THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

"An Investigation of Patterns of Self-Brand Personality Alignment"

MARIA KARAMPELA

PhD in Management

The University of Edinburgh

2015

Declaration

This is to certify that that the work contained within has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Maria Karampela

March 2015

Abstract

In their continuous search for improved explanations of why consumers engage with certain brands more than with others, academics and managers have placed significant importance on self-brand congruence theory, which suggests that consumers are drawn to brands with characteristics that align with their own characteristics. Although this theory has been extensively investigated and supported by previous research, it has hitherto been assumed that the alignment of characteristics exhibits a similarity configuration, that is, consumers are drawn to brands with traits that mirror their own traits. By adopting a relational view of consumer-brand interactions and drawing from the literature on interpersonal relationships, specifically from theories of interpersonal attraction, the thesis explores the possibility that besides similarity, self-brand personality alignment may also exhibit a complementarity configuration, whereby consumers are drawn to brands with traits that complement their own. Using a two-phase empirical study of mixed methods [in-depth interviews and online survey (n=206)], the thesis first explores the structure of consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and those of their favourite brands using Exploratory Factor Analysis. Results reveal that although brand personality has the same five factor structure as human personality, the composition of dimensions is distinct. The patterns of alignment between the two sets of traits are then examined through Canonical Correlation Analysis, which reveals the existence of both similarity and complementarity configurations in self-brand personality alignment. A new method for measuring the magnitude of self-brand personality alignment is then devised, which captures both configurations. The predictive power of this new measure is then compared against existing, similarity-based measures for a range of desirable brand behaviours, using Discriminant Analysis and Linear Regression. Results indicate the new measure performs well, especially for emotionally-related brand behaviours.

Publications

Karampela, M., Tregear, A., & Ansell, J. (2014). When Opposites Attract: Incorporating Trait Complementarity into the Measurement of Self-Brand Personality Alignment. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 42, 539-540 [Paper presented at North American Association for Consumer Research Conference 2014, Baltimore, MD, USA (October 23-26)].

Karampela, M. & Tregear, A. (2014). The Alignment of Self and Brand Personality Traits: An Exploratory Analysis. Paper presented at the Annual Academy of Marketing Conference 2014, Bournemouth, UK (July 7-10).

Karampela, M., Tregear, A., Ansell, J. & Dunnett, S. (2013). Investigating brand personality perceptions & preferences: The influence of higher-order goals. Paper presented at the International Research Conference in Marketing titled "Reflecting on the Past, Celebrating the Present and Shaping the Future in Marketing Research", University of Edinburgh Business School, UK (September 19-20).

Karampela, M. & Tregear, A. (2013). Investigating brand personality perceptions and preferences: The influence of values. Paper presented at the Annual Academy of Marketing Conference 2013, Cardiff, UK (July 8-11).

Karampela, M. (2012). Investigating the Influence of Values on Consumers' Perceptions of Brand Personality. Paper presented at the PhD Conference organised by the Doctoral Society of the University of Edinburgh Business School, UK (May 24th).

Karampela, M. (2011). Cross-cultural differences in decision-making process, choice & forming of relationships with brands. Poster presented at the Poster Day organised in the University of Edinburgh Business School, UK (November 25th).

The thesis is dedicated to my parents,

Georgios and Alexandra

Acknowledgements

I really feel the need to acknowledge the support of my family, friends and colleagues, without whom this thesis would have never been completed. Being a PhD student in a different country from your own and in such a research intensive university as the University of Edinburgh, involved a series of changes for me, and the support of the people in my life was invaluable.

First and foremost, I would have *never* made it through the PhD process without my partner in life, George Lygkas. George kept me going through storms. For the eyes full of pride, for his warm embrace, for making me breakfast after the long nights I spent in front of my computer screen, and for many more, I thank him from the bottom of my heart. I would not have made it without him, *literally*.

Second, I want to thank my parents. This thesis is devoted to them. They were my anchor. Their smiley faces on our Skype calls and their constant encouragement always gave me strength. I also want to thank other members of my family: my brother, Sotiris, for sending me pictures of my niece and nephew that kept me cheerful; my cousin, Katerina, for her funny messages; George's parents, for always thinking of me; my godparents, Vasilis and Dimitra, for always feeling proud of me; my friend, Elli, for being there when I needed her; my friend, Katerina, for being the first one to visit me.

I feel that special thanks should go to my principal supervisor, Dr Angela Tregear, Reader in the University of Edinburgh Business School. She always asked for more progress, for better results, thus encouraging me to move forward and forward. Our systematic, step-by-step approach was crucial for the completion of the PhD. We had regular meetings so that we could ensure I am on track and that my ideas and work proceeded in the way they should. Her contribution during the initial stages was to hold me to the ground when my research ideas were going to one thousand different places, and to help me clarify the implications of what I was reading; she never gave me the responses but she was guiding me to find them myself. I once told her that she "made my mind turn" and I consider this as her greatest gift to me. Dr Tregear, thank you for all your support and guidance. I wish all the best for you, your family and your career.

Many thanks go to other members of staff in the Marketing Group of the University of Edinburgh Business School: Professor Jake Ansell, for providing tremendous support with the statistical analysis and for always being helpful; Dr Susan Dunnett, for

introducing me to the richness of the symbolic consumption literature and for her overall support; Professor Stephanie O'Donohoe, for her kind comments and insight when I needed her; Dr Dahlia El-Manstrly, for always encouraging me to feel confident about my progress, and for her support in the analysis part; Dr Ben Marder, for providing encouragement and lots of laughter; and I saved for last the person that without her psychological support and deep care for me, this journey would have been almost impossible: Mrs Caroline Marchant, whose hugs every time I was feeling down ("Mariaaaa, come here my wee chum!") will be in my heart forever. Of course, many thanks go to the rest of the members of the Marketing Group and to the PhD Administration Office for being problem-solvers. Many thanks to my colleagues and friends that believed in me, supported me and made me enjoy the PhD journey, particularly Rachel Moss and Wejdan Alakaleek, and so many more that I could write a whole thesis, so I stop right here!

I thank the University of Edinburgh for providing an outstanding environment for the completion of this PhD. The list is endless: the office, the facilities, the research ethos, the innovative thinking, the seminars, the world-renowned speakers, the opportunities for development (e.g. teaching, organising a world-class conference, etc.), and finally and most importantly for awarding me with the Principal's Career Development Scholarship, the best thing that happened to me before I even set my foot in Edinburgh to work on the PhD. Without this scholarship, I would have never been able to come in this city, in this University, in this PhD programme, I would have never been able to meet all these interesting people and my life would have never become what it is now.

I also want to thank my colleagues in the University of Strathclyde Business School for their support at the later stages of the PhD, and especially the Head of the Marketing Department, Professor Anne Marie Doherty, who truly believed in me, as well as Dr Aliakbar Jafari for his encouragement.

I also want to thank Dr Francesca Dall'Olmo Riley, Associate Professor in Kingston Business School, and Dr Tina Harrison, Senior Lecturer in the University of Edinburgh Business School, for doing me the honour to examine this thesis.

Finally, I thank God and myself for pursuing my dreams even when the circumstances were against me, for never giving up, for always rising and standing on my feet after a fall, for changing when I should but also for preserving deep down inside my core values and who I truly am. Thank you all!

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

1.1. Opening Statement

This thesis is an investigation of the patterns of alignment between consumers' and brands' personalities. Specifically, the thesis develops and tests a conceptual model of: i) the structure and composition of consumers' perceptions of brand personality; ii) the patterns of alignment exhibited between brands' and consumers' personalities; and iii) their influence on desirable brand-related behaviours.

This chapter, providing an introduction to the thesis, starts by presenting the background to the research. Next, it articulates the research problem and states the specific research objectives. Thereafter, it outlines the approach taken by the research and explains its contribution, both in terms of academic knowledge and commercial practice. The final section describes the structure of the thesis.

1.2. Research Background

> *"…as brands only exist in the minds of customers,*
> *the management of brands is all about managing perceptions."*
>
> Rosenbaum-Elliott, Percy, and Pervan (2011), p. 4

Brands hold a central place in the global marketplace (Holt, Quelch, & Taylor, 2004) and in our everyday lives (Kapferer, 2008). They play a fundamental role in a company's success and performance (Fischer, Volckner, & Sattler, 2010; Wong & Merrilees, 2007) to the extent that they are considered as part of its capital and as assets (Rosenbaum-Elliott, et al., 2011) that need to be strategically managed in order to add further value to the company's position in the market (Kapferer, 2008).

A strong indicator of the importance of brands in a firm's success is the ample availability of different rankings seeking to capture the added value brands offer to their owning firms. A series of lists with the world's most valuable brands is published every year, with the most notable being the ones by Forbes, Interbrand, Brandirectory and Millward Brown BrandZ. Brands such as Apple, Microsoft, Google, Coca-Cola, have been consistently featuring among the top 10 brands during the past years [e.g. Brandirectory (2014)]. The Apple brand, for example, was valued at USD 124.2 billion in December 2014 (Forbes, 2014).

The value of a brand (i.e. brand equity) stems from its ability to be widely recognised and to create favourable, strong and unique brand associations (Keller, 1993) in consumers' minds. It appears that successful brands are those that have managed to integrate the meanings (Chang & Chieng, 2006) they emit over time (Gardner & Levy, 1955), and which act synergistically (Diamond et al., 2009) towards a unique brand presence that allows them to differentiate from, and be consistently preferred over other competitive brands, even less expensive ones (Kapferer, 2008). Besides other advantages [e.g. less risk, easier distribution, etc. – see Hoeffler and Keller (2003)], these brands enjoy high levels of emotional engagement from consumers, as attested by the endless queues outside Apple's stores every time new i-phone and i-pad models are released (Brownsell, 2012; Lakin, 2008; Williams, R., 2014) or by the strong loyalty consumers show to Coca-Cola even after they have just chosen in a blind test the competitor brand, Pepsi, as the most tasteful one (Thrillist, 2013).

Not surprisingly therefore, branding has been one of the most researched topics in marketing and consumer behaviour literature (Schmitt, 2012), and understanding how consumers make their brand decisions, how they relate to brands, and ultimately why certain brands are preferred over others has been a key issue of concern (Ivens & Valta, 2011). The complex meanings attached to brands, both from consumers and firms, have led to a variety of approaches that can be followed in order to understand consumer-brand interactions. A comprehensive effort to capture all these meanings was made by De Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley (1998), who proposed that brands may be considered as: i) legal instruments that offer protection against potential imitations from competition; ii) logos; iii) names of owning companies; iv) short-hands facilitating consumers' choice; v) risk reducers; vi) identity systems; vii) images in consumers' minds; viii) value systems; ix) personalities; x) relationship partners; xi) objects bringing added value to the consumer; and xii) evolving entities that transform an unbranded good to a policy indicator. Amongst those different perspectives, two in particular have been attracting increased research interest in recent years (Avis, Aitken, & Ferguson, 2012; Hayes, Alford, Silver, & York, 2006; Lin & Huang, 2012) and have been considered as most promising (De Chernatony, 2001) when seeking to understand consumer-brand interactions: the brand as a relationship partner and the brand as personality. Their recent prominence in the literature is attributed to the fact that they refer to more symbolic aspects of brand consumption that are considered more crucial in the contemporary marketplace (Freling & Forbes, 2005b), where

differentiation based on functionality is almost not feasible any more (Graeff, 1996b; van Rekom, Jacobs, & Verlegh, 2006; Veryzer, 1995). Their symbolic nature stems from the fact that they both adopt an anthropomorphised view of brands (Bengtsson, 2003).

The idea of the brand as a relationship partner was originally proposed by Susan Fournier (1998). In essence, Fournier supported that since brands communicate functional and symbolic meanings (Chernev, Hamilton, & Gal, 2011; Levy, 1959) through the marketing mix activities, they assume an active role in their interactions with consumers, who in turn receive, interpret and add further nuance to these meanings according to their personal and social goals. In this sense, consumer-brand interactions can be considered as active dyadic exchanges that resemble interpersonal interactions in many ways (e.g. trusting the brand or forgiving its transgressions). Both global and local brands enjoy this kind of benefits: Toyota, for example, remains one of the most valued auto brands even though it recalled millions of cars due to faulty components in 2009-2010; FAGE, a Greek yoghurt brand, suffered huge losses in 2005 after discovery of mould in its yoghurts and for failing to notify consumers promptly, but recovered quickly and is once again the market leader. Not surprisingly, therefore, firms have a vested interest in building and fostering such powerful relationships between their brands and consumers (Francisco-Maffezzolli, Semprebon, & Prado, 2014; Kim, Lee, & Lee, 2005; Kim, Lee, & Ulgado, 2005).

Shortly prior to Fournier's introduction of the relational perspective at the consumer-brand level, Jennifer Aaker (1997), in a seminal paper, provided evidence that consumers actively anthropomorphise brands and attribute human personality characteristics to them. For example, Harley Davidson may be perceived as rugged while Red Cross as sympathetic. Firms are deeply interested in understanding how consumers (users and non-users) perceive the personalities of their brands and one key area of concern for marketers is the need to make decisions around what personality characteristics their brands should be imbued with (Cohen, 2014).

These two perspectives have largely shaped the development of the key theoretical explanation that has prevailed in the consumer behaviour and branding literature with regards to why and how consumers engage with certain brands more than with others: the Self-Brand Congruence theory (Sirgy, 1982;1985). The theory basically proposes that consumers show stronger preference for, and are more likely to develop relationships with, brands that have characteristics which are close to or congruent with their own characteristics. In practice, numerous empirical studies have provided

support for this premise [e.g. Birdwell (1968); Dolich (1969); Sirgy (1985); Stern, Bush, and Hair (1977)]. Moreover, and most importantly for firms and their brands, previous research has shown that when congruence is high/strong, a range of desirable behaviours ensues, such as preference and loyalty towards the brand [e.g. Bellenger, Steinberg, and Stanton (1976); Kressmann et al. (2006)].

In conclusion, the discussion above illustrates that the research field of self-brand congruence is rich and of interest, both to academics and to practitioners. Nevertheless, the theory is not without problems, as the following section will reveal.

1.3. Research Problem

> *"Consumer researchers are best positioned to pursue issues*
> *dealing with the intersection of identity and brands,*
> *which can lead to both theoretical and substantive insights."*

Kirmani (2009), p. 274

The purpose of this thesis is to address two key problems that can be identified in the existing research surrounding self-brand congruence (S-BC) theory.

First, as mentioned previously, S-BC seeks to understand the processes followed when consumers align a brand's characteristics to their own sense of selves; ever since Fournier's and Aaker's influential work, the theory in essence proposes that consumers develop relationships with, and prefer brands with characteristics that match their own personality characteristics. However, previous work on S-BC has hitherto assumed that consumers are drawn to brands with characteristics that *mirror* their own characteristics, hence the ways in which previous studies have been designed allow only a similarity configuration/form of alignment to emerge [e.g. Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, and Sen (2012) refer to self-brand (trait) *similarity*]. Surprisingly, this assumption has not been critically challenged, and previous research has not considered the possibility of other configurations in self-brand personality alignment, besides similarity. As this thesis will illustrate, existing research has adopted a rather restricted view of the alignment possibilities between consumers and brands. One reason for this is that, while the two research streams of consumer-brand relationships and brand personality have been flourishing, they still have not reached their full potential as theoretical platforms for the further exploration of the reasons why, and

the ways in which, consumers show stronger preferences for certain brands than for others. This can be attributed to the lack of thorough appreciation of the literature on interpersonal interactions, which consequently has impeded progress on areas relating to consumer-brand interactions where understanding is still limited. An examination of the interpersonal attraction literature reveals that similarity is not the only form of alignment, as having *similar* characteristics is not the only condition that fosters attraction between two people; people with *complementary* characteristics may also be attracted to each other. Although it seems logical for certain types of Fournier's consumer-brand relationships (e.g. flings), this alternative form of alignment has slipped under consumer researchers' radar. To the author's knowledge, no previous research has even considered, let alone tested empirically, the existence of this form of alignment, and the only studies which have implied that consumers might not only be attracted to brands with similar but also to brands with complementary characteristics are Swaminathan and Dommer (2012) and Heath and Scott (1998). Therefore, the first broad aim of this thesis is to explore alternative configurations of trait alignment that may exist between consumers' and brands' personalities.

Second, a central element of S-BC theory is that, in order to understand consumers' preferences for, and relationships with brands, one must: i) understand the specific characteristics that consumers attach to brands and to themselves, then ii) explore the ways the two are aligned, iii) use an appropriate method to measure this alignment, and eventually iv) assess its influence on brand-related behaviour. However, following the assumption of similarity in self-brand personality alignment and an evaluation of existing ways of measuring it (Sirgy et al., 1997), the trend in the design of recent studies has been towards more 'global' measures that do not capture consumers' and brands' specific traits in detail. As this thesis will show, this implies that it still remains unknown what actually it is that consumers are matching/aligning in the congruence process. In other words, research so far has not provided insight on which specific aspects of personality take precedence in the alignment process, and in what precise ways/patterns these more prominent consumer personality aspects are aligned and related to those of their chosen brands. The possibility of other forms of alignment, besides similarity, implies that other techniques of measurement that capture more detail in the alignment process might be more appropriate. In that case, although the positive influence of the similarity form of self-brand congruence has been supported for outcomes such as purchase motivation (Sirgy, 1985), the predictive power of a new

measure capturing more nuance in the alignment process would need to be examined for a range of cognitive, emotional and behavioural brand-related outcomes. Therefore, the second broad aim of this thesis is to explore other ways of measuring consumer and brand personality traits, and of testing the relationship between them, while capturing all the nuance and detail which has been, to date, rather overlooked.

1.4. Research Objectives

To address the research problems outlined above, the following specific research objectives were set, presented in the order in which they are addressed in the thesis.

    i.   To review and critique existing literature on the conceptualisation and measurement of human personality and of brand personality.

This objective is the first objective relating to the literature review part of the thesis. As self-brand congruence theory proposes that consumers align brand personality traits with their own traits, the first step of the thesis, is to review and critically appraise current knowledge on how human and brand personality are conceptualised and measured, respectively. In other words, in order to examine the patterns of alignment between consumers' own personalities and the personalities of their chosen brands, the first step must be to understand the ways in which the properties or components of both constructs have been defined and captured for empirical study. Particular care will be taken to pinpoint the limitations of existing approaches, so as to inform the design of the empirical part of the thesis.

    ii.   To examine and critique existing literature relating to the conceptualisation and measurement of self-brand congruence, and to its influence on desirable brand-related outcomes.

This is the second objective relating to the literature review. Having reviewed how previous research has conceptualised and measured human and brand personality separately, this objective involves reviewing how the two are related/aligned and how this alignment has hitherto been measured in previous studies. As with the first objective, the review will identify problems in existing conceptualisations and measures of alignment so as to appropriately inform the empirical study.

iii. To develop a conceptual model of the structure and composition of human and brand personality, the alignment patterns between them, and the effect of this alignment on desirable brand-related outcomes.

Building on the outcomes of the first and the second objectives, the third research objective refers to the development of a conceptual model, which offers a novel proposal of the alignment between human/consumer and brand personality. The model will be accompanied by hypotheses relating to: i) the composition of brand personality, ii) the alignment between consumer and brand personality, and iii) the outcomes of this alignment for desirable brand-related behaviours.

iv. To explore, qualitatively, complex aspects of consumers' relationships with brands, their perceptions of those brands' personalities and of the alignment with their own personalities.

The fourth research objective refers to the exploratory, qualitative phase of the empirical study. It will provide, through consumers' own accounts, a broader understanding of the role of brands in consumers' lives within the overall context of their brand preferences and dislikes. Moreover, it will shed light on underexplored questions relating to the processes consumers follow when building their perceptions of brands' personalities, before moving forward to explore further how consumers perceive the relationship between their own personality characteristics and those of brands. The intention of the exploratory stage is also to improve the design and quality of the main quantitative stage of the empirical study.

v. To investigate, quantitatively, the structure and composition of consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and brands' personalities, the patterns of alignment existing between the two, and the influence of these patterns on desirable brand-related outcomes (i.e. to test the conceptual framework and the hypotheses).

The fifth research objective relates to the quantitative testing of the study's hypotheses via a large scale survey. The intention of this objective is to develop a new, improved measure of self-brand personality alignment which captures a greater spectrum of

nuance in alignment patterns, and to test and compare its predictive power against existing measures for a range of brand-related outcomes.

vi. To derive useful, practical recommendations for brand managers regarding the implications of the patterns of self-brand personality alignment for their brands.

The final objective has direct relevance to, and seeks to inform, marketing practice. The results from the investigation of the hypotheses will be used to develop recommendations for practitioners with regards to the design of their brands' personalities. In particular, the thesis will provide insight on those aspects of brand personality that need to be highlighted in order for the alignment process with consumers' own personalities to lead to desirable brand-related behaviours.

1.5. Research Approach

The account of the research problem and objectives above implies a need to draw from two distinct literature streams: i) the sociological/relational perspective, represented by theories of self- and social self-identity, and by a relational view of consumer-brand interactions; ii) the psychological perspective, represented by the human personality and interpersonal attraction literatures. While the two are indeed distinct approaches, their combination is thought to lead to a fuller appreciation of issues relating to self-identity (Côté & Levine, 2002), and thus provides a unique opportunity to inform the research problem addressed in this thesis. As a matter of fact, Schmitt (2012) suggests that brand relationships and brand personality are the result of a process that combines brand-related information; they capture social/relational-focused and self-focused perspectives of engagement with brands, respectively.

In terms of the *sociological/relational* perspective, key strands of literature that will be reviewed include work by Fournier (1998) on consumer-brand relationships and work on the role of the self- and social self-identity in brand consumption [e.g. Belk (1988); Escalas and Bettman (2005); Sirgy (1982)]. Overall, this work will assist in generally understanding how consumers relate personally and socially to their chosen brands, as the development of such relationships ultimately represents the greater personal meaningfulness of those brands to the consumer (Schmitt, 2012). In this sense, it will

add to our understanding of self-brand congruence theory by shedding light on how and why the brand and the symbolic associations invested to it through marketing communications are interpreted and evaluated according to the consumer's own (social) self-symbolic objectives, and are eventually incorporated into the self.

In terms of the *psychological* perspective, key areas of literature that will be reviewed include research on human personality [e.g. McCrae and Costa Jr (1997); McCrae and John (1992); Saucier (1994)], and on interpersonal relationships and attraction [e.g. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005); Emerson (1976); Klohnen and Luo (2003); Klohnen and Mendelsohn (1998); Luo and Klohnen (2005)]. On the one hand, the work on human personality can shed light on how consumers' perceptions of own personalities and those of brands can be measured. On the other hand, the adoption of a relational perspective, viewing brands as partners with which consumers enter and sustain relationships because they seek benefits from them (Ashworth, Dacin, & Thomson, 2009), will allow the current thesis to draw from work on interpersonal interactions. The theories that research on interpersonal attraction has developed about the reasons why people enter and sustain relationships with others seem to highlight the importance of the benefits they seek in them, while modern sociologists (Giddens, 1991) have recognised that the extent to which a relationship provides benefits to all involved parties is a crucial condition for its maintenance. Previous research in interpersonal psychology (Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, & Giles, 1999; Robins, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2000) has provided clear evidence that personality is one of these benefits that are fundamental for the development and high perceived quality of relationships. Therefore, the work on interpersonal attraction will enhance understanding of consumer-brand attraction and will provide further insight on how aspects of consumers' personalities may be relating to those of their brand partners, hence revealing hitherto unexplored configurations of self-brand personality alignment.

In terms of the empirical part of the research, a two-stage mixed-methods approach will be followed. First, the qualitative exploration of consumers' relationships with brands via in-depth interviews will draw from the interpretivist paradigm, where consumers' own accounts, crucial for a deeper understanding of the relevance of the brand to the consumer's personal and social self-concept, as well as of the consumer-brand attraction, will be sought. Second, the testing of the study's conceptual model and hypotheses will draw from a logical-positivist paradigm, involving the execution of a large-scale online survey to investigate the structure and composition of consumers'

perceptions of their own and brands' personalities, the alignment between them, and the influence of this alignment on a range of brand-related outcomes.

1.6. Academic & Practical Contribution of the Research

The academic contribution of this thesis is threefold. First, it explores for the first time the possibility that there are other forms of alignment between consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and those of brands, beyond that of 'mirroring'. The thesis therefore contributes to the literature of self-brand congruence by advancing our understanding of the mechanisms in self-brand personality alignment. Second, it examines in detail what specific traits/characteristics are actually being aligned when consumers compare or match themselves to brands. In this sense, the thesis contributes to self-brand congruence knowledge by adding further nuance and detail with regards to the alignment patterns. Third, this thesis develops and tests an original measure of self-brand congruence which captures more than just a similarity configuration of trait alignment between consumers and brands. This advances the self-brand congruence field as the new measure, capturing a greater spectrum of nuance in alignment, will show stronger explanatory powers with regards to desirable brand-related behaviours in comparison to existing measures that only capture similarity.

The study is also of value to marketing practitioners, as the results will assist brand managers in identifying those brand personality aspects that are more crucial in consumers' alignment processes, thus allowing them to better refine and tailor the personality characteristics of their brands. The results will also increase managers' understanding about the personality aspects of their brands that require reinforcement or dilution in communications with their target markets. Overall, the research will assist marketers in fostering consumers' emotional engagement with their brands, setting the scene for the development of strong consumer-brand relationships.

1.7. Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 reviews the literature relating to brands as relationship partners and as having personalities. It presents an overview of the previous research on consumer-brand relationships and on consumers' emotional engagement with brands. It also critically examines previous research on the

conceptualisation and measurement of brand personality and proposes a theoretically grounded method for the measurement of brand personality perceptions by drawing from human personality research. Chapter 3 reviews, and highlights the limitations of, current research on the conceptualisation and measurement of self-brand congruence, and draws from theories of interpersonal relations and attraction to provide the theoretical basis for the re-conceptualisation of self-brand personality alignment. Chapter 4 summarises the implications of the preceding chapters for self-brand personality alignment and proposes the conceptual model and the hypotheses with regards to the structure and composition of human and brand personality, the alignment between them, and the influence of this alignment on a range of brand-related outcomes. Chapter 5 describes and justifies the methodological decisions that were made for the empirical part of the research. Chapter 6 reports the results from the exploratory, qualitative study. Chapter 7 presents the descriptive results from the online survey, while Chapter 8 reports the results from the testing of the study's hypotheses. Finally, Chapter 9 summarises the main findings of the thesis, and their theoretical and managerial implications; it also discusses the study's limitations and proposes avenues for future research.

2. THE BRAND AS A RELATIONSHIP PARTNER AND AS A PERSONALITY: CONCEPTUALISATION AND MEASUREMENT

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the notion of the brand as a relationship partner and as a personality and to review the relevant literatures. Before proceeding further however, and following previous criticism on the ambiguous starting point of the two literature streams (Avis, et al., 2012), it is vital to clarify that such an undertaking is assumed on the basis that the brand as a partner and as a personality are *metaphors* that can be used to inform understanding of consumer-brand interactions, rather than as literal postulations. In other words, these considerations are used as tools that can allow us to make sense of consumer-brand interactions by considering them as analogous to, but not identical to, interpersonal interactions.

The chapter starts with introducing the perspective of viewing brands as relationship partners and providing an overview of the relevant literature on consumer-brand relationships. As a crucial aspect of consumer-brand connection, personality is discussed next, starting with the definition of the concept, providing a brief account of the developments in measuring human personality perceptions and discussing the most dominant model for their measurement, the Five Factor Model. The focus is then turned to brand personality, its definition and its underlying mechanisms, before critically reviewing the different approaches that have been proposed for the measurement of brand personality perceptions. The penultimate section presents the implications of previous research on brand relationships and brand personality for this study, and the final section provides a summary of the chapter.

2.2. Brands as Relationship Partners

2.2.1. The Relational Perspective at the Consumer-Brand Level

As indicated in Chapter 1, a flourishing research stream has developed around the relational perspective of consumer-brand interactions, that is, a view of brands as partners interacting with consumers in ways similar to interpersonal relations. While the relational perspective, where the focus is on the development of long-term, co-creative relationships with value-generating stakeholders (e.g. consumers, other

members of a company's network), is not new to marketing literature (Coviello, Brodie, & Munro, 1997; O'Malley, 2014; Tregear & Gorton, 2009), especially in business-to-business and services contexts (Veloutsou, 2007), its application at the consumer-brand level is more recent. One of the studies that introduced the relational view of brands was the study by Shimp and Madden (1988). By drawing from Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory of love, they proposed that, similar to interpersonal relationships, consumers can have eight different relationship types with their brands, depending on the degree to which they exhibit liking, yearning and commitment towards them. While the study was influential in building a conceptual bridge between consumer-brand and interpersonal interactions, the literature on the relational view of brands actually rocketed with a seminal paper by Fournier (1998) that provided clear empirical evidence for the existence of consumer-brand relationships.

The paper based the idea that the brand can act as a partner in a relationship dyad with the consumer in ways that bear similarities with interpersonal relationships, on two main explanations. First, previous studies, primarily Belk (1988) and Aaker (1997), had clearly indicated that consumers are able and willing to perceive brands as human-like characters and can easily attribute human characteristics to them. Second, Fournier proposed, brands exhibit behaviour and communicate functional and symbolic meanings (psychological, sociocultural, relational/emotional) to consumers through the marketing mix activities; these can be interpreted as the brand's actions and its response to consumers, who in turn interpret and evaluate these meanings, make additional inferences about the brand's personality traits (Bengtsson, 2003) and decide whether they will initiate, retain or discontinue a relationship with it. In this sense, brands assume an active role in engaging with consumers in a dyadic exchange.

Fournier's analysis, which consisted of idiographic and cross-case examination of three females, identified a range of different types of consumer-brand relationships based on seven dimensions: i) voluntary/imposed, ii) positive/negative, iii) intense/superficial, iv) enduring/short-term, v) public/private, vi) formal/informal, and vii) symmetric/asymmetric. These different types can be classified under four broader groupings (Hanslin & Rindell, 2014), as shown in Figure 2-1. A close observation of the diagram reveals that Fournier's typology includes a range of different relationships, such as short- and long-term, as well as sporadic and enduring.

Figure 2-1: Fournier's (1998) typology of consumer-brand relationships [adapted from Hanslin and Rindell (2014)]
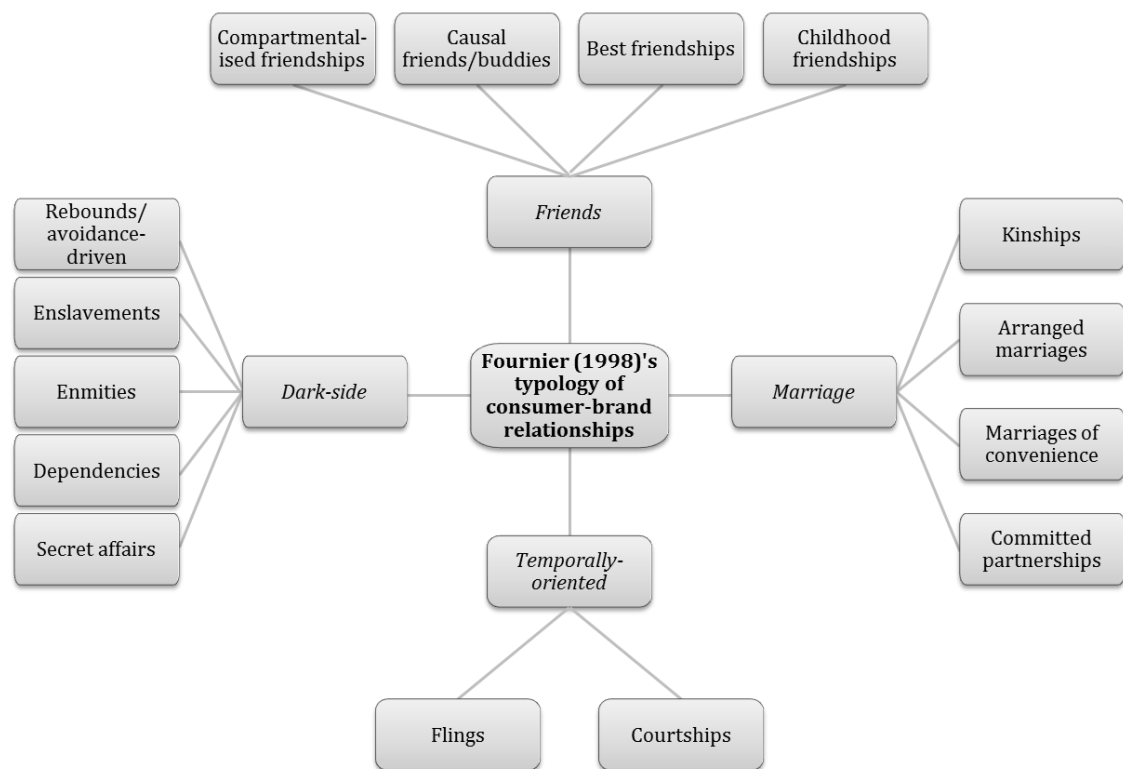
In order to capture the fact that not all consumer-brand relationships are strong or enduring or of the same significance to the consumer, Fournier, supporting that all relationships are worthy of further exploration, proposed a six-dimensional construct, the consumer-brand relationship quality (BRQ, Figure 2-2), and highlighted that an active, satisfying relationship is the result of affective/socio-emotive (Love and Passion, and Self-connection), behavioural (Interdependence and Commitment) and cognitive (Intimacy and Brand Partner Quality) ties. According to Fournier, *Love and Passion* are key aspects of all strong brand relationships and refer to a level of emotional engagement with the brand beyond simple preference (i.e. the consumer may experience anxiety in the case of separation from the brand). *Self-connection* refers to the degree that the brand allows the consumer to express their actual or ideal self (i.e. the extent to which identity is shared). *Interdependence* describes the frequency and intensity of consumer-brand interactions (i.e. the extent to which the brand is an indispensable part in the consumer's life) while *Commitment* expresses the consumer's strong intentions to invest in the relationship and to maintain it. The depth of consumers' subjective knowledge and perception of brand-related stories indicate

Intimacy with the brand. Finally, *Brand Partner Quality* signifies the consumer's overall satisfaction with the branded relationship partner, encompassing expectations from the consumer's side that the brand will care for/respect them, will be reliable and predictable in fulfilling its role, will follow the rules of the relationship, will deliver what is expected, and that it will be held accountable for its actions.

Figure 2-2: Fournier's (1998) Brand Relationship Quality construct (p. 366)
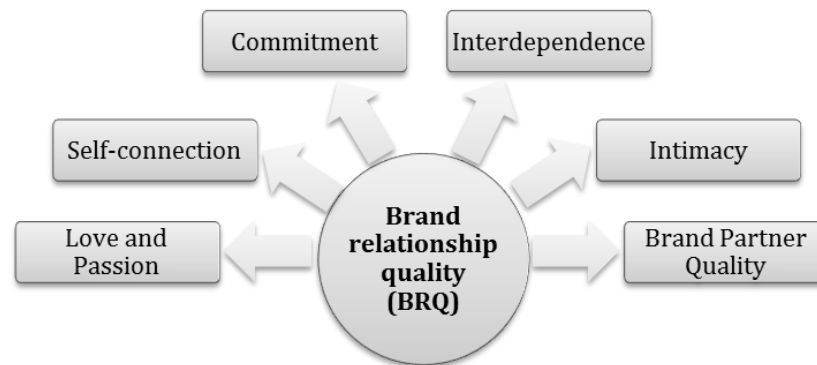
2.2.2. Overview of the Consumer-Brand Relationship Research

As it can be expected, Fournier's work inspired further research relating to different types, stages, contexts, aspects and outcomes of consumer-brand relationships. Substantial effort has been made to corroborate the existence of, and understand more deeply, the different relationship types she proposed, such as childhood friendships (Connell & Schau, 2012) or flings (Alvarez & Fournier, 2012); for instance, Alvarez and Fournier (2012) found that 89% of the respondents in one of their studies had indeed experienced brand 'flings'. More recently, Fournier's typology of consumer-brand relationships has been expanded with new relationship forms, such as the 'turncoat', which describes the transformation of a previously negatively-loaded relationship to a currently more positive one (Hanslin & Rindell, 2014). Issues such as whether consumer-brand relationships are affected by the particular life stage the consumer is in (Kim & Kwon, 2011; Sikkel, 2013) or how and why they are dissolved (Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004; Fajer & Schouten, 1995) have also been examined.

The BRQ construct and its dimensions have also attracted research interest although a number of issues seem to remain unresolved. For example, Kim, H. K., et al. (2005) developed a measurement scale for BRQ and showed that self-brand connection is its

most important component. They also explored further the notions embodied in the different BRQ dimensions. They argued that Commitment consists of a cognitive and a behavioural facet, albeit in their empirical study only the behavioural one emerged, both for product and service brands. Similarly, they suggested that Intimacy should be considered as a two-dimensional concept, consisted of depth of knowledge for the brand on the one hand and affective bonds on the other, but in their own empirical study Intimacy was fully accounted by its affective aspect. More recent research has started examining whether the dimensionality of the BRQ construct is retained in different contexts/product categories (Francisco-Maffezzolli, et al., 2014).

2.2.3. *Critique of the Relational Perspective of Consumer-Brand Interactions*

Fournier's conceptualisation of brands as active relationship partners and her theoretical framework of consumer-brand relationships, however, are not without criticism. The idea of brand partners has been criticised as not applicable to the majority of consumers that are considered to merely want brands to serve a certain purpose/need instead of taking an active role within their lives (Bengtsson, 2003; Freeman, Spenner, & Bird, 2012). As a result, it has been supported (Bengtsson, 2003) that consumer research should avoid any association (including terminology) of consumer-brand interactions with interpersonal relationships. O'Malley and Tynan (2000) have specifically warned against this: *"It may be that the metaphor of interpersonal relationships has been so successful that the academy has forgotten that it is a metaphor which is being used"* (p. 807). In a similar vein, Bengtsson (2003) notes that, some concepts that describe notions as complex as the interactions between two people are overstretched when transferred from the context of interpersonal relationships to the context of consumer-brand interactions; a typical example being Brand Love and Passion. Bengtsson also proceeds to highlight that, since brands are inanimate objects, the condition of reciprocity, which is fundamental for any relationship, is violated in the case of consumer-brand relationships. In this sense, he argues, three more BRQ dimensions (Interdependence, Commitment and Intimacy) are problematic as they are in essence inapplicable to consumer-brand interactions.

However, in her seminal paper, Fournier clearly defined the limits of the metaphorical conceptualisation of brands as active relationship partners and highlighted the fact

that, although insight from interpersonal theories can enhance our understanding about consumer-brand interactions, brands are not real partners, as they cannot think, feel or act individually, but only through the marketing mix activities. Her recent work has focused on consolidating further the idea of the intentional agentic behaviour of brands (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012). Besides Fournier's own work however, subsequent research has provided further empirical evidence that consolidates the notion of the brand as an active relationship partner, and has confirmed that consumers indeed engage in relationships with brands. For instance, Veloutsou (2007) found that consumers seem willing to hear about, but also to provide feedback to product brands ('Two-way Communication'), and respond emotionally to them ('Emotional Exchange'). In the context of services brands, relationships are even more complicated due to the intangibility of services and the risk consumers feel; hence issues of trust for example become very crucial as the relationship is in fact built between the corporate brand, consumers, and employees (Dall'Olmo Riley & De Chernatony, 2000).

Overall, Fournier's work in particular, and the relational perspective in general, can largely enhance our understanding of consumers' enduring preferences for certain brands, especially in the contemporary marketplace where marketers increasingly seek to develop relationships between their brands and consumers across a vast range of touch-points, including social media. The usefulness of the relational perspective lies with the fact that, in a similar way that relationship quality in interpersonal relationships has the power to explain partners' behaviour, brand relationship quality embodies notions that can explain behaviours beyond repeat purchase, price insensitivity or high spending on a certain brand within a certain product category, that are embedded in the traditional views of brand loyalty. First, it can help explain behaviours on which understanding remains limited, such as the tendency to perceive the brand more positively, to be willing to try brand extensions, but also to lack appreciation for alternatives, to be more accommodating and forgiving towards the brand's transgressions, or to engage in positive word-of-mouth (Fournier, 1995;1998). Second, while the influence of emotions on consumers' judgments and actions/decisions is not new in the psychology and consumer behaviour literatures (Williams, P., 2014), and research prior to Fournier had already touched upon consumers' emotional arousal from consumption activities [e.g. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982)], and emotional connection with special possessions in general [e.g. Wallendorf and Arnould (1988), Richins (1994)], her study highlighted that brands can

be considered as "*powerful repositories of meaning*" [Fournier (1998), p. 365], where all brand-related information, memories and experiences accumulate in consumers' minds and create strong emotional ties with the brand that grow with time (Fournier, 2009). As a result, the relational perspective is also useful in that it can capture more emotionally-related aspects of the consumer-brand interactions that prior to Fournier's work were indeed largely ignored, such as love, passion, and self-brand connection.

The usefulness of the relational approach in explaining all these different brand-related behaviours is attested by a burgeoning stream of literature, from which this thesis draws to address the research problems. This stream of literature has demonstrated how important a strong consumer-brand relationship is for commitment (Sung & Choi, 2010), trust (Elliott & Yannopoulou, 2007), but also connectedness (Escalas, 2004) with the brand. The connection with the brand at a personal level nurtures consumers' emotional engagement with it (Kim, H. K., et al., 2005). Not surprisingly therefore, emotional brand attachment [e.g. Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, and Nyffenegger (2011); Thomson, MacInnis, and Park (2005)] and brand love [e.g. Albert, Merunka, and Valette-Florence (2008); Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi (2012)] have both received substantial research attention recently; a typical example is the study by Batra, et al. (2012), which supported that self-brand integration (i.e. the extent to which the brand facilitates self-expression) is a core element of consumer-brand love relationships.

2.3. Brands as Personalities

2.3.1. Introduction

Similar to the perspective of viewing brands as relationship partners, the perspective of viewing brands as personalities describes in essence a metaphor: that of brands being perceived by consumers as having human personality characteristics. The brand-as-personality perspective is also very influential, as it has attracted a substantial amount of branding researchers' interest. This section will introduce the ways in which brand personality has been conceptualised and measured in existing research. Before brand personality can however be explained, it is first essential to define and explain what personality as a concept actually is. For this purpose, the section starts with considering some key ideas in the conceptualisation and measurement of personality by drawing from the human personality research in the psychology literature.

2.3.2. Personality: Conceptualisation & Measurement

"What human personality is, everybody knows; but nobody can tell."

Burnham (1929), p. 361

The word 'personality' derives from the word 'persona' which was used to name the masks actors in ancient Greece and Rome used to wear in order to represent the characters they were playing (Allport, 1937).

As it can be expected for such a complex concept, there is no commonly accepted definition of personality in psychology research (Kassarjian, 1971). Illustrative of this is the following quote from Pervin (1990): *"There appear to be as many definitions of personality as there are authors"* (p. 3). The reason for this is because researchers are not in agreement about the actual subject matter of personality research. The idea that seems to have gained substantial support over the years and that is commonly mentioned in core textbooks in psychology [e.g. Martin, Carlson, and Buskist (2007)] is that personality research should aim to understand individual differences. One definition that adequately captures this notion is the one proposed by Gross (1987) that considers personality *"…as those relatively stable and enduring aspects of an individual which distinguish them from other people, making them unique, but which at the same time permit a comparison between individuals"* (p. 8). Overall, attempts that have been made in conceptualising and measuring human personality can be categorised under four different approaches: the psychodynamic, the humanistic, the social-cognitive and the psycholexical/trait approach.

The *psychodynamic* approach suggests that people's thoughts and actions are simply an outward expression of unconscious yearnings and tensions (Gleitman, Gross, & Reisberg, 2011). The father of the psychodynamic approach, Sigmund Freud, was primarily concerned with understanding inner conflicts provoked by three levels of personality called the id (basic, primal forces that seek pleasure), the ego (reconciling the id with the demands of reality) and the superego (internalised system of conduct acting in rewarding or punishing ways, depending on whether the ego obeys the reality), and with the defence mechanisms the mind develops to deal with these conflicts (Gleitman, et al., 2011). The contribution of Freud's and his followers' work (e.g. Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, Karen Horney and Erik Erikson) to modern psychology research is arguable, primarily due to the difficulties in providing empirical support for

the main premises of their theories and the fact that their proposed explanations can account for even opposing outcomes (Martin, et al., 2007).

The *humanistic* approach adopts a more phenomenological stance and basically contends that we shape our personalities in a way that enables us to attain self-actualisation, that is, our maximum intellectual and emotional potential (Gleitman, et al., 2011). One of its most influential contributors, Abraham Maslow, proposed that people are positively motivated to move forward in a hierarchical way, that is, to first fulfil their most basic needs (e.g. food, water) and, once these have been achieved, to sequentially seek satisfaction of other needs (safety, attachment, esteem, cognitive and aesthetic). While, in comparison to the darker psychodynamic approach, the positive orientation of the humanistic approach invites a certain degree of relief about the human nature, it has also been criticised as largely descriptive rather than explanatory of human personality, as well as for the significant challenges posed towards the empirical investigation of its central premises (Martin, et al., 2007).

The *social-cognitive* approach builds on the notion of our self-perception being shaped by others around us and proposes that our behaviour is shaped by cognitive, behavioural and environmental influences, such as the consequences of our actions, our own perception of them and the beliefs of others about us (Martin, et al., 2007). It is an amalgam of two traditional perspectives to personality (Gleitman, et al., 2011): i) the behavioural/social learning tradition, founded by John Watson who supported that any person can achieve anything with proper training, and further developed by Albert Bandura who supported that, when we connect our actions with their consequences, we develop an internalised system of outcome expectations that consistently controls our actions, and ii) the cognitive tradition, originally developed by George Kelly and further developed by Walter Mischel, that broadly suggests that stable characteristics of one's own personality are strongly affected by the situation but also the person's cognitive perception of the situation. The social-cognitive approach has also been criticised as descriptive rather than explanatory (Martin, et al., 2007).

The approach that has achieved the most enduring influence on the personality research field, however, is the *psycholexical/trait* approach. It proposes that: i) an individual can be described using a set of enduring characteristics (traits) that capture who he/she is and that emerge across a variety of situations, and ii) the degree to which an individual possess these traits can help explain differences in their behaviour (Martin, et al., 2007). However, researchers under this approach support that before

we can start to explain people's behaviour, we first need to develop a system to describe their personality, and to capture their differences in terms of personality. After years of empirical research, researchers finally seem to agree on the form of such a system. The section below provides a brief historical account of the developments which led to the currently most dominant (Mulyanegara, Tsarenko, & Anderson, 2009) descriptive system of human personality: the Five Factor Model (or Big Five).

Five Factor Model of Human Personality (FFM)

While previous contributors [e.g. Klages (1929); Baumgarten (1933)] cannot be ignored [see John, Angleitner, and Ostendorf (1988) for a complete review], the father of the trait approach and the FFM was Gordon Allport. Following Sir Francis Galton (1884), Allport substantially elaborated the lexical hypothesis: that the most important descriptors of how individuals differ in terms of personality must have logically been captured in the language people use every day (Saucier & Goldberg, 1996); therefore, scrutinising the language will allow the identification of a list of personality characteristics, which can subsequently be classified and reduced to a more manageable taxonomy of personality dimensions (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008; McCrae & John, 1992) that could adequately capture differences in people's behaviour (John, et al., 2008). To proceed further with this idea, Allport and Odbert (1936) searched in an English dictionary all those words that described personality, ending up with an enormous list of approximately 18000 terms. These descriptors were classified into four categories: traits; temporary states and moods; evaluative judgments; physical characteristics and talents. Following Allport, Raymond Cattell, recognising that some of these categories (e.g. temporary states and moods) would not be really useful in deriving a taxonomy that would describe stable differences among individuals (John, 1989), focused only on a list of traits (around 4500 terms) by Allport and Odbert (1936) and drastically reduced them to 35 variables; through factor analysis, he was led to the discovery of 16 'fundamental' factors of personality.

The work by Fiske (1949), largely inspired by Cattell, provided the first empirical study that revealed a five-factor structure of personality; this was also confirmed by Tupes and Christal (1961) across eight different samples, and other subsequent studies, including efforts not using Cattell's list. Goldberg (1981), for example, used Norman's work (1963) to show that the FFM structure was stable regardless of the factor

extraction and rotation method (John, et al., 2008) and developed the 100 unipolar trait descriptive adjectives list (TDA). Following this massive amount of research, the five orthogonally rotated dimensions that were consistently emerging, were labelled Factor I: Surgency/Extraversion, Factor II: Agreeableness, Factor III: Conscientiousness, Factor IV: Emotional Stability vs Neuroticism and Factor V: Culture/Intellect/Openness. This structure was named as the 'Big Five' (Goldberg, 1981) to account for the fact that the five factors are broad dimensions and each one of them is in essence a summary of a large number of personality traits (John, 1990). An individual can exhibit traits from all five dimensions, and they may be scoring high or low in each one of them.

In parallel with the lexical tradition, research using questionnaires to study personality [e.g. Eysenck (1947)] showed signs of convergence with the Big Five in the work of Costa Jr and McCrae (1992), who, after a series of versions [e.g. McCrae and Costa Jr (1985)], published in 1992 the NEO Personality Inventory-Revised (NEO-PI-R) consisting of 240 items allocated across six facets for each of the five dimensions (Figure 2-3).

Figure 2-3: The Five Factor Model of human personality [adapted from Costa Jr and McCrae (1992)]
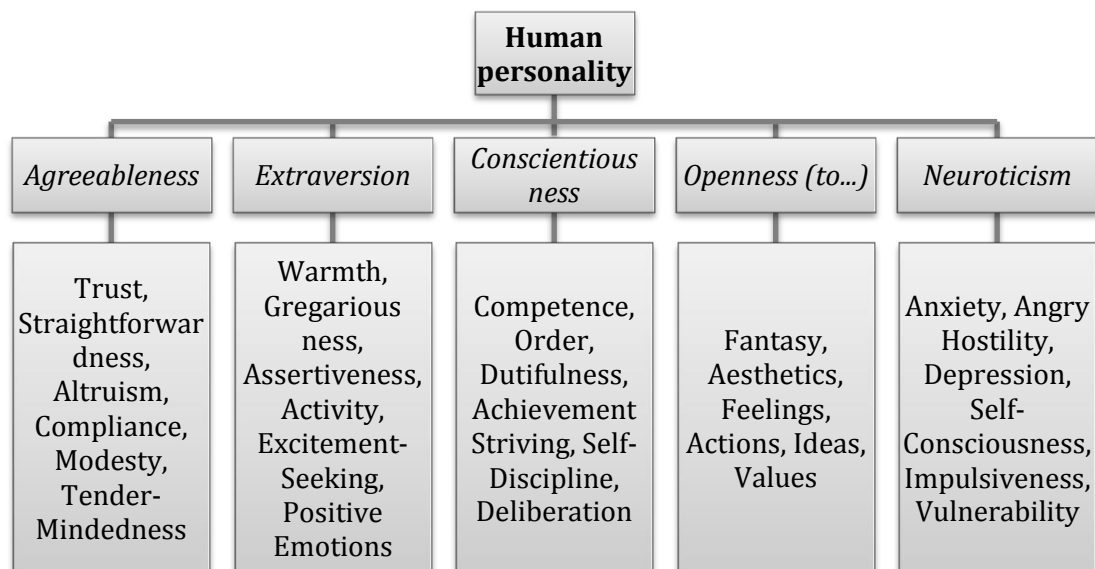
Since then, research [see McCrae and John (1992) and John, et al. (2008)] has further confirmed the stability of the FFM both in self-reports and peer-reports, as well as in

other cultural contexts [e.g. Benet-Martinez and John (1998); Denissen, Geenen, van Aken, Gosling, and Potter (2008)], and over different life stages, as Costa and McCrae's work was also conducted on middle-aged/older individuals. As a result, the FFM is nowadays considered as a remarkably stable, universal abstract taxonomy of personality (Schmitt, Allik, McCrae, & Benet-Martínez, 2007), and besides some disagreements in the labels of the factors (Kassarjian, 1971), there now seems to exist a general consensus regarding their meaning and content (John, et al., 2008).

