative data has revealed the possible link between brand polarization and the willingness to spread positive or negative information about the focal brand. Sharing with others the constructive and/or the adverse feelings towards the polarizing brand was a common behavioural outcome of extreme positive and negative feelings towards it among the participants of the qualitative study. Hence, it is hypothesised:

H₁₅: Brand polarization is positively related to positive/negative WoM.

6.5.7 Defending/attacking the brand

Consumers who feel represented by a brand are motivated to advocate for and to avoid negative information about it (Huang et al., 2019). These consumers are also willing to boycott a disliked brand when strong negative emotions are involved (Shin & Yoon, 2018).

Strong positive feelings like brand love motivate consumers to exhibit advocacy behaviours such as recommending and defending the brand (Parrott et al., 2015). On the other hand, adverse attitudes and emotions often derive in boycott intentions (Farah & Newman, 2010). A boycott is defined as “an attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging individual consumers to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace” (Friedman 2002, p.4). Boycotts can be economic or social (ethical control) (Albrecht et al, 2013).

Boycotts are associated with the desire to harm a disliked brand, which is frequently observed when such brand represents a threat to the brand supported by the consumer (Marticotte et al., 2016).

From the qualitative data analysis, it was observed that often consumers are willing to endorse and support the loved brand and to harm and boycott the hated brand as an outcome of the brand polarization phenomenon. This goes from arguments with opposite-minded consumers to the creation of memes and other online material. Accordingly, it is hypothesised:

H₁₆: Brand polarization is positively related to defending/attacking the brand.

6.6 Summary of hypotheses

Table 15 summarises the raised hypotheses.

Table 15 Summary of hypotheses

Drivers of brand polarization	
H ₁	Product involvement is positively related to brand polarization.
H ₂	Brand strength is positively related to brand polarization.
H ₃	Brand uniqueness is positively related to brand polarization.
H ₄	Perceived quality is positively related to brand polarization.
H ₅	Association with important issues is positively related to brand polarization.
H ₆	Expected positive/negative experience is positively related to brand polarization.
H ₇	Ideological compatibility/incompatibility is positively related to brand polarization.
H ₈	Sense of community is positively related to brand polarization.
Moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity	
H _{9a}	Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between product involvement and brand polarization.
H _{9b}	Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between brand strength and brand polarization.
H _{9c}	Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between brand uniqueness and brand polarization.
H _{9d}	Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between perceived quality and brand polarization.
H _{9e}	Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between association with important issues and brand polarization.
H _{9f}	Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between expected positive/negative experiences and brand polarization.
H _{9g}	Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between ideological compatibility/incompatibility and brand polarization.
H _{9h}	Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between sense of community and brand polarization.
Outcomes of brand polarization	
H ₁₀	Brand polarization is positively related to complimenting/complaining.
H ₁₁	Brand polarization is positively related to brand loyalty/disloyalty.
H ₁₂	Brand polarization is positively related to using pro/anti-brand merchandise.
H ₁₃	Brand polarization is positively related to participation in a brand/anti-brand community.
H ₁₄	Brand polarization is positively related to forgiveness/retaliation behaviours.
H ₁₅	Brand polarization is positively related to positive/negative WoM.
H ₁₆	Brand polarization is positively related to defending/attacking the brand.

6.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has introduced the conceptual model and the hypotheses developed based on the analysis of the literature and on the findings of the qualitative study. The chapter

began addressing the relationships between eight antecedent constructs and the brand polarization phenomenon. Next, the moderating role of one construct between brand polarization and its drivers was presented. Lastly, the relationships between brand polarization and seven outcome constructs were discussed. A total of 24 hypotheses has been proposed. These hypotheses will be empirically tested with quantitative data and using a process which is discussed in following chapters.

Chapter 7 Quantitative data collection

7.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the steps in quantitative data collection, used in the hypotheses testing process explained in Chapter 9. The first section of the chapter covers the development of the two phases of the questionnaire, detailing its structure. Then, the choice of the adapted or adopted scales of the constructs included in the conceptual model is presented. Next, the pilot study is outlined and the administration of the questionnaire in the two phases is depicted. The characteristics of the three collected samples are then detailed. Further, the specifics of survey response, treatment of missing data and non-response bias are specified. Also, data preparation and normality assessment are portrayed. Lastly, the procedure followed for data analysis is explained.

7.2 Development of the questionnaire

As suggested by DeVellis (2017), the conceptual model presented in previous chapter was the focal point in the development of the questionnaire. Initially, the constructs included in the conceptual model were defined considering the different points of view presented in the literature (Tähtinen & Havila, 2018). Insights from the qualitative study were also examined, especially for those constructs for which a measurement scale needed to be developed. The definitions that best explained the constructs, considering the research context, were further evaluated, analysing when appropriate the constructs' dimensions.

Once the constructs were defined, the next step was to make them operational by transforming them into variables (Blaikie & Priest, 2019). In order to do this, relevant measurement scales available in the literature were reviewed and evaluated. Three aspects were contemplated to choose the most appropriate measurement scale for each construct:

- Fit of the scale items with the chosen definition (Tähtinen & Havila, 2018).
- Number of items of the scale. Multi-item measures were preferred as the specificity of the items can be averaged out, better distinctions among respondents can be made, reliability increases and measurement error decreases (Churchill, 1979).
- Validity and reliability of the existing scale (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008).

In addition to brand polarization, the central construct of this research, scales for three more constructs included in the conceptual model (association with important issues, perceptions of rivalry intensity and using pro/anti-brand merchandise) were developed. For the rest of the constructs, available scales found in the literature were adopted or adapted. The choice of the adopted or adapted scales to measure the constructs included in the conceptual model is explained in section 7.4. The process followed for developing scales for measuring the dimensions of brand polarization and the three additional constructs is detailed in the next chapter.

The response strategy incorporated the usage of close-ended, multiple choice questions, which are considered highly appropriate in self-administered surveys (Blair et al., 2013). According to Buckingham & Saunders (2004), close-ended, multiple choice questions assure response format homogeneity and, therefore, facilitate information recording and save the researcher's time when it comes to analysis.

Excluding the screening questions and the questions related to the respondents' demographic information, the variables were operationalised using Likert-type questions. Likert scales are considered as ordinal scales. Nevertheless, their treatment as interval is widespread in the field of marketing, especially in online self-administered questionnaires (Hair et al., 2017). Likert scales are commonly applied in interval-based techniques, such as Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modelling (DeVellis, 2017). Of the 24 variables (3 attention checks, 16 drivers, outcomes and moderator and 5 dimensions of the brand polarization phenomenon), 18 were operationalised as 7-point Likert-type questions and 6 as 13-point Likert-type questions. Since the questionnaire was designed to be appropriate for lovers and for haters, the 6 variables operationalised as 13-point Likert-type questions (perceived quality, expected positive/negative experience, ideological compatibility/incompatibility, behavioural brand loyalty/disloyalty, forgiveness/retaliation behaviours and defending/attacking the brand) were transformed to a 7-point scale for analysis through data recoding (Parke, 2013) as follows: scores 1 and 13 were considered as 7; 2 and 12 as 6; 3 and 11 as 5; 4 and 10 as 4; 5 and 9 as 3; 6 and 8 as 2; and 7 as 1. Seven point scales are considered crucial to performing successful Factor Analysis (Malhotra, 2014). The order of the questionnaire is explained in following sections of the chapter.

7.3 Structure and content of the final questionnaire

Aiming to reduce bias and to enhance the study's validity and reliability, the final questionnaire was divided in two phases. The first phase began with an introductory statement where the purpose of the study and the time to complete the survey was explained. The survey started with a screening question to limit participation to respondents who were 18 years old or older.

If respondents answered affirmatively the screening question, they were asked to choose the product category they knew more about between football teams, airlines and music artists. Then, participants were asked to rate, on a scale from 1 to 7, how familiar, experienced and knowledgeable they were with and about the selected product category. Further, they were asked if in the selected product category there was a brand they loved, a brand they hated, a brand they loved knowing that other people hated it and a brand they hated knowing that other people loved it. The final questions of the first phase's survey pertained to participants' demographic information.

For the second phase of the survey, only those respondents who answered affirmatively to the questions if there was a brand they loved knowing that other people hated it or a brand they hated knowing that other people loved it in the chosen product category were considered. Responses were evenly collected for lovers and haters and for each product category.

The second phase began with an introductory statement that explained the aim of the research project and assured the participants of their confidentiality (Bryman, 2016). It also stated approximately how long it would take to complete the questionnaire (Hulland et al., 2018). The sequence of the questionnaire was congruent with the proposed guides: questions moved from generic to specific, and from simple to more complex (Dillman, 2007). The questionnaire was structured in four sections: perceptions about the product category the brand belongs to, feel/do about the brand, relationship between the brand and its main competitor, and relationship with other consumers related to the brand. The statements included positive and negative wordings and were mixed to avoid common method variance (Fuller et al., 2016). Three attention check questions were dispersed throughout the questionnaire and were included as metrics for respondent data quality (Kees et al., 2017). The 7-point Likert scale attention check questions were: (1) "The Sun

rotates around the Earth,” (2) “Theresa May was the first UK Prime Minister,” and (3) “I have never heard of Facebook” (Smith et al., 2016).

Given the potential negative influence that common method variance might have on the research findings if it is not controlled properly (Tehseen et al., 2017), several procedural remedies were implemented in this study. Firstly, data was collected from three different samples (one for scale development and two for model testing) in two different phases. Secondly, the anonymity of the respondents was protected. Additionally, an effort was made to keep the questions simple, specific, and concise. Meetings with branding experts and the expert panel were key to control for item characteristic effects, item social desirability, item demand characteristics and item ambiguity (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Further, items of the constructs were mixed and the order of measurement of the variables was counterbalanced to neutralise method bias related to items’ embeddedness (Tehseen et al., 2017). Appendix D presents the full version of the first phase and Appendix E the full version of the second phase of the questionnaire.

7.4 Choice of measures

Following the analysis of the semi-structured interviews and having identified and defined the constructs included in the conceptual model, the literature was reviewed to classify and operationalise existing constructs. A total of 123 existing scales were evaluated. Table 16 shows the scales revised for each construct. Scales for the dimensions of brand polarization and for three constructs included in the conceptual model for which an appropriate existing scale could not be found (association with important issues, using pro/anti-brand merchandise and perceptions of rivalry intensity) needed to be developed. The scale development process is explained in Chapter 8.

Table 16 Scales revised for the conceptual model's constructs

Construct	Number of scales	Authors and Number of items
Product involvement	12	Berendt et al. (2018), 3 items; De Wulf et al. (2001), 3 items; Dijkstra et al. (2005), 2 items; Kapferer & Laurent (1985), 11 items; Lastovicka & Gardner (1979), 22 items; McQuarrie & Munson (1992), 9 items; Michaelidou & Dibb (2006), 15 items; O'Cass (2004), 10 items; Putrevu & Lord (1994), 8 items; Wang et al. (2012), 5 items; Zaichkowsky (1985), 5 items; Zaichkowsky (1994), 10 items
Brand strength	6	Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001), 3 items; Hieke (2010), 8 items; Mittal & Frennea (2010), 3 items; Strandvik & Heinonen (2013), 3 items; Wymer et al. (2012), 9 items; Wymer et al. (2016), 9 items
Brand uniqueness	4	Franke & Schreier (2008), 3 items; Keller (1993), 2 items; Liljedal & Dahlén (2018), 3 items; Netemeyer et al. (2004), 4 items
Perceived quality	11	Abbey et al. (2015), 3 items; Bao et al. (2011), 4 items; Bayo-Moriones et al. (2015), 1 item; Chen & Chang (2013), 5 items; Erdem et al. (2006), 2 items; Mishra et al. (2017), 6 items; Netemeyer et al. (2004), 4 items; Pappu & Quester (2006), 4 items; Parasuraman et al. (1991), 25 items; Tsiotsou (2005), 4 items
Expected positive/negative experiences	6	Hegner, Fetscherin, et al. (2017), 4 items; Jean et al. (2016), 4 items; Lee (2000), 3 items; Loureiro & Kaufmann (2012), 4 items; May So et al. (2005), 5 items; Yoo & Lee (2012), 5 items
Ideological compatibility/incompatibility	7	Brown & Dacin (1997), 3 items; Dean (1999), 3 items; Hegner, Fetscherin, et al. (2017), 4 items; Jolly & Mowen (1985), 1 item; Shanahan & Hopkins (2007), 5 items; Vassilikopoulou, et al. (2009), 1 item; Wagner et al. (2009), 3 items
Sense of community	9	Algesheimer et al. (2005), 6 items; Carlson et al. (2008), 4 items; Fraering & Minor (2006), 5 items; Fraering & Minor (2013), 2 items; Füller et al. (2008), 4 items; McAlexander et al. (2002), 3 items; Qu & Lee (2011), 4 items; Rosenbaum et al. (2005), 2 items; Taute & Sierra (2014), 3 items
Complimenting/complaining	7	Bonifield & Cole (2008), 2 items; Donoghue et al. (2016), 4 items; Grégoire & Fisher (2006), 3 items; Liu & McClure (2001), 3 items; Moliner Velázquez et al. (2010), 3 items; Oh (2004), 3 items; Oh (2006), 7 items
Brand loyalty/disloyalty	18	Bennett & Rundle-Thiele (2002), 3 items; Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001), 4 items; Chen (2013), 4 items; El-Manstrly & Harrison (2013), 17 items; Fatma et al. (2016), 5 items; Ferreira & Coelho (2015), 3 items; Grace & O'Cass (2005), 5 items; Harris & Goode (2004), 4 items; Keller (2001), 7 items; Kim et al. (2008), 3 items; Kuikka & Laukkanen (2012), 2 items; Lam et al. (2004), 2 items; Loureiro & Kaufmann (2012), 2 items; Odin et al. (2001), 4 items; Veloutsou & McAlonan (2012), 10 items; Washburn et al. (2004), 3 items; Yoo & Donthu (2001), 5 items; Zeithaml et al. (1996), 3 items
Participation in a brand/anti-brand community	10	Algesheimer et al. (2005), 4 items; Baldus et al. (2015), 11 items; Casaló et al. (2007), 4 items; Casaló et al. (2010), 2 items; Gummerus et al. (2012), 7 items; Hur et al. (2011), 4

Construct	Number of scales	Authors and Number of items
		items; Laroche et al. (2012), 4 items; Li et al. (2006), 5 items; McAlexander et al. (2002), 3 items; Wong et al. (2018), 15 items
Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours	9	Bechwati & Morrin (2003), 5 items; Finkel et al. (2002), 3 items; Grégoire & Fisher (2006), 6 items; Grégoire & Fisher (2008), 3 items; Grégoire et al. (2010), 4 items; Hegner, Fenko, et al. (2017), 4 items; Hegner, Fetscherin, et al. (2017), 5 items; Thomson et al. (2012), 5 items; Xie & Peng (2009), 2 items
Positive/negative word-of-mouth	15	Albert et al. (2009), 3 items; Alexandrov et al. (2013), 6 items; Batra et al. (2012), 1 item; Brown et al. (2005), 9 items; Carroll & Ahuvia (2006), 4 items; Fazal-e-Hasan et al. (2017), 3 items; Grégoire & Fisher (2006), 3 items; Harrison-Walker (2001), 4 items; Hegner, Fetscherin, et al. (2017), 5 items; Helgesen & Nettet (2007), 3 items; Ismail & Spinelli (2012), 4 items; Jalilvand et al. (2017), 3 items; Karjaluoto et al. (2016), 7 items; Maisam & Mahsa (2016), 5 items; Wallace et al. (2014), 5 items
Defending/attacking the brand	9	Albrecht et al. (2013), 3 items; Bauer et al. (2009), 4 items; Farah & Newman (2010), 2 items; Hoffmann (2013), 4 items; Klein et al. (2004), 3 items; Marticotte et al. (2016), 3 items; Palmer et al. (2016), 2 items; Romani et al. (2013), 5 items; Sen et al. (2001), 5 items

Academic expert panel reviews were undertaken in the process of choosing the measurement scales. The goal in seeking academic experts' opinions was threefold: (1) to establish face and content validity (Hynes et al., 1995); (2) to validate the definitions of constructs and to rate the relevance of each item with regard to what is supposed to be measured (McDaniel & Gates, 2016); and (3) to ensure items' conciseness and clarity (Hardesty & Bearden, 2004). Overall, two academic experts in the branding field were approached following the recommendations of DeVellis (2017). Three meetings were held over the course of three weeks and the average duration per meeting was one hour. This helped the researcher to use only those items and scales which were reflective of the adopted definitions exposing face and content validity. The academic expert panel reviews also established items' conciseness and clarity of wording to avoid any misunderstandings when participants filled in the questionnaire (DeVellis, 2017).

The following paragraphs explain the rationale for selecting the scales to measure the variables included in the conceptual model. Table 17 presents the list of measures used in this research excluding the constructs for which measurement scales were developed.

7.4.1 Product involvement

Product involvement was conceptualised as consumer's perception of the importance of a product category based on his/her needs, values, and interests (Hong, 2015). Berendt et al.'s (2018) three-item scale to measure product involvement was adopted for this research, as the items reflect the construct's definition. Further, the scale has proven to be valid and reliable to measure product involvement (Berendt et al., 2018).

7.4.2 Brand strength

This research follows Wymer et al.'s (2016) definition of brand strength, regarding it as the extent to which a brand is well known and perceived to be remarkable by a target group. The measurement scale was also borrowed from Wymer et al. (2016), adapting the nine items of the scale according to the research's needs. Three items were dropped to ensure discriminant validity, as they better measured the brand passion construct. Hence, a total of six items were used to measure brand strength.

7.4.3 Brand uniqueness

Brand uniqueness was defined as the degree to which consumers feel the brand is distinct from competing brands (Su & Chang, 2018). Netemeyer et al.'s (2004) scale was adopted to measure brand uniqueness, as the items mirrored the definition of the construct and proved to be valid and reliable. A total of four items measured the brand uniqueness construct.

7.4.4 Perceived quality

In line with Konuk (2018), in this research perceived quality is viewed as consumers' assessment of superiority or inferiority of the considered brand. The four items from Bao et al.'s (2011) scale were adapted and used to measure the perceived quality construct.

7.4.5 Expected positive/negative experience

In agreement with Hegner, Fetscherin et al. (2017), this study defines expected positive/negative experience as the anticipated good or bad performance of the product or satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the offering. Items from the Jean et al.'s (2016) customer satisfaction scale were adapted to measure expected positive/negative experience. Four items in total measured the construct.

7.4.6 Ideological compatibility/incompatibility

In this research, ideological compatibility/incompatibility refers to the extent to which consumers believe that the brand follows or violates moral and ethical standards (Dalli et al., 2006; Yim & Fock, 2013). Three items adapted from Wagner et al.'s (2009) perceived social responsibility scale were used to measure the ideological compatibility/incompatibility construct.

7.4.7 Sense of community

Sense of community is conceptualised as the degree to which a consumer perceives relational bonds with other like-minded consumers around a specific brand (Carlson et al., 2008). The four items from Carlson et al.'s (2008) sense of community scale were borrowed and adapted to measure the construct.

Table 17 Operationalisation of study constructs (existing scales)

Construct	Items	Source
Product involvement	This brand's product category means much to me	Berendt et al. (2018)
	This brand's product category is important to me	
	This brand's product category is an important part of my life	
Brand strength	I am knowledgeable about the activities of this brand	Adapted from Wymer et al. (2016)
	I am able to describe this brand to others	
	I have a good understanding of what this brand has done in the past	
	This brand is very good in achieving its goals	
	This brand really stands apart as being exceptional	
	This brand is remarkable when compared to other brands	
Brand uniqueness	This brand is distinct from other brands of the same product category	Adapted from Netemeyer et al. (2004)
	This brand really stands out from other brands of the same product category	
	This brand is very different from other brands of the same product category	
	When compared with other brands of the same product category this brand is one of a kind	
Perceived quality	This brand's level of excellence is low/high	Adapted from Bao et al. (2011)
	This brand is not at all reliable/very reliable	
	This brand offers inferior products/superior products	
	This brand's performance is very bad/very good	
Expected positive / negative experience	I would be pleased/unpleased with the products and services provided to me by this brand	Adapted from Jean et al. (2016)
	I would be happy/unhappy with this brand's responsiveness to me	
	I would be satisfied/dissatisfied with this brand's products and services provided to me	
	This brand would exceed/fall behind my requirements and expectations	
Ideological compatibility / incompatibility	In my opinion this brand is socially irresponsible/responsible.	Adapted from Wagner et al. (2009)
	In my opinion this brand is not/is genuinely concerned to improve the well-being of society.	
	In my opinion this brand violates/follows ethical standards.	
	I feel strong ties to other people who feel the same way than me about this brand.	

Construct	Items	Source
Sense of community	I find it very easy to form a bond with other people who feel the same way than me about this brand	Adapted from Carlson et al. (2008)
	I feel a sense of being connected with other people who feel the same way than me about this brand	
	A strong feeling of camaraderie exists between me and other people who feel the same way than me about this brand	
Complimenting / complaining	I would express my feelings towards this brand to the managers (artist's manager)	Adapted from Moliner Velázquez et al. (2010)
	I would tell the company (artist) my impressions about this brand	
	I would express my feelings towards this brand to the staff involved with it (artist and the manager)	
Brand loyalty / disloyalty	I would never/always choose this brand before others	Adapted from Harris & Goode (2004)
	I will never/always prefer the characteristics of this brand before others	
	I would never/always favour the offerings of this brand before others	
	I will never/always select this brand in preference to competitor brands	
Participation in a brand / anti-brand community	In general, I'm very motivated to participate actively in the activities of a community that shares my feelings for this brand	Adapted from Casaló et al. (2007)
	In general, I participate in order to stimulate the community that shares my feelings for this brand	
	I usually provide useful information to other members of the community that shares my feelings for this brand	
	In general, I communicate in the community that shares my feelings for this brand with great excitement and frequency	
Forgiveness / retaliation behaviours	If this brand would act in a way that I disapprove of, I would be inclined to forgive/get revenge of the brand	Adapted from Grégoire & Fisher (2006)
	If this brand would act in a way that I disapprove of, I would be inclined to let it go/harm the brand	
	If this brand would act in a way that I disapprove of, I would be inclined to excuse/punish the brand in some way	
	If this brand would act in a way that I disapprove of, I would be inclined to absolve/make the brand get what it deserves	
	If this brand would act in a way that I disapprove of, I would be inclined to pardon/get even with the brand	

Construct	Items	Source
Positive / negative WoM	I mention this brand to others quite frequently	Harrison-Walker (2001)
	I've told more people about this brand than I've told about most other brands	
	I seldom miss an opportunity to tell others about this brand	
	When I tell others about this brand, I tend to talk about it in great detail	
Defending / attacking the brand	I want to do something good/bad to this brand	Adapted from Marticotte et al. (2016)
	I want to take actions to support this brand/get this brand in trouble	
	I want to benefit/cause inconvenience to this brand	

7.4.8 Complimenting/complaining

The present study considers for complimenting/complaining the positive and negative behavioural responses driven by perceived satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a consumption event targeted directly to the brand's representatives (Liu & McClure, 2001). The three items from Moliner Velázquez et al.'s (2010) complaining responses scale were adapted to measure the complimenting/complaining construct.

7.4.9 Brand loyalty/disloyalty

In this study, brand loyalty and disloyalty are conceptualised as behavioural loyalty and disloyalty, focusing on purchasing or avoiding to purchase the brand over time (Menidjel et al., 2017; Veloutsou & McAlonan, 2012). Harris & Goode's (2004) action loyalty scale was borrowed and its four items were adapted to measure brand loyalty/disloyalty.

7.4.10 Participation in a brand/anti-brand community

Participation in a brand/anti-brand community is defined as the individuals' level of engagement with a community of consumers who have similar attitudes and feelings towards a brand (Baldus et al., 2015; Kuo & Feng, 2013). The four items from Casaló et al.'s (2007) brand community participation scale were adapted to measure participation in a brand/anti-brand community.

7.4.11 Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours

This research views forgiveness/retaliation behaviours as the willingness to grant pardon to the loved brand and the desire to reciprocate against the hated brand (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Hegner, Fenko, et al., 2017). Items from Grégoire & Fisher's (2006) desire for retaliation scale were adapted to include forgiveness behaviours. One item was dropped to ensure discriminant validity, as it better measured the defending/attacking the brand construct. In total, five items were used to measure forgiveness/retaliation behaviours.

7.4.12 Positive/negative WoM

In line with Alexandrov et al. (2013), in this study, positive or negative WoM is viewed as the willingness to tell other people positive or negative opinions about the polarizing brand. Four items from Harrison-Walker's (2001) WoM scale were borrowed to measure the positive/negative WoM construct.

7.4.13 Defending/attacking the brand

Defending/attacking the brand is defined as consumers' willingness to endorse the loved brand and to harm the hated brand (Marticotte et al., 2016; Palmer et al., 2016). Marticotte et al.'s (2016) desire to harm scale was adapted to include defending the brand behaviours. Three items were used to measure the defending/attacking the brand construct.

7.5 Pilot study

Pilot studies are deemed helpful in detecting issues which may have been missed by the researchers even after carefully crafting an instrument (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). Before conducting a full-scale survey, a small scale preliminary study was conducted to identify and adjust any possible issues with the design of the questionnaire (Thabane et al., 2010). The pilot study aimed to detect problems in sequence, order, layout and wording and to ascertain that the questionnaires would generate a range of answers and that they are seamless (Buckingham and Saunders, 2004). The pilot study was launched in December 2018, recruiting participants using convenience sampling (Saunders et al., 2016). A Qualtrics link to the survey was sent through e-mail to a pool of contacts of the researcher. For the pilot study, the two phases of the questionnaire were integrated. Respondents who answered affirmatively either if there was a brand they loved knowing that other people hated it or a brand they hated knowing that other people loved it in the chosen product category, were eligible to take the survey. The invitation indicated the voluntary nature of participation, and also reassured the participants of their anonymity. After collecting 25 usable responses in a period of two months with the mentioned sampling method, the researcher decided to use Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to collect the rest of the data for the pilot study. MTurk is a well-known crowdsourcing platform where employers outsource their tasks to potential workers in return for some agreed compensation (Antoun et al., 2016). MTurk allows employers to find potential workers for their tasks (called 'HITs') (Goodman et al., 2013) and provides high quality data (Roulin, 2015). MTurk workers were compensated USD1.20 per completed survey in the pilot study. Thirty-five usable responses of the pilot study were collected through MTurk in a period of four days.

In total, 60 usable responses were retained for analysis, an adequate sample size considering that for pilot studies, a minimum of 24-36 responses is recommended (Johanson & Brooks, 2010). The analysis of the data from the pilot study was useful to

introduce some editing changes to wording and layout of the questionnaire and to estimate how long it would take to complete it (Buckingham and Saunders, 2004). After the changes suggested by the data analysis of the pilot study, the final questionnaire was ready to be launched.

7.6 Administration of the questionnaire

The crowdworking platform MTurk was initially used to administer the questionnaire. MTurk is a widely-used crowdworking platform in the social sciences: Over 15.000 published articles have referenced MTurk in the past 10 years (Wright & Goodman, 2019). The advantages of using crowdworking platforms as a participant recruitment method are well documented in the literature (e.g. Antoun et al., 2016; Kees et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2016; Woods et al., 2015). For instance, data collected through crowdworking platforms showed to be more reliable, more cost-effective, easier and quicker to collect, and of better quality than data collected using other 'traditional' methods such as student samples and consumer panels (Kees et al., 2017a). After collecting less than 200 responses for the first phase in a period of three weeks, the researcher decided to increase the compensation to workers from USD 0.4 to USD 0.5 per completed response. Since the response rate continued to be slow, the researcher contacted an MTurk representative, who recognised that the platform is not as efficient with UK respondents as it is with respondents in the US. Following a conversation with a fellow PhD researcher, it was decided to switch from MTurk to Prolific Academic (ProA) to collect both phases of the quantitative data. The first phase's collected responses through MTurk were discarded.

ProA presents an internet-based platform through which researchers can outsource their questionnaires to potential participants who are willing to complete tasks in exchange for cash incentives (Antoun et al., 2016; Peer et al., 2017). ProA specifies detailed demographic information about its participant pool, which is useful to screen respondents (Peer et al., 2017). Specifically, ProA has shown to be more practical to screen participants (by previous approval rate, by demographics and for taking part in previous studies), easier to check and approve submissions and to have lower participants' propensity to engage in dishonest behaviour than other well-known platforms (Peer et al., 2017).

Recent studies have proved ProA's superiority to other platforms such as MTurk and CrowdFlower, in several areas. First, ProA has detailed regulations concerning the

treatment of participants, with a user-friendly interface and a functionality which is a superset of MTurk's, student and professional marketing research company panels (Palan & Schitter, 2018). Further, unlike MTurk, ProA explicitly caters for researchers (Gleibs, 2017). To provide a subject pool solely for research is the core element of ProA's business, whereas MTurk is not considered a key product by Amazon and has not been subject to any significant development in recent years since it was created (Palan & Schitter, 2018). Meanwhile, ProA is constantly evolving to better meet research initiatives' credibility requirements (Palan & Schitter, 2018).