It was soon noted however, that the personality scales published until that point were quite lengthy: for example, Costa Jr and McCrae's (1992) NEO-PI-R includes 240 items, while Goldberg's TDA list includes 100 items. Indicatively, the latter would require approximately 15 minutes to be completed. For some research purposes however, this amount of time is quite demanding for participants (Saucier, 1994). As a result, shorter scales were developed, including very short ones with only 10 items (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003), which however bear risks related to reliability and validity (John, et al., 2008). The most notable shorter scales include Costa Jr and McCrae's (1989) 60-item NEO-FFI, the 44-item Big Five Inventory (BFI) developed based on the prototypical definitions of the Big Five (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991), and Saucier's (1994) 40-item Mini-Markers of personality (a brief version of Goldberg's TDA list). Their recent comparison (John, et al., 2008) suggests that the TDA and Saucier's 40-item scales seem to have the highest reliability (.84 for the TDA and Saucier's lists, .83 for the BFI and .81 for the NEO-FFI). Although the BFI scale includes short phrases to describe personality traits and can thus be considered less ambiguous than single-item scales, such as Saucier's Mini-Markers (Appendix I), the latter has been found as a remarkably reliable and valid inventory (Dwight, Cummings, & Glenar, 1998; Mooradian & Nezlek, 1996), with similar robustness to, and less confusing, negation-phrased items than the original 100-item TDA list (Saucier, 1994).

In conclusion, the trait perspective in general and the FFM in particular constitute the currently most well-developed and most popular approach to capturing individuals' differences in terms of stable aspects of personality. Their popularity also extends to the field of consumer research, as they share similarities in the way personality is conceptualised. For example, Kassarjian (1971) defines personality as a set of *"generalised patterns of response"* that allow the individual to react in a relatively stable way in response to surrounding stimuli (p. 409).

2.3.3. Brand Personality: Definition & Overview of Existing Research

"Products, like people, have personalities,
and they can make or break them in the market place."

Ogilvy (1985), p. 14

As mentioned earlier, brand personality is in essence a term that describes a metaphor: that of brands being perceived as having human characteristics. The term should not be confused with brand identity or brand image, although the three are related constructs. For this reason, it is worth providing first a brief definition of the two constructs before proceeding to define brand personality.

<u>*Brand Identity, Brand Image and Brand Personality*</u>

Brand identity, a term originally introduced by Jean-Noël Kapferer in the 1980s, refers to the outward expression of a brand, that is, to how the owner of the brand wishes the consumer to perceive the brand. In essence, brand identity encompasses the vision, values and meanings that the company wishes to communicate externally. Kapferer (2008) distinguishes six components of brand identity in his Brand Identity Prism (Figure 2-4): physique, relationship, reflection, self-image, culture and personality.

Figure 2-4: Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism [Kapferer (2008), p. 183]
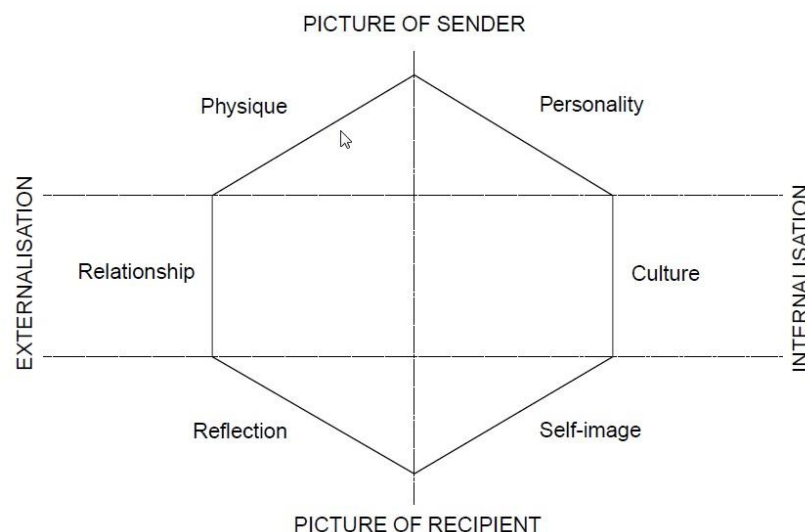
The six components are positioned according to two axes: i) the constructed source (the brand as an individual) vs the constructed receiver (the brand as a stereotypical user), and ii) externalisation (the social aspects of the brand) vs internalisation (the self of the brand).

More recently, David Aaker's (1996) conceptualisation of brand identity (section 3) has also received widespread acclaim. Aaker views brand identity as *"a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategy aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for…"*. According to Aaker, brand identity is composed of two levels: i) the core, which refers to the *"central, timeless essence of the brand"* and should remain constant, and ii) the extended, which refers to those elements *"that provide texture and completeness"* and add detail to the portrait the brand projects to the world. Moreover, Aaker's model decomposes brand identity in 12 dimensions categorised in four perspectives (Figure 2-5): brand as product, as organisation, as person, and as symbol.

Figure 2-5: Aaker's Brand Identity Model [adapted from Aaker (1996), section 3]
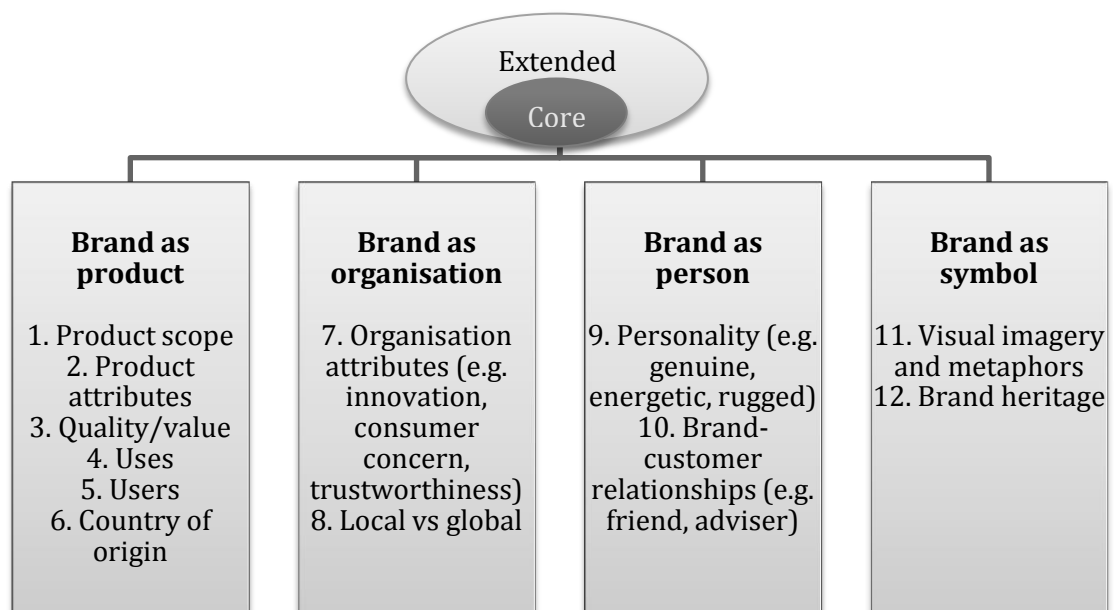
While brand identity refers to how the brand is intended to be communicated by its owner, brand image refers to how the brand is actually perceived by consumers. Managers ideally strive towards the maximisation of the overlap between the two.

According to Keller (1993), *brand image* is defined as the *"perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory"* (p. 3). Brand associations include product-related (e.g. physical characteristics of the product) and non-product-related attributes (e.g. price, packaging, user imagery, and usage imagery), benefits (functional, symbolic and experiential), and overall attitudes towards a brand. These associations can vary in terms of favourability, strength and uniqueness, and the more favourable, strongly held and unique associations a brand is related to, the more likely its success in the marketplace is.

What can be concluded from the above discussion therefore is that brand personality is only one element or component of brand associations, and a distinction between intended and perceived brand personality should be made. It should be clarified at this point that this thesis will focus on consumers' perceptions of brands' personalities and not on brands' personalities as those are intended by their managers. The next section defines the concept of brand personality and presents an overview of existing research.

Definition of Brand Personality & Overview of Existing Research

The first reference to the fact that brands can have personalities was made by Gardner and Levy (1955). The concept attracted increased interest from practitioners much earlier than academics (Avis, et al., 2012). As early as 1983, Ogilvy (1983) postulated that brands have personalities just like people. A year later, Plummer (1984) made a significant step forward in conceptualising brand personality by considering it as the collection of two dimensions: how brands are promoted *to* consumers and how brands are eventually perceived *by* consumers. He clearly highlighted that perceptions of a brand's personality might be different from the company's initial intentions due to consumers' differences in values, cultural surroundings and experiences. Plummer therefore warned brand managers that they cannot control but only half of their brand's fate in the market. In his Marketing News article, Triplett (1994) issued more warnings; he asserted that even brands of everyday appliances can have personalities and that consumers may assign both positive and negative personality traits to brands. He alerted managers to the fact that they need to carefully manage the personality of their brands as unique brand personalities are a key differentiating element from competition. In essence, he made clear that brand personality represents a key part of the brand's image and cannot be ignored.

Not surprisingly, it was not much later that the concept attracted academic interest and, in an effort to meet practitioners' dire need for a reliable tool, the first serious effort to conceptualise and measure brand personality was published in a seminal paper by Aaker (1997). Her definition of brand personality as *"the set of human characteristics associated with a brand"* (p. 347) is by far the most cited one. More recently, however, Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) noted that this definition is rather general and 'too-global' because the term 'human characteristics' may encompass many more things apart from personality [e.g. physical traits, values], hence Aaker's conceptualisation of brand personality actually incorporates more aspects of brand identity besides personality. For the purposes of this study, therefore, Azoulay and Kapferer's (2003) definition of brand personality as *"the unique set of human personality traits both applicable and relevant to brands"* (p. 153) is adopted. The definition, albeit in agreement with Aaker's view that brands can be pictured using *human* descriptors, presents several implications. First, it highlights that only personality traits should be incorporated in a brand personality scale instead of items referring to other aspects of brand image. Second, it implies that not all descriptors of something as complex as human personality may be appropriate to describe an inanimate object's personality (i.e. a brand's personality). Finally, it suggests that some descriptors might be more pertinent to some brands than to others.

In any case, Aaker's (1997) contribution cannot be stressed enough, as this was the study that triggered academic inquiry on the topic of brand personality (Maehle & Supphellen, 2011). Her paper ignited an overwhelming flow of research addressing in parallel a range of issues around the construct (Maehle & Supphellen, 2011), primarily in relation to its measurement, but also its antecedents, its consequences as well as its relations to other constructs [see Eisend, M. and Stokburger-Sauer, N. (2013) for a recent overview of antecedents and consequences]. Some studies focused on exploring further the personality of specific brands, such as Coca-Cola (Louis & Lombart, 2010), Colgate (Thomas & Sekar, 2008), Dove (Pandey, 2009), or Ford (Rojas-Méndez, Erenchun-Podlech, & Silva-Olave, 2004). Similarly, many studies have also paid attention to investigating brand personality perceptions in almost every product category, including: beer (Phau & Lau, 2001), cars (Kressmann, et al., 2006; Wang, Yang, & Liu, 2009; Wang & Yang, 2008), industrial brands (Herbst & Merz, 2011), non-profit organisations/charities (Sargeant, Ford, & Hudson, 2008; Venable, Rose, Bush, & Gilbert, 2005), pharmaceutical drugs (Leonard & Katsanis, 2013), print media (Valette-

Florence & De Barnier, 2013), restaurants (Musante, Bojanic, & Zhang, 2008; Siguaw & Mattila, 1999), including fast-food ones (Austin, Siguaw, & Mattila, 2003; Murase & Bojanic, 2004), retailers/stores (d'Astous & Levesque, 2003; Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004; Zentes, Morschett, & Schramm-Klein, 2008), services (Spielmann & Babin, 2011), sports teams (Smith, Graetz, & Westerbeek, 2006; Tsiotsou, 2012), and tourist destinations (Hosany, Ekinci, & Uysal, 2006; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011).

The overflowing research interest is not startling, given that early work (Aaker, 1997; Triplett, 1994) had alluded a positive influence of brand personality on brand-related behaviour. The importance of a distinctive brand personality continues to be highlighted nowadays and managers are strongly recommended to actively include brand personality considerations in their brand vision designs (Aaker, 2013) for numerous reasons. A unique, distinctive brand personality is considered to attract consumers' attention (Mulyanegara, et al., 2009), to make the brand more memorable in their minds (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007;2012; Cohen, 2014), to simplify their choice (Freling & Forbes, 2005b), and therefore to differentiate it from its competition (Aaker, 1997; Arora & Stoner, 2009; Fleck, Michel, & Zeitoun, 2014; Freling & Forbes, 2005a) in a more sustainable way (Ang & Lim, 2006). It also increases consumers' confidence in (Triplett, 1994), and trust to the brand (Bouhlel, Mzoughi, Hadiji, & Slimane, 2011; Hess, Bauer, Kuester, & Huber, 2007; Louis & Lombart, 2010; Sung & Kim, 2010; Sung, Kim, & Jung, 2009); it can lead to more favourable brand evaluations (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; Freling & Forbes, 2005a;2005b; Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004), including high perceived quality (Ramaseshan & Tsao, 2007). Therefore, it enhances chances of brand awareness, trial, recognition or recall (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014; Cohen, 2014; Wee, 2004), preference and purchase intentions (Eisend, M. & Stokburger-Sauer, N., 2013; Freling & Forbes, 2005b) and it has also been argued to reinforce loyalty because consumers are hesitant to shift to other brands in the same product category, even if their price is lower (Triplett, 1994); however, a direct link does not seem to have been established (Kim, Han, & Park, 2001).

Finally, previous research has also investigated how particular aspects of brand personality affect brand-related behaviour [e.g. Aaker, et al. (2004); Lee and Kang (2013); Lin and Huang (2012); O'Cass and Lim (2002); Ramaseshan and Tsao (2007); Boudreaux and Palmer (2007); Elliot and Barth (2012)]. For example, a brand's sincerity and competence have been found to influence consumers' brand attitudes (Eisend, M. & Stokburger-Sauer, N., 2013), while these two brand personality

dimensions along with ruggedness seem to have a positive effect on perceived brand partner quality (Hayes, et al., 2006). More recently, research (Freling, Crosno, & Henard, 2011) has sought to identify different scenarios that can explain the influence of brand personality on purchase intentions according to three conditions: Favourability (how positively the brand's personality is perceived), Originality (how novel/distinct consumers think it is), and Clarity (how recognisable it is).

2.3.4. How Are Brands Imbued with Human Personality Traits

Brand personality capitalises on anthropomorphism, namely, people's inherent tendency to attribute human qualities/characteristics (e.g. emotions, personality, intentions, etc.) to non-human/living entities (e.g. animals, objects, etc.), in order to comfort themselves with a new sense of companionship, to ascribe to the world around them characteristics with which they are familiar (Maehle, Otnes, & Supphellen, 2011) and they can understand or characteristics that can help them interact with, interpret and predict other additional properties of the object that is anthropomorphised (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; Epley et al., 2008; Epley, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2007; Puzakova, Kwak, & Rocereto, 2009), as a form of 'heuristics' (Miles & Ibrahim, 2013); for example, consumers can extract a lot of information relating to a brand's functional capacities from the inferences they make about its personality (Aaker, 2013).

Marketers assist consumers' natural tendency for anthropomorphism (Freling & Forbes, 2005b) by humanising/personifying their brands in communication messages to their target audiences (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014; Delbaere, McQuarrie, & Phillips, 2011) and by imbuing them with unique characteristics/qualities. The basic underlying mechanism of the process is that the brand is presented either as a living entity itself, or 'next' to other entities that possess the qualities its managers wish to associate it with (Wee, 2004). Overall, there is a wide array of tools that marketers can employ in order to assist consumers in perceiving brands as living entities, and all marketing activities can intentionally or unintentionally (Freling & Forbes, 2005b; Wee, 2004) transmit meanings and images that consumers can translate to personality characteristics for the brand (Aaker, 1997; Fournier, 1998).

In a similar way as Act Frequency Theory (Buss & Craik, 1983) proposes that people can deduce information about someone's personality from their behaviour (Srull & Wyer, 1989), marketers may sometimes deliberately and strategically personify a

brand using a face/figurehead with human-like properties (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012) congruent with the intended brand personality (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014; Brown, 2014). For example, the brand may be shown in an advertisement to talk/move (it thus becomes 'alive') and 'socialise' (it thus becomes 'sociable'/'friendly'). Consumers can thus ascribe personality traits to the brand through its 'behaviour'. Alternatively, the brand is partnered with an entity that represents it and through its own behaviour, transfers its personality traits to the brand (Maehle & Supphellen, 2011), such as a character, an internal/external spokesperson (Fleck, et al., 2014), the CEO or other employees, an ambassador/endorser, a mascot, typical or even real consumers (Cohen, 2014), present or past, that have used the brand, hence it has absorbed their personality traits (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012). These commonly used tactics need to be carefully designed and implemented in order to ensure that the entity's personality is congruent with the intended personality (Fleck, et al., 2014), but also monitored in order to avoid any negative attention to the brand by the entity's (e.g. a celebrity endorser's) undesirable activities (Cohen, 2014).

Besides personifying the brand through other entities, consumers form their brand personality perceptions from a range of other sources, including: marketing mix elements, such as product characteristics, packaging, distribution channel, price, and elements of advertising including its logo and name (Aaker, 1997), music (jingles), symbols/signs, or its country-of-origin (Wee, 2004), the external design of the company headquarters (Raffelt, Schmitt, & Meyer, 2013), as well as from consumers' own direct experiences with it (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009; Plummer, 1985).

Maehle, Chunyan, and Supphellen (2009) recently assembled the sources of brand personality and categorised them in two groups: company-based and consumer-based. Company-based sources can be direct (i.e. the personality traits of the company's CEO/director, employees, celebrity endorsers are transferred from the person to the brand) or indirect (i.e. the brand name, logo, symbol, attributes, product category, advertising, packaging, distribution, price are interpreted as actions from the brand's part and help the consumer make a judgement about its personality traits). Consumer-based sources include consumers' own brand experiences, brand communities, word-of-mouth and consumers' own value systems and views (Maehle & Supphellen, 2011).

Different sources seem to reinforce different aspects of brand personality. For example, Maehle, et al. (2011) showed that consumers' perceptions of specific brand personality aspects are shaped by the particular product category in which the brand belongs; fast

food brands are generally viewed as insincere because they are considered unhealthy, while luxury beauty brands are considered as sophisticated. Other research has showed that a crucial factor for deciding which brand personality aspects will need to be reinforced and communicated is whether the brand belongs to a functional or symbolic product type, as the personalities of functional product types seem to be restricted by consumers' expectations for products in these categories (e.g. a bank brand is expected to exhibit competence/reliability) (Kum, Bergkvist, Lee, & Siew Meng, 2012). Besides product category, other sources also reinforce particular aspects of brand personality: for instance, complex advertising efforts seem to emit higher competence for the brand (Eisend, M. & Stokburger-Sauer, N., 2013) while brands that use flattery in their communications with consumers are perceived as less sincere (Guevremont & Grohmann, 2013); brand names that include, for example, the vowels o and u (Klink & Athaide, 2012), or are written using heavy and compressed fonts (Grohmann, Giese, & Parkman, 2013), reinforce the brand's perceived ruggedness.

It should be clear by now that consumers make brand personality inferences from a wide range of sources. Given the evidence of the positive influence of brand personality on desirable brand outcomes, and on brand equity (Valette-Florence, Guizani, & Merunka, 2011; van Rekom, et al., 2006), the next question is how these perceptions can be identified and organised in practice. The next section reviews the relevant literature on this issue.

2.3.5. The Measurement of Brand Personality Perceptions

The empirical ways that consumer researchers and marketers use to identify which particular personality traits consumers associate with brands and to what degree, refer to the measurement of brand personality perceptions, which, not surprisingly, has attracted a substantial amount of research attention (Das, Datta, & Guin, 2012). This section presents the two main approaches that have been hitherto employed: the free association-based method and the human psychology-driven method.

Free Association-Based Method

The free association-based approach for the measurement of brand personality perceptions was in essence originally proposed by Aaker (1997). In her seminal paper,

Aaker combined personality scales from psychology and from marketing as well as insight from her own qualitative research to produce a comprehensive set of brand personality traits (309 traits). During the qualitative stage of her study, she asked respondents to write down any personality characteristics they associated with brands (free-association) that she had pre-selected herself. At the second stage, participants were asked to consider brands in general and to rate these 309 traits in terms of their descriptiveness, from 1: not at all descriptive, to 7: extremely descriptive. By using a cut-off value of 6, her list was reduced down to 114 traits. The next phase included once again pre-selected, well-known brands from a diverse range of product categories. Each respondent was asked to think each brand from a list of 10 brands as a person and rate the extent to which the 114 characteristics described it. As Aaker was not drawing from a specific theoretical framework in human psychology, she used exploratory factor analysis to see whether her data could be meaningfully organised. This process led her to five dimensions of brand personality perceptions: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. Her analysis continued with the identification of those characteristics that represented each dimension the most; for this purpose, she conducted five individual factor analyses and, upon validating her results using a different sample and a different set of brands, she proposed a brand personality scale consisting of 42 items, 15 facets and 5 dimensions (Figure 2-6).

As mentioned earlier, Aaker's work was the first impactful academic study on brand personality. Up until that point, practitioners were mostly using ad-hoc scales that were constructed with less rigorous methods, and they were thus in dire need for a more reliable scale. It is therefore not surprising that, following Aaker's work, a significant proportion of studies sought to use her scale to measure the personality of specific brands, to explore in depth the measurement of consumers' perceptions of brands' personalities in different product categories (section 2.3.3), but also across different cultural settings in order to develop new scales that would adequately capture unique local variations, such as: China (Chu & Sung, 2011), France (Ferrandi, Valette-Florence, & Fine-Falcy, 2000), Germany (Bosnjak, Bochmann, & Hufschmidt, 2007), Japan (Murase & Bojanic, 2004), Korea (Sung & Tinkham, 2005), Malaysia (Mohtar, Taha, Mutum, & Ghazali, 2013), Mexico (Alvarez-Ortiz & Harris, 2002; De la Paz Toldos Romero, 2012), the Netherlands (Smit, van den Berge, & Franzen, 2003), and Russia (Supphellen & Grønhaug, 2003). In this sense, Aaker's study was very influential in generally moving brand personality research forward and the methodological

dominance of her approach cannot be disputed (Freling, et al., 2011). Her method largely influenced subsequent research (Ivens & Valta, 2011), as attested by the fact that quantitative studies that either directly applied or modified her approach constitute the majority of published studies in the field (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003), with some rare exceptions that approached the matter qualitatively (Arora & Stoner, 2009; Freling & Forbes, 2005b; Lee, 2013; Veloutsou & Taylor, 2012).

Figure 2-6: Aaker's (1997) brand personality dimensions (p. 352-354)

Brand personality				
Sincerity	*Excitement*	*Competence*	*Sophistication*	*Ruggedness*
Down-to-earth (down-to-earth, family-oriented, small-town)	**Daring** (daring, trendy, exciting)	**Reliable** (reliable, hard-working, secure)	**Upper-class** (upper-class, glamorous, good-looking)	**Outdoorsy** (outdoorsy, masculine, Western)
Honest (honest, sincere, real)	**Spirited** (spirited, cool, young)	**Intelligent** (intelligent, technical, corporate)	**Charming** (charming, feminine, smooth)	**Tough** (tough, rugged)
Wholesome (wholesome, original)	**Imaginative** (imaginative, unique)	**Successful** (successful, leader, confident)		
Cheerful (cheerful, sentimental, friendly)	**Up-to-date** (up-to-date, independent, contemporary)			

The dominance of Aaker's method, however, is a bit surprising (Avis, 2012), a 'bandwagon effect' according to Azoulay and Kapferer (2003), given that it was not long before the limitations of her proposed approach became evident. These limitations can explain why the original Aaker model has never been entirely confirmed in relation to structure and/or content (i.e. the number and content of dimensions, including number of items are not identical across studies), as previous research has observed (Austin, et al., 2003; Bian, Moutinho, & Reast, 2010). The majority of the criticisms lie with the actual conceptual and methodological foundations of the approach.

First, although Aaker argued that three of her model's dimensions resembled three of the Big Five human personality dimensions (Sincerity with Agreeableness, Excitement with Extraversion, and Competence with Conscientiousness), her approach was not based on any framework/theory of human personality (Avis, 2012). Furthermore, one of the early criticisms (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003) revolved around the fact that Aaker's definition of brand personality is too 'loose' and general, referring broadly to the concept as the *"set of human characteristics associated with a brand"* (p. 347) rather than narrowing it down to personality traits. This confusion, which still bears its influence on contemporary views of brand personality [e.g. Lee (2013)], is also imprinted on her scale as it includes several non-personality items relating to social class and gender (e.g. upper-class, Western, feminine/masculine, etc.), or evaluative judgments (e.g. intelligent). In other words, the scale includes items that have no place in a scale that is supposed to measure personality as this is defined by psychology research (Bao & Sweeney, 2009); thus, it essentially describes a looser brand image (Austin, et al., 2003; Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003) and clearly suffers from concept validity issues. As some of the scale's items may be assigned different meaning when the consumer is invited to rate brands in different product categories, and some might not even be relevant to certain brands (Avis, 2012; Sweeney & Brandon, 2006), Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) proposed a stricter definition of brand personality as *"the unique set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant for brands"* (p. 153). It is implied therefore that brand personality perceptions need to be measured using a scale that could adequately portray the brand's personality but would also allow the most relevant and meaningful items to emerge.

Two more problematic areas have been identified with regards to the terms included in Aaker's scale. Some items (e.g. contemporary) are not accompanied by their antonyms (i.e. classic) (Heere, 2010); scoring low in such items does not necessarily mean that

the brand is considered to have the opposite qualities. Most importantly, Aaker's scale includes only positively-inflected items; however, as qualitative research has shown (Avis, Forbes, & Ferguson, 2014), not all brands are perceived solely on positive terms (Bosnjak, et al., 2007; Huang, Mitchell, & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012; Sweeney & Brandon, 2006). The ways in which certain brands are described in the numerous anti-brand online communities are an illustrative example of this. In addition, some brands have been very successful by capitalising on less positive traits (e.g. Harley-Davidson and its rebellious, non-conservative personality), which some consumers may value (Bao & Sweeney, 2009). However, even if marketers never originally intend to imbue their brands with less flattering traits, they control only half of their brands' fates (Plummer, 1984). They should therefore have the opportunity to obtain a realistic picture of how their brand's personality is actually perceived by consumers, and scales that include only positive items provide no assistance on that matter. This is an important limitation because without having a clear idea of how their brands are positioned in consumers' minds, marketers cannot make informed movements to alter their brands' traits.

Furthermore, in the first phase of the study (and all studies that followed her method), Aaker had asked respondents to bring up items that they would associate with well-known brands. Although such an approach has the advantage that it allows items that are most personally relevant to participants to emerge, the process can by no means be considered as providing comprehensive descriptions of a brand's personality. It is possible that some descriptors that are relevant escape consumers' minds at that point. The reason for this is because this free-association task: i) is largely dependent on whether respondents are able to *remember* previous brand 'actions', such as marketing communications, advertising messages, that will allow them to identify as many traits about the brand as they can, and ii) pre-assumes that respondents can *articulate* those perceptions on the spot. This assumption is problematic, because it implies that consumers *actually* and *ordinarily* perceive brands as human-like characters. This notion, albeit plausible, has not been empirically supported or evaluated for its applicability to the majority of consumers and if accepted, it trespasses the boundaries of researchers using brand personality as a metaphor (Avis, et al., 2014) to make sense of consumers' perceptions of brands, and moves brand personality into reality. Avis, et al. (2014) have raised an important concern about this issue: they explain that if indeed consumers ordinarily think of brands as people with personality traits (a view with which they largely disagree), then it is unclear why researchers ask consumers to think

of brands as people before they ask them to rate the brands under investigation according to lists of characteristics. Their concern therefore is that Aaker's scale as well as all scales that ask consumers to think of brands as people, that is, that ask consumers to personify the brands, essentially 'create' personalities for those brands. In other words, it is possible that such approaches force the consumer to indicate perceptions about a certain brand that he/she does not have before the task. They proceeded to test this proposition by using Aaker's scale in the context of rocks. Specifically, they presented respondents with pictures of three different rocks, and asked them to consider them as people, and then to rate the extent to which each of the items in Aaker's scale were descriptive of these rocks. Their results showed that indeed the three rocks were rated differently, and appeared to be perceived as having distinct personalities, as these were measured by Aaker's scale; the authors thus concluded that, in essence, Aaker's scale in particular, and the use of the personification request in general in conjunction with the fact that consumers are 'forced' to rate the object under investigation (a brand or a rock), 'creates' a personality for that object.

A final problem lies with the use of pre-selected, well-known brands [e.g. in Aaker's study, such brands were used in both the first and the third phase of the scale development, as well as in the scale validation process]. The basic assumptions behind this methodological choice are that respondents are familiar with well-known brands and that they have a clear picture of their personalities. However, being able to recognise a famous brand name does not provide any guarantee that respondents really know the brand and its 'actions' to such an extent that they can provide accurate descriptions of its personality. One reason for this is because the respondent might not have purchased/used the brand before, hence the brand associations have not been built yet (Romaniuk, 2008) or reinforced in their minds through interaction and lived experiences. Moreover, those pre-selected brands might not be interesting and relevant enough to the participants to the extent that they are adequately motivated to present an as much comprehensive as possible portrayal of their perceived personalities.

As could be expected, subsequent researchers were inspired to address some of the aforementioned limitations, by developing new scales of brand personality. A notable example is the study by Geuens, Weijters, and De Wulf (2009) which primarily sought to address the issues relating to the inclusion of non-personality items and of only positive traits, and to develop a brand personality scale that would be generalizable across cultures (the USA and 10 European countries) and product categories. Although

there is evidence supporting its superiority over Aaker's (Alpatova & Dall'Olmo Riley, 2011), the scale includes only 12 items, and therefore faces issues of weak predictive and nomological validity. In other words, meaningful personality descriptors may have been excluded, which is a possibility that the authors themselves recognise (p. 106).

Human Psychology-Driven Method

As a result of the limitations to the free association-based approach in general and the Aaker study in particular, recent research, following suggestions that brand personality research can highly benefit from human personality research [e.g. Wee (2004)], has turned its attention to theories of personality from the psychology literature. One example is the Interpersonal Circumplex Model of human personality proposed by Wiggins (1979). The model has been applied into a branding context (Bao & Sweeney, 2009; Sweeney & Brandon, 2006), but has not received much attention as it only focuses on interpersonal traits and it could thus be argued that it does not provide a very comprehensive view of personality. In contrast, as discussed earlier, the Five Factor Model (FFM), comprised of five orthogonal, broad dimensions of personality (Agreeableness, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Openness and Emotional Stability) has dominated the psychology literature and due to its remarkable stability across cultures and over life stages, recent research has considered its use in order to measure consumers' brand personality perceptions. In practice, the administration of the FFM in a branding context refers to: i) asking participants to consider a certain brand as having human personality traits, ii) asking them to rate the extent to which traits from any one of the scales that have been developed to measure human personality (e.g. the NEO-PI-R, BFI, Saucier's mini-markers, etc.) describe the brand, and iii) factor-analysing their responses and deriving underlying dimensions of brand personality perceptions.

One of those studies that have considered the application of the FFM in order to measure brand personality perceptions was Caprara, Barbaranellie, and Guido (2001). Their paper represents a notable exception in the period following Aaker's study when most research was occupied with replicating her work in different contexts. They highlighted that, since adjectives are used to describe brands (Plummer, 1985), and adjectives have also been used to describe human personality, then it is worth exploring whether the FFM can be applied to brand personality. By using a 40-item scale of human personality that they had developed in one of their previous studies for

the Italian context, they showed that brand personality perceptions did not follow the five-factor structure. Instead, their analysis showed a two-factor solution, the first being comprised of items of Emotional Stability and Agreeableness, and the second including markers of Extraversion, Openness and Conscientiousness; they noted that these two factors of brand personality were bearing similarities with Digman's (1997) two meta-factors of human personality. An explanation for their result might be that they used oblique rotation for both human and brand personality, and thus the factors were allowed to correlate. The reasons for this decision are unclear as the FFM is consisted of five orthogonal/independent factors. In summary, the study concluded that while some of its factors may be used to describe brand personality perceptions, it is unlikely that the FFM, in its original structure and composition, can be applied to brands. They suggested that brand-specific items, such as economical and well-known, should also be included in a brand personality scale, and as such, their study, similarly to Aaker's, does not acknowledge issues relating to the inclusion of non-personality items.

Shortly after the Caprara, et al. (2001) study, Ferrandi, Merunka, Valette-Florence, and De Barnier (2002) translated Saucier's (1994) 40 mini-markers in French and asked respondents to evaluate their own personality and the personalities of four pre-selected brands on that same scale. The analysis showed that consumer and brand personalities exhibit the same five-factor structure and composition when the scale is reduced to 15 items. The large number of deleted items (25 items out of 40), however, led to substantial loss of meaning and the five factors that were derived were unipolar (e.g. the Extraversion factor captured only introversion).

The most recent study that has directly applied the FFM to the measurement of brand personality perceptions is the Huang, et al. (2012) study. Based on Capelli and Jolibert (2009), the study asserted that, since human personality is used to describe the traits of a person and brand personality is a metaphor that is used to describe what traits a brand would have if it were a person, the two definitions overlap, hence there is no reason why we cannot use the reliable personality measurement tools from psychology that have been developed after extensive empirical research. They suggested that the dimensionality of Aaker's scale did not bear similarities with that of human personality due to the inclusion of non-personality items; they thus concluded that an instrument which only measures personality is the way forward and since the tool that has been proposed as valid and reliable for the measurement of human personality is the FFM,

this validates its use as a tool for the measurement of brand personality as well. Following the peer-rating technique, where respondents rate their own personalities and those of their close others (e.g. partners/friends), Huang, et al. (2012) used the same FFM-based scale [Saucier's (1994) 40 mini-markers] to measure both consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and those of their favourite brands in four product categories (laptops, dishwashing detergent, jeans and soft drinks). The results of Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis showed that both human and brand personality, when measured on the same scale, exhibit similar factorial structure and composition after the deletion of 21 items. Therefore, they concluded that both consumer and brand personality can be measured on the same abridged 19-item scale (Figure 2-7). It is worth noting that the multiple item deletions led to a scale consisting of less than half of the original items, which suggests substantial loss of meaning. Another problematic aspect of their empirical study is that respondents were asked to rate their own personality first and immediately after that to rate the personality of their favourite brand (Huang, 2009). As a result, it is highly possible that respondents could easily understand that the purpose of the questionnaire was to investigate the extent to which their own personalities were similar with the personalities of their favourite brands; hence the results might be biased due to question order effects.

Figure 2-7: Huang, et al.'s (2012) abridged brand personality scale (p. 344)
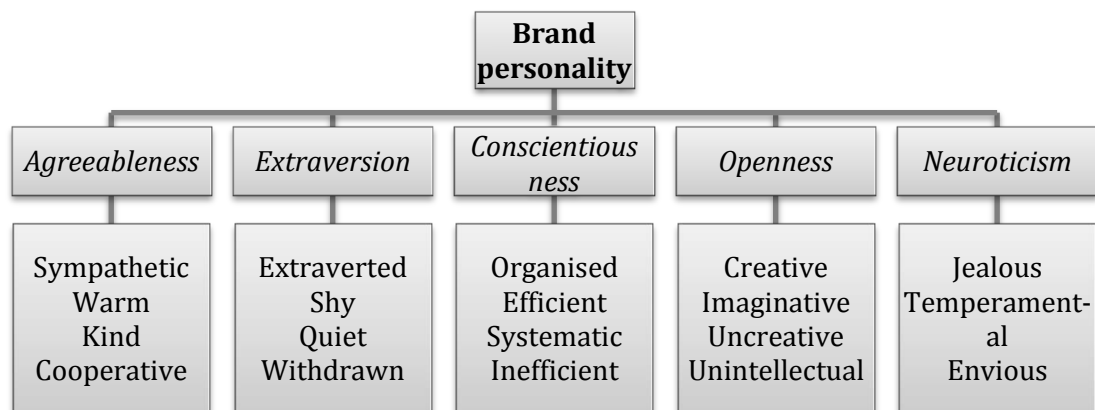
While research seems to acknowledge the benefits of using the FFM in brand personality (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003; Eisend, M. & Stokburger-Sauer, N. E., 2013; Ferrandi, et al., 2002), some concerns have been raised about the direct application of

human personality frameworks and measurement instruments to brand personality. Much of this hesitation originally stemmed from the fact that early work in consumer research, influenced by research examining the relationship between personality and social behaviour, had aspired to a significant causal/explanatory effect of the FFM on consumption-related behaviour (Plummer, 1984). In general however, such expectations have not been confirmed (Brody & Cunningham, 1968), as can logically be expected for a framework with primarily descriptive strengths. Currently, researchers' concerns [e.g. Sung and Tinkham (2005); Caprara, et al. (2001)] revolve around the notion that human and brand personality cannot be considered 'analogous', especially in relation to four issues: i) brands not really having personalities, ii) antecedents, iii) stability, and iv) trait meaning. A closer examination of those critiques, however, reveals a number of misunderstandings about the appropriateness of the FFM to measure brand personality perceptions.

First, it has been supported, primarily by Sung and Tinkham (2005), that obviously, brands are not living entities, they do not think/feel/act, hence they have no actual personality. Brand personality inferences are thus simply consumers' perceptions, in contrast to consumers who have personalities, irrespective of whether others perceive their characteristics or not. Although brands do not in reality have personality traits besides those attributed to them by consumers, it could be argued that an individual's personality is in essence constituted by others' perceptions about that individual's traits: according to social identity theory, our self-esteem is largely dependent on whether our self-presentation, as exhibited through our behaviour, is socially accepted and valued (e.g. we are not really kind and sympathetic unless others consider us so). We shape our self-perceptions based on how we think others perceive us (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934). Indicative of this notion is the fact that individuals' personality profiles on the FFM are built through both self-reports (i.e. how they perceive their own personality) and peer-reports (i.e. how someone close to them, e.g. partner, best friend, etc. perceives their personality).

Second, researchers [e.g. Das, et al. (2012); Ferrandi, et al. (2002)] argue that brand personality perceptions are the product of a number of factors that are not similar to those influencing human personality inferences. Specifically, Sung and Tinkham (2005), largely influenced by the Aaker study, argue that a *"human's personality traits are inferred from the individual's behavior, physical characteristics, attitudes and beliefs, and demographic characteristics"* (p. 336) and that this is not the case with brands, as brand

personality inferences are created by sources that may or may not be directly related to it (e.g. a celebrity endorser). However, their argumentation is rather confusing, as the conceptualisation of human personality in psychology has clearly excluded all non-trait aspects, such as demographics or physical characteristics, and has attested to the fact that information about an individual's personality traits can only be inferred from that individual's behaviour. Moreover, as the brand is not a living entity, every touch-point with its consumers, including marketing communications and celebrity endorsements, can be considered as the brand's 'behaviour', out of which consumers make their personality trait inferences about it, similarly to how they make personality inferences about individuals through their behaviour.

A third objection that can be raised with regards to the application of the FFM on brand personality revolves around the stability of brand personality perceptions over time. It is logical to consider that these may not be stable over time, due to the fact that marketing communications can easily change the personality profile of the brand at any point. In this sense, the structure of consumers' perceptions of a brand's personality may vary across time, in contrast to the structure of human personality perceptions, the FFM, the stability of which over life stages has been empirically proven. While brand personality can indeed be shaped and changed through a range of direct and indirect sources, and primarily through the marketing mix activities, in practice, research (Diamantopoulos, Smith, & Grime, 2005; Fennis & Pruyn, 2007; Wee, 2004) has shown that brand personality perceptions tend to be quite enduring. Wee (2004), for example, showed that overall, brand personalities are sustained, and although some dimensions might show a slight change after a certain 'behaviour', they are not dramatically altered (e.g. a brand's sincerity might lower after a transgression, but the brand does not lose the characteristic and is not perceived as insincere).

Similarly, as discussed earlier, a range of studies have shown that the structure and composition of brand personality perceptions across different cultural settings are not stable, which is not the case for the FFM; empirical evidence has attested to its stability across cultures. However, this observation about the difference between the two concepts in relation to their stability across cultures has been largely based on the lack of replicability of Aaker's scale across cultures. Under the perspective of using human psychology-based methods and specifically the FFM to measure brand personality, this premise of brand personality dimensions differing across cultural settings has not been empirically confirmed [the Huang, et al. (2012) study was only conducted in the UK

with British students; similarly, the Caprara, et al. (2001) study was conducted with Italians only]. It is however plausible that certain aspects of brand personality might be valued differently and might become more prominent in different cultural contexts; yet this is something that remains unexplored.

Perhaps the most important issue that previous research has offered as reservation against the direct application of the FFM on brand personality is trait meaning. As in their study the factor structure and composition of brand personality perceptions differed substantially from that of human personality when measured on the same scale, Caprara, et al. (2001) concluded that not all human personality descriptors can be applied to brands: some traits may be attributed different meaning than the meaning they have when referring to people, because the degree of relevance might differ (they related this to concept-scale interaction); some descriptors may even be assigned different meaning when applied to different brands (an issue that they labelled brand-adjective interaction), a concern that others (Austin, et al., 2003) have also raised in order to explain the lack of generalizability of Aaker's dimensions across product categories and individual brands. Although Caprara, et al. (2001) seem to suggest that changes in trait meaning are problematic, in reality, this notion is consistent with the intuitive idea that a tool used to describe a concept as complex as human personality might not be directly applicable to the description of the perceived personality of an inanimate object. As such, it is in agreement with Azoulay and Kapferer's (2003) stricter definition of brand personality as *"the unique set of human personality traits both applicable and relevant to brands"* (p. 153), and helps explain the reduced number of items in the Ferrandi, et al. (2002) and Huang, et al. (2012) scales. In this sense, the Caprara, et al. (2001) study presents some implications about future studies that will attempt to use the FFM to measure brand personality perceptions: it suggests that changes in trait meaning may manifest themselves in some of the items that are not really relevant for brands by showing low correlations with the rest of the items; hence, some descriptors might be assigned in different factors than their allocations in human personality dimensions, and their relationship with other traits might vary.

Overall, it can be concluded that much of the confusion about the application of human personality frameworks and tools to a brand personality context stems from the lack of understanding that previous research has shown with regards to the boundaries of the brand-as-personality metaphor. A metaphor (etymologically derived from the Greek

word μεταφέρω which means to carry something over, to transfer) is employed when we wish to use well-developed frameworks, theories and tools from a field of which we have understanding in order to make sense of another notion or field on which our understanding is limited. In the case of personality, the FFM is such a framework; one that has been developed after decades of empirical investigation and that has shown remarkable stability over life stages and across cultures. And despite common misunderstandings in branding research [e.g. Sweeney and Brandon (2006)], it is not an a-theoretical framework. Although it is a generalisable result produced out of empirical investigation, it is based on a theory (psycholexical/trait) which seeks to explain consistently emerging individual differences of universal nature (traits) through suggesting that: i) those traits are embodied in natural language, ii) the language we use to communicate has captured the most important and relevant traits, and iii) these traits are captured in the language of every culture (McCrae & John, 1992). In this sense, the FFM is not merely the result of factor-analytical procedures; it has theoretical foundations that have steered empirical work to the current point: after decades of research, the FFM is at the very least a descriptive framework that helps researchers to manage a complex concept, personality. It is exactly this capacity of the FFM that can prove useful for brand personality research: the FFM can serve as a comprehensive personality inventory that branding researchers can use in order to adequately capture consumers' perceptions of brand personality, and which places brand personality in its appropriate theoretical foundation, by excluding non-personality items, such as gender or social class (Huang, et al., 2012).

2.4. Implications for Current Study

The literature that was reviewed in this chapter demonstrated the usefulness of the two perspectives, the brand as partner and the brand as personality, for the purposes of the current study, namely: i) the investigation of alternative configurations of trait alignment that may exist between consumers' and brands' personalities, and ii) the exploration of other ways of measuring consumer and brand personality traits, and of testing the relationship between them in more detail.

On the one hand, the perspective of brands as relationship partners can be largely useful in order to enhance our understanding of consumers' strong preferences for certain brands. With the adoption of this relational perspective, the study can draw

insight from the literature on interpersonal interactions and explore other forms of relationships that may exist between consumers' and their chosen brands' personalities as well as provide improved explanations behind brand-related behaviours that so far have been largely underexplored, particularly emotionally-related ones. On the other hand, the perspective of brands as personalities also presents a unique opportunity to draw from the psychology literature and use the frameworks for the measurement of human personality perceptions in the context of brand personality.

The review also presented significant implications for the empirical study. First, with the adoption of the notion of the brand as partner, the peer-rating technique from psychology can be employed; in this sense, the consumer can assess their own personality and that of their brand partner(s) on the same scale, in a similar way as they would assess the personality of their human partner. Second, the review of the human personality literature revealed the advantages of the trait approach and of the FFM as a reliable and remarkably stable tool. The assessment of the different scales that have been developed so far led to the conclusion that Saucier's (1994) mini-markers are a robust and parsimonious personality scale that will pose minimum inconvenience to the participants.

Moreover, with regards to the testing of the relationship between consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and those of their chosen brands, when measured on the FFM, the review of previous studies (Caprara, et al., 2001; Ferrandi, et al., 2002; Huang, et al., 2012) revealed that the question whether the FFM can be applied in a branding context remains largely unanswered (Nevid & Pastva, 2014). The evidence from these studies indicates that, when measured on the same scale, the factorial composition of brand personality might not be identical to that of human personality, as some descriptors may not be applicable to brands. It seems therefore that the FFM might not be *directly and exactly* applied to brand personality; however, it remains to be seen whether it can be *meaningfully* applied.

Finally, the review revealed that, in order to seek enhanced explanations of why consumers engage with certain brands more than with others, the current study should focus on participants' self-nominated *favourite* brands, instead of simply well-known brands, pre-selected by the researcher. While previous research, including Aaker, has used pre-selected brands, even very well-known ones, this approach would be unsuitable for this study. One reason for this is because simple familiarity with, or the

extent to which the participant likes a brand, does not necessarily provide assurances that the person really knows the brand or that it is of interest to them personally. Simply controlling for the extent to which a participant knows a pre-selected brand, as previous research has done [e.g. Lee (2013)], is not appropriate for the purposes of this study where the objective is to understand why consumers prefer certain brands more than others. Therefore, the ability of the consumer to provide accurate descriptions of the brand partner's personality is of utmost importance to this research, but, in order to do that, the respondent will need to be as close to the brand partner as possible. The extent of knowledge for a personified object plays a crucial role on how the object's personification is perceived, interpreted (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014) and eventually assessed by consumers in terms of personal self-relevance. According to Taylor (1989), *"…what I am as a self, my identity, is essentially defined by the way things have significance for me"* (p. 34). Self-identity issues are therefore more prevalent in our interactions with exactly those favourite and much loved brands, which connect to certain aspects of our self (Harmon-Kizer, Kumar, Ortinau, & Stock, 2013) and are rooted in our lived experiences (Miller, Fournier, & Allen, 2012). These favourite brands are possessions that hold special place in our lives, and are usually part of very committed consumer-brand relationships such as 'marriages' or 'friendships' (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012). As a result, the review of the literature in this chapter leads to the conclusion that the current study should aim to understand more deeply how consumers' own personality traits connect with their *favourite* brands' personality traits, an approach consistent with previous research on consumer-brand interactions (Chernev, et al., 2011; Huang, et al., 2012; Kim, H. K., et al., 2005; Torelli, Özsomer, Carvalho, Keh, & Maehle, 2012). This investigation, however, will need to be designed in such a way in order to avoid question-order effects that have been encountered in the past (Huang, et al., 2012) when asking respondents to rate their own characteristics, and those of their favourite brands immediately after.

2.5. Summary

This chapter aimed to introduce the notion of the brand as a relationship partner and as a personality. In order to achieve this, first, the conceptualisation of brands as relationship partners was discussed with specific focus to the seminal study conducted by Fournier (1998). Next, the contribution of the relational approach in reinforcing

consumer-brand connections and in capturing more emotionally-related brand outcomes was highlighted. In order to facilitate understanding of self-brand interactions, the rest of the chapter was devoted to reviewing literature on personality and on the different approaches that have been proposed for its study, focusing on the most dominant one, the trait approach, and specifically, the Five Factor Model. The conceptualisation of brands as personalities was discussed next, and a review of the existing brand personality research was undertaken. The mechanism behind brand personality was explained next, before focusing on the two main approaches that have been proposed for the measurement of consumers' perceptions of brand personality, and their limitations. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the implications deriving from the review of the perspectives of brands as relationship partners and as personalities for the purposes of the current study.

Having explained the value of a relational perspective of consumer-brand interactions, and having individually considered the conceptualisation and operationalisation of human and brand personality, the next chapter highlights the central role that personality plays in consumer-brand attraction and draws insight from the interpersonal attraction literature in order to critically examine, with an informed eye, the existing research on the relationship between human and brand personality, and specifically, the self-brand congruence theory.

3. INTERPERSONAL & CONSUMER-BRAND INTERACTIONS

3.1. Introduction

The overarching aims of this thesis are: i) the investigation of alternative configurations of trait alignment that may exist between consumers' and brands' personalities, and ii) the exploration of other ways of measuring consumer and brand personality traits, and of testing the relationship between them in more detail. The previous chapter considered how previous research has conceptualised and measured consumer and brand personality individually. This chapter considers how previous research has conceptualised and measured their relationship.

The adoption of the relational view of consumer-brand interactions, the merits of which were presented in the previous chapter, allows this chapter to consider the brand as a relationship partner and thus draw from the literature on interpersonal relationships and attraction in order to enhance our understanding of consumer-brand relationships and attraction. In order to do this, the first step will be to review the psychological literature on interpersonal attraction; this will provide insight on the forms the relationship between partners' personalities can generally take. The second step will be to review the consumer research literature surrounding the main proposed explanation of consumer-brand attraction: the self-brand congruence theory; this review will explore how the relationship between consumer and brand personalities has been conceptualised and measured so far, and will thus reveal unexplored forms of personality alignment.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, as self-brand congruence theory supports that consumers are attracted to brands with images and meanings that are aligned to their own self-images, a brief overview will be made on what these self-images are, and how they generally interplay with brand meanings and images, before highlighting the central role that personality assumes within the self and the brand. Then, the literature on interpersonal attraction and the forms of personality alignment between partners will be investigated. The next sections will focus on how self-brand congruence theory has been developed, will review the empirical support it has received and the ways in which the self-brand personality alignment has been measured thus far, as well as the range of outcomes with which it has been connected. The penultimate section will present the implications of research on interpersonal attraction and self-brand congruence for this study, while the final section will provide a summary of the chapter.

3.2. The Role of the Self in Interactions with Others and with Brands

3.2.1. Defining the Self

"Who in the world am I? Ah, that's the great puzzle."

Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (Chapter 2)

A concept as complex as the self, has, not surprisingly, been considered as difficult to define (Gross, 1987). William James, postulated that the self is consisted of two components: the 'I' and the 'me' (James, 1890). The former represents the part of one's self that thinks, feels and acts; the latter is consisted of the spiritual self (our core self, e.g. our personality and values), the social self (the roles we assume depending on the social situation we are in, e.g. a father, an employee), and the material self (the things that belong to us, such as our body, clothes, possessions, etc.). Similarly, Mead (1934) viewed the self as a reflexive, interactive process: the 'I' interacts, and the 'me' is what it interacts with. Following the review of this and subsequent work, Malhotra (1988) defines the self-concept *"as the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to themselves as subjects as well as objects"* (p. 7). Our self-concept can thus be considered as the collection of all this knowledge, perceptions, thoughts, feelings, but also attitudes towards and evaluations of our self (Martin, et al., 2007) and its aspects, including characteristics, personality, and abilities (Graeff, 1996a;1996b).

Illustrative of the complex nature of the self is the existence of multiple terms used to describe it: self-image, self-identity, self-concept, self-esteem, actual/ideal self, are all used interchangeably, but in fact, these terms represent notions slightly different and in essence constitute parts of the total self-concept/self-identity. To help with their distinction, Markus and Nurius (1986) asserted that our self-concept may be consisted of many possible selves that are activated and influenced by the context in which we are. Higgins (1987), for example, has identified three possible selves: the actual (who we are), the ideal (who we would like to be) and the ought self (who we think we ought to be). Gross (1987) further assists with the clarification of these terms by noting that while self-image captures our perceptions about our self and thus serves descriptive purposes, it should not be confused with self-esteem which serves evaluative purposes and captures our attitudes towards our self and the extent to which we accept/approve of it. Our self-esteem largely depends on the distance we perceive that there is between who we really are (our actual self) and any other way we want to describe ourselves (e.g. our ideal/ought self).

The question arising at this point though is what exactly these perceptions about our self include. In essence, they are the totality of responses we give when asking ourselves: *'Who am I?'*. Kuhn (1960) found that if a person is asked this question 20 times, they will most likely give responses which belong to one or more of the following groupings: physical characteristics, personality characteristics, social roles and groups, self-evaluations, interests and ambitions. Of those, personality characteristics and social roles are considered as the most prominent (Gross, 1987). While social roles, either endowed or selected (e.g. being a daughter, or a student), might be more objective representations of reality (Reed II, Forehand, Puntoni, & Warlop, 2012), this is not really the case about personality traits. Our perceptions about our personality are in fact our personal judgments about how we see ourselves or how we think others see us. In this sense, our perceptions about our self and personality are formed primarily in two ways: introspection and interaction/ comparison with others (Baron, Branscombe, & Byrne, 2008; Festinger, 1954).

3.2.2. The Self and Our Interactions with Others

While inward reflection can be helpful, a stream of literature [e.g. Cooley's (1902) 'looking glass-self' model] argues that we shape our self-perceptions based on how we think others see us. Indeed, according to social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), we evaluate ourselves by comparing to others, in order for example to reduce uncertainty about the social approval of our characteristics, ideas, etc. These beliefs about others' perceptions of us largely shape the way we behave (Martin, et al., 2007). Depending on the context (Markus & Nurius, 1986), the lens under which we view our self-identity, and thus the aspects of it that we eventually choose to express/reinforce, and the ways in which we behave, may differ (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012), because the context might render a certain aspect of self more salient (Reed II, et al., 2012) or central over time (Harmon-Kizer, et al., 2013).

A quite helpful framework to understand this notion further is social identity theory (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Tumer, 1986), which proposes that differences in our self-perceptions depend on which point we stand each time on the continuum between personal versus social self-identity (Baron, et al., 2008). Personal self-identity represents our understanding of our characteristics and of those perceptions about ourselves deriving from our interactions with close others (e.g. our partners) while

social self-identity represents those deriving from our membership in various social groups. The basic premise of the social identity theory is that wherever we may stand in the continuum, even at the personal identity end, there is some form of comparison that always takes place and that the way we choose to describe ourselves and to behave is dependent on which aspect of our self-concept we consider as salient at that context (Baron, et al., 2008; Reed II, et al., 2012) and we wish to express and present to others in order to achieve our goals at that given time (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). Therefore, social identity theory captures the notion that our self-esteem is largely dependent on whether our self-presentation is socially accepted and valued. In this sense, for instance, we are not really kind and sympathetic unless others consider us so.

The reasons why we choose to compare our self to others and to present different aspects of our self are known as self-motives, with the three most prominent being (Sedikides & Strube, 1997): i) *Self-assessment* (our need to reach the truth about who we are); ii) *Self-verification* (also known as need for consistency, i.e. our need to find/filter information or interact with people/objects that will confirm/reinforce our sense of self or at least will not disconfirm it); iii) *Self-enhancement* [our need to self-grow, by either seeking information/interaction with people/objects that will allow us to project favourable/flattering images (self-advancement), or by at least avoiding those that will highlight our less positive aspects (self-protection)][1]. Previous research (Sedikides, 1993) has provided evidence that amongst the three, self-enhancement is the strongest motivation, followed by self-verification. This finding is consistent with the idea that in order to increase their self-esteem, people wish to view themselves, and to be seen by others favourably (Rosenberg, 1979). Ultimately, therefore, people always act in ways that either maintain or enhance their self-concepts; their consumption choices are one of the ways that they achieve this (Graeff, 1996a;1996b).

3.2.3. The Self and Our Interactions with Brands

"Shopping is not merely the acquisition of things: it is the buying of identity."

Clammer (1992), p. 195

Following the review of what self-images are and how they are created through our interactions with others, this section will consider how these self-images interplay with

---

[1] For more detail on self-verification and self-enhancement, see Manstead and Hewstone (1999).

brand-images, and how the latter also shape the former. As mentioned earlier, the self is a notion that encompasses not only our physical, psychological and personality characteristics or our social roles, but also aspects of the material world, such as our body, our clothes, our possessions, etc. (Belk, 1988). Not surprisingly therefore, consumer researchers realised early on the importance of the self-concept in consumption choices (Malhotra, 1988) and have been actively focusing on the exploration of the ways in which self-images interact with brand images.

A useful starting point for understanding this interaction is De Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley's (1998) cyclical perspective of how brand meanings are imbued by the company, are perceived by the consumer and are then renegotiated and co-created. Moving beyond one-directional considerations of brands as simply the vehicles transferring a unique selling proposition from the firm to the consumer, the cyclical process highlights that consumers' brand-related decisions derive from their own interpretations/perceptions of both tangible and intangible elements of a brand and their evaluations of the extent to which these elements match their own utilitarian and symbolic goals. Similarly to assimilating all self-related knowledge/perceptions in order to create their own self-images, consumers accumulate their overall perceptions about a brand into a network of associations built around the brand name (i.e. any brand-related knowledge such as information deduced by marketing mix activities) that constitutes the brand's image in their minds (Freling & Forbes, 2005b; Keller, 1993; Nenycz-Thiel & Romaniuk, 2014; van Osselaer & Alba, 2000). This image is developed constantly as new information emerges and new experiences with the brand accumulate (Fournier, 1998; Francisco-Maffezzolli, et al., 2014). The consumer however no longer receives brand messages passively but actively interacts with them (Hollebeek, 2011). Therefore, besides the intended meanings that managers imbue their brands with and which they can control, brands are also soaked with layers of meanings that consumers add to them (Chaudhuri, Mazumdar, & Ghoshal, 2011; Elliott, 1994; Wong, Hogg, & Vanharanta, 2012); these meanings cannot be controlled but need to be observed (Jevons, Gabbott, & de Chernatony, 2005), as they represent the benefits which consumers perceive that are emanated from the brand.

Keller (1993) and others [e.g. Dimofte, Johansson, and Bagozzi (2010)] have indeed concluded that consumers base their decisions on three types of benefits: functional (i.e. the brand's problem-solving capability, how it serves consumers' needs); hedonic/experiential (i.e. the fantasies, feelings of happiness and enjoyment consumers

can derive from brand consumption or brand-related activities); and symbolic, that is, intangible benefits that refer to the brand's ability to transfer the subjective, cultural meanings it carries to the consumer (McCracken, 1986) and that have the power to change the consumer's experience with the brand (De Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998; Rosenbaum-Elliott, et al., 2011). These symbolic meanings (e.g. images of prestige, brand personality traits and values, sense of community, lifestyle) are transferred from the culturally-constituted world to the brand and from the brand to the consumer (McCracken, 1986) and are operationalised both inwards (self-symbolism) and outwards (social symbolism). Levy (1959) was the first to verbalise this distinction, by referring to products as *"psychological things which are symbolic of **personal** attributes and goals of **social** patterns and strivings"* (p. 119, emphasis added). At this point, it is worth discussing self- and social self-symbolism in more detail.

Self-symbolism refers to those messages encompassed in brands we consume and use as means of self-expression (i.e. who we are/want to be). In this sense, the brands we choose to use, especially for those product types with which we are highly involved (Rosenbaum-Elliott, et al., 2011), are selected not only for their utilitarian purposes, but also for the meanings they incorporate and which we consider important for our actual or ideal self-identity projects (Wong, et al., 2012), or for transitional phases in our lives (Escalas & Bettman, 2005), where conflicts between actual and ideal selves are likely to arise (Karanika & Hogg, 2010). In other words, we consider products/brands as an extension of our selves (Belk, 1988), and the meanings they convey facilitate us in maintaining our actual self, defending/confirming it, expanding it, reaching our ideal self, disposing an undesired/'not me' self, or even connecting with a past self (Wong, et al., 2012). Over time, our chosen brands become part of our self, we connect with them (Escalas & Bettman, 2003), and become emotionally attached to them (Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010). Self-symbolic meanings are only solidified in our perceptions when both our mediated (i.e. through marketing communications) and lived (i.e. own) experiences with the brand, individual and/or shared (Chang & Chieng, 2006), harmoniously integrate those notions and in essence, create narratives that we consume along with the brand and pass on to our social circles (Bulmer & Buchanan-Oliver, 2014; Escalas, 2004; Wong, et al., 2012).

Social self-symbolism refers to messages embodied in the brands we choose that facilitate social self-expression (i.e. help us communicate to others who we are/how we wish to be seen as). For brands in some product types where consumption is socially

visible, and can thus be considered as a social activity, these meanings are important in helping us create or sustain our social self (Aaker, 2013); these brands thus carry meanings that can assist our social integration or differentiation (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Rosenbaum-Elliott, et al., 2011). In other words, in this era where brand consumption is a central element of the contemporary society (Thompson, 2004), we understand much about others from their consumption choices (Belk, 1988; Fennis & Pruyn, 2007; Irmak, Vallen, & Sen, 2010; Reed II, et al., 2012), assuming of course that we all interpret their symbolic nature in a similar way (Grubb & Stern, 1971); therefore, brands are used as signals (of identity/status/prestige, etc.) to others in general (Berger & Heath, 2007), or people that we consider as important in particular (Grubb & Stern, 1971; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014), in order to impress them and to communicate a positive view of ourselves (Chaudhuri, et al., 2011; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012; Stokburger-Sauer, et al., 2012), to re-confirm or persuade them that we possess certain characteristics (Ashworth, et al., 2009; Cutright, Samper, & Fitzsimons, 2013; Reed II, et al., 2012), to help us connect (Wong, et al., 2012) with groups or even celebrity endorsers (Escalas & Bettman, 2003) and to feel that we belong somewhere (Bulmer & Buchanan-Oliver, 2014).

Escalas and Bettman (2003) showed that consumers who form connections with brands that are consumed within groups they *are already part of* are motivated by self-verification whereas those who form connections with brands that are consumed in groups they *wish to be part of* are driven by self-enhancement. One reason why we might seek entrance to specific groups is our needs for belongingness, conformity or submission to others' opinions (Zou, Jin, He, & Xu, 2014). However, brands also enable our disentanglement from a social group that we no longer wish to associate with or our differentiation from other groups (Berger & Heath, 2007; Escalas & Bettman, 2005) or even within a particular group (Chan, Berger, & Van Boven, 2012). This might represent our chronic or situational need (Zou, et al., 2014) to feel unique (Irmak, et al., 2010) and diverge from the masses in order: i) to reduce negative emotions of self-threat (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001) deriving from perceiving our self as overly similar to others (internal/individual motive), or ii) to avoid signalling through our brand consumption undesired characteristics (external/social motive) that others can use to make additional negative inferences about us (Berger & Heath, 2007), or even iii) to project that we are not influenced by others' interests/choices (Zou, et al., 2014), that we are confident and self-sufficient (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012).

Of course, our needs for belongingness and uniqueness (as expressed through brand consumption), albeit largely dependent on whether we hold an interdependent or independent self-view (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) as shown by Escalas and Bettman (2005), are not mutually exclusive, and social identity theory is particularly helpful in understanding this: our existence as social beings requires us to adapt to living with others and in order to avoid exclusion we seek to project positive social identities, under the logic that others are more likely to accept us if we behave in a similar way to them; still, we seek some level of differentiation (Song & Lee, 2013), at least to the extent that we do not jeopardise our social assimilation (Tian, et al., 2001). In a consumption context, this 'balance' might be achieved through multiple simultaneous choices (Chan, et al., 2012; Stokburger-Sauer, et al., 2012); we may choose an ordinary brand to achieve conformity and a rare/luxury brand to show differentiation, or choose a brand commonly used by our peers but seek another form of differentiation, such as a different size/colour. As brands act as identity signals to others (Berger & Heath, 2007), therefore, social-symbolic meanings are only authenticated by the positive reactions from the respective social groups with which we want to interact (Grubb & Stern, 1971; Rosenbaum-Elliott, et al., 2011).

3.2.4. The Prominence of Personality to Self- & Brand-Images

The previous discussion focused on explaining what self- and brand-images are and how they generally seem to interact. From this discussion, however, it can be inferred that personality assumes a central role, both amongst self- *and* brand-images, and seems to be crucial for attraction and relationship development.

On the one hand, sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 provided support for the fact that personality characteristics are a crucial aspect of one's self-identity (Gross, 1987; Kuhn, 1960). Indeed, research in interpersonal psychology has highlighted that personality plays a central role in interpersonal attraction and is actively taken into consideration when selecting a partner or friend (Botwin, Buss, & Shackelford, 1997; Furnham, 2009); personality is also fundamental in the development and perceived quality of relationships (Fletcher, et al., 1999; Robins, et al., 2000). On the other hand, section 3.2.3 highlighted that brands, assuming an active role in their interactions with consumers through marketing activities, transmit both functional and symbolic meanings, that the consumer evaluates, interprets and merges with their previous

brand experiences (Chang & Chieng, 2006; Fleck, et al., 2014; Fournier, 1998; Plummer, 1984), and eventually decides whether they are of benefit to their personal and/or social self, and whether their relationship with the brand will be initiated, continued or dissolved. Symbolic meanings play a very crucial role for the achievement of self-relevant goals and thus positively influence self-brand interactions and emotional engagement with the brand (Franzak, Makarem, & Jae, 2014). Similarly to self-images, it appears that personality inferences are amongst the most prominent symbolic brand meanings as well (Choy & Kim, 2013; De Chernatony, 2001; Maehle, et al., 2009; Plummer, 1985). This central position of brand personality arises from the fact that the conceptualisation of brands as active relationship partners stems partly from considering the brand as a character with human-like characteristics and personality traits (Fournier, 1998). Davies and Chun (2003) posit that brand relationships are practically dependent on the brand being perceived as having such characteristics: *"The idea that we can have a relationship with a brand is an extension of the brand is person metaphor, as the implication is the brand requires a human dimension before we can have a relationship with it"* (p. 51). In a similar vein, Keller (1998) writes: *"the right personality can result in a consumer feeling that the brand is relevant"* and that consumers *"may be more willing to invest in a relationship…"* (p. 97).

Given the prominent role that personality assumes within self- and brand-meanings, as well as in the development of interpersonal and consumer-brand interactions, the current study will thus focus on the alignment between consumer and brand personalities in order to shed light on consumer-brand attraction. Previous work has implied that there is a close relationship between the two: it is broadly accepted that consumers use brands to self-express, and it seems that brand personality is a central vehicle of a brand's self-expressive capabilities (Keller, 1993). For instance, Swaminathan, Stilley, and Ahluwalia (2009) have shown that consumers, depending on their attachment style (approach/avoidance), choose brands that are perceived as sincere and exciting in order to signal those appealing traits to others. Similarly, Park and Roedder-John (2010) showed that some consumers (entity theorists, who believe that their identities are fixed and cannot be improved from their own efforts) tend to consider that the brand rubs off its personality characteristics on them even when they have been associated with it for a relatively short time, because they view brands as opportunities to signal positive qualities to others.

Following from the previous chapter that provided insight on how consumer and brand personality have individually been conceptualised and measured, the rest of this chapter will focus on how their alignment has so far been conceptualised and measured. The starting point for this discussion will be the interpersonal theories explaining patterns of alignment between partners' characteristics in general and personalities in particular. Drawing from interpersonal interactions theories to enhance our understanding of consumer-brand interactions has substantial value. As Aggarwal (2004) states: "…*even though people's relationships with brands do not necessarily share the same richness and depth as their relationships with human partners, they sometimes do behave as if they have a relationship with them*" (p. 88); hence, such an endeavour will provide the theoretical platform that can better inform our understanding of consumer-brand attraction.

3.3. Interpersonal Interactions & Attraction

3.3.1. Introduction

Our relationships with others, serving our fundamental need to connect, to belong and to be accepted (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), infiltrate every aspect of our lives, and our emotional balance is largely dependent on whether they are progressing well (Baron, et al., 2008). Researchers have been particularly interested to understand why we are attracted to others, why eventually we create, sustain or dissolve relationships with them, and why some of these relationships are more enduring and lead to stronger bonds (Klohnen & Luo, 2003). One powerful framework that has been proposed to explain interpersonal attraction is Social Exchange Theory.

3.3.2. Interpersonal Attraction: Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET), developed by George Homans (1958;1961;1974), and subsequently expanded by John Thibaut and Harold Kelley (1959), Peter Blau (1964), and Richard Emerson (1976), is a general framework that has been proposed to enhance understanding of social interactions/relationships. Although there are different orientations within SET, with roots in three different disciplines (economics, psychology and sociology), the general consensus is that social relations can be viewed as exchanges that create obligations for all parties involved (Emerson, 1976) and that

in order for those relations to develop and endure over time, some basic rules must be followed (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The main rule is that of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), which refers to a bidirectional exchange between parties: when one party provides a certain reward to another party, the latter is expected to reciprocate; in this sense, the continuation of the relationship/interaction depends on each party's behaviour, and is the result of a cyclical process consisted of a series of interdependent sequences of exchanges (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

The rationale behind viewing social interactions as exchanges is that relationships are quite demanding, as they require a lot of time, effort and commitment, while it is not uncommon to experience distress within them; in this sense, Blau (1964) posits that relationships are 'expensive', so their output, in comparison to our input, should be rewarding for us. As a result, SET primarily adopts a perspective to human interactions largely inspired by economics: it basically proposes that people consider relationships on a cost-benefit basis; we enter and sustain relationships where the amount of reward we gain (benefit), minus the rewards we provide (cost), still leaves clear 'profits' for us; if the costs are higher than the benefits, then the relationship is dissolved. This basic premise applies to both dyadic and small-group relationships (Homans's and Thibaut & Kelly's work, respectively).

Critique and Usefulness of the Social Exchange Theory for the Current Study

As mentioned above, SET is considered as a general 'frame of reference', within which other theories of social interaction, macro and micro, can converge and help explain individuals' motivations to create, sustain and dissolve social relationships (Emerson, 1976). Its power lies with the fact that it seems to bridge psychology, sociology and anthropology in understanding social interactions (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). However, SET has also been critiqued. For example, this output maximisation/input minimisation perspective assumes a rational, 'score-keeping' behaviour and thus oversimplifies such complex phenomena as social relationships (Gross, 1987); it also cannot adequately account for relationships that are largely dependent on altruistic motives (e.g. mother-child) (Rubin, 1973), as its economic roots reduce individuals' decisions regarding human relationships down to self-interest and selfish motives. It could also be argued that SET fails to distinguish between *communal* (individuals responding to a significant other's needs) and *exchange* relationships (all parties

involved acting based on their own interests), but since the latter are largely the norm in social relations (Clark & Mills, 1979), making this distinction does not seem to play an important role, especially for the current study. It could be supported that when we refer to consumer-brand relationships, we essentially refer to exchange relationships, since consumers purchase brands in order to satisfy functional and symbolic purposes. Our relationships with charity brands could of course be considered as communal, but research (Brodie et al., 2011) has shown that, besides altruism, satisfaction of self-interests is a quite common motivation behind charitable giving and participation to charitable activities. The dichotomy between communal and exchange relations does not thus capture the complexities and diverse range of either human-to-human or human-brand relationships (Miller, et al., 2012), for which other typologies [e.g. by Fournier (1998)] seem more accurate and appropriate.

Overall, as Gross (1987) warns, SET should not be applied literally; rather, its value lies in providing a general theoretical explanation behind motivations for entering, sustaining and dissolving relationships. As such, SET can be a very useful framework for the examination of consumer-brand relationships: the notion that consumers seek functional, hedonic/experiential and symbolic benefits from the consumption of brands (Keller, 1993) is in full agreement with SET's consideration of relationships as an exchange of benefits/rewards between the parties involved. The next section explains what exactly these benefits/rewards are in the context of interpersonal relations.

3.3.3. Patterns of Alignment in Interpersonal Attraction

As mentioned earlier, the basic premise behind SET is that social relationships are initiated and sustained when the parties involved exchange rewards which are of value to them (Emerson, 1976); this implies that different individuals may be seeking different rewards from certain relationships, and they may value them differently. Obviously, there are numerous types of rewards that one may be seeking from a relationship, of either economic or psychological/socio-emotional nature, such as affection, status, power, money, information/skills, goods/services etc. (Berscheid & Walster, 1978; Foa & Foa, 1980). In any case, our evaluations of these rewards influence the extent to which we are attracted to the individual(s) with whom we interact, and increase our satisfaction from the interaction, eventually boosting the chances of this progressing into a stable, enduring and committed relationship.

While there are numerous factors[2] that can lead us to initially feel drawn to another person, our attraction is not really consolidated or further nurtured until we have actively interacted/communicated with them (Baron, et al., 2008) and the information exchange between us has provided insight about the extent to which they like us (reciprocal liking) and the extent to which we share similar or complementary interests, needs, values, personality traits, etc. Similarity and complementarity effects, have consistently emerged as the most important predictors of attraction within the context of close, intimate relationships (e.g. between partners/spouses/friends), and are thus discussed below in more detail.

Similarity

"Birds of a Feather Flock Together."

Proverb (allegedly quoted originally in Plato's Republic)

Broadly, similarity in this context refers to the degree to which two people resemble each other in terms of demographic characteristics, such as age, educational background, occupation, etc. (Gleitman, et al., 2011) as well as in terms of attitudes, values, personality traits, interests, goals, beliefs, etc. (Baron, et al., 2008; Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2008). It is now widely accepted that similarity across one or more of the above domains is one of the most powerful explanations for interpersonal attraction (Buss, 1985), as well as relationship quality and satisfaction (Luo & Klohnen, 2005). Substantial empirical research over the years, both in experimental and in real-life settings [see Montoya, et al. (2008) for a recent review], has shown that indeed similarity draws people together, leads to attraction, assists mate selection and relationship development, and enhances relationship satisfaction.

Much of this empirical work, which has been based on whole-sample analyses and not individual relationships, has examined couples' similarities in terms of specific characteristics (e.g. values), rather than focusing on a more extensive assessment of

---

[2] For instance: i) Physical attractiveness (the extent to which we are attracted to someone's physical appearance), ii) Propinquity/proximity (the more we see someone and are physically close to them, the more attracted we become to them), iii) Mere exposure/familiarity (a notion similar to proximity, yet it focuses on the frequency of our interactions which may not necessarily be physical), iv) Direct positive emotions (we tend to like someone that may for example have just made a positive comment about us), v) Indirect effect of positive emotions (we evaluate more favourably someone we have encountered shortly after experiencing another interaction/event that has made us feel better about ourselves).

their similarities/differences (Luo & Klohnen, 2005). The overall picture from these studies is that, at least when it comes down to the selection of a romantic partner, similarities in age and attitudes (e.g. political/religious) are amongst the stronger predictors of attraction to, and selection of, mates because these characteristics seem to initially bring two individuals together; following these, similarities in educational backgrounds and values are most important, while personality similarities seem to be the weakest predictors of attraction (Luo & Klohnen, 2005).

Not surprisingly, therefore, much of previous literature has focused on similarity in terms of attitudes/values/beliefs (Aron, Steele, Kashdan, & Perez, 2006; Klohnen & Luo, 2003). According to Selfhout, Denissen, Branje, and Meeus (2009), early research efforts sought primarily to explore whether there was actual similarity between 'bogus strangers': for example, individuals were asked about their own attitudes/values/ beliefs, then were presented with information about the attitudes/values/beliefs of a fictitious person, and eventually were asked to evaluate that person [e.g. Byrne (1961)]. The results from those studies showed clear support for the notion that not only we tend to like/be attracted to people with who we share similarities (Wetzel & Insko, 1982), but also we tend to evaluate them more positively (Baron, et al., 2008).

In comparison to values and attitudes, studies that have examined the effect of personality similarity on initial attraction and mate selection, are fewer, primarily because: i) personality similarities are not really visible until the relationship has progressed (Furnham & Tsoi, 2012; Luo & Klohnen, 2005); ii) contrary to values/attitudes which are often our ideal choices (Luo & Klohnen, 2005), sharing with someone personality traits that we do not like about ourselves (e.g. aggressiveness) may not be seen as a rewarding exchange but as a repulsive possibility (Klohnen & Mendelsohn, 1998; Rosenbaum, 1986); iii) by asking strangers to describe themselves and others in terms of personality and then comparing their evaluations, early empirical efforts could only test for actual similarity, yet individuals may also be attracted to each other when *perceiving* personality similarities (Klohnen & Luo, 2003).

In any case, evidence for similarity in terms of personality has also been provided. For instance, Klohnen and Luo (2003) focused on the initial attraction stage and on a specific personality domain (attachment styles) to examine both actual and perceived similarities. With the exception of partners with secure attachment styles that were preferred at all times irrespective of the respondent's own attachment style, the results showed that: i) when respondents were provided with *descriptions* of their potential

partners' attachment styles, they preferred partners with attachment styles *similar* to their own (actual self-similarity); ii) when they were asked about their own *perceptions* of their potential partners' attachment styles, attraction increased either when that potential partner had an attachment style *similar* to the respondent's actual (perceived self-similarity), or ideal self (perceived ideal self-similarity). Overall, their results showed that the influence of *perceived* similarity on initial attraction was significantly stronger than that of *actual* similarity. Similarly, Selfhout, et al. (2009) more recently conducted a study in a naturalistic setting instead of following the 'bogus strangers' paradigm, and showed that friendship intensity is positively related to *perceived* (not actual) personality similarity between friends in the acquaintance stage. Another noteworthy study that provided empirical support for personality similarity was Furnham and Tsoi (2012), who asked respondents to rate themselves and to indicate their preferences for a potential mate in relation to Ability, Personality, Character, Physical, Resources and Values. Besides similarities in educational and socio-economic backgrounds, physical attractiveness and ideological views (political/religious), results also showed that respondents exhibited preferences for partners that were similar to them in terms of Extraversion, Openness and Conscientiousness. Besides attraction, personality similarity (in terms of Agreeableness and Openness) has also been connected to perceptions of high relationship quality (Luo & Klohnen, 2005).

There are many explanations behind this 'law of attraction' as Byrne and Rhamey (1965) have eloquently titled the similarity-attraction relationship. First, according to balance theory (Heider, 1958), discovering that we share similarities with someone else, at the very least, creates pleasant feelings; the opposite would create tensions within us (according to cognitive dissonance theory), as it would not feel natural to dislike someone similar to us (Aron, et al., 2006). Sharing similarities also creates a sense of safety and familiarity (Klohnen & Luo, 2003) in the rather uncertain situation we are faced with in the beginning of a relationship, when we are not yet sure whether it will be successful (Aron & Aron, 1986); similarities thus indicate to us that the relationship might thrive (Aron & Aron, 1996). Our agreement with another individual in terms of values, attitudes, and opinions means that we have substantial knowledge about them, which increases the level of intimacy between us (Barelds & Barelds-Dijkstra, 2007) and implies that our communication will be much easier (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Dryer & Horowitz, 1997), hence leading to a pleasant relationship. Moreover, it hints that our relationship will be enjoyable, as joint interests suggest that

we will be engaging in common activities (Rubin, 1973). Most importantly, however, liking people with characteristics similar to us seems logical, because in this way our self-concept and ideas are validated as acceptable and are socially approved (Aron, et al., 2006). As has already been discussed in section 3.2.2, this notion refers to one of our fundamental needs to verify our sense of self by interacting with people/objects/information that will reinforce certain aspects of our self; the fact that others have characteristics/ideas/beliefs similar to our own is a very powerful way of self-verification (Klohnen & Luo, 2003), that increases our self-esteem (Rubin, 1973) and consequently our positive feelings (Izard, 1960) and attraction to the other person. Therefore, sharing similarities is a very rewarding situation (Wetzel & Insko, 1982) which is likely to breed attraction between us and the other person, and could eventually lead to a long-standing relationship.

Complementarity

> _"I love you not only for what you are,_
> _but for what I am when I am with you."_

> Roy Croft, 'Love' poem

While similarity between two partners is obviously crucial and has received substantial empirical support, it is not uncommon for individuals to become attracted to people with qualities that complement their own needs, attitudes, beliefs, values and characteristics. This form of alignment is known as complementarity.

It appears that there is some confusion in the literature about what exactly this form of alignment involves, as attested by the existence of not always clearly distinguished [e.g. Klohnen and Luo (2003); Wetzel and Insko (1982)] concepts (e.g. ideal self-similarity, dissimilarity, etc.). For this reason, it needs to be clarified that complementarity should not be confused with ideal self-similarity, as the latter suggests that the person seeks a partner that represents their own ideal self and has their ideal characteristics, but such a pairing may not always be helpful: if a submissive person for example wishes to become more dominant, pairing up with a dominant person will not allow them to become dominant themselves (Wetzel & Insko, 1982). On the other hand, complementarity should also not be confused with dissimilarity, as not necessarily all of partners' characteristics need to be opposing; rather, complementarity suggests that _some_ of the partners' characteristics may be opposing, but in a way that allows the

individuals to complement each other. Dryer and Horowitz (1997) clearly illustrate this point, for example, by clarifying that complementarity is exhibited when two individuals may both be friendly, but the one is dominant and the other submissive, and they have paired up exactly because the one invites/expects certain behaviour from the other (i.e. the submissive may want to be dominated rather than to become more dominant). Thus, complementarity as a form of alignment does not necessarily mean that the interacting individuals share no similarities at all; rather, it means that they are particularly attracted to each other (and subsequently satisfied from their relationship) because the one has characteristics that the other does not own but desires in order to fulfil certain goals (Dryer & Horowitz, 1997) and/or reach an ideal state. In this sense, similarity and complementarity are not mutually exclusive (Dryer & Horowitz, 1997; Furnham & Tsoi, 2012); they may simply refer to different characteristics.

Empirical support for the complementarity hypothesis in human-to-human interactions has not been as straightforward as for similarity, however previous research has shown that it holds especially true for needs and partly for personality traits. By considering that each partner's personality is expressed in their needs and traits, Winch (1958) proposed that mate selection is the result of our search for a mate that will allow us to maximise the gratification of our emotional needs. Specifically, Winch showed that married couples had selected their mates because they wanted to satisfy needs or traits that differed between partners, either in intensity (Type I of complementarity, e.g. one partner is highly dominant, the other has low need for dominance) or in kind (Type II of complementarity, e.g. the one partner desires receiving attention, the other desires giving attention). Moreover, Dryer and Horowitz's (1997) recent effort showed that dyads of females with complementary interpersonal styles (e.g. one submissive-one dominant) were more satisfied from their interaction than those with similar interpersonal styles, because they felt that the other assisted them with their behaviour in achieving their own self-relevant goals.

A useful framework within which the above findings can be interpreted in order to assist our understanding of the reasons why individuals may be attracted to others with complementary characteristics, is the Self-Expansion Model (SEM) of motivation and cognition in close relationships (Aron & Aron, 1986). The model is based on two key principles: i) that we constantly seek to expand our selves in terms of resources, perspectives, and characteristics [a distinction inspired by James's (1890) material, social and spiritual self]; ii) that one way to achieve self-expansion is through our close

relationships, because, to some extent, others' resources and identities become our own. Previous research has indeed provided evidence that we tend to include the other in our self and to describe both similarly (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991). In the context of interpersonal attraction, SEM implies that we should logically be attracted to those individuals with who we will maximise self-expansion possibilities (Aron, et al., 2006), and that the more we continue to experience self-expansion within a relationship, the more its perceived quality and our satisfaction from it increases (Aron, Norman, Aron, McKenna, & Heyman, 2000). While forming a relationship with a person similar to us will still provide some opportunities for expansion since every individual is different, Aron, et al. (2006) propose that partnering with a person that has *different* characteristics/interests/perspectives offers the maximum possibilities for self-expansion; in contrast *dissimilar* characteristics/interests/perspectives would raise conflicts in the relationship that would undermine attraction (Rubin & McNeil, 1983), especially for fundamental differences in personality which would create frictions even at the level of day-to-day interactions (Luo & Klohnen, 2005). Rubin and McNeil (1983) also posited that, although we always prefer the support of others, seeking to achieve some differentiation can sometimes be positive, desirable or necessary. For instance, a less assertive person might find someone else's assertiveness attractive. Others (Gleitman, et al., 2011) have also supported that attraction between individuals differing on important personality traits is not uncommon.

The findings of studies examining complementarity presented previously also seem to dovetail with the basic motivational processes suggested by SEM, as they indicate that we seek to compensate, through our relationships, for qualities we do not have, yet we desire: relating to/interacting with someone that has these much desired qualities allows us to project that we also have these characteristics (Aron, et al., 1991). These qualities may refer to any aspect of self (e.g. a personality trait) which we feel is not reinforced in us but which we consider as important/favourable. In this sense, our relationship with a partner/friend that has characteristics complementary to our own allows us to become 'whole' (Aron, et al., 1991), to self-actualise and grow (Aron & Aron, 1986; Klohnen & Luo, 2003), and thus relates to the self-enhancement motive (section 3.2.2). Finally, Snyder and Fromkin (1980) suggest that another explanation behind complementarity lies with our need to feel unique and special: we are likely to be drawn to people with who we differ on a number of characteristics because in this way we re-confirm our own uniqueness within the relationship dyad.

A final point to note about human-to-human attraction is that the progression of a relationship over time seems to incur changes in the alignment of partners' characteristics, in two ways.

First, previous work on similarity has indicated that, during the course of a relationship, different importance is assigned to different characteristics; the characteristics we consider as crucial to be shared in the beginning of the relationship are not always the same with those we feel should be shared once the relationship has matured. Luo and Klohnen (2005) showed that newlywed couples exhibited similarities in terms of attitudes, values and religiosity, but not in terms of personality traits; the latter were however shown to be an important predictor of the perceived quality of the marital relationship. They suggested therefore that sharing similarities in terms of values/attitudes seems to be crucial in the beginning, and as the relationship progresses over time, personality similarities increase in importance.

Second, similarity and complementarity seem to differ in terms of importance in different stages of the relationship. The most notable study that has provided support for this premise is the Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) research which showed that for couples that had been together for a short amount of time (less than 18 months), the attraction between partners was stronger when they shared a range of similar values and personality characteristics. In contrast, for longer relationships, similarity was not as crucial; rather, complementarity of mates' needs was the glue that was keeping them together. Drawing from these findings, Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) proposed a model, which views relationships as passing through a series of filters. The first filter is that, in practice, socio-demographic variables will determine whether two individuals will come across each other; for example, individuals from similar educational, cultural or socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to meet and become attracted to each other (Botwin, et al., 1997; Furnham & Tsoi, 2012; Luo & Klohnen, 2005), plus their similar backgrounds will make communication much easier. Nevertheless, having similar backgrounds is not enough for two people to become attracted; other characteristics, such as a partner's values and needs, are taken into consideration (Luo & Klohnen, 2005). The second filter thus refers to the fact that, in order for the relationship to develop, there needs to be some form of agreement/similarity between the partners' basic values and world-views. Beyond the initial stages of the relationship, partners' longer commitment is nurtured by the existence of

complementary needs (third filter) that in essence act as the glue that merges two separate entities into a whole; this last filter is in agreement with the empirical evidence provided by Winch (1958) about the complementarity of needs in couples. Overall, the model supports the notion that similarity and complementarity are not mutually exclusive forms of alignment (Furnham & Tsoi, 2012).

At this point, some crucial issues arising from the Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) study need to be addressed. First, given that complementarity was found to have a clear positive effect on the success of a relationship, Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) imply that the reason why an individual might select a partner with complementary needs/traits might be because those characteristics are particularly important to them in comparison to others. This raises the possibility that certain characteristics might be assuming a more prominent role in the alignment process; for some characteristics similarity might be important, and for others complementarity might be crucial. Second, with regards to the reasons why complementarity does not become more prominent in the early stages of a relationship, Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) posited that this can be explained by the overall tendency of partners at the beginning of romantic involvement to idealise each other [also supported in Klohnen and Mendelsohn (1998)]. It is possible that individuals do not actually realise very early on in the relationship their personality similarities/differences, as these are not easily revealed and are not straightforwardly understood (Duck & Craig, 1978; Furnham & Tsoi, 2012). Dryer and Horowitz (1997) lent further support to this idea, as they observed that when individuals were satisfied from their relationship, they did not actually consider that the other party had complementary characteristics; they perceived them as having similar characteristics. Therefore, while in the beginning everything is idealised and in their enthusiasm two interacting individuals (e.g. partners/friends) actively seek to find similarities, once the relationship has been established and lived joint experiences have shaped a clearer picture of each other's characteristics, they may realise that some of the other's traits are not after all similar to their own, but complementary.

Finally, the importance of complementarity on the longevity of a relationship can be made explicitly clear, if we consider findings from previous empirical studies (Luo & Klohnen, 2005) showing that beyond a certain point, similarity between partners' attitudes, values and characteristics does not add to their relationship satisfaction, as it offers no further opportunities for self-expansion (Aron & Aron, 1996). Therefore, it is logical to suggest that after a point, similarity is not rewarding anymore; in contrast, as

time passes and the relationship develops, the discovery that some of the partner's characteristics are complementary to our own and our interaction with him/her can assist us in achieving our goals, can be particularly rewarding.

3.4. Consumer-Brand Interactions & Attraction

3.4.1. Introduction

Having drawn from the interpersonal attraction literature and having examined the two main forms of alignment between partners' characteristics (similarity and complementarity), our attention is now turned to consumer-brand attraction and how consumer research has thus far considered that consumers' and brands' characteristics are aligned, in order to reveal unexplored forms of consumer-brand personality alignment. The main explanation that has been proposed for consumers' attraction to brands is Self-Brand Congruence theory.

3.4.2. Consumer-Brand Attraction: Self-Brand Congruence Theory

"Choices are made more easily – either more routinely or more impulsively, seemingly – because one object is symbolically more harmonious with our goals, feelings, and self-definitions than another."

Levy (1959), p. 120

It was mentioned earlier that, besides functionality, consumers also seek symbolic benefits from their consumption choices (e.g. products, brands, stores) (Belk, 1988; Levy, 1959). One key such benefit is the contribution of those choices in satisfying consumers' need for self-definition and self-expression (Belk, 1988; Eisend, M. & Stokburger-Sauer, N., 2013; Holt, 1995; Kleine, Kleine, & Allen, 1995; Swaminathan & Dommer, 2012; Wong, et al., 2012). A vast amount of research in consumer behaviour has been dedicated to explain how exactly this self-expressive process takes place and how it may lead to desirable behaviour. This overwhelming stream of research, originating back in the 1950s and 1960s [e.g. Birdwell (1968); Gardner and Levy (1955); Grubb and Grathwohl (1967); Grubb and Hupp (1968); Levy (1959); Dolich (1969)], has led to the development of a theoretical framework that seeks to provide an

overall explanation of why and how, in this overabundance of available brands (Hanslin & Rindell, 2014), consumers make choices that allow them to express themselves: the self-congruence theory. It is worth noting that other terms, such as 'self-congruity', 'image congruence', or 'self-image congruence' have been used interchangeably to describe this framework (Hohenstein, Sirgy, Herrmann, & Heitmann, 2007; Hosany & Martin, 2012; Kressmann, et al., 2006; Sirgy, et al., 1997), but its application in a branding context demands a more accurate description; for this purpose, the term Self-Brand Congruence (S-BC) will be adopted hereafter.

The basic premise behind S-BC is that consumers psychologically (Dolich, 1969) compare their own self-images with the images (e.g. personality, typical user imagery, etc.) projected by brands (or products/stores). A close match between them is referred to as 'high' congruence (and vice versa). Since consumer research has conceptualised the self-concept as a multidimensional construct (Sirgy, 1982), consisted of actual, ideal, social and ideal social self-image, S-BC can also be viewed in multidimensional terms: actual, ideal, social, and ideal social S-BC (Sirgy, 1985). The theory proposes that consumers, following this comparison, develop more favourable evaluations and are attracted to brands with images that match their own self-images more closely. High congruence therefore may lead to consumer-brand attraction and desirable brand-related behaviour (e.g. purchase intention, preference, favourable attitude, satisfaction, loyalty, etc.), and increase brand equity; this relationship seems stronger for brands with clear symbolic associations (e.g. personality) (Sirgy, 1982) rather than brands with a less clear personality (Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak, & Sirgy, 2012).

It is believed that S-BC is the result of perceptions relating to the consumer's congruence with: i) the product line, ii) the firm's/brand's employees, iii) the image of brand users as depicted in brand communications, and iv) the general image of the typical brand customer that the consumer has in mind (Hohenstein, et al., 2007). S-BC is distinct from functional congruity which is defined as *"an assessment of the brand by focusing on the extent to which functional attributes of the brand matches the consumer's ideal or desired performance specifications"* [Hohenstein, et al. (2007), p. 5], and which has been found to mediate the relationship between S-BC and some consumer behaviour outcomes. More recent research (Parker, 2009) has also highlighted that a distinction should be made between studies which have examined Brand Personality Congruity (relationship between consumer and brand personality perceptions) and those which have examined Brand User Imagery Congruity (the extent to which a

consumer perceives him/herself as similar to the image of the typical brand user); more recently (Liu, Li, Mizerski, & Soh, 2012), these two have also been distinguished from Brand Usage Imagery Congruity (the extent to which the consumer perceives that the typical ways of using a certain brand match the situation in which they wish to use it). These studies have provided some initial evidence that the predictive power of the three different types of congruence on consumer behaviour outcomes varies, depending on the situation or brands under investigation.

It is crucial to clarify that the theory does not claim to be in a position to fully explain consumers' choices. It is recognised [e.g. Landon (1974); Sirgy (1982)] that other product- or consumer-related factors may influence consumer behaviour or moderate its relationship with S-BC, such as product category (Malhotra, 1988), income (Birdwell, 1968), or product conspicuousness and self-monitoring [e.g. Graeff (1996a)]. Additionally, the fact that a single brand choice might be congruent with our self-image does not mean that it expresses the totality of who we are; multiple consumption objects might express different aspects of our self-concept (Belk, 1988).

Empirical studies that have examined the basic propositions of S-BC are numerous and spread across a wide array of contexts, samples, and product categories. Broadly, previous work has been concerned with three main themes: i) to theoretically explain and find support for the basic premise (i.e. that consumers indeed enter this psychological process of comparison which eventually leads them to prefer products/ brands/stores with images that match their own), and given the multidimensional view of S-BC, to discover whether and in what conditions the premise holds true for the different aspects of S-BC; ii) to identify the most appropriate ways to measure S-BC; and iii) to explore how S-BC explains a range of desirable outcomes. The next sections briefly review previous work on these three domains.

3.4.3. Patterns of Alignment in Consumer-Brand Attraction: Empirical Support for Similarity

<u>Early Work</u>

The S-BC premise has received substantial support over the years, albeit the empirical ways of investigation have considerably evolved. In one of the earliest studies, Birdwell (1968) asked owners in four car groups (prestige, medium-priced, low-priced, and

economy-compact) to rate the image of the typical owner of their own car brand, of the other car brands, and finally, their own self-image, on 22 bipolar image dimensions (e.g. sophisticated-unsophisticated, but also non-personality items, such as old-young). Following the calculation of a distance measure for each dimension, the study broadly concluded that across the four car groups, respondents had indicated small 'distance' between their perceptions of their car brand image and of themselves (hence their car brand choice was *similar* to their own selves). In a similar vein, Grubb and Hupp (1968) asked owners of two car brands (Volkswagen 1200-1300 and Pontiac GTO) to indicate their own self-concept, their perceptions of the Volkswagen owners' and Pontiac GTO owners' self-concepts, but used instead a series of 16 unipolar scales, where the respondent could indicate the extent to which each item was applicable in each case. This study also concluded that owners of the one car brand perceived themselves to be different from the typical owners of the other car brand, and *similar* to the same-car typical owner image. A later replication (Grubb & Stern, 1971) corroborated these results for Volkswagen and Mustang owners, and additionally showed that the owners' significant others could also perceive car owners of the same brand to be *similar*, and typical owners of the two competing brands to be different.

While these studies indeed showed that consumers' self-images matched those of their most preferred brands, researchers soon adopted a multi-dimensional view of S-BC, and started concentrating their efforts in discovering for which of the S-BC aspects and why, this basic premise held true. A notable early effort, made by Dolich (1969), asked respondents to rate their actual and ideal self-image, and the images of their most and least preferred brands in four product categories (two publicly-consumed: beer and cigarettes, and two privately-consumed: bar soap and toothpaste) on 22 bipolar scales (a mix of personality and non-personality items). The results showed that: i) respondents reported greater similarity between their own self-images and their most preferred brands' images, than their least preferred brands, ii) high S-BC for most preferred brands held true irrespective of whether the product was socially-/privately-consumed, iii) ideal S-BC did not assume a more significant role than actual S-BC.

Kassarjian (1971) and Landon (1974), however, were sceptical about the results from earlier studies because they had checked for congruence *after* purchase. Specifically, Landon (1974) argued that post-purchase self-brand similarity may be caused by a number of factors (e.g. consumers' efforts to avoid dissonance, or change of perceived self-image after purchase), and that research should instead examine whether S-BC

influences *pre-purchase* intentions. He asked respondents to rate the extent to which a range of products matched their actual self-image ('very strongly unlike me'/'very strongly like me'), their ideal self-image ('very strongly unlike I want to be'/'very strongly like I want to be'), as well as their intentions to purchase it (5-point scale). Overall, the study showed that: i) actual and ideal S-BC were correlated, ii) although ideal S-BC was more prominent for certain products, actual S-BC emerged as more prominent for most products; most importantly however, the study was among the first to verbalise that some consumers might be motivated by a self-verification motive ('actualizers', i.e. those for which actual S-BC was most prominent), while others by self-enhancement ('perfectionists', i.e. those for which ideal S-BC was more prominent).

Which Self-Brand Congruence Is More Important: Actual, Ideal, Social, or Ideal Social?

The overall picture from these early empirical studies was that the basic proposition, that consumers' self-images match their most preferred brands' images, is not strongly supported for all types of congruence. Indeed, Sirgy (1982), perhaps the most influential figure in the development of the S-BC theory, reported that until that point, preference for brands/products/stores had received strong support for actual self-congruence, less for ideal [e.g. Dolich (1969); Landon (1974); Stern, et al. (1977)], but no or minimal support for social or ideal social self-congruence.

In order to explain this, Sirgy (1985), following Grubb and Grathwohl's (1967) argument that consumers will always behave in ways that will protect and enhance their self-images, supported that consumers' attraction to brands is motivated by their needs for consistency and self-esteem enhancement. Specifically, he suggested that consumers' attraction to brands with images that match their own self-images (actual S-BC) is motivated by their need for self-consistency/self-verification, that is, the need to make choices that are consistent with, and will verify their perceptions of themselves, and to avoid choices that will lead them to cognitive dissonance. On the other hand, consumers' attraction to brands with images that match their ideal self-images (ideal S-BC) is motivated by their need to behave in ways that will lead them to positive self-views and will increase their self-esteem (self-enhancement), such as making brand choices that will minimise the distance between actual and ideal self.

Sirgy (1985) tested his propositions, by asking respondents to first indicate their purchase motivations for four brands (two magazines and two car brands), then to rate

their images of these brands, and then their own actual and ideal self-images, across 30 attributes. Using a mathematical index (generalised absolute-difference model), he calculated two 'distance' scores (representing actual and ideal S-BC, respectively). Results showed that: i) purchase motivation was higher for high actual/ideal S-BC in comparison to low actual/ideal S-BC, ii) the effects of actual and ideal S-BC seem to be additive: not only actual and ideal S-BC may directly influence purchase motivation, but they may also interrelate in four ways (Figure 3-1). When both actual and ideal S-BC are high, both consumers' self-consistency and self-esteem enhancement needs are satisfied, hence the consumer is motivated to 'approach' the brand (and vice versa). When the one is low and the other high, the consumer is faced with need conflict.