ProA samples exhibit highly desirable psychometric properties consisting of convergent and divergent validity as well as reliability (Peer et al., 2017). Indeed, having compared the three core crowdsourcing platforms, Peer et al. (2017) observed that ProA and CrowdFlower participants showed lower degrees of dishonest behaviour, compared to those recruited on MTurk. They also confirmed that ProA participants scored significantly above both CrowdFlower and MTurk participants on attention check questions, resulting in higher internal reliability values for ProA participants. Scholars have highlighted the flexibility and practicality of collecting data using crowdsourcing panels, where it can occasionally even take less than twenty four hours to gather a few hundred completed responses (Gleibs, 2017). This is enabled by the thousands of potential online participants across different time zones, many of whom are able to participate in the study simultaneously (Prolific, 2019).

In contrast with other platforms, ProA permits unique participation, meaning that no participant can submit to any study that is running on ProA twice. This feature can enhance the credibility of the gathered data (Goodman & Paolacci, 2017). Furthermore, ProA enables follow-up studies to be conducted on a subset of participants (Palan & Schitter, 2018; Prolific Demographics, 2019), which is advantageous given the two-phases design of this study. Additionally, apart from the exclusion of those who have previously taken part and filtering by number of completed studies, ProA's algorithms have the advantage of fairly allocating study spaces, which protects a study from non-naïveté (Hulland & Miller, 2018). Importantly, unlike MTurk, ProA imposes a minimum wage, communicated to participants when they sign up to the platform, so they know they will be paid a fair wage (Prolific, 2019). ProA defined the minimum wage per hour as USD 6.50 (around £5.1)

(Wright & Goodman, 2019), independent of the regional and cultural background of participants, while fractions of hours require proportionally smaller payments.

Although the required time for the questionnaire is primarily calculated by the researcher, it is then updated with the actual time spent on the completion of the questionnaire once participants make submissions. Participants are informed about the continuously upgraded minimum payment per unit before agreeing to participate (Prolific, 2019). Research has found that the payment of overly low wages decreases researchers' reputation, thereby, diminishing the attractiveness of subsequent questionnaire completion tasks (Goodman & Paolacci, 2017). Low reputations may also impact upon data quality (Holland & Miller, 2018). The payment of a minimum wage via ProA can safeguard the researcher's reputation and the credibility of the collected data (Holland & Miller, 2018). For the first phase of the questionnaire, respondents were compensated £0.40 per completed survey. The estimated completion time of the questionnaire in the first phase was 4 minutes, making a reward per hour of £6.00. However, the real average completion time was 2 minutes, making it an effective hourly rate of £12.00. Respondents who were based in the UK and 18 years of age or above were considered to take the first phase of the survey. For the second phase of the questionnaire, respondents were compensated £1.00 per completed survey. In the second phase, the estimated completion time of the questionnaire was 11 minutes, making an hourly reward of £5.46. Given that the average time to complete the questionnaire was 9.6 minutes, the effective hourly rate for the second phase was £6.25. Only those respondents who answered affirmatively to at least one of the questions *'Is there a [selected product category] brand you love and you know other people hate?'* or *'Is there a [selected product category] brand you hate and you know other people love?'*, included in the first phase, were considered to take part in the second phase of the questionnaire. Responses were proportionally collected for lovers and haters and for each of the three product categories included in the study (football teams, airlines and music artists).

Another reason to employ ProA is that it benefits from a more diverse range of UK based participants, compared with other platforms, e.g. MTurk and CrowdFlower (Peer et al., 2017). Researchers have advocated using diverse participants in marketing and consumer research beyond those who are mostly Western, highly-educated, industrialised, relatively rich, and democratic (as is found in the majority of student samples) (Henrich et al., 2010).

Thus, ProA enables the potential generalisability of the findings to a broader population (Goodman & Paolacci, 2017).

Both phases of the survey were hosted on Qualtrics (<https://www.qualtrics.com/>). Once the data for the first phase was collected, the researcher checked if the survey was complete and the work was accepted. Then, the researcher checked if the answer to either of the two questions mentioned above were affirmative to classify the respondents who qualified for the second phase. When the data for the second phase was collected, the researcher inspected the attention check questions to ensure the quality of the data before accepting the work. Payment to workers who failed to answer correctly the attention check questions was not released.

7.7 Sampling in the quantitative study

Several parameters characterise the survey's participants. Participants targeted by the study include male and female consumers aged 18 years old and above who manifested to have a loved brand that other people hated or a hated brand that other people loved in one of the following three product categories: football teams, airlines and music artists. Table 18 shows polarizing brands frequently mentioned in phase 1 for each category. Given the difficulties to outline such a broad target population, the study uses a non-probability convenience sample technique to recruit participants.

Table 18. Polarizing brands frequently mentioned by participants in phase 1

Football Teams	Airlines	Music Artists
Manchester United F.C.	easyJet	Ed Sheeran
Liverpool F.C.	Ryanair	Justin Bieber
Arsenal F.C.	United Airlines	Beyoncé
Celtic F.C.	British Airways	Robbie Williams
Rangers F.C.	Emirates	Katy Perry
Tottenham Hotspur F.C.	American Airlines	Taylor Swift
Chelsea F.C.	Delta Airlines	Adele
F.C. Barcelona	Lufthansa	Madonna
Real Madrid C.F.	Air France	Coldplay
Newcastle United F.C.	Norwegian Air	Little Mix

The application of random sampling relies on the existence of a sampling frame (Bryman, 2016), and determining a sampling frame does not seem to be feasible given the characteristics of the study's target population. In the absence of sampling frame, an

adequate random sample size could not be determined, and the study had to rely on non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling involves non-random selection of respondents and often includes an element of subjective judgement (Saunders et al., 2016). Crowdsourcing panels constitute a type of convenience samples accepted as appropriate in social sciences research (Buhrmester et al., 2011). The rule of thumb to have a participant to item ratio of 5:1 served as a basis to determine the required amount of responses (Gorsuch, 1983).

According to the ProA website, the platform has around 75.000 participants from diverse age groups and with different employment statuses and education levels. However, in order to frame the sample, it was decided to limit participation to UK respondents, since 45% of the ProA participants reside in the UK and for 76% English is his or her first language (Prolific Demographics, 2019).

A total of 2,816 responses were collected in the first phase of the survey in the three different product categories. Table 19 exhibits the demographics of participants in the first phase of the questionnaire. The table presents variables like gender, age, level of education, employment, income, country of residence and the participation of each product category.

The majority of respondents in phase 1 were females (66%), in the 25-34 age group (33%), with an undergraduate degree (36%) and working full-time (44%). Most participants have a household income level between £20,000 and £39,999 (38%) and reside in England (84%). Airlines was the most frequently selected product category in phase 1 (52%).

Table 19 Participants' demographics, phase 1

N = 2,816	
Gender	
Male	969 (34%)
Female	1,847 (66%)
Age	
18-24	625 (22%)
25-34	919 (33%)
35-44	601 (21%)
45-54	413 (15%)
55-64	204 (7%)
65-75	54 (2%)
Education	
High school	661 (23%)
Technical / vocational training	276 (10%)
Professional qualification / diploma	419 (15%)
Undergraduate degree	1,010 (36%)
Postgraduate degree	413 (15%)
Other	37 (1%)
Employment	
Student	375 (13%)
Self-employed	230 (8%)
Working full-time	1,222 (44%)
Working part-time	483 (17%)
Out of work but looking for a job	137 (5%)
Out of work and not looking for a job	176 (6%)
Retired	106 (4%)
Other	82 (3%)
Missing	5 (0%)
Income	
Under £10,000	250 (9%)
£10,000 - £19,999	400 (14%)
£20,000 - £29,999	523 (19%)
£30,000 - £39,999	533 (19%)
£40,000 - £49,999	395 (14%)
£50,000 - £59,999	278 (10%)
£60,000 or over	422 (15%)
Missing	15 (0%)
Country UK	
England	2,359 (84%)
Scotland	255 (9%)
Wales	120 (4%)
Northern Ireland	48 (2%)
Missing	34 (1%)
Product category	
Football teams	695 (25%)
Airlines	1,475 (52%)
Music Artists	646 (23%)

The second phase of the survey measures 90 items, excluding demographics, attention checks and other non-construct items. According to Hair et al. (2006) the rule of thumb for the participant to item ratio to determine the required amount of responses is of 5:1. Therefore, a sample size of 450 responses was required. Of the 90 items included in the survey, 39 were used in the scale development process. Hence, applying the 5:1 ratio, the minimum number of responses required for the scale development analysis was 195.

In order to enhance the validity and reliability of the results, two samples of 450 responses each for hypothesis testing (samples 2 and 3) and one sample of 338 responses for scale development (sample 1) were collected and analysed in the second phase. The samples had the same proportion of lovers and haters (50%-50%) and respondents were similarly distributed among the three product categories.

Table 20 presents participants' demographics for the three samples. Variables like gender, age, level of education, employment, income and country of residence are shown in the table. Information about the proportion of lovers and haters and the participation of each product category for each of the samples is also presented.

Participants' demographics in the three samples are very similar, as it is presented in Table 20. In terms of gender, the majority of respondents were females, with 60% in samples 1 and 3 and 62% in sample 2. Two age groups, the 25-34 and 35-44 were the most representative for the samples. Together, these age groups represent 57% of respondents for sample 1, 54% for sample 2 and 53% for sample 3. In terms of education, over one-third of the participants in the three samples have an undergraduate degree (38% in sample 1, 36% in sample 2 and 35% in sample 3). Almost one-half of the participants work full-time (44% in samples 1 and 2 and 46% in sample 3) and the vast majority reside in England (83% for samples 1 and 2 and 84% for sample 3). As it was mentioned, the three samples are similarly distributed by lovers and haters and by product category.

Table 20 Participants' demographics, phase 2

	Sample 1 (N = 338)	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)
Gender			
Male	135 (40%)	173 (38%)	178 (40%)
Female	203 (60%)	277 (62%)	272 (60%)
Age			
18-24	68 (20%)	91 (20%)	92 (20%)
25-34	121 (36%)	139 (31%)	127 (28%)
35-44	70 (21%)	104 (23%)	114 (25%)
45-54	45 (13%)	73 (16%)	75 (17%)
55-64	26 (8%)	36 (8%)	34 (8%)
65-75	8 (2%)	7 (2%)	7 (2%)
Education			
High school	74 (22%)	105 (23%)	96 (21%)
Technical / vocational training	34 (10%)	47 (10%)	51 (12%)
Professional qualification / diploma	38 (11%)	67 (15%)	59 (13%)
Undergraduate degree	127 (38%)	161 (36%)	159 (35%)
Postgraduate degree	57 (17%)	65 (15%)	79 (18%)
Other	6 (2%)	5 (1%)	5 (1%)
Employment			
Student	39 (12%)	57 (12%)	61 (13%)
Self-employed	32 (10%)	43 (10%)	43 (10%)
Working full-time	148 (44%)	197 (44%)	206 (46%)
Working part-time	55 (16%)	67 (15%)	73 (16%)
Out of work but looking for a job	15 (5%)	29 (6%)	22 (5%)
Out of work and not looking for a job	20 (6%)	31 (7%)	17 (4%)
Retired	15 (4%)	17 (4%)	13 (3%)
Other	11 (3%)	9 (2%)	14 (3%)
Income			
Under £10,000	30 (9%)	37 (8%)	33 (7%)
£10,000 - £19,999	48 (14%)	76 (17%)	66 (15%)
£20,000 - £29,999	59 (18%)	81 (18%)	78 (17%)
£30,000 - £39,999	59 (18%)	91 (20%)	86 (19%)
£40,000 - £49,999	57 (17%)	64 (14%)	67 (15%)
£50,000 - £59,999	29 (8%)	29 (7%)	53 (12%)
£60,000 or over	53 (16%)	68 (15%)	67 (15%)
Country UK			
England	282 (83%)	374 (83%)	379 (84%)
Scotland	36 (11%)	48 (11%)	50 (11%)
Wales	12 (4%)	17 (4%)	13 (3%)
Northern Ireland	6 (2%)	10 (2%)	7 (2%)
Lover/hater			
Lover	168 (50%)	225 (50%)	225 (50%)
Hater	170 (50%)	225 (50%)	225 (50%)
Product category			
Football teams	92 (27%)	150 (33%)	150 (33%)
Airlines	121 (36%)	150 (33%)	150 (33%)
Music Artists	125 (37%)	150 (33%)	150 (33%)

7.8 Survey response and non-response bias

Missing data and non-response bias must be carefully assessed before proceeding with the analyses of sample characteristics and data (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). A total of 2,816 responses were collected in phase one in a period of seven days. Responses were further analysed, and only those who affirmatively answered to at least one of the questions *'Is there a [selected product category] brand you love and you know other people hate?'* or *'Is there a [selected product category] brand you hate and you know other people love?'* were considered for participation in phase 2. In total, 1,296 responses were collected in the second phase in a period of four days. As explained in section 7.3, three attention check questions were dispersed throughout the questionnaire and were included as metrics for respondent data quality (Kees et al., 2017). Attention checks help to minimise inattentive responses, and "offer direct, simple, and relatively objective means to analyse response quality" (Abbey & Meloy, 2017, p.68). Responses that failed to answer appropriately any of the three attention check questions were not considered for the analysis. After reviewing the answers to attention check questions, 35 responses were eliminated. Some missing data were spotted in the resulting responses, calling for detailed missing data analyses and treatment.

As advocated by Hair et al. (2006), a cut-off percentage of accepted missing data per case was established at 10%. Demographic questions were not considered for establishing the cut-off percentage, as demographic variables were not included in hypotheses testing in this research project. Deletion of these cases resulted in 1,238 retained replies which were subjected to the Expectation Maximisation (EM) method via the SPSS Missing Value Analysis function. This is considered an appropriate approach for the following three reasons. First, unlike other methods such as regression imputation or series mean, EM does not reduce the variance of data (Byrne, 2010). Second, EM produces less bias (Graham et al., 2003; Little & Rubin, 2014): "The EM algorithm does not fill in missing data, but rather estimates the parameters directly by maximising the complete data log likelihood function" (Dong & Peng, 2013, p.2). Lastly, it enables the specification of distinctions other than normal, which may be potentially problematic with some constructs (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). An overview of collected data, data subjected to EM, and questionnaires with completed data for phases 1 and 2 of the quantitative study is presented in Table 21 below.

Table 21 **Collection and completion rates**

Questionnaires collected in phase 1		Questionnaires collected in phase 2		Respondents that correctly answered attention check questions in phase 2		Data with less than 10% missing values subject to SPSS EM		Total response rate (%) phase 2
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
2,816	100%	1,296	46%	1,261	45%	1,238	44%	96%

When a sample frame cannot be determined, dealing with non-response bias is particularly important. A lack of bias indicates the robustness of the adopted sampling approach. One of the commonly applied techniques to address non-response bias is to compare the early and late participants, assuming that those who completed the questionnaire later should more closely match theoretical non-respondents (Armstrong & Overton, 1977; Baldauf et al., 1999).

However, recent studies have strongly warned against using such ritualistic evaluations of non-response bias. It has instead been advocated that non-responses mostly stem from participant refusal rather than the researcher's inability to reach potential participants (Curtin et al., 2005; Weisberg, 2005). As postulated by Hulland et al. (2018) it is not clear why comparing late and early participants on certain characteristics would be able to offer relevant information on the alleviation of non-response bias concerns. The applicability of this approach is even more questionable given the method of delivery in this research, in which data was collected in two phases and in a short period of time.

Researchers suggest taking strict measures to identify careless participants, such as deploying instructional attention checks where participants are required to select a specific response option (Meade & Craig, 2012; Oppenheimer et al., 2009). In cases where the wrong option is chosen, the participant was probably not paying enough attention; therefore, his/her reply contains a systematic error and should be excluded. Further, according to Hulland et al. (2018), it is legitimate to discard cases if they are not compatible with the screening criteria. These approaches were implemented in this research project.

7.9 Data preparation and normality test

After replacing the missing data, some transformations were performed to prepare the data for analysis. First, the negatively worded items were transformed to positively worded to avoid correlation and reliability problems (Kline, 2015). Then, the 1-13 Likert scale items were recoded to a 1-7 scale (Parke, 2013) to have consistency in the analysis. As explained in section 7.2, such items were transformed considering 1 and 13 as 7; 2 and 12 as 6; 3 and 11 as 5; 4 and 10 as 4; 5 and 9 as 3; 6 and 8 as 2; and 7 as 1.

The next step was to test the data's normal distribution. To check for normality, skewness and kurtosis measures were used. Skewness reflects the distribution's symmetry and kurtosis reflects the distribution's peakedness (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). Commonly accepted values of skewness and kurtosis coefficients are in the (-1, 1) interval (Groeneveld & Meeden, 1984). Histograms' shape of the distribution was also analysed to assess normality. Appendix F shows the values of the skewness and kurtosis coefficients, as well as further measures of mean and standard deviation for sample 1, used in the scale development process (N = 338), sample 2 (N = 450) and sample 3 (N = 450).

As it is observed from Appendix F, the values of the skewness coefficient for all the variables are in the (-1, 1) interval. On the other hand, the values of the kurtosis coefficient for some of the variables are slightly outside of the (-1, 1) interval. However, the histograms show an acceptable normal distribution for all the variables. Given that the analysis of the skewness and kurtosis coefficients and of the histograms do not indicate strong violations to normality, it was decided not to take any data treatment. Further, Hair et al. (2006) argue that normality issues may be ignored if the sample size exceeds 200, which is the case for the three samples.

7.10 Data analysis

Once the data was ready for analysis, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed to identify the commonalities within the items of the measured variables (Norris & Lecavalier, 2010). Following EFA, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was executed to test the fit of the hypothesised conceptual model (Kline, 2015). Lastly, the formulated hypotheses were tested using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). SEM was deemed to be the most appropriate method given that multiple relationships of dependent and independent

variables were being investigated (Chin, 1998). SPSS and AMOS statistical packages were used to analyse the quantitative data.

Structural equation modelling (SEM) was the main technique chosen for the analysis of the quantitative data. SEM is useful for testing causal relationships of multivariate data sets (Kline, 2015), which is appropriate for answering research questions 2 and 3. Also, SEM supports the development and validation of the brand polarization scale, inferred from research question 1, as it allows the testing of interdependence between factors (Hair et al., 2006).

Initially, the measurement models were evaluated through CFA. CFA was used for both, the brand polarization scale development and to assess the whole measurement model prior to hypothesis testing. CFA is used “to confirm a particular pattern of relationships predicted on the basis of theory or previous analytic results” (DeVellis, 2017, p.184). As such, CFA is a method that aims to test goodness of fit of a model and ensure unidimensionality of each hypothesised factor (Kline, 2015).

An analysis of the correlation matrix between factors was first conducted as a way to detect singularity or multicollinearity between factors. Goodness of fit is then evaluated using the relative Chi-square statistic (CMIN/DF), in combination with the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and the p of Close Fit (PClose) indices.

Chi-square (CMIN) ascertains how well the theoretical model fits the empirical model (Huber-Carol et al., 2012). CMIN/DF adjusts the Chi-square to the degrees of freedom, considering the complexity of the model. CMIN/DF values between 1 and 3 suggest a good fit and values between 3 and 5 suggest an acceptable fit (Kline, 2015). CFI compares the proposed model with a null or independence model which assumes that the latent variables in the model are uncorrelated (Bentler, 1992). CFI is one of the measures least affected by sample size. CFI should be equal to or greater than 0.90 to accept the model. A CFI equal to or greater than 0.95 indicates a very good fit (Westland, 2019). SRMR is “the average difference between the predicted and observed variances and covariances in the model, based on standardized residuals” (Westland, 2019, p.46). SRMR should be lower than 0.10 to accept the model, with values lower than 0.08 indicating very good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). RMSEA estimates the discrepancy per degree of freedom and it is considered the

most informative criteria in covariance structure modelling (Byrne, 2010). Values below 0.08 represent acceptable fit (Hair et al., 2006) and values equal to or below 0.06 represent very good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Finally, PClose tests the null hypothesis that the RMSEA equals 0.05 and the alternative hypothesis that the RMSEA is greater than 0.05. If PClose is greater than 0.05 (not statistically significant), it is concluded that the fit of the model is “close” (good fit) (Browne & Cudeck, 1992). Table 22 presents the model fit indices evaluated in this study and their suggested values.

Table 22 Assessed model fit indices

Measure	Terrible	Acceptable	Excellent
CMIN/DF	Higher than 5	Between 3 and 5	Between 1 and 3
CFI	Lower than 0.90	Between 0.90 and 0.95	Higher than 0.95
SRMR	Higher than 0.10	Between 0.08 and 0.10	Lower than 0.08
RMSEA	Higher than 0.08	Between 0.06 and 0.08	Lower than 0.06
PClose	Lower than 0.01	Between 0.01 and 0.05	Higher than 0.05

Source: (Gaskin & Lim, 2016)

In addition to the assessment of the indicators' estimates and the model fit indices, the composite reliability and the average variance extracted (AVE) for the constructs included in the model were also evaluated. This process was done to analyse the reliability and validity of the measurement model, and it is discussed in the following chapters. The hypothesised relationships included in the structural model were then tested.

7.11 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the design and execution of the quantitative data collection. The quantitative data was used to answer research questions 1 to 3, associated with the dimensionality, the drivers and the outcomes of the brand polarization phenomenon.

The chapter discussed the development of the questionnaire, its structure and administration. The questionnaire was developed based on the conceptual model, which was in turn advanced based on the literature review and the qualitative data analysis. The questionnaire was divided in two phases. Different questions were asked in the first phase, but only those respondents who answered affirmatively to at least one of two specific

questions were considered to take part in the second phase. The second phase was structured in four sections, addressing different themes included in the conceptual model. The questionnaire was pilot-tested to conduct the preliminary assessment of the psychometric characteristics of the measures. Both phases of the questionnaire were hosted on Qualtrics and administered using the crowdworking platform ProA. A total of 2,816 responses were collected in the first phase and 1,238 complete responses in the second phase.

Once the data was collected, it was divided in three samples: sample 1 (N = 338), used in the scale development process, and samples 2 and 3 (N = 450 each), used to test the formulated hypotheses. The characteristics of each sample are described in the chapter. Treatments for missing data and non-response bias were applied and normality was assessed in preparation for analysis. Lastly, the chapter presents the methodology employed for the analysis of the quantitative data. EFA, CFA, and SEM were used.

Chapter 8 Scale development process

8.1 Introduction

This chapter details the process of developing the scale to measure brand polarization and other three study constructs. The first part of the chapter addresses the process of developing the brand polarization scale. This section starts by discussing the rationale and steps employed in developing the brand polarization scale. The four-step scale development process is presented. Each step is explained in detail. The first step describes the process to decide the dimensions of brand polarization and the initial generation of items. The second step relates to item purification and describes the survey sent to academic experts to ensure the scale's content validity. The third step is concerned with the scale's reliability and validity. The results of EFA and CFA are presented in this step. The fourth step displays the development of norms.

The second part of the chapter discusses the operationalisation of three variables included in the conceptual model for which measurement scales were developed. Items developed to measure association with important issues, perceptions of rivalry intensity and using pro/anti-brand merchandise are presented. The scales to measure brand polarization, association with important issues, perceptions of rivalry intensity and using pro/anti-brand merchandise were used in the process of hypothesis testing, explained in the next chapter.

8.2 Brand polarization scale development process

8.2.1 Rationale for developing the brand polarization scale

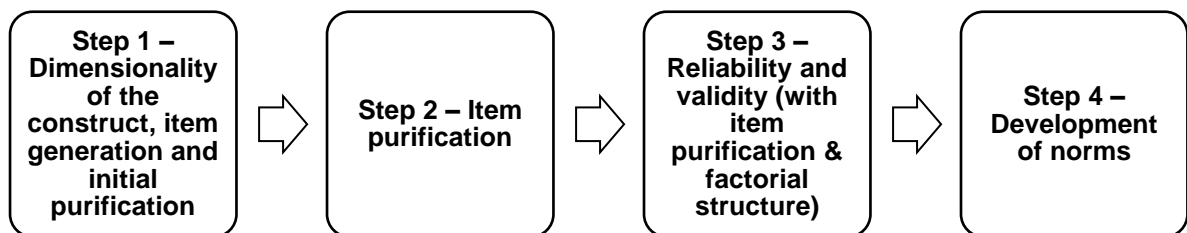
As stated by Churchill (1979), the reason for the development of a new measurement scale needs to be justified. At the inception of this study, no conceptually adequate and valid scale of brand polarization that could have been used or adapted had been published. In the marketing literature, the polarization index is used to measure the degree of brand loyalty, as it estimates changes in the heterogeneity of consumer choice (Casteran et al., 2019; Fader & Schmittlein, 1993). Further, Luo et al. (2013b) attempt to measure how polarizing a brand is through brand dispersion, or variance in ratings across consumers of a specific brand. In the social psychology literature, group polarization is mainly measured through the pre-test-post-test difference scores (e.g. Krizan & Baron, 2007; Liu & Latane, 1998; Spears et al., 1990) to evaluate the variation of extremity after group discussion.

Political polarization is measured using methods as the difference between means (e.g. Banda & Kirkland, 2018; Rehm & Reilly, 2010), the analysis of variance (e.g. Baldassarri & Bearman, 2007; Dixit & Weibull, 2007) and the feeling thermometer evaluations (e.g. Rogowski & Sutherland, 2016; Strickler, 2018) to determine how far apart in ideology are two groups regarding certain categories or issues. These methods are useful to measure the polarization of attitudes on a particular issue, politician or ideology (Paddock, 2010), so are not deemed appropriate to measure a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon like brand polarization. As such, the creation of a dedicated scale to measure the focal concept of the study was necessary. The scale development process, applied to generate a valid and reliable scale of the brand polarization phenomenon, is explained next.

8.2.2 Development of the brand polarization scale

Following well established procedures for scale development (Churchill, 1979; DeVellis, 2017; Mackenzie et al., 2011; Rossiter, 2002), this study followed four steps to develop the brand polarization scale. The first step aimed to decide the brand polarization dimensions and generate items. The second step had the purpose to purify the instrument and ensure that the suggested dimensionality was appropriate and the items were valid in terms of their content. The third step addressed the reliability and validity checks of the developed scale. The fourth step relates to the development of norms. Figure 3 presents the steps involved in the scale development process.

Figure 3 Development and validation of the brand polarization scale



Sources: Churchill, 1979; DeVellis, 2017; Mackenzie et al., 2011; Rossiter, 2002

The discussion below explains each step detailed in Figure 3.

8.2.3 Step 1 – Dimensionality of the construct, item generation and initial purification

To decide the dimensions of brand polarization and generate items, the literature related to polarizing brands and brand polarization was first reviewed (see Chapter 2). A systematic literature review in five bodies of literature was conducted. Using specific inclusion and exclusion criteria, 18 papers on brand rivalry, 54 papers on brand love, 8 papers on brand hate, 48 papers on polarization in political science and 30 papers on polarization in social psychology were selected for the review. The papers from rivalry, and polarization in political science and social psychology were read with the aim to identify possible dimensions of brand polarization and items to measure these dimensions, while the papers on brand love and brand hate were only read to help in the item development.

In addition to the literature search, qualitative data was collected to help in the identification of the dimensionality of brand polarization. To reach saturation point (Fusch & Ness, 2015), 22 semi-structured interviews lasting between 16 and 65 minutes with UK residents with diverse background were contacted (see Chapter 4). To identify dimensions of brand polarization the transcripts were analysed using line-by-line coding and thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Five dimensions of brand polarization (brand passion, self-brand benchmarking, intra-group identification, inter-group dissociation and generation of strong feelings for the achievement/misfortune of the brand) were identified from the analysis of the literature and the qualitative data.

Following the analysis of the literature and the interviews, two face-to-face meetings and discussions aiming to purify the dimensionality and the items between the researcher and two academic experts working on consumer-brand relationships were held over a period of three weeks. Each meeting had an average duration of 70 minutes. As a result, the five brand polarization dimensions were retained and items were generated for each dimension. Definitions of each specific dimension were also developed (see section 5.2). Table 23 shows the number of items per dimension before and after the meetings with the two branding experts.

Table 23 Initial item purification of the brand polarization dimensions

	Items before the meetings with experts	Items after the meetings with experts
Brand passion	13	13
Self-brand benchmarking	26	12
Intra-group identification	15	11
Inter-group dissociation	15	11
Generation of strong feelings for the achievement / misfortune of the brand	31	12
Total	100	59

Items for three of the variables included in the conceptual model for which an existing appropriate measurement scale could not be found (association with important issues, using pro/anti-brand merchandise and perceptions of rivalry intensity) were also generated. These variables are explained in section 8.3.

8.2.4 Step 2 – Item purification

Following common practice, and aiming to purify the instrument and to ensure that the suggested dimensionality was appropriate and the items were valid in terms of their content, the suggested operationalisation was exposed to a panel of academic experts who acted as judges (DeVellis, 2017; Hardesty & Bearden, 2004; Mackenzie et al., 2011; Rossiter, 2002). A link to a Qualtrics-based survey was sent via a personal e-mail from one of the researcher's supervisor to 42 expert academic researchers in branding, all publishing in related topics with some of their work reviewed during the identification of relevant papers in the earlier stages of the project working in Universities from 13 different countries (31% in the US, 19% in Italy and 14% in France). They were asked to report on the definition of brand polarization, adopted from Osuna Ramírez et al. (2019), the suggested five dimensions and their definitions, and the specific 59 items in terms of clarity and reflection of the definition. The experts were invited to provide comments both in a structured manner through two scales and an unstructured manner through the provision of written comments. Appendix G shows the survey sent to the branding experts.

A total of 22 experts responded the survey. For confidentiality purposes, the profile of these academic experts was not asked. The experts supported the suggested dimensionality. A total of 13 items were included in the survey sent to the experts as alternatives to measure

brand passion. From the 13, the 5 items with the highest combined mean of clarity and reflection of the definition were selected to be the measurement scale for brand passion. As the comments from the experts mainly focused on the items excluded from the scale, the selected items were left unchanged.

A list of 12 alternative items to measure self-brand benchmarking was presented in the survey sent to the experts for them to indicate their thoughts on the clarity of the item and how well each item reflected the definition of the construct. Half of the items, those with the highest combined mean, were kept to measure self-brand benchmarking. The comments of the experts mainly focused on the clarity of the name of the construct.

Of the 11 alternative items presented to the experts to measure intra-group identification, the 5 with the highest combined mean of clarity and reflection of the definition were selected to measure the construct. Given that the experts mainly commented on the excluded items, the selected items did not suffer any change.

Similar to the previous dimension, 5 items were selected to measure inter-group dissociation out of the 11 alternative items presented to the experts in the survey. These 5 items had the highest combined mean of clarity and reflection of the definition in the experts' opinion. A grammar error in one of the items was fixed following the suggestions of the experts. The rest of the comments were mostly related to the items excluded from the scale.

To measure generation of strong feelings for the achievement/misfortune of the brand, 6 of the 12 alternative items presented to the experts were selected. These 6 items had the highest combined mean of clarity and reflection of the definition of the construct. The selected items were left unchanged, since the comments of the experts were mainly about the quantity of items presented to measure the construct.

Table 24 presents the list of items and the main source of item generation. A reference indicates that the item is issued from the literature, and the word 'interviews' indicates that the item came through mainly in the semi-structured interviews. The table also shows the statistics of the experts' responses to the survey and the retained items after the academic experts' feedback.

Table 24 Item purification of the brand polarization dimensions: pre-test with experts

Item	Source	Combined mean/std deviation (experts)	Retained?
Brand passion			
I am passionate about this brand	Thomson et al. (2005)	4.500/1.090	Yes (BP1)
I have extreme emotions for this brand	Interviews	4.370/0.980	Yes (BP2)
This brand arouses intense feelings	Interviews	4.290/0.880	Yes (BP3)
I have strong feelings for this brand	Interviews	4.250/1.210	Yes (BP4)
I have almost an obsessive feeling for this brand	Adapted from Vallerand et al. (2003)	4.160/1.035	Yes (BP5)
I think about this brand several times a day	Sternberg (1997)	3.890/1.205	No
I have an outburst of intense emotions for this brand	Interviews	3.840/1.160	No
I cannot live without this brand	Adapted from Vallerand et al. (2003)	3.660/1.395	No
I can't help myself from thinking about this brand	Adapted from Vallerand et al. (2003)	3.555/1.185	No
I am emotionally dependent on this brand	Adapted from Vallerand et al. (2003)	3.240/1.265	No
I feel myself craving to think about this brand	Adapted from Batra et al. (2012)	3.185/1.155	No
There is nothing more important to me than my relationship with this brand.	Albert et al. (2009)	3.105/1.325	No
I have a tough time controlling my need to think about this brand	Adapted from Vallerand et al. (2003)	2.950/1.085	No
Self-brand benchmarking			
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to express my identity	Interviews	4.255/0.600	Yes (SBB1)
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to describe my personality	Adapted from Kemp et al. (2014)	4.000/1.000	Yes (SBB2)
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to present who I am	Adapted from Escalas & Bettman (2003)	3.970/1.000	Yes (SBB3)
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to reveal my values	Interviews	3.970/0.970	Yes (SBB4)
I can compare myself with this brand	Interviews	3.915/0.980	Yes (SBB5)

Item	Source	Combined mean/std deviation (experts)	Retained?
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to explain my character	Interviews	3.910/0.900	Yes (SBB6)
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to indicate what I believe in	Adapted from Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012)	3.820/1.150	No
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to communicate my convictions	Adapted from Escalas & Bettman (2003)	3.625/1.095	No
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to express my individuality	Interviews	3.625/1.065	No
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to reveal my self-image	Adapted from Algesheimer et al. (2005)	3.605/1.390	No
I can benchmark myself with this brand	Interviews	3.210/1.125	No
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to inform my nature	Interviews	2.515/1.020	No
Intra-group identification			
I associate with the people who feel the same way I do about this brand	Interviews	4.265/0.865	Yes (IGI1)
I feel close to the people who feel the same way I do about this brand	Adapted from Becker & Tausch (2014)	4.265/0.865	Yes (IGI2)
I identify with the people who feel the same way I do about this brand	Adapted from Ellemers et al. (1999)	4.160/1.065	Yes (IGI3)
I relate to the people who feel the same way I do about this brand	Interviews	4.080/0.820	Yes (IGI4)
I have things in common with people who feel the same way I do about this brand	Adapted from Becker & Tausch (2014)	4.030/0.890	Yes (IGI5)
I belong to the group of people who feel the same way I do about this brand	Adapted from Dholakia et al. (2004)	3.895/1.185	No
I am similar to the people who feel the same way I do about this brand	Interviews	3.865/0.965	No
I am like the people who feel the same way I do about this brand	Adapted from Ellemers et al. (1999)	3.840/1.005	No

Item	Source	Combined mean/std deviation (experts)	Retained?
My self-image overlaps with the image of the group of people who feel the same way I do about this brand	Adapted from Dholakia et al. (2004)	3.445/1.050	No
People who feel the same way I do about this brand are my allies	Interviews	3.290/1.095	No
I equate with the people who feel the same way I do about this brand	Interviews	3.130/1.140	No
Inter-group dissociation			
I feel a distance between myself and the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand	Adapted from Becker & Tausch (2014)	4.130/0.750	Yes (IGD1)
I dissociate from the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand	Interviews	4.025/0.930	Yes (IGD2)
I do not identify with the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand	Adapted from Ellemers et al. (1999)	3.920/0.955	Yes (IGD3)
I am different from the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand	Interviews	3.840/1.025	Yes (IGD4)
I am disconnected from the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand	Interviews	3.790/0.940	Yes (IGD5)
I am dissimilar to the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand	Adapted from Dholakia et al. (2004)	3.735/1.015	No
I am detached from the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand	Interviews	3.655/1.130	No
I do not have things in common with people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand	Adapted from Becker & Tausch (2014)	3.635/0.850	No
I am not like the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand	Adapted from Ellemers et al. (1999)	3.605/0.990	No
My self-image is separated from the image of the group of people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand	Adapted from Dholakia et al. (2004)	3.420/1.080	No
People who feel the opposite way I do about this brand are not my allies	Experts	3.215/1.050	No

Item	Source	Combined mean/std deviation (experts)	Retained?
Generation of strong feelings for the achievement / misfortune of the brand			
When I learn of this brand's misfortune, I have strong feelings	Interviews	3.970/0.925	Yes (BP6)
When I learn of this brand's achievement, I have strong feelings	Interviews	3.820/1.040	Yes (BP7)
When I learn of this brand's misfortune, I have intense emotions	Interviews	3.910/0.950	Yes (BP8)
When I learn of this brand's achievement, I have intense sentiments	Interviews	3.790/1.155	Yes (BP9)
When I learn of this brand's misfortune, I have intense sentiments	Interviews	3.910/1.040	Yes (BP10)
When I learn of this brand's achievement, I have intense emotions	Interviews	3.765/1.110	Yes (BP11)
When I learn of this brand's misfortune, I have strong reactions	Interviews	3.710/1.070	No
When I learn of this brand's achievement, I have strong reactions	Interviews	3.620/1.000	No
When I learn of this brand's misfortune, I am deeply impacted	Interviews	3.590/1.085	No
When I learn of this brand's achievement, I am deeply impacted	Interviews	3.500/1.090	No
This brand's misfortunes change my mood	Interviews	3.380/1.135	No
This brand's achievements change my mood	Interviews	3.120/1.180	No

The same procedure was applied to the three constructs included in the conceptual model for which new measurement was developed. The content validity results for association with important issues, perceptions of rivalry intensity and using pro/anti-brand merchandise are presented in section 8.3.

8.2.5 Step 3 – Reliability and validity (with Item Purification & Factorial Structure)

Before conducting a full-scale survey and following the literature advice on the use of pre-testing (Thabane et al., 2010), the sampling method (Saunders et al., 2016) and the sample size (Johanson & Brooks, 2010) for pre-testing, a pilot study with 60 responses (see section 7.5) from a convenience sample recruited through the researcher's network (25 responses) and MTurk (35 responses) was conducted to identify and adjust any possible issues with the design of the questionnaire. All the items selected in the previous stage were retained in this stage.

The sample of 338 (see section 7.7) was recruited via ProA and in two stages. Respondents were first contacted and asked several questions, including if they were positively or negatively connected with a brand that they knew that other consumers had the opposite feelings towards (polarizing brand). Following this initial stage, only respondents who admitted to be lovers or/and haters of a polarizing brand were approached in a separate stage. The researcher purposely recruited 50% lovers and 50% haters of brands from three product categories. Data was screened and checked for missing values. With 39 items in the scale development process (27 items for the dimensions of brand polarization and 12 items for other constructs included in the conceptual model), the sample size of N=338 had an 8.7:1 ratio of cases per item, higher than the rule of thumb 5:1 ratio (Hair et al., 2006). The suitability of the sample size was also checked through *Bartlett's test of sphericity*, where the recommended coefficient should be statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ (Green & Salkind, 2016). Finally, the *Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy* (KMO) should be > 0.6 (Green & Salkind, 2016). Table 25 illustrates the results of these two tests.

Table 25 Results of the KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity for scale development

Test	N = 338
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.942
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, Sig.	0.000

8.2.5.1 Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for the brand polarization scale

Following the data suitability tests, EFA was performed. EFA was deemed appropriate as it helps to identify the factor structure for a set of variables, testing measurement integrity and guiding further theory refinement (Henson & Roberts, 2006). Firstly, factor extraction was conducted in order to identify the dimensionality or structure of the variables (Costello & Osborne, 2005). The extraction method used was *Maximum likelihood*, looking for *eigenvalues* greater than one (Henson & Roberts, 2006). Secondly, factor rotation was executed using the *Promax* approach. *Promax* rotation was chosen as the set of loadings with this method frequently reveal simple structure better than do those from the Varimax solution (Finch, 2006).

Initial results showed that the items of two of the identified dimensions of the brand polarization phenomenon, brand passion and generation of strong feelings for the achievement/misfortune of the brand loaded in the same factor. After reviewing the redaction of the items belonging to these dimensions, the researcher judged that all of them were part of the same dimension, and brand passion was retained including the items of generation of strong feelings for the achievement/misfortune of the brand. Further, some items were excluded from the analysis due to cross-loadings (BP1, BP5 and SBB3 -reversed-) or low loadings (BP9 -reversed-).

The final analysis extracted four factors, each with *eigenvalue* higher than one. They explained 71% of the overall variance. Factors loaded strongly on the components (1) Brand passion – 8 items loading at 0.610 or above; (2) Self-brand benchmarking – 5 items loading at 0.749 or above; (3) Intra-group identification – 5 items loading at 0.735 or above; and (4) Inter-group dissociation – 5 items loading at 0.662 or above. Table 26 shows the results of the EFA's final pattern matrix. No Cronbach's α of any of the four dimensions achieves a value below the advocated cut-off point of 0.70 (Santos, 1999), and all the values are above 0.89, exhibiting good reliability, as shown in Table 26.

Table 26 EFA scale development – Final Pattern Matrix

Cronbach's α	0.947	0.941	0.932	0.891
Brand passion 2	0.678	0,045	0,046	0,020
Brand passion 3	0.733	-0,043	0,041	0,036
Brand passion 4	0.610	0,181	0,086	-0,094
Brand passion 6	0.765	0,053	0,033	-0,021
Brand passion 7	0.674	0,150	0,124	-0,120
Brand passion 8	1.012	-0,101	-0,040	0,046
Brand passion 10	0.873	-0,012	-0,001	0,058
Brand passion 11	0.853	0,113	-0,045	0,018
Self-brand benchmarking 1	0,009	0.866	0,008	-0,066
Self-brand benchmarking 2	0,076	0.853	0,043	-0,083
Self-brand benchmarking 4	0,062	0.837	-0,063	0,068
Self-brand benchmarking 5	0,094	0.749	-0,064	0,094
Self-brand benchmarking 6	-0,018	0.924	0,020	0,043
Intra-group identification 1	0,094	-0,032	0.735	0,050
Intra-group identification 2	0,027	0,059	0.835	0,019
Intra-group identification 3	0,037	-0,038	0.911	0,005
Intra-group identification 4	-0,028	0,029	0.892	0,006
Intra-group identification 5	0,047	-0,054	0.797	-0,023
Inter-group dissociation 1	-0,063	0,039	0,152	0.662
Inter-group dissociation 2	-0,039	0,044	0,039	0.805
Inter-group dissociation 3	0,145	-0,043	-0,188	0.791
Inter-group dissociation 4	-0,052	0,016	0,109	0.751
Inter-group dissociation 5	0,010	-0,006	-0,019	0.895

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

8.2.5.2 Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to test the dimensionality of the brand polarization scale by estimating the regression coefficients between the items and the latent constructs (Schreiber et al., 2006). CFA is useful for “developing and refining measurement instruments, assessing construct validity, identifying method effects, and evaluating factor invariance across time and groups” (Jackson et al., 2009, p.6). Firstly, CFA verified that the newly developed scale was unidimensional. Factor loadings should exceed 0.5, where the standardized regression weights with lower values should be dropped (Hair et al., 2006). Table 27 shows that all the factor loadings are above the

acceptable threshold, signalling that the brand polarization factors are unidimensional. The CFA of the brand polarization scale is run by correlating the four identified sub-dimensions

Table 27 Standardized regression weights (Brand polarization)

Items			Estimate
BP2	<---	Brand passion	0.741
BP3	<---	Brand passion	0.716
BP4	<---	Brand passion	0.812
BP6	<---	Brand passion	0.795
BP7	<---	Brand passion	0.855
BP8	<---	Brand passion	0.891
BP10	<---	Brand passion	0.870
BP11	<---	Brand passion	0.910
SBB1	<---	Self-brand benchmarking	0.843
SBB2	<---	Self-brand benchmarking	0.926
SBB4	<---	Self-brand benchmarking	0.875
SBB5	<---	Self-brand benchmarking	0.774
SBB6	<---	Self-brand benchmarking	0.912
IGI1	<---	Intra-group identification	0.805
IGI2	<---	Intra-group identification	0.907
IGI3	<---	Intra-group identification	0.896
IGI4	<---	Intra-group identification	0.871
IGI5	<---	Intra-group identification	0.787
IGD1	<---	Inter-group dissociation	0.675
IGD2	<---	Inter-group dissociation	0.791
IGD3	<---	Inter-group dissociation	0.737
IGD4	<---	Inter-group dissociation	0.803
IGD5	<---	Inter-group dissociation	0.903

The model fit indices are then evaluated. As seen from Table 28, the indices show very good levels of model fit, with a relative Chi-square value (CMIN/DF) of 1.764, a CFI of 0.978, an SRMR of 0.042 and a RMSEA of 0.048.

Table 28 Brand polarization CFA model – model fit indices

Measure	Estimate	Criteria
CMIN	366,916	--
DF	208,000	--
CMIN/DF	1.764	Between 1 and 3, excellent; between 3 and 5, acceptable
CFI	0.978	Higher than 0.95, excellent; between 0.90 and 0.95, acceptable
SRMR	0.042	Lower than 0.08, excellent; between 0.08 and 0.10, acceptable
RMSEA	0.048	Lower than 0.06, excellent; between 0.06 and 0.08, acceptable
PClose	0.680	Higher than 0.05, excellent; between 0.01 and 0.05, acceptable

Source: (Gaskin & Lim, 2016)

Further tests to assess the reliability and validity of the developed scale were performed. Reliability was evaluated with the composite reliability (CR) index, which measures the constructs' internal consistency (Bacon et al., 1995). Hair et al. (2006) advise that the CR value should exceed 0.7, which is the case for all the dimensions of brand polarization, as observed in Table 29.

Convergent validity has been assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE), computed for each sub-dimension of the scale. AVE measures how much variance is captured by a construct compared to the variance caused by measurement error, and it should be above 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As Table 29 shows, the AVE values for all the sub-dimensions of the brand polarization scale are above the recommended threshold, signalling convergent validity.

Discriminant validity was determined by comparing the square root of the AVE for each sub-dimension of the scale with the inter-item correlations (Voorhees et al., 2016). It is observed from Table 29 that for each sub-dimension the value of the square root of the AVE is higher than any of the associated correlations, evidencing the scale's discriminant validity.

Table 29 Brand polarization CFA model – assessment of reliability and validity

	CR	AVE	Brand passion	Self-brand benchmarking	Intra-group identification	Inter-group dissociation
Brand passion	0.945	0.683	0.826			
Self-brand benchmarking	0.938	0.753	0.782***	0.868		
Intra-group identification	0.931	0.737	0.672***	0.565***	0.859	
Inter-group dissociation	0.888	0.616	0.190**	0.150*	0.406***	0.785

* $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$

8.2.6 Step 4 – Development of norms

The last stage of the scale development process displayed in Figure 3 is the development of norms. This procedure aims to allow the assessment of the position of a relevant unit of investigation in terms of the scores it achieves on the scale items (Churchill, 1979). For this particular scale, it is useful to know if the level of brand polarization is higher, lower or similar depending on the product category (football teams, airlines or music artists) and depending on the type of passionate relationship with the polarizing brand (lover or hater). Consequently, means are computed for each item of the mirrored scales and broken down

by product category (Table 30) and by lovers/haters (Table 31) in order to perform the mentioned comparisons.

The highlighted values in Table 30 and Table 31 represent the highest item means, whereas the values in bold represent the lowest scores. The results show that football teams achieve the highest cross-category means, whereas airlines have the lowest levels of brand polarization across items. Further, when analysing the means across items comparing lovers and haters, it is observed that lovers achieve the highest means in three of the four sub-dimensions of the brand polarization phenomenon: brand passion, self-brand benchmarking and intra-group identification. On the other hand, haters exhibit the highest mean across the items of the inter-group dissociation sub-dimension of the brand polarization phenomenon.

Table 30 Item means by product category

Dimension	Items	Football Teams	Airlines	Music Artists
Brand passion	2	4.66	3.13	3.82
	3	4.76	3.32	3.93
	4	5.16	3.74	4.29
	6	5.35	3.84	4.06
	7	5.30	3.42	4.12
	8	4.75	3.08	3.60
	10	4.59	2.80	3.34
Self-brand benchmarking	11	4.57	2.88	3.35
	1	3.90	2.61	3.54
	2	3.75	2.13	3.21
	4	3.97	2.63	3.37
	5	3.42	2.19	2.89
Intra-group identification	6	3.50	2.16	3.14
	1	4.86	3.61	4.02
	2	4.72	3.38	3.86
	3	5.10	3.74	4.22
	4	5.09	3.81	4.32
Inter-group dissociation	5	5.14	3.96	4.42
	1	3.78	3.01	3.14
	2	3.07	2.49	2.76
	3	3.38	2.83	3.35
	4	3.49	2.96	3.42
	5	3.29	2.68	3.06

Table 31 Item means by lovers/haters

Dimension	Items	Lovers	Haters
Brand passion	2	3.92	3.69
	3	4.09	3.79
	4	4.76	3.91
	6	4.68	3.99
	7	4.71	3.68
	8	4.02	3.44
	10	3.73	3.24
	11	3.90	3.14
Self-brand benchmarking	1	3.96	2.66
	2	3.55	2.40
	4	3.74	2.79
	5	3.19	2.38
	6	3.36	2.42
Intra-group identification	1	4.17	4.03
	2	4.10	3.74
	3	4.32	4.26
	4	4.36	4.33
	5	4.54	4.37
Inter-group dissociation	1	3.16	3.37
	2	2.55	2.94
	3	2.98	3.36
	4	3.04	3.51
	5	2.71	3.25

8.3 Other developed measures

The review of the literature undertaken to provide appropriate measures for the rest of the constructs included in the conceptual model failed to identify suitable scales for three variables: association with important issues (driver of brand polarization), perceptions of rivalry intensity (moderator between brand polarization and its drivers) and using pro/anti-brand merchandise (outcome of brand polarization). Hence, measurement scales were developed for these constructs following the same procedures than for the development of the measures of the brand polarization dimensions. The constructs were subjected to the face and content validity assessment concurrently with the newly developed brand polarization measures. Two meetings with two branding experts were held for initial item

purification purposes, as explained in section 8.2.3. Table 32 shows the number of items per construct before and after the meetings with the two academic experts.

Table 32 Initial item purification for other constructs

	Items before the meetings with experts	Items after the meetings with experts
Association with important issues	9	9
Perceptions of rivalry intensity	13	8
Using pro/anti brand merchandise	9	7
Total	31	24

Table 33 shows the items for these three constructs included in the experts survey explained in section 8.2.4. The table also shows the statistics of the experts' responses to the survey and the retained items after the academic experts' feedback.

Table 33 **Item purification for other constructs: pre-test with experts**

Item	Source	Combined mean/std deviation (experts)	Retained?
Association with important issues			
This brand is associated with themes I consider important in my life	Interviews	4.135/1.155	Yes (All1)
This brand relates to significant things for me	Interviews	4.135/1.035	Yes (All2)
This brand is linked with themes I find meaningful	Interviews	3.885/0.990	Yes (All3)
This brand is paired with things I consider crucial in my life	Interviews	3.725/0.950	Yes (All4)
There is a bond between this brand and aspects I find valuable	Interviews	3.655/1.105	No
There is a relationship between this brands and aspects I believe are relevant for me	Interviews	3.540/1.150	No
There is a link between this brand and issues I believe are substantial in my life	Interviews	3.535/1.105	No
Aspects in my life I consider essential are linked with this brand	Interviews	3.490/1.115	No
This brand is related to imperative aspects in my life	Interviews	3.285/1.055	No
Perceptions of rivalry intensity			
Competition between this brand and a main opponent is intense	Interviews	4.325/0.925	Yes (PRI1)
This brand is in a constant battle with another brand	Interviews	3.870/1.110	Yes (PRI2)
This brand and its main opponent have an extreme antagonistic relationship	Interviews	3.745/1.170	Yes (PRI3)
This brand clearly has an enemy brand	Interviews	3.700/1.130	Yes (PRI4)
Conflict between this brand and its main opponent is fierce	Interviews	3.665/1.095	No
This brand and its main competitor are trying to gain advantage from each other at any cost	Interviews	3.585/1.225	No
This brand has a strong competitor brand	Interviews	3.480/1.250	No
This brand has another brand that is a meaningful contender	Interviews	3.075/1.245	No

Item	Source	Combined mean/std deviation (experts)	Retained?
Using pro/anti-brand merchandise			
I use or wear merchandise that communicate how I feel about this brand	Interviews	4.250/0.990	Yes (UPABM1)
I indicate my feelings for this brand by using or wearing relevant merchandise	Interviews	3.925/1.005	Yes (UPABM2)
I am willing to use merchandise that will allow to express my feelings towards this brand	Interviews	3.625/0.990	Yes (UPABM3)
I own merchandise that demonstrate my sentiments for this brand	Interviews	3.600/0.940	Yes (UPABM4)
I utilise merchandise to suggest how I feel about this brand	Interviews	3.465/1.255	No
I own merchandise as an evidence of my beliefs about this brand	Interviews	3.450/1.045	No
Merchandise I own helps me convey how I feel about this brand	Interviews	3.300/1.075	No

8.3.1 Association with important issues

Association with important issues was conceptualised as linking the brand with aspects considered relevant by consumers (Wojcieszak & Price, 2010). A list of 9 items to measure association with important issues was presented to the experts in the survey. The 4 items with the highest combined mean of clarity and reflection of the definition were selected to measure this variable. The experts recommended to replace the terms “issues”, “matters” and “topics” to provide more clarity to the respondents and to enhance the validity and reliability of the study.

8.3.2 Perceptions of rivalry intensity

Perceptions of rivalry intensity is defined as consumers’ perceived level of antagonism between a brand and its main competitor (Berendt & Uhrich, 2016). The 4 items with the highest combined mean (clarity and reflection of the definition) were selected from the 8 items presented in the survey to the experts to measure perceptions of rivalry intensity. The selected items were left unchanged, as the experts’ comments focused on the discarded items.

8.3.3 Using pro/anti brand merchandise

Literature on the use of pro or anti brand merchandise is scarce. A precise definition or a scale to specifically measure this behaviour could not be found in the available literature. Based on the qualitative data, this study views the use of pro or anti brand merchandise (the brand’s logo products) as a way to express the feelings towards the polarizing brand. In total, 7 alternative items to measure “using pro/anti brand merchandise” were included in the survey sent to the experts. Out of the 7 items, the 4 with the highest combined mean of clarity and reflection of the definition were selected to measure the construct. Of the 4 items, 2 had minor grammar changes following the experts’ recommendations.

8.3.4 EFA for association with important issues, perceptions of rivalry intensity and using pro/anti-brand merchandise

Prior to conducting the EFA for the developed items measuring association with important issues, perceptions of rivalry intensity and using pro/anti-brand merchandise, the suitability of the data was tested. KMO measures for the three variables are above the recommended threshold of 0.6 (Green & Salkind, 2016) (0.791 for association with important issues; 0.806 for perceptions of rivalry intensity; and 0.865 for using pro/anti-brand merchandise).

Further, the coefficients of *Bartlett's test of sphericity* for the three variables are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, as recommended by Green & Salkind (2016), confirming the suitability of the sample size.

EFA was then performed separately for each of the three mentioned variables. *Maximum likelihood* was used as the extraction method, looking for *eigenvalues* greater than one (Henson & Roberts, 2006). The items loaded in one factor, confirming the unidimensionality of each scale. Due to low loadings, one of the items of association with important issues (All2, reversed) was removed. All the items were retained for the other two scales. Final analysis extracted 3 items for association with important issues loading at 0.833 or above and explaining 71.86% of the variance; 4 items for perceptions of rivalry intensity loading at 0.853 or above and explaining 79.99% of the variance; and 4 items for using pro/anti-brand merchandise loading at 0.850 or above and explaining 80.82% of the variance. Cronbach's α values for the three variables (0.884 for association with important issues, 0.942 for perceptions of rivalry intensity and 0.943 for using pro/anti-brand merchandise) indicate good reliability, as all are above the advocated cut-off point of 0.70 (Santos, 1999). Table 34, Table 35 and Table 36 show the results of the EFA's final factor matrix for association with important issues, perceptions of rivalry intensity and using pro/anti-brand merchandise respectively.

Table 34 EFA association with important issues – Final Factor Matrix

Cronbach's α	0.884
Association with important issues 1	0.874
Association with important issues 3	0.840
Association with important issues 4	0.827

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

1 factor extracted. 3 iterations required.

Table 35 EFA perceptions of rivalry intensity – Final Factor Matrix

Cronbach's α	0.942
Perceptions of rivalry intensity 1	0.931
Perceptions of rivalry intensity 2	0.942
Perceptions of rivalry intensity 3	0.847
Perceptions of rivalry intensity 4	0.853

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

1 factor extracted. 6 iterations required.

Table 36 EFA using pro/anti-brand merchandise – Final Factor Matrix

Cronbach's α	0.943
Using pro/anti-brand merchandise 1	0.933
Using pro/anti-brand merchandise 2	0.923
Using pro/anti-brand merchandise 3	0.850
Using pro/anti-brand merchandise 4	0.887

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

1 factor extracted. 3 iterations required.

8.4 Chapter summary

The first section of the chapter focused on the development of a reliable and valid scale to measure brand polarization in order to answer the first research question. The dimensions of brand polarization, the central construct of this research, were proposed in the conceptual framework and further evidenced in the interview data. Two experts supported the generation of an initial set of items, and the content validity of these items was ensured with the help of 22 academic experts. Using a final pool of 27 items for the brand polarization scale, data were collected from brand lovers and haters of three different product categories. The items were first purified through EFA and then submitted to CFA analysis. CFA analysis showed adequate goodness of fit indices and good measures of reliability, convergent and discriminant validity. Lastly, norms were developed for the three product categories and for polarizing brands' lovers and haters.

The chapter also presented the developed scales to measure three of the constructs included in the conceptual model for which an appropriate existing scale could not be found. Definitions and items to measure association with important issues, perceptions of rivalry intensity and using pro/anti-brand merchandise were proposed and validated. Item purification for the three variables was conducted through EFA.

Chapter 9 Hypothesis testing

9.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the hypothesis testing process of the relationships included in the conceptual model presented in Chapter 6 using SEM. Following the full measurement model's assessment of model fit and reliability and validity of the study constructs using EFA and CFA, two models are evaluated in the chapter. The initial structural model was developed from the review of the literature and the analysis of the qualitative data, as explained in Chapter 6. The second model includes additional relationships that enhance model fit, as suggested by the modification indices. This modified model is considered as final. The models are assessed using two randomly chosen samples, one for calibration and the other for validation. The results of hypotheses testing in line with the conceptual model and including additional relationships are presented after the evaluation of the model parameters. The chapter closes with the summary of results.