Figure 3-1: Interrelationship between actual & ideal self-brand congruence and its effect on purchase motivation [adapted from Sirgy (1985)]
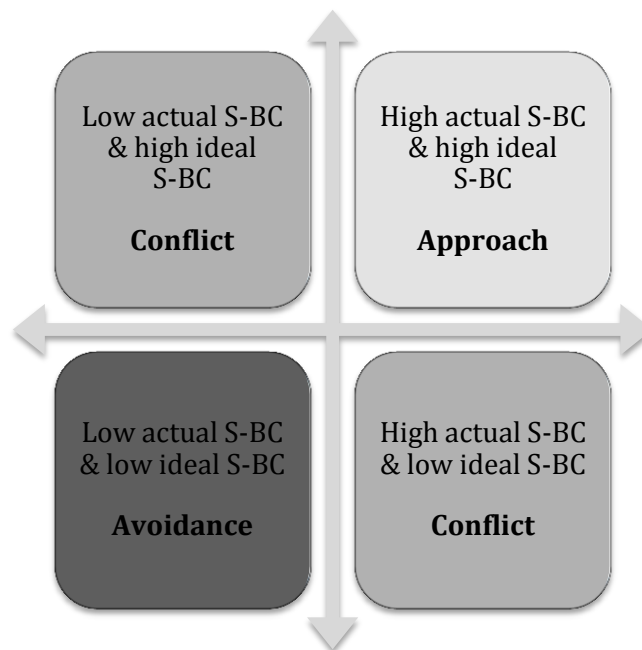
Malhotra (1988) largely agreed with Sirgy about the two basic motivation processes, but distinguished these two from a third need: that of projecting a certain image to significant others (social self). In order to substantiate his claims, he asked participants in his study to consider that they wish to buy a house, and presented them with nine house profiles which differed in terms of nine attributes (e.g. how old the house was, whether it had a swimming pool, etc.). He then asked them to rate their images of the

houses, then their actual, ideal and social self, on the same 15-item scale and finally to state their preference for each one of the house profiles. The results indicated that 60.1%, 22.3%, and 17.6% of the respondents showed preference for houses that matched their ideal, actual and social self, with average correlations between preference and congruence being 0.55, 0.58, and 0.60, respectively. Malhotra (1988) concluded that the role of actual, ideal and social self is likely to differ depending on the individual's self-relevant goals and on the context or product category investigated.

Overall, however, it is now broadly accepted [e.g. Helgeson and Supphellen (2004); Sirgy (1982)] that actual and ideal S-BC are the two types of congruence that are of most importance, and a more recent review of existing S-BC studies (Hosany & Martin, 2012) showed that these two types have received the most empirical support.

Recent Developments

S-BC still continues to attract researchers' attention; the desire to understand more deeply how exactly self- and brand-images in general, and consumer and brand personalities in particular, interact is still a matter of interest. Although there are some cases where no directionality is assumed (Garsvaite & Caruana, 2014), the majority of studies have sought to establish a causal effect (i.e. to what extent and how, consumers' personalities *influence* preference for brands with certain characteristics) and have examined congruence in relation to consumer [e.g. Maehle and Shneor (2010) used the Ekelund and Langvik's (2008) Diversity Icebreaker scale; Shank and Langmeyer (1994) used the Myers-Brigg Type Indicator] or brand [e.g. Mulyanegara, et al. (2009)] personality typologies. Although useful in moving the field forward, these studies have shown weak or inconclusive results, which is not surprising given that they have basically sought to offer fixed patterns of association and in essence, seem to ignore the central role of individuals' self-related goals and motivations.

The most notable of recent studies is perhaps Huang, et al. (2012), who actually examined S-BC in a brand personality context (section 2.3.5). The study asked respondents to rate their own and their favourite brands' personality traits on the same scale, drawn by human psychology literature [Saucier's (1994) mini-markers]. After the deletion of 21 items, consumer and brand personality exhibited similar factorial structure and composition to that of the Five-Factor Model. However, the study's model hypothesised and tested linear relationships between each consumer personality

dimension and the corresponding brand personality one (e.g. Consumer Excitement with Brand Excitement); hence, this study also assumed that consumers choose brands with characteristics that *mirror* each and every one of their personality dimensions. Results were relatively weak in relation to some dimensions (e.g. Conscientiousness), and also showed statistically significant relationships between non-corresponding consumer and brand personality dimensions that were not accounted for.

Overall Critique of Existing Studies

What can be realised by the review of both early and later studies is that the ways in which they have conceptualised and empirically examined congruence actually equates it with similarity, that is, that consumers prefer brands with personalities that *mirror* their own personalities. By looking for how closely a consumer's own self-images and characteristics match with a product/brand/store's images and characteristics, they automatically assume that this alignment exhibits a similarity configuration. Early research bears much of the responsibility for this; Dolich (1969), for example, explicitly stated: *"...only those products or brands symbolized as **similar** to the self concept will maintain or enhance the self"* (p. 80, emphasis added). And although it was quite early recognised (Hughes & Guerrero, 1971) that congruence/similarity can explain our basic motivation for harmony between our self-images and our surroundings but it cannot explain our need for differentiation and for pursuing new aspirations, this assumption of similarity was transferred across to all subsequent empirical efforts, and has never been challenged. In fact, to the author's knowledge, only two studies (Heath & Scott, 1998; Swaminathan & Dommer, 2012) have raised the possibility that other forms of alignment, and specifically complementarity, may be taking place in self-brand interactions, and only one study on S-BC (Kressmann, et al., 2006) seems to somehow acknowledge that some dissimilarities between self and brand characteristics might offer opportunities for self-extension and higher consumer-brand relationship quality; however, these voices have been ignored and no empirical investigations of such propositions exist in the literature.

Yet the possibility of other forms of self-brand personality alignment is worth exploring further. Previous work has suggested that, if we want to understand consumer-brand interactions further, we need to explore how consumers' personalities and motivations influence their brand choices (Baumgartner, 2002; Swaminathan, et al., 2009). Given

that a distinct, well-designed brand personality can ease consumers' self-expression (Cohen, 2014; Eisend, M. & Stokburger-Sauer, N., 2013; Fleck, et al., 2014), and facilitate the formation of strong consumer-brand relationships (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014; Eisend, M. & Stokburger-Sauer, N., 2013; Fournier, 1998), even for low-involvement products (Delbaere, et al., 2011), the exploration of how exactly this self-brand personality matching is exhibited and how it allows the achievement of these self-expressive goals (self-verification or self-enhancement) emerges as a crucial issue. A deeper understanding of those alignment patterns can allow the further refinement of brand meanings and personality traits according to its target consumers' aspirations, allowing the brand to uniquely position itself in their minds and eventually adding value both to them and to the firm (Ballantyne, Warren, & Nobbs, 2006).

Moreover, the existence of other configurations such as complementarity would not be mutually exclusive with similarity; as discussed earlier, research in interpersonal attraction has shown that both forms can co-exist. In a consumer-brand context, this is also possible: previous research (Escalas, 2004) has noted that consumers may connect with brands only on certain self-aspects, and S-BC proposes that we choose brands with images that are consistent with *some, not all* aspects of our self-image (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012), and that a single brand choice does not express the totality of who we are (Belk, 1988). This implies that we may share *some* personality characteristics with a brand, but depending on our self-related goals, we may have also chosen the brand because it has traits that complement *some* of our other characteristics. It also implies that some aspects of personality might assume a more prominent role (Harmon-Kizer, et al., 2013), but which and why still remains unclear.

3.4.4. Measuring Self-Brand Congruence

Not surprisingly, the assumption of similarity in S-BC is deeply embedded in the different approaches that have been proposed for its measurement. The progression of empirical work on S-BC measurement can easily be followed chronologically, with early work employing product-anchored Q-sort methodology, followed by discrepancy scores, and more recently direct measures. The first method, although successfully used in some cases [e.g. Belch and Landon (1977); Greeno, Sommers, and Kernan (1973)], was replaced by discrepancy scores due to a number of limitations related to its core procedure [see Sirgy (1982) for more detail]: as respondents were asked to

describe their self-concept in terms of products, on the one hand, it was not uncommon for them to find the process difficult when they were presented with products that did not have clear symbolic associations (e.g. personality); on the other hand, the method failed to distinguish between self- and product-images, hence providing no further information about how the two are aligned. For this reason, only discrepancy scores and direct measures will be discussed in more detail.

Discrepancy Scores

The use of discrepancy scores in measuring S-BC refers to the actual mathematical calculation of the 'distances' between a respondent's ratings of their own self-image and of a brand's image on a range of dimensions/characteristics, which are then summed together into a single score, using a mathematical index (Sirgy, et al., 1997). Although there is a range of models that have been used to calculate S-BC (interactive congruence, absolute difference, difference-squared, simple difference, Euclidean distance, simple difference divisional), Sirgy, et al. (1997) concluded that no significant differences in relation to their predictive strength seem to exist; rather he suggested (Sirgy, 1982) that the selection of the model used to calculate discrepancy scores between self- and brand-images should be guided and adapted according to theory.

Discrepancy scores can be classified in two broad groups, depending on whether they have used semantic differential (bipolar) scales or Likert-type (unipolar) scales. In the bipolar scales approach [e.g. Birdwell (1968); Dolich (1969); Bellenger, et al. (1976); Stern, et al. (1977)], respondents were asked to assess their selves and brands on a series of aspects (e.g. personality dimensions, evaluative perceptions, etc.), each one of which was measured using one or more bipolar adjective scales (e.g. kind/rude, etc.); then an arithmetic score was calculated for each pair and dimension, with a smaller score signifying higher congruence/similarity. In the unipolar scales approach [e.g. Grubb and Hupp (1968)], the respondent is asked to indicate the degree to which a certain trait matches his/her view of self (e.g. to what extent they are kind, from not at all/does not apply to very much/applies very much); the same is done for the brand/typical brand user and a comparison is then made afterwards.

According to Sirgy (1982), early studies using bipolar scales forced respondents to signal their position on a series of 5-point scales with opposing adjectives, and assumed that all pairs were equally important/relevant to the respondent when thinking about

their own selves; this problem seems to be addressed in unipolar scales that can control for the extent to which respondents consider that certain items are applicable to themselves, however, both approaches share some limitations. Specifically, by asking respondents to indicate their image perceptions of the typical brand user/owner, they in essence equated brand user imagery with brand personality (Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004); as shown in Chapter 2, brand personality perceptions are formed from many direct and indirect sources, user imagery being only one of them. Moreover, the items included in those scales were arbitrarily selected, often from pre-existing lists/ personality inventories [e.g. Birdwell (1968); Grubb and Hupp (1968); Grubb and Stern (1971); Stern, et al. (1977)], with no theoretical justification (Malhotra, 1988). The implications of this limitation are two-fold. First, according to Malhotra (1988), the arbitrary selection of items means that those studies have in essence found support for the congruence premise on a limited number of characteristics; for example, Bellenger, et al. (1976) opted to examine self-store image congruence on two aspects only, assertiveness/passivity and objectivity/impulsiveness. If anything, these ad hoc scales may have ignored key personality characteristics (Jie, Chou, & Chou, 2012). Therefore, Malhotra (1988) warned that the arbitrary selection of items does not allow for a systematic assessment of self-brand image/personality congruence to take place. Second, both Malhotra (1988) and Sirgy (1982) argued that the items selected for inclusion (especially in the semantic differential scales) may not be relevant or applicable to the product type(s) under investigation. In order to address this issue, the first argued in favour of the use of product profiles, where respondents could indicate their ratings of product- and self-images on a semantic differential scale developed specifically for the product type under investigation, and could then indicate their preference among a number of product profiles; the second recommended presenting respondents with product/situation-specific sentences, and asking them to indicate the extent to which they considered that certain images applied.

Irrespective of which approach is used (bipolar/unipolar), the estimation of congruence via discrepancy scores in general has received criticism. Sirgy, et al. (1997) suggested that discrepancy scores have been connected to issues relating to questionable reliability and construct validity. Most importantly however, he argued against discrepancy scores because their use assumes that consumers judge the congruence of their self-images and characteristics with those of the brand as a 'piecemeal' process, rather than holistically; in practice this implies that consumers

consider the congruence/similarity for each and every relevant dimension/ characteristic, then 'add' these perceptions, and accordingly reach a decision. These issues, in conjunction with the fact that the scales with which respondents are presented may include items not relevant to them, led Sirgy, et al. (1997) to propose a more direct approach to S-BC measurement, as discussed below.

Direct Measures

Direct S-BC measures refer to the method where congruence is measured more directly and holistically. There are two commonly encountered variations of this approach.

The first one uses statements which ask the respondent to consider to what extent they perceive differences between their own self-images and a brand's images for a range of dimensions. For example, Sirgy, Johar, Samli, and Claiborne (1991) asked their respondents to consider for a beer brand with which they were familiar the extent to which they perceived differences between their own self-image and the brand's (from 0: no difference to 4: lot of difference) on a series of dimensions (e.g. conservative/ modern, city/country person, etc.); they then calculated a total score of congruence by summing the scores the respondent had given for all dimensions. The sentences can also be phrased in a way that, instead of differences, asks participants to consider consistencies/similarities (e.g. from 0: not consistent at all to 4: very consistent).

The second variation presents the respondent with a statement that asks them to consider to what extent they believe the brand's image is consistent with their own self-image globally, that is, without asking them to consider specific dimensions or characteristics. The measure was originally developed by Sirgy, et al. (1997) and its predictive superiority over discrepancy scores was confirmed across multiple samples and products, and for a range of consumer behaviour outcomes, including choice, preference, attitude, satisfaction, etc. One recent application of this direct measure was made by Malär, et al. (2011), who adapted the measure for both actual and ideal S-BC; specifically, respondents were given the following instructions:

> *Take a moment to think about brand X. Describe this person using personality characteristics such as reliable, smooth, etc. Now think about how you see yourself (your actual self). What kind of person are you? How would you describe your personality? Once you've done this, indicate your agreement or disagreement to the following statements:*
> *1. The personality of brand X is consistent with how I see myself (my actual self).*
> *2. The personality of brand X is a mirror image of me (my actual self).*

According to Sirgy, et al. (1997), a direct measure has substantial advantages over all previous measures, and discrepancy scores in particular: i) it is easily administered, it is directly addressed to respondents, and does not require any sort of calculations of difference scores; ii) it allows participants to consider individually those image dimensions most relevant to them, hence eliminating the researcher's problem of identifying items that are relevant both for the respondent and the product type under investigation, and iii) it allows the respondent to express their global feeling about the degree of similarity between their self-image and a certain brand's image, hence not assuming that the respondent has considered the degree of similarity for each and every image dimension. Indeed, the predictive power of the direct measure over discrepancy scores continues to receive confirmation (Jie, et al., 2012).

However, the direct technique is not without limitations. First, it assumes that, when addressed with the question, the respondent will take the time to form an overall, descriptive and thorough profile of the brand and of him/herself, and compare the two; it is likely that the respondent will simply focus on one or two characteristics/ dimensions that will pop in their mind at that time, and respond to the question on this basis. Their responses thus might not be accurate enough. Second, a global measure allows respondents to understand more easily researchers' objectives: when asked to indicate the extent to which they feel their self-image is consistent with that of a brand, they are alerted to the fact that the researcher might seek to identify whether S-BC is indeed the reason they have selected the specific brand, hence they may downplay the reported congruence (Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004); this is less possible in the discrepancy score technique if respondents are asked to indicate their perceptions of themselves and of brand images with a number of other questions being asked in-between. Third, a global measure completely removes a great level of detail and nuance that is ample in a discrepancy-score measure: the latter can capture more information about the exact image aspects/characteristics where the respondent feels to be consistent with/complemented by those of the brand. In other words, a global measure does not allow the researcher or the practitioner to understand which brand image aspects mostly align, in whatever form, with those of the respondent's. Yet, the importance of capturing relationships between consumer and brand personality dimensions has been raised as a crucial issue (Maehle & Shneor, 2010), both for our theoretical understanding of the alignment process and for managerial practice; at the

very least consumers may be assigning different importance to each dimension/ characteristic/aspect of identity (Harmon-Kizer, et al., 2013; Hayes, et al., 2006).

In conclusion, in their current form, existing S-BC measures only capture similarity configurations of personality alignment. Therefore, an important gap in the measurement of S-BC emerges: the opportunity to develop a new measure that captures both similarity and complementarity forms of alignment, and which logically would enjoy greater predictive powers of brand-related outcomes than existing measures that only capture similarity. For the purpose of developing such a measure, the discrepancy scores technique seems to have more merits in comparison to direct measures, as it can capture more detail with regards to the exact patterns of alignment between consumer and brand personalities.

3.4.5. *The Influence of Self-Brand Congruence on Consumer Behaviour*

As S-BC proposes that consumers will be attracted to brands with images/ characteristics that match their own images/characteristics, it has been used to explain a wide range of consumer behaviour outcomes (Sirgy, et al., 1997).

In their quest to check whether the basic S-BC premise held true, early research efforts were more interested in looking for evidence that S-BC and choice were indeed connected; they thus often examined the premise within naturalistic settings after consumers had made their choices (Birdwell, 1968; Grubb & Hupp, 1968; Grubb & Stern, 1971). However, researchers eventually became more interested in checking whether S-BC could be used to explain/predict pre-purchase behaviours; these efforts (often in experimental settings) were focused for example on providing support for the influence of S-BC on forming positive attitudes/evaluations (Graeff, 1996a;1996b;1997; Lee, 2004), perceiving the brand as having high quality (Graeff, 1996b; Kwak & Kang, 2009), increasing purchase intentions (Graeff, 1997; Hung & Petrick, 2011; Landon, 1974; Sirgy, 1985; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011), or preference (Dolich, 1969; Graeff, 1996a; Jamal, 2004; Jamal & Goode, 2001).

The importance of S-BC in explaining post-purchase outcomes was soon however realised (Hosany & Martin, 2012). The most attention has been paid to traditional outcomes, such as satisfaction (Jamal, 2004; Jamal & Al-Marri, 2007; Jamal & Goode,

2001; Jamal, Khan, & Tsesmetzi, 2009; Sirgy, et al., 1997) and loyalty (Bellenger, et al., 1976; Jamal, et al., 2009; Kressmann, et al., 2006). More recently, research has sought to confirm the predictive power of S-BC on a range of outcomes, such as emotional attachment (Malär, et al., 2011; Matzler, Pichler, Fuller, & Mooradian, 2011), and positive word-of-mouth (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). However, a range of cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses that are exhibited within the context of consumer-brand relationships, still remain underexplored (e.g. the extent to which consumers resist negative comments about their favourite brands).

While the results of the above studies are encouraging, it should be highlighted that they are based on the assumption that S-BC takes a similarity configuration; hence, with the confirmation of the existence of complementarity, and with the development of a new measure of self-brand personality alignment capturing both similarity and complementarity configurations, the influence of S-BC on these brand-related outcomes would need to be re-examined, along with a series of desirable brand-related outcomes that have been underexplored.

3.5. Implications for Current Study

The literature that was reviewed in this chapter demonstrated the usefulness of a more thorough appreciation of previous research in interpersonal attraction, for the purposes of the current study, namely: i) the investigation of alternative configurations of trait alignment that may exist between consumers' and brands' personalities, and ii) the exploration of other ways of measuring consumer and brand personality traits, and of testing the relationship between them in more detail.

First, the review of the literature on the self revealed the importance of two motivations, self-verification and self-enhancement, behind individuals' behaviour. Second, it became clear that the self plays a significant role in our consumption of brands, which apart from the fulfilment of functional needs, allow us to create, sustain, advance and situate ourselves in the societies we belong in through the symbolic meanings they convey (Aaker, 1997; Ballantyne, et al., 2006; Belk, 1988; De Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; McCracken, 1986; Wattanasuwan, 2005). Therefore, the fact that our possessions and our relationships with brands add to our self-definition (Belk, 1988; Eisend, M. & Stokburger-Sauer, N., 2013; Holt, 1995; Kleine, et al., 1995; Swaminathan & Dommer, 2012; Wong, et al.,

2012) and allow us to achieve self-relevant goals (Fournier, 1998), lends further value to the aims of this study. Fournier's eloquent comment illustrates this point further: *"...consumer-brand relationships are more a matter of perceived goal compatibility than congruence between discreet product attributes and personality trait images"* (p. 366). This comment in essence implies that the ultimate motivation behind consumers' brand choices is not the extent to which self-brand meanings match per se, but how this match allows consumers to achieve goals relating to their self (verification or enhancement). Given the prominent role of personality in self- and brand-image perceptions, the exploration of how exactly their matching is exhibited and facilitates the achievement of these goals, emerges therefore as a crucial issue. It appears that there is still much to learn regarding the mechanism of how brand personality influences consumers' choices under the light of a relational view of consumer-brand interactions (Aaker, 2013).

Third, the review of previous research on interpersonal patterns of personality alignment and on consumer-brand patterns of personality alignment leads to some interesting conclusions. On the one hand, the framework adopted to explain why and how interpersonal relationships are formed and progress, Social Exchange Theory, proposes that relationships can be considered as exchanges of benefits/rewards. The two crucial vehicles that can allow the achievement of such rewards (e.g. fulfilment of self-relevant goals) are the extent to which a potential partner/friend has characteristics similar to us (similarity) and the extent to which some of their characteristics complement our own (complementarity). The review showed that the two are not mutually exclusive, and that similarity seems to matter most during the initial phases of a relationship because it verifies partners' self-concepts, while the extent to which their characteristics complement each other in a way that allows them to fulfil their goals and achieve self-enhancement seems to matter once the relationship has been established. On the other hand, the framework adopted to explain why and how consumer-brand relationships are formed and progress, Self-Brand Congruence Theory, proposes that consumers are drawn to brands with characteristics that align with their own characteristics. Existing conceptualisations of this alignment only capture similarity, with complementarity having been completely ignored. Hence, a gap exists in the literature regarding the existence of a complementarity configuration in self-brand personality alignment. As it has never been empirically explored whether self-brand personality alignment exhibits a complementarity form, besides similarity, a

gap also exists in the literature regarding which of the two assumes a more prominent role in the different stages of consumer-brand relationships.

Fourth, with regards to the existing measurement techniques of S-BC, there are two points that can be raised. The first is that both discrepancy scores and direct measures have limitations, but each seems appropriate depending on the purpose of the empirical investigation at hand. However, both types of S-BC measures currently capture only similarity configurations. In this sense, existing measures would be inappropriate for the exploration of other forms of self-brand personality alignment. Although previous research has shown that the direct measurement approach has stronger predictive power than discrepancy scores in certain contexts (Jie, et al., 2012), the latter seem more appropriate to capture detail in alignment patterns, and consequently to capture both similarity and complementarity configurations. The second point is that research using these existing approaches has failed to provide a systematic and thorough assessment of the extent to which self- and brand-images are congruent. This limitation is logically explained if we consider the vast range of self-image aspects that would need to be explored for such an undertaking, which is clearly one of the reasons why complementarity configurations have not been captured before. Given the prominence of personality however in interpersonal and consumer-brand interactions (section 3.2.4), it seems logical that such an assessment can be undertaken for the alignment between consumers' and brands' personality traits. In order for such an investigation to be as systematic as possible, a reliable and thoroughly descriptive personality trait framework would need to be used, and the review of the relevant literature in Chapter 2 clearly indicated that the Five Factor Model of Human Personality is the most appropriate one. While the use of a standardised personality scale like this contradicts Sirgy's (1982) recommendation for product-specific scales, it is in agreement with his suggestion that S-BC studies should elicit respondents' self-awareness through self-reporting of their individual characteristics.

Finally, the review also revealed that S-BC has been connected with a range of desirable brand-related outcomes; however, all previous studies have examined those outcomes using measures that only capture similarity configurations. A gap in the literature therefore exists to explore the influence of self-brand personality alignment that incorporates both similarity and complementarity configurations on brand-related outcomes; it is possible that a new measure that captures both forms of alignment will have stronger predictive powers than measures that only capture similarity.

It can overall be concluded that our current understanding of S-BC and consumer-brand interactions remains limited and there are still some unresolved issues about what exactly this alignment between consumer and brand characteristics involves and how exactly it occurs.

3.6. Summary

Given the adoption of a relational view of consumer-brand interactions in this thesis, this chapter aimed to draw from the literature on interpersonal interactions and attraction in order to enhance understanding on consumer-brand interactions and attraction, with specific focus on the forms of personality alignment. The chapter started with a discussion of the general role of the self-concept in our interactions with others and with brands. Next, the Social Exchange Theory was used as the framework to review the literature on interpersonal attraction, and the two main patterns of alignment between partners' characteristics, that is, similarity and complementarity, were examined. The next section focused on Self-Brand Congruence Theory as the framework to explain consumer-brand attraction, reviewing past research in the conceptualisation and measurement of self-brand alignment and revealing that existing work has only captured similarity configurations between consumers' and brands' characteristics. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the implications deriving from this examination of the literature for the purposes of the current study.

Having concluded the review of the relevant literature in Chapters 2 and 3, the next chapter proceeds to develop a conceptual framework and a series of hypotheses about the structure and composition of human and brand personality, the alignment between them, and the influence of this alignment on a range of brand-related outcomes.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK & HYPOTHESES

4.1. Introduction

This thesis aims to: i) investigate alternative configurations of trait alignment that may exist between consumers' and brands' personalities, and ii) explore other ways of measuring consumer and brand personality traits, and of testing the relationship between them in more detail. Based on the literature review in Chapters 2 and 3, this chapter will present a framework that, building upon a relational view of consumer-brand interactions and in light of previous research on interpersonal interactions, conceptualises how consumer and brand personalities are constructed, how they are aligned and how this alignment may influence brand-related outcomes. The framework's originality stems from proposing that: i) consumers' brand personality perceptions can be measured using a model of human personality, and specifically, the Five Factor Model (FFM), but the two do not necessarily exhibit the same factorial composition; ii) the alignment between consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and of their favourite brands' personalities may exhibit a complementarity configuration, besides similarity. Each element of the framework is accompanied by hypotheses which will be tested in the empirical part of the thesis.

4.2. Conceptual Framework & Hypotheses

Figure 4-1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the current thesis, namely, a model of self-brand personality alignment and its outcomes. Briefly, the framework, in full consistency with Self-Brand Congruence Theory (Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy, 1982), proposes that consumers associate personality characteristics to brands and engage in a process of psychological comparison with their own characteristics, and that the alignment between consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and of their favourite brands' personalities has a positive influence on brand-related outcomes.

Specifically, the framework proposes that consumers' perceptions of brand personality can be measured using a scale of human personality traits based on the FFM (H1), but their factorial composition is not necessarily identical to that of human personality (H2). It also proposes that the alignment between consumer and brand personality traits may exhibit a complementarity configuration, besides similarity (H3), and that complementarity will be more likely in longer consumer-brand relationships (H4).

Figure 4-1: Conceptual framework of the thesis: A model of self-brand personality alignment and its outcomes

H1:
Can be meaningfully described using the same, 5-factor structure as consumers' perceptions of own personalities

Consumers' perceptions of their own personalities

H3:
Self-brand personality alignment may exhibit a complementarity configuration, besides similarity

Consumers' perceptions of the personalities of their favourite brands

H4:
Complementarity configurations are more likely in longer-term consumer-brand relationships

H2:
Exhibit a different composition of factors than consumers' perceptions of own personalities

H5:
A measure of self-brand personality alignment capturing both complementarity and similarity configurations has greater predictive power than measures based solely on similarity configurations

H5a	Perceptions of quality	H5f	Intuitive fit	H5k	Willingness to forgive brand's transgressions
H5b	Overall satisfaction	H5g	Passion	H5l	Frequent thoughts about the brand
H5c	Overall trust	H5h	Pleasure	H5m	Contribution of the brand to life meaning
H5d	Current loyalty perceptions	H5i	Overall brand love	H5n	Positive word-of-mouth
H5e	Future loyalty intentions	H5j	Separation distress	H5o	Resistance to negative comments

Finally, the framework proposes that a new measure of self-brand personality alignment capturing both complementarity and similarity will have greater predictive power on brand-related outcomes in comparison to existing measures that only capture similarity (H5). The next sections explain and justify these hypotheses in detail.

4.2.1. Conceptualising the Structure & Composition of Consumers' Brand Personality Perceptions (H1 & H2)

In order to conceptualise and understand the alignment between consumer and brand personality, the first step involves conceptualising its individual elements, for the purposes of this study.

With regards to the conceptualisation of consumer personality, the most dominant model of human personality in the psychology literature, namely, the Five Factor Model (Costa Jr & McCrae, 1985;1992) is adopted (section 2.3.2). The FFM proposes that all human personality traits can be adequately represented by five dimensions: Emotional Stability, Openness, Agreeableness, Extraversion and Conscientiousness.

With regards to the conceptualisation of brand personality, two approaches were identified in Chapter 2: the (data-driven) free association–based approach, and the human psychology-driven approach. The first, with Aaker's (1997) seminal study being the most representative, has been criticised (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003) for multiple reasons (e.g. including non-personality items, overlooking a range of personality traits due to the free association method, etc.); for this reason, the second approach is adopted. While other models of human personality, such as Wiggins (1979)' Interpersonal Circumplex Model, have been applied in a branding context (Bao & Sweeney, 2009; Sweeney & Brandon, 2006), the FFM of human personality (Costa Jr & McCrae, 1985;1992) is deemed as a more appropriate choice due to its constant emergence and remarkable stability across different cultures, life stages and samples. The question whether the FFM can be used for brand personality remains largely unanswered (Nevid & Pastva, 2014) as the results of a small number of studies that have applied it in a branding context (Caprara, et al., 2001; Ferrandi, et al., 2002; Huang, et al., 2012) are inconclusive (section 2.3.5). The overall picture drawn from these studies is that, when consumer and brand personality are measured on the same FFM-based scale, some descriptors of human personality do not seem applicable to all brands. It seems that the FFM might not be *directly and exactly* applied to brand

personality, yet it remains to be seen whether it can be *meaningfully* applied, as it is possible that the factorial composition of brand personality is not identical to that of human personality. Following the peer-rating technique, which allows consumers to rate their own personalities and those of their favourite brand 'partners' on the same scale [e.g. Huang, et al. (2012)], this study hypothesises that:

H1: The Five Factor Model trait inventory can be meaningfully applied to describe the structure of consumers' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities.

H2: The factor composition of consumers' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities is different to that of consumers' perceptions of their own personalities.

4.2.2. Conceptualising Self-Brand Personality Alignment (H3 & H4)

Having explained how the framework conceptualises consumer and brand personality as individual constructs, the next step involves explaining how the alignment between these two constructs is conceptualised for this study. Understanding self-brand personality alignment is of central importance to this thesis because past research has showed that the degree of congruence (Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy, 1982) between consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and those of brands significantly influences brand preference and choice; as shown in Chapter 3, numerous studies have attested to this notion but they have all been based on the assumption that self-brand personality alignment follows a *similarity* form, that is, that consumers are drawn to brands with characteristics that *mirror* their own traits.

However, in the context of interpersonal attraction, the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Emerson, 1976; Homans, 1974; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) proposes that we enter and sustain relationships in order to achieve benefits/rewards. The extent to which a potential partner/friend has characteristics similar to us (similarity, i.e. an introvert being attracted to another introvert) is not the only vehicle that allows the achievement of such rewards (e.g. fulfilment of self-relevant goals); the extent to which some of the partner's characteristics complement our own (complementarity, i.e. an introvert being attracted to an extrovert) is another way that allows us to gain benefits from our relationships. Complementarity

configurations have been shown to be significant and meaningful in interpersonal relationships, as they allow partners to achieve their self-relevant goals. In a branding context, the possibility of the existence of a complementarity configuration in self-brand personality alignment has not yet been explored. Hence, the present study seeks to fill this gap by explicitly examining whether complementarity configurations are exhibited between consumers' own personalities and those of their favourite brands. It is thus hypothesised that:

H3: Self-brand personality alignment may exhibit a complementarity configuration, besides similarity.

The review of the literature on interpersonal attraction in Chapter 3 also revealed that similarity and complementarity are particularly fostered in different stages of a relationship's life cycle. In the beginning of a relationship, similarity seems to matter most because by recognising for example similar values/views/personality traits in each other, partners feel self-verified, more secure about their choice of partner, and make positive projections about the continuation of the relationship (Klohnen & Luo, 2003). Some degree of complementarity however has been considered as a key factor in the long run (Kerckhoff & Davis, 1962), as partners seek in each other the opportunity to access traits and qualities not individually held, yet desired. Complementarity of personality traits, for example, provides them with the opportunity to grow within the relationship and achieve self-enhancement. In a branding context, it may be argued that analogous patterns of alignment may be exhibited for consumers engaged in brand relationships of different duration. It is thus hypothesised that:

H4: Complementarity configurations in self-brand personality alignment are more likely in longer-term consumer-brand relationships.

4.2.3. Conceptualising the Influence of Self-Brand Personality Alignment on Brand-Related Outcomes (H5a-H5o)

Having explained how the current study conceptualises consumer and brand personality, and their alignment, the final step is to explain how self-brand personality alignment is conceptualised as influencing brand-related outcomes. The connection between self-brand personality alignment and brand-related outcomes is in many ways

the central issue in this thesis, as its overarching argument is that consumers' brand preferences/choices depend on whether consumers engage in a relationship with them, which in turn relies, at least in part, upon the extent to which they identify with those brands' traits.

Although self-brand congruence does not always materialise due to a series of factors that play a role in consumers' brand-related behaviour (Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987), there are numerous studies that have provided empirical evidence supporting its influence on desirable brand outcomes (section 3.4.5). For instance, Malär, et al. (2011) showed that actual S-BC positively influences emotional brand attachment, though no significant relationship was noted for ideal S-BC. So, while the positive effect of S-BC on brand-related outcomes has been broadly supported, the results are not always universally significant. As mentioned in the previous section, all studies on S-BC that have hitherto been conducted have examined S-BC assuming it only takes a similarity configuration. It is possible that these studies have shown weak or not statistically significant relationships between S-BC and brand-related outcomes because the similarity configuration did not fully represent congruence. Therefore, the present study proposes that self-brand personality alignment that captures both similarity and complementarity will better predict brand-related outcomes:

> **H5:** A measure of self-brand personality alignment capturing both complementarity and similarity configurations has greater predictive power than measures based solely on similarity configurations.

It should be noted that, in order to test H5, an original measure of congruence which captures both similarity and complementarity configurations in self-brand personality alignment will need to be devised, in a way that: i) allows different patterns of trait alignment to emerge, and ii) captures whether and which consumer and brand personality aspects prevail in the alignment process, and how they are related to each other. The new measure will need to be tested against existing measures which only capture similarity for a series of brand-related behaviours. The selection of these brand-related behaviours was made after scrutinising the relevant literature to identify those outcomes that seem to have attracted the attention of past and recent research in consumer behaviour and branding. Specifically, in order to test the predictive power of the new measure against existing, similarity-based measures of actual and ideal self-

brand congruence, it was considered important to include: i) brand-related outcomes that have traditionally been studied in previous research, and their relationship with self-brand congruence has thus been well established (e.g. satisfaction), as well as ii) brand-related outcomes that feature prominently within the context of recent research in consumer-brand relationships, but for which there has been only preliminary evidence with regards to their relationship with self-brand congruence (e.g. brand love or passion). It was also considered as crucial to focus on both outcomes that relate to consumers' past experiences with brands, as well as on outcomes that acquire special meaning within a relational view of consumer-brand interactions and refer to the consumer's strong, enduring engagement with a brand (Hollebeek, 2011), and which can thus provide insight about consumers' current and expected behaviour around brands. While the examination of the relevant literature identified a wide range of such brand-related behaviours, the qualitative phase of the study, the findings of which are presented in Chapter 6, allowed the refinement of the original list of outcomes, as respondents referred to certain brand-related behaviours to a greater extent in comparison to others. As a result, it was decided that H5 would be tested for fifteen brand-related outcomes. The rest of the sections in this chapter explain and justify the sub-hypotheses relating to those fifteen outcomes that will be examined in this study.

Hypotheses Relating to Brand-Related Outcomes (H5a-H5o)

According to Zeithaml (1988), perceived quality is *"the consumer's judgement about a product's overall excellence or superiority"* (p. 3). Self-brand congruence in general proposes that we tend to evaluate more positively brands with which we have similar characteristics (Graeff, 1996b). This behaviour is easily explained: in the study by Ahuvia, Batra, and Bagozzi (2009), consumers were considering their loved consumption choices as *"nothing short of magnificent"* (p. 352); in essence this can be attributed to our efforts to be seen in positive ways, hence we choose to be associated with products of excellent quality and value. The relationship between self-brand personality alignment capturing both configurations and perceived quality seems logical: on the one hand, we obviously consider that brands that have similar characteristics to us are brands of high quality, in order to avoid dissonance (Graeff, 1996b); on the other hand, our choice of brands with characteristics that complement our own traits may in essence be the result of our effort to be associated with certain much desired qualities; in both cases therefore, brands with similar and/or

complementary characteristics represent objects of great quality and value in our minds. Hence, it is expected that:

H5a: The new measure has greater power to predict consumers' perceptions of their favourite brand's **quality**.

Customer satisfaction can be defined as *"an overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience with a good or service over time"* [Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann (1994), p. 54]. Previous research on the relationship between similarity-based S-BC and satisfaction has shown mixed results. In some cases, no (Hosany & Martin, 2012) or a weak [e.g. Jamal, et al. (2009); Jamal (2004)] direct link has been found, and it has been supported that satisfaction is rather explained by other factors such as demographics (Jamal, 2004). Others have found an indirect link through brand attitude (Ibrahim & Najjar, 2008), or functional congruity (Hohenstein, et al., 2007). However, He and Mukherjee (2007) found partial support for their relationship, as satisfaction was directly influenced by actual and social S-BC. Other studies have also shown a direct connection (Jamal & Al-Marri, 2007; Jamal & Goode, 2001; Park & Lee, 2005; Sirgy, et al., 1997), while recent evidence suggests that S-BC probably exerts both a direct and an indirect effect on satisfaction (Hohenstein, et al., 2007). Overall, the relationship between S-BC and satisfaction requires further investigation; since the new measure captures more detail, it is expected that:

H5b: The new measure has greater power to predict consumers' perceptions of **overall satisfaction** with their favourite brands.

Brand trust is defined as *"the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function"* [Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), p. 82]. It is considered that brand trust has two components (Belaid & Behi, 2011): a cognitive (i.e. brand credibility) and an affective (i.e. brand integrity). Previous studies examining the relationship between S-BC and brand trust have been limited. Krohmer, Malär, and Nyffenegger (2007) showed that actual S-BC positively influences brand trust and loyalty (as dimensions of brand performance) more than ideal S-BC; they also found that for high-involvement products the relationship is not important. Dwivedi (2014) considered trust as a component of brand relationship quality, which was positively influenced by self-brand connection (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). As trust is a key

determinant of exhibiting commitment towards a brand relationship (Louis & Lombart, 2010), it is worth examining the connection between S-BC and trust further. Hence:

H5c: The new measure has greater power to predict consumers' perceptions of **overall trust** towards their favourite brands.

According to Jacoby and Kyner (1973), brand loyalty refers to *"(1) the biased (i.e., nonrandom), (2) behavioural response (i.e., purchase), (3) expressed over time, (4) by some decision-making unit, (5) with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands, and (6) is a function of psychological (decision-making, evaluative) processes"* (p. 2). Loyalty is a complex concept, with attitudinal and behavioural (past, present and future) connotations (Picón, Castro, & Roldán, 2014; Quester & Lim, 2003).

Support for the influence of similarity-based S-BC on loyalty has not been clear. For instance, Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) did not find a statistically significant relationship between self-brand identification and brand loyalty, while Liu, et al. (2012) found weak results for the influence of Brand Personality Congruity, Brand User Imagery Congruity and Brand Usage Imagery Congruity on brand loyalty. A direct, yet weak relationship was also revealed in Jamal, et al. (2009). To an extent, it is logical to expect that the relationship between S-BC and loyalty will not be particularly strong given that other factors (e.g. socio-economic) seem to play a significant role in repurchase decisions; Das (2014) for example showed that the relationship between S-BC and store loyalty is moderated by gender while numerous other studies have found an indirect effect through the inclusion of other variables, such as level of involvement or satisfaction (He & Mukherjee, 2007; Ibrahim & Najjar, 2008; Park & Lee, 2005).

The evaluation of the brand's functional performance also seems to be an important influencing factor. Sirgy's work in particular has revealed that S-BC has an indirect influence on loyalty through functional congruity/evaluation (Sirgy, et al., 1991; Sirgy & Samli, 1985). Kressmann, et al. (2006) and Hohenstein, et al. (2007) have also provided evidence in support of an indirect influence of S-BC on loyalty through functional congruity, but they have found a direct S-BC effect on loyalty as well. For instance, Kressmann, et al. (2006), using Aaker's (1997) scale to measure both consumer and brand personality in the automobile sector, found that S-BC exhibited: i) a significant direct effect on loyalty, ii) a significant indirect effect through functional congruity, and iii) a significant indirect effect through brand relationship quality.

The overall picture from these studies is thus inconclusive. One explanation may reside in the aspects of loyalty investigated each time, behavioural or attitudinal. The notion of exclusivity in particular seems problematic, as Fournier and Yao (1997) highlighted, because consumers seek multiple brand relationships even within the same product category. These results suggest that S-BC might or might not have a direct effect on loyalty, thus their relationship requires further investigation. Under Social Exchange Theory, it is expected that consumers will positively favour the idea to remain loyal to the brand given that similarity and complementarity are the vehicles for achieving self-relevant goals. Hence, it is possible that:

H5d: The new measure has greater power to predict consumers' perceptions of **current loyalty** towards their favourite brands.

H5e: The new measure has greater power to predict consumers' perceptions of **future loyalty** intentions towards their favourite brands.

A sense of intuitive fit with a brand has been recognised as one of the components of consumer-brand love relationships (Batra, et al., 2012). It is logical to expect that the more similar we are with the brand partner in terms of personality traits, this feeling of intuitive fit will be much stronger; but according to the Self-Expansion model of motivation and cognition in close relationships, pairing up with a partner with characteristics complementary to our own allows us to feel that we have now become 'whole' (Aron, et al., 1991). Hence, it is possible that this sense of intuitive fit will be better predicted by a measure incorporating both configurations:

H5f: The new measure has greater power to predict consumers' perceptions of **intuitive fit** with their favourite brands.

According to Sternberg (1986), as one of the three components of interpersonal love, passion *"comprises those motivational and other sources of arousal"* (p. 122) that lead to a constant yearning to be 'near' the partner. In the context of consumer-brand relationships, besides this enthusiasm for the brand partner, passion has been considered to include notions of pride as well (Hollebeek, 2011). Sternberg (1986) suggested that being able to satisfy, through our partner, our need for self-actualisation (among other needs), leads us to experience feelings of passion. Indeed, Carroll and

Ahuvia (2006) supported that brands which assist consumers in shaping their identities generally enjoy positive and strong emotional responses, and passion, a core component of brand relationship quality (Fournier, 1998), is one of these responses. Passion was captured as one of the dimensions of brand relationship quality in Kressmann, et al.'s (2006) confirmation of a positive and statistically significant relationship between S-BC and brand relationship quality. It is therefore logical to expect that a brand, with some characteristics similar and others complementary to our own, which allow us to reach self-expansion, will elicit feelings of passion from us:

H5g: The new measure has greater power to predict consumers' perceptions of feelings of **passion** relating to the use of their favourite brands.

Pleasure is considered as a key aspect of brand love relationships (Albert, et al., 2008). In light of Social Exchange Theory, it is logical to assume that we will nurture pleasant feelings towards a brand when similarity and complementarity between its characteristics and ours will allow us to achieve rewarding situations such as the fulfilment of self-relevant goals. Hence, it is hypothesised that:

H5h: The new measure has greater power to predict consumers' perceptions of feelings of **pleasure** relating to the use of their favourite brands.

The concept of brand love has recently received a lot of attention (Albert, et al., 2008; Batra, et al., 2012; Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Fetscherin & Dato-on, 2012; Heinrich, Albrecht, & Bauer, 2012; Rossiter, 2012; Roy, Eshghi, & Sarkar, 2013; Sarkar, Ponnam, & Murthy, 2012), but also criticism [e.g. Dawes (2013); Bengtsson (2003)]. An early influential study by Shimp and Madden (1988) provided a conceptual foundation for the concept, by drawing from Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory of love. Ever since, substantial empirical evidence (Batra, et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Sarkar, et al., 2012)] has shown that consumers' strong emotional/love relationships with brands are possible, and the idea is nowadays broadly accepted [e.g. Grisaffe (2014); Grisaffe and Nguyen (2011); Sarkar, et al. (2012)]. Perhaps the most notable study on brand love was conducted by Batra, et al. (2012) who, contrary to Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), viewed brand love as a form of relationship rather than as an emotion and defined it as *"a higher-order construct including multiple cognitions, emotions, and behaviors, which consumers organize into a mental prototype"* (p. 2). This brand love

prototype (i.e. a full list of notions associated with brand love) consisted of: an antecedent (quality), seven core elements (self-brand integration, passion-driven behaviours, positive emotional connection, long-term relationship, anticipated separation distress, attitude valence, attitude strength), and three consequences (loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, willingness to repurchase after hearing negative comments). In interpersonal relationships literature however, prototypic views of love are thought to ignore the fact that relationships are basically interactional processes (Callaghan & Lazard, 2011); according to Marston, Hecht, and Robers (1987), intimacy and love are experienced through interaction and communication, and one of the ways this actually happens is through explicit statements of love for the other; indeed, the explicit statement of love has been recognised as one of the key aspects of brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

Previous research (Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011) has identified the achievement of self-related goals as an antecedent of strong emotional engagement with brands. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) supported that brands which assist consumers in shaping their identities generally enjoy positive and strong emotional responses, such as love, a proposition that was also confirmed by Wallace, Buil, and De Chernatony (2014). Indeed, Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) showed that self-brand identification positively influences brand love (operationalised through expressed love and feelings of loss in case of unavailability). More recently, Roy, et al. (2013) hypothesised that S-BC is positively related to brand love, but such an effect has only been captured indirectly: love was one of the brand relationship quality dimensions in Kressmann, et al.'s (2006) confirmation of a positive relationship between S-BC and brand relationship quality. Hence, the issue remains underexplored. It is expected that the more a brand has traits that allow us to achieve these self-relevant goals (e.g. self-verification/self-enhancement), the more we will be willing to declare that we 'love' it:

H5i: The new measure has greater power to predict consumers' perceptions of overall **love** towards their favourite brands.

In Fournier's (1998) conceptualisation of Brand Relationship Quality it was clearly noted that consumers' emotional engagement with brands may lead them to experience separation anxiety, which is attributed to dependence between the consumer and the brand partner (Kim, H. R., et al., 2005). There is much confusion in

the literature about separation distress (Sarkar, et al., 2012); some (Thomson, et al., 2005) consider that separation distress is an outcome of strong emotional attachment, while others (Batra, et al., 2012) consider it to be a core component of consumer-brand love relationships. In any case, Kim, H. R., et al. (2005) found support for the relationship between similarity-based self-brand congruence [measured using Sirgy, et al.'s (1997) direct measure] and separation anxiety for consumers' most-used brands in six product categories. It is therefore logical to expect that our potential separation from our favourite brand, which may have characteristics both similar and complementary to our own, will lead us to experience distress, as the separation would not allow us to achieve our self-relevant goals. It is thus expected that:

> **H5j:** The new measure has greater power to predict consumers' perceptions of **distress resulting from their potential separation** from their favourite brands.

Forgiving a betrayal, any minor or major violation of the culturally-shared or relationship–specific, implicit or explicit norms governing the relationship, is, according to interpersonal relationships literature (Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002), one of the most difficult tasks, because these norms are often considered as moral obligations; hence their breach creates impulses to reciprocate the harm. Following a betrayal, it is possible that the partner may forgive the partner. According to Finkel, et al. (2002), besides perseverance, there are numerous reasons why a betrayed partner might choose to forgive the other: the extent to which the partner has invested in the relationship in terms of personal identity and feels that the relationship allows the gratification of certain needs are amongst those.

Consumers often encounter negative messages about, or experience negative interactions with their chosen brands (Trump, 2014): these transgressions refer to some form of violation of the norms regulating the consumer-brand relationship, and may include (most often) bad quality or product failure (Puzakova, Kwak, & Rocereto, 2013), poor service, or violation of ethical/social norms (Lin & Sung, 2014) that contradict the public's expectations about the brand (Hsiao, Shen, & Chao, 2015) and lead to disappointment (Donovan, Priester, MacInnis, & Park, 2012).

Consumers react in different ways to negative comments/experiences (Lin & Sung, 2014): some may sever any relationship with the brand, others may distance themselves for a while, whereas others may keep consuming it [i.e. 'buffering effect'

(Donovan, et al., 2012)]; obviously, in order for the consumer-brand relationship to continue, it is of crucial importance whether the consumer will forgive the brand's transgressions, although Donovan, et al. (2012) argue that forgiveness does not necessarily lead to repurchase. The way in which the consumer will react to a transgression depends on many factors. For instance, consumers' impressions about a brand in the post-transgression stage tend to become more negative the more anthropomorphised the brand is, because the brand's negative actions are considered intentional and are attributed to its stable traits, especially when the misdeeds are internal/brand-related (Puzakova, et al., 2013); indeed, consumers react more negatively to misconduct by brands heavily imbued with sincerity traits (Aaker, et al., 2004). Some consumers though might resist negative information about brands with which they are most connected (Swaminathan, Page, & Gürhan-Canli, 2007); this 'buffering effect' however is largely dependent on the type of transgression, the extent to which the brand has strong self-relevance (Trump, 2014), and the extent to which the consumer considers the brand as part of themselves (Donovan, et al., 2012).

Since a favourite brand is part of the consumer's extended self (Belk, 1988), a negative brand action can logically be perceived as a threat to the consumer's own self (Cheng, White, & Chaplin, 2012), in which case they may try to control the damage, such as for example, ignoring the negative information and continuing previous behaviour (brand preference). Given that the new measure of alignment captures both characteristics which the consumer feels they share with the brand, but also characteristics that the consumer perceives as complementary to their sense of self, it is expected that:

> **H5k:** The new measure has greater power to predict consumers' perceptions of **willingness to forgive** their favourite brands' potential transgressions.

According to Social Exchange Theory, when we receive rewards and benefits from a relationship, we have the tendency to reciprocate with positive feelings but also thoughts. Indeed, consumers' constant dreams and thoughts about their chosen brand(s) are considered as a key aspect of brand love (Albert, et al., 2008). In the context of consumer-brand relationships, key rewards could include the extent to which we are able to verify our sense of self through similar personality traits between us and the brand, and the extent to which we can enhance our self by becoming, through the brand's traits, associated with qualities that we do not own, yet we desire.

Therefore, if a brand serves our self-relevant goals, we are more likely to include it in our thoughts and minds. It is thus expected that:

H5l: The new measure has greater power to predict consumers' perceptions of the **frequency of their thoughts** about their favourite brands.

Similarly, a brand with similar and/or complementary characteristics to our own allows us to self-express and to grow, and thus automatically assumes a very prominent role in our lives because it offers clear intrinsic rewards (i.e. helping us shape and construct our identity); such intrinsic benefits are a key aspect of the relationships we have with our most favourite brands (Batra, et al., 2012). Thus:

H5m: The new measure has greater power to predict consumers' perceptions of their favourite brands' **contribution/importance to their lives' meaning**.