9.2 EFA and CFA on full measurement model

Prior to estimating the structural model, the measurement model was assessed to evaluate the links between the latent constructs and their indicators (Westland, 2019). The measurement model was initially evaluated through EFA and then by checking its model fit indices and validity using CFA. A calibration sample – Sample 2 (N = 450) and a validation sample – Sample 3 (N = 450) were used for these processes.

9.2.1 EFA on full measurement model

The suitability of the sample size was checked through the *Bartlett's test of sphericity* and the KMO prior to conducting the EFA. Table 37 presents the results of these two tests, confirming the suitability of the data.

Table 37 Results of the KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity for measurement model

Test	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.939	0.933
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, Sig.	0.000	0.000

Initial results of the conducted factor extraction and factor rotation showed that the items of two of the conceptualised drivers of the brand polarization phenomenon, perceived quality and expected positive/negative experience loaded in the same factor. After reviewing the redaction of the items belonging to these constructs with two academic experts, the researcher judged that all of them were part of the of the perceived quality construct, which was retained including the items of expected positive/negative experience. Further, some items were excluded from the analysis due to cross-loadings (three items of brand strength and one item of ideological compatibility/incompatibility) or low loadings (three items of perceived quality and one item of association with important issues). Although the EFA showed that the items of the constructs sense of community and participation in a brand/anti-brand community loaded in the same factor, they were kept separated for the estimation of the structural model, as one was theoretically conceptualised and supported as an antecedent of the brand polarization phenomenon and the other as an outcome.

EFA's final results showed 16 distinct constructs, eight drivers of brand polarization, seven outcomes and one moderator. Harman's single factor test was carried out to examine common method variance (Tehseen et al., 2017). All items for every construct were loaded into a factor analysis restricted to one single factor. Since the resulting factor explained less than 50% of the variance (34.29% for sample 2 and 32.90% for sample 3), it means that common method variance is not a pervasive issue in the study (Chang et al., 2010). Appendix H and Appendix I show the results of the EFA's final pattern matrix for samples 2 and 3. No Cronbach's α of any of the four dimensions achieves a value below the advocated cut-off point of 0.70 (Santos, 1999), indicating a good reliability, as shown in Appendix H and Appendix I.

9.2.2 CFA full measurement model fit

The model fit indices of the full measurement model were assessed using CFA. As seen from Table 38, the indices show very good levels of model fit, with a relative Chi-square value (CMIN/DF) of 1.686 for sample 2 and 1.712 for sample 3, a CFI of 0.954 for sample 2 and 0.948 for sample 3, an SRMR of 0.040 for sample 2 and 0.043 for sample 3 and a RMSEA of 0.039 for sample 2 and 0.040 for sample 3.

Table 38 CFA full measurement model – model fit indices

Measure	Estimate sample 2 (N = 450)	Estimate sample 3 (N = 450)	Criteria
CMIN	2,390,978	2,427,279	--
DF	1,418,000	1,418,000	--
CMIN/DF	1.686	1.712	Between 1 and 3, excellent; between 3 and 5, acceptable
CFI	0.954	0.948	Higher than 0.95, excellent; between 0.90 and 0.95, acceptable
SRMR	0.040	0.043	Lower than 0.08, excellent; between 0.08 and 0.10, acceptable
RMSEA	0.039	0.040	Lower than 0.06, excellent; between 0.06 and 0.08, acceptable
PClose	1.000	1.000	Higher than 0.05, excellent; between 0.01 and 0.05, acceptable

Source: (Gaskin & Lim, 2016)

9.2.3 CFA reliability and validity of the study constructs

Following the evaluation of model fit, the researcher conducted reliability and validity assessment of the proposed constructs. This step is required before proceeding with the hypothesis testing.

As observed in Table 39 and Table 40, all CR values from both samples are above 0.7, signalling the model's composite reliability and the internal consistency of the constructs (Bacon et al., 1995).

Discriminant validity issues are observed with the constructs sense of community and participation in a brand/anti-brand community, as the square root of the AVE for both constructs is less than the correlation between them. As it was mentioned, the items of these two constructs loaded in the same factor when conducting the EFA. However, it was decided to keep them separated, as one construct is hypothesised to be a driver of brand polarization and the other an outcome, which is theoretically supported. Further, the square

root of the AVE for perceived quality is less than its correlation with brand loyalty/disloyalty in sample 3. As for the rest of the constructs, the square root of the AVE is higher than the correlation between them, as shown in Table 39 and Table 40. This discards any further discriminant validity concerns.

Regarding convergent validity, the AVE values for all the constructs included in the measurement model are above the recommended threshold of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) for sample 2, as observed in Table 39. For sample 3, as Table 40 shows, the AVE of perceived quality is slightly lower than the recommended threshold (0.478), but it can be considered border-line.

Table 39 CFA full measurement model – assessment of reliability and validity sample 2

	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Sense of community (1)	0,919	0,739	0,860														
Brand uniqueness (2)	0,924	0,675	0,364***	0,822													
Forgiveness / retaliation behaviours (3)	0,885	0,610	0,301***	0,164**	0,781												
Using pro/anti-brand merchandise (4)	0,949	0,823	0,556***	0,530***	0,138**	0,907											
Perceptions of rivalry intensity (5)	0,916	0,731	0,357***	0,057	0,117*	0,278***	0,855										
Brand loyalty/disloyalty (6)	0,913	0,724	0,263***	-0,009	0,432***	-0,011	0,156**	0,851									
Perceived quality (7)	0,858	0,549	0,275***	0,207***	0,477***	0,110*	-0,080	0,708***	0,741								
Product involvement (8)	0,950	0,865	0,421***	0,537***	0,067	0,497***	0,116*	0,011	0,140**	0,930							
Complimenting / complaining (9)	0,880	0,710	0,416***	0,451***	0,248***	0,449***	0,190***	0,110*	0,259***	0,392***	0,842						
Positive/negative WoM (10)	0,918	0,737	0,622***	0,696***	0,224***	0,757***	0,321***	0,098†	0,229***	0,569***	0,564***	0,858					
Brand strength (11)	0,794	0,564	0,532***	0,707***	0,241***	0,566***	0,260***	0,138*	0,263***	0,626***	0,615***	0,728***	0,751				
Association with important issues (12)	0,898	0,745	0,523***	0,705***	0,138**	0,691***	0,087	-0,080	0,164**	0,665***	0,525***	0,824***	0,726***	0,863			
Ideological compatibility / incompatibility (13)	0,714	0,555	0,261***	0,319***	0,486***	0,282***	0,000	0,335***	0,528***	0,260***	0,309***	0,366***	0,367***	0,340***	0,745		
Defending / attacking the brand (14)	0,839	0,636	0,472***	0,402***	0,715***	0,431***	0,126*	0,396***	0,604***	0,279***	0,452***	0,524***	0,450***	0,432***	0,663***	0,798	
Participation in a brand / anti-brand community (15)	0,913	0,724	0,897***	0,451***	0,302***	0,690***	0,428***	0,167**	0,195***	0,470***	0,451***	0,740***	0,559***	0,596***	0,317***	0,499***	0,851

† p < 0.100; * p < 0.050; ** p < 0.010; *** p < 0.001

Table 40 CFA full measurement model – assessment of reliability and validity sample 3

	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Sense of community (1)	0,902	0,698	0,835														
Brand uniqueness (2)	0,910	0,631	0,453***	0,794													
Forgiveness / retaliation behaviours (3)	0,889	0,619	0,286***	0,254***	0,787												
Using pro/anti-brand merchandise (4)	0,933	0,777	0,546***	0,535***	0,204***	0,881											
Perceptions of rivalry intensity (5)	0,906	0,711	0,218***	-0,049	0,158**	0,143**	0,843										
Brand loyalty/disloyalty (6)	0,899	0,690	0,298***	0,080	0,500***	0,045	0,203***	0,831									
Perceived quality (7)	0,820	0,478	0,320***	0,293***	0,518***	0,148**	-0,112*	0,710***	0,692								
Product involvement (8)	0,952	0,869	0,443***	0,568***	0,207***	0,510***	0,091†	0,069	0,190***	0,932							
Complimenting / complaining (9)	0,868	0,688	0,377***	0,397***	0,210***	0,343***	0,044	0,279***	0,413***	0,372***	0,829						
Positive/negative WoM (10)	0,902	0,698	0,608***	0,668***	0,264***	0,763***	0,106*	0,160**	0,345***	0,639***	0,522***	0,835					
Brand strength (11)	0,795	0,565	0,587***	0,654***	0,327***	0,547***	0,239***	0,269***	0,380***	0,640***	0,515***	0,714***	0,752				
Association with important issues (12)	0,894	0,738	0,586***	0,732***	0,236***	0,679***	0,087†	0,000	0,257***	0,700***	0,457***	0,797***	0,673***	0,859			
Ideological compatibility / incompatibility (13)	0,742	0,591	0,342***	0,350***	0,489***	0,280***	-0,027	0,443***	0,615***	0,223***	0,259***	0,377***	0,349***	0,304***	0,769		
Defending / attacking the brand (14)	0,853	0,660	0,491***	0,428***	0,722***	0,446***	0,100†	0,449***	0,619***	0,371***	0,441***	0,498***	0,500***	0,494***	0,599***	0,812	
Participation in a brand / anti-brand community (15)	0,882	0,652	0,856***	0,472***	0,207***	0,620***	0,234***	0,123*	0,158**	0,441***	0,353***	0,693***	0,515***	0,564***	0,233***	0,427***	0,807

† p < 0.100; * p < 0.050; ** p < 0.010; *** p < 0.001

9.3 Model estimation

The analytical approach adopted here uses confirmatory data analysis to test research hypotheses detailed in Chapter 6. The study has examined two sets of hypotheses. The first set is concerned with the drivers of the brand polarization phenomenon and relates to RQ2. A subset of hypotheses explores the moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationships between brand polarization and its drivers. The second set of hypotheses confirms the outcomes of the brand polarization phenomenon, aiming to answer RQ3. SEM was used in the process of testing the developed hypotheses described in section 7.10.

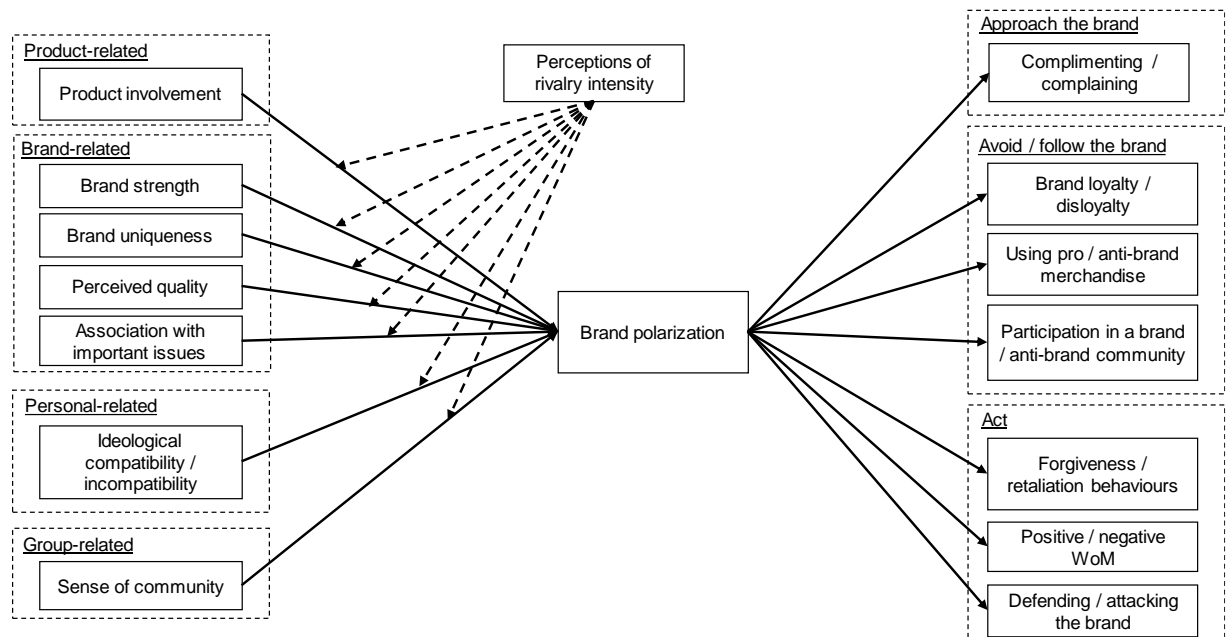
The approach to hypothesis testing process involved a model modification strategy (Klem, 2000). In this approach, an initial theoretically driven model is estimated, followed by the model modification stage, where additional relationships may be added or removed based on the model properties and modification indices. The measurement model (developed using CFA) is transformed into a structural model (SEM) by drawing the causal paths from independent (exogenous) variables to the dependent (endogenous) variables. Independent variables are correlated, while error terms (ϵ) are added to all the dependent variables. Similarly, error terms are also added to the second-order variables (Ullman & Bentler, 2003). The full measurement model has been estimated in the previous section of the chapter, and the analysis presented below builds on that model.

9.3.1 Model 1

Figure 4 below shows the initial structural model. The initial model includes 7 exogenous constructs and 8 endogenous constructs which are linked with 14 relationships. Further, one construct moderating the relationships between brand polarization and its drivers is also included in the conceptual model. Following the results of the measurement development and CFA of the full measurement model addressed in section 9.2, one hypothesis was dropped from the statistical analysis. This concerned the relationship between expected positive/negative experience and brand polarization in line with hypothesis 6 (H_6). The variable was deleted from the following structural model estimations due to the failed discriminant validity test discussed in the previous section of the chapter. The moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationship between expected positive/negative experience and brand polarization (H_{9f}) was excluded from the analysis

as well. Given that SEM allows simultaneous testing of dependence relationships at multiple levels (Klem, 2000), the focal construct of brand polarization sits in the middle of the model, being preceded by 7 drivers and leading to 7 outcomes. A moderator in the relationships between brand polarization and its antecedents is also included in the model.

Figure 4 Initial structural model (model 1)



To test the structural model, AMOS software was used. Once the model had been drawn and the hypothesised relationships included in the model, it was estimated using two randomly split data sets of 450 respondents each, equally distributed by product category and by lovers/haters as discussed in section 7.7. The structural model has been estimated using The Maximum Likelihood method.

As discussed in section 7.10, the goodness of model fit was assessed using the relative Chi-square statistic (CMIN/DF), in combination with the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and the p of Close Fit (PClose) indices. Table 41 presents the values of the model fit indices for the initial structural model. Overall, CMIN/DF (2.155 for sample 2 and 2.124 for sample 3), RMSEA (0.051 for sample 2 and 0.050 for sample 3) and PClose (0.260 for sample 2 and 0.485 for sample 3) indicate good model fit. CFI (0.901 for sample 2 and 0.896 for sample 3) and SRMR (0.095 for sample 2 and 0.089 for sample

3) reveal an acceptable model fit, with the CFI value just slightly below the recommended threshold for sample 3.

Table 41 Model fit indices initial structural model (model 1)

Index	Value sample 2 (N = 450)	Value sample 3 (N = 450)	Criteria
CMIN	5,507.564	5,428.979	--
DF	2,556.00	2,556.00	--
CMIN/DF	2.155	2.124	Between 1 and 3, excellent; between 3 and 5, acceptable
CFI	0.901	0.896	Higher than 0.95, excellent; between 0.90 and 0.95, acceptable
SRMR	0.095	0.089	Lower than 0.08, excellent; between 0.08 and 0.10, acceptable
RMSEA	0.051	0.050	Lower than 0.06, excellent; between 0.06 and 0.08, acceptable
PClose	0.260	0.485	Higher than 0.05, excellent; between 0.01 and 0.05, acceptable

Source: (Gaskin & Lim, 2016)

The initial SEM model is acceptable and conclusions could be drawn. After testing the initial structural model, results indicate that for the drivers of the brand polarization phenomenon (Table 42) four hypotheses were supported, one hypothesis was partially supported (supported in one sample and rejected in the other), two hypotheses were rejected and one hypothesis was not tested due to the deletion of the variable. Specifically, results of model estimation using samples 2 and 3 provide support for the H₂ ($\beta_2=0.043$; $\beta_3=0.044$; $p_2 < 0.05$; $p_3 < 0.001$), H₅ ($\beta_2=0.037$; $\beta_3=0.042$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$), H₇ ($\beta_2=0.026$; $\beta_3=0.029$; $p_2 < 0.001$; $p_3 < 0.05$) and H₈ ($\beta_2=0.027$; $\beta_3=0.032$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$). Additionally, support is provided for the H₃ when estimated on sample 2 ($\beta_2=0.031$; $p_2 < 0.05$), albeit estimation of the model on sample 3 does not evidence a significant relationship. Thereby, the results of hypothesis testing in the initial model concerning the drivers of brand polarization establish that the phenomenon is significantly and positively affected by the following drivers: brand strength, association with important issues, ideological compatibility/incompatibility, sense of community and brand uniqueness (partial support).

The results of model estimation, however, did not provide support for the H₁ and H₄, where the significance levels were above the cut-off value of 0.05. Thereby, results of hypothesis testing estimated on both samples suggest product involvement and perceived quality do

not have an effect on brand polarization. H_6 was not tested due to the deletion of the expected positive/negative experience variable.

Regarding the moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationships between brand polarization and its drivers (Table 43), two hypotheses were supported, three hypotheses were partially supported (supported in one sample and rejected in the other), two hypotheses were rejected and one hypothesis was not tested due to the deletion of the variable. The results of the initial structural model support the moderation of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationships between brand strength and brand polarization (H_{9b} , $\beta_2=0.023$; $\beta_3=0.025$; $p_{2,3} < 0.05$) and between brand uniqueness and brand polarization (H_{9c} , $\beta_2=0.021$; $\beta_3=0.023$; $p_2 < 0.05$; $p_3 < 0.001$). Further, the results partially support the moderation of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationships between association with important issues and brand polarization (H_{9e} , $\beta_2=0.022$; $p_2 < 0.05$), between ideological compatibility/incompatibility and brand polarization (H_{9g} , $\beta_2=0.022$; $p_2 < 0.001$) and between sense of community and brand polarization (H_{9h} , $\beta_3=0.025$; $p_3 < 0.05$). The moderation of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationships between product involvement and brand polarization (H_{9a}) and between perceived quality and brand polarization (H_{9d}) were not supported, as the significance levels were above the cut-off value of 0.05. Finally, the moderation of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationship between expected positive/negative experience and brand polarization (H_{9f}) was not tested due to the deletion of the expected positive/negative experience variable.

As for the outcomes of brand polarization (Table 44), all the seven hypotheses were supported. The estimation of the initial structural model on samples 2 and 3 offers support for the relationships between brand polarization and the outcome variables complimenting/complaining (H_{10} , $\beta_2=0.073$; $\beta_3=0.069$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$), brand loyalty/disloyalty (H_{11} , $\beta_2=0.063$; $\beta_3=0.069$; $p_2 < 0.05$; $p_3 < 0.001$), using pro/anti-brand merchandise (H_{12} , $\beta_2=0.085$; $\beta_3=0.080$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$), participation in a brand/anti-brand community (H_{13} , $\beta_2=0.076$; $\beta_3=0.073$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$), forgiveness/retaliation behaviours (H_{14} , $\beta_2=0.058$; $\beta_3=0.065$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$), positive/negative WoM (H_{15} , $\beta_2=0.080$; $\beta_3=0.079$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$) and defending/attacking the brand (H_{16} , $\beta_2=0.076$; $\beta_3=0.083$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$).

Table 42 Initial structural model (model 1) – results of hypothesis testing – drivers of brand polarization

Hypothesis		Sample 2 (N = 450)			Sample 3 (N = 450)			Result
		S.E. (β)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	S.E. (β)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	
Drivers of brand polarization								
Product related drivers								
H ₁	Product involvement → Brand polarization	0.02	-1.312	0.19	0.023	-0.178	0.859	Rejected
Brand related drivers								
H ₂	Brand strength → Brand polarization	0.043	2.512	0.012	0.044	5.025	***	Supported
H ₃	Brand uniqueness → Brand polarization	0.031	3.145	0.002	0.034	-1.418	0.156	Partially supported
H ₄	Perceived quality → Brand polarization	0.026	-0.179	0.858	0.038	0.739	0.46	Rejected
H ₅	Association with important issues → Brand polarization	0.037	10.724	***	0.042	10.027	***	Supported
Personal related drivers								
H ₆	Expected positive/negative experience → Brand polarization	Not tested due to the deletion of the 'expected positive/negative experience' variable						
H ₇	Ideological compatibility/incompatibility → Brand polarization	0.026	3.295	***	0.029	2.522	0.012	Supported
Group related drivers								
H ₈	Sense of community → Brand polarization	0.027	11.353	***	0.032	8.649	***	Supported

CMIN/DF₂ = 2.155; CMIN/DF₃ = 2.124; CFI₂ = 0.901; CFI₃ = 0.896; SRMR₂ = 0.095; SRMR₃ = 0.089; RMSEA₂ = 0.051; RMSEA₃ = 0.050

Table 43 Initial structural model (model 1) – results of hypothesis testing – moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity

Hypothesis		Sample 2 (N = 450)			Sample 3 (N = 450)			Result
		S.E. (β)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	S.E. (β)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	
Moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity (PRI)								
H _{9a}	PRI moderates Product involvement → Brand polarization	0.021	1.167	0.243	0.023	1.347	0.178	Rejected
H _{9b}	PRI moderates Brand strength → Brand polarization	0.023	2.319	0.02	0.025	2.346	0.019	Supported
H _{9c}	PRI moderates Brand uniqueness → Brand polarization	0.021	2.325	0.02	0.023	3.823	***	Supported
H _{9d}	PRI moderates Perceived quality → Brand polarization	0.024	0.083	0.934	0.026	-0.262	0.793	Rejected
H _{9e}	PRI moderates Association with important issues → Brand polarization	0.022	2.688	0.007	0.024	1.265	0.206	Partially supported
H _{9f}	PRI moderates Expected positive/negative experience → Brand polarization	Not tested due to the deletion of the 'expected positive/negative experience' variable						
H _{9g}	PRI moderates Ideological compatibility/incompatibility → Brand polarization	0.022	3.492	***	0.025	0.882	0.378	Partially supported
H _{9h}	PRI moderates Sense of community → Brand polarization	0.022	1.406	0.16	0.025	2.978	0.003	Partially supported

CMIN/DF₂ = 2.155; CMIN/DF₃ = 2.124; CFI₂ = 0.901; CFI₃ = 0.896; SRMR₂ = 0.095; SRMR₃ = 0.089; RMSEA₂ = 0.051; RMSEA₃ = 0.050

Table 44 Initial structural model (model 1) – results of hypothesis testing – outcomes of brand polarization

Hypothesis		Sample 2 (N = 450)			Sample 3 (N = 450)			Result
		S.E. (β)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	S.E. (β)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	
Outcomes of brand polarization								
Approach the brand								
H ₁₀	Brand polarization → Complimenting/complaining	0.073	10.715	***	0.069	9.495	***	Supported
Avoid / follow the brand								
H ₁₁	Brand polarization → Brand loyalty/disloyalty	0.063	2.532	0.011	0.069	4.374	***	Supported
H ₁₂	Brand polarization → Using pro/anti-brand merchandise	0.085	14.393	***	0.08	13.561	***	Supported
H ₁₃	Brand polarization → Participation in a brand/anti-brand community	0.076	15.058	***	0.073	13.375	***	Supported
Act								
H ₁₄	Brand polarization → Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours	0.058	5.618	***	0.065	6.775	***	Supported
H ₁₅	Brand polarization → Positive/negative WoM	0.08	16.119	***	0.079	15.163	***	Supported
H ₁₆	Brand polarization → Defending/attacking the brand	0.076	9.825	***	0.083	10.385	***	Supported

CMIN/DF₂ = 2.155; CMIN/DF₃ = 2.124; CFI₂ = 0.901; CFI₃ = 0.896; SRMR₂ = 0.095; SRMR₃ = 0.089; RMSEA₂ = 0.051; RMSEA₃ = 0.050

9.3.2 Model 2

The present study follows a model development strategy in the application of SEM (Hair et al., 2006). As such, the modelling effort aimed to improve the initial model framework through the modification of the structural model by considering additional relationships (Hair et al., 2014). Respecification of the initial model was implemented to improve model fit and better represent the relationships between the included constructs (Everitt & Dunn, 2010). Theoretical support for the additional relationships is presented in section 10.3.2.

The model development strategy was chosen over a confirmatory modelling strategy, as in the latter a single conceptual model is specified and tested to analyse if it works (Hair et al., 2006). However, that single model “is just one of several different models having equally acceptable model fits” (Hair et al., 2014, p. 558).

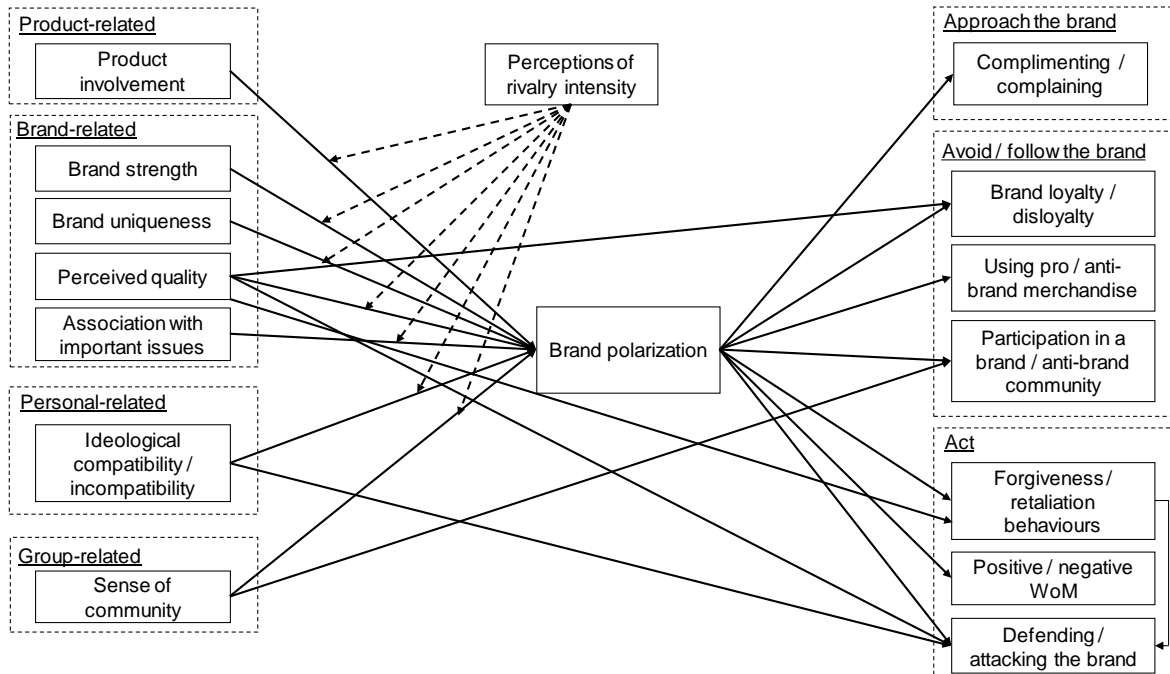
Furthermore, the model development strategy was also preferred over a competing models strategy since, given the scarcity of literature on brand polarization, testing competing, alternative theories or hypothesised structural relationships was out of the scope of the research (Everitt & Dunn, 2010).

Albeit the initial model fit is acceptable, modification indices used in model development strategy suggest that it can be improved. Specifically, the indices suggested six additional pathways that were incorporated to the model. Three new causal relationships involving perceived quality were added, including the relationships between this construct and brand loyalty/disloyalty, forgiveness/retaliation behaviours and defending/attacking the brand. Further, the relationships between ideological compatibility/incompatibility and defending/attacking the brand, between sense of community and participation in a brand/anti-brand community and between forgiveness/retaliation behaviours and defending/attacking the brand were also included in the modified model.

Similar to the initial structural model (model 1), the modified model (model 2) includes seven exogenous constructs, eight endogenous constructs and one construct moderating the relationships between brand polarization and its drivers. The exogenous and endogenous constructs are linked with 20 arrows capturing initial and additional relationships. As in model 1, the modified model positions brand polarization in the centre and proposes seven drivers, seven outcomes and one moderator of the relationships

between the phenomenon and its drivers. Additionally, the six new mentioned relationships are incorporated to the model. Figure 5 illustrates the enhanced model.

Figure 5 Modified structural model (model 2)



The model was estimated using The Maximum Likelihood method in the same two randomly split data sets of 450 respondents each, equally distributed by product category and by lovers/haters.

Model fit was assessed using CMIN/DF, CFI, SRMR, RMSEA and PClose indices. Compared to model 1, model 2 presents better model fit indices, with a CMIN/DF of 1.832 for sample 2 and 1.856 for sample 3, a CFI of 0.929 for sample 2 and 0.921 for sample 3, a SRMR of 0.073 for sample 2 and 0.067 for sample 3, a RMSEA of 0.043 for sample 2 and 0.044 for sample 3 and PClose of 1.000 for samples 2 and 3. These values indicate good model fit, as shown in Table 45.

Table 45 Model fit indices modified structural model (model 2)

Index	Value sample 2 (N = 450)	Value sample 3 (N = 450)	Criteria
CMIN	4,667.879	4,730.215	--
DF	2,548.000	2,548.000	--
CMIN/DF	1.832	1.856	Between 1 and 3, excellent; between 3 and 5, acceptable
CFI	0.929	0.921	Higher than 0.95, excellent; between 0.90 and 0.95, acceptable
SRMR	0.073	0.067	Lower than 0.08, excellent; between 0.08 and 0.10, acceptable
RMSEA	0.043	0.044	Lower than 0.06, excellent; between 0.06 and 0.08, acceptable
PClose	1.000	1.000	Higher than 0.05, excellent; between 0.01 and 0.05, acceptable

Source: (Gaskin & Lim, 2016)

Model 2 is therefore accepted and treated as the final model, regarding which specific conclusions can be drawn concerning the hypothesised relationships.

9.4 Results of hypothesis testing

The results of estimation of the final model (model 2) using the two samples of N = 450 each are presented in Table 46, Table 47, Table 48 and Table 49. These concern seven drivers and seven outcomes of brand polarization, one moderator in the relationships between brand polarization and its drivers and six additional relationships.

9.4.1 Drivers of brand polarization (H₁ – H₈)

The initial group of hypotheses relates to the drivers of brand polarization, consisting of seven proposed antecedents of the phenomenon (Table 466). It is observed that all of the relationships between brand polarization and its drivers are positive and most of them are significant. Results provide support for H₂ ($\beta_2=0.044$; $\beta_3=0.046$; $p_2 < 0.05$; $p_3 < 0.001$), H₃ ($\beta_2=0.032$; $\beta_3=0.035$; $p_2 < 0.001$; $p_3 < 0.05$), H₅ ($\beta_2=0.042$; $\beta_3=0.048$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$), H₇ ($\beta_2=0.027$; $\beta_3=0.031$; $p_{2,3} < 0.05$) and H₈ ($\beta_2=0.025$; $\beta_3=0.032$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$) for both samples. Therefore, the results of hypothesis testing regarding the drivers of brand polarization establish that the phenomenon is significantly and positively affected by the following drivers: brand strength, brand uniqueness, association with important issues, ideological compatibility/incompatibility and sense of community. Association with

important issues is the strongest antecedent of the brand polarization phenomenon, with a β of 0.042 and 0.048 for sample 2 and sample 3 respectively.

Results of model estimation did not provide support for H₁ and H₄, where the significance levels were above the threshold value of 0.05. Therefore, results of hypothesis testing estimated on both samples suggest that product involvement and perceived quality do not have an effect on the brand polarization phenomenon. H₆ was not tested due to the deletion of the expected positive/negative experience variable.

Table 46 Final structural model – results of hypothesis testing – drivers of brand polarization

Hypothesis		Sample 2 (N = 450)			Sample 3 (N = 450)			Result
		S.E. (β)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	S.E. (β)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	
Drivers of brand polarization								
Product related drivers								
H ₁	Product involvement → Brand polarization	0.02	-1.548	0.122	0.023	-0.686	0.493	Rejected
Brand related drivers								
H ₂	Brand strength → Brand polarization	0.044	1.958	0.05	0.046	5.147	***	Supported
H ₃	Brand uniqueness → Brand polarization	0.032	3.399	***	0.035	-2.017	0.044	Supported
H ₄	Perceived quality → Brand polarization	0.029	0.035	0.972	0.042	0.135	0.893	Rejected
H ₅	Association with important issues → Brand polarization	0.042	11.763	***	0.048	10.773	***	Supported
Personal related drivers								
H ₆	Expected positive/negative experience → Brand polarization	Not tested due to the deletion of the 'expected positive/negative experience' variable						
H ₇	Ideological compatibility/incompatibility → Brand polarization	0.027	2.525	0.012	0.031	1.996	0.046	Supported
Group related drivers								
H ₈	Sense of community → Brand polarization	0.025	7.305	***	0.032	5.98	***	Supported

CMIN/DF₂ = 1.832; CMIN/DF₃ = 1.856; CFI₂ = 0.929; CFI₃ = 0.921; SRMR₂ = 0.073; SRMR₃ = 0.067; RMSEA₂ = 0.043; RMSEA₃ = 0.044

9.4.2 Moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity (H_{9a} – H_{9h})

Regarding the moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationships between brand polarization and its drivers, H_{9c} ($\beta_3=0.024$; $p_3 < 0.001$), H_{9e} ($\beta_2=0.023$; $p_2 < 0.05$), H_{9g} ($\beta_2=0.023$; $p_2 < 0.001$) and H_{9h} ($\beta_3=0.026$; $p_3 < 0.05$) are somewhat inconclusive. That is, the results were partially supported, since support is provided for one sample but not for the other. Therefore, results partially support that perceptions of rivalry intensity enhance the relationships between brand uniqueness and brand polarization, between association with important issues and brand polarization, between ideological compatibility/incompatibility and brand polarization and between sense of community and brand polarization. Moderation of perceptions of rivalry intensity is stronger in the relationship between sense of community and brand polarization, with a β of 0.026.

The analysis failed to provide support for H_{9a}, H_{9b} and H_{9d} where the significance levels were above the threshold value of 0.05 for both samples. This suggests that perceptions of rivalry intensity does not moderate the relationships between product involvement and brand polarization, between brand strength and brand polarization and between perceived quality and brand polarization. The moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationship between expected positive/negative experience and brand polarization (H_{9f}) was excluded from the analysis due to the deletion of the expected positive/negative experience variable.

9.4.3 Outcomes of brand polarization (H₁₀ – H₁₆)

All the tested hypothesised relationships between brand polarization and its outcomes were supported. Specifically, H₁₀ ($\beta_2=0.075$; $\beta_3=0.069$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$), H₁₁ ($\beta_2=0.054$; $\beta_3=0.062$; $p_{2,3} < 0.05$), H₁₂ ($\beta_2=0.088$; $\beta_3=0.081$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$), H₁₃ ($\beta_2=0.082$; $\beta_3=0.088$; $p_2 < 0.001$; $p_3 < 0.05$), H₁₄ ($\beta_2=0.052$; $\beta_3=0.058$; $p_{2,3} < 0.05$), H₁₅ ($\beta_2=0.093$; $\beta_3=0.105$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$) and H₁₆ ($\beta_2=0.058$; $\beta_3=0.061$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$) were confirmed. These results indicate a significant and positive effect of brand polarization on complimenting/complaining, brand loyalty/disloyalty, using pro/anti-brand merchandise, participation in a brand/anti-brand community, forgiveness/retaliation behaviours, positive/negative WoM and defending/attacking the brand. The data analysis also indicates that brand polarization has the strongest effect on positive/negative WoM ($\beta_2=0.093$ / $\beta_3=0.105$), followed by participation in a brand/anti-brand community ($\beta_2=0.082$ / $\beta_3=0.088$) and using pro/anti-brand merchandise ($\beta_2=0.088$ / $\beta_3=0.081$).

9.4.4 Other relationships

Results of the final model estimation offer support for six additional relationships on both samples. These relationships were drawn during the model refinement process. The analysis of the data indicates the existence of a positive effect of perceived quality on brand loyalty/disloyalty ($\beta_2=0.080$; $\beta_3=0.113$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$), forgiveness/retaliation behaviours ($\beta_2=0.066$; $\beta_3=0.087$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$) and defending/attacking the brand ($\beta_2=0.068$; $\beta_3=0.096$; $p_{2,3} < 0.05$). Further, positive effects of ideological compatibility/incompatibility on defending/attacking the brand ($\beta_2=0.060$; $\beta_3=0.064$; $p_2 < 0.001$; $p_3 < 0.05$), of sense of community on participation in a brand/anti-brand community ($\beta_2=0.054$; $\beta_3=0.067$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$) and of forgiveness/retaliation behaviours on defending/attacking the brand ($\beta_2=0.061$; $\beta_3=0.062$; $p_{2,3} < 0.001$) were also evidenced. The next chapter presents the discussion and implications of the findings.

Table 47 Final structural model – results of hypothesis testing – moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity

Hypothesis		Sample 2 (N = 450)			Sample 3 (N = 450)			Result
		S.E. (β)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	S.E. (β)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	
Moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity (PRI)								
H _{9a}	PRI moderates Product involvement → Brand polarization	0.022	0.792	0.428	0.023	1.043	0.297	Rejected
H _{9b}	PRI moderates Brand strength → Brand polarization	0.024	1.495	0.135	0.026	1.618	0.106	Rejected
H _{9c}	PRI moderates Brand uniqueness → Brand polarization	0.022	1.762	0.078	0.024	3.554	***	Partially supported
H _{9d}	PRI moderates Perceived quality → Brand polarization	0.025	-0.179	0.858	0.027	-0.677	0.499	Rejected
H _{9e}	PRI moderates Association with important issues → Brand polarization	0.023	2.427	0.015	0.025	0.255	0.799	Partially supported
H _{9f}	PRI moderates Expected positive/negative experience → Brand polarization	Not tested due to the deletion of the 'expected positive/negative experience' variable						
H _{9g}	PRI moderates Ideological compatibility/incompatibility → Brand polarization	0.023	3.757	***	0.025	1.399	0.162	Partially supported
H _{9h}	PRI moderates Sense of community → Brand polarization	0.023	0.636	0.525	0.026	2.078	0.038	Partially supported

CMIN/DF₂ = 1.832; CMIN/DF₃ = 1.856; CFI₂ = 0.929; CFI₃ = 0.921; SRMR₂ = 0.073; SRMR₃ = 0.067; RMSEA₂ = 0.043; RMSEA₃ = 0.044

Table 48

Final structural model – results of hypothesis testing – outcomes of brand polarization

Hypothesis		Sample 2 (N = 450)			Sample 3 (N = 450)			Result
		S.E. (β)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	S.E. (β)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	
Outcomes of brand polarization								
Approach the brand								
H ₁₀	Brand polarization → Complimenting/complaining	0.075	10.649	***	0.069	9.438	***	Supported
Avoid / follow the brand								
H ₁₁	Brand polarization → Brand loyalty/disloyalty	0.054	-2.869	0.004	0.062	-2.579	0.01	Supported
H ₁₂	Brand polarization → Using pro/anti-brand merchandise	0.088	14.396	***	0.081	13.816	***	Supported
H ₁₃	Brand polarization → Participation in a brand/anti-brand community	0.082	4.999	***	0.088	2.546	0.011	Supported
Act								
H ₁₄	Brand polarization → Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours	0.052	2.805	0.005	0.058	2.739	0.006	Supported
H ₁₅	Brand polarization → Positive/negative WoM	0.093	14.133	***	0.105	12.832	***	Supported
H ₁₆	Brand polarization → Defending/attacking the brand	0.058	6.882	***	0.061	7.508	***	Supported

CMIN/DF₂ = 1.832; CMIN/DF₃ = 1.856; CFI₂ = 0.929; CFI₃ = 0.921; SRMR₂ = 0.073; SRMR₃ = 0.067; RMSEA₂ = 0.043; RMSEA₃ = 0.044

Table 49 Final structural model – results of hypothesis testing – other relationships

Hypothesis		Sample 2 (N = 450)			Sample 3 (N = 450)			Result
		S.E. (β)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	S.E. (β)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	
Other relationships								
N/A	Perceived quality → Brand loyalty/disloyalty	0.08	11.241	***	0.113	10.135	***	Supported
N/A	Perceived quality → Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours	0.066	7.891	***	0.087	7.918	***	Supported
N/A	Perceived quality → Defending/attacking the brand	0.068	3.239	0.001	0.096	2.633	0.008	Supported
N/A	Ideological compatibility/incompatibility → Defending/attacking the brand	0.06	4.021	***	0.064	2.324	0.02	Supported
N/A	Sense of community → Participation in a brand/anti-brand community	0.054	15.319	***	0.067	11.677	***	Supported
N/A	Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours → Defending/attacking the brand	0.061	8.592	***	0.062	8.65	***	Supported

CMIN/DF₂ = 1.832; CMIN/DF₃ = 1.856; CFI₂ = 0.929; CFI₃ = 0.921; SRMR₂ = 0.073; SRMR₃ = 0.067; RMSEA₂ = 0.043; RMSEA₃ = 0.044

9.5 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the results of the hypothesis testing process. Initially, the chapter presented the assessment of the full measurement model and the evaluation of reliability and validity of the measures. Using EFA, the items were purified, and CFA analysis confirmed adequate model fit, reliability, convergent and discriminant validity indices for the full measurement model. It then compared and evaluated two structural models. The second model, considered as final, had satisfactory model fit and was accepted for testing the proposed causal relationships between variables. The models were estimated on two separate samples.

Results confirmed the positive influence of brand strength, brand uniqueness, association with important issues, ideological compatibility/incompatibility and sense of community on the brand polarization phenomenon. The moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationships between brand uniqueness, association with important issues, ideological compatibility/incompatibility and sense of community and brand polarization was partially supported. The positive influence of brand polarization on all the predicted outcome variables (complimenting/complaining, brand loyalty/disloyalty, using pro/anti-brand merchandise, participation in a brand/anti-brand community, forgiveness/retaliation behaviours, positive/negative WoM and defending/attacking the brand) was also supported. Further, the analysis revealed additional significant relationships between several study constructs.

Chapter 10 Discussion

10.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings in the context of past literature. In doing so, it answers the research questions posed at the beginning of the study. Specifically, this chapter analyses how the findings of the current research relate to the existing state of knowledge on brand polarization. To answer the identified research questions, the insights from the qualitative and quantitative studies conducted in this research are scrutinised. The chapter is divided into several sections, related to the three research questions, and to the discussion of additional findings revealed in the quantitative study. The chapter is structured as follows: first, RQ1 is addressed, including the overview of dimensionality and measurement of the brand polarization phenomenon. Next, RQ2 is answered, where the identified drivers of brand polarization are addressed. This is followed by the discussion of RQ3 related to the identified outcomes of brand polarization. Finally, additional findings identified in the quantitative study are examined.

10.2 Discussion of research questions and hypotheses

10.2.1 RQ1: What is the nature of brand polarization?

The first research question concerned the dimensionality of the brand polarization phenomenon, the central concept of this research. As argued in the opening chapters, the available literature on brand polarization is scarce and the dimensions that comprise the phenomenon are still unexplored (see section 2.6). As the marketing literature focuses on polarizing brands (Monahan et al., 2017) or polarizing products (Rozenkrants et al., 2017), the attention to the objects disregards the examination of brand polarization as a phenomenon. Additionally, given that brand love and brand hate, the opposite poles of the brand polarization phenomenon, are affective in nature (Bryson et al., 2013; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), further research needed to be conducted to explore the dimensionality of the construct.

To answer the question, and elaborate on the nature of brand polarization, the current study built on the conceptualisations from political science. The literature in this discipline has suggested two dimensions of polarization: affective and ideological (Webster & Abramowitz, 2017). Affective polarization describes how group members display positive

feelings and convictions towards other members regarded as the in-group and negative feelings and convictions towards people considered as the out-group (Lau et al., 2017). Ideological polarization explains why group members move to the extremes of the ideological spectrum (Webster & Abramowitz, 2017).

The extension of these concepts into the realm of branding begun with a qualitative study. Results of the exploratory study indicate that the brand polarization phenomenon comprises five dimensions: brand passion, self-brand benchmarking, intra-group identification, inter-group dissociation, and generation of strong feelings for the achievement or misfortune of the brand. After conducting the EFA during the quantitative data analysis, generation of strong feelings for the achievement or misfortune of the brand was discarded and the dimensions of brand polarization were reduced to four. Brand polarization is a multi-dimensional construct which involves passionate feelings towards the brand and other consumers.

The four identified dimensions of brand polarization warrant consideration. In the available literature, brand passion is commonly associated with strong positive feelings, reflecting its most exciting features (Batra et al., 2012). This approach leaves out the opposite side of the spectrum (e.g. Herrando et al., 2017). However, qualitative insights have suggested that strong passionate feelings towards a brand can be either positive or negative, covering both poles of the consumer-brand relationship scope. This was corroborated by the quantitative findings. For this reason, Albert et al.'s (2013) definition of brand passion was adapted for this study in order to include both strong positive and negative feelings. As such, brand passion as a dimension of the brand polarization phenomenon is considered to be a psychological phenomenon constituted of excitation, infatuation, and obsession for a polarizing brand (Albert et al., 2013). This more inclusive view of brand passion adds to previous research by also considering strong negative emotions in the definition of the construct. Future research may explore the similarities and differences between passionate positive and negative sentiments towards a brand.

The second conceptual dimension, self-brand benchmarking, closely relates to the concepts of consumer-brand identification (Popp & Woratschek, 2017) and symbolic incongruity (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017). These two concepts are treated separately in the literature. While consumer-brand identification is viewed as a psychological state in which the consumer perceives, feels and values his/her belongingness with a brand (Lam

et al., 2013), symbolic incongruity is observed when the image represented by a brand is undesired and contradictory with the consumer's self-concept (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017). Qualitative findings revealed that the match or mismatch between the consumer's identity and the brand's identity helps to explain the strong positive or negative feelings towards such brand. Survey data supported these findings. Adapting Davvetas & Diamantopoulos' (2017) definition of consumer-brand identification, self-brand benchmarking as a dimension of brand polarization is considered to be the degree to which consumers compare their self-identity with the identity of the polarizing brand. This definition simultaneously considers the congruent and incongruent features of a brand with the consumer's self-concept, adding to the current literature, where consumer-brand identification and consumer-brand disidentification are treated as independent constructs (Wolter et al., 2016).

The last two dimensions, intra-group identification and inter-group dissociation, relate to Tajfel's (1974) social identity theory. Identification with an in-group refers to the individual's sense of belongingness to the group and the value derived from this group membership (Chiang et al., 2017). Intra-group identification, considered one of the dimensions of brand polarization, is defined in this study as the extent to which an individual associates him or herself with people who share the same feelings for the polarizing brand (Dalakas et al., 2015). On the other hand, group dissociation is defined as the individual's tendency to put psychological distance between himself or herself and members of a certain group (Weiss & Lang, 2012), and is also considered a dimension of the phenomenon. Dissociation is observed with groups consumers do not wish to belong to, as they are perceived to be threatening to the self (Becker & Tausch, 2014). Interview data evidenced that extreme positive and negative feelings towards a brand are shared within a group of like-minded consumers. Interviewees declared to identify with people who share the same feelings about a polarizing brand and to dissociate from opposite-minded consumers. The collective nature of brand polarization had not yet been explored, to the author's best knowledge. Findings suggest that like-minded consumers play an important role in the extremisation of feelings towards a brand. Further research might be conducted to explore if this applies in different cultural backgrounds.

The study makes an important headway in building on the qualitative insight to develop a brand new scale for the brand polarization construct. In the marketing literature, this

construct has not been operationalised, as the focus has been on the objects (polarizing brands or polarizing products) and not on the phenomenon (brand polarization) (Monahan et al., 2017; Rozenkrants et al., 2017). In other fields, few definitions and items have been proposed but none that taps directly into an affective phenomenon involving passionate positive and negative emotions towards the brand, like-minded consumers, and opposite-minded consumers.

The results of the quantitative study advance in the operationalisation of the brand polarization construct. The new measurement scale captures the multi-dimensional nature of the brand polarization phenomenon. Using extensive procedures, the study proposes and validates empirical operationalisation of the brand polarization scale, where brand polarization is measured as a second-order latent construct consisting of four dimensions. Furthermore, the measures are characterised by strong psychometric properties, including having satisfied several internal consistency tests, and assessment of face, content, convergent and discriminant validity.

As explained in section 8.2.1, at the inception of this study, no conceptually adequate and valid scale of brand polarization that could have been used or adapted had been published. Existing measures of polarization were not appropriate to assess the brand polarization phenomenon. Hence, the creation of a dedicated scale to measure the focal concept of the study was necessary, aiming to further explore the drivers and outcomes of the phenomenon.

10.2.2 RQ2: What are the features that drive brand polarization?

The second research question was related to the drivers of brand polarization. No literature could be found regarding the antecedents of the phenomenon. For instance, in their work, Luo et al. (2013b) acknowledge the need of behavioural investigation of the causes of brand dispersion, a method to measure how polarizing a brand is. The literature in the political science and social psychology disciplines suggests some causes of polarization, being social influences (e.g. Mason, 2015; Van Boven et al., 2012), self-categorisation (e.g. Hoffarth & Hodson, 2016; Wronski, 2016) and issue importance (e.g. Mullinix, 2016; Wojcieszak & Price, 2010) the most recurrent. Further, the literature on brand love and brand hate offers diverse antecedents of the two extreme emotions of the brand polarization phenomenon (e.g. Albert & Valette-Florence, 2010; Huber et al., 2015 for brand love and

Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017; Zarantonello et al., 2016 for brand hate). However, specific research on the drivers of brand polarization seemed to be missing in the literature.

Two studies were employed to answer RQ2: a qualitative, exploratory study and a quantitative, confirmatory study. Implications of both studies are discussed below.

Exploratory findings presented in Chapter 5 provide tentative evidence concerning relevant relationships between brand polarization and its antecedents. Results of the qualitative study suggest that eight drivers, divided in four categories, give rise to brand polarization. The first category is product-related drivers, which includes the product involvement construct. The second category, brand-related drivers, includes brand strength, brand uniqueness, perceived quality and association with important issues. Additionally, brand polarization can be driven by two personal-related constructs, such as expected positive/negative experience and ideological compatibility/incompatibility. Finally, the qualitative study also showed that brand polarization could be caused by a group-related driver such as sense of community.

These tentative relationships are further assessed in the quantitative study. In this part of the thesis, exploratory findings and theoretical insights from the literature review have been formalised into an empirical model and tested using the quantitative data (discussed in Chapter 9). The results of hypothesis testing related to the drivers of brand polarization are presented in Table 50.

Not all the insights from the qualitative model were supported in hypothesis testing. Additionally, whereas the conceptual model provided in Chapter 6 included eight drivers of brand polarization, only seven were tested in the empirical model discussed in Chapter 9. This was driven by the results of the measurement development and evaluation in the quantitative study, which failed to provide support for the discriminant validity of the expected positive/negative experience driver. Consequently, the associated hypothesis (H_6) was removed from the further analysis and was not tested in the confirmatory stage. All other relationships concerning the drivers of brand polarization (reflected in $H_1 - H_8$) are discussed separately in the following sections. Results of hypothesis testing are discussed on two separate samples.

Table 50 Results of hypothesis testing – drivers of brand polarization

Drivers of brand polarization		Result	
		Sample 2	Sample 3
H ₁	Product involvement is positively related to brand polarization.	Rejected	Rejected
H ₂	Brand strength is positively related to brand polarization.	Supported	Supported
H ₃	Brand uniqueness is positively related to brand polarization.	Supported	Supported
H ₄	Perceived quality is positively related to brand polarization.	Rejected	Rejected
H ₅	Association with important issues is positively related to brand polarization.	Supported	Supported
H ₇	Ideological compatibility/incompatibility is positively related to brand polarization.	Supported	Supported
H ₈	Sense of community is positively related to brand polarization.	Supported	Supported

10.2.2.1 Product involvement → Brand polarization

Unexpectedly, the relationship between product involvement and brand polarization has not received support in the quantitative study. The relationship was disconfirmed when tested on the initial and validation samples.

There is a tension between qualitative and quantitative findings. The fact that this relationship was not supported contradicts the results of the qualitative study. These results indicate that polarizing brands mentioned by participants frequently belonged to highly involving product categories. However, the results of the quantitative study reveal that the polarizing brand has the protagonist role in the brand polarization phenomenon, independently of the product category such brand belongs to. The lack of support for this relationship in the quantitative study may be associated with the fact that the smaller sample in the qualitative study could be biased towards certain high-involvement product categories. Quantitative results support previous research that finds empirical evidence that the quality of the brand relationship is not significantly impacted by the level of involvement with the product category (Fetscherin et al., 2014; Valta, 2013).

Product involvement relates to the perception of personal relevance of a product category (Belanche et al., 2017). This relevance is determined by the extent to which the product category is interesting and important for the consumer (Ferreira & Coelho, 2015). Previous

research describe two dimensions of product involvement: cognitive and affective (Drossos et al., 2014). As brand polarization was conceptualised as an affective phenomenon, future research could explore the incidence of affective involvement on the development of simultaneous passionate positive and negative emotions towards a brand.

10.2.2.2 Brand strength → Brand polarization

Brand strength is the extent to which consumers know a brand and perceive it to be remarkable (Wymer et al., 2016). Brand strength associates to intense thoughts, feelings and actions consumers have towards a brand (Strandvik & Heinonen, 2013). This construct is frequently linked with an energetic response from the consumer (Mühlbacher et al., 2016), and this response can be positive or negative (Fetscherin et al., 2019).

Results of hypothesis testing in the quantitative study confirm the positive relationship between brand strength and brand polarization. This is reflected in the results of the initial and validation samples. These results show that brand strength seems to be the second strongest antecedent of the brand polarization phenomenon.

The quantitative data supports the results of qualitative study. For example, the qualitative data analysis evidenced that interviewees associated strong, big, global and successful brands with the development of brand polarization. This is further confirmed by the analysis of the quantitative survey results.

The prominence of this driver may be rooted in the specifics of the chosen research settings. The three product categories respondents could choose from (music artists, airlines and football teams) usually involve remarkable, outstanding brands. Further, lovers and haters were included in the study, as it is acknowledged in the literature that supporters, indifferent and negative customers and non-customers should be considered to gain a more realistic picture of the strength of a brand (Strandvik & Heinonen, 2013). Future studies may consider these implications and select different product categories or additional cultural contexts.

10.2.2.3 Brand uniqueness → Brand polarization

Brand uniqueness, or the degree to which consumers feel the brand is distinct from competing brands (Su & Chang, 2018), is seen when a brand stands out, so it can be easily noticed, recognised and recalled over rivals (Dwivedi et al., 2018). Prior research suggests that unique brand associations are passionately evaluated by consumers (Keller, 1993).

The positive impact of brand uniqueness on brand polarization is confirmed in the quantitative study. It was observed from the quantitative results that brand uniqueness represents the third strongest driver of brand polarization. Brands being unique, focused and differentiated was identified in the interviews as a cause of extreme, passionate positive and negative emotions towards the brand. Quantitative data results further confirm this finding.

These results could be explained by the design of the quantitative study. As respondents were asked to think about a loved or a hated polarizing brand, such brands are frequently perceived to be different and special (Song Southworth & Ha-Brookshire, 2016). The findings are in line with previous research that state that unique brand associations are assessed passionately by consumers (Keller, 1993). Such passion might result in the appearance of extreme attitudes (Herrando et al., 2017), as it happens in the brand polarization phenomenon.

Future research could explore deeper the nature of the relationship between brand uniqueness and brand polarization. For example, the link between the two constructs may be confirmed using brands belonging to diverse product categories or in specific situations in the consumer-brand relationship, such as the duration of the connection between the consumer and the polarizing brand.

10.2.2.4 Perceived quality → Brand polarization

The qualitative study uncovered the positive relationship between the brand's perception of quality and brand polarization. However, this hypothesised path was not supported by the results of the quantitative study.

The lack of support for this hypothesis is also somewhat unexpected. Previous studies have provided evidence of the links between satisfaction of the brand's quality and brand love (Tsai, 2014); between perceived quality and brand love (Batra et al., 2012; Rauschnabel & Ahuvia, 2014); between dissatisfaction of the brand's quality and brand hate (Bryson et al., 2013); and between violation of expectations and brand hate (Zarantonello et al., 2016).

The chosen product categories for the quantitative study (football teams, airlines and music artists) could explain the lack of relationship between perceived quality and brand polarization. In the case of airlines, quality might be taken for granted, so it might not be a

strong motivator of the phenomenon. For football teams and music artists, the nature of the relationship consumers have with such brands is perhaps very specific and of a longer-term nature (Dmowski, 2013; Morris, 2014). As such, the brand's perceived level of quality probably does not motivate the appearance of extreme emotions consumers have towards it. Future studies should explore this relationship in product categories for which perceived quality is considered to be more relevant for consumers.

10.2.2.5 Association with important issues → Brand polarization

The polarization literature in the political science and social psychology disciplines provides support for the findings related to the relationship between association with important issues and brand polarization from the qualitative and quantitative studies. Previous research reveal that issues categorized as relevant or important cause attitude polarization (Wojcieszak & Price, 2010) since people tend to feel more intensely about them (Hetherington, 2009). As the level of personal importance of an issue increases, the polarization of attitudes is enhanced (Harton & Latané, 1997).

The positive relationship between association with important issues and brand polarization was confirmed in the quantitative study. This result thereby supports the findings from the qualitative study that evidence that brands related to issues considered important by interviewees were seen as motivators of the brand polarization phenomenon. It is observed from the hypothesis testing results that association with important issues is the strongest predictor of brand polarization.