The effectiveness of word-of-mouth (WOM) communication has been long realised by academics and managers alike, due to its non-commercial and non-biased nature (Wien & Olsen, 2014). It is now broadly accepted that satisfaction, trust and high perceived quality of a brand are among the key conditions that lead a consumer to WOM behaviour (De Matos & Rossi, 2008), but not the only ones: Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) showed that consumers are more likely to engage in positive word-of-mouth for brands that facilitate their self-expression. Yet, empirical evidence has led to inconsistent and unclear findings around the relationship between self-brand connection/expression and WOM. For instance, the study by Jamal, et al. (2009) in the cosmetics market did not find a statistically significant relationship between S-BC and WOM. Wallace, et al. (2014), using Carroll and Ahuvia's (2006) inner and social-self expressive measures, found no significant relationship for social self-expression but did find a positive relationship between inner self-expression and WOM. On the other hand, Usakli and Baloglu (2011) found a statistically significant relationship between both actual and ideal S-BC on consumers' intention to recommend a destination, with ideal S-BC having a stronger effect; this is not surprising. A recent review (Lovett, Peres, & Shachar, 2013) of the factors that influence our willingness to engage in positive WOM identified self-enhancement as one of the social drivers behind WOM behaviour: it seems that, especially in online environments, we are often motivated to signal to others our expertise, that we are able to identify high-quality/luxury products which in turn bring

to us esteem; yet this might imply that the relationship between self-enhancement and WOM may be valid only for certain brands (e.g. luxury). Another recent study (Wien & Olsen, 2014), based on Dichter's (1966) suggestion that the gratification of self-related needs leads to WOM behaviour, showed that individualists (those that distinguish themselves from others) are more likely to engage in WOM when they perceive opportunities for self-enhancement. Under the light of Social Exchange Theory then, it is quite easily understandable why a fuller measure of self-brand personality alignment may capture behaviours such as WOM: we may feel the obligation to reciprocate the rewards that our branded relationship partner has provided us with (i.e. the achievement of our self-related goals through similarity and complementarity between our own traits and the brand's traits), by spreading positive comments for the brand. Hence, it is expected that:

H5n: The new measure has greater power to predict consumers' perceptions of engagement in **positive word-of-mouth** for their favourite brands.

Previous research (Swaminathan, et al., 2007) has indicated that consumers who feel that their self-identity is strongly connected to a certain brand will discard negative information that they come across about the brand and may also defend it. As mentioned in Chapter 3, people actively seek to present positive self-images to others, and their most important motive is self-enhancement, which includes not only their efforts to associate with people/objects that will allow them to project favourable images (self-advancement), but also to avoid information that will highlight their less flattering characteristics (self-protection). Earlier work (Ferraro, Kirmani, & Matherly, 2013) has already provided evidence that when consumers have a strong connection with a certain brand, they resist information/actions by others that dilute the brand's image, in order to protect their self-view. It is thus expected that:

H5o: The new measure has greater power to predict consumers' perceptions of **resistance to negative comments** made by others about their favourite brands.

4.3. Summary

This chapter has presented the conceptual framework of the present thesis, namely a model of self-brand personality alignment and its outcomes, which conceptualises how

consumer and brand personalities are constructed, how they are aligned and how this alignment may influence brand-related outcomes. The hypotheses that are associated with the model have been presented and justified; these hypotheses will be tested through an empirical study. The following chapter will outline the methodology employed for their testing.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1. Introduction

The literature that was reviewed for this thesis provided insight on how previous research has conceptualised and measured consumers' perceptions of brand personality and how it has proposed that these perceptions are aligned with consumers' perceptions of own personality characteristics. By adopting a relational view of consumer-brand interactions and drawing from theories of interpersonal attraction, the review led to the development of a conceptual framework and of a series of propositions about the structure and composition of consumers' perceptions of brand personality, as well as about alternative forms of self-brand personality alignment and their impact on desirable outcomes. In order to test empirically this conceptual framework and its associated hypotheses, the study followed a mixed-methods approach: an exploratory qualitative phase (in-depth, semi-structured interviews) and a quantitative phase (online survey). The purpose of this chapter is to explain the overall research design, and to outline and justify the stages that were followed regarding sample selection, data collection, and data analysis, for both stages.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, the research objectives are reprised and the implications for the overall research design are discussed. Second, the actual research design is presented and the purpose of the two stages is explained. Then, the rationale for the sample selection is provided. The next two sections, referring to the exploratory interviews and the online survey respectively, draw from the practices recommended by the literature with regards to the two methods and describe in detail the processes that were actually followed in relation to sample recruitment and data collection for both stages. At the end of each section, a data analysis overview is also provided. The chapter ends with a summary of the empirical study design, before proceeding to the discussion of the findings in three chapters.

5.2. Restatement of the Research Objectives & Implications for the Research Design

The selection of the research strategy, design and methods that will be used in a research project can only be made in view of its research questions and objectives (Davis, Golicic, Boerstler, Choi, & Oh, 2013). The aims and types of research questions

guide the researcher in deciding the most appropriate approaches to answer them. Following the literature review in Chapters 2 and 3, and the development of the conceptual framework in Chapter 4, two research objectives are of primary interest in relation to the empirical study:

i.   To explore, qualitatively, complex aspects of consumers' relationships with brands, their perceptions of those brands' personalities and of the alignment with their own personalities.

ii. To investigate, quantitatively, the structure and composition of consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and brands' personalities, the patterns of alignment existing between the two, and the influence of these patterns on desirable brand-related outcomes (i.e. to test the conceptual framework and the hypotheses).

As the first research objective aims to explore and understand complex aspects of consumers' relationships and experiences with their favourite brands, the methodology that needs to be followed should enable the researcher to capture the complicated and different roles/purposes brands serve within consumers' personal and social lives. In this sense, qualitative methodologies under the interpretivist research paradigm, which views social reality through the meanings actors attach to their activities (Blaikie, 2009), are most appropriate in order to understand from consumers' own accounts how they describe and explain their experiences with their favourite brands and how they interpret the roles of these brands within their life stories. A qualitative approach will also be appropriate to explore for the first time whether a complementarity configuration in self-brand personality alignment emerges from consumers' accounts.

On the other hand, the second research objective of the empirical study lends itself to a quantitative approach under the logical-positivism philosophy that views research as the generation and testing of hypotheses about the phenomena under study (Bryman, 2008). Indeed, the main goal of this phase is to derive conclusions about the structure and composition of consumers' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities and to test whether self-brand personality alignment exhibits a complementarity configuration, apart from similarity. This can only be realised if a large number of respondents are presented with the same questions in a consistent manner. In addition, given the absence of previous measures of self-brand personality alignment incorporating patterns other than similarity, the development of a new measure of

alignment and the examination of its relation to desirable brand outcomes cannot be conducted without a large set of responses.

The research questions therefore call for a combination of the two methodological approaches, leading to a two-stage, mixed-methods empirical study.

5.3. Overview and Justification of the Research Strategy, Design & Methods

As the previous section highlighted, the two research objectives of the empirical study request for a mixed-methods approach. The term 'mixed-methods' is one of the many to describe the use of two or more methodologies in the same research project; other terms include 'multi-method', 'triangulation', 'integration', etc. and all are surrounded with great confusion (Kelle, 2001; Moran-Ellis et al., 2006). In general, a mixed-methods research design may combine two or more methodologies in a concurrent or sequential way (Creswell, 2003) of which one, or more than one, are the principal modes of inquiry. Researchers, for example, sometimes use the term 'triangulation' to describe a design where all methods used are principal and concurrent (Blaikie, 1991; Moran-Ellis, et al., 2006). This empirical study was comprised of two sequential but tightly connected phases: an exploratory qualitative phase including in-depth, semi-structured interviews, followed by a large-scale, quantitative phase including an online survey. Therefore, the term 'mixed-methods' will be used in this thesis. According to Tashakkori and Creswell (2007), mixed-methods research is defined as *"research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry"* (p. 4). Before proceeding further though, it is important to outline more clearly the benefits of the mixed-methods approach.

It is true that there seems to exist some confusion about the definition (Moran-Ellis, et al., 2006) and some hesitation about the use of mixed-methods amidst the academic community (Blaikie, 1991), albeit this has rapidly subsided over the years (Blaikie, 2009; Brannen, 2005; Kelle, 2001). This is primarily because quantitative and qualitative approaches to scientific inquiry are often falsely equated by 'purists' (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989) with positivist and interpretivist research paradigms, respectively (Blaikie, 2009). Following Kuhn's (1970) argumentation about their incommensurability, it is widely considered that research paradigms are

supposed to encompass distinct epistemological and ontological assumptions. While this incommensurability has been disproved (Heath, 1992; Hunt, 1991), it is still often argued that the qualitative and quantitative approaches are also incompatible/contrasting, hence cannot be combined. On the other hand, 'pacifists' or 'integrationists' argue that this viewpoint is erroneous and both methodologies can be used under the two different paradigms (Bryman, 2008). As it is not uncommon for a single research project to ask questions that require different methodological treatment (Brannen, 2005), as in this study, a more pragmatist perspective might be more appropriate. This perspective proposes that researchers should select the methodological tools that best address their research questions each time (Kelle, 2001); if these need different methodological approaches, then mixed-methods research is an appropriate mode of inquiry.

Apart from dovetailing with the research objectives of this empirical study, a mixed-methods approach capitalises on the strengths of the two methodologies and may neutralise their weaknesses (Bryman, 2008; Jick, 1979), without of course this suggesting that mixed-methods designs are superior to mono-method studies or that they lead to greater validity of results (Laurie & Sullivan, 1991; Mathison, 1988). In this study, the exploratory, qualitative phase will provide insight about consumers' relationships with their favourite brands and specifically about their cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses to those brands, as well as about their perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities and of the consumer-brand personality relationship. It will therefore inform the content of the second stage, which will investigate the structure and composition of these perceptions, the patterns of self-brand personality alignment but also their relationship to brand-related outcomes. The qualitative stage will also shed more light on the consumption practices of the population investigated and will increase the relevance of the quantitative phase to its respondents, hence improving the overall data quality. Finally, the findings of the qualitative stage will enable the researcher to interpret the findings from the quantitative stage (aggregate level), by providing illustrative demonstrations of key findings from consumers' own accounts (individual level) or by granting explanations to unexpected/surprising findings (Bryman, 1988; Mathison, 1988) and consequently increasing confidence to the results (Jick, 1979) and their external validity (Davis, Golicic, & Boerstler, 2011). Overall, the two phases will both provide corroborating evidence for the main propositions of the study, the qualitative will facilitate the

quantitative phase, and they will complement each other in understanding and analysing consumers' perceptions of brand personality and of self-brand personality alignment, in essence serving what Hammersley (1996) has identified as the three purposes of mixed-methods research: Triangulation, Facilitation and Complementarity.

Sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 will present more detailed justification why these two stages were appropriate for the research objectives and the overall study.

5.3.1. The Qualitative Phase

Apart from enabling the researcher to gain more insight in complex aspects of social actors' behaviour through their own interpretations (Mason, 2002; Stroh, 2000), exploratory qualitative research is also the primary tool used in the beginning of an empirical study when more insight is needed about the topic or context of investigation in order to sharpen the focus of the research (Blaikie, 2009). All these issues were of concern in this study as well.

First, an exploratory qualitative phase was considered appropriate in order to understand more deeply consumers' experiences with brands in general and their relationships with their favourite brands in particular. As the primary goal of the thesis is to explore self-brand personality alignment patterns by adopting a relational view of self-brand interactions, it was assessed that respondents would need to be as familiar and personally-vested as possible with the brands investigated, an approach consistent with the peer-rating technique from the field of psychology. Given the multi-faceted role brands play in our personal and social lives, consumers' experiences with their favourite brands, from the beginning of each consumer-brand relationship, were crucial parts of information in order to understand the evolution of these brands to the status of 'favourites'. Consumers' accounts would also allow for the deeper understanding of more complex aspects of their relationships with their favourite brands and in particular, their cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses towards them, under the lens of their personal and social life stories.

Second, qualitative insight regarding consumers' perceptions of brand personality and their relationship to their own personalities is very limited. Previous research has primarily employed quantitative techniques to explore the structure of brand personality perceptions, as following Aaker's (1997) work, most studies either directly

employed/modified her framework in different settings [e.g. Aaker, Benet-Martínez, and Garolera (2001)], or developed new scales of brand personality following a similar approach [e.g. Geuens, et al. (2009)]. This overwhelmingly biased, a priori use of Aaker's approach has been criticised (Arora & Stoner, 2009), as it has in essence undermined qualitative inquiry. Freling and Forbes (2005b) explicitly note that *"brand personality remains little-known terrain with limited theoretical or qualitative grounding"* (p. 149). For instance, the relationship between consumers' perceptions of brands' personalities and their own personalities is still unexplored. As a matter of fact, previous studies in self-brand congruence have almost exclusively focused on quantitative testing of similarity scores between a brand's image and a consumer's self-image, hence ignoring the possibility of other patterns of alignment between the two. Since this study is the first to explore the possibility of self-brand personality alignment exhibiting a complementarity pattern, besides similarity, exploratory qualitative research was deemed as an appropriate starting point to investigate this unknown territory and to reveal novel, refreshing ideas about this alignment.

Third, exploratory qualitative research as a first stage in an empirical study allows for the initial development of ideas regarding relations among concepts, which in this study is of particular importance because one of the research objectives is to explore the relationship between self-brand personality alignment and desirable outcomes. The identification of these desirable interactions with the favourite brands in the exploratory stage will, on the one hand, offer an indication of those outcomes that are most relevant to incorporate in the next, quantitative stage; on the other hand, it will assist the researcher in acquiring a first impression about the relation between these outcomes and self-brand personality alignment. In this sense, the exploratory qualitative phase will inform the second stage of the empirical study and consumers' rich descriptions will assist in the interpretation of its results.

As a result, although the two stages fulfil different purposes, they are in fact tightly connected, and will complement each other in examining different aspects of the complex phenomena investigated (Moran-Ellis, et al., 2006), hence offering a more holistic understanding (Brannen, 2005; Davis, et al., 2013; Mathison, 1988) of consumers' interactions with their favourite brands, their perceptions of their personalities, and the self-brand personality alignment process. In short, the qualitative phase will offer rich descriptions and the quantitative phase will examine and test relationships (Cupchik, 2001). Finally, the exploratory, qualitative phase will inform the

quantitative phase by providing more insight on the consumption practices of the population being investigated, hence increasing the relevance of the quantitative study to the respondents as much as possible.

The Methodological Tool: In-Depth, Semi-Structured Interviews

Following the presentation of the reasons why a qualitative approach would be most appropriate for the first stage of the empirical study, the next question that arises is which particular methodological tool should be used. For the purposes of the first stage, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted on a one-to-one, face-to-face mode. This decision was based on many reasons.

First, as the objectives of this phase were to gain more insight on individuals' relationships with their favourite brands, and given that each respondent has different brand preferences and different types of relationships with each of their favourite brands, a one-to-one interaction was considered more suitable (Lewis, 2003). The intimate nature of one-to-one interviews would encourage the participants to express themselves more freely and to refer back to events/experiences from their personal lives, while the researcher would be able to ask for further elaboration.

Second, as in-depth interviews *"can get close to the social actors' meanings and interpretations, to their accounts of the social interaction in which they have been involved"* [Blaikie (2009), p. 207], they would allow the researcher to delve deeper into the meanings and roles of these favourite brands in consumers' lives and to explore further their own interpretations (Arksey & Knight, 1999) of the reasons behind distinguishing these brands from others and elevating them to the status of 'favourites'.

Third, by using semi-structured interviews, the researcher can change the sequence of the questions or ask for clarifications if an interesting/surprising response is received; this adaptability is amongst the most significant advantages of the qualitative interview (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003; Mason, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Stroh, 2000). A semi-structured mode of interviewing allows the identification of central themes across respondents (Bechhofer & Paterson, 2000; Corbetta, 2003) but also provides open space for new themes to emerge (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003; Corbetta, 2003). Consequently, the researcher has more flexibility in addressing issues that are relevant and specific to the people interviewed.

However, in selecting in-depth interviews as the methodological tool, their limitations were acknowledged. First, interviews are time-consuming (Stroh, 2000); only a small number of people can be interviewed within the time restrictions of a PhD program. This does not really relate to the duration of the actual interviews but mostly to the time needed to transcribe and analyse the interview data. As some tentative hypotheses had already been developed however via the literature review, it was concluded that not a very large number would be eventually needed.

Second, the intimate nature of the one-to-one, face-to-face interviews can be problematic in three ways: i) it poses additional difficulty and requires time to recruit respondents, as they are often intimidated by meeting and talking to a stranger about their very own experiences; ii) it is not uncommon for interactional problems to emerge, such as participants' reluctance to elaborate further on their responses (Roulston, 2014), often due to the researcher's inability to establish rapport; iii) the very presence of the interviewer often shapes their responses, as they are reluctant to reveal personal aspects of their lives that they consider as embarrassing/not very flattering. These issues were taken into consideration in this study, however, it was considered unlikely that interviewees would need to reveal anything that would make them uncomfortable, as the discussions were primarily focused on their perceptions of different aspects of their brands, rather than themselves. Nevertheless, the researcher made a significant effort to establish rapport with them and minimise the effects of these issues. She was very welcoming during the interviews and explicitly referred to the general objectives of her research as well as the processes that would ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of respondents' participation (Lewis, 2003). This assisted in building a rapport with them (Arksey & Knight, 1999) and in minimising inconvenience/awkwardness during the discussions.

Finally, and most importantly, qualitative interviewing demands delicate handling from the researcher in order to avoid fixed predispositions or expectations (Bechhofer & Paterson, 2000) which would result in a biased perspective from the interviewer's part (Bell, 2005). The researcher also needs to avoid asking leading questions and therefore influencing participants' responses (Legard, et al., 2003). During the interview, the researcher needs to be rather skilful as they simultaneously need to take notes, be vigilant to participants' answers and responsive in order to ask for clarifications or raise new questions that will shed more light to the topics under investigation (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Legard, et al., 2003; Mason, 2002; Stroh, 2000).

5.3.2. The Quantitative Phase

The second stage of the empirical study followed a quantitative approach, for a number of reasons. First, the literature review led to the development of a conceptual framework and of a series of propositions about the structure and composition of consumers' perceptions of brand personality, as well as about alternative self-brand personality alignment patterns and their impact on desirable outcomes. The testing of hypotheses on a large scale is one of the core strengths of quantitative research, therefore it seemed appropriate to follow this approach.

Second, a large-scale quantitative approach allows for the exploration of the underlying structure and composition of consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and those of their favourite brands, as well as of the relationship between them. The extraction of underlying dimensions cannot be realised without administering the same questions to a large number of people, especially when the concepts under investigation relate to personality that has traditionally been studied using trait inventories, namely, multi-item scales that are quantitatively administered.

Third, the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 4 proposes that a self-brand personality alignment measure that captures both similarity and complementarity configurations will better explain consumers' cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses towards their favourite brands. Given that a new measure of self-brand personality alignment that captures both complementarity and similarity configurations is to be developed, in order for this measure to be reliable, it will need to be tested via a series of questions that must be consistently delivered on a large number of respondents. This consistent, systematic approach is one of the main characteristics of quantitative research strategies (Fowler, 2009).

Fourth, while conducting the study in certain product categories can offer an initial exploration and corroboration of the complementarity hypothesis, and can provide managerial implications for brands in these specific contexts, it is also important for both academic and industry researchers to be able to replicate the study in other contexts. Replication is of primary concern to quantitative research approaches (Bryman, 2008) whilst qualitative research is difficult to replicate (Jick, 1979). A systematic investigation of the research in other contexts and samples can only be realised via a quantitative methodology that explicitly outlines the step-by-step procedures followed in the original study.

Having presented the reasons why a quantitative approach was considered as most appropriate for the second stage of the empirical study, the next issue of concern is the selection of an appropriate methodological tool. For the purposes of the second stage, an online, self-completion questionnaire administered on a web-survey platform was used. This tool was selected for many reasons.

First, as the survey sought to examine the structure and composition of respondents' perceptions of their own personalities and those of their favourite brands, a single personality inventory was used. Given that each respondent needed to complete the inventory twice, a self-administered questionnaire was considered as most appropriate, as it is suitable when respondents are presented with a battery of closed questions/items to complete (Fowler, 2009) at their own pace, whenever they wish (Fowler, 2009; van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). This flexibility in terms of completion is one of the key advantages of self-administered questionnaires.

Another advantage of self-administered questionnaires is the avoidance of the researcher's influence. This is particularly important for questions that are sensitive or personal (Burton, 2000b). Although highly sensitive questions were not included in the questionnaire, it was considered that respondents would feel more comfortable to complete their own personality profile alone, as the presence of the researcher might have triggered social desirability effects (Fowler, 2009; van Selm & Jankowski, 2006).

Finally, from a practical point of view, web-surveys are cheap to administer (Fowler, 2009), as respondents are invited to the survey via an email containing the website link where they can access the questionnaire; also, responses are returned more quickly (De Vaus, 2002b; van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). A web-survey platform also provides the opportunity to use design features that are aesthetically more pleasant, and a variety of question formats (Bryman, 2008; De Vaus, 2002b). Overall, in web-surveys the researcher has much more control over the administration of the questionnaire.

The limitations of the online, self-administered questionnaire as the methodological tool for this stage were also acknowledged prior to its selection. First, in a self-administered questionnaire, respondents are asked to read and respond to all questions by themselves without having access to the researcher and being able to ask clarification questions (Baker, 2003; Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009; Fox, Murray, & Warm, 2003). This suggests that the questionnaire needs to be carefully designed and

clear instructions must be provided (Fowler, 2009). In this study, the questionnaire was designed according to the recommendations from the literature and was also pre-tested, as explained later in this chapter, in order to minimise the effect of these issues.

Second, in a self-administered questionnaire respondents may read the whole questionnaire before completing the questions in the order they are written (Bryman, 2008). This can have severe implications, as the participant's responses to the questions earlier in the questionnaire might be influenced if they have already accessed its later sections. In this study, respondents could not access questions of later sections unless they had responded to some questions of the section they were currently in (De Vaus, 2002b; van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). This restriction also assisted to some extent to the minimisation of incomplete responses and missing data, but was applied to only a few questions, as it is considered to frustrate respondents (Sue & Ritter, 2007).

A third problem is the uncertainty as to whether the questionnaire is eventually completed by the person to whom it is addressed (Fowler, 2009; Fox, et al., 2003), and whether a person can complete it more than once (van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). To address these issues to the degree that was possible, respondents, students at the University of Edinburgh, were invited to complete the questionnaire by visiting a website link that was included in an email sent to their personal student email accounts. Moreover, the web-survey platform had been modified in order to allow the person to complete the questionnaire in their own pace, that is, to start, pause and return back to the point they had stopped (Dillman, et al., 2009). Once they completed the questionnaire, any further attempts to re-access it were met with a message informing them that they have completed the survey.

Online surveys are generally criticised for being appropriate only for populations that can access the Internet (Fowler, 2009; Fox, et al., 2003), hence lending themselves by default to non-probability sampling (Bryman, 2008; van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). This was not an issue of concern in this study however, as the purpose was not to generalise findings in a greater population, hence there was no need to use probability sampling. Moreover, respondents, all students in the University of Edinburgh, are de facto Internet users, since they are required to access their student email accounts and online learning platforms for their studies, and are very capable technology users (Dillman, et al., 2009; Fowler, 2009). Finally, evidence in the literature suggests that online surveys are more likely to achieve higher response rates than paper-and-pencil ones when targeted to younger people (van Selm & Jankowski, 2006).

5.4. Choice of Student Population for the Empirical Study

Having explained the chosen methodological approaches, the next issue was the selection of the research participants. It has been briefly mentioned that both stages of the empirical study were conducted on a student sample; this section explains and justifies this choice.

The sampling processes that are followed in a certain study should always adhere to its research objectives (Bryman, 2008). Both stages of this empirical study were exploratory in nature; their primary goal was to explore a range of different aspects of consumers' relationships with their favourite brands, their perceptions of these brands' personalities, the possibility that the self-brand personality alignment may exhibit a complementarity configuration besides similarity, as well as its influence on brand-related behaviour. The purpose of the study, therefore, was not to generalise findings in a representative sample. For this reason, a non-probability sampling method, that is, a non-random process to select research participants, was used in both stages.

The specific choice of students was driven by the relevance of the subject matter (Beltramini, 1983; De Vaus, 2002b) to this group. The broad phenomenon under study was personality perceptions of one's favourite branded object and their relation to one's own personality. As a group, students are highly involved in the use of brands, interacting with them frequently, and actively experimenting with different brands in order to be associated with particular images, to reinforce their self-identity and to fit-in with their peers (Moore, Wilkie, & Lutz, 2002). Moreover, issues of self-expression are particularly prominent in young people that have still not shaped their self-concepts (Chernev, et al., 2011). Students thus constitute a distinct target market (Ok, Shanklin, & Back, 2008) and further exploration of their interaction with brands is of interest and importance to both academics and practitioners. For the purposes of this study therefore, this active engagement with brands presented a two-fold implication. First, it meant that respondents represented a rich data source, as their experimentation with different brands would allow a variety of explanations to emerge with regards to the reasons behind these strongly favoured brand choices and behind differences in brand-related behaviour. Second, it also meant that respondents would assess the subject matter of the study as of interest to them; according to the literature (Dillman, et al., 2009; Fowler, 2009), personal interest to the topic increases the chances that respondents will be more willing to provide detailed descriptions and

explanations of their behaviours/opinions (Bryman, 2008). Moreover, as specific brand choices are often the result of one's life stage, the relatively homogeneous student sample in terms of age and lifestyle was considered as the optimal choice in order to contextualise the study and reduce extraneous variation (Ok, et al., 2008; Peterson, 2001). On the other hand, its relatively heterogeneous nature in terms of social background (and personality of course), would capture a variety of possible explanations (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003) for the different aspects and levels of consumer-brand interaction.

Although student samples are very common in studies of consumer research (Peterson, 2001), their use has been debated, with critics primarily focusing on the fact that results drawn from student samples cannot be generalised to other populations (Lynch Jr., 1982; Peterson, 2001; Peterson & Merunka, 2014). However, generalizability was not an objective of either stage in this empirical study; rather, the objective was to test a theory, that of self-brand personality alignment exhibiting both complementarity and similarity configurations. In other words, the purpose of this study was theory rather than effects application (Calder, Phillips, & Tybout, 1981). Contrary to effects application that aims to generalise findings to a real-world situation, theory application aims to test a more general theory that will increase understanding on phenomena and their relationships; this general theory can eventually be subjected to further empirical examination in different contexts, so that conclusions can be made with regards to situations in which it is supported or falsified. In this sense, a student sample constitutes a valid subset of the population for testing this study's propositions.

More detailed description of the recruitment processes that were followed in each stage of the empirical study will be provided in the next two sections, which will discuss all issues relating to the design and execution of the exploratory, in-depth interviews and of the online survey, respectively.

5.5. In-Depth Interviews: Design, Execution & Analysis

5.5.1. Sampling Procedure & Recruitment

The objectives of the qualitative study were to explore consumer-brand relationships in-depth, and to reveal a wide range of complex aspects of consumers' relationships with their favourite brands, including how and why these relationships have evolved

over time and how consumers explain their cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses towards these brands. Therefore, the focus was on variety, nuance and depth. As a result, a theoretical sampling approach was followed.

Theoretical sampling, proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), refers to a continuous process of collecting data and selecting interviewees until the categories of an emerging theory reach theoretical saturation and nothing new emerges anymore (Bryman, 2008). In this sense, the final number of interviews is not pre-decided; rather, it is the result of an iterative process of reflecting on, analysing and collecting new data until theoretical saturation is reached. McCracken (1988) has suggested that even as few as eight in-depth interviews might be sufficient. In this study, saturation was reached by the 12th interview, in full accordance with findings from an experiment by Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) which showed that when the sample is relatively homogeneous in terms of respondents' characteristics (as in this study), data saturation is usually reached after twelve interviews.

For this qualitative phase, respondents were recruited via advertisement of the research project in the e-mailing list of one core course taught during the second semester across all undergraduate programmes in Business Studies at the University of Edinburgh. The email sent to the students (Appendix II) included information on the researcher, a broad overview of the research project's goal, the expected duration of the interview and the incentives for participation, as well as guarantees about confidentiality and anonymity, as recommended in the literature (Bell, 2005). The researcher also made a personal announcement/invitation briefly describing the project during one of the classes, prior to sending the email. Students that were interested to participate in the interviews responded to the researcher's email address, who communicated with them in order to arrange a suitable timing for the interviews. A profile of the twelve interviewees is provided in Chapter 6 (Table 6-1).

5.5.2. Discussion Guide Development

In order to ensure that the research questions are adequately addressed, the researcher designs an interview discussion guide. This is in essence a list of topics to be discussed and is used as an aide during the interview.

The interview discussion guide for this study was developed according to the recommendations from the literature, and followed a 'funnel' approach, starting from the more general aspects and moving on to more complex/specific issues (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003; McCracken, 1988). When designing the discussion guide, the first task was to revisit the objectives of the qualitative stage and decompose them to a list of topics to be investigated (Mason, 2002; Stroh, 2000). These were then 'translated' in questions that the respondents would easily understand (Legard, et al., 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Both content-mapping and content-mining questions were included in the guide, in order to understand as many of the issues relating to their interaction with their favourite brands as possible, but also to gain more insight in issues that may be particularly important to the interviewee (Legard, et al., 2003). Questions were phrased in such a way that they would invite as much input from the respondent as possible, that is, open-ended questions that would encourage interviewees to provide vivid, rich and extensive responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Stroh, 2000). In order to ensure that the discussions would provide detail and depth, and would flow smoothly in case respondents significantly deviated from the topics under investigation, some prompts were also included in the discussion guide (Legard, et al., 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2005), apart from some non-verbal ones such as short pauses, expression of interest, etc. used during the course of the interview to probe the interviewee to elaborate further (Corbetta, 2003; Legard, et al., 2003). Questions were sequenced in a way that would resemble a natural conversation; those relating to respondents' general brand preferences and past experiences with their favourite brands were placed in the beginning of the discussion, as: i) such information would allow the researcher to understand the settings of these experiences and thus respondents' comments later in the interview, and ii) people find it easier to talk about their personal past experiences, hence having these questions at the beginning would allow them to open up before moving to questions around their perceptions or feelings (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003).

The opening and closing sections of the discussion were also carefully considered. The opening section was designed to ease tension, build rapport (Legard, et al., 2003; Mason, 2002), and create a sense of familiarity and resemblance to an informal conversation: the researcher would welcome the interviewee and invite them to make themselves comfortable, offering some refreshments/snacks, before briefly introducing herself and the research project, and addressing anonymity and confidentiality issues (Legard, et al., 2003; Mason, 2002). The closing section was designed to avoid abruptly

ending the interview (Stroh, 2000); instead interviewees were encouraged to discuss anything they considered they did not have the chance to mention before (Legard, et al., 2003) and were given the opportunity to express their opinions about the overall interview process, before being thanked and given an appreciation voucher. This way of closure was beneficial in assuring respondents that their contribution was meaningful and significant, that their opinions mattered and were appreciated.

The discussion guide, which was structured according to four main themes relating to the objectives of the qualitative phase, is presented in Appendix III, along with some comments showing how each topic is connected with the research objectives. In full accordance with the literature, the first interviews assisted to the further refinement of the guide (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). It is important to note that although the guide served as an outline of the interview, the wording or sequencing of the questions was not identical in all interviews, as the researcher adapted to the flow of the discussion with each interviewee (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

5.5.3. Execution of In-Depth Interviews

The execution of the interviews followed as much as possible the recommendations from the literature. All interviews took place in the premises of the University of Edinburgh Business School at the end of January and the beginning of February 2013. It was decided that the interviews would take place in familiar settings to both the researcher and the interviewees in order to minimise discomfort, since the second semester of the academic year had already started; therefore, the respondents would only be able to meet the researcher in-between their lectures and classes taking place within the university campus. The rooms had been reserved by the researcher herself prior to the interviews and guidelines had been sent to the interviewees on how they could access them. The rooms where the interviews took place have card-swipe locks and small monitors indicating the name of the researcher holding the room and the purpose of the holding (interview in progress) to avoid interruptions (Legard, et al., 2003). Refreshments and snacks were provided and participants were warmly invited to treat themselves throughout the interview. They were also explicitly told to interrupt the interview at any time if they wished to do so (BSA, 2002; SRA, 2003; Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2008). Most discussions lasted about one hour. Following the interviewees' consent (Wiles, Heath, Crow, & Charles, 2005), all

discussions were voice-recorded via a recording application in the researcher's tablet device, which ensured that the interviews were fully captured and the researcher was completely devoted to listen and be alert to the flow of the discussion (Legard, et al., 2003). The recorder was switched on at all times and was switched off only after the person had left the room. Upon being debriefed, interviewees were thanked for their participation, were given a £15 Amazon voucher as an appreciation of their efforts and were dismissed.

5.5.4. Analysis of In-Depth Interview Data

The analysis of the interview data needs to be planned in advance (Mason, 2002). This ensures that the researcher stays focused on the objectives of the data collection, in this case on the objectives of the qualitative stage of the empirical study, and that only data that are related to these objectives are retained for further analysis (Stroh, 2000). This process is rather challenging if we consider the massive amount of data that become available at the end of a series of qualitative interviews.

For this study, all interviews were transcribed by the researcher herself. Before any analysis was conducted, respondents' names were changed and pseudonyms were used in accordance with the ethical guidelines (Wiles, et al., 2008). The first stage of the analysis included a careful consideration of the individual's brand experiences and relationships separately for each respondent. This enabled the researcher to understand the meanings of these consumer-brand interactions within the context of each individual's personal life (Fournier, 1998). The second stage involved analysing the data, along with the researcher's notes, by following the basic principles and procedures of grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990); the process was assisted by the use of the qualitative analysis software tool QSR NVivo 10. Initially, data were broken down by developing open codes. In other words, chunks of data that referred to a certain meaning/phenomenon were categorised together and labelled. In some cases, these chunks may have simultaneously referred to different concepts/phenomena, hence were categorised in more than one codes. These codes were not pre-determined, but emerged from the data (Spiggle, 1994). The codes were also open, that is, provisional, and were revised based on new meanings attached to them across the instances they appeared in the same interview, but also in the rest of the interviews. By employing constant comparison, the open codes were then grouped into more abstract

categories that represented higher-order concepts. These higher-order concepts were subsequently developed in a vertical sense by identifying the conditions that provoke their existence, the contexts in which they take place and their outcomes (axial coding) (Spiggle, 1994). The relationships between the higher-order concepts (selective coding) were the last step of the process. These higher abstractions represent the structure which will be used to report the findings of the qualitative phase in Chapter 6; respondents' comments will be used to illustrate the main concepts in each category.

5.6. Online Survey: Design, Execution & Analysis

5.6.1. Sampling Procedure and Recruitment & Survey Execution

Following the execution of the in-depth interviews, the purpose of the second stage of the empirical study, the online survey, was to test the conceptual framework and the hypotheses presented in Chapter 4. It is worth highlighting once again that this study is the first to explore the possibility that the self-brand personality alignment may exhibit a complementarity configuration, besides similarity. In this sense, the objective was to generally test the new theory and its propositions around the structure and composition of consumers' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities, the patterns of alignment between their own personalities and the personalities of their favourite brands, as well as the relationship of this alignment with a range of brand-related outcomes. Therefore, the focus was on theory rather than effects application (Calder, et al., 1981); hence, a non-probability sampling method was employed since generalisation to a broader context was not of relevance (Burton, 2000a). Nevertheless, the testing of the theory needed to be appropriately contextualised using a purposive sample, one that was highly involved in interaction with brands, was primarily homogeneous but was such that would also allow for some degree of heterogeneity in terms of social background and, of course, personality characteristics. As explained in section 5.4, these requirements were fulfilled by using students of the University of Edinburgh Business School as the study's sample. This section will discuss how respondents were approached and the processes that were followed during the launch period of the online survey.

For the official survey launch, all undergraduate, taught and research postgraduate students registered at the University of Edinburgh Business School in Semester 2 in 2013 were invited to participate in the survey via an email containing an identical message. The invitation email (Appendix IV), generally considered to increase response rates and encourage fuller completion of the questionnaire if designed well (Kalafatis, Riley, Tsogas, & Clodine-Florent, 2012), was carefully prepared following as much as possible the recommendations from the literature suggesting that it should: be concise; intrigue respondents' interest in order to persuade them to take part in the survey (Dillman, et al., 2009; Sue & Ritter, 2007); be presented in a friendly, yet professional style; clarify the broad purpose of the research; provide details about the researcher, their supervisor and the organisation/institution under the auspices of which the study is conducted, as this has been suggested to add to the credibility of the message/survey (Kalafatis, et al., 2012); and explicitly refer to adherence to ethical guidelines, including assurances regarding voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality and data protection (Dillman, et al., 2009; Fowler, 2009; Sue & Ritter, 2007).

Recipients were also informed of the incentives available to them. Incentives are considered as one of the ways to increase response rates (Dillman, et al., 2009; Fowler, 2009), although their effectiveness has not been entirely proven (van Selm & Jankowski, 2006), with the exception of prize draws (Bosnjak & Tuten, 2003). Their provision is often debated to act as a form of coercion for respondents to participate in the study; however, it has also been supported that incentives are in reality a token of appreciation for the respondent's time (Dillman, et al., 2009; Wiles, et al., 2005). In the email, recipients were informed that their participation would result in a £1 donation to one of three charities that they would have the chance to select upon the completion of the questionnaire; charity donations are amongst the recommended types of incentives (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011). They were also informed that they could enter a prize draw for £360 worth of vouchers for Blackwell's Booksellers; bookshop vouchers are considered appropriate incentives for student populations (Sue & Ritter, 2007). The final part of the email asked participants to select one of four website links where they could access the survey, based on the first letter of their surname.

The online survey launched simultaneously across the three cohorts (approximately 1540 students) on a Tuesday morning in mid-March 2013. The literature suggests that survey invitation emails should be sent early in the morning (Dillman, et al., 2009). The email was disseminated to the corresponding mailing lists by the undergraduate and

postgraduate administration personnel in the Business School, which meant that the researcher herself did not have access to the contact details of the students, hence could not personalise the email, as recommended by the literature in order to increase response rates (Dillman, et al., 2009; Heerwegh, Vanhove, Matthijs, & Loosveldt, 2005). Therefore, recipients' identity remained unknown to the researcher and the recipients could not see each other's email addresses, hence anonymity was guaranteed (Dillman, et al., 2009). The survey closed approximately four weeks after the original launch date. One reminder was sent approximately two weeks after the launch. This time, the message also included a set deadline by which the questionnaire needed to be completed. The researcher also made personal announcements about the survey throughout the launch period to students across various core classes, to allow them to connect the email they had received with a person, and create a sense of familiarity.

In total, 361 responses were received, representing a response rate of around 24%. This can be considered as a quite satisfactory response rate, given that online surveys, in spite of their many advantages over other forms of questionnaire administration, generally achieve much lower response rates (Dillman, et al., 2009; Jin, 2011), on average around 6-15% (Manfreda, Bosnjak, Berzelak, Haas, & Vehovar, 2008). What also needs to be taken into consideration is that web-surveys administered online or via email are incessantly used these days (Dillman, et al., 2009; Thomas, Cook, Fulgoni, Gloeckler, & Terhanian, 2014) and email users are bombarded daily with many requests for survey participation. The frequency of survey participation requests significantly adds to respondent 'burden' (Downes-Le Guin, Baker, Mechling, & Ruyle, 2012). This is particularly an issue of concern for university students, who constantly receive emails requesting their participation to student satisfaction surveys about their programme of study/particular courses/student associations. As a matter of fact, three more online surveys were sent via email to students across the Business School and the University on the very same day that the survey was launched, which probably resulted in students paying less attention to the multiple survey participation requests, even though the email included the phrase 'Business-School approved survey' as its subject, in order to convey professionalism (Dillman, et al., 2009). One factor that might have also played a role is the fact that on the afternoon of the day the survey was launched, access to the online platform where students can check their emails was not permitted due to a technical problem. By the time the platform was up and running again the next morning, the email was already further down in their inbox.

5.6.2. Questionnaire Design

Apart from the survey topic matching the respondent's personal interests, the careful design of the questionnaire is the next crucial factor that can ensure that a survey achieves its objectives, that respondents remain engaged (Dillman, et al., 2009) and do not behave in ways that could lead to low data quality (Puleston, 2011), such as 'straight-lining' (i.e. providing the same response to all questions, without differentiation), 'primacy' and 'recency' (i.e. selecting the first or last response option provided, respectively), 'satisficing' (i.e. selecting reasonable but personally inaccurate responses, not paying much attention, etc.), and hasty, random or incomplete responses (Downes-Le Guin, et al., 2012; Thomas, et al., 2014). For this survey, the design of the questionnaire was even more crucial as the sample consisted of people coming from different cultural backgrounds. The literature (Yang, Harkness, Chin, & Villar, 2010) suggests that a person's cultural background sometimes influences the way they respond to a question, irrespectively of the question's content; for example, there are three types of response styles that can be attributed to cultural variations: 'acquiescence' (also known as 'yea-saying' or 'nay-saying', i.e. consistently providing positive/negative responses and agreeing/disagreeing with the given statements), 'extremes' selection (i.e. consistently choosing the extreme response options, such as 'strongly dissatisfied' or 'strongly agree') and 'middle-category' selection (i.e. consistently choosing the middle or neutral position). All these issues needed to be taken into consideration; this section describes the processes that were followed and the decisions that were made when designing the online questionnaire.

The web-survey platform that was used for the online administration of the questionnaire was EsurveysPro, which had three main advantages: i) the researcher had previous experience using the website, therefore the design and implementation of the survey would be much easier and less time-consuming; ii) the platform allowed for a larger number of questions to be included in a single questionnaire without additional cost, contrary to other similar platforms; iii) it provided a range of different formats and types of questions, and a range of navigation characteristics.

The literature recommends that when designing a questionnaire, the following key aspects should be considered in order to avoid overburdening respondents (De Vaus, 2001): the questionnaire length, the visual layout, the structure, the format, the sequence and the wording/language of the questions, and of course, whether the

questions appropriately measure the concepts the researcher seeks to capture (Burton, 2000c). All these aspects can add to this 'burden' associated with questionnaire completion and can jeopardise the chances of achieving high response rates and good data quality. The sub-sections below explain how the recommendations from the literature about all these aspects were taken into consideration.

Questionnaire Length

Perhaps the most prevalent issue adding to respondents' 'burden' is the questionnaire length. In general, the longer a questionnaire is, the less likely it is people will respond to it (De Vaus, 2002b; Downes-Le Guin, et al., 2012; van Selm & Jankowski, 2006) because a long questionnaire requires increased amounts of effort from respondents, and leads to fatigue and boredom (Downes-Le Guin, et al., 2012; Puleston, 2011).

As this was an exploratory study that sought to examine for the first time the possibility that self-brand personality alignment exhibits a complementarity configuration, besides similarity, it was necessary that a comprehensive and reliable personality inventory was used to measure respondents' perceptions of their own personality, as well as of their favourite brand's personality. For the purposes of brevity however, the personality inventory needed to be relatively short. For this reason, Saucier's 40 mini-markers of personality were used (Saucier, 1994), which has been validated in a branding context and for a student sample by Huang, et al. (2012). Respondents therefore were required to complete this 40-item scale twice: once for their own personality and once for the personality of their favourite brand. In addition, the survey aimed to investigate the relationship between the new measure of self-brand personality alignment that would be developed and a wide range of brand-related outcomes that are commonly studied in the branding and consumer research literature, but that had also emerged from the qualitative phase. In total, fifteen different outcomes were investigated, some of which were measured using multi-item scales. Along with a series of demographic questions and questions relating to other aspects of the consumer-brand relationship, the questionnaire ended up being relatively long. However, respondents invited to pre-test the questionnaire took on average 15 minutes to complete it. This is not very demanding, as recommendations from the market research industry (Puleston, 2011) classify a questionnaire as being long, when the time respondents spend on its completion exceeds 30 minutes.

In order to decrease the boredom and lack of engagement respondents may sometimes feel when completing questionnaires, it is generally recommended that the questionnaire is presented in visually attractive layouts, as these have been considered to have a positive effect on response rates (Bryman, 2008; Puleston, 2011). In contrast, very fancy layouts have been associated with higher risk and lower response rates as they require the respondent to access them using beyond standard software (e.g. JavaScript for specific types of video) or hardware (e.g. speakers for sound effects or guidelines) facilities (Dillman, et al., 2009; van Selm & Jankowski, 2006).

In relation to the visual design and layout of this online questionnaire, an effort was made to create a pleasing environment for the respondent. Easy-to-the-eye colours were consistently used across the online questionnaire (Bryman, 2008; Sue & Ritter, 2007). Each section contained a group of questions relating to the same topic (De Vaus, 2002b; Dillman, et al., 2009) and was presented in a different page, although some sections were split in more than one page in order to avoid respondents scrolling down a lot. In order to ensure that respondents did not access the whole questionnaire, in some pages, they needed to complete a certain compulsory question before being allowed to proceed further. However, this technique was used with caution and only for four questions throughout the questionnaire, as forcing participants to respond to each question has been considered to lead to frustration (Sue & Ritter, 2007) and eventually to larger percentages of drop-out (Dillman, et al., 2009). Unfortunately, the survey platform did not allow for the inclusion of a 'progress bar', which has been associated with higher respondent retention, and less response attrition and missing data (Sue & Ritter, 2007; van Selm & Jankowski, 2006).

Format of Questions

With the exception of the question asking respondents to write the name of their favourite brand for which they wished to complete the questionnaire, the rest were all 'closed' questions; these are processed more easily by respondents (De Vaus, 2002b; Fowler, 2009), allow for easier coding process prior to statistical analysis (Bryman, 2008; Dillman, et al., 2009), and can take a number of formats (e.g. single/multiple-choice, Likert-type scales, rank-order scales, drop-down menus, etc.). The smaller the

number of different question types, the easier the task is for respondents as they quickly adapt to the process of responding to them (Fowler, 2009).

In this survey, the majority of questions were either single-choice or seven-point unipolar or bipolar Likert-type scales where respondents were instructed to indicate the level of accuracy of, or level of agreement/disagreement with, one or more statements (Dillman, et al., 2009; Fowler, 2009). In all types of questions, respondents were given clear instructions on how to respond (Bryman, 2008; Dillman, et al., 2009), by clicking on a radio button (Fox, et al., 2003; Sue & Ritter, 2007); radio buttons have been connected to smaller amounts of missing data (van Selm & Jankowski, 2006) because they are easy to use.

The response options were presented vertically for single-choice questions and horizontally for Likert-type scales. Vertical presentation of responses is considered to assist respondents distinguishing between the question and the available responses (McColl et al., 2001), but it is not recommended for Likert scales as it takes up a lot of space, hence creating the impression of a long questionnaire (Bryman, 2008). The response options were balanced, equally spaced and clearly labelled (De Vaus, 2002b; Dillman, et al., 2009). For the verbal rating and Likert-type scales specifically, only the endpoints and the middle positions were labelled in order to avoid aesthetic congestion and respondents' tendency to provide more positive ratings on fully-labelled scales (Dillman, et al., 2009). However, numbers were assigned to each one of the response categories (McColl, et al., 2001). Seven-point scales were used instead of 4-, 5- or 6-point scales as they capture more variation in responses and include a neutral choice, hence not forcing respondents to express positive or negative predisposition towards a question, which could jeopardise the reliability of the findings (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011).

In accordance with some recommendations (Bryman, 2008), it was also decided that the response options of 'Don't know' or 'Undecided' would not be included. These responses can be an easy way of avoiding questions (De Vaus, 2002b; Fowler, 2009), leading to large amounts of missing data (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011). In this survey, it was considered that, for most questions, respondents could easily formulate an opinion even if they had not thought about it before, as the nature of the topic was non-sensitive and they were asked to express opinions about their favourite brands with which they were familiar; recent research (Dolnicar & Grün, 2014) provides evidence that the 'Don't know' options should only be included when the respondent is unfamiliar with the brand. Moreover, special effort had been made during the pre-

testing phase in order to cover all possible responses (Sue & Ritter, 2007) and to avoid overlapping options (Baker, 2003; Dillman, et al., 2009).

Wording of Questions

Even if respondents are willing to spend time in completing a questionnaire, they might abandon the process if they find that the wording/language that has been used is difficult for them to understand (De Vaus, 2001). For this survey, all questions were assessed for their appropriateness to achieve the objectives of the survey (Baker, 2003; Fowler, 2009; Sue & Ritter, 2007) and were worded with simplicity and accuracy in mind (Baker, 2003; Dillman, et al., 2009; van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). Special attention was paid to ensure that questions would not be long and confusing (De Vaus, 2002b; Dillman, et al., 2009). The objective was to phrase the questions in such a manner that they would be easily understood by the respondents (Downes-Le Guin, et al., 2012) while also safeguarding against 'double-barrelled' or leading questions (Baker, 2003; Dillman, et al., 2009; Fowler, 2009).

Sequence of Sections & Questions

The questions were sequenced in a logical way by using a funnel approach, moving from the general to the specific (Corbetta, 2003; Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011). It is recommended that the first questions are easy and short (Sue & Ritter, 2007), to build respondents' confidence, whilst the next section should include the key/dependent variables of the study (Bryman, 2008; Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011). In this survey, a significant effort was made in order for all sections, and for the questions within the sections, to be sequenced in a way that would feel natural to respondents (Corbetta, 2003), ensuring to order the questions from the general to the specific with the main objective of the study in mind, that is, the investigation of the patterns of self-brand personality alignment. Hence, the questionnaire started with questions relating to the respondent: demographic profile and own personality ratings; then, respondents were invited to name their favourite brand and provide information about different aspects of their relationship with it. Finally, they were asked to rate the personality of their favourite brand, and to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement with direct, similarity-based measures of self-brand congruence. This sequence of sections allowed the respondent to start the questionnaire with some easy and short questions, and

inserted some distance between the two main concepts, namely, consumer personality perceptions and brand personality perceptions. The separation of the two sections by several screens/pages made it more difficult for the respondent to remember the questions presented earlier (Dillman, et al., 2009), and to guess the objectives of the research (Siminski, 2008).

Figure 5-1 depicts a graphic overview of the questionnaire and each part is separately discussed in the next sections. For each of the sections of the questionnaire, the following discussion explains the purpose of the section in general and of the questions within each section in particular, and provides information on the original works from which the specific questions and scale items were drawn. A table presenting an overview of all the measurement items that were used in the questionnaire is presented in Appendix V, while the whole questionnaire is presented in Appendix VI.

Figure 5-1: Sequence of sections in the online questionnaire

First Page

| Section I: About You
(demographic questions) |

| Section II: About Your Characteristics
(respondent's own personality perceptions) |

| Section III: Your Favourite Brand
(aspects of respondent's relationship with their favourite brand) |

| Section IV: How You See Your Favourite Brand
(respondent's personality perceptions of their favourite brand) |

| Section V: Your Favourite Brand and You
(respondent's perceptions of actual and ideal self-brand congruence) |

| Charitable Donations & Vouchers |

| Thank You |

The First Page

The first page of the questionnaire welcomed respondents and thanked them for their willingness to participate in the survey. They were reminded that the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Edinburgh had approved the survey (Guillemin, Gillam, Cannella, & Lincoln, 2004) and it was highlighted that their participation was voluntary, anonymous and data provided were protected (BSA, 2002; Fox, et al., 2003; SRA, 2003; Wiles, et al., 2008). By completing the questionnaire they essentially provided their consent for their participation to the study, a process broadly used in previous studies (Parker, 2008). Respondents were also given explicit instructions on how they could withdraw from the survey at any point and were once again reminded of the rewards available to them on completing the questionnaire. Finally, they were encouraged to contact the researcher or the supervisor in case they had any further queries.