Marketers could take advantage of this finding. The appearance of intense passionate emotions towards the brand is more likely to develop when such brand is linked to issues considered as relevant for consumers.

10.2.2.6 Ideological compatibility/incompatibility → Brand polarization

Previous studies suggest that ideological compatibility/incompatibility and brand polarization might be related. For instance, in the polarization literature, ideological compatible or incompatible factors such as religious identity (e.g. McTague & Pearson-Merkowitz, 2013; Tepe, 2013), political orientations (Hart & Nisbet, 2012) and preference differences (Dixit & Weibull, 2007) are considered to be motivators in the development of the polarization phenomenon. Further, empirical findings in the brand love and brand hate literatures reveal that social support, or "the extent to which a relational partner (a firm or

its employees) undertakes actions to improve customers' general well-being and to show they care or want to help customers" (Long-Tolbert & Gammoh, 2012, p. 393) is an antecedent of brand love. Additionally, Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., (2017) state that ideological incompatibility is one of the drivers of brand hate.

The hypothesis concerning the positive relationship between ideological compatibility/incompatibility and brand polarization was confirmed in the quantitative study. These results support the qualitative findings that uncovered that compatibility or incompatibility between the brand's core values and actions and the consumer's moral and ethical standards seemed to be one of the drivers of brand polarization.

Findings therefore indicate that the way a brand behaves conditions the appearance of strong positive and negative feelings and convictions towards it among consumers. Consumers tend to passionately love a brand that they consider makes good impact to society and/or passionately hate the brand if they think it is socially irresponsible. Future research should further explore this relationship considering specific appropriate or inappropriate behaviours of the brand.

10.2.2.7 Sense of community → Brand polarization

Previous studies have linked sense of community with the appearance of strong feelings, either positive (Zhang, 2010) or negative (Mannarini et al., 2017). This is particularly notorious in the rivalry literature, where it is described how sense of community causes extreme emotions towards like-minded consumers and against opposite-minded consumers (Havard et al., 2016; Hickman & Ward, 2013). In the polarization literature, the relational bonds with other like-minded individuals are reflected in the social categorisation phenomenon, which is considered to be a motivator of polarization (e.g. Landemore & Mercier, 2012; Mason, 2015; Sunstein, 2002). Also, sense of community is regarded as a driver of brand love, supported by empirical research (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010).

Both the quantitative study and hypothesis testing confirm the positive impact of sense of community on brand polarization. Results from the qualitative study show that the extent to which the supporters or detractors of a brand perceive relational bonds with other like-minded consumers appears to be an antecedent of the brand polarization phenomenon.

Results imply that sense of community might provoke passionate positive feelings towards like-minded consumers and passionate negative feelings towards opposite-minded

consumers. This indicates that other actors different than the polarizing brand itself play an important role in the development of strong emotions towards the brand, which should be considered when planning and implementing branding strategies.

10.2.2.8 Moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity

Following different authors (e.g. Berendt & Uhrich, 2016; Grohs et al., 2015; Marticotte et al., 2016), the thesis has hypothesised that the relationships between brand polarization and its drivers was enhanced when the perceived intensity of the rivalry between the focal brand and its main competitor was high. The moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the mentioned relationships is evaluated in the quantitative study. The results of hypothesis testing related to this moderation are presented in Table 51. Given that the expected positive/negative experience driver was not tested, the moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationship between this driver and brand polarization (H_{9f}) was also removed from the analysis and was not tested in the confirmatory stage.

Table 51 Results of hypothesis testing – moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity

Moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity		Result	
		Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)
H_{9a}	Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between product involvement and brand polarization.	Rejected	Rejected
H_{9b}	Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between brand strength and brand polarization.	Rejected	Rejected
H_{9c}	Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between brand uniqueness and brand polarization.	Rejected	Supported
H_{9d}	Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between perceived quality and brand polarization.	Rejected	Rejected
H_{9e}	Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between association with important issues and brand polarization.	Supported	Rejected
H_{9g}	Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between ideological compatibility/incompatibility and brand polarization.	Supported	Rejected
H_{9h}	Perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationship between sense of community and brand polarization.	Rejected	Supported

Hypothesis testing results in the quantitative study are inconclusive regarding the moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationships between the drivers brand uniqueness, association with important issues, ideological compatibility/incompatibility and sense of community and the brand polarization phenomenon. Though moderation was supported when tested on one of the samples, none of the tests confirms moderation using both samples. Results also fail to support the moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationships between product involvement, brand strength and perceived quality and brand polarization. It is important to remember that the results of hypothesis testing in the quantitative study failed to confirm the direct relationships between the product involvement and perceived quality drivers and the brand polarization phenomenon.

The quantitative results seem to contradict the qualitative data findings. The qualitative data suggested that strong rivalry seemed to enhance the passionate feelings of love and hate towards polarizing brands. It is therefore surprising to find only a weak support for the moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationships between brand uniqueness, association with important issues, ideological compatibility/incompatibility and sense of community and brand polarization and the lack of support of the moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationship between brand strength and brand polarization.

One of the explanations for these mixed results might be the presence of three different product categories in the quantitative study. Rivalry appears to be more relevant in the football teams product category (Benkwitz & Molnar, 2012; Dalakas et al., 2015), while its role in a product category like music artists is not as clear. Another explanation could be that, in certain occasions, consumers might centre on the brand and other like- and opposite-minded consumers for developing passionate emotions towards it, independently of the existence of a recognisable opponent. Future research should further estimate the moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationships between brand polarization and its drivers by focusing on a single product category.

10.2.3 RQ3: What are the attitudinal and behavioural outcomes of the brand polarization phenomenon?

The third research question concerned the outcomes of the brand polarization phenomenon. Although existent research has covered possible actions to enhance the

relationship with the lovers while dealing with the haters of a polarizing brand (Luo et al., 2013a), researchers have not been concerned about consumers' attitudes and behaviours that result from brand polarization. The political science literature on polarization presents positive and negative consequences of the concept (e.g. Abramowitz & Stone, 2006; Esteban & Schneider, 2008; Layman et al., 2006). Furthermore, attitudinal and behavioural outcomes of brand love (e.g. Albert et al., 2009; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012) and brand hate (e.g. Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017; Romani et al., 2012; Zarantonello et al., 2016) are also found. However, a gap is observed regarding the specific outcomes of brand polarization.

To answer RQ3 similarly two studies were employed – a qualitative study (exploratory stage) and a quantitative study (confirmatory stage). The findings of the semi-structured interviews have shown seven possible outcomes of brand polarization: complimenting/complaining, brand loyalty/disloyalty, using pro/anti-brand merchandise, participation in a brand/anti-brand community, forgiveness/retaliation behaviours, positive/negative WoM and defending/attacking the brand. These seven outcomes were further analysed in relation to the literature of polarization, brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate and added in the conceptual model discussed in Chapter 6. In the quantitative study, the answer to RQ3 involved a set of hypotheses ($H_{10} - H_{16}$) proposed in the conceptual model and consequently tested in the empirical model discussed in Chapter 9. The discussion below addresses both the qualitative and quantitative findings and compares them to the evidence from existing research. Specifically, in line with RQ3, results of hypothesis testing confirm a significant and positive impact of brand polarization on complimenting/complaining, brand loyalty/disloyalty, using pro/anti-brand merchandise, participation in a brand/anti-brand community, forgiveness/retaliation behaviours, positive/negative WoM and defending/attacking the brand. The findings of hypothesis testing concerning the outcomes of brand polarization are summarised in Table 52.

Table 52 Results of hypothesis testing – outcomes of brand polarization

Outcomes of brand polarization		Result	
		Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)
H ₁₀	Brand polarization is positively related to complimenting/complaining.	Supported	Supported
H ₁₁	Brand polarization is positively related to brand loyalty/disloyalty.	Supported	Supported
H ₁₂	Brand polarization is positively related to using pro/anti-brand merchandise.	Supported	Supported
H ₁₃	Brand polarization is positively related to participation in a brand/anti-brand community.	Supported	Supported
H ₁₄	Brand polarization is positively related to forgiveness/retaliation behaviours.	Supported	Supported
H ₁₅	Brand polarization is positively related to positive/negative WoM.	Supported	Supported
H ₁₆	Brand polarization is positively related to defending/attacking the brand.	Supported	Supported

10.2.3.1 Brand polarization → complimenting/complaining

Complimenting or complaining responses targeted directly to the brand's representatives are driven by perceived satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a consumption event (Liu & McClure, 2001; Moliner Velázquez et al., 2010). Past empirical evidence links active engagement, which is comparable to complimenting behaviours, with passionate positive emotions towards the brand (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Sarkar & Sreejesh, 2014). Further, past research also presents complaining behaviours as a result of extreme negative feelings towards the brand (Romani et al., 2012; Zarantonello et al., 2016).

Results of the qualitative study provide tentative evidence that indicates a relationship between brand polarization and complimenting/complaining behaviours. The hypothesised positive relationship was confirmed in the analytical survey on both samples.

Findings hint that consumers approach the brand's representatives to compliment or complain about the polarizing brand as a result of brand polarization. This suggests that a brand's polarizing nature drives passionate supporters to compliment its representatives and passionate detractors to complain against them. The relationship between these two constructs can be explained by the fact that enthusiastic consumers are keen to express their feelings towards the polarizing brand, either positive or negative, to the people they

consider that can take action, such as the brand's representatives. Such behaviour could be relevant for brand managers, as it gives them the opportunity to improve. Future research should explore the nature of this relationship using different cultural contexts.

10.2.3.2 Brand polarization → brand loyalty/disloyalty

Behavioural brand loyalty is a well-documented practice for the lovers of a brand (e.g. Batra et al., 2012; Sarkar & Sreejesh, 2014). Polarization and rivalry usually mean that the individual identifies with a group that shares the same feelings, opinions and ideas. Feeling part of a respected, cohesive and distinct group results in enhanced behavioural loyalty (Berendt & Urich, 2016). Further, polarization drives individuals to adversely view and disconnect from the rejected brand and its followers (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). Previous research empirically demonstrates the link between brand loyalty and brand love (e.g. Alnawas & Altarifi, 2016; Fetscherin, 2014; Roy et al., 2016) and between patronage reduction/cessation and brand hate (Zarantonello et al., 2016).

The second hypothesis concerning the outcomes of brand polarization has been supported, thus confirming a positive relationship between brand polarization and behavioural brand loyalty/disloyalty. This research consequently provides a dual support for the influence of brand polarization on behavioural brand loyalty/disloyalty – through the results of the exploratory study and of the quantitative study.

Findings suggest that, in the positive and negative feelings extremes of brand polarization, behavioural loyalty and disloyalty are predictable outcomes of the phenomenon. Study results indicate that passionate positive and negative feelings towards a brand are linked with the act of purchasing it. Future studies might explore the relationship between brand polarization and other types of loyalty, such as cognitive, affective and conative (El-Manstrly & Harrison, 2013).

10.2.3.3 Brand polarization → using pro/anti-brand merchandise

Marketers use branded merchandise as a way to increase sales and enhance relationships with target consumers (Jones, 2016). Previous research links the use of branded articles of clothing and other personal items with the public demonstration of feelings towards a brand or activity (McClure et al., 2006). Devoted consumers are prone to express their convictions through the purchase and use of name-brand products (Chan & Wang, 2015).

The hypothesis concerning the positive relationship between brand polarization and using pro/anti-brand merchandise was confirmed in the quantitative study when tested on the two samples. It was therefore evidenced that consumers are willing to use pro- or anti-brand merchandise to express their feelings towards the polarizing brand as a result of extreme, passionate positive and negative feelings towards it. This means that consumers might publicly brand themselves as a self-expression mechanism when passionate emotions are involved. Future research could explore if this holds true for other product categories.

10.2.3.4 Brand polarization → participation in a brand/anti-brand community

The literature in the political science discipline identifies the formation of community among partisans as one of the outcomes of the polarization phenomenon (Lupu, 2015). Such community formation is useful to identify and support other partisans (Harrison, 2016; Wronski, 2016) and to disengage and show hostility towards supporters of the opposite party (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Lelkes, 2016).

Findings validate the positive impact of brand polarization on participation in a brand/anti-brand community. The results of hypothesis testing support this relationship on the calibration and validation samples.

It is then concluded that participation in a community of consumers who share beliefs towards a brand is a possible outcome of extreme positive and negative feelings towards it. Such extreme feelings motivate the individuals' level of engagement with a brand community of like-minded consumers. This is in the same line with previous research that recognises that brand community behaviours involve extreme positive (pro-brand) and extreme negative (anti-brand) sentiments towards the focal brand (Wong et al., 2018).

10.2.3.5 Brand polarization → forgiveness/retaliation behaviours

Strongly engaged consumers are willing to forgive any wrongdoing by the preferred brand (Wallace et al., 2014) and to punish a disliked brand and make it pay for the damages it has caused (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006, 2008; Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017). Extreme partisan identity can lead to hostility (Wronski, 2016), and it sometimes translates in desire to harm and incivility actions (Dixit & Weibull, 2007).

Quantitative results provide support to the positive relationship between brand polarization and forgiveness/retaliation behaviours in the two samples. This suggests that extreme,

passionate feelings towards a polarizing brand motivates consumers' willingness to forgive it or to retaliate against it in the event of the brand's misbehaviour. This finding supports previous research that has discussed separately the incidence of brand love on brand forgiveness (Hegner, Fenko, et al., 2017) and of brand hate on brand retaliation (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017). Future research could explore how far this willingness to forgive or to retaliate against the polarizing brand can go, considering the type or the frequency of the misbehaviour.

10.2.3.6 Brand polarization → positive/negative WoM

A consumer who is in love with a brand is more likely to tell other people about his or her positive experiences with it (Albert et al., 2013). Activism, understood as trying to influence other people's vote, is considered an outcome of polarization in the political science literature (Mason, 2015). On the other hand, consumers intend to hurt the brand's reputation by sharing the negative experience with other people, and hope to make them reconsider their relationship with the brand (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006). Activists are a force behind polarization that constitute an important structure that supports ideologically extreme positions, spreading the word on the advantages of the own party's policy positions and the disadvantages of the opposing party's policy positions (Layman et al., 2006).

The hypothesis concerning the positive relationship between brand polarization and positive/negative WoM was confirmed in the quantitative study when tested on the calibration and validation samples. These results imply that sharing with others the constructive and/or the adverse feelings towards the polarizing brand is likely to be a behavioural result of passionate positive and negative feelings towards it.

The findings support past research that links positive WoM as one of the consequences of brand love (e.g. Karjaluoto et al., 2016; Maisam & Mahsa, 2016; Wallace et al., 2014). Furthermore, the relationship between negative WoM as an outcome of brand hate can also be found in the literature (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017; Romani et al., 2012; Zarantonello et al., 2016). Strong positive and negative emotions towards a polarizing brand derive in the willingness to spread positive or negative information about it. If this is consistent independently of the product category or the cultural context could be an interesting avenue for future research.

10.2.3.7 Brand polarization → defending/attacking the brand

The political science literature indicates that activism, or vigorously defending the supported party or candidate, is one of the outcomes of the polarization phenomenon (Abramowitz & Stone, 2006; Mason, 2015). Additionally, in the same literature is argued that polarization can derive in incivility (Dixit & Weibull, 2007) or in violence, riots and demonstrations against the opposite party or candidate (e.g. Esteban & Schneider, 2008; Ezrow et al., 2014; McDoom, 2012).

Qualitative and quantitative findings uncovered the positive relationship between brand polarization and defending and/or attacking the polarizing brand. Passionate positive and negative feelings motivate consumers to advocate for or to boycott the polarizing brand. This supports past research that states that strong positive feelings like brand love motivate consumers to exhibit advocacy behaviours such as recommending and defending the brand (Parrott et al., 2015). These consumers are also willing to boycott a disliked brand when strong negative emotions are involved (Shin & Yoon, 2018). These behavioural reactions should be further explored considering different cultural dimensions.

10.3 Additional findings**10.3.1 Measure development**

The current study has also developed new measures for three constructs included in the conceptual model for which suitable scales were not identified in the available literature, including association with important issues (driver of brand polarization), using pro/anti-brand merchandise (outcome of brand polarization) and perceptions of rivalry intensity (moderator between brand polarization and its drivers). Results of the psychometric assessment of the scales have confirmed that all of the new measures are valid and reliable.

Association with important issues, defined as linking the brand with aspects considered relevant by consumers (Wojcieszak & Price, 2010), was measured with four items. The use of pro- or anti-brand merchandise (the brand's logo products) as a way to express the feelings towards the polarizing brand was measured with four items as well. Lastly, perceptions of rivalry intensity, conceptualised as consumers' perceived level of antagonism between a brand and its main competitor (Berendt & Uhrich, 2016), was also measured with four items.

As explained in section 10.2.2.5, association with important issues was confirmed to be a strong predictor of brand polarization. Further, using pro/anti-brand merchandise proved to be a significant outcome of the phenomenon, as described in section 10.2.3.3. Additionally, as depicted in section 10.2.2.8, the moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity was partially supported in the relationship between brand polarization and some of its drivers. The development of scales to measure these three constructs was key for successfully testing the conceptual model related to the drivers, outcomes and moderators of the brand polarization phenomenon. It also offers the potential to further explore how these three constructs interact with other marketing constructs.

10.3.2 Additional relationships

Following the respecification of the original structural model (discussed in Chapter 9), six additional relationships between several research constructs were established. These include positive relationships between perceived quality and brand loyalty/disloyalty, perceived quality and forgiveness/retaliation behaviours, perceived quality and defending/attacking the brand, ideological compatibility/incompatibility and defending/attacking the brand, sense of community and participation in a brand/anti-brand community, and forgiveness/retaliation behaviours and defending/attacking the brand. All of the relationships are significant at $p < 0.05$ in both samples. The additional results based on the model modification process are presented in Table 53 and explained in the following sections.

Table 53 Additional causal relationships

Relationship	Effect	
	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)
Perceived quality → Brand loyalty/disloyalty	Positive	Positive
Perceived quality → Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours	Positive	Positive
Perceived quality → Defending/attacking the brand	Positive	Positive
Ideological compatibility/incompatibility → Defending/attacking the brand	Positive	Positive
Sense of community → Participation in a brand/anti-brand community	Positive	Positive
Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours → Defending/attacking the brand	Positive	Positive

10.3.2.1 Perceived quality → Brand loyalty/disloyalty

High perceived quality has a significant influence on brand loyalty, both directly and indirectly through satisfaction (Alhaddad, 2015; Hallak et al., 2018). For instance, Erdoğan & Budeyri-Turan (2012) confirm this relationship in the Turkish ready-to-wear fashion sector. Further, Nguyen et al. (2011) also tested the relationship in emerging markets such as Thailand and Vietnam. However, research covering the relationship between low perceived quality and brand disloyalty is scarce.

Results of model modification support the positive relationship between perceived quality and brand loyalty/disloyalty. This relationship is confirmed when estimated on two separate sub-samples. This finding suggests that a high perceived quality enhances behavioural loyalty and a low perceived quality increases behavioural disloyalty, covering both extremes of the spectrum.

It can thus be derived from this study that not only high levels of perceived quality motivate brand loyalty behaviours, but also a low perceived quality drives consumer to behavioural brand disloyalty. Future research could further explore this relationship comparing different cultural contexts and focusing on the negative side (low perceived quality and behavioural brand disloyalty), where little has been researched.

10.3.2.2 Perceived quality → Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours

It can be found in the literature a positive relationship between perceived quality and perceived value and between perceived value and brand love (Bairrada et al., 2018). Brand love is positively related to brand forgiveness (Hegner, Fenko, et al., 2017; Heinrich et al., 2012). Also, a positive relationship has been empirically tested between perceived quality and brand trust (Bao et al., 2011; Das, 2016; Konuk, 2018) and between perceived quality and satisfaction (Chen & Chang, 2013; Hameed, 2013). Relationship quality, which includes trust, satisfaction and commitment (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008) has been linked with desire for retaliation (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006) and anti-brand actions (Johnson et al., 2011).

Following the results of the modification indices in the initial structural model, the relationship between perceived quality and forgiveness/retaliation behaviours was examined in the modified model. Results of the final model estimation evidence a

significant and positive relationship between perceived quality and forgiveness/retaliation behaviours when tested on two samples.

Given that the relationship between perceived quality and forgiveness/retaliation behaviours was derived from the modification of the initial structural model, rather than from the existing theory, results should be evaluated with caution. Nonetheless, the explanation of this finding may relate to the nature of the involved constructs. This study confirms the direct and positive relationship between high perceived quality and the willingness to forgive the brand and low perceived quality and the desire to retaliate against the brand. Future investigation may confirm this link using alternative contexts.

10.3.2.3 Perceived quality → Defending/attacking the brand

In the literature, perceived quality is related to brand advocacy through self-brand connection (Kemp et al., 2012). Further, and also through self-brand connection, perceived quality is linked to brand aggression and to the desire to harm a disliked brand (Kemp et al., 2012; Marticotte et al., 2016).

A positive and significant relationship between perceived quality and defending/attacking the brand was uncovered by the results of the modified model. This relationship is supported when estimated on both samples. It can be interpreted from this finding that the perceived level of quality (high or low) drives consumers to be willing to advocate for or to charge against the polarizing brand. This relationship could be explained by consumers' expectations about a brand. When the quality of the brand meets or exceeds such expectations, consumers might be willing to defend it. On the contrary, if the brand performs lower than expected, consumers could take direct actions against it. The link between perceived quality and defending/attacking the brand merits further investigation recruiting consumers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

10.3.2.4 Ideological compatibility/incompatibility → Defending/attacking the brand

The literature reveals that perceived high corporate social responsibility leads to a high perceived product social responsibility, which in turn leads to a positive product evaluation and the willingness to defend it (Brown & Dacin, 1997). Regarding the opposite pole of the spectrum, ideological incompatibility is positively related to brand hate (Hegner, Fetscherin, et al., 2017) and brand hate is positively related to anti-brand actions like protest

(Zarantonello et al., 2016). Further, Romani et al. (2013) state that corporate misconduct leads to punitive actions.

The relationship between ideological compatibility/incompatibility and defending/attacking the brand was also introduced as a means to improve the structural model. The results of model estimation on the two sub-samples demonstrate that this relationship is significant and positive. This result can be interpreted like this: the higher the ideological compatibility between consumers and the polarizing brand, the more prone they are to defend it. On the other hand, if consumers are ideologically incompatible with the polarizing brand's actions, they will be willing to attack it.

The contribution of this finding to existing literature is twofold. First, it directly links the constructs ideological compatibility/incompatibility and defending/attacking the brand. Second, the relationship simultaneously considers the positive and negative poles of the spectrum. This finding offers an interesting avenue for further researching the relationship between these two constructs considering other contexts.

10.3.2.5 Sense of community → Participation in a brand/anti-brand community

The literature links community engagement, community participation intentions and community participation behaviour (Algesheimer et al., 2005). Further, Swimberghe et al. (2018) provide support for the link between psychological sense of brand community and willingness to participate in brand community events. However, little evidence is found regarding the relationship between sense of community and participation in an anti-brand community.

Results of the modified structural model confirm a positive and significant relationship between sense of community and participation in a brand/anti-brand community when tested on the two samples. It is then evidenced that a high sense of community drives consumers to participate in community activities in favour of the loved brand or against the hated brand. This study adds to current literature by directly linking sense of community and participation in a community either supporting the loved brand and/or opposing to the hated brand, the latter being little researched.

10.3.2.6 Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours → Defending/attacking the brand

Available literature linking forgiveness/retaliation behaviours and defending/attacking the brand is scarce. Recent research connects forgiveness with brand revenge, confirming that

greater forgiveness leads to reduced brand revenge (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019). In their work, Grégoire & Fisher (2006) provide support for the relationship between desire for retaliation and anti-brand actions not specifically related to attacking the brand but to negative WoM, complaining and reduced patronage.

The relationship between forgiveness/retaliation behaviours and defending/attacking the brand was included to enhance the structural model. When estimated on both samples, results indicate that the relationship between these two constructs is significant and positive. This means that, when considering polarizing brands, forgiveness is associated with brand advocacy and retaliation relates to brand boycott.

It is supported in this study that those consumers capable to forgive are also willing to defend the loved brand. On the other hand, desire for retaliation drives consumers to attack and boycott the polarizing brand. Future research could explore this relationship considering other product categories and/or additional cultural dimensions.

10.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the findings in the light of the three research questions stated at the beginning of this research. The discussion has covered the results of both the qualitative and quantitative study, as they relate to the existing literature. The correspondence and deviations from the existing research have been explained.

In line with RQ1, the study has confirmed that brand polarization is a four-dimensional construct, which includes brand passion, self-brand benchmarking, intra-group identification, and inter-group dissociation. A key contribution of the study is a new measurement scale for brand polarization that reflects the specifics of the phenomenon.

With regards to the RQ2, the qualitative study has identified eight drivers of brand polarization. Albeit, in the quantitative study one of the brand polarization drivers was dropped and five of the drivers were confirmed as having a positive impact on the phenomenon. As such, answering the RQ2, the findings suggest that the brand polarization phenomenon is driven by brand strength, brand uniqueness, association with important issues, ideological compatibility/incompatibility and sense of community. New measures for a driver of brand polarization (association with important issues) and for a moderator in

the relationship between brand polarization and its drivers (perceptions of rivalry intensity) were also developed in the current research.

In line with RQ3, brand polarization has a significant positive effect on seven outcome variables – complimenting/complaining, brand loyalty/disloyalty, using pro/anti-brand merchandise, participation in a brand/anti-brand community, forgiveness/retaliation behaviours, positive/negative WoM and defending/attacking the brand. Findings of the qualitative study suggested these outcome variables and the quantitative study further confirmed the relationships. One of the contribution of the research is the development of a scale to measure one of the outcomes of brand polarization (using pro/anti-brand merchandise).

Finally, the chapter discussed six additional relationships derived from the modification of the original structural model. These include positive relationships between perceived quality and brand loyalty/disloyalty, perceived quality and forgiveness/retaliation behaviours, perceived quality and defending/attacking the brand, ideological compatibility/incompatibility and defending/attacking the brand, sense of community and participation in a brand/anti-brand community, and forgiveness/retaliation behaviours and defending/attacking the brand.

Chapter 11 Conclusion

11.1 Introduction

This final chapter outlines the key contributions of the current research, its limitations, and future research avenues. The chapter is structured as follows: first, an overview of the research gaps, research methods and findings is displayed. Then, the key theoretical contributions are presented. This is followed by the overview of the methodological contributions. Next, the managerial implications and recommendations for marketing practice are presented. Finally, the chapter addresses the existing limitations of the current research. Future research directions are also outlined.

11.2 The study

This study aimed to better understand the underdeveloped concept of brand polarization. As the academic literature on brand polarization seems to be relatively scarce, the concept needed to be formally conceptualized and an instrument to measure it had to be developed. Further, the study addressed the drivers and outcomes of the brand polarization phenomenon.

Initially, the literature of five concepts related to brand polarization (polarization in political science, polarization in social psychology, brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate) was systematically reviewed. Then, a sequential mixed-methods research design with a qualitative (semi-structured interviews) and a quantitative (surveys) study was adopted to answer the three research questions.

Findings of the study provide several contributions to the consumer-brand relationship literature regarding the brand polarization phenomenon. These concern the conception of brand polarization and its dimensionality and the identification of five drivers, one moderator in the relationships between brand polarization and four of its drivers and seven outcomes of the phenomenon. The study also establishes additional aspects related to the nature of the phenomenon. Additionally, it makes several methodological contributions, associated with the development of a new valid and reliable measurement scale for brand polarization to capture the specifics of the phenomenon, and the advancement of measures for three additional constructs. Findings from this research also illustrate the importance of

brand polarization for the brands and provide several implications for the marketing practice.

11.3 Theoretical contributions

The study makes several theoretical contributions to consumer-brand relationship literature (Fournier, 1998) and key headway concerns the development and conceptualisation of a new concept: brand polarization. To the researcher's best knowledge, this is the first study to investigate the dimensionality, drivers and outcomes of the brand polarization phenomenon. Furthermore, this research developed a new measurement for brand polarization following extensive procedures. Additionally, measures for three constructs included in the conceptual model for which suitable scales were not identified in the available literature were developed. All of the measures have undergone reliability and validity assessments and could be applied in future studies concerning brand polarization.

The first contribution of this research relates to the nature and conception of brand polarization. Previous research has primarily focused and analysed the concept of *polarizing brands* (Jayasimha & Billore, 2015; Luo et al., 2013a; Luo et al., 2013b; Monahan, 2017; Monahan et al., 2017), or *polarizing products* (Rozenkrants et al., 2017). Polarizing products are seen as "*products that some people like a great deal and other people dislike a great deal*" (Rozenkrants et al., 2017, p. 759) and operationalized as products with "*bimodal rating distributions*" (Rozenkrants et al., 2017, p. 759). Existing research using the term brand polarization has not clearly defined it, and previous studies have operationalized the concept as brand attitude (Mafael et al., 2016). This approach only partially addresses the theoretical domain of brand polarization and insufficiently exposes the complex nature of the phenomenon.