Section I of the Questionnaire

The first section of the questionnaire included demographic questions relating to the respondent's gender, age, programme of study, country where they have lived for the most part of their lives and family status. As the demographic questions did not ask for particularly sensitive pieces of information such as income or religion, they were positioned in the very beginning of the questionnaire, as an easy, warm-up task (Burton, 2000c). In order however to avoid any ethical problems with the positioning of the demographic questions, respondents were allowed to skip these questions.

Section II of the Questionnaire

The next section asked respondents to provide more information about themselves, by rating their own personality (from 1: Extremely inaccurate to 7: Extremely accurate) using Saucier's (1994) 40 mini-markers of personality (Appendix I). The scale was split in two screens of 20 items each. This was decided in order to reduce the possibility of respondents' fatigue and frustration from viewing a large matrix that would require them to scroll down. In order to assist respondents in processing each personality item separately (Dillman, et al., 2009), grey and white were used interchangeably as the background colours.

In using the personality scale, it was important to control for item order effects (Baker, 2003). One technique for achieving this is the randomisation of the order in which the items are presented to the respondents (Dillman, et al., 2009; Fowler, 2009; Siminski, 2008). While the web-survey platform could technically accommodate this randomisation, randomising differently the 40 items for each respondent would have substantially increased the amount of time that the researcher would need to input the data to SPSS. Instead, an alternative approach was followed (Siminski, 2008): four different versions of the questionnaire were created, where the order of the personality items for both the respondent's personality and the favourite brand's personality were differently randomised. In order to avoid any type of bias in the allocation of respondents to one of the four versions, respondents were asked in the invitation email to click on one of four survey links, based on the first letter of their surname.

Section III of the Questionnaire

In this section, respondents provided information about their favourite brand. Since the questions touched upon different aspects of the consumer-brand relationship, those relating to similar aspects were grouped together in three separate pages/screens in order to be more easily processed by respondents (Dillman, et al., 2009).

The first screen asked the respondent to type the name of their favourite brand in one of two product categories that needed to be provided as an option to respondents in order to capture as much variation in their interests as possible. During the exploratory, qualitative phase it was identified that the two product categories most salient to the student population were clothing and technology. Then, respondents were asked to indicate how long it had been since the first time they had bought the brand. The rest of the questions in this section related to a range of brand-related behaviours and were included in order to test H5 in the conceptual framework of the thesis. Specifically, the next three questions, all adapted from Batra, et al. (2012), asked the respondent whether the products of their favourite brand were of high quality, whether they were satisfied with the brand, and whether they would be willing to forgive the brand if it failed to meet their expectations.

In the second screen, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they trusted their favourite brand; the question was drawn from Batra, et al. (2012). Then, three items relating to brand loyalty were used to capture respondent's perceptions of

current loyalty towards their favourite brand; the first was drawn from Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) while the other two from Quester and Lim (2003). The next question sought to explore the personal meaning/relevance of the favourite brand to the consumer's life, using an item originally developed by Eisingerich and Rubera (2010); the polarity of this question was reversed in order to control for response sets or 'acquiescence' phenomena (Fowler, 2009; Weijters & Baumgartner, 2012). The rest of the questions in this page were all drawn from Batra, et al. (2012): respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they engaged to positive word-of-mouth about their favourite brand, to share whether they were thinking frequently about it, whether they resisted to negative word-of-mouth from others and whether they considered they would continue buying it in the future.

The third and final screen of this section included all questions relating to the respondent's emotional engagement with their favourite brand [all adapted from Batra, et al. (2012)]. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt intuitive fit with, passion towards, and pleasure from the favourite brand, as well as to explicitly declare 'love' for it. Finally, they were asked to consider the scenario that their favourite brand did not exist in their lives anymore and to express the extent to which they would feel separation distress (anxiety and fear).

Section IV of the Questionnaire

In this section, respondents were asked to consider their favourite brand as if it were a person and to rate its personality (from 1: Extremely inaccurate to 7: Extremely accurate) on the same 40-item scale (Saucier, 1994) that they had earlier used to rate their own personality, following Huang, et al. (2012) that employed the peer-rating technique in a brand personality context. Once again, the personality inventory was split in two screens and items were differently randomised in the four versions of the questionnaire (Siminski, 2008).

Section V of the Questionnaire

In the penultimate section, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement to four statements, directly taken from Malär, et al. (2011), representing the direct, similarity-based measures of actual (items 1 and 2) and ideal

(items 3 and 4) self-brand congruence. The purpose of these questions related to the final hypothesis of the conceptual framework, that is, the investigation of the predictive power of the new self-brand personality alignment that will be developed in this study and will incorporate both complementarity and similarity configurations, over direct, similarity-based measures of actual and ideal self-brand congruence traditionally used in consumer research.

Final Section & Page of the Questionnaire

The final section asked respondents to indicate which of three charities they would like the researcher to donate £1 to, in appreciation of their participation to the survey. Three charities supporting different causes were selected in order to capture different motivations/interests: one well-known, international charity (UNICEF) in order to ensure participants had the chance to select a charity that acts globally towards the relief of communities in other parts of the world besides the UK; one regional (Maggie's cancer support centres, a quite well-known UK charity) in order to capture participants with medical concerns; and a local charity (Edinburgh Young Carers Project) in order to capture the wishes of respondents that were potentially interested in the relief of their peers, that is, young people as themselves who encounter problems in their domestic environments. Then, respondents were asked whether they wished to be included in the prize draw for £360 worth of vouchers (i.e. 20 vouchers of £5, 10 vouchers of £10, 3 vouchers of £20 and 2 vouchers of £50) for Blackwell's Booksellers, a chain of bookstores which students in the UK frequently patronise for the purchase of books related to their studies. In case they replied positively, they were encouraged to provide their email addresses. Upon clicking 'Next', the final page of the questionnaire appeared and respondents were thanked for their participation.

Pre-Testing

A questionnaire needs to be pre-tested prior to its official launch (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001) in order to identify and amend any issues related to its content, structure or administration.

Following an extensive period of iterations and checks that the online questionnaire was appropriately and similarly presented in multiple Internet browsers, both for

computers and tablet devices (Dillman, et al., 2009; Fox, et al., 2003), and upon receiving feedback from the two supervisors of the student and two other academics in the Department of Marketing, experts in marketing and survey research (Dillman, et al., 2009; Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011), the questionnaire was pre-tested on members of the target population, that is, students in the Business School. The literature suggests that usually pre-testing occurs in rounds of 5-15 respondents and should be repeated until no more issues are identified (Beatty & Willis, 2007), and in cases such as in this study, where the questionnaire was also pre-tested extensively through interviews as will be explained below, the ten participants that were interviewed are considered more than sufficient (Fowler, 2009). Respondents to the pre-testing phase were selected by convenience, as the focus was on identifying problematic areas of the questionnaire and of the method of administration (Beatty & Willis, 2007); still, an effort was made that both UK-based and international students from the Business School were included in the pre-testing phase in order to ensure that any potential issues relating to language and cultural differences were dealt with. An international, non-Business School student was also asked to complete the questionnaire in order to identify any problems relevant to the inclusion of words that respondents might have perceived as highly technical or jargon and thus might have found difficult to understand.

In the pre-test, the approach that was followed largely resembled the two main approaches for the collection of additional information about survey responses from respondents (Beatty & Willis, 2007; Dillman, et al., 2009): 'thinking aloud' and 'verbal probing'. Some students received the survey link by email and were asked to complete it in their own time, make extensive notes and then discuss their experiences with the researcher in a face-to-face meeting. Other students were invited to a physical session, where they were asked to complete the questionnaire in the presence of the researcher who observed their reactions directly (Dillman, et al., 2009; Fowler, 2009), and invited them to 'think out loud'; they were of course debriefed at the end as well.

This approach had several benefits: observation provided insight on aspects, such as for example, the time allocated to each question (Bell, 2005); respondents 'thinking out loud' provided authentic, spontaneous reactions (Priede & Farrall, 2011); the 'verbal probing' at the end of each pre-test, where the researcher encouraged the respondent to share their thoughts, assisted more reluctant respondents in opening up and elaborating on problematic issues (Priede & Farrall, 2011), both general and specific (Fowler, 2009), relating to the sequence of questions, the instructions, the wording, the

response options but also to respondents' interpretations of the questions (Presser & Blair, 1994) in order to check whether the intended meaning was indeed understood (Fox, et al., 2003; Priede & Farrall, 2011).

Respondents' comments were in general very positive, most of them finding the topic of the study very interesting and relevant. There was no need to continue pre-testing the questionnaire beyond the ten interviews because no major problems had been identified. There were only a few issues that emerged and were not possible to deal with. First, while respondents mentioned that the Saucier's personality inventory was easy to complete, some international respondents stated that they could not understand a few items (e.g. 'bashful'). Suggestions included linking the word with an online dictionary or a pop-up window where the respondent would easily be able to see the translation or further explanation of the word. Unfortunately, the web-survey platform did not allow the incorporation of this feature. The other issue was one respondent mentioning that for some questions they would have liked an open space to write some comments, however this was dismissed as the addition of open spaces would have significantly increased the time and effort respondents would need to spend on the questionnaire, and also, the survey had been preceded by an exploratory phase where more in-depth insight had already been provided; the objective of this stage was to test the relationships amongst concepts on the aggregate level rather than focusing on individual-relevant circumstances.

Following the recommendations from the literature (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011; Presser & Blair, 1994), the data from the pre-testing phase were also subjected to descriptive analysis (tabulated versions of frequencies and distributions across responses) in order to check whether particular questions such as brand love, for example, had the majority of their responses concentrated towards the two ends of the distribution curve. The examination of this preliminary analysis did not yield any problematic issues. The pre-testing data were not incorporated in the data of the main study however, and were excluded from the analysis, as some modifications, albeit minimal, had been made to the questionnaire, thus it was considered appropriate that the accuracy of the data should not be jeopardised (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001).

5.6.3. Preparation of the Survey Dataset for Analysis

The first step that was taken after the close date of the survey was to retrieve the file containing participants' responses from the database of the web-survey platform. The file however was not appropriately formatted for statistical analysis in the software tool that would be used for the analysis of the survey data (IBM SPSS 20). The re-formatting essentially included assigning a unique number to each completed questionnaire (Fowler, 2009) and slowly and carefully entering data in the SPSS file according to the number coding of questions and response options that the researcher had already determined. With the exception of the question where respondents were asked to indicate the name of their favourite brand for which they wished to complete the questionnaire, all other questions were 'closed' questions that resulted in nominal, ordinal and scale variables. Missing data were coded with the number '999'.

After the input of the responses in SPSS, the next step involved data cleaning. The process revealed that of the 361 responses that were originally received, 206 were eventually usable. The process of excluding data was very strict, as the primary concern was to conduct the analysis on reliable information. For this purpose, the researcher first ran univariate statistics for each variable in the dataset in order to identify extreme cases. Then, a Missing Value Analysis was conducted in SPSS. Any questionnaires that showed evidence of sub-optimal behaviour, such as response sets (e.g. undifferentiated answers across a battery of statements) (Corbetta, 2003) or that were less than 75% completed were excluded from the analysis, as recommended in the literature (Mazzocchi, 2008; Thomas, et al., 2014). As respondents had been informed in the first page of the questionnaire that the researcher would assume they had essentially given their consent to participate in the study if they returned the *completed* questionnaire, questionnaires where the respondent had not completed the later sections of the questionnaire indicated, in a sense, the lack of the respondent's willingness to participate further in the study. Among the incomplete questionnaires therefore, the only ones that were retained were the ones where the respondent had reached the final page of the questionnaire, hence, had given their consent by participating, but had not responded to only some of the questions in-between. Still, any questionnaires that suffered from large item non-response were also excluded. For those incomplete cases that were retained, a Missing Value Analysis was conducted again, showing that all variables suffered from less than 5% of missing data, with the exception of one that was around 6%; this percentage of missing data is considered as

minimal and unlikely to distort the results (Fowler, 2009). Mean substitution was thus used to replace missing data; although it is considered to reduce the variance of the distribution in the data (Mazzocchi, 2008), mean substitution is one of the most widely used methods for replacing missing data, is easy to implement and is ideal for low levels of missing data (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010), as in this case.

Having prepared the dataset, the first step of the statistical analysis involved univariate analysis, namely, the creation of frequency tables for each variable in the dataset, examination of measures of central tendency and dispersion, as well as the diagrammatic illustration of the data through graphs. Bivariate analysis (e.g. contingency tables and measures of association) was also conducted, with specific focus in the item-by-item relationship of consumer and brand personality perceptions. The processes followed and the results from the univariate and bivariate analyses are presented in Chapter 7.

In order to investigate the hypotheses, a range of multivariate data analysis techniques were used. These are described in more detail in Chapter 8; however, a brief summary is provided here. Upon reverse-coding some of the personality items-variables (i.e. the negatively-inflected items), Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted to investigate the structure and composition of consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and of their favourite brands' personalities (H1 & H2). In order to explore the patterns of alignment between consumer and brand personality perceptions (H3), the HP and BP factor scores for each respondent were inputted as the predictor and criterion variables in a Canonical Correlation Analysis, a multivariate technique that is appropriate for the exploration of the relationship between two sets of multiple variables (Hair, et al., 2010). Upon confirmation of the complementarity hypothesis, a modification of the traditional discrepancy score technique was used to derive the new measure of self-brand personality alignment incorporating both complementarity and similarity configurations. The new measure consisted of five discrepancy scores. H4 (i.e. whether complementarity configurations are more likely in long-term consumer-brand relationships than in short-term) was examined by splitting the sample in two halves, based on the variable relating to the length of the consumer-brand relationship, and by conducting an Independent Sample's t-test on the discrepancy scores. Finally, hypotheses H5a-H5o (regarding the predictive power of the new measure of alignment over the similarity-based measures) were examined using Discriminant analysis and Linear Regression analysis (the latter was used for multi-item constructs, i.e. current

brand loyalty perceptions and separation distress, for which single scores had been created). Specifically, the fifteen different brand outcomes were inserted separately as the dependent variables and the five discrepancy scores (i.e. the new measure of self-brand personality alignment) were inserted as the independent variables. Then, these tests were repeated, but this time the respondent's gender, product category to which the favourite brand belonged and the length of the consumer-brand relationship, were inserted as additional independent variables. This process was repeated again for the direct, actual self-brand congruence measure and the direct, ideal self-brand congruence measure. The results were then compared based on the significance of the models, the percentage of variance explained, and for those outcomes examined through discriminant analysis, the percentage of cases correctly classified. The processes followed and the results from the testing of the hypotheses will be presented in detail in Chapter 8.

5.7. Summary

This chapter presented the overall research design and justified the selection of the methods that were used for the empirical study of the thesis. A mixed-methods approach, consisting of an exploratory, qualitative (in-depth interviews) and a quantitative (online survey) phase, was considered appropriate in order to explore complex aspects of consumers' relationships with their favourite brands, and to test the conceptual framework and the hypotheses of the study, respectively. The chapter outlined the processes that were followed for the sample selection, data collection and data analysis stages of both phases and explained how these processes were informed by the recommendations of the relevant literature.

Following this analysis, the next three chapters discuss the results from the two phases of the empirical study.

6. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS

6.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings from the exploratory, in-depth interviews that were conducted as part of this research. Although understanding consumers' brand preferences in general was the starting point of the discussions, the principal goal of the interviews was to explore consumers' relationships with their favourite brands, their perceptions of those brands' personalities and of the self-brand personality alignment. This stage was deemed necessary in view of the gaps identified by the literature review in Chapters 2 and 3, and explicitly referred to in Chapter 4. Furthermore, the exploratory interviews were considered appropriate in order to gain further insight into the student population's interaction with brands, and therefore, to inform the next stage of the study, the survey.

The chapter is structured as follows. The first section discusses the rationale and the objectives of the exploratory interviews. Second, the profile of the respondents is portrayed. Then, the findings are presented sequentially in four thematic sections following the qualitative research objectives, namely: i) respondents' general brand preferences; ii) aspects of respondents' relationships with their favourite brands, including their thoughts, emotions and behaviours; iii) respondents' perceptions of their favourite brands as personalities; iv) respondents' perceptions of self-brand personality alignment. The final section summarises the findings and outlines their implications for the survey stage, thus fulfilling the fifth and final objective of the qualitative phase.

6.2. Restatement of Qualitative Research Rationale and Objectives

Based on the literature review in Chapters 2 and 3 which provided insight regarding how consumers attach personality characteristics to brands and how previous research has proposed that these characteristics are aligned with consumers' own personality traits, a series of propositions about self-brand personality alignment and its outcomes were developed in Chapter 4. However, prior to the investigation of these propositions on a large-scale quantitative study, it is essential that a broader understanding of the role of brands in consumers' lives is achieved. This was the first objective of this phase.

With a plethora of brands in every product category and across different price ranges for the consumer to choose from, understanding why consumers tend to prefer specific brands over others is crucial both for academics and managers. As brands have been attributed symbolic meanings and have been conceptualised as vehicles for self-expression, self-enhancement, social integration or differentiation, it is crucial to continue exploring the roles they play in people's lives following constant changes in their meanings within the context of consumerist societies. Further exploration of consumers' brand preferences can assist in increasing understanding about the mechanisms that drive fondness towards specific brands. In order to achieve this, however, it is imperative that the consumer is allowed to express their likings without any restrictions or obstructions. This can be accomplished by prompting the person to discuss their brand preferences irrespectively of previous ownership or usage, because a brand might be considered as favourite based on the image or symbolic meaning it projects, but the consumer may not be able to obtain it due to financial restrictions (Hanslin & Rindell, 2014). For this study therefore, the first objective was to explore general brand preferences as a basis for gaining further insight on the common characteristics and qualities of those brands that are considered as 'favourite' ones as well as for understanding what differentiates them from others. The identification of those favourite brands leads to the second objective of the exploratory interviews.

One of the primary objectives of this phase was to understand consumers' relationships with their favourite brands in order to reveal perceived qualities/characteristics that distinguish them in respondents' eyes from other brands in the same product categories and place them in such special positions within their lives. In this sense, information relating to their first interactions with those brands, the length of their relationship, frequency of purchase/usage, consumption practices/habits or special occasions where the brand is used/consumed, is of particular interest in order to understand those brand stories, to follow the evolution of these relationships from their origins and to track the transformation of these brands to the current state of

'favourite' brands. Furthermore, it is essential that more information regarding other, more complex aspects of these relationships, such as consumers' thoughts, emotions and behaviours when purchasing and/or using these brands, the extent to which they consider important to inform their social circles of their possession/use of them, their current levels of commitment and future loyalty intentions, are vital pieces of information in order to understand the overall role, meaningfulness and relevance of these favourite brands within the context of consumers' personal and social lives. Moreover, the exploration of these issues will provide further insight about the extent to which key desirable outcomes are connected with self-brand personality alignment patterns. However, before moving on to explore consumers' perceptions about self-brand personality alignment, that is, the relationship between their own and their favourite brands' characteristics, it is first necessary to gain insight on their perceptions of the personalities of their favourite brands. This constitutes the third objective of the exploratory interviews.

Exploratory interviews objective III: To investigate consumers' perceptions of the concept of brand personality and to elicit their perceptions of the personalities of their favourite brands.

As illustrated in Chapter 2, brand personality research is dominated by quantitative studies; insights from qualitative research about how consumers relate to the concept of brand personality and how they derive their brand personality perceptions are rare. Moreover, there is a dearth of research regarding whether brand personality is a notion that consumers actively and frequently think of when interacting with brands or is a set of characteristics that are only activated in consumers' perceptions when they are asked to describe a brand in terms of personality. There are still many unanswered questions in the literature: Do consumers spontaneously associate personality traits to brands? Is this an easy or difficult process for them? Are there brands in particular product categories for which it is easier to associate personality traits than in others? Is it easier (more difficult) for them to associate personality traits to brands with which they are familiar (unfamiliar)? Can they describe their favourite brands in terms of personality more elaborately than other brands? Therefore, more insight is needed to understand how brand personality is received by consumers, whether the process of associating personality traits to brands is forced by researchers or is more

spontaneous, and to shed light on the degree of difficulty and effort needed by consumers when associating personality traits to favourite/familiar/unfamiliar brands in different product categories. Given that the peer-rating technique assumes that close peers provide more accurate descriptions of their significant other's characteristics, the exploratory interviews may support the argument that consumers find it easier to associate a broader range of personality traits with their favourite brands than with brands they are unfamiliar with. The next issue that would be of interest then is to explore further how consumers perceive and express in their own accounts the relationship between their own personality characteristics and those of their favourite brands. This is the next objective of the exploratory interviews stage.

Exploratory interviews objective IV: To reveal consumers' perceptions about the relationship between their own personalities and the personalities of their favourite brands.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, previous studies of self-brand congruence have assumed that consumers are drawn to brands with characteristics that mirror their own. Moreover, previous research has primarily examined the relationship between consumers' own personalities and their favourite brands' personalities through quantitative studies. Although this approach has advanced knowledge around consumers' brand preferences, it has focused on providing evidence in support of the similarity configuration and has failed to explore alternative patterns of alignment. Insight from qualitative research is much needed therefore in order to understand more broadly consumers' own perceptions about this self-brand personality relationship. According to the literature review in Chapter 3 and the propositions developed in Chapter 4, it is expected that the interviews will reveal that a complementarity configuration of self-brand personality alignment might be possible.

Overall, the exploration of the four aforementioned objectives of the qualitative stage will provide insight about consumers' relationships with their favourite brands that will allow for the improvement of the design and quality of the next stage of research, the online survey; this is the fifth and final objective of the qualitative phase.

Exploratory interviews objective V: To inform the second stage of the empirical study, the online survey.

On the one hand, the information from the interviews about consumers' relationships with their favourite brands will provide direction in considering which desirable outcomes in terms of thoughts, emotions and behaviours are most important and most relevant to the self-brand personality alignment and should be therefore further investigated in the survey. On the other hand, the interviews will inform the second stage by increasing understanding and awareness of the consumption practices that the student population is broadly involved in. Following the evidence in the literature (Chernev, et al., 2011; Moore, et al., 2002) suggesting that young people and students in particular actively experiment with brands in order to reinforce their identities and to fit-in with their peers, it was considered that the subject matter of the study would be of interest to them and that they would represent rich sources of data for this study. Therefore, it was decided that both stages of the study, the exploratory interviews and the online survey, would be conducted on a student sample. It was thus useful to gain through the first phase more insight about consumers' brand experiences from members of the same population that would be investigated in the second phase. For example, the interviews could shed light on which product categories are most salient to the student population, hence increasing the possibilities of investigating only product categories students are familiar with and interested in.

6.3. Respondents' Recruitment and Profiles

Twelve in-depth, exploratory interviews were conducted for this first phase of the research. As the main focus of this stage was to gain more insight on consumers' complex aspects of their relationships with their favourite brands, and not to explore how these are influenced by variations in socio-demographic characteristics, it was not considered necessary to retain any personal information apart from gender and origin (i.e. UK/international students). All participants were undergraduate students less than 26 years old at the time of the interviews, resulting in a youthful adult sample. Table 6-1 portrays basic information about the respondents, whilst Appendix VII contains an account of each respondent's preferences of, and interaction with brands, drawn from the individual analysis of each discussion. This holistic consideration of each respondent's brand relationships represented the first stage of the analysis and

allowed the researcher to understand these interactions within the context of each respondent's personal life stories (Fournier, 1998), and how their brand choices were connected to their selves (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012), experiences (Arora & Stoner, 2009) and significant life moments (Wong, et al., 2012).

Table 6-1: Profile of interviewees

Interviewee's pseudonym	Gender	Origin
Amy	Female	UK
Aidan	Male	International
Beth	Female	International
Charlotte	Female	UK
Emily	Female	International
Michael	Male	International
Irene	Female	UK
Langdon	Male	International
Jo	Female	UK
Katia	Female	International
Lydia	Female	International
Yvonne	Female	International

6.4. Respondents' Brand Preferences

In order to gain a broader understanding of the mechanisms that drive fondness towards particular brands, and to reveal characteristics of favourite brands that differentiate them from other brands, respondents were asked to indicate their brand preferences but also their dislikes in any product category, irrespectively of previous ownership/usage. As the focus of the thesis is on favourite brands, all discussions about respondents' least-preferred brands will be excluded. The next section presents the key reasons respondents offered for preferring certain brands. It is highlighted that due to the limited confines of this thesis it is impossible to include all relevant comments, therefore, the quotes presented are only some of the illustrative examples available.

6.4.1. Favourite Brands

As would probably be expected, one of the first reasons consumers mentioned for preferring a brand and considering it amongst their favourite brands was that they simply liked the product itself, some of its unique characteristics or additional customer services. Contrary to what might be expected for students, a part of the adult

population that is usually restricted by financial resources, low price was rarely mentioned as a reason for liking a brand. A few respondents seemed to like brands that they considered as 'value for money', but for almost all interviewees, high quality was one of the most commonly mentioned and dominant reasons; they frequently stated that they were almost never disappointed/dissatisfied by them:

> *"I am **never disappointed** in their products; I think they are **good quality**." (Amy, Female, UK, talking about the Revlon makeup brand)*

Those favourite brands did not necessarily have to be of high quality; it seemed that it was enough for them to be *perceived* as such:

> *"And also I feel… What is appealing, well, sort of common feature of all the brands I really like is that they are big, international, well-recognised; so that it is sort of giving me an **indication of quality**, of what I can expect there." (Beth, Female, International)*

Beth's comment was not the only one suggesting that the brand's reputation or dominance in the market was a common characteristic of favourite brands. Especially for those long-standing brands, it appeared that their history, legacy and way of doing business (e.g. innovative strategies) were considered as very important by some interviewees. Consumers tended to consider strong, reputable brands as professional, but also widely accessible and socially desirable choices because of what they represent:

> *"For MAC, it is very famous for makeup and it is **professional**." (Katia, Female, International)*

> *"It's [Walkers chips] very **accessible**, easily accessible, you can get it anywhere, and it's pretty dominant and monopoly kind of chips." (Lydia, Female, International)*

> *[Talking about his favourite brands, namely, Apple, Nike, Calvin Klein]: "I think they're desirable or they seem to be **desirable** by a wide range of people. I guess brands that, if you are seen consuming it or using it, it has cool connotations associated with it, generally viewed positively I suppose by the public, which is the appeal of it." (Langdon, Male, International)*

Celebrity endorsement or extra effort from a brand in terms of marketing communications in general were particularly influential and quite often mentioned as

reasons for liking certain brands, mainly because consumers were either inspired by or wished to be associated with the person endorsing/advertising the brand:

> *"You see, like I said, Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, they wear them, so… it's kind of **cool** to wear Nike." (Michael, Male, International)*

> *"…well, they [Omega watches] are nice looking watches for one thing; I like the products but also Omega sponsors James Bond, he wears Omega, so I see James Bond as a suave, **cool** character who I guess is also seen as quite desirable, and I guess that would be the main one [reason]". (Langdon, Male, International)*

It was clear from the discussions that respondents' favourite brands generally provided nice shopping experiences for them. Enjoyable/comfortable store atmospherics, useful/helpful advice from employees and nice packaging were frequently mentioned as core characteristics of respondents' favourite brands. The smells/colours, the product ranges, the nicely organised stock or the carefully designed packaging of the products were all mentioned as attractive characteristics of the favourite brands/brand stores that seemed to enhance the overall shopping experience and that respondents seemed to largely enjoy. Respondents particularly appreciated the personal attention they received in some favourite brand stores or the fact that they could explore uninterrupted in others. These characteristics clearly distinguished favourite brands from others and respondents openly admitted that brands taking steps to attend to their needs in such a way were strongly preferred and were worth paying a price premium:

> *"…I like when the **shop** itself is nice, when the **packaging** is nice, not only the product itself but also that my **shopping experience** is good, so, I am able, also to sort of either pay a premium or prefer obviously from two shops that sell similar products, the one with a nicer package or… A **nicer** shop is going to be the **first** point where I will go." (Beth, Female, International)*

One significant factor that truly differentiated favourite brands from the rest was the projection of a style/image that really resonated with the consumers. The majority of respondents emphasised that their favourite brands' styles seemed to suit their age/lifestyle and express who they were. This was the case irrespective of previous ownership/usage; not previously owned brands were also labelled as 'favourite' because they were perceived as having nice styles that would suit the respondents in terms of the images they wished to project.

However, respondents' comments clearly displayed that brands that were classified as favourite often represented vehicles for social integration; in other words, the favourite brand was the means to fit-in:

> "Topshop, I suppose you get a sense of **fitting-in** with everyone else because that's what everyone else my age is wearing. So if someone asks where you got your dress and it's from Topshop, that's seen as, like, acceptable…" (Irene, Female, UK)

For other interviewees, it was often the case that their favourite brand allowed them to differentiate themselves from others, to show that they made distinct choices:

> "I suppose, thinking of clothing, I quite like H&M and Zara, especially Zara because I think it's **not that typical** of the UK high street. I think it is Spanish; because of the overseas vibe, it's just a bit more unusual and stimulating and I really like it." (Amy, Female, UK)

> [Talking about the Givenchy brand]: "Maybe it's because that people around me use more Dior. I don't like the brand that people often use or too many people choose it, I like to be **special**…" (Katia, Female, International)

While allowing consumers to be different was a key reason for considering a brand as favourite, irrespective of its conspicuousness, in some cases, certain luxury brands were particularly favoured because they provided respondents with the opportunity to make conspicuous yet subtle brand choices and thus, to avoid being perceived as trying to show-off to others (Ferraro, et al., 2013):

> "And in a way, as a brand [Polo], it's good product, but it's not **that** [stresses the word with her tone of voice] obvious in terms of Luis Vuitton […] bags, all over LVs; in Polo, it's kind of recognisable but still quite subtle, not that obvious. If people don't really know about it they may just think it's like a normal jumper, whereas if it's more obvious luxury brands, they're like 'yeah, you definitely like taking that luxury brand'. I don't really prefer having [something] that obvious nor showing people what I've got." (Yvonne, Female, International)

Similarly, some respondents were completely uninterested to show-off to others because they recognised that most of the people in their circles owned/used the same favourite brands. Some, however, were really proud of making specific brand choices and they wanted to let their social circles to know that; in other cases they enjoyed projecting to others a positive image:

*"To me, [...] it [Samsung] is a little bit **unique**, because it is a huge phone and every time you take it out people look at you and say 'oh, that's huge'. It's not the same kind of thing as iPhone, but still it's a piece of thing that I would like to take out because it's cool and I'd like to use in front of people, yeah, like, it just makes me feel like 'oh, I'm unique'; that makes me feel good." (Lydia, Female, International)*

*"Well, I don't have much of the need to sort of show-off what I am doing, that much, but still I would like for my friends and my family to be aware. [...] there are also some brands which I am proud of, for example, I recently bought a new phone, so obviously it's pleasant for me if someone sees it, and it's a phone of a good brand, and it's a nice model, and so on [...]. So yeah, I think that definitely, the more luxurious products I would have, the more I would feel the need and want to **accidentally take it out of my purse** during a meeting [laughs], to some extent. (Beth, Female, International)*

Yvonne offers a nice concluding remark about how others can influence consumers in their brand choices. It is not necessarily about showing-off anymore; it is about a vicious circle that consumers follow in their quest for better representations of themselves:

*"[...] branding is not something to be desired for, any more; it's more like something you should be having and people will look up on you. So, no matter how the economic situation of everyone is nowadays, they're still accessible for everyone; [...] it's like, a choice of ranges they are provided and they just buy what they like from that; [...] it doesn't really have the meaning of the desire anymore, it's more like you need to have this, and once you purchase it, **the next should be better** than the one you're having right now. And so, it's kind of harsh sometimes, it's you comparing to the others [...] you need to get something better [...] but actually when you walk down the street sometimes you kind of look what other people are having and you just want that..." (Yvonne, Female, International)*

6.4.2. Relevance of Product Categories to the Student Population

The analysis of consumers' preference towards certain brands also provided further information about the product categories that are most relevant to the student population (Table 6-2). As it can be deduced from Table 6-2, a wide range of clothing brands were most frequently mentioned by all participants, females and males.

Table 6-2: Preferred and favourite brands mentioned in the interviews classified by their corresponding product category

Product category	Favourite brands
Airlines	EasyJet, Flybe
Cars/motorcycles	BMW, Chrysler, Ferrari, Harley-Davidson, International Harvester, Mercedes
Clothing (including shoe wear and accessories)	Abercrombie & Fitch, Adidas, Alexander McQueen, American Apparel, Bench Clothing, Chanel, Diesel, DKNY, Gucci, H&M, Hollister, Hugo Boss, Jack Wills, Jason Wu, Juicy Couture, Kiehl's, Kirsten, Kurt Geiger, Lipsy, Luis Vuitton, Marks & Spencer, Michael Kors, New Look, Nike, Polo, Prada, Ralph Lauren, Reebok, Reiss, Rocket Dog, Tiffany's, Timberland, Tommy Hilfiger, Topshop, Urban Outfitters, Warehouse, Yves Saint Laurent, Zara
Cosmetics	Benefit, Bobby Brown, Bodyshop, Boots No 7, Chanel, Clinique, Colgate, Dermalogica, Dior, Herbal Essences, Johnson & Johnson, L' Occitane, L'Oreal, Lush, MAC, Max Factor, Revlon, Shiseido, Tresseme, Versace
Drinks	Anheuser-Busch, Coca-Cola, Diet Coke, Highland Spring, Innocent Smoothies, Poland Spring, Ribena, Starbucks
Eyeglasses/sunglasses	Givenchy, Rayban
Food	Cadbury, Dunkin' Donuts, Kellogg's, Lipton, Marks & Spencer, McDonalds, Nestle, Pizza Hut, Quaker, Starbucks, Walkers
Football clubs	Manchester United
Hotels	Hilton, Marriott
Perfumes	Calvin Klein, Chanel, Dior, Hugo Boss
Supermarkets	ASDA, Lidl, Sainsbury's, Tesco
Technology	Apple, Blackberry, Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft, Nokia, Samsung, Sony
Watches	DKNY, Michael Kors, Omega

However, the table can be misleading if only the number of brands in each category is accounted for; other issues need to be taken into consideration. For example, following clothing, the broadest range of brands were mentioned in cosmetics/makeup; however, this product category was referred to only by females, hence it is not applicable to men:

> *[Being asked about cosmetics] "Well definitely to much larger extent for females who might consider the pleasure choosing, males probably buy these products as well but don't draw that much of attention to choose the particular product, to test it, whether it works fine or not." (Beth, Female, International)*

Some of the rest of the categories were also highly gender-focused or not relevant to everyone:

[Being asked about perfumes]: "For females, yes." (Aidan, Male, International)

"Maybe, for girls, maybe jewellery, I don't really know jewellery." (Michael, Male, International)

[Being asked about digital cameras]: "I wouldn't say it's much relevant, I don't use myself a camera, I have a phone which takes good pictures, and I think many people have substituted having a camera by having a phone that takes good pictures." (Beth, Female, International)

"Smirnoff, Koppenberg, Carlsberg, Tennent's... not much of a beer drinker [laughs]. (Amy, Female, UK)

[Being asked about watches]: "I'd say the average student doesn't have enough money to spare on watches so that might not be the best field to go on to." (Aidan, Male, International)

[Being asked about banking services]: "I don't know if they think much about it, because, for me, as a customer, I just made a current bank account and don't think about it anymore." (Beth, Female, International)

"...as a student, you kind of more stick to your core product groups, you wouldn't have cars [...] as part of your core stuff, because you don't really need to own a car while you're at university or be thinking about it." (Jo, Female, UK)

For other categories, it was deduced that perhaps they would not be appropriate for the investigation of brand personality perceptions in the student population, either because the respondent could not think of any brands within this product category or because most of them found it difficult to consider any of the brands they could recall as having a personality due to their lack of familiarity with the product category:

"The only ones [sunglasses/eyeglasses] I can think of, is Rayban's, I don't really know many other brands (Amy, Female, UK)

"I'd say for food it'd be quite difficult. For clothing it'd be easier because more shops try to differentiate themselves by having a personality." (Charlotte, Female, UK)

"I don't really think of banking services at all as having personality." (Amy, Female, UK)

Moreover, the frequency with which brands in a certain product category are mentioned needs to be considered as well. In this sense, the product category that seemed to resonate with both females and males, and was mentioned most frequently besides clothing was technology. Although only seven brands were stated as favourite

within this product category, they were cited more frequently than brands in other product categories. This suggests that clothing and technology seem to be the two product categories that are most salient to students. This impression was also corroborated when respondents were purposely asked at the end of the discussion to state the product categories that they would think are most relevant to their peers. All of them, with no exception, mentioned clothing and technology:

> *"Personal electronics, laptops, mp3 players, cell phones, any sort of apparel, fashion apparel…" (Aidan, Male, International)*

> *"I would say it is clothes; then I would also say all technology devices, especially the mobile ones, tablets, mobile phones, audio players…" (Beth, Female, International)*

> *"Clothing and technology are a daily life thing." (Yvonne, Female, International)*

6.5. Respondents' Relationships with their Favourite Brands

The discussion in the previous section regarding key drivers of preference towards specific brands concluded that, apart from high quality and nice overall shopping experience, consumers seem to seek for desirable aspects of image or personality with which they can associate and express themselves. This suggests that consumers' identification with desired characteristics is a key condition for the development of a strong consumer-brand relationship. In this sense, it is important to gain more insight about the role/meaningfulness of these favourite brands in consumers' personal and social lives, and to investigate consumers' behaviour within the context of these relationships. This section discusses these issues, specifically focusing on consumers' levels of commitment towards, and emotional engagement with their favourite brands.

6.5.1. Initiation and Development of the Consumer-Brand Relationship

Following the identification of respondents' favourite brands and the exploration of the reasons behind strong brand preferences, the next step was to gain more insight on how these brands were introduced in consumers' lives and how the consumer-brand relationships developed over time.

The ways in which favourite brands entered and sustained their presence in consumers' lives seemed to differ among respondents. Some were introduced to the brands through family members, who either used the brands themselves or offered them as a gift to the respondents; in most of these cases, the continued interaction with the brand was largely connected with nostalgic memories. For others, the consumer-brand relationship was initiated during a difficult/uncomfortable situation and since then the brand has been established as a long-term relationship partner. New life circumstances, external influences or unexpected events, such as changes in the symbolic and cultural meaning of a brand that established it at some point as a popular, 'cool' brand, were also some of the ways that these brands originally penetrated respondents' lives, and have evolved as active relationship partners ever since.

For most respondents, their relationships with their favourite brands have lasted for a significant amount of time, with the brands being regularly used in their everyday routine to the extent that they now consider them as parts of themselves, always embedded in their daily lives, and often imagine that these brands will be part of their lives in the future too:

> *"With regards to clothing, H&M and Zara, I think I started shopping there at the* ***age of 14-15****; I think, just, you know, going through high school you start getting your own identity at that age, so I just kind of liked the style of the clothes, I suppose. And then when I turned 16 I got my first job and [...] I thought 'oh, more money for clothes!' and I just always kind of returned to those shops. Thinking about it now I don't shop in the same section of H&M, 'cause I know they have kind of themed sections. They have a clothing section called 'Divided' which I think is more aimed at teens and younger girls, which I really adored when I was that age but now [...] I don't think it's me anymore, but I think it's good that they kind of almost address your life cycle going through the H&M clothes. 'Cause currently I suppose I gravitate towards the H&M Basics range but I know they've also got a range called 'LOGG', and I think, this might just be my perception, but I think it's kind of targeted to the more mature customer than me, say the 30-something, so I think maybe* ***in the years to come****, well [laughs], I will kind of abandon where I am shopping now and progress to shop at LOGG at H&M." (Amy, Female, UK)*

On the other hand, evidence from the interviews showed that a strong consumer-brand relationship might not necessarily be continuous; the relationship might be frequently interrupted for various reasons, such as due to financial restrictions (as in the case of expensive brands), or because some favourite brands are only reserved for special occasions (e.g. when consumers want to treat themselves). As noted by previous

research (Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2014), respondents were gifting themselves with their favourite brands either to self-reward/self-console in case of successes/disappointments, or when extra income was available to indulge themselves (e.g. Amy's comment above). Other forms of interrupted relationship that emerged were when the favourite brand was kept for special occasions (Richins, 1994), including their/their loved ones' celebrations [consistent with previous research (Wong, et al., 2012) suggesting that gifts to important others are also considered part of one's self] or when consumers interacted with specific cohorts of acquaintances:

> *"The other brand [Yves Saint Laurent] is what I ask for **when I have my birthday**, so it's more of an annual thing. […] And how often I use the bag… I guess probably when I go for a night out, on **more formal occasions**. Because when you're with your friends just going out and have a meal, I wouldn't take those bags, unless they're like, some friends of mine who come from rich families, I kind of have to **adjust** for what you wear…" (Yvonne, Female, International)*

6.5.2. Respondents' Commitment towards their Favourite Brands

The previous section revealed that respondents had engaged in strong, and in some cases very long relationships with their favourite brands. In this sense, it is interesting to explore further the extent to which they feel committed to their favourite brands, either in terms of current loyalty or future intentions of loyalty. This section precedes the section where more emotionally-related outcomes are discussed. Understanding more deeply these aspects of consumers' behaviour will allow the further investigation of one of the objectives of this thesis which is to explore the potential relationship between desirable outcomes and self-brand personality alignment.

Previous research has conceptualised brand loyalty as single- and multi-brand loyalty (Cunningham, 1956). In general, brand managers ideally strive towards their brands achieving exclusive loyalty within a certain product category. As the interviews revealed, there are some cases where this exclusive loyalty might indeed be true:

> *"No. No. For mascara I would change, but for my actual foundation I'd **never** use any other, and I've tried everything under the sun, but would **never ever** change from Revlon, well, unless I absolutely have to, if they close tomorrow, but for mascara only really I would change, but not for anything else." (Irene, Female, UK, after being asked if she switches from her favourite brand, Revlon, to others)*

The discussions with Michael, Langdon and Aidan (all international students), indicated that males as well are exclusively loyal towards some of their favourite brands:

> Michael: "So if I need jeans, I go to Diesel."
> Me: "And what happens if you go to Diesel for jeans and you can't find one that you really like? Where do you go next?"
> Michael: Then I cry [jokes and laughs]. No, then I go to a different shop."
> Me: "A different shop, from...?"
> Michael: From Diesel... So I am from Montreal, and there is a Diesel shop there, but they also have big department shops, like Harvey Nichols here or Jenner's, that also have Diesel, [...] so... I **just keep looking** for Diesel."

> [Aidan, when asked how long he has been using his Hewlett-Packard computer and printer]: "Since 2009."
> Me: "And the Nokia [phone]?"
> Aidan: "Nokia, since 2003 I've had a Nokia. Brand loyalty."
> Me: "And you haven't switched to another brand since then?"
> Aidan: "Not for cell phones. I switched my SIM card or whatever, phone provider, but **never** my cell phone."

Aidan's commitment to his favourite brands is exceptional. He is actively engaged in his relationship with these brands and knows everything about them through extensive research, evidenced by his long account of their history and achievements during our discussion. However, more recent research has suggested that this exclusive devotion might not always be a reality within the context of consumer-brand relationships (Fournier & Yao, 1997) and that consumers tend to feel committed towards certain brands but do not necessarily treat them as exclusive relationship partners. This was evident in interviewees' accounts of their levels of commitment to their favourite brands, though respondents provided different explanations with regards to why they were not always loyal. One explanation was related to the high price of some of these brands, hence forcing respondents to choose other brands every now and then in order to satisfy their needs; after all, students are often in a tight budget:

> "L' Occitane is just a bit pricier, so if I need to **cut down on spending**, I go for a cheaper..." (Emily, Female, International)

Another reason behind switching was because respondents considered the product as relatively unimportant (e.g. shampoo, chips, gym clothes); therefore, they did not think it was necessary for them to stick to their most strongly preferred brands.

Access/availability difficulties were also mentioned as a reason for switching to other brands, even if the consumer perseveres at first to find the favourite brand:

> *[Michael, Male, International, after being asked what he would do if he could not find a sweater he likes in his favourite clothing brand, Tommy Hilfiger]: "Then maybe I'll go to a different Tommy shop, **or** I'll go to Ralph Lauren maybe".*

Most of the respondents considered that their favourite brands were the ones that they would ideally purchase. One of the core reasons, however, for which consumers seem to switch between brands is because they consider that, for different kinds of products within a certain, larger product category, other brands might be more appropriate than their favourite one:

> *"My first thought is **what I need to buy**. So if I need jeans, I go to Diesel. But if I want a golf shirt, I go to, maybe, Ralph Lauren. If I need gym clothes, I go to Nike. And for Tommy, if I need a sweater, usually, or a dress shirt." (Michael, Male, International)*

In a similar vein, respondents referred to some situations/occasions where their ideal brand might not necessarily be appropriate; therefore they are almost forced to choose another brand instead of their favourite, to project certain images:

> *"[...] if I go to a hotel or a luxury place or something, I wear formally and I have to ride in a car like that [means her parents' car, Mercedes], so... it's all about the atmosphere and [...] my mom's got a Polo as well... so if we go to the beach or something we'll just drive that Polo, **but if** we're going to go to somewhere really formal, restaurant or something, we would ride the other car." (Lydia, Female, International)*

As the literature has suggested (Moore, et al., 2002), students tend to experiment with different brand images, which may represent different identities. This was also evident in the discussions; some respondents often switched from their favourite brands simply because of their quest for variety or differentiation from others, a result that is in full consistency with previous research on consumers' need for uniqueness (Irmak, et al., 2010; Zou, et al., 2014) at least in some product categories with high personal meaningfulness (Berger & Heath, 2007), and on how consumers tend to deviate from practices/brands that were once considered as 'cool' (e.g. unconventional, laid-back, even slightly defiant) but have now become mainstream (Rahman, 2013):

[Lydia, Female, International, when asked about her ideal technology brand]:
*"At the moment it's probably Sony or Samsung, because there's just too much iPhone. […] I think it [Apple] is a trend as well, **everybody's using it.** It's very handy, great technology, creation, […] I've got my iPhone several years ago but then I changed it for a Samsung Galaxy, yeah, **I just want to try new things** and I got quite sick of iPhone stuff, but I still use iPad and everything, it is just way too handy."*

While this section has so far illustrated that for most consumers exclusivity in brand choices is not real, the discussions overall showed that brand loyalty is not probably an appropriate term to describe these consumers' overall commitment towards their favourite brands, as it seems to disregard other important aspects. The interviews revealed that those brands have earned their places as favourites due to the fact that they have consistently satisfied consumers and have rarely disappointed them. And although they might not be treated as exclusive relationship partners, they enjoy other benefits. First, respondents kept making multiple purchases from the same brand, even if there was some inconvenience related to the brand or the process of acquiring it:

*"I still go all the way from [her current place of living in Edinburgh] to [the store's location, quite far from her home place], to do big shopping and **walk back with like 4 big bags** of Tesco." (Yvonne, Female, International)*

Second, those favourite brands were the first ones to be considered when respondents sought to satisfy a certain need in their corresponding product categories:

*"…whenever I go shopping they're my first point of contact. So, I go to Princes Street and **first**, without even entering other shops, I **first** go to H&M, Primark and New Look, as they are in order, and only when I can't find something I want in these 3 shops, **then** I start to go to the other ones as well." (Beth, Female, International)*

*[Jo, Female, UK, after being asked whether she would consider other watch brands apart from her favourite, Michael Kors]: "I will switch to other brands, if there's one in particular that I've seen and I think 'oh that's really nice', then I will, but Michael Kors is kind of, like, the one that I kind of **check on**, whereas the other ones would be the ones that I see while I am looking **for** Michael Kors…"*

*[Irene, Female, UK, when asked which jewellery brand she would first consider]: "If it's a watch, **always, always, always,** DKNY."*

Third, respondents most often disregarded their higher price in comparison to other brands, and most importantly, seemed willing to incur, to a certain degree, an extra cost when presented with the scenario of a future price increase of their favourite brand:

> *"That would depend on the perceived benefits that I would be getting from it. I understand that these technology products are expensive already, but I see Apple as being a step above the competition so I am **willing** to pay a price, a slightly higher price for it. So probably, yes. [...] For Google, basically, everything that Google provides is free, so I wouldn't expect to pay much more for, although if they did start charging a small amount, I would be **willing** to pay because I value their services. Microsoft, I would probably be **willing** to pay a higher price because I do value their products and what they deliver." (Langdon, Male, International)*

Fourth, respondents could imagine their future with those brands in it, relating them to positive aspects of their future lives:

> *"It's [Ralph Lauren] more a classier, more woman wear than Polo. And it's quite expensive, I think it's more like, when I get successful, **when I grow** and get myself good salary, good pay, then I **will** reward myself to buy them." (Yvonne, Female, International)*

Finally, they highly trusted those favourite brands, which in turn increased their emotional engagement with them, as will be discussed further in the next section:

> *"It's like... using the safest product [talking about his Hewlett-Packard laptop] for the range, so, it's **like driving through a warzone in a tank** opposed to a [Toyota] Prius." (Aidan, Male, International)*

6.5.3. Respondents' Emotional Engagement with their Favourite Brands

Before proceeding further to respondents' emotional engagement with their favourite brands, it is important that a crucial distinction is made. The focus of this study is on emotional engagement with favourite brands *specifically*, rather than emotional reactions generated while purchasing in general. An example will be used to illustrate this important distinction. Most respondents reported feeling excited and happy about the purchase/use of brands; however, in some cases, this was related to the eagerness that *generally* accompanies the process of shopping/using a specific type of product:

> *"I think it does make me feel happy, it does kind of give you some excitement for purchasing and I think you're always quite eager, you know, to either wear **that item** or wear **a** new makeup; you can't wait to go home and crack open your shopping bags I suppose." (Amy, Female, UK)*

In contrast, the focus of this section is to identify feelings related to/provoked by certain brands. Here are some examples of respondents feeling excited/happy/uplifted, because they enjoyed one or more of their favourite brands' *specific* characteristics:

> *"Topshop, I think… I don't know, it's got like a social element to it because it takes me back to being at school and we were all usually excited when I would go to Topshop with my friends and we would get to buy something. I think I've still got that, I still like to go to Topshop and I know all the people that work there at home, so I think social as well. Even if I am not really looking for something, I would still go into Topshop and see who's there and I like, I think it's something I still get, the **excited feeling** of when I was younger and we first started shopping at Topshop". (Irene, Female, UK)*

> *"I suppose they're [Innocent Smoothies] just kind of **mood-lifting**, they are obviously satisfying your thirst or hunger, but I think just the quirky packaging and kind of scanning through it, yeah it uplifts you and yeah, it's a **happy** drink [laughs]. (Amy, Female, UK)*

In many cases, the use of some favourite brands offered pleasurable experiences:

> *"Sony, well, […] **happiness** and yeah, it's just a **relaxed** thing to use when you see that, you don't feel pressure; when you see Sony, you know it's relaxed." (Lydia, Female, International)*

> *"In terms of the shopping experience, I would probably say what distinguishes them [her favourite brands] is that I feel comfortable because I usually know the layout, I know the type of products, I am familiar with how they do things. So, it is comfortable and **pleasant** for me." (Beth, Female, International)*

For many respondents, the interaction with their favourite brand had a more intuitive element, as it seemed to almost feel like a second nature for them:

> *"I **feel more like myself** when I am wearing their [her favourite make-up brand, Revlon] products […]. I think it's because it's makeup I apply every day, it's just become **part of me** and I don't really kind of associate it as a separate thing I am doing to myself, it's always there…" (Amy, Female, UK)*

> *[Talking about Prada]: "…I go for Prada because it's more like… **it suits me more**." (Yvonne, Female, International)*

Besides the intuitive connection, respondents very frequently referred to how these brands made them feel positively and reinforced different aspects of their selves:

> *"I think, yeah, [Hugo Boss] just makes me feel **good about myself**." (Langdon, Male, International)*

> *"The facial products and body products [her favourite brands, mainly L'Occitane and Dermalogica] make me smell nice, feel better about my skin. The shoes [Kurt Geiger] as well, make me **feel good in them**." (Emily, Female, International)*

> *"I suppose when I am buying Revlon, it makes you feel more glamorous because I am buying makeup, and a makeup that I like, **not just any makeup**, something that I really like." (Irene, Female, UK)*

The contributions of the favourite brands to different aspects of one's self were of utmost significance to respondents because the brands' characteristics compensated for characteristics that the consumers felt they did not currently have without these brands. For example, some brands allowed the interviewees to feel more special, unique or confident, hence reinforcing respondents' emotional engagement with them to the highest level, that of expressing feelings of love:

> *"I **love** it [Juicy Couture]; it's so cute [...]. And it's very young, it's dynamic, it makes you feel very powerful and confident." (Katia, Female, International)*

> *"I **love** Blackberry. I love the QWERTY keyboard, that's a very unique thing. It's a very business-themed phone, I can't use loads of applications in the phone, yes, but I just feel better for myself in a Blackberry than myself holding an iPhone because all my friends use iPhones and I am just the only one left that uses a Blackberry or shifted when iPhone 4 came out... I still like the keyboard, I don't like touch screen so unless Blackberry really disappoints me, I'll just stick with my Blackberry." (Yvonne, Female, International)*

Taking into consideration the broad range of emotions that were associated with the favourite brands, it is not surprising that respondents expressed significant levels of anxiety when presented with the scenario of their favourite brands not existing anymore in their lives. Of course, there were still some respondents that mentioned they would not be particularly distraught and they would replace their favourite brands with other similar ones, especially for brands that were relatively unimportant or someone could easily find replacements:

*"I would kind of be annoyed but it **wouldn't bother** me that much. I would just go to brands that were similar. [...] If they didn't exist [...] I **wouldn't be really furious** about it, I wouldn't mind just going somewhere else." (Jo, Female, UK)*

*"It's [Tesco] got **alternatives** as well, like Sainsbury's or ASDA. So if Tesco doesn't exist, yeah I am sure that the other supermarkets would take over the place." (Lydia, Female, International)*

Others would lose interest and would base their future brand choices on price and value for money:

*"My consumerism would probably be based **solely in price** after that point. I would not see any sustainability within brands, I would just see different companies selling at different prices and I'd consume what would look like the best product for the price." (Aidan, Male, International)*

Some respondents would not really mind for some brands, but they would feel frustrated for the loss of others. Katia, for example, mentioned she would *"change to another brand"* in order to replace her favourite make-up brand, Bobby Brown, but for her favourite clothing brand, she did not seem so relaxed:

"I think I will not be happy, but I think maybe I would find some clothes which most suit me, but I am not sure. If it is closed or does not exist tomorrow maybe I will buy a lot of this tonight [laughs]." (Katia, Female, International)

The majority of respondents though seemed rather anxious when they were presented with the scenario of separation from their favourite brands. Some of the initial reactions included surprise, dreadfulness, denial, but also humour:

*[When presented with the scenario]: "Could I still own a bit of clothes from them [Polo, Tommy Hilfiger, Zara, Topshop]??? I can still wear it for my life!!!" [Then when asked specifically about her favourite clothing brand, Polo]: "I will be **gutted** because it's such a good brand. I don't really know, I **couldn't imagine** it like it's gone-gone." [When asked separately about her other favourite clothing brand, Tommy Hilfiger]: "Even Tommy [Hilfiger] after Polo?" (Yvonne, Female, International)*

*"It'd be horrible. [...] I'd be **gutted, disappointed**, it's, like, when you find something you really like and it kind of **gets taken away from you**, you just kind of don't think that any other product will be just as good as that kind of thing." (Emily, Female, International)*

In fact, all respondents reported a certain degree of inconvenience with the potential new status quo, and were worried that they would need to compromise, to pay a higher price for another brand or that it would take a significant amount of time and effort to search for and adapt to alternatives; an effort they did not seem very willing to make:

> "... I kind of **grudge** shopping elsewhere because I think 'mmm... this is not what I am used to, this is not what I would ideally like' but I think I could find alternatives but perhaps at a different price, at higher price perhaps, 'cause I know Topshop is quite similar in style but I tend not to shop there as it's more expensive, and when I do I am quite reluctant, so..." (Amy, Female, UK)

> "Apple, it would be highly **inconvenient**, because it's a product that once you get your head around how it works, it's very hard to re-learn, so the re-learning process of purchasing another phone or computer would be time-consuming and annoying I guess." (Langdon, Male, International)

For some, this major inconvenience would be particularly frustrating and would provoke disappointment, even anger, loss of security and, in exceptional cases, panic:

> "With regards to Innocent smoothies, [...] I don't know if I, say, go to the bother of making my own fruit juice and smoothies, I think I've tried it before actually and it's just very **inconvenient** and very messy and such, so [...]. I suppose I would just look for similar products, similar fruit juices, but I don't think from my experience any competitors quite as good, quite as tasty. I'd feel pretty **disappointed** I suppose, maybe even **frustrated and angry**." [When asked why]: "Just because [...] I am always kind of guaranteed satisfaction when I purchase these things, it's just an easier decision for me but I think, if those shops and products were withdrawn it would just take me more time to kind of find similar products or sources of the products. [...] I think the frustration would just be in, 'oh, it was there, it was so simple, and now it's been taken away, I have to put my effort and time into finding a substitute'..." (Amy, Female, UK)

> "With Google probably I would maybe be **worried** about the security; I really trust Google to look after my personal files and things, so a breach of trust of security I guess would be a feeling I'd have". (Langdon, Male, International)

> "Well, Revlon would be the worst because then I'd need to start all over again looking for new makeup, and Revlon is the best because it's really good but it's not that expensive either. But Revlon would definitely be the worst. I think with the other two [Topshop and DKNY] I could probably find somewhere else to go to, instead of going to Topshop I could maybe go to River Island and it wouldn't be the end of the world, but I do prefer Topshop; but Revlon would be **dreadful**. [...] I'd probably feel quite **upset** because there is a Revlon shop where I stay and the shop closed down, and that is when I started to **panic** because I thought that Revlon was going to stop completely but you could still get it in Boots and online, but I thought that it was completely gone and I do remember panicking that day." (Irene, Female, UK)

Some respondents admitted that they would experience a loss of a part of themselves, that they or the world around them would need to change, or that they would stop feeling good about themselves, if the favourite brands were not in their lives anymore:

> *"That [her favourite makeup brand, Benefit] kind of matters because that's quite unique, it's kind of, I don't think there's any brand anywhere else, doing this kind of style makeup, so if it doesn't exist, probably **my** makeup **style would change** because I don't have the product." (Lydia, Female, International)*

> *"I'd feel like there's a **big gap in** the core, or the **core things** that I use in my life. So I'd feel a little bit hopeless I guess, for a little while. [...] Nike and Adidas, I think it would be frustrating because I perceive those to be the things that make me feel good. There are other brands out there that I could choose to wear or use but I don't think they would make me look as good or feel as good about myself, so... that would be the main problem." (Langdon, Male, International)*

Respondents' comments both in the previous and this section clearly illustrate that favourite brands enjoy respondents' high levels of emotional and behavioural commitment, because they have consistently delivered their promises, hence keeping them satisfied:

> *"Apple: Design, innovation, ease of use, quality and I guess **satisfaction**. [...] With Google, I would say probably satisfaction; [...] **delivers results**, facilitates the achievement of goals and helps me to order my life. [...] Microsoft I would say also delivers results and allows work tasks to be done; [...] satisfaction and I would say I am pleased with its consistency of the results it produces I guess; it's a consistently good product." (Langdon, Male, International)*

The satisfaction with the favourite brands has in turn nurtured a two-way emotional exchange between the relationship partners. On the one hand, the consumer places greater levels of trust in the brand, as evidenced by Aidan's comment cited at the end of section 6.5.2; on the other hand, the brand allows consumers to feel more secure:

> *"I think shopping from those brands I often feel just quite **secure in my choices**, I feel like, say, I am unlikely to return an item of clothing, or I think I am pretty much guaranteed to like the smoothie 'cause most likely I've had it before... So, yeah, shopping from those brands I don't often feel kind of a bit unsure of myself and a bit of kind of 'oh, should I hold on the receipt in case I change my mind?'; I feel always quite certain in that I guess, I've made good choices and I'm happy with my purchases." (Amy, Female, UK)*

These feelings of security around the favourite brand, the belief that it will not disappoint them, as well as their strong emotional engagement with it, often led to respondents being more forgiving if the brand failed to deliver what was promised:

> *"Although the thing with Hilton is that, you know, they've got different levels, I don't know what they all are, so sometimes it can be a bit confusing if you don't know, I think they've got like DoubleTree and all these different things so it's hard... I've been to Hilton a second time with somebody else, and it wasn't as nice, I didn't understand at that time that there were different levels of the Hilton, I thought that Hilton was just the one brand that had the same level of hotels everywhere, so my second experience wasn't as good, although **I still would trust them again**. [...] I still think it's kind of a luxurious kind of hotel, even though the second experience wasn't that brilliant, [...] I still think it would be quite nice to go there." (Irene, Female, UK)*

6.6. Respondents' Perceptions of Brands as Personalities

In order to gain more insight on self-brand personality alignment, this section will investigate how respondents related to the concept of brand personality and derived their brand personality perceptions. Then, some light will be shed on the process of attributing personality characteristics to favourite brands, and its degree of difficulty.

6.6.1. Respondents' Perceptions of the Concept of Brand Personality

In this stage of the discussions respondents were introduced to the concept of brand personality, and were asked to indicate whether and how often they think of brands as personalities and how they relate to the idea of brands being associated with personality traits. In general, their responses showed that interviewees could think of some favourite brands as having personality traits and spontaneously provided examples and descriptions of their personalities. When asked how often they thought of brands as having personality characteristics, respondents appeared a bit reluctant to admit that this is something they actively think about when purchasing/using brands; very few however had never thought of brands as having personality characteristics:

> *"I **don't think too much** of that, I kind of have the feeling that they**'ve** got their own characteristics but never kind of see them as humans..." (Lydia, Female, International)*

*"I **don't think I do**. I think like, just now when I told you, all those things, I think it's because I was asked. I don't think I've ever thought of a brand as a person before." (Irene, Female, UK)*

Overall though, brand personality seemed important. Brands that were considered as lacking a distinct personality in respondents' minds were certainly unappealing because consumers could not identify desirable characteristics to associate with:

*"They [Toshiba] sort of don't have any image; I would say personality; also **nothing** appealing for their products." (Beth, Female, International)*

Another important discovery that emerged from this stage of the discussions, however, revolved around the sources of these brand personality perceptions. Respondents' comments indicated that they drew their perceptions from a range of different sources, such as their images of typical customers, celebrity endorsers, marketing communications, (e.g. packaging), and employees:

*"I don't think any of the brands themselves have many characteristics but I think the **people that buy** the brands maybe do". (Jo, Female, UK)*

*"…when I was speaking about Rimmel and how I didn't really resonate with the brand, I didn't really like, I think that is because I think with Rimmel I always have the image of Kate Moss in my head 'cause she just **endorsed** the product, she has kind of become the face of that brand. […] Revlon I think, just, elegant, kind of timeless. Again I think in my head I think of Emma Stone, the actress, cause I know she is currently the face of Revlon, and I like her as a person, so, I guess contrasting with Kate Moss perhaps that makes me endear myself to the brands more." (Amy, Female, UK)*

*"I certainly do that from time to time. And without saying it's usually very much connected with the fact that, for example, the brand has some sort of **advertising** style. Or for example, in terms of perfumes, I use quite a lot of Paco Rabanne perfumes and […] as well as the woman who's advertising the perfumes, the **packaging** of the perfume itself, the bottle, it sort of reminds me of some kind of a bit wild person… But I don't think in this way about every brand usually, they have to either show some image or have some distinctive packaging; […] it helps a lot if they can associate some advertisement or image or something that has a particular distinctive style." (Beth, Female, International)*

*"…the [Zara's] image in my head is being clouded by the **employees** in Zara, I think they form a lot of what I consider the brand would be if it had a personality." (Amy, Female, UK)*

The variety of sources from which consumers draw their brand personality perceptions has an important implication for the tools that are used to capture these perceptions. As respondents seemed to draw their perceptions from such a vast range of sources, including other people whose characteristics are transferred to the brands, a personality trait inventory that summarises different expansions of personality would be more appropriate to capture brand personality perceptions. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Five Factor Model is such a reliable personality trait inventory that can encapsulate variances in personality.

6.6.2. Respondents' Perceptions of their Favourite Brands' Personalities

After being introduced to the concept of brand personality and eliciting their first reactions to it, respondents were invited to describe the personalities of their favourite brands. It is worth highlighting that respondents seemed to start their descriptions with phrases such as *"I think he/she **is** a very successful, dynamic woman…"* and a little less often with phrases such as *"I think if it was a person, it **would be** a successful, dynamic woman"*. This might suggest that personality traits are actively incorporated in consumers' brand perceptions and add to the creation of vivid portraits for the brands.

A summary of the personality traits, both positively- and negatively-inflected, that respondents attributed to their favourite brands is provided in Table 6-3 in order to clearly illustrate the breadth and depth of consumers' brand personality perceptions, and therefore, to provide empirical support that the Five Factor Model is an appropriate tool for capturing them. It is worth noting that, in some cases, respondents could not find the appropriate wording and used small phrases to describe a personality trait; these have also been included.

As the table includes the personality traits that respondents attributed to their favourite brands only, one important observation can be made: consumers do not only associate personality characteristics with negative connotations to brands they dislike but also to brands they like. This observation is significant in that it suggests that personality trait inventories which also include negative meanings, such as the Five Factor Model, are more appropriate to capture consumers' perceptions of brand personality.

Table 6-3: Personality traits interviewees associated with their favourite brands

Active	Efficiency-oriented	Logical	Reflective
Agreeable	Elegant	Loud	Relaxed
Always going full speed	Energetic	Makes hard decisions	Reliable
Always trying new things	Enigmatic	Mature	Rigorous
Analytical	Enjoys solving problems	Modern	Risk-taking
Arrogant	Exaggerating	Monotone	Rough
Boring	Excitable	Mysterious	Rugged
Businessy	Extreme	Narrow-minded	Sad
Can't really be knocked down	Firm	Nasty	Safe
Casual	Formal	Natural	Seeks self-indulgence
Catty	Fresh	Neglecting potential downsides	Serious
Cheerful	Friendly	Nerdy	Sets high goals and high standards for themselves and achieves them
Chic	Fun	Nice	
Classic	Functional	No commitments	
Classy	Funky	Normal	
Clean-cut	Glamorous	Not very nice	Sharp
Clever	Good sensibilities	Not afraid to back themselves	Simple
Cold	Happy		Simplistic
Confident	Hard	Not blaze	Smart
Cool	Hard working	Not complex	Sociable
Crazy	Has a good idea so just pursues it	Not fussy	Social
Creative	Has a set of things that can do well	Not happy	Sophisticated
Current	Helpful	Not quirky	Straightforward
Dares to try	High-ended	Not refined	Structured
Decent	Hipstery	Not serious	Suave
Decisive	Honest	Not seriously committed	Subtle
Develops ideas	Humble	Not soft	Sure of themselves
Does small talk	Humorous	Not smart	Sweet
Does good quality work	Iconic	Not trendy	Tells the right joke at the right time
Does the right thing all the time	Independent thinker	Not very intelligent	Timeless
Doesn't enjoy being in the crowd	Innovative	Old fashioned	Timid
Doesn't follow schemes	Intelligent	On top of things	Tough
Doesn't branch out	Intimidating	Organised	Trendy
Doesn't care about people's opinions of them	Joyful	Outdoorsy	Trustworthy
Douchebag	Just bothered about his family	Outgoing	Unique
Down to earth	Kind	Outside-of-the-box thinking person	Up for anything
Dynamic	Laid-back	Polite	Warm
Easy-come, easy-go	Learned	Popular	Weird
Easy to get to know	Light-hearted	Posh	Welcoming
Easy-going	Likes exercise	Powerful	Willing to change
Effective	Likes to go out	Practical	Willing to take guests
	Likes to party	Professional	With hospitality
	Likes to change accordingly to the world around them	Profit-oriented	Witty
		Quiet	Working hard
		Quirky	
		Refined	

Moreover, the presence of negatively-inflected personality traits raises further questions: for example, where exactly are these negative traits placed within the structure of consumers' perceptions of brand personality traits? This issue will be investigated further in the next two chapters that report the survey results. In the meantime, it appears that respondents often drew clear lines between the positive and the negative personality characteristics of their favourite brands:

> [Talking about one of her favourite brands, Zara]: "…stylish, and elegant, **and** kind of has a bit of attitude as well, kind of not as soft and as blaze as M&S, kind of a little, I don't know, a bit sharper […]. If they were a person, they'd be very confident and very sure of themselves and witty […] sharp and cold. (Amy, Female, UK)

> [Talking about one of her favourite brands, Cadbury]: "I would say it is someone more reflective, who thinks a lot about his life, and likes staying at home, **and** is a bit maybe even boring. He doesn't enjoy being in the crowd, rather with a narrow range of friends to go into a club or just to meet and talk…" (Beth, Female, International)

> [Talking about one of her favourite brands, Topshop]: "I think they would be quite a nasty person. Topshop always wants to be like the coolest place to go, **and** I think that they would not be a very nice person. Like, you know, when you are at school, when there is a person that's really cool but they're not actually very nice. I think it would be like that, I don't think Topshop would be very nice, **but** it would be really funky." (Irene, Female, UK)

> "Microsoft kind of nerdy, very practical, very functional, and has a set of things that it can do well **and** doesn't really branch out very much, so maybe a little bit narrow-minded." (Langdon, Male, International)

> [Talking about one of her favourite brands, Chanel]: "Very-very chic, very-very girly, quite sweet I would guess. **But** at the same time, always just quite monotone." [And then about her other favourite brand, Topshop]: "Quite exaggerating can be sometimes, you can see it from their clothes; they can be quite exaggerating **but** at the same time can be really simple, very easy-going…" (Yvonne, Female, International)

Two conclusions can be made from these comments. First, the personality traits, either positive or negative, were not mentioned according to the same aspect of personality to which they referred. Second, it seems that consumers clearly distinguished between positively- and negatively-inflected traits by sometimes, for example, starting with the positives and then referring to a chain of negative ones. In other words, respondents mentioned positive traits corresponding to different dimensions of personality and *then* they mentioned negative traits corresponding to the same or different dimensions

of personality. This suggests that negative items in consumers' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities might be grouped separately from the positive ones, rather than being structured in the personality aspects to which they correspond to.

It could be argued that consumers would be unlikely to attribute negative personality traits to their favourite brands, as this would in a sense refute their own argumentation for preferring these brands in the first place. However, the evidence from the interviews suggests otherwise. It seems that consumers might favour some brands specifically because of some of their more unfavourable characteristics, in an effort for example to project a more rebellious, less conservative image. Although the negative items might not be as many as the positive ones, it is still crucial that these negative perceptions are captured/investigated. Such information can be crucial for managers when designing the personalities of their brands. Overall, the above reasons reinforce the appropriateness of the Five Factor Model as a tool to capture consumers' brand personality perceptions. By using a personality scale based on the Five Factor Model, this study, therefore, is the first to capture aspects of brand personality perceptions that have hitherto not been revealed.

Finally, it was also surprising to observe respondents talking vividly and with detail about other aspects of their favourite brands, which they often deduced from the overall personality profile they had just drawn for them, such as: types of employment the brand would pursue if it were a real person, types of people it would get along with, kinds of music it would listen to, etc. This suggests that brand personality perceptions may act as a catalyst for the activation of other brand-related meanings:

> *"...if H&M was a person, I don't think they'd have a serious **job**, I think [laughs] they may be in a part-time work, kind like of dipping out, of having fun, and then no commitments and stuff." (Amy, Female, UK)*

6.6.3. Respondents' Degree of Difficulty When Assigning Personality Characteristics to their Favourite Brands

When asked about the process of assigning personality traits to brands, respondents indicated that it was easier for some brands or particular product categories than for others. As responses varied for each individual, it is not possible to conclude whether brands in specific product categories were more difficult to associate with personality traits. What however can be concluded from the discussions is that consumers seemed

to find it easier to draw the personality profiles of brands with which they were familiar, that is, their favourite brands:

> "Well, some of them I found really easy, and some of them I really struggled. [...] I think maybe if you're really **familiar** with a brand, you could probably think of it as a person." (Irene, Female, UK)

> "For the ones that **I know a lot about** and quite like and use, it was less difficult, because I kind of know a bit about their history or their product range and things like that, so that makes it easier. But for brands I don't know much about, I find it difficult to picture them." (Langdon, Male, International)

> "It would be easy for me to think of my **favourite** brands because I **know** them; I kind of understand them... For the brands I don't like, I don't really think about them too much, so it would be hard... and I don't understand them that much." (Lydia, Female, International)

Respondents' comments indicated that, although consumers might have broad perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities, asking them to articulate them *there and then* was not an easy process, because maybe these perceptions were formed subconsciously or because consumers never really had to consider the totality of a brand's personality profile unless purposely asked. This can be explained by the fact that most consumers draw their perceptions from multiple different sources, as mentioned earlier and in section 2.3.4; therefore, their perceptions are quite fragmented. As a result, when invited to instantly draw the personality profile of a brand, they need to make extra effort to compose these parts together:

> "I suppose I did have to put some thought into it and was quite **hard to articulate** exactly what I meant but I **did** have an image in my head. [...] I'd say if I was in a shop, not in an environment like this, perhaps I'd be more swayed by the other customers, say, if there was someone shopping in a makeup stand and I thought they looked really something to look up to, I'd think 'oh she has a good taste, I want to see what she's purchasing' or if there was someone that looked kind of dressed down, unkempt, I think I'd be influenced by that and I guess perhaps I would associate the customer with the brand if they were right beside each other." (Amy, Female, UK)

The above findings suggest that perhaps consumers' brand personality perceptions are best captured when they are presented with a set of personality traits and asked to rate the personalities of brands they are familiar with. This supports the approach followed in the online survey phase of this research.

6.7. Respondents' Perceptions of Self-Brand Personality Alignment

At the end of the discussions and before being debriefed, respondents were presented with the concept of self-brand personality alignment. Specifically, they were invited to respond to the following question: *"Some people say that we tend to choose brands with personality characteristics that match our own personality characteristics. Do you agree with this view? Is it something that you or your friends and family do?"*

Most of the respondents resonated with the idea of similarity-based self-brand personality alignment, in other words, they agreed with the fact that consumers tend to choose brands with characteristics that match their own:

> *"I would agree with that totally, I would say. Once a brand has a personal characteristic which comes to mind and you identify with that, it becomes more appealing to you just because of that fact, so yeah. I think that's right. It might not always lead to you choosing that brand because obviously there might be other qualities of the product that will make you to choose something else, but it definitely acts as a plus and the opposite way, if there's some personality you don't really like, it deters you from buying something from that brand."* (Beth, Female, International)

> *"I can see that people probably do that. Let me think about my mom... Yes, she probably does that actually, yeah, that's probably quite true. Well, my mom's quite classy, she shops maybe in places like Hobbs or Fraser and she's got a bubbly characteristic and she's quite classy and these places they're all quite classy. [...] My brother, he's quite really tight with his money and he doesn't like to spend it, and he goes to all the budget shops and stuff, so if I saw those people as being like cheaper, you could match them, just by knowing someone's personality from where they go, probably."* (Irene, Female, UK)

> *"Yeah, I agree with that view. I think most of my choices are based on my preferences, based on my characteristics, so yeah, I definitely agree with that view."* (Jo, Female, UK)

> *"I do identify with Jeep, I am not a military person myself but I do come from a military family [...], I do consider myself more of a tough individual [he had just previously described Jeep as rough and tough]."* (Aidan, Male, International)

Some of them, however, were also sceptical and revealed that there are cases where they tend to choose brands with characteristics that represent something that they do not have, yet they desire:

> *"Well, [...] they may not always be ones [means characteristics] that I actually have myself; **it might be ones that I want to have** the attributes. So, for Topshop, I don't see myself as being really trendy or anything like that, but I*

want to be trendy, if you know what I mean, I want to keep up with the trends so that's probably why I choose Topshop." (Irene, Female, UK)

"I think, in most cases brands are, I suppose aspirational, for example, when I was thinking about Revlon I described it as timeless, elegant; that isn't really what I am but it's **perhaps what I want to be***..." (Amy, Female, UK)*

"Yes. I would definitely agree with that [he means similarity configuration]. Yeah, I would. I think... perhaps boosts their own self-image, but also in contrast to that, I think people sometimes purchase brands for things that they **would like to be** *but they maybe aren't. So a good example would be luxury goods I suppose, people trying to look or act or be viewed as something that's better than what they actually are I guess. It would be a motivation for them." (Langdon, Male, International)*

"For clothing maybe, partially agree and disagree. Because, yeah, there are many occasions in the society that we need to be different from ourselves, not that we talk differently but we have to dress up differently. [...] So I think it's quite important for each of us to have different brands that are **not related to our characteristics** *but to help you* **to present yourself** *in those kinds of occasions." (Lydia, Female, International)*

Their comments were an important empirical indication corroborating the main argument of this thesis that self-brand personality alignment might not necessarily exhibit a similarity configuration; instead, the comments indicate that consumers also tend to choose brands with personality traits that help them to associate with traits they do not themselves have in order to achieve self-relevant goals (e.g. self-enhancement).

6.8. Summary & Implications for the Survey Research

This chapter presented the findings from the first stage of this empirical study, the exploratory interviews. The sections were structured thematically according to the first four objectives of the qualitative phase as these were outlined in section 6.2. The fifth objective, that is, to use the findings of the qualitative study in order to inform the next stage, the online survey, was discussed throughout the chapter and the implications are summarised here again.

First, the part of the discussion with respondents about their general brand preferences, their favourite brands and their dislikes provided some interesting insight. It appears that those brands that seem to be elevated in the status of 'favourites' are

those that seem to resonate the most with the consumer's need for self-expression and self-enhancement. Interviewees clearly indicated that their favourite brands were those that fitted their self-concept, their lifestyle and the peer groups to which they belonged or wished to belong, and that allowed them to feel special.

Second, the respondents, all students, clearly indicated with multiple examples from their own brand experiences as well as their personal opinions that clothing and technology brands are part of their everyday lives. Therefore, it was decided that the survey, which will be launched to a student population, would focus on these two product categories in order to increase the degree of salience to the respondents.

Third, the discussions with the respondents with regards to their perceptions of brand personality provided substantial insight on some issues that have not been extensively addressed and clarified in previous literature. The first revelation from the respondents' accounts is that consumers do indeed conceive brands as having personality traits, including traits with negative connotations, even to their favourite brands; this is an aspect of consumers' brand personality perceptions not previously revealed. What was also shown is that respondents seemed to group positive and less favourable characteristics separately; this is an issue that requires further exploration. The second revelation was that the actual process of assigning human personality characteristics to brands does not always seem natural or straightforward to all consumers. Specifically, it was revealed that not all respondents actively and consciously think of brands as having personality traits: some admit of not (frequently or at all) thinking of brands in this way while others actually form personality images for brands in their minds by using a number of sources (e.g. personality associations relating to employees or other customers); for the majority though brand personality perceptions seem to be important when choosing brands. Moreover, some respondents reported experiencing different degrees of difficulty when assigning human personality characteristics to different brands in a certain product category (e.g. to Kit Kat and Cadbury) or to brands in different product categories (e.g. to bank brands and laptop brands). It appears that the product category in which the brand belongs plays an important role when assigning human personality characteristics to brands; as interviewees' responses varied, no conclusive findings could be drawn about this. What could be concluded though from their comments is that the process seems much easier for their favourite brands, that is, brands with which they interact to a greater extent, and this seemed to be the case irrespective of the product category.

The above findings have important implications for the conceptualisation & measurement of brand personality in general, but also for this study in particular. Specifically, the fact that some consumers may not actively attach human personality traits to brands does not necessarily imply that they cannot form the profile of a brand's personality; it may suggest that, for some reason, this process is not prioritised because other issues are considered more important when making a brand choice (e.g. price was often mentioned as reason for selecting certain brands). It is also possible that the process has not been activated for certain brands or for certain product categories, and it appears that familiarity, or even more accurately, interaction with a brand or a product category in general, plays a crucial role in the degree of difficulty that consumers experience when assigning human personality traits to brands: from respondents' accounts it was revealed that the more lived experiences they have had with certain brands and product categories, the easier it was for them to assign human personality characteristics to those brands. As was already discussed in section 2.3.5, lack of such lived experiences and interactions can explain the difficulty consumers seem to face in some cases: they may not have clear perceptions of the brand's personality because they have not been associated with the brand or product category in general, or they may not remember previous brand 'actions' (e.g. communications). In other cases, the difficulty consumers seem to be facing in this process emerges from the difficulty to readily articulate, when asked in the context of an interview, specific personality traits that would draw a comprehensive brand personality profile; some personality descriptors may escape respondents' minds at that point.

These issues present severe implications for the approaches that should be followed to capture consumers' brand personality perceptions. On the one hand, lived experiences and personal relevance (not simple familiarity with a brand and/or product category), largely influence the extent to which the consumer can accurately draw a brand's personality profile as this has been formed in his/her mind; the use of favourite or most preferred brands in product categories with which the consumer interacts the most is thus a logical approach. On the other hand, the free-association technique does not always appear to be optimal when seeking to capture consumers' perceptions; instead, consumers should be presented with comprehensive personality inventories, such as the Five Factor Model. The evidence from the interviews, therefore, provides confirmation for the conclusion that was made following the review of the literature in Chapter 2, that the Five Factor Model is an appropriate tool to capture these

perceptions; it also seems to support the need for further exploration with regards to the differences in the structure of human and brand personality when both measured using the FFM, as respondents seemed to group positive and less favourable characteristics separately.

Finally and most importantly, the interviews provided initial support for the main proposition of this thesis, that is, that the self-brand personality alignment might not necessarily always exhibit a similarity pattern, but that a complementarity configuration is also possible. Respondents revealed that, in some cases, their wish to be associated with some personality characteristics they did not currently possess led them to certain brand choices. Moreover, respondents' comments about their favourite brands provided significant insight on outcomes regarding thoughts, emotions and behaviours that could be related to self-brand personality alignment, such as perceptions of quality, satisfaction, trust and current and future loyalty intentions, as well as pleasure from the favourite brand, intuitive fit, overall brand love, separation distress, and willingness to forgive the brand's potential transgressions. As a result, the findings from interviews informed the content of the survey where the relationship between these outcomes and self-brand personality alignment could be investigated further.

Following the analysis and discussion of the exploratory interviews, the next two chapters now turn to the discussion of the findings from the online survey.

7. SURVEY RESEARCH DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

7.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the initial steps of analysis, including the treatment of missing data and the testing of the variables' compliance with assumptions of multivariate analysis, as well as the descriptive results of the second research phase, the online survey, which aimed to test the propositions of the study (Chapter 4), in a larger sample.

The initial examination of the variables in the dataset was considered appropriate for many reasons. First, it is important in order to ensure that the data are suitably prepared for multivariate analyses (presented in Chapter 8). For example, it is essential that the data are checked for conformity to the assumptions of the individual analytical techniques (e.g. normality, homoscedasticity, etc.). Second, the presentation of tabulated, descriptive accounts of the variables provides the researcher with the opportunity to acquire an initial impression of the data that can prove useful during the interpretation of the findings in the more complex stages of analysis. Last but not least, a descriptive account of the variables in the dataset assists the reader to familiarise themselves with the concepts and measurement items included in the actual survey.

The chapter is structured as follows. The first section discusses the treatment of the missing values in the final sample (n = 206) derived after the deletion of incomplete cases (described in section 5.6.3), and the steps followed to test the variables for violation of the assumptions of multivariate analysis techniques. The rest of the sections sequentially present and comment on condensed, tabulated summaries of the variables in the dataset and also report the results of a series of tests examining the relationship between them and gender/age. Specifically, after presenting the sample's demographic profile, respondents' ratings of their own personality characteristics are reviewed, followed by a section presenting respondents' selected brands in the two product categories investigated (clothing and technology). Variables relating to respondents' relationships with their favourite brands are then presented in a separate section, consisting of four parts: i) length of respondents' relationships with their favourite brands; ii) respondents' perceptions of quality, satisfaction with, and trust towards their favourite brands; iii) aspects of respondents' relationships with their favourite brands and of their strength (i.e. intentions to forgive transgressions, importance of the brand in consumer's life, frequency of thoughts, engagement in

positive word-of-mouth, resistance to negative comments); iv) respondents' current and future loyalty intentions. The following section refers to respondents' emotional responses towards their favourite brands (i.e. intuitive fit, passion, pleasure, overall love, and separation distress). Respondents' ratings of their favourite brands' personalities are the focus of the next section, while the penultimate section portrays respondents' perceptions of similarity-based self-brand personality congruence. The last section provides a summary of the main highlights of the descriptive findings.

7.2. Missing Data & Assumptions of Multivariate Analysis

This section provides a description of the steps that were followed to treat missing values in the sample, and of the tests that were conducted to ensure adherence to assumptions of multivariate data analysis.

7.2.1. Missing Data

Following a series of data inspection rounds to ensure that the data were correctly entered in SPSS 20 and the deletion of incomplete cases (section 5.6.3), the final survey sample was comprised of 206 cases. Using the Missing Values Analysis function, the final sample was scrutinised to identify the extent and pattern of missing data.

All variables presented less than 5% of missing values, except for the brand personality item 'Intellectual' that reached 6.3%. The pattern of the missing values was investigated using Little's MCAR test (Little, 1988), which showed a p value greater than .05, suggesting that the absent data were missing completely at random (MCAR) and their distribution was unpredictable. When the percentage of missing data is below 5%, problems related to absent data are not significant (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) and one of the recommended remedies for MCAR data is mean substitution (Hair, et al., 2010), that is, the replacement of the missing values of a specific variable with the mean of the rest, known values of that variable. Although the method has been criticised for reducing the variance of the distribution of values and for weakening the correlations between variables, it is one of the most widely used techniques for replacing low levels of missing data, especially for variables which are relatively strongly related (Hair, et al., 2010). As the extent of missing data in this study was very low and previous studies have observed a relatively strong relationship between

consumer and brand personalities, this remedy was considered as the most appropriate and was thus implemented. The findings reported in the rest of the sections thus refer to analyses conducted on the sample of 206 fully completed cases.

7.2.2. Testing the Assumptions of Multivariate Analysis

The next step of the preliminary analysis was to ensure that the data complied with the statistical assumptions of the multivariate techniques used in subsequent analyses.

The most important assumption is multivariate normality, which requires that all variables and their combinations follow the normal distribution. However, multivariate normality cannot easily be assessed directly; instead, the researcher may examine univariate normality (Hair, et al., 2010) through the shape of the distribution curves of the variables in the dataset, investigated via: i) the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests of normality, ii) graphical representation of the normal probability plots, and iii) two measures: kurtosis and skewness (all easily accessible in SPSS 20). The statistical tests of normality are rather sensitive to large sample sizes, and tend to mistakenly judge distributions as non-normal; for this reason, they were not investigated further in this study. A normal probability plot is in essence a residual scatter plot; the variable is considered to follow the normal distribution when the residual dots are placed along the zero line. Acceptable ranges for kurtosis (the extent to which the distribution is more peaked or flatter than the normal curve), and skewness (the extent to which the distribution is shifted towards either end of the curve instead of being balanced as in the normal curve) values are under debate (Hair, et al., 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007); recommendations include kurtosis values between -3 and +3 and skewness between -2 and +2, with the risk of a wrong estimation of normality disappearing for samples with more than 200 cases (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Waternaux, 1976). In this study, the examination of frequency tables, the visual inspection of histograms and normal probability plots as well as the examination of the kurtosis and skewness values for each variable identified no serious problems regarding non-meaningful outliers and indicated that only three variables presented kurtosis values slightly outside the acceptable range: i) the human personality trait 'Kind', ii) the brand personality trait 'Uncreative' and iii) overall satisfaction with the favourite brand. However, since the sample size of the current study is 206 cases, all variables were considered to follow the normal distribution.

Furthermore, for the purposes of subsequent analyses, adherence of the data to two more assumptions was investigated: homoscedasticity and absence of multicollinearity. It is desirable for both of these assumptions to be satisfied for the purposes of Canonical Correlation Analysis (discussed in Chapter 8), while homoscedasticity is also important for the use of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) technique (Hair, et al., 2010), which was frequently used in the rest of the sections of this chapter. Multicollinearity is present when two or more variables correlate highly (Hair, et al., 2010), while heteroscedasticity (i.e. the opposite of homoscedasticity) occurs when a variable does not vary consistently across the values of another variable (De Vaus, 2002a).

As the two variable sets included in Canonical Correlation Analysis were the 40 human personality items and the 40 brand personality items, one recommended method [De Vaus (2002a), p. 345] to test for multicollinearity involves the examination of the bivariate correlations of all possible combinations among them (i.e. 40*40). The investigation showed no significant problems with multicollinearity, as the largest correlation coefficient was .392 (between the human personality trait 'Envious' and the brand personality trait 'Envious'), suggesting very low or moderate relationships between pairs of individual human and brand personality items.

Finally, Levene's test of homogeneity of variance and Box's M test (in the case of multiple metric variables), are among the methods used to assess heteroscedasticity. As the tests' appropriateness for large samples has been argued (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), they were not used in this study. Nevertheless, De Vaus (2002a) supports that heteroscedasticity is usually caused when the skewness of a variable deviates from the acceptable ranges of normal distribution (p. 350). However, as previously mentioned, all variables across the dataset of the current study presented no departures of their skewness values from the acceptable ranges. Therefore, the issue of heteroscedasticity was not considered as an issue of further concern.

7.3. Respondents' Profile

This section presents the demographic profile of the 206 survey participants. The demographic questions were the first questions respondents encountered following the welcome screen. Table 7-1 portrays the dispersion of respondents in terms of gender, age group, programme of study, family status and country of longest residence.

Table 7-1: Demographic characteristics of survey respondents (n = 206)

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	74	35.9
Female	132	64.1
Age		
17-22 years old	117	56.8
23-25 years old	47	22.8
26 years old and above	42	20.4
Programme of study		
Undergraduate	112	54.4
Taught postgraduate	72	34.9
Research postgraduate	22	10.7
Family status		
Single	104	50.5
In a relationship	47	22.8
Living with partner/flatmates	32	15.5
Married	20	9.7
In civil union	0	0
Divorced/Separated	1	0.5
Widowed	1	0.5
Prefer not to say	1	0.5
Country of respondent's longest residence		
United Kingdom	72	34.9
China	28	13.6
United States of America	14	6.8
Germany	9	4.4
India	8	3.9
France	5	2.4
Other	67	32.5
Did not disclose	3	1.5

The survey was addressed to the whole student population of the University of Edinburgh Business School. Almost two thirds of the respondents were female. Unfortunately, no data regarding the percentages of male and female students is released from the Business School, thus it was impossible to compare gender allocation between the sample and the student population. While a more even split between the two sexes would have been desirable, a series of tests, presented in the next sections of this chapter, demonstrate that there are no significant differences between males and females in this study and that the current respondent allocation is not problematic for the purposes of subsequent analyses.

More than half of the respondents were between 17 and 22 years old, which is typically the age group of undergraduate students. At the time the survey was launched, the

Business School had approximately 1540 students, with almost 59% of them being undergraduates, 33% taught postgraduates and 8% research postgraduates (UoeBusinessSchool, 2013)[3]. Therefore, the allocation of the survey respondents to the different age groups and programmes of study corresponds very well with the overall student profile of the Business School. Consistent with their age group and their current status as students, approximately half of the respondents were single, 22.8% of them were in a relationship and 25.2% were either married or living with others.

Finally, as the survey was administered in a UK-based Business School, a substantial proportion of respondents were from the UK (34.9%). The second most frequently mentioned country was China (13.6%), followed by the USA (6.8%). Respondents from these three countries comprised almost two thirds of the sample. In general, 45 different countries were reported from participants as the places they had lived for the longest part of their lives. This number represented quite well the range of students' nationalities in the Business School, as at the time, there were around 71 and 59 different nationalities in its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, respectively (UoeBusinessSchool, 2013).

7.4. Respondents' Perceptions of Own Personality Characteristics

After providing their demographic information, respondents were asked to rate their own personality characteristics. As one of the survey objectives was to investigate the patterns of alignment between consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and those of their favourite brands, the purpose of this question was to capture respondents' perceptions of their own personality traits. Specifically, participants were asked to consider the extent to which each trait from Saucier's 40-item mini-markers scale (Saucier, 1994) accurately described them as a person, from 1: Extremely inaccurate to 7: Extremely accurate. As explained in section 5.6.2, the items were split in two different screens, in order to minimise respondents' fatigue, and their order was differently randomised in each of the four versions of the questionnaire in order to avoid order effects (Baker, 2003). Table 7-2 lists the 40 personality traits, starting from the characteristic which received the highest mean rating, along with information about other measures of centrality and dispersion.

---

[3] The information is based on the student profile released in the University of Edinburgh Business School website in October 2012 and November 2013 (UoeBusinessSchool, 2013).

Table 7-2: Respondents' ratings of own personality traits (n = 206)

	Mean	Std. Error of Mean	Median	Mode[1]	Std. Deviation	Variance
Kind	5.53	0.071	6.00	6	1.015	1.031
Cooperative	5.45	0.070	6.00	6	1.009	1.019
Warm	5.31	0.075	5.00	5	1.078	1.162
Intellectual	5.30	0.074	5.00	6	1.066	1.136
Efficient	5.29	0.079	5.00	6	1.136	1.290
Sympathetic	5.23	0.087	5.00	6	1.250	1.562
Practical	5.21	0.080	5.00	5	1.148	1.317
Organised	5.10	0.103	5.00	6	1.476	2.180
Energetic	5.00	0.081	5.00	5	1.158	1.341
Systematic	4.90	0.090	5.00	5	1.286	1.653
Imaginative	4.76	0.094	5.00	5	1.354	1.833
Talkative	4.65	0.095	5.00	5	1.360	1.849
Creative	4.59	0.095	5.00	5	1.357	1.843
Relaxed	4.56	0.101	5.00	4	1.450	2.101
Complex	4.56	0.094	5.00	4	1.345	1.808
Deep	4.42	0.085	4.00	4	1.222	1.494
Bold	4.33	0.095	4.00	5	1.356	1.840
Extroverted	4.25	0.100	4.00	5	1.432	2.051
Unenvious	4.17	0.109	4.00	4	1.563	2.444
Philosophical	3.91	0.110	4.00	4	1.579	2.494
Quiet	3.62	0.113	3.00	2	1.627	2.646
Shy	3.55	0.115	3.00	2	1.651	2.726
Touchy	3.54	0.107	4.00	2	1.538	2.366
Temperamental	3.49	0.102	3.50	4	1.468	2.154
Bashful	3.29	0.100	3.00	4	1.442	2.081
Moody	3.21	0.099	3.00	2	1.428	2.039
Fretful	3.07	0.103	3.00	2	1.485	2.204
Harsh	2.98	0.102	3.00	2	1.460	2.131
Envious	2.93	0.102	3.00	2	1.470	2.161
Jealous	2.87	0.100	3.00	2	1.433	2.052
Uncreative	2.86	0.101	2.00	2	1.457	2.122
Careless	2.63	0.097	2.00	2	1.397	1.951
Cold	2.57	0.100	2.00	2	1.429	2.042
Withdrawn	2.49	0.089	2.00	2	1.279	1.636
Sloppy	2.45	0.086	2.00	2	1.240	1.537
Disorganised	2.43	0.095	2.00	2	1.366	1.865
Inefficient	2.39	0.092	2.00	2	1.324	1.752
Unsympathetic	2.29	0.089	2.00	2	1.277	1.632
Unintellectual	2.07	0.076	2.00	2	1.086	1.180
Rude	1.91	0.080	2.00	1	1.149	1.319

Notes:
[1] If more than one mode was identified, the smallest is reported in the table.

Respondents in the sample primarily described themselves as highly agreeable (kind, cooperative, warm, sympathetic), conscientious (efficient, practical, organised) and open-minded (intellectual), while they felt that the characteristics least describing them were the exact opposites: disagreeableness (rude, unsympathetic, cold, harsh), low conscientiousness (inefficient, disorganised, sloppy, careless), emotional instability (jealous, envious) and low openness (unintellectual, uncreative). It can thus be concluded that positive characteristics related to interpersonal interactions as well as competency and effectiveness were closest to respondents' perceptions of themselves, whereas they distanced themselves from traits showing harshness, insensitivity to others or lack of productiveness.

7.5. Respondents' Favourite Brands

Having rated their personality traits, respondents were asked to proceed to the next section of the questionnaire that revolved around their favourite brands. Respondents were instructed to state in a textbox their favourite brand from one of the two product categories revealed as most salient to the student population during the qualitative stage of the study: clothing (including clothes, shoe wear, handbags, etc.) or technology (including computers, laptops, phones/tablets, etc.). In order to minimise confusion, a clarification of the term 'favourite brand' was provided: *"By the term 'favourite', we mean ONE brand that you have purchased or used and is your most preferred one in either clothing or technology"*. After writing the brand name in the box, they were prompted to indicate whether their stated brand belonged to the clothing or technology product category. Table 7-3 shows the five brand names that were most frequently mentioned in each product category.

Table 7-3: Respondents' favourite brands in clothing & technology (n = 206)

Clothing			Technology		
Brand name	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Brand name	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Topshop	8	8.08	Apple	60	56.07
Adidas	6	6.06	Samsung	15	14.02
H & M	5	5.05	Sony	6	5.61
Nike	5	5.05	HP	4	3.74
New Look	4	4.04	Nokia	3	2.80
Other	71	71.72	Other	19	17.76
TOTAL	99	100	TOTAL	107	100

The five most frequently mentioned brands in clothing were consistent with the typical choices of a student population, revolving around popular retailer brands of fashionable clothing and accessories (e.g. Topshop, H & M and New Look) and sports clothing brands (e.g. Adidas and Nike). While for clothing 59 different brands were mentioned in total, only 20 distinct brands were stated as favourite in the technology product category. As a matter of fact, more than half of the respondents (56.07%) among those who chose to complete the questionnaire for a technology brand reported Apple as their favourite brand. This is not surprising given the recent dominance of the brand in the technological products market and its 'cool' appeal, documented by it being awarded the title 'Brand of the Year' at the time the survey was launched (Graziano, 2013) and estimated to be the UK's 'coolest' brand (CoolBrands, 2014) and the world's most valuable brand at the time of writing (Brandirectory, 2014), leaving far behind the second one, Samsung, which was also the second most frequently mentioned brand in the technology product category.

Relationship between Gender/Age and Selection of Product Category

As explained in Chapter 6, an effort was made to avoid respondents selecting between product categories with gender-stereotypical connotations, as it would be the case if the respondents were to choose between make-up products or cars (most salient to women and men, respectively). Upon examining the findings of the qualitative stage of the study, clothing and technology were considered as the two product categories with which both males and females could easily relate, based on their personal consumption experiences. Establishing that respondents' demographic characteristics, primarily gender and age, did not affect their choice of product category was critical for the aggregation of the sub-samples (males/females, younger/older participants) for the purposes of further analysis. For this reason, a 2 × 2 and a 3 × 2 cross-tabulation analysis was conducted for the relationship between gender and product category, and age group and product category, respectively. Phi coefficient was used as the measure of association between gender and product category, as both variables were nominal and dichotomous while Cramer's V was used as the measure of association between age and product category, as age group was an ordinal variable. Results indicated that there were no statistically significant relationships between the selection of product category and gender (Phi = .130, $p > .05$) or age (Cramer's V = .068, $p > .05$). Therefore, the sample could be used in subsequent analyses as a single entity.

7.6. Respondents' Relationships with their Favourite Brands

Respondents were subsequently asked to reply to a series of questions relating to their experiences with their favourite brands as well as to a variety of brand-related outcomes. As one of the objectives of this study was to develop a new measure of self-brand personality alignment and to test its predictive power against existing, similarity-based measures, the inclusion of a range of such outcomes was essential.

This section reports descriptive findings on all variables relating to respondents' relationship with their favourite brand in four separate sub-sections, following a thematic classification, rather than the exact order with which the questions were presented in the questionnaire: i) respondents' length of relationship with their favourite brands; ii) respondents' perceptions of quality, satisfaction and trust towards their favourite brands; iii) respondents' perceptions of aspects of consumer-brand relationship strength; iv) respondents' loyalty toward their favourite brands.

7.6.1. Respondents' Length of Relationship with their Favourite Brand

Respondents were first asked to indicate the length of their relationship with their favourite brand [*"How long is it since you first bought the brand?"*] by selecting one of six options. Table 7-4 summarises the findings. It is worth noting that more than half of the respondents (53.9%) had been purchasing/using their favourite brands for at least 4 years at the time of the survey, indicating that they had engaged in long-term relationships with them.

Table 7-4: Respondents' length of relationship with their favourite brand (n = 206)

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Less than a month	7	3.4	3.4
1-6 months	16	7.8	11.2
7-12 months	19	9.2	20.4
1-3 years	53	25.7	46.1
4-6 years	46	22.3	68.4
More than 6 years	65	31.6	**100.0**
Total	**206**	**100.0**	

It was considered interesting at this point to identify whether there were any significant differences between males and females regarding the length of relationship with their favourite brands as well as whether participants in the younger age group were involved in shorter-term relationships with their favourite brands than those in the older age group. Results showed that there were no statistically significant differences between males and females (Cramer's V = .136, p > .05) or among 17-22, 23-25 and 26+ year-olds (age and length both ordinal variables, hence Gamma = .037, p > .05) regarding the length of their relationships with their favourite brands.