Through the analysis of the literatures on polarization in political science and social psychology and on closely-related concepts like brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate, this research extends previous findings and theoretically elaborates the concept. The present study advances a definition of brand polarization that describes it as *an affective and cognitive phenomenon where beliefs and emotions of a significant number of individual consumers induce a simultaneous move to the extremes involving passionate positive and negative feelings and convictions towards the brand, like-minded consumers, and opposite-minded consumers*. This definition reveals the affective and cognitive nature of

the brand polarization phenomenon, which involves passionate feelings and convictions towards the brand and encompasses the feelings and convictions for other consumers.

The combination of literature review, qualitative and quantitative data indicates the existence of four dimensions of brand polarization, including brand passion, self-brand benchmarking, intra-group identification and inter-group dissociation. The current conception elaborates brand passion as a psychological phenomenon constituted of excitation, infatuation, and obsession for a polarizing brand (Albert et al., 2013). Self-brand benchmarking is considered as the degree consumers compare their self-identity with the identity of the polarizing brand (Davvetas & Diamantopoulos, 2017). Intra-group identification refers to the extent to which an individual associates him or herself with people who share the same feelings for the polarizing brand (Dalakas et al., 2015). Lastly, inter-group dissociation relates to the extent to which an individual detaches him or herself from people who have opposite feelings about the polarizing brand (Dalakas et al., 2015). Unlike most existing research (e.g. Becker & Tausch, 2014; Davvetas & Diamantopoulos, 2017; Hsu et al., 2015), the dimensions of brand polarization identified in this study include simultaneously the extreme positive and negative poles of the consumer-brand relationship spectrum. This facilitates the measurement of the concept considering the opposite extremes of consumers' feelings towards a brand.

Another theoretical contribution concerns the operationalisation of the focal construct: brand polarization. Due to the lack of past research focusing on brand polarization, and following the results of the qualitative study, it has become evident that existing measures would not fully capture the specifics of the research setting. This is why the creation of a dedicated scale to measure the focal concept of the study was necessary and the new measures for brand polarization were developed. Results of the EFA support the multidimensionality of brand polarization with the items fitting perfectly on each respectful dimension. Furthermore, the newly developed measures have satisfied the face, content, convergent and discriminant validity tests, as well as internal consistency tests, hence confirming their validity and reliability. The development of new measures for brand polarization is especially relevant because it has been recognised that not only positivity, but also negativity towards brands needs to be managed (Azer & Alexander, 2018; Veloutsou & Guzmán, 2017). In providing a valid and reliable measurement for brand

polarization, this study enables academics and practitioners to consider both extremes of the consumer-brand relationship valence.

Another core contribution of this research is the identification of key factors that drive the brand polarization phenomenon. These factors are divided in product-related (product involvement), brand-related (brand strength, brand uniqueness, perceived quality and association with important issues), personal-related (ideological compatibility/incompatibility), and group-related (sense of community) drivers. After the analysis of the quantitative data, five of the seven identified drivers of brand polarization (brand strength, brand uniqueness, association with important issues, ideological compatibility/incompatibility and sense of community) were confirmed to have a significant and positive relationship with the phenomenon.

The results of the quantitative study further evidence that brand-related drivers play the most important role inducing the development of brand polarization. Specifically, among all the identified drivers of brand polarization, the three supported brand-related antecedents (association with important issues, brand strength and brand uniqueness) seemed to have the strongest positive effects. This illustrates that factors related to the brand itself tend to cause the appearance of the brand polarization phenomenon to a greater extent than personal-related or group-related factors. The emphasis on the brand itself, rather than product-, person- and group-related factors advances past studies that view the phenomenon with a product focus (Rozenkrants et al., 2017) or as a matter of extremization of attitudes (Mafael et al., 2016).

Regarding the moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationships between brand polarization and its drivers, the quantitative data results showed an inconclusive support of this moderation in the relationships between brand polarization and four of its antecedents. That is, the findings partially supported that perceptions of rivalry intensity enhances the relationships between brand uniqueness, association with important issues, ideological compatibility/incompatibility and sense of community and brand polarization when tested on two sub-samples. Although brand strength was confirmed as a driver of brand polarization, the results of the quantitative study failed to provide support to the moderating role of perceptions of rivalry intensity in the relationship between this driver and brand polarization. These results suggest that further research may be needed to evidence that the relationships between brand polarization and four of its drivers (brand

uniqueness, association with important issues, ideological compatibility/incompatibility and sense of community) may be enhanced when the perceived intensity of the rivalry between the focal polarizing brand and its main competitor is high. It is important to investigate this further because the rivalry literature confirms that the intensity of the competition relates to passionate, polarizing behaviours towards the focal brand and other like-minded and opposite-minded consumers (Dalakas et al., 2015; Havard et al., 2016; Hickman & Ward, 2013).

Further theoretical contribution concerns outcomes of brand polarization. The current study identifies several key brand relationship outcomes of the phenomenon. Such consequences are divided in three groups: approach the brand (complimenting/complaining), avoid/follow the brand (brand loyalty/disloyalty, using pro/anti-brand merchandise and participation in a brand/anti-brand community), and act (forgiveness/retaliation behaviours, positive/negative WoM and defending/attacking the brand). More specifically, this study found that the strongest outcome of brand polarization is positive/negative WoM, which belongs to the 'act' group of factors. This finding is in line with previous literature that links positive WoM as a consequence of brand love (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Fetscherin, 2014) and negative WoM as an outcome of brand hate (Zarantonello et al., 2016). The second and third strongest outcomes of brand polarization belong to the 'avoid/follow the brand' category, and are, respectively, participation in a brand/anti-brand community and using pro/anti-brand merchandise. The former finds support in the political science literature, where it is stated that the formation of community among partisans is one of the outcomes of political polarization (Lupu, 2015; Wronski, 2016). Using pro/anti-brand merchandise as an outcome of brand polarization is supported by previous research that links the use of branded articles of clothing and other personal items with the public demonstration of feelings towards a brand or activity (McClure et al., 2006).

Another important theoretical contribution of this study concerns the development of measurement scales for three constructs included in the conceptual model for which existing suitable scales could not be identified in the available literature. Insights from the qualitative study have allowed developing valid and reliable measures that capture the essence of these constructs. These variables included association with important issues (driver of brand polarization), using pro/anti-brand merchandise (outcome of brand

polarization) and perceptions of rivalry intensity (moderator between brand polarization and its drivers).

Lastly, theoretical contribution concerns additional relationships between constructs included in the final conceptual model. The quantitative data results supported six additional relationships between several research constructs. Specifically, these include positive relationships between perceived quality and brand loyalty/disloyalty, perceived quality and forgiveness/retaliation behaviours, perceived quality and defending/attacking the brand, ideological compatibility/incompatibility and defending/attacking the brand, sense of community and participation in a brand/anti-brand community, and forgiveness/retaliation behaviours and defending/attacking the brand. The strongest of these six additional relationships is the link between perceived quality and brand loyalty/disloyalty. This finding evidences that a high perceived quality enhances behavioural loyalty and a low perceived quality increases behavioural disloyalty. Support for the link between high perceived quality and brand loyalty can be found in the available literature (e.g. Erdoğan & Budeyri-Turan, 2012; Hallak et al., 2018). However, little is found on the relationship between low perceived quality and brand disloyalty.

11.4 Methodological contributions

The current study also provides some methodological contributions, associated with the control of biased and dishonest responses and with the improvement of the validity and reliability of the results.

The collection of the quantitative data in two separate phases can be considered a methodological contribution of this study. One concern regarding the data collected through crowdsourcing platforms like ProA is how to control dishonest respondents (Ford, 2017). Specifically, crowdsourcing data posits the issue of 'cheaters' (Kees et al., 2017b). 'Cheaters' are intentionally dishonest respondents who try to maximise their opportunity for participation in a study (Smith et al., 2016). The two phases of data collection allow to control the 'cheaters', as participants in the first phase were not aware of the second phase of the survey or which answers could be considered 'correct'. Only those respondents who answered affirmatively to at least one of the questions '*Is there a [selected product category] brand you love and you know other people hate?*' or '*Is there a [selected product category] brand you hate and you know other people love?*', included in the first phase,

were considered to take part in the second phase of the questionnaire. This helped to reduce bias and control for dishonest answers. The additional step introduced to the quantitative study helps to enhance the quality of the samples for crowdsourcing platforms, as dishonest answers from such participants are a major issue for researchers (Difallah et al., 2012).

Another methodological contribution is the holistic approach to study the brand polarization phenomenon. To answer the research questions, several theoretical paths (systematic review of the literature of five different disciplines) and different methods (semi-structured interviews, meetings with branding experts, expert panel and quantitative surveys in two phases) were used. This complex, multi-method approach improves the validity and reliability of the results.

11.5 Managerial implications

This research offers some implications for the marketing practice. Understanding the nature of brand polarization, its drivers and its outcomes can be advantageous for marketing and brand managers. Brand polarization can harm but may also benefit companies. It can bring negative consequences like making enemies and creating tension, as observed for political candidates (Rogowski & Sutherland, 2016) and football teams (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2014). Research suggests that the negative views for a popular brand can be used to diagnose emerging cultural changes and gain insights on how to avoid undesired outcomes (Thompson et al., 2006). However, brand polarization can also convey advantages. Brands could benefit from having an identified group of lovers and an identified group of haters, as it would allow them to have a better focus when developing and implementing the brand's marketing strategies and tactics.

Polarization is sometimes used intentionally in the development of profitable and productive brand differentiation and brand positioning strategies, as in the case of Marmite and Strongbow (Luo et al., 2013a). Brand strategies that rely on polarization opportunistically exploit this clear identity concerning when, where, why, and what the brand stands for. Such strategies identify the traits and the best content that their preferred target market values, and others find odd, uninteresting or even repelling, and make them their defining brand element as points of difference of the brand. Polarizing brands are not afraid to cause controversy and do not try to appeal to everyone. Their stand helps them position

themselves to attract their target market and make an impact and, on certain occasions, they are even willing to potentially lose sales to stay true to their cause. The fact that they are distinct can help them develop a very strong emotional branding strategy and convince consumers that the brand plays a proactive role in their lives (Thompson et al., 2006). This allows them to grow, diversify and expand into new markets. However, polarization must be used carefully. When polarization goes too far or provokes bad taste it is likely to offend people and may put brands a step back by losing brand loyalty.

Brand polarization can be advantageous in the design and application of more effective marketing campaigns of the brand with its followers. Knowing that not everybody will like a brand allows managers to undertake more adventurous marketing communication decisions that might take the form of openly acknowledging the coexistence of lovers and haters of the brand (Monahan et al., 2017). Cultivating the polarizing nature of the brand can extend beyond marketing communications. Managers should also focus on the points of difference and support them when making any brand-related decisions, knowing that these exact points will evoke in different consumers positive and negative sentiments. Having a group of declared haters can be useful to strengthen the bonds with the group of lovers, as the existence of an out-group would be a unifying factor of the supporters of the brand. This is the case for Coke and Pepsi, the world's two most popular cola brands (Muniz & Hamer, 2001). Brand polarization is also a very relevant base for the development of relationship marketing campaigns.

This research identifies several key factors that motivate the appearance of the brand polarization phenomenon. Specifically, it shows that brand-related drivers are the strongest predictors of brand polarization, being personal-related and group-related factors also important. Managers interested on encouraging the development of brand polarization should focus on enhancing the brand's strength and uniqueness and the association of the brand with issues considered important by consumers. Also, they should encourage the development of consumers' sense of community in support of the loved brand or against its main rival. In an era of social networking, where interaction between consumers through WoM and belonging to brand communities is more spread than ever, brand polarization helps brands to gain attention.

Managers of polarizing brands have the responsibility to clearly support the brand's devoted consumers. The strong base of opposers is always there, ready to criticize them.

If they do not deliver to the expectations of the supporters in any front, then it is likely to see negative ratings start to emerge from all the consumer base. The need for consistency and the support of the relevance of the brand's positioning from the followers is key for securing the strength and the further growth of the polarizing brand. Haters push the management team to keep constantly improving to satisfy the group of lovers. In a world of clutter, consumers are not likely to pay attention to things that are ordinary and indifferent. The last effect a brand can afford to create is indifference and, therefore, marketers must try to avoid having brands that are not memorable. Instead, the creation of great brands that make segments of people delighted should be the goal of any marketer. The fact that polarizing brands make other segments unhappy should not be a primary concern for marketers. The worst case is to incite no passionate reactions at all, and that happens when companies try to make everyone happy.

11.6 Limitations and future research directions

As an initial effort aimed at the understanding of the nature, drivers and outcomes of the brand polarization phenomenon, this research acknowledges several limitations which could be addressed in future studies. One limitation is associated with the sampling approach used in the quantitative phase of this research. Specifically, the survey uses convenience sampling of consumers to collect the quantitative data by means of the crowdworking platform Prolific Academic (ProA). Despite the growing acceptance of ProA as a reliable source of data collection (e.g. Antoun et al., 2016; Peer et al., 2017), the adoption of non-probability sampling reduces the generalisability of the findings. Future research should replicate this study in a naturalistic setting.

Further, this study has limitations pertaining to the type of data collected. Using predominantly quantitative data focused on brand polarization, the research design inherently has aimed to capture complex phenomena through numbers. As such, and despite a supportive qualitative phase, it has necessarily adopted a reductionist approach, one that might not capture the full depth of the phenomena under investigation. A way to gain depth into the brand polarization phenomenon would be to complement this study's data with qualitative approaches and follow-up with more in-depth interviews. In-depth ethnographies of communities over time are one other possible direction (Reeves et al., 2008).

Additionally, all the hypotheses were tested based on a cross-sectional design. The data were collected at one point in time, and therefore it is impossible to have an indication of the sequence of events. In other words, the study relies on the retrospection of respondents to capture the past status of brand polarization. These reports tend to ignore the dynamic nature of consumer-brand relationships (da Silveira et al., 2013; Lam et al., 2013), and directions of causality are hugely overlooked because causal relationships between two constructs often take time to appear, which is problematic from a logical perspective. To tackle causality more explicitly, follow-up studies could be carried out and longitudinal data collected to fully understand the causal relationships between brand polarization, its antecedents, and outcomes

Future research should examine the perceptions of different actors and actors with different profiles towards brand polarization. Most existing research approaches polarization from the consumer perspective. The managerial perspective, the reasons behind the choice to adopt such a positioning strategy or to work around the unintentional brand polarization phenomenon is largely missing. Given that polarization has effects in other associated entities, such as sponsors, more research is needed on the effect of polarization on such entities. Since competition and conflict are acceptable to a different extent from specific cultures, examining the brand polarization phenomenon from the consumer perspective in different cultural groups could provide useful insights.

It is also important to recall that, whereas qualitative sample included brands from many different product categories, the quantitative phase focused only on three categories: football teams, airlines and music artists. Future research should assess the relationships between the identified drivers, brand polarization and its outcomes considering a broader range of product categories, with a further possibility of a comparison study.

A final possibility to extend this work further is to reconsider the conceptual frame. The conceptual model presented here builds on key studies in the polarization, brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate literatures to generate a conceptual framework. Necessarily, the number of antecedents is small and finite and other antecedents and outcomes of brand polarization may need to be explored in future research. Conceptual research in brand rivalry, brand love and brand hate has highlighted an overabundance of possible connections between the two extreme ends of brand polarization and other relational and social constructs. As empirical research that aims to validate these relationships is only

slowly emerging, consumer-brand relationship scholars should seek to further validate the connections that link brand polarization to other constructs.

Appendices

Appendix A Data collection methods

Method	Purpose	Sample	Timeframe
Semi-structured interviews	Develop a new brand polarization scale. Finalise the conceptual model	22 lovers and haters of polarizing brands	October 2017 – January 2018
Survey pilot test	Test respondents' understanding of the questions. Preliminary evaluate the internal consistency of the new brand polarization measures	60 completed surveys, lovers and haters of polarizing brands in 3 product categories	January – March 2019
Main data collection	Test the conceptual model	1,238 completed surveys, lovers and haters of polarizing brands in 3 product categories (recruited through ProA)	March – April 2019

Appendix B Semi-structured interview guide

1. Can you think about brands for which you have strong positive feelings and you know other people strongly dislike?
2. Can you think about brands for which you have strong negative feelings and you know other people strongly like?
3. Can you think about brands for which you have neutral feelings but you know that have passionate followers and detractors at the same time?
4. Can you think about industries or sectors with strong passionate followers and detractors at the same time?

Regarding the brands for which you have strong positive feelings:

5. Can you tell me a few things about the brand?
6. How would you describe the brand?
7. Why do you feel the way you do about the brand?
8. Could you please tell me what do you do or what are you willing to do to support the brand?
9. Please tell me how do you react if the brand does not perform well
10. Would you say that the brand has an “enemy” brand? Why?
11. Which do you think are the characteristics of the followers of the brand?
12. Which do you think are the characteristics of the people who dislike the brand?
13. Why do you think that other people feel the same way you do about the brand?
14. How do you feel about the people that feel the same way you do about the brand?
15. Why do you think that other people feel the opposite way you do about the brand?
16. How do you feel about the people that feel the opposite way you do about the brand?

Regarding the brands for which you have strong negative feelings:

17. Can you tell me a few things about the brand?
18. How would you describe the brand?
19. Why do you feel the way you do about the brand?
20. Could you please tell me in what actions are traduced the strong negative feelings you have towards the brand?
21. Please tell me how do you react if the brand performs well
22. Please tell me how do you react if the brand does not perform well

23. Which do you think are the characteristics of the followers of the brand?
24. Which do you think are the characteristics of the people who dislike the brand?
25. Would you please tell me what do you do to be differentiated from the supporters of the brand?
26. Could you please tell me which common characteristics do you think these brands have to cause these feelings and behaviours?
27. Personal information

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Appendix C

Example of thematic analysis

Theme	Sub-theme	Quote
Dimensions of brand polarization	Passionate and extreme positive and negative feelings	"...it is about the feelings that can evolve in a person who likes Harry Potter" (M4, 28)
		"I hate Mourinho... His reputation is so shattered in my mind... but some people absolutely love him" (F2, 26)
		"I suppose the Tottenham would be very much against it and will have quite deep, you know, deep passions towards or against them" (M8, 21)
		"So, a shop that I absolutely loathe is Tesco, and I know a lot of people who love Tesco and shop in Tesco and do online shopping from Tesco and they say Tesco is amazing. I just think it's a dreadful shop" (F7, 74)
	Self-brand benchmarking	"So, I find the designs, the colours, the ranges of things that they provide, even the accessories I like the style much more, it's more me rather than the British brands" (F2, 26)
		"I think that you're kind of boasting that you have the money to pay for this brand and it kind of comes with a status symbol that I am this mould. Like I attribute these qualities so it's kind of just further draw attention to yourself" (F6, 23)
		"...they have worked strong on developing a brand that people can identify with... if you can identify yourself with the brand or you can't identify yourself with the brand you will create this strong positive or negative feelings towards this brand... it's a matter of identification and not only with the brand as just the logo or something like that but also the history, the story that is behind that brand" (M4, 28)
		"...personality related, because I like different styles and different things. And I also like... well, Scottish culture and colourful things, and this is what this brand actually represents" (F3, 26)
		"So that's a brand I associate myself with, if you like" (M6, 61)
	Intra-group identification	"I think that for a brand to take off it has to connect, people need to feel they have a connection to the brand, like a sense of personal investment in there" (M8, 21)
		"...when you see someone else who has these positive feelings for that brand is pretty amazing because you feel like you're not alone... It's kind of like if I know that you're a follower of that brand, I kind of feel that you are my friend" (M4, 28)
		"[Other detractors of the hated brand are] Probably like me, where I don't have, like in a lot of situations I don't have a set thing... I think kind of someone more eclectic, more willing to try different things" (F4, 29)
	"In both cases I feel similar to them, I feel I'm a bit like them. So, there is a degree of similarity, and therefore I feel, you know, kind of they are like me, you know... I feel that they are people who look for my kind of things" (M10, 42)	

Theme	Sub-theme	Quote
		"I feel like myself among them... when you talk to somebody of those you feel like, 'oh they share the same ideas'" (F10, 32)
	Inter-group dissociation	"[Detractors of the loved brand are] mostly people with less analytical skills, critical skills... They have no urge, no mental capability and no willingness to correct the wrong-doings of people who came in the country and tried to play their part in the past" (M1, 31)
		"...sometimes [detractors of the loved brand] disrespect the people that consume Coca-Cola, they say we're unhealthy, we're going to be fat, so I kind of dislike people that talk badly or talk bad about one's product. I think they should just don't talk about the brand. If they don't like it, it's ok don't consume it, but if you criticize the brand, I don't like that" (M5, 39)
		"...the thing I don't like about them [hated brand] most is the loyalty behind it, is the people who love it. I just think that they are a bit stupid to queue for to pay a thousand pounds for a phone... I think that the kind of people that attract or are attracted to Apple are the kind of people that I don't want to, you know, be associated with" (M7, 22)
		"So, at home I went to the University of Kentucky. And our big rival is the Indiana Hoosiers. And so, we have this perception that their fans are certain ways. So, I think that kind of goes back to identity, like they are going to be loud and obnoxious and they're like out of control. I think there's a certain identity that comes with associating when you have certain brands" (F6, 23)
	Strong feelings for the achievement / misfortune of the brand	"...he will not be able to return [as] a Prime Minister now, our Supreme Court has banned him to run for election anymore... I was happy. Yeah, that shows that our Supreme Court is a strong institution" (M1, 31)
		"[If the hated brand does not perform well] you feel very strong, very passionate about your own brand. Gives you even more support than before. Yeah, it basically feels good... because it's the rival you don't want to see success" (M8, 21)
		"[If the hated brand does not perform well] I'm quite pleased with that" (M9, 39)
		"[If the hated brand does not perform well feels] Overjoyed, of course, because every time they lose, they're losing three points, so there's less chance for them" (F8, 68)

Appendix D Final survey, phase 1

Screening

1. Are you 18 years old or above?

- Yes → go to 'Welcome'
 No → go to disqualification message
-

Disqualification message

We are sorry but you must be 18 years old or above to answer this survey. Thank you for your interest anyway!

Welcome

You are invited to participate in a survey conducted by the University of Glasgow. In this study you will be asked about brands and brand categories you have strong feelings for. The survey should not take more than 4 minutes to complete. The study is anonymous and follows the University of Glasgow ethics. For more details please [click here](#). If you consent to take part in this study, understanding that the material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research, please click 'next'.

Knowledge of the product category

2. From the following product categories please choose the one you know more about:

- Football teams
 Airlines
 Music artists
-

Familiarity with the product category

On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much) answer the following questions for the selected product category

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am familiar with [selected product category]							
I am experienced with [selected product category]							
I am knowledgeable about [selected product category]							

Brands that you are passionate about

For the purpose of this research, [selected product category] are considered as brands. Please indicate the [selected product category]'s brands that you are passionate about.

Is there a [selected product category] brand you love?

- Yes
- No

If 'Yes':

Which is this brand?

Is there a [selected product category] brand you hate?

- Yes
- No

If 'Yes':

Which is this brand?

Is there a [selected product category] brand you love and you know other people hate?

- Yes
- No

If 'Yes':

Which is this brand?

Is there a [selected product category] brand you hate and you know other people love?

- Yes
- No

If 'Yes':

Which is this brand?

Demographics

3. What is your gender?

- Male Female

4. What is your age?

- 18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-75
Over 75

5. What is the highest qualification you have obtained?

- High school Technical / vocational training Professional qualification / diploma
 Undergraduate degree Postgraduate degree Other (please specify) _____

6. What is your employment status?

- Student Self-employed Working full-time Working part-time
Out of work but looking for a job Out of work and not looking for a job
Retired Other (please specify) _____

7. How many people are in your household? _____

8. What is the gross income level of your household?

- Under £10,000 £10,000 - £19,999 £20,000 - £29,999 £30,000 - £39,999
 £40,000 - £49,999 £50,000 - £59,999 £60,000 or over

9. Which country in the UK do you live in?

- England Scotland Wales Northern Ireland

Thank you

Your answers have been recorded. Thank you very much for completing this survey!

Appendix E Final survey, phase 2 (example for haters of football teams)

Welcome

You are invited to participate in a survey conducted by the University of Glasgow. In this study you will be asked about the football team brand you previously expressed to have strong feelings for. The survey should not take more than 11 minutes to complete. The study is anonymous and follows the University of Glasgow ethics. For more details please [click here](#). The study data will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research. If you consent to take part in this study, please click 'next'.

General instruction

For the purpose of this research, football teams are considered as brands. This survey is to be completed having in mind the football team brand you expressed to hate knowing that other people love it.

Perceptions about the product category the brand belongs to

The following question is about your perceptions of the product category this brand belongs to.

10. Indicate on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree) to which extent you agree with the following statements.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This brand's product category means much to me							
This brand's product category is important to me							
This brand's product category is an important part of my life							

Feel/do about the brand

The following questions are about your perceptions, feelings and behaviours towards this brand.

11. Indicate on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree) to which extent you agree with the following statements.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am knowledgeable about the activities of this brand							
This brand is distinct from other brands of the same product category							
I am passionate about this brand							
When I learn of this brand's misfortune, I have strong feelings							
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to express my identity							
This brand is associated with themes I consider important in my life							
I would express my feelings towards this brand to the managers							
I would express my feelings towards this brand to other people							
I use or wear merchandise that communicate how I feel about this brand							
I am able to describe this brand to others							
This brand really stands out from other brands of the same product category							
I have extreme emotions for this brand							

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When I learn of this brand's achievement, I have strong feelings							
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to describe my personality							
This brand relates to significant things for me							
I would tell the club my impressions about this brand							
The Sun rotates around the Earth							
I would communicate my opinion about this brand to someone else who seeks my advice							
I indicate my feelings for this brand by using or wearing relevant merchandise							
I have a good understanding of what this brand has done in the past							
This brand is very different from other brands of the same product category							
This brand arouses intense feelings							
When I learn of this brand's misfortune, I have intense emotions							
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to present who I am							
This brand is linked with themes I find meaningful							

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would express my feelings towards this brand to the staff involved with it							
I would indicate my beliefs about this brand to friends and relatives							
I am willing to use merchandise that will allow me to express my feelings towards this brand							
This brand is very good in achieving its goals							
When compared with other brands of the same product category this brand is one of a kind							
I have strong feelings for this brand							
When I learn of this brand's achievement, I have intense sentiments							
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to reveal my values							
This brand is paired with things I consider crucial in my life							
I own merchandise that demonstrate my sentiments for this brand							
Theresa May was the first UK Prime Minister							
This brand really stands apart as being exceptional							

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have almost an obsessive feeling for this brand							
When I learn of this brand's misfortune, I have intense sentiments							
I can compare myself with this brand							
This brand is remarkable when compared to other brands							
When I learn of this brand's achievement, I have intense emotions							
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to explain my character							

12. Indicate on a scale from 1 (completely agree with the option on the left) to 13 (completely agree with the option on the right) to which extent you agree with the following statements.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
This brand's level of excellence is low														This brand's level of excellence is high
I would be pleased with the products and services provided to me by this brand														I would be unpleased with the products and services provided to me by this brand

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
In my opinion this brand is socially irresponsible														In my opinion this brand is socially responsible
If this brand would act in a way that I disapprove of, I would be inclined to forgive the brand														If this brand would act in a way that I disapprove of, I would be inclined to get revenge of the brand
I want to do something good to this brand														I want to do something bad to this brand
I would never choose this brand before others														I would always choose this brand before others
This brand is not at all reliable														This brand is very reliable
I would be happy with this brand's responsiveness to me														I would be unhappy with this brand's responsiveness to me

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
In my opinion this brand is not genuinely concerned to improve the well-being of society														In my opinion this brand is genuinely concerned to improve the well-being of society
If this brand would act in a way that I disapprove of, I would be inclined to let it go														If this brand would act in a way that I disapprove of, I would be inclined to harm the brand
I want to take actions to support this brand														I want to take actions to get this brand in trouble
I will never prefer the characteristics of this brand before others														I will always prefer the characteristics of this brand before others
This brand offers inferior products														This brand offers superior products

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
I would be satisfied with this brand's products and services provided to me														I would be dissatisfied with this brand's products and services provided to me
In my opinion this brand violates ethical standards														In my opinion this brand follows ethical standards
If this brand would act in a way that I disapprove of, I would be inclined to excuse the brand														If this brand would act in a way that I disapprove of, I would be inclined to punish the brand in some way
I want to benefit this brand														I want to cause inconvenience to this brand
I would never favour the offerings of this brand before others														I would always favour the offerings of this brand before others

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
This brand's performance is very bad														This brand's performance is very good
This brand would exceed my requirements and expectations														This brand would fall behind my requirements and expectations
If this brand would act in a way that I disapprove of, I would be inclined to absolve the brand														If this brand would act in a way that I disapprove of, I would be inclined to make the brand get what it deserves
I will never select this brand in preference to competitor brands														I will always select this brand in preference to competitor brands
If this brand would act in a way that I disapprove of, I														If this brand would act in a way that I disapprove of, I

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
would be inclined to pardon the brand														would be inclined to get even with the brand

Relationship between the brand and its main competitor

The following question is about your perceptions of the relationship between this brand and its main competitor.

13. Indicate on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree) to which extent you agree with the following statements.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Competition between this brand and a main opponent is intense							
This brand is in a constant battle with another brand							
This brand and its main opponent have an extreme antagonistic relationship							
This brand clearly has an enemy brand							

Relationship with other consumers related to the brand

The following question is about your relationship with other consumers related to this brand.

14. Indicate on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree) to which extent you agree with the following statements.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel strong ties to other people who feel the same way than me about this brand							
In general, I'm very motivated to participate actively in the activities of a community that shares my feelings for this brand							
I associate with the people who feel the same way I do about this brand							
I feel a distance between myself and the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand							
I find it very easy to form a bond with other people who feel the same way than me about this brand							
I have never heard of Facebook							
In general, I participate in order to stimulate the community that shares my feelings for this brand							
I feel close to the people who feel the same way I do about this brand							
I dissociate from the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand							
I feel a sense of being connected with other people who feel the same way than me about this brand							
I usually provide useful information to other members of the community that shares my feelings for this brand							
I identify with the people who feel the same way I do about this brand							

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I do not identify with the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand							
A strong feeling of camaraderie exists between me and other people who feel the same way than me about this brand							
In general, I communicate in the community that shares my feelings for this brand with great excitement and frequency							
I relate to the people who feel the same way I do about this brand							
I am different from the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand							
I have things in common with people who feel the same way I do about this brand							
I am disconnected from the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand							

Demographics

15. What is your gender?
 Male Female

16. What is your age?
 18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-75
 Over 75

17. What is the highest qualification you have obtained?
 High school Technical / vocational training Professional qualification / diploma
 Undergraduate degree Postgraduate degree Other (please specify) _____

18. What is your employment status?

- Student Self-employed Working full-time Working part-time
Out of work but looking for a job Out of work and not looking for a job
Retired Other (please specify) _____

19. How many people are in your household? _____

20. What is the gross income level of your household?

- Under £10,000 £10,000 - £19,999 £20,000 - £29,999 £30,000 - £39,999
 £40,000 - £49,999 £50,000 - £59,999 £60,000 or over

21. Which country in the UK do you live in?

- England Scotland Wales Northern Ireland

Thank you

Your answers have been recorded. Thank you very much for completing this survey!

Appendix F Normality assessment

Items	Mean			Std. Deviation			Skewness			Kurtosis		
	Sample 1 (N = 338)	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)	Sample 1 (N = 338)	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)	Sample 1 (N = 338)	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)	Sample 1 (N = 338)	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)
Product involvement 1	4,41	4,28	4,34	1,684	1,759	1,810	-0,40	-0,33	-0,36	-0,51	-0,75	-0,75
Product involvement 2	4,43	4,25	4,27	1,667	1,748	1,811	-0,42	-0,33	-0,32	-0,50	-0,75	-0,78
Product involvement 3	3,80	3,79	3,78	1,759	1,819	1,859	-0,01	0,01	0,10	-0,83	-0,93	-1,00
Brand strength 1	4,59	4,47	4,59	1,575	1,555	1,533	-0,53	-0,40	-0,36	-0,31	-0,46	-0,38
Brand strength 2	5,18	5,16	5,22	1,492	1,481	1,432	-0,80	-0,83	-0,67	0,32	0,43	-0,04
Brand strength 3	4,65	4,68	4,75	1,636	1,599	1,526	-0,50	-0,47	-0,39	-0,43	-0,43	-0,50
Brand uniqueness 1	4,57	4,46	4,53	1,604	1,642	1,624	-0,63	-0,40	-0,42	-0,21	-0,59	-0,48
Brand uniqueness 2	4,52	4,41	4,55	1,663	1,766	1,651	-0,47	-0,36	-0,50	-0,51	-0,78	-0,44
Brand uniqueness 3	4,16	4,14	4,24	1,702	1,754	1,604	-0,21	-0,12	-0,18	-0,85	-0,87	-0,69
Brand uniqueness 4	4,15	4,27	4,20	1,821	1,819	1,821	-0,22	-0,21	-0,15	-0,91	-1,04	-1,02
Perceived quality 1	4,86	4,62	4,54	1,809	1,808	1,804	-0,47	-0,22	-0,32	-0,74	-1,02	-0,87
Perceived quality 4	4,85	4,76	4,62	1,840	1,882	1,951	-0,44	-0,38	-0,35	-0,92	-1,00	-1,04
Perceived quality 5	4,95	4,68	4,70	1,790	1,772	1,831	-0,58	-0,33	-0,53	-0,61	-0,77	-0,71
Perceived quality 7	4,59	4,53	4,47	1,849	1,858	1,903	-0,33	-0,22	-0,36	-0,83	-1,01	-0,90
Perceived quality 8	4,54	4,41	4,19	1,870	1,975	1,912	-0,22	-0,19	-0,14	-1,02	-1,12	-1,07
Association with important issues 1	3,69	3,77	3,82	1,845	1,864	1,789	0,02	-0,06	-0,10	-1,16	-1,16	-0,99
Association with important issues 3	3,80	3,88	4,01	1,776	1,768	1,752	-0,07	-0,15	-0,21	-1,07	-1,01	-0,84
Association with important issues 4	3,29	3,24	3,26	1,814	1,850	1,710	0,29	0,31	0,21	-0,99	-1,10	-0,98
Ideological compatibility/incompatibility 1	4,08	4,20	4,12	2,085	1,988	2,016	-0,02	-0,10	-0,08	-1,30	-1,17	-1,18
Ideological compatibility/incompatibility 3	4,25	4,30	4,29	2,101	2,121	2,030	-0,16	-0,19	-0,18	-1,27	-1,27	-1,23
Sense of community 1	4,35	4,15	4,33	1,674	1,754	1,677	-0,44	-0,27	-0,41	-0,55	-0,79	-0,54

Items	Mean			Std. Deviation			Skewness			Kurtosis		
	Sample 1 (N = 338)	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)	Sample 1 (N = 338)	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)	Sample 1 (N = 338)	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)	Sample 1 (N = 338)	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)
Sense of community 2	4,26	4,19	4,25	1,608	1,626	1,576	-0,38	-0,27	-0,41	-0,48	-0,50	-0,34
Sense of community 3	4,02	3,94	4,10	1,705	1,779	1,630	-0,26	-0,15	-0,33	-0,85	-0,88	-0,66
Sense of community 4	3,95	3,80	3,92	1,732	1,781	1,719	-0,16	-0,06	-0,12	-0,84	-0,95	-0,75
Perceptions of rivalry intensity 1	4,74	4,83	4,94	1,875	1,834	1,784	-0,56	-0,54	-0,54	-0,63	-0,68	-0,61
Perceptions of rivalry intensity 2	4,55	4,70	4,68	1,964	1,894	1,838	-0,41	-0,51	-0,42	-0,94	-0,79	-0,83
Perceptions of rivalry intensity 3	3,95	4,02	4,05	1,884	1,866	1,878	-0,02	0,01	0,00	-0,92	-0,93	-0,97
Perceptions of rivalry intensity 4	3,90	3,96	4,04	2,050	2,051	2,065	0,11	0,05	-0,01	-1,18	-1,21	-1,28
Complimenting/complaining 1	3,96	3,85	4,05	1,895	1,901	1,789	-0,14	-0,01	-0,19	-1,11	-1,12	-0,85
Complimenting/complaining 2	4,72	4,57	4,62	1,769	1,804	1,617	-0,58	-0,49	-0,45	-0,59	-0,71	-0,44
Complimenting/complaining 3	4,33	4,22	4,39	1,873	1,870	1,713	-0,36	-0,29	-0,39	-0,99	-1,03	-0,68
Brand loyalty/disloyalty 1	5,00	5,02	4,89	1,961	1,940	1,949	-0,62	-0,62	-0,47	-0,82	-0,81	-1,03
Brand loyalty/disloyalty 2	4,61	4,52	4,48	1,992	2,010	1,967	-0,28	-0,28	-0,22	-1,18	-1,18	-1,14
Brand loyalty/disloyalty 3	4,59	4,62	4,46	1,976	1,986	2,041	-0,33	-0,31	-0,23	-1,08	-1,12	-1,20
Brand loyalty/disloyalty 4	4,83	4,92	4,80	1,987	1,944	1,975	-0,47	-0,56	-0,43	-0,99	-0,88	-1,04
Using pro/anti-brand merchandise 1	2,88	2,86	2,82	2,043	2,078	1,886	0,67	0,71	0,66	-0,98	-0,95	-0,78
Using pro/anti-brand merchandise 2	2,78	2,86	2,78	1,920	1,987	1,836	0,69	0,69	0,68	-0,82	-0,87	-0,71
Using pro/anti-brand merchandise 3	3,34	3,24	3,32	2,041	2,034	1,924	0,29	0,42	0,27	-1,30	-1,14	-1,13
Using pro/anti-brand merchandise 4	2,83	2,80	2,71	2,121	2,120	1,985	0,71	0,80	0,79	-1,00	-0,84	-0,74
Participation in a brand/anti-brand community 1	3,64	3,59	3,73	1,741	1,809	1,659	0,01	0,10	-0,12	-0,97	-1,00	-0,75

Items	Mean			Std. Deviation			Skewness			Kurtosis		
	Sample 1 (N = 338)	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)	Sample 1 (N = 338)	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)	Sample 1 (N = 338)	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)	Sample 1 (N = 338)	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)
Participation in a brand/anti-brand community 2	3,26	3,35	3,31	1,589	1,695	1,594	0,10	0,17	0,11	-0,92	-0,89	-0,79
Participation in a brand/anti-brand community 3	3,68	3,66	3,57	1,634	1,825	1,672	-0,11	0,08	0,02	-0,74	-0,95	-0,93
Participation in a brand/anti-brand community 4	3,30	3,36	3,39	1,644	1,835	1,718	0,07	0,32	0,18	-1,02	-0,92	-0,94
Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours 1	3,61	3,62	3,64	1,873	1,934	1,894	0,29	0,34	0,23	-0,97	-1,03	-1,02
Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours 2	3,75	3,85	3,84	1,941	1,889	1,896	0,15	0,11	0,15	-1,07	-1,01	-1,07
Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours 3	3,56	3,67	3,56	1,899	1,913	1,898	0,33	0,24	0,29	-0,98	-1,00	-1,03
Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours 4	3,52	3,55	3,47	1,884	1,903	1,846	0,33	0,34	0,34	-0,95	-0,99	-0,94
Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours 5	3,60	3,68	3,64	1,983	1,924	1,842	0,27	0,17	0,27	-1,13	-1,06	-0,98
Positive/negative WoM 1	3,71	3,62	3,53	1,873	1,904	1,810	0,01	0,16	0,23	-1,10	-1,15	-0,99
Positive/negative WoM 2	3,64	3,42	3,53	2,022	1,999	1,994	0,04	0,23	0,19	-1,33	-1,25	-1,22
Positive/negative WoM 3	2,86	2,91	2,92	1,654	1,722	1,678	0,51	0,64	0,60	-0,79	-0,55	-0,51
Positive/negative WoM 4	3,42	3,44	3,30	1,843	1,837	1,801	0,23	0,25	0,36	-1,03	-1,03	-0,92
Defending/attacking the brand 1	3,93	4,00	3,72	2,102	2,109	2,149	0,04	-0,05	0,20	-1,32	-1,33	-1,33
Defending/attacking the brand 2	3,83	3,84	3,83	2,166	2,021	2,080	0,12	0,14	0,11	-1,37	-1,20	-1,28
Defending/attacking the brand 3	4,14	3,98	3,99	1,993	2,081	2,089	-0,09	0,00	0,01	-1,15	-1,26	-1,30
Brand passion 2	3,80	3,90	3,89	1,777	1,796	1,769	0,02	-0,03	0,03	-0,94	-0,96	-0,92
Brand passion 3	3,94	4,00	4,12	1,863	1,888	1,841	-0,03	-0,03	-0,15	-1,09	-1,09	-1,06
Brand passion 4	4,33	4,30	4,50	1,835	1,852	1,685	-0,37	-0,23	-0,33	-0,84	-0,98	-0,63
Brand passion 6	4,33	4,48	4,43	1,720	1,712	1,719	-0,21	-0,40	-0,32	-0,78	-0,70	-0,64

Items	Mean			Std. Deviation			Skewness			Kurtosis		
	Sample 1 (N = 338)	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)	Sample 1 (N = 338)	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)	Sample 1 (N = 338)	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)	Sample 1 (N = 338)	Sample 2 (N = 450)	Sample 3 (N = 450)
Brand passion 7	4,19	4,23	4,29	1,914	1,893	1,856	-0,25	-0,24	-0,22	-1,02	-1,01	-0,98
Brand passion 8	3,73	4,00	3,99	1,875	1,865	1,812	0,06	-0,07	-0,03	-1,15	-1,03	-1,04
Brand passion 10	3,49	3,71	3,72	1,835	1,864	1,851	0,14	0,14	0,11	-1,08	-1,07	-1,08
Brand passion 11	3,51	3,72	3,73	1,854	1,841	1,883	0,08	0,08	0,06	-1,15	-1,06	-1,12
Self-brand benchmarking 1	3,31	3,49	3,31	1,823	1,862	1,816	0,27	0,11	0,25	-1,03	-1,14	-1,03
Self-brand benchmarking 2	2,97	3,17	3,11	1,826	1,843	1,741	0,49	0,35	0,32	-0,97	-1,05	-0,96
Self-brand benchmarking 4	3,27	3,28	3,25	1,728	1,743	1,648	0,23	0,22	0,21	-1,01	-1,00	-0,87
Self-brand benchmarking 5	2,78	2,87	2,89	1,705	1,707	1,676	0,55	0,54	0,54	-0,85	-0,81	-0,67
Self-brand benchmarking 6	2,89	3,00	2,96	1,729	1,772	1,700	0,50	0,52	0,40	-0,89	-0,79	-0,93
Intra-group identification 1	4,10	4,00	4,17	1,674	1,740	1,645	-0,29	-0,15	-0,38	-0,71	-0,83	-0,60
Intra-group identification 2	3,92	3,87	3,99	1,655	1,742	1,640	-0,16	-0,06	-0,21	-0,73	-0,87	-0,66
Intra-group identification 3	4,29	4,12	4,30	1,546	1,738	1,567	-0,36	-0,25	-0,51	-0,38	-0,78	-0,28
Intra-group identification 4	4,35	4,23	4,30	1,560	1,708	1,553	-0,44	-0,24	-0,47	-0,38	-0,77	-0,35
Intra-group identification 5	4,45	4,44	4,43	1,443	1,553	1,424	-0,44	-0,47	-0,52	0,02	-0,16	-0,04
Inter-group dissociation 1	3,27	3,30	3,37	1,691	1,739	1,679	0,36	0,35	0,24	-0,71	-0,82	-0,86
Inter-group dissociation 2	2,75	2,73	2,74	1,566	1,637	1,581	0,61	0,84	0,59	-0,45	-0,07	-0,63
Inter-group dissociation 3	3,17	3,13	3,25	1,714	1,735	1,669	0,53	0,58	0,38	-0,54	-0,54	-0,60
Inter-group dissociation 4	3,28	3,32	3,33	1,641	1,711	1,583	0,29	0,29	0,15	-0,69	-0,85	-0,74
Inter-group dissociation 5	2,99	2,98	3,00	1,633	1,634	1,565	0,50	0,73	0,54	-0,52	-0,06	-0,32

Appendix G Experts survey

I am Sergio Andres Osuna Ramirez, a final year PhD researcher at the University of Glasgow Adam Smith Business School. My PhD focuses on strong emotions towards brands, in particular explores the brand polarization phenomenon. The project is supervised by Prof. Cleopatra Veloutsou and Dr. Anna Morgan-Thomas.

The research project involves the development of scales to measure four of the constructs of the study. Therefore, we are targeting high profile academics who are very knowledgeable in the field to inform this scale development of the research instrument through this survey. The results of the survey will inform the mentioned scale development process and measure four constructs, one of them having five dimensions and will be used for academic purposes. The current survey has been reviewed by the two supervisors.

I am contacting you to ask for your help. You have been identified as an expert in the particular sub-area of branding, and as such, I am hoping that you can participate in the survey. Your inputs and responses will be of great value in developing appropriate scales to measure the formerly mentioned variables.

If you choose to participate in the study, you will be invited to answer a few questions about your perceptions and thoughts related to the completeness and clarity of the definitions of the involved variables and of the items that intend to measure them. The survey should take about 30 minutes to complete.

1. On a scale from 1-5 indicate how **clear**, **comprehensive** and **capturing the essence of the construct** the following definition of *association with important issues* is.

Association with important issues is linking the brand with aspects considered relevant by consumers.

This definition is:

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all clear	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very clear
Not at all comprehensive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very comprehensive
Not at all capturing the essence of the construct	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very much capturing the essence of the construct

Comments:

2. **Association with important issues** is defined as linking the brand with aspects considered relevant by consumers.

On a scale from 1-5 please indicate the **clarity** of each item and **to which extent it reflects the definition** of the construct.

	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
	Not at all clear				Very clear		Not at all reflects the definition				Very much reflects the definition
This brand is associated with issues I consider important in my life	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is a relationship between this brands and aspects I believe are relevant for me	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is a link between this brand and issues I believe are substantial in my life	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is linked with matters I find meaningful	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is a bond between this brand and aspects I find valuable	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand relates to significant issues for me	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 Very
clear clear

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 Very much
reflects the reflects the
definition definition

This brand is paired with topics I consider crucial in
my life

This brand is related to imperative aspects in my life

Aspects in my life I consider essential are linked with
this brand

Comments:

3. On a scale from 1-5 indicate how **clear**, **comprehensive** and **capturing the essence of the construct** the following definition of *using pro – anti brand merchandise* is.

Using pro – anti brand merchandise is the use of the brand’s logo products to express the feelings towards the polarizing brand.

This definition is:

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all clear	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very clear
Not at all comprehensive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very comprehensive
Not at all capturing the essence of the construct	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very much capturing the essence of the construct

Comments:

4. **Using pro – anti brand merchandise** is defined as the use of the brand’s logo products to express the feelings towards the polarizing brand.

On a scale from 1-5 please indicate the **clarity** of each item and **to which extent it reflects the definition** of the construct.

	1	Not at all	2	3	4	5	Very clear		1	Not at all	2	3	4	5	Very much
	clear						clear		reflects the definition						reflects the definition
I am willing to use merchandise that will allow to express my feelings towards this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I use or wear merchandise that communicate how I feel about this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I utilise merchandise to suggest how I feel about this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I own merchandise as an evidence of my beliefs about this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I have merchandise that demonstrate my sentiments for this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 Very
clear clear

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 Very much
reflects the reflects the
definition definition

Merchandise I own helps me convey how I feel
about this brand

I indicate my feelings for this brand by using or
wearing relevant merchandise

Comments:

5. On a scale from 1-5 indicate how **clear**, **comprehensive** and **capturing the essence of the construct** the following definition of *perceptions of rivalry intensity* is.

Perceptions of rivalry intensity refers to consumers' perceived level of antagonism between a brand and its main competitor.

This definition is:

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all clear	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very clear
Not at all comprehensive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very comprehensive
Not at all capturing the essence of the construct	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very much capturing the essence of the construct

Comments:

6. **Perceptions of rivalry intensity** refers to consumers' perceived level of antagonism between a brand and its main competitor.

On a scale from 1-5 please indicate the **clarity** of each item and **to which extent it reflects the definition** of the construct.

	1	Not at all	2	3	4	5	Very clear		1	Not at all	2	3	4	5	Very much
	clear								reflects the definition						reflects the definition
This brand has a strong competitor brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
This brand is in a constant battle with another brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Competition between this brand and a main opponent is intense	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
This brand and its main competitor are trying to gain advantage from each other at any cost	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
This brand has another brand that is a meaningful contender	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
This brand clearly has an enemy brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 Very
clear clear

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 Very much
reflects the reflects the
definition definition

Conflict between this brand and its main opponent is
fierce

This brand and its main opponent have an extreme
antagonistic relationship

Comments:

7. On a scale from 1-5 indicate how **clear**, **comprehensive** and **capturing the essence of the construct** the following definition of *brand polarization* is.

Brand polarization is an affective phenomenon in where beliefs and emotions of a significant number of people induce simultaneous move to the extremes involving passionate positive and negative feelings and convictions towards the brand, like-minded consumers, and opposite-minded consumers.

This definition is:

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all clear	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very clear
Not at all comprehensive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very comprehensive
Not at all capturing the essence of the construct	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very much capturing the essence of the construct

Comments:

1 2 3 4 5
Not Very
at much
all

Inter-group dissociation

“the extent to which an individual detaches him or herself from consumers who have opposite feelings about the polarizing brand”

Generation of strong feelings for the achievement / misfortune of the brand

“extreme emotions felt by consumers in response to the polarizing brand’s achievements or misfortunes”

Comments:

9. **Brand passion** is defined as a psychological phenomenon constituted of excitation, infatuation, and obsession for a polarizing brand.

On a scale from 1-5 please indicate the **clarity** of each item and **to which extent it reflects the definition** of the dimension.

	1	Not at all	2	3	4	5	Very		1	Not	at	all	2	3	4	5	Very	much
	clear						clear		reflects	the	the	definition					reflects	the
I have almost an obsessive feeling for this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
I have strong feelings for this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
I have extreme emotions for this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
I think about this brand several times a day	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
I have an outburst of intense emotions for this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
This brand arouses intense feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
I feel myself craving to think about this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
I cannot live without this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

	1	Not at all	2	3	4	5	Very clear		1	Not at all	2	3	4	5	Very much
	clear								reflects the definition						reflects the definition
I can't help myself from thinking about this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am emotionally dependent on this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have a tough time controlling my need to think about this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is nothing more important to me than my relationship with this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am passionate about this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

10. **Self-brand benchmarking** is defined as the degree consumers compare their self-identity with the identity of the polarizing brand.

On a scale from 1-5 please indicate the **clarity** of each item and **to which extent it reflects the definition** of the dimension.

	1	Not at all	2	3	4	5	Very		1	Not	at	all	2	3	4	5	Very	much
	clear						clear		reflects			the					reflects	the
									definition								definition	
I can benchmark myself with this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
I can compare myself with this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to present who I am	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to explain my character	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
When I think about myself I can use this brand as a means to express my identity	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 Very
clear clear

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 Very much
reflects the reflects the
definition definition

When I think about myself I can use this brand as a
means to reveal my values

When I think about myself I can use this brand as a
means to communicate my convictions

When I think about myself I can use this brand as a
means to indicate what I believe in

When I think about myself I can use this brand as a
means to describe my personality

When I think about myself I can use this brand as a
means to reveal my self-image

When I think about myself I can use this brand as a
means to express my individuality

11. **Intra-group identification** refers to the extent to which an individual associates him or herself with people who share the same feelings for the polarizing brand.

On a scale from 1-5 please indicate the **clarity** of each item and **to which extent it reflects the definition** of the dimension.

	1	Not at all	2	3	4	5	Very		1	Not	at	all	2	3	4	5	Very	much
	clear						clear		reflects			the					reflects	the
									definition								definition	
I am like the people who feel the same way I do about this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
My self-image overlaps with the image of the people who feel the same way I do about this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I am similar to the people who feel the same way I do about this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I associate with the people who feel the same way I do about this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 Very
clear clear

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 Very much
reflects the reflects the
definition definition

I identify with the people who feel the same way I do

about this brand

Comments:

12. **Inter-group dissociation** refers to the extent to which an individual detaches him or herself from consumers who have opposite feelings about the polarizing brand.

On a scale from 1-5 please indicate the **clarity** of each item and **to which extent it reflects the definition** of the dimension.

	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
	Not at all clear				Very clear		Not at all reflects the definition				Very much reflects the definition
I am not like the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My self-image is separated from the image of the group of people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am different to the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I dissociate from the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 Very
clear clear

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 Very much
reflects the reflects the
definition definition

I am dissimilar to the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand

I feel a distance between myself and the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand

I do not have things in common with people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand

I am disconnected from the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand

I am detached from the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand

People who feel the opposite way I do about this brand are not my allies

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 Very
clear clear

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 Very much
reflects the reflects the
definition definition

I do not identify with the people who feel the opposite way I do about this brand

Comments:

13. **Generation of strong feelings for the achievement / misfortune of the brand** is defined as extreme emotions felt by consumers in response to the polarizing brand's achievements or misfortunes

On a scale from 1-5 please indicate the **clarity** of each item and **to which extent it reflects the definition** of the dimension.

	1	Not at all	2	3	4	5	Very clear	1	Not at all	2	3	4	5	Very much
	clear						clear	reflects the definition						reflects the definition
When I learn of this brand's achievement, I have strong feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
When I learn of this brand's achievement, I have intense emotions	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
This brand's achievements change my mood	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
When I learn of this brand's achievement, I have strong reactions	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
When I learn of this brand's achievement, I have intense sentiments	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 Very
clear clear

1 Not at all 2 3 4 5 Very much
reflects the reflects the
definition definition

When I learn of this brand's achievement, I am
deeply impacted

When I learn of this brand's misfortune, I have
strong feelings

When I learn of this brand's misfortune, I have
intense emotions

This brand's misfortunes change my mood

When I learn of this brand's misfortune, I have
strong reactions

When I learn of this brand's misfortune, I have
intense sentiments

When I learn of this brand's misfortune, I am deeply
impacted

Comments:

14. Do you want to be informed about publications or presentations related to this project?

Yes

No

15. Do you want to be acknowledged in the PhD as an expert contributing to the scale development process by your name?

Yes

No

16. If the answer to any of the previous two questions is yes, what is your name?

Your answers have been recorded. Thank you very much for completing this survey!

Cronbach's α	0.915	0.930	0.880	0.950	0.925	0.917	0.868	0.932	0.879	0.920	0.897	0.795	0.836	0.712	0.914
Positive/negative WoM 1										0.611					
Positive/negative WoM 2										0.687					
Positive/negative WoM 3										0.826					
Positive/negative WoM 4										0.777					
Defending/attacking the brand 1													0.527		
Defending/attacking the brand 2													0.688		
Defending/attacking the brand 3													0.653		

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.
Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.
Rotation converged in 10 iterations.

Appendix I EFA measurement model – Final Pattern Matrix sample 3

Cronbach's α	0.897	0.883	0.930	0.908	0.903	0.944	0.913	0.837	0.863	0.906	0.790	0.894	0.849
Product involvement 1						0.923							
Product involvement 2						0.972							
Product involvement 3						0.791							
Brand strength 1											0.678		
Brand strength 2											0.608		
Brand strength 3											0.777		
Brand uniqueness 1				0.746									
Brand uniqueness 2				0.866									
Brand uniqueness 3				0.852									
Brand uniqueness 4				0.784									
Perceived quality 1								0.762					
Perceived quality 4								0.736					
Perceived quality 5								0.660					
Perceived quality 7								0.530					
Perceived quality 8								0.517					
Association with important issues 1												0.676	
Association with important issues 3												0.652	
Association with important issues 4												0.715	
Ideological compatibility/incompatibility 1													
Ideological compatibility/incompatibility 3													
Sense of community 1	0.709												
Sense of community 2	0.722												
Sense of community 3	0.873												
Sense of community 4	0.828												
Perceptions of rivalry intensity 1							0.885						
Perceptions of rivalry intensity 2							1.002						
Perceptions of rivalry intensity 3							0.735						

Cronbach's α	0.897	0.883	0.930	0.908	0.903	0.944	0.913	0.837	0.863	0.906	0.790	0.894	0.849
Perceptions of rivalry intensity 4							0.725						
Complimenting/complaining 1									0.762				
Complimenting/complaining 2									0.709				
Complimenting/complaining 3									0.937				
Brand loyalty/disloyalty 1					0.786								
Brand loyalty/disloyalty 2					0.817								
Brand loyalty/disloyalty 3					0.904								
Brand loyalty/disloyalty 4					0.837								
Using pro/anti-brand merchandise 1			0.956										
Using pro/anti-brand merchandise 2			0.975										
Using pro/anti-brand merchandise 3			0.635										
Using pro/anti-brand merchandise 4			0.795										
Participation in a brand/anti-brand community 1													
Participation in a brand/anti-brand community 2													
Participation in a brand/anti-brand community 3													
Participation in a brand/anti-brand community 4													
Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours 1		0.718											
Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours 2		0.658											
Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours 3		0.873											
Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours 4		0.831											
Forgiveness/retaliation behaviours 5		0.864											
Positive/negative WoM 1										0.684			

Cronbach's α	0.897	0.883	0.930	0.908	0.903	0.944	0.913	0.837	0.863	0.906	0.790	0.894	0.849
Positive/negative WoM 2										0.600			
Positive/negative WoM 3										0.744			
Positive/negative WoM 4										0.757			
Defending/attacking the brand 1													0.561
Defending/attacking the brand 2													0.620
Defending/attacking the brand 3													0.765

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

Rotation converged in 11 iterations.

Appendix J Related publications

Journal article

Osuna Ramírez, S. A., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2019). I hate what you love: brand polarization and negativity towards brands as an opportunity for brand management. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 28(5), 614–632.

Conference papers

Osuna Ramírez, S. A., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2019). Advantages of Brand Polarization? Exploring Potential Beneficiaries: Structured Abstract. Presented in the Academy of Marketing Science Annual Conference, Vancouver, Canada.

Osuna Ramírez, S. A., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2018). Towards a conceptualization of Brand polarization. Presented in the 13th Global Brand Conference. Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University, Newcastle, UK.

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