7.6.2. Respondents' Perceptions of Quality, Satisfaction and Trust towards their Favourite Brands

Respondents were also invited to complete questions on their overall perceptions of quality, satisfaction and trust towards their favourite brands. Table 7-5 shows that respondents perceived products bearing the name of their favourite brand as having high quality; they were also generally satisfied and largely trusted the brand.

Table 7-5: Respondents' perceptions of quality, satisfaction and trust towards their favourite brands (n = 206)

	Mean	Std. Error of Mean	Median	Mode[1]	Std. Deviation	Variance
Perceptions of quality[2a]	5.96	0.066	6.00	6	0.947	0.896
Satisfaction with favourite brand[2b]	6.08	0.068	6.00	6	0.982	0.964
Trust towards favourite brand[2c]	5.67	0.077	6.00	6	1.112	1.237

Notes:

[1] If more than one mode was identified, the smallest is reported in the table.

[2] Respondents were specifically asked:

    [a] "Please indicate, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much), the extent to which you believe that products of your favourite brand have high quality."

    [b] "Considering all your experiences to date with your favourite brand, how satisfied are you with it, from 1 (Very dissatisfied) to 7 (Very satisfied)?"

    [c] "Please indicate your agreement or disagreement to the following statement, from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree): I trust my favourite brand."

Relationship between Gender and Perceptions of Quality, Satisfaction and Trust

The next step involved testing whether there were any significant differences between males and females regarding their overall perceptions of quality, satisfaction and trust. Three Independent Samples t-tests were conducted to investigate the potential relationship between gender and each of the three outcomes.

With regards to respondents' perceptions of quality, Levene's test for equality of variances across the two groups, that is, males and females, indicated that the variances were homogeneous ($F = 1.392$, $p > .05$). There was a significant difference [$t (204) = 1.989$, $p < .05$] in perceptions of quality between male and female participants. Male participants (mean = 6.14, SD = .833) seemed to consider that products under their favourite brand name were of high quality to a slightly greater extent than females (mean = 5.86, SD = .994). Although the difference between males and females regarding their overall perceptions of quality is significant, it is small and cannot be interpreted as conclusive, especially if we consider that only one question was used to measure perceived quality. Previous research has suggested that perceived quality seems to include many dimensions, such as functional or emotional, and is different from objective quality (Zeithaml, 1988). For this study, as one of the objectives was to investigate the influence of a new measure of self-brand personality alignment on a range of brand-related outcomes, with perceived quality being only one of them, a single item was considered sufficient to measure respondents' overall perceptions of quality. Moreover, previous research has suggested that demographic variables such as gender have no influence on perceptions of quality (Bitner, 1990), therefore, it is safe to conclude that this small difference between males and females is not considered problematic for subsequent analysis.

As far as overall satisfaction with the favourite brand was concerned, Levene's test for equality of variances indicated that the variances of the two groups, males and females, were homogeneous ($F = .088$, $p > .05$). There was no significant difference [$t (204) = .279$, $p > .05$] in overall levels of satisfaction with the favourite brand between male and female participants. This was also the case for respondents' levels of trust towards their favourite brands. Levene's test showed that the variances were homogeneous ($F = .125$, $p > .05$) and there was no statistically significant difference [$t (204) = - .075$, $p > .05$] between males and females.

Three one-way ANOVA tests were conducted to examine the relationship between age group and each of the three brand-related outcomes. The first ANOVA explored the relationship between age group and perceptions of quality. Levene's test for equality of variances across the three groups, that is, 17-22, 23-25 and 26+ year-olds, indicated that the variances were homogeneous [$F_{(2, 203)}$ = 1.875, $p > .05$]. There was no significant difference [$F_{(2, 203)}$ = 1.370, $p > .05$] in perceptions of quality among the three different age groups. The second ANOVA, investigating the relationship between age group and overall satisfaction, found similar results. Levene's test for equality showed that the variances were homogeneous among the three groups [$F_{(2, 203)}$ = 2.004, $p > .05$], which did not differ significantly in their levels of overall satisfaction [$F_{(2, 203)}$ = .916, $p > .05$].

The third ANOVA explored the relationship between age group and overall trust towards the favourite brand. Levene's test for equality showed that the variances were not homogeneous among the three groups [$F_{(2, 203)}$ = 3.968, $p < .05$]; therefore, the Welch statistic was examined [Welch $_{(2, 77.018)}$ = 4.587, $p < .05$]. This result suggests that the three age groups differ significantly in their levels of overall trust. Post-hoc comparisons using the Games-Howell procedure indicated that there was only one significant difference among the three groups: the mean score of trust for the 17-22 year-old age group (mean = 5.86, SD = .928) was significantly higher than the 23-25 years old age group (mean = 5.28, SD = 1.246). The result is interesting but not surprising. It is possible that respondents in a younger age are more likely to have shorter relationships with their favourite brands, which in turn decreases the possibility that the brand has already failed to perform to the consumer's standards or expectations, and thus to betray consumer's trust within such short-term interaction.

7.6.3. Respondents' Perceptions of Aspects of Relationship Strength with their Favourite Brands

Apart from the questions about quality, satisfaction and trust, participants were also invited to complete a series of questions that aimed to provide insight on the strength of the consumer-brand relationship. In particular, one of the questions revolved around the respondent's willingness to forgive their favourite brand in case of potential transgressions. Another question sought to reveal respondents' perceptions of the

overall role and meaning of their favourite brand in their lives. The role of the brand in a consumer's life was further explored by asking respondents about the extent to which they found themselves having thoughts about it. Respondents' interactions with others around the favourite brand were of particular interest, and for this purpose, they were asked to approximately note how often they have found themselves saying positive things about it to other people, and also to consider the extent to which they would question in their mind others' negative comments about it.

Table 7-6: Respondents' perceptions of aspects of relationship strength with their favourite brands (n = 206)

	Mean	Std. Error of Mean	Median	Mode[1]	Std. Deviation	Variance
Willingness to forgive favourite brand's transgressions[2a]	4.66	0.092	5.00	5	1.322	1.747
Contribution/importance of the favourite brand to consumer's life meaning (R)[2b]	2.98	0.128	3.00	1	1.835	3.365
Frequent thoughts about favourite brand[2c]	3.43	0.104	4.00	4	1.492	2.227
Positive Word-of-Mouth[2d]	4.98	0.099	5.00	5	1.414	2.000
Resistance to negative comments about favourite brand[2e]	3.87	0.099	4.00	4	1.420	2.017

Notes:
[1] If more than one mode was identified, the smallest is reported in the table.

[2] Respondents were specifically asked:

[a] "Imagine that up to this point your favourite brand has met or exceeded your expectations. Now imagine an occasion where your favourite brand fails to meet your expectations. In future, how willing would you be to purchase it again, from 1 (not all all) to 7 (very much)?"

[b] "Please indicate your agreement or disagreement to the following statement, from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree): It is easy to imagine a fulfilled life without my favourite brand". The item has been reverse-coded, as it was negatively phrased.

[c] "Please indicate, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much), the extent to which you find yourself having thoughts about your favourite brand?"

[d] "How often have you found yourself saying positive things about your favourite brand, to other people, from 1 (Never) to 7 (Very often)?"

[e] "Please indicate, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much), the extent to which you would question in your mind, something negative you heard about your favourite brand?"

As Table 7-6 shows, respondents exhibited a relatively high willingness to forgive potential brand transgressions. However, they also claimed that their favourite brand played a fairly minor role in their lives. It is essential to note that the question relating to the meaning of the brand in consumer's life was negatively phrased, as one of the items in the questionnaire to control for response sets. For this reason, the item has been reverse-coded [represented by (R) in the table] in order to bear the same direction in connotations as the rest of the items in the table. Therefore, a small mean indicates that the brand was not considered as important in the consumer's life. Moreover, they admitted a moderate frequency of thoughts about their favourite brand and of engaging to positive word-of-mouth about it, but they seemed relatively hesitant to question other's negative comments about it.

Relationship between Gender and Willingness to Forgive Brand's Transgressions, Brand's Importance in Consumer's Life, Frequency of Thoughts about the Favourite Brand, Positive Word-of-Mouth and Resistance to Negative Comments about the Favourite Brand

With regards to differences between male and female participants, Levene's test for equality of variances across the two groups indicated that the variances were homogeneous (F = 2.287, p > .05) and that there was no significant difference [t (204) = 1.226, p > .05] in willingness to forgive potential transgressions of the favourite brand.

Levene's test showed that the variances were homogeneous (F = 1.436, p > .05), and there were statistically significant differences between males and females [t (204) = 2.121, p < .05] with regards to the importance of their favourite brands in their lives. It seems that favourite brands played a much more meaningful role in the lives of the female participants (mean = 3.18, SD = 1.777) than in the lives of male participants (mean = 2.62, SD = 1.892). The fact that their favourite brands played a more central role for females than for males was also supported by the results of the comparison between the two groups on the basis of the frequency of thoughts related to the respondent's favourite brand. Once again, Levene's test showed homogeneous variances (F = .000, p > .05) and the Independent Samples t-test [t (204) = -2.258, p < .05] revealed that females (mean = 3.61, SD = 1.502) thought of their favourite brands slightly more frequently than men (mean = 3.12, SD = 1.433). It could be argued that these two results are expected as women have been argued to enjoy shopping more than men and consider it as a recreational activity (Kruger & Byker, 2009); they also

seem to engage in higher levels of brand commitment and hedonic consumption in comparison to men (Tifferet & Herstein, 2012).

No significant differences [t (204) = -1.709, p > .05] were identified between males and females regarding the extent to which they engage in making positive comments about their favourite brands to others (Levene's test showed homogeneous variances: F = 2.419, p > .05). This was also the case with respondents' perceptions of the extent to which they would question in their minds negative comments about their favourite brands made by others: Levene's test (F = .195, p > .05) confirmed homogeneous variances and no significant differences were identified between the two groups [t (204) = -.133, p > .05].

Relationship between Age and Willingness to Forgive Brand's Transgressions, Brand's Importance in Consumer's Life, Frequency of Thoughts about the Favourite Brand, Positive Word-of-Mouth and Resistance to Negative Comments about the Favourite Brand

With regards to differences among the three age groups, five one-way ANOVA tests were conducted. The first ANOVA explored the relationship between age group and willingness to forgive brand's transgressions. Levene's test for equality of variances across the three groups, that is, 17-22, 23-25 and 26+ year-olds, indicated that the variances were homogeneous [F (2, 203) = .471, p > .05]. There was no significant difference [F (2, 203) = .630, p > .05] in willingness to forgive potential transgressions of the favourite brand among the three different age groups.

The second ANOVA, investigating the relationship between age group and importance of the brand to consumer's life, found different results. Levene's test for equality showed that the variances were homogeneous among the three groups [F (2, 203) = 2.863, p > .05], which differed significantly in their perceptions of the importance of their favourite brands in their lives [F (2, 203) = 3.060, p = .05]. Since the group sizes were unequal, post-hoc comparisons using the Hochberg's GT2 procedure (Mazzocchi, 2008) indicated that there was only one significant difference among the three groups: the mean score of respondents' perceptions of the favourite brand's importance in their lives for the 17-22 year-old age group (mean = 2.74, SD = 1.673) was significantly lower than the 26 years old and above age group (mean = 3.52, SD = 2.133). The result is explicable if we take into consideration the possibility of older participants having

developed longer-term relationships with their favourite brands, thus the brand playing a central role in the consumer's life for a much longer time period.

The results of the relationship between age groups and frequency of thoughts about the favourite brand were similar. With the variances not assumed to be homogeneous [$F_{(2, 203)}$ = 3.945, $p < .05$], the Welch test [Welch (2, 96.324) = 3.749, $p < .05$] showed that there were significant differences across the three age groups. Specifically, the Games-Howell process confirmed that respondents belonging to the 23-25 years-old group (mean = 3.85, SD = 1.459) were thinking their favourite brands more frequently than the 26 years-old and above group (mean = 3.07, SD = 1.218). No other differences were identified among the groups. One explanation for this finding is that perhaps the respondents in the 26+ age cohort are not spending too much time thinking about their favourite brand, because the brand has already been established as a relationship partner and is a regular part of their lives, 'always there' for them. On the other hand, the 23-25 year-olds are the group which seems to think of their favourite brands the most in comparison with the other two groups. While in the transitional phase from adolescence to young adulthood (17-22 years old) consumers are still negotiating their identities (Arnett, 2004; Chernev, et al., 2011), hence exploring and experimenting with a broader range of brands (Moore, et al., 2002), it is possible that those in the 23-25 years old age range are in the process of deciding which brand images suit them and which not, hence focusing their thoughts to specific brands that have the potential to become regular brand partners in their everyday lives.

Regarding the relationship between age groups and positive word-of-mouth, Levene's test for equality of variances across the three groups indicated that the variances were homogeneous [$F_{(2, 203)}$ = .032, $p > .05$]. There was no significant difference [$F_{(2, 203)}$ = .912, $p > .05$] in engaging to positive word-of-mouth behaviour among the three different age groups. Finally, with regards to resisting others' negative comments about their favourite brands, Levene's test showed homogeneous variances among the three groups [$F_{(2, 203)}$ = .168, $p > .05$], and once again, no significant differences were identified among the three age groups [$F_{(2, 203)}$ = 2.610, $p > .05$].

7.6.4. Respondents' Loyalty towards their Favourite Brands

As part of the series of questions regarding different aspects of their relationships with their favourite brands, respondents were also asked about their perceptions of current

and future loyalty. Specifically, respondents' perceptions of current loyalty were captured using three items, to which they were required to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement. In terms of future loyalty intentions, they were asked to indicate the extent to which they believed that they would continue buying their favourite brand in the future. Current loyalty perceptions and future loyalty intentions are presented in two separate sub-sections below.

Current Loyalty Perceptions

Table 7-7 presents descriptive findings for all three items used to measure perceptions of current loyalty.

Table 7-7: Respondents' perceptions of current loyalty towards their favourite brands (n = 206)

	Mean	Std. Error of Mean	Median	Mode[1]	Std. Deviation	Variance
I'll 'do without' rather than buy another brand.	2.77	0.113	2.00	1	1.621	2.628
I always find myself consistently buying this particular brand over other brands in the same product category.	5.02	0.110	5.00	5	1.577	2.487
Even if another brand is on sale, I still buy this brand.	4.14	0.124	4.00	6	1.776	3.156

Notes:
[1] If more than one mode was identified, the smallest is reported in the table.

The careful examination of these results allows the researcher to draw two interesting conclusions. One the one hand, respondents seem to consistently prefer their favourite brand over others in the same product category (mean = 5.02), and this preference seems to slightly recede when the other brands are available in a lower price (mean = 4.14). On the other hand, the relatively low mean score of the first item (2.77) shows that responses to this particular question of loyalty are differentiated and distanced from responses to the other two items measuring the concept. It can be supported that

the first item strongly emphasises an unconditional, absolute brand loyalty, and respondents that would strongly agree with the sentence would prefer to 'do without' the favourite brand rather than buy any other to satisfy their desire/need. Therefore, the low mean of the first item suggests that respondents seem to reject exclusive purchase/use of the favourite brand. Although brand loyalty has been conceptualised as single- and multi-brand loyalty (Cunningham, 1956), exclusivity might not be a reality within the context of consumer-brand relationships (Fournier & Yao, 1997). The main conclusion from Table 7-7 therefore is that consumers seem to prefer their favourite brands over others in the same product category, but they do not necessarily treat them as exclusive relationship partners.

Nevertheless, this distinction in the meanings of brand loyalty raises an important question for subsequent analyses in this study with regards to whether it is appropriate to replace respondents' answers in the original three items of current loyalty with a single composite measure representing overall perceptions of current loyalty towards the favourite brand. As potential effects of multicollinearity among the three items need to be minimised for subsequent analyses, which will be conducted in only one dataset and will not be replicated in multiple samples (Hair, et al., 2010), a factor score will need to be calculated for each participant, computed based on their scores in each of the three items. For this reason, a reliability analysis of the three items was conducted. Cronbach's alpha, one of the most widely used measures of internal reliability, indeed confirmed original suspicions that the first item is distinct from the other two, as the item-total correlations indicated that Cronbach's alpha would increase from 0.58 to 0.64 if the first item was excluded. Further exploration of the issue using Exploratory Factor Analysis (Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation) however, indicated that all three items were loading significantly to a single factor, with Bartlett's test of sphericity being statistically significant and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic (0.58) being acceptable (Kaiser, 1974). However, KMO was reduced below acceptable levels when the first item was excluded from the exploratory factor analysis. Therefore, it was decided to retain the first item and develop the single composite measure (i.e. factor score for each individual) with all three items, at the expenses of a low Cronbach's alpha. It should also be reminded that Cronbach's alpha might be low due to the small number of items used to represent the concept (Hair, et al., 2010).

With regards to differences between male and female participants, Levene's test for equality of variances across the two groups indicated that the variances were homogeneous (p > .05) and that there were no significant differences (p > .05) between males and females regarding their current loyalty perceptions for all three items in Table 7-7 and the single composite measure.

With regards to differences among the three age groups, four one-way ANOVA tests were conducted. Levene's tests for equality showed homogeneous variances (p > .05) and no significant differences (p > .05) were identified across the three age groups for the extent to which they consistently bought their favourite brand over other brands in the same product category (second item in Table 7-7), or for the extent to which they preferred their favourite brand when other competitive brands were on sale (third item in Table 7-7), or for the single composite measure of current loyalty perceptions.

However, Levene's test for the first item showed that variances were not homogeneous [$F_{(2, 203)}$ = 5.219, p < .05] across the three groups and the Welch test [Welch $_{(2, 78.197)}$ = 3.820, p < .05] indicated that there were significant differences. Specifically, respondents belonging to the 17-22 years-old group (mean = 2.49, SD = 1.387) were less willing to 'do without' any brand than the 23-25 years-old group (mean = 3.13, SD = 1.801) and the 26+ age group (mean = 3.14, SD = 1.882). In other words, younger participants seemed to prefer to buy another brand in the product category if their favourite brand was not available for some reason, rather than not buy any product at all. Older participants were also not very willing to 'do without' any product but they seemed significantly more willing than younger respondents. This finding is explicable if we consider that older participants had probably already developed longer-term relationships with their favourite brands; thus they probably felt more willing than younger respondents to 'do without' any product until their favourite brand was available again (albeit their own willingness to 'do without' was still low).

Future Loyalty Intentions

As far as future loyalty intentions are concerned, it is clear from Table 7-8 that respondents were almost certain that they would continue purchasing their favourite brand in the future.

Table 7-8: Respondents' future loyalty intentions towards their favourite brands (n = 206)

	Mean	Std. Error of Mean	Median	Mode[1]	Std. Deviation	Variance
Future loyalty intentions[2]	5.73	0.077	6.00	6	1.101	1.211

Notes:

[1] If more than one mode was identified, the smallest is reported in the table.

[2] Respondents were specifically asked: "Please indicate, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much), the extent to which you believe that you will continue buying your favourite brand in the future".

Relationship between Gender/Age and Future Loyalty Intentions

With regards to differences between males and females, Levene's test for equality of variances across the two groups indicated that the variances were homogeneous (F = .002, p > .05); there was no significant difference [t (204) = .627, p > .05] between men and women regarding future loyalty intentions towards the favourite brand.

A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to examine the relationship between age group and future loyalty intentions. Levene's test for equality of variances across the three groups, that is, 17-22, 23-25 and 26+ year-olds, indicated that the variances were homogeneous [F (2, 203) = 1.933, p > .05]. The three age groups differed significantly in their perceptions of future loyalty intentions [F (2, 203) = 3.246, p < .05]. Since the group sizes were unequal, post-hoc comparisons using the Hochberg's GT2 procedure (Mazzocchi, 2008) indicated that there was only one significant difference: the mean score of respondents' perceptions of future loyalty intentions for the 17-22 year-old age group (mean = 5.88, SD = 1.052) was significantly but only slightly higher than the 23-25 year-old age group (mean = 5.40, SD = 1.077). It is unclear why this slight difference between the two age groups has emerged. It can only be speculated that perhaps younger respondents exhibited more enthusiasm about their relationship with their favourite brand, hence exhibited more optimism about its continuation.

7.7. Respondents' Emotional Responses to their Favourite Brands

As one of the objectives of this thesis was to test a new measure of self-brand personality alignment against existing, similarity-based measures for a range of brand-

related outcomes, respondents' emotional connection with their favourite brands within the consumer-brand relationship were of special interest. In particular, one of the questions seeking to reveal emotional connection to the brand revolved around the extent to which each time the respondent purchased or used their favourite brand, it felt 'right' to them, intuitively. Moreover, two questions sought to reveal respondents' feelings of passion and pleasure when using the favourite brand. Respondents were also straightforwardly asked to indicate the extent to which they considered that they 'loved' their favourite brand. Finally, the depth of respondents' emotional connections to their favourite brands was explored via two questions that aimed to reveal the extent to which feelings of anxiety and fear would emerge when the respondent was presented with the scenario of separation from the favourite brand. Table 7-9 summarises the main descriptive findings for each of these six outcomes.

As the table shows, respondents were very supportive of the notion that their favourite brand 'felt' right to them and that they were intuitively drawn towards it. Moreover, they seemed to enjoy highly pleasurable experiences with their brands and were quite passionate to use them. One of the most striking results was that of overall brand 'love' perceptions. On the one hand, respondents' intense emotions, such as passion and pleasure, towards their favourite brands, pre-suggested that it should be expected they would report high levels of overall brand 'love'. On the other hand, it could be argued that they might have been more hesitant to express love for their favourite brand, since they were, in essence, straightforwardly asked to indicate 'love' for an inanimate object. However, respondents admitted 'loving' their favourite brand to a substantial degree. As a matter of fact, further examination of their responses revealed that 59.7% of them agreed or strongly agreed that they felt 'love' for their favourite brands.

However, these declarations of 'love' did not seem to be substantiated by their responses to scenarios of potential separation from these favourite brands. Respondents were very cautious to admit that they would feel anxiety, and even more hesitant to admit fear, in case their favourite brand was not part of their lives any more. The relatively low mean scores of these two items relating to separation distress suggested that they referred to a deeper level of emotional connection which did not seem to reveal itself in participants' responses. It was thus considered appropriate to replace respondents' answers in these two items with a single composite measure that could be used for subsequent analyses. Once again, as further multivariate analyses would be conducted in only this dataset and not in multiple samples (Hair, et al., 2010),

it was decided that a factor score would be calculated for each participant, computed based on their scores in both items. The reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha (0.82) indeed confirmed original suspicions that it was appropriate to group these two items together in order to form a composite measure of separation distress. Exploratory Factor Analysis (Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation) was used to calculate the factor scores for each respondent; it showed that the two items were loading under a single factor and explained 84.8% of the overall variance.

Table 7-9: Respondents' emotional responses to their favourite brands (n = 206)

		Mean	Std. Error of Mean	Median	Mode[1]	Std. Deviation	Variance
Intuitive fit with favourite brand[2a]		5.23	0.089	5.00	6	1.274	1.623
Passion towards favourite brand[2b]		5.01	0.098	5.00	5	1.400	1.961
Pleasure from using favourite brand[2c]		5.33	0.086	5.00	6	1.228	1.508
Overall love for favourite brand[2d]		4.67	0.104	5.00	6	1.497	2.242
Separation distress	**Anxiety**[2e]	2.73	0.121	2.00	1	1.737	3.018
	Fear[2f]	2.17	0.107	1.00	1	1.530	2.340

Notes:

[1] If more than one mode was identified, the smallest is reported in the table.

[2] Respondents were specifically asked:

[a] "Please express, from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much), the extent to which each time you purchase/use your favourite brand, it just feels 'right' to you?"

[b] "Please express, from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much), the extent to which you find yourself desiring to use your favourite brand?"

[c] Please express, from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much), the extent to which you find the experience of using your favourite brand pleasurable?"

[d] "Overall, how much do you 'love' your favourite brand, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (very much)?"

[e] "Suppose your favourite brand were to go out of existence, to what extent, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (very much), would you feel Anxiety?"

[f] "Suppose your favourite brand were to go out of existence, to what extent, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (very much), would you feel Fear?"

Relationship between Gender and Respondents' Emotional Responses

With regards to respondents' perceptions of intuitive fit with their favourite brand, their passion to use the brand or the extent to which they felt that the process of using the brand was pleasurable for them, Levene's test for equality of variances across the males and females participants indicated that the variances were homogeneous (p > .05) for all outcomes and there were no significant differences (p > .05) between them.

On the other hand, Levene's test showed that the variances were not homogeneous (F = 6.728, p < .05) between males and females and statistically significant differences were identified between the two groups [t (124.134) = -3.023, p < .05] with regards to their overall brand 'love'. It seems that female respondents (mean = 4.92, SD = 1.325) admitted stronger 'love' for their favourite brands than male participants (mean = 4.23, SD = 1.684). Moreover, with regards to feelings of anxiety in the case of being separated from the favourite brand, the two groups exhibited homogeneous variances (F = .107, p > .05) and statistically significant differences [t (204) = -2.618, p < .05]. In other words, females (mean = 2.96, SD = 1.714) seemed to disagree less than males (mean = 2.31, SD = 1.712) with the possibility of feeling anxiety if their favourite brand were to stop being part of their lives. An identical picture was drawn when respondents were asked about the possibility of feeling fear: the two groups exhibited homogeneous variances (F = 1.174, p > .05) and statistically significant differences [t (204) = -2.493, p < .05] between females (mean = 2.37, SD = 1.505) and males (mean = 1.82, SD = 1.520). As expected, the overall perceptions of separation distress captured by the composite measure, exhibited a similar trend, with Levene's test showing that the variances were homogeneous (F = .618, p > .05). Females admitted disagreeing less than men with the possibility of experiencing separation distress [t (204) = -2.784, p < .05]. Findings regarding women's stronger emotional connection with their favourite brands are in line with previous research (Tifferet & Herstein, 2012).

Relationship between Age and Respondents' Emotional Responses

With regards to differences among the three age groups, seven one-way ANOVA tests were conducted. With the exception of feelings of fear in case of separation from the favourite brand, Levene's tests for equality showed homogeneous variances (p > .05) for all variables of emotional responses. In all of them, no significant differences (p >

.05) were identified across the three age groups, suggesting that age did not seem to play any role in respondents' emotional reactions to their favourite brands.

7.8. Respondents' Perceptions of their Favourite Brands' Personality Traits

After responding to a series of questions about their behaviour in terms of their relationship with their favourite brand, respondents were asked to rate the personality characteristics of their favourite brand. As one of the objectives of the survey was to investigate the patterns of alignment between consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and those of their favourite brands, the purpose of this question was to capture respondents' perceptions of their favourite brands' personality traits. Specifically, participants were asked to consider their favourite brand as if it were a person and to rate the extent to which each trait from Saucier's 40-item mini-markers scale (Saucier, 1994), the same personality scale that was used to rate their own personality traits, accurately described their brand as a personality, from 1: Extremely inaccurate to 7: Extremely accurate. As explained in Chapter 5, the items were split in two different screens, in order to minimise respondents' fatigue, and the order of items was differently randomised in each of the four versions of the questionnaire in order to avoid order effects (Baker, 2003). Table 7-10 lists the 40 personality traits, starting from the personality characteristic which received the highest mean rating.

Table 7-10 shows that respondents in the sample primarily described their favourite brands as highly cerebral (creative, imaginative, intellectual) and highly conscientious (practical, efficient, organised), with only one characteristic (energetic) conveying Extraversion, while the characteristics least describing their favourite brands expressed all the negative connotations in the personality scale: low intellect (uncreative, unintellectual), low conscientiousness (sloppy, inefficient, disorganised, careless), introversion (withdrawn, shy, bashful, quiet), disagreeableness (rude, harsh, cold, unsympathetic) and emotional instability (fretful, jealous, envious, moody, temperamental, touchy). It can thus be concluded that respondents perceived their brands as being creative and imaginative, but also efficient, which is not surprising given that respondents rated their favourite brands in the product categories of clothing and technology.

Table 7-10: Respondents' ratings of their favourite brand's personality characteristics (n = 206)

	Mean	Std. Error of Mean	Median	Mode[1]	Std. Deviation	Variance
Creative	5.67	0.099	6.00	7	1.423	2.025
Practical	5.61	0.098	6.00	6	1.409	1.986
Efficient	5.58	0.094	6.00	6	1.348	1.816
Imaginative	5.42	0.100	6.00	6	1.428	2.040
Energetic	5.38	0.090	6.00	6	1.285	1.652
Organised	5.35	0.106	6.00	6	1.519	2.307
Intellectual	5.09	0.111	5.00	5	1.593	2.539
Systematic	4.96	0.110	5.00	4	1.577	2.486
Relaxed	4.94	0.101	5.00	5	1.444	2.084
Extroverted	4.93	0.108	5.00	5	1.554	2.415
Cooperative	4.88	0.101	5.00	6	1.444	2.084
Bold	4.84	0.119	5.00	5	1.715	2.942
Warm	4.75	0.095	5.00	5	1.362	1.855
Talkative	4.58	0.115	5.00	5	1.644	2.703
Kind	4.53	0.101	5.00	5	1.447	2.094
Complex	4.35	0.107	4.00	4	1.542	2.376
Unenvious	4.24	0.132	4.00	6	1.889	3.570
Deep	3.83	0.112	4.00	4	1.608	2.587
Sympathetic	3.79	0.112	4.00	4	1.603	2.569
Philosophical	3.43	0.123	3.50	4	1.762	3.105
Touchy	2.94	0.115	3.00	2	1.650	2.723
Quiet	2.92	0.115	2.00	2	1.651	2.726
Temperamental	2.88	0.115	2.50	2	1.644	2.702
Moody	2.55	0.103	2.00	1	1.477	2.181
Unsympathetic	2.53	0.095	2.00	2	1.360	1.850
Envious	2.5	0.106	2.00	1	1.523	2.319
Bashful	2.47	0.105	2.00	1	1.500	2.250
Cold	2.47	0.102	2.00	1	1.470	2.162
Unintellectual	2.41	0.115	2.00	1	1.644	2.702
Harsh	2.37	0.100	2.00	1	1.428	2.040
Jealous	2.25	0.095	2.00	1	1.366	1.865
Fretful	2.23	0.092	2.00	1	1.318	1.738
Shy	2.17	0.087	2.00	2	1.253	1.569
Rude	2.14	0.091	2.00	1	1.300	1.689
Careless	2.14	0.095	2.00	1	1.365	1.864
Disorganised	2.11	0.093	2.00	1	1.332	1.774
Withdrawn	2.09	0.089	2.00	1	1.271	1.616
Inefficient	2.02	0.089	2.00	1	1.272	1.619
Sloppy	1.97	0.086	2.00	1	1.237	1.531
Uncreative	1.92	0.086	2.00	1	1.231	1.516

Notes:
[1] If more than one mode was identified, the smallest is reported in the table.

Moreover, it seems that respondents grouped all negatively-inflected personality items closely together, as it can be observed by the small differences in their means. Finally, if respondents' ratings of their favourite brands' personality characteristics are compared with their ratings of their own personality traits (presented in section 7.4), it can be noticed that traits relating to interpersonal relations played a more prominent role when respondents described their own personalities, while traits relating to efficiency, practicality and creativeness were considered as central personality characteristics of their favourite brands.

7.9. Respondents' Perceptions of Self-Congruence with their Favourite Brands

The final set of questions that respondents were asked to complete sought to reveal their holistic perceptions of actual and ideal self-brand congruence (S-BC). Two items were used to capture each concept. Respondents were instructed to indicate their agreement or disagreement to these four items, from 1: Strongly disagree to 7: Strongly agree. The items, drawn from Malär, et al. (2011), were included in the questionnaire as representative of the existing, direct, similarity-based measures of S-BC. Their inclusion was essential, as one of the objectives of this thesis was to test the predictive power of the new measure of self-brand personality alignment that captures both similarity and complementarity configurations against the similarity-based measures of S-BC that have been traditionally used in previous research, for a range of brand-related outcomes. Table 7-11 summarises descriptive findings for all four items.

The results portray a rather surprising picture, which however provides a first confirmation of the central hypothesis of this thesis, that is, that the self-brand personality alignment does not necessarily exhibit a similarity configuration. According to previous research (Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy, 1982), consumers are drawn to brands with characteristics that mirror their own. It would seem logical, therefore, to expect that respondents would agree with these four statements since they were being asked about their congruence with their favourite brands, and not brands that had been pre-selected by the researcher. However, the relatively low mean scores indicate that many respondents were ambivalent about the statements; their holistic perceptions of self-brand personality congruence suggest that consistency between their own personalities and the personalities of their favourite brands is not necessarily the case

for them. Therefore, these results seem to imply that similarity between a consumer's personality and a brand's personality is not the only pre-requisite for preferring a brand over others in the same product category. The slightly higher mean of the third item in Table 7-11, representing the congruence with the ideal self, offers a first indication that respondents might actually prefer the brands they have indicated as their favourite ones because they can assist them acquire qualities that they do not currently have and achieve certain self-relevant goals. In other words, consumers might be drawn to brands with traits that complement, rather than mirror, their own.

Table 7-11: Respondents' perceptions of actual and ideal self-brand congruence (n = 206)

		Mean	Std. Error of Mean	Median	Mode[1]	Std. Deviation	Variance
Actual self-brand congruence	The personality of my favourite brand is consistent with how I see myself.	3.75	0.106	4.00	4	1.525	2.326
	The personality of my favourite brand is a mirror image of me.	3.12	0.104	3.00	4	1.495	2.234
Ideal self-brand congruence	The personality of my favourite brand is consistent with how I would like to be (my ideal self).	4.03	0.117	4.00	5	1.676	2.809
	The personality of my favourite brand is a mirror image of the person I would like to be (my ideal self).	3.63	0.123	4.00	4	1.761	3.102

Notes:
[1] If more than one mode was identified, the smallest is reported in the table.

For the purposes of subsequent analyses, it was considered appropriate to replace respondents' answers in the original two items of actual S-BC with a single composite measure representing actual S-BC and answers in the original two items of ideal S-BC with a single composite measure representing ideal S-BC. In other words, two factor scores were calculated for each participant, computed based on their scores in each set

of items. A reliability analysis confirmed internal consistency both for the two items of actual S-BC (0.86) and the two items of ideal S-BC (0.90). Exploratory Factor Analysis (Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation) used to calculate the factor scores for each respondent showed that the two items of actual S-BC and the two items of ideal S-BC explained 88.0% and 91.2% of the overall variance, respectively.

Relationship between Gender/Age and Respondents' Perceptions of Actual and Ideal Self-Brand Congruence

With regards to differences between males and females, Levene's test for equality of variances across the two groups indicated that the variances were homogeneous (p > .05); there were no significant differences (p > .05) between males and females for all four items of S-BC as well as for the two composite measures. Overall, there does not seem to be a relationship between gender and perceptions of actual/ideal S-BC.

With regards to differences among the three age groups, six one-way ANOVA tests were conducted. With the exception of the third item in Table 7-11 (i.e. the first item of ideal S-BC), Levene's tests for equality showed homogeneous variances (p > .05) for all items of S-BC, including the composite measures. In all six of them, no significant differences (p > .05) were identified across the three age groups. The findings suggest that age does not seem to play any role in respondents' perceptions of actual/ideal S-BC.

7.10. Summary

This chapter has reported the initial steps of analysis and the descriptive results for the second stage of the current study, namely, the online survey. The objectives of the survey were to test, quantitatively, the propositions of the thesis, as described in Chapter 4. Upon describing the processes that were followed to treat missing values in the dataset and to ensure the data's suitability for multivariate analysis, the chapter presented descriptive findings for each variable in the survey. Moreover, a series of tests was conducted to investigate differences between males and females as well as younger and older respondents. Overall, the results of these tests (summarised in Table 7-12) show that the sample can be considered as homogeneous, and can therefore be used as a single entity for subsequent analyses.

Table 7-12: Summary of tests investigating differences between males and females as well as younger and older respondents for all brand-related outcomes in the study

		Gender	Age group
Selection of product category		No	No
Length of relationship with favourite brand		No	No
Perceptions of quality		Yes	No
Overall satisfaction with favourite brand		No	No
Overall trust towards favourite brand		No	Yes
Willingness to forgive favourite brand's transgressions		No	No
Contribution/importance of favourite brand to consumer's life meaning		Yes	Yes
Frequent thoughts about favourite brand		Yes	Yes
Positive Word-of-Mouth		No	No
Resistance to negative comments about favourite brand		No	No
Current loyalty perceptions	I'll 'do without' rather than buy another brand.	No	Yes
	I always find myself consistently buying this particular brand over other brands in the same product category.	No	No
	Even if another brand is on sale, I still buy this brand.	No	No
	Composite measure of current loyalty perceptions	No	No
Future loyalty intentions		No	Yes
Intuitive fit with favourite brand		No	No
Passion towards favourite brand		No	No
Pleasure from using favourite brand		No	No
Overall love for favourite brand		Yes	No
Separation distress perceptions	Anxiety	Yes	No
	Fear	Yes	No
	Composite measure of separation distress	Yes	No
Actual self-brand congruence	The personality of my favourite brand is consistent with how I see myself.	No	No
	The personality of my favourite brand is a mirror image of me.	No	No
	Composite measure of actual self-brand congruence	No	No
Ideal self-brand congruence	The personality of my favourite brand is consistent with how I would like to be (my ideal self).	No	No
	The personality of my favourite brand is a mirror image of the person I would like to be (my ideal self).	No	No
	Composite measure of ideal self-brand congruence	No	No

In conclusion, the examination of the initial findings in this chapter provides a first support for the study's central proposition, that is, that self-brand personality alignment does not necessarily exhibit a similarity configuration. Although previous research (Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy, 1982) suggests that consumers are drawn to brands with characteristics that are similar with their own characteristics, examination of respondents' low mean scores in the four items directly measuring similarity-based congruence, indicated that respondents did not perceive the congruence between their own personality and the personality of their favourite brand to exclusively exhibit a similarity configuration. This finding suggests that consumers might actually prefer the brands they have indicated as their favourite ones because they can assist them to be associated with personality traits that they do not currently have, yet they desire, in order to achieve certain self-related goals (e.g. self-enhancement). In other words, consumers may also seek in their brand preferences personality characteristics that will complement their own. The proposition will be further examined and tested in the next chapter.

8. SURVEY RESEARCH RESULTS: TESTING HYPOTHESES

8.1. Introduction

Following the previous chapter that reported the descriptive results of the survey and some bivariate analyses, the purpose of this chapter is to report the results relating to the testing of the study's hypotheses. It is worth reminding that the aim of the online survey, which was preceded by the qualitative stage, was to investigate, quantitatively, the structure and composition of consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and of their favourite brands' personalities, the patterns of alignment existing between the two, and the influence of these patterns on desirable brand-related outcomes (i.e. to test the conceptual framework and the hypotheses).

The chapter is structured as follows. First, the survey objectives are restated and the hypotheses are reprised. Then, the results are presented sequentially according to these objectives and hypotheses, namely: the examination of the structure and composition of consumers' perceptions of their own personality traits and those of their favourite brands; the investigation of the alignment patterns between these perceptions; the processes followed for the development of the new self-brand personality alignment measure; and the testing of the new measure's predictive power over existing measures of self-brand congruence. The final section provides an overall discussion of the results.

8.2. Restatement of Quantitative Research Rationale, Objectives & Hypotheses

The literature review in Chapters 2 and 3 identified that there are some crucial, yet hitherto unresolved issues relating to: the structure and composition of consumers' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities, their alignment with consumers' perceptions of their own personalities, and the influence of this alignment on brand-related outcomes.

First, the review identified that the vast majority of previous research has followed a data-driven approach when seeking to examine consumers' brand personality perceptions. Briefly, researchers following this approach, with the study conducted by Aaker (1997) being the most representative, ask respondents to free-associate items to

brands that the researchers themselves have pre-selected irrespectively of their salience to the respondent. Then, these items, including both personality items and more general items of brand image, along with items from previous scales, are factor-analysed and the underlying dimensions of brand personality perceptions are derived. The lack of theoretical underpinning, the lack of respondents' familiarity with the pre-selected brands as well as the loosely-defined brand personality dimensions deriving from this approach are amongst its major shortcomings. Research has thus recently turned to theories of personality from the psychology literature to explore the structure of brand personality, most notably, the Five Factor Model (Costa Jr & McCrae, 1985;1992). Huang, et al. (2012) concluded that a much more condensed version of Saucier's (1994) 40-item scale based on the FFM (19-item abridged scale) can be applied to examine consumers' perceptions of brand personality, however, other researchers have raised concerns whether consumers' perceptions of an inanimate object's personality can follow the same structure and composition as human personality (Caprara, et al., 2001). It thus remains largely unanswered whether the FFM can be meaningfully applied to describe consumers' perceptions of brand personality. Therefore, the first objective of the survey was:

Survey objective I: To examine the structure of consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and of their favourite brands' personalities using the same scale, i.e. the Five Factor Model.

Following the peer-rating approach, where respondents are asked to judge the personality characteristics of their *favourite* brands, the study hypothesises that:

H1: The Five Factor Model trait inventory can be meaningfully applied to describe the structure of consumers' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities.

H2: The factor composition of consumers' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities is different to that of consumers' perceptions of their own personalities.

The second survey objective related to the theory of self-brand congruence (S-BC), which proposes that consumers are drawn to brands with characteristics that align with their own characteristics (Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy, 1982). S-BC has attracted a lot of research interest, with a broad range of empirical studies focusing mainly on: finding support for the premise (Birdwell, 1968; Dolich, 1969; Sirgy, 1985; Stern, et al., 1977),

debating on appropriate ways of measurement (Sirgy, et al., 1997) and examining its positive influence on desirable outcomes such as brand preference and loyalty (Bellenger, et al., 1976; Kressmann, et al., 2006; Sirgy, 1985). The literature review in Chapter 3 identified that previous research on S-BC has hitherto been based on the assumption that self-brand personality alignment follows a similarity pattern, that is, consumers are always drawn to brands with traits similar to their own. Surprisingly, there has been no critical investigation of this premise, and no exploration of the possibility that alternative patterns of alignment might exist. Since previous research has shown that consumers attach human personality traits to brands (Aaker, 1997) and brands have been conceptualised as active relationship partners (Fournier, 1998), it can be supported that the alignment between consumers' and brands' personality traits can be considered analogous to the alignment between partners' personality characteristics in interpersonal relationships. For this reason, previous research on interpersonal attraction was examined in order to gain insight about consumer-brand attraction. The review of this literature and specifically the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Emerson, 1976; Homans, 1974; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) revealed that the matching between partners' characteristics can also take a complementarity form, besides similarity. Since previous research in branding has exclusively focused on similarity configurations in self-brand personality alignment, the second objective of the survey was:

Survey objective II: To investigate the possibility that the alignment between consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and of the personalities of their favourite brands exhibits a complementarity configuration, besides similarity.

Specifically, the study hypothesises that:

H3: Self-brand personality alignment may exhibit a complementarity configuration, besides similarity.

Two methods have come to dominate the literature on how to measure S-BC: direct measures and discrepancy scores. Both types of measures though, in their existing forms, allow only similarity effects to be revealed. Ever since the critique of discrepancy scores (Sirgy, et al., 1997), the strong preference of the literature has been towards the easily employed direct, similarity-based measures of S-BC [e.g. Malär, et al. (2011)].

Given the possibility that self-brand personality alignment may also exhibit a complementarity configuration, the third objective of this study was therefore:

Survey objective III: To derive a new measure of self-brand personality alignment that captures both similarity and complementarity.

The review of the literature on interpersonal attraction revealed that complementarity and similarity might not be equally important across the life cycle of a relationship; in particular, complementarity has been considered as a key factor for the development of long-term relationships (Kerckhoff & Davis, 1962), as it offers partners the opportunity to grow within the relationship and achieve self-enhancement. In view of brands as active relationship partners (Fournier, 1998), translating this insight in a branding context leads to the following hypothesis:

H4: Complementarity configurations in self-brand personality alignment are more likely in longer-term consumer-brand relationships.

Finally, past research has also investigated the positive influence of S-BC on desirable brand-related outcomes (section 3.4.5), such as brand preference and loyalty (Bellenger, et al., 1976; Kressmann, et al., 2006; Sirgy, 1985). However, as indicated earlier, findings from these studies are based on the assumption that S-BC follows a similarity configuration. The influence of a self-brand personality alignment measure that captures both similarity and complementarity configurations on desirable outcomes has not been previously investigated. Therefore, the final objective was:

Survey objective IV: To test the predictive power of the new measure of self-brand personality alignment over existing, direct, similarity-based measures for a range of brand-related outcomes.

Overall, it is proposed that a measure of self-brand personality alignment capturing both complementarity and similarity configurations has greater predictive power than measures based solely on similarity configurations (**H5**). It was decided that this proposition would be tested for a wide range of desirable, brand-related outcomes, which are commonly studied in the branding and consumer research literature and had also emerged from the qualitative phase, namely, consumers' perceptions of: their favourite brand's quality (**H5a**), overall satisfaction with (**H5b**), and overall trust

towards (**H5c)** their favourite brand, current loyalty (**H5d**) and future loyalty intentions (**H5e**), intuitive fit with their favourite brand (**H5f**), feelings of passion (**H5g**) and pleasure (**H5h**) relating to the use of their favourite brands, overall love towards their favourite brand (**H5i**), distress resulting from their potential separation from their favourite brand (**H5j**), willingness to forgive their favourite brand's potential transgressions (**H5k**), frequency of thoughts about their favourite brand (**H5l**), their favourite brand's contribution/importance to their lives' meaning (**H5m**), engagement in positive word-of-mouth (**H5n**), and resistance to negative comments made by others (**H5o**) about their favourite brand.

In summary, this section restated the research rationale, the specific survey objectives and the propositions of the study, which are diagrammatically illustrated in the conceptual framework of the thesis presented in Chapter 4 and again in Figure 8-1 below. The rest of the chapter will sequentially report the results from the testing of the hypotheses mentioned above, according to the four survey objectives, starting with the examination of the structure and composition of respondents' perceptions of own personality traits and those of their favourite brands.

Figure 8-1: Conceptual framework of the thesis: A model of self-brand personality alignment and its outcomes

H5a	Perceptions of quality	H5f	Intuitive fit	H5k	Willingness to forgive brand's transgressions
H5b	Overall satisfaction	H5g	Passion	H5l	Frequent thoughts about the brand
H5c	Overall trust	H5h	Pleasure	H5m	Contribution of the brand to life meaning
H5d	Current loyalty perceptions	H5i	Overall brand love	H5n	Positive word-of-mouth
H5e	Future loyalty intentions	H5j	Separation distress	H5o	Resistance to negative comments

8.3. Structure & Composition of Respondents' Perceptions of their Own Personality Traits

In order to test H1 and H2, the first step was to explore the factor structure and composition of respondents' ratings of own personality traits prior to conducting the same analysis for their ratings of their favourite brands' personality traits. Respondents had been asked to rate their own personalities on Saucier's (1994) 40-item FFM-based scale, from 1: Extremely inaccurate to 7: Extremely accurate. This resulted in 40 variables, one for each personality item. The most appropriate analytical technique for the identification of underlying factors/dimensions behind a large set of variables is Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) (Hair, et al., 2010; Mazzocchi, 2008). EFA involves a series of steps and decisions that need to be made depending on the nature of the variables and the analytical problem at hand. This section outlines these steps and reports the results of EFA for respondents' perceptions of their own personalities.

The literature recommends that EFA should not be conducted unless the sample size is at least five times the total number of variables that will be factor-analysed. In this case, there were 40 variables, therefore the sample size (n=206) was large enough to permit the use of EFA. The first step was to reverse-code negatively-inflected items in order to avoid positively- and negatively-inflected items cancelling each other out (Hair, et al., 2010). The next decision revolved around the selection of the factor extraction and the factor rotation methods. As the objective here was to summarise most of the information in the original 40 variables in a smaller set of independent factors, Principal Components Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation was used.

Upon running the analysis, the first step was to inspect the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic (a measure also known as measure of sampling adequacy, MSA, that indicates whether the correlations between the variables are explained by the rest of the variables), which showed a quite satisfactory value (.770). The Bartlett's test of sphericity (a statistic that tests the null hypothesis that all variables subjected to the factor analysis are uncorrelated) was statistically significant (p < .05), hence it was concluded that there were adequate correlations among the variables. This was also confirmed upon inspecting the variable-specific MSA values across the anti-image correlation matrix's diagonal, which were all above the .50 threshold (Hair, et al., 2010; Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011). The analysis provided a clear, 5-factor solution, and as expected, the structure and composition of the five factors was almost identical to the

original human personality factors presented by Saucier (1994), except from one item (Unintellectual) which loaded onto an unexpected factor (Openness). This item was therefore excluded, and the analysis was re-run, repeating all the steps. The inspection of the rotated factor loadings (i.e. the correlation between each one of the five factors and each one of the variables assigned to the factor), revealed that a few variables suffered from low communalities (a value which measures how much of the variable's variance is captured by the factor to which it has been assigned) as they were below the .30 threshold (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011). As recommended (Hair, et al., 2010), the item with the lowest communality (Cooperative) was deleted from the list of variables and the analysis was re-run. This time all variables' communalities were above .30; however, the factor loading of one item (Energetic) was below the .40 threshold recommended in the literature for this sample size (Hair, et al., 2010; Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011). The item was excluded and the analysis was repeated. No further problems were identified this time. The KMO value had in fact improved (.777), the Bartlett's test of sphericity remained statistically significant, all variable-specific MSA values across the anti-image correlation matrix's diagonal were above .50, all communalities above .30 and all factor loadings above .40. The reliability analysis also showed that the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were well above the commonly recommended .70 threshold (Hair, et al., 2010).

The resulting 5-factor solution, which accounted for 50.7% of the overall variance, is presented in Table 8-1. It can be observed that, with the exception of the three deleted items, the structure and composition of respondents' perceptions of their own personality traits in this sample is identical to the structure and composition of human personality dimensions published by Saucier (1994) (Appendix I).

Table 8-1: Trait-to-factor loadings for respondents' perceptions of their own personality traits

	1 Conscientiousness	2 Agreeableness	3 Extraversion	4 Emotional Stability	5 Openness
Organised	.850				
Disorganised (R)	.840				
Efficient	.774				
Systematic	.729				
Inefficient (R)	.611				
Sloppy (R)	.575				
Practical	.525				
Careless (R)	.404				
Unsympathetic (R)		.766			
Sympathetic		.729			
Warm		.696			
Harsh (R)		.672			
Cold (R)		.598			
Rude (R)		.561			
Kind		.549			
Quiet (R)			.870		
Talkative			.767		
Shy (R)			.759		
Extroverted			.662		
Withdrawn (R)			.622		
Bold			.504		
Bashful (R)			.453		
Envious (R)				.734	
Jealous (R)				.708	
Temperamental (R)				.640	
Unenvious				.619	
Fretful (R)				.605	
Moody (R)				.557	
Touchy (R)				.537	
Relaxed				.495	
Creative					.739
Imaginative					.708
Philosophical					.699
Uncreative (R)					.601
Deep					.600
Intellectual					.477
Complex					.404
Cronbach's alpha	.842	.805	.811	.783	.764

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
(R) indicates reversed items.

8.4. Structure & Composition of Respondents' Perceptions of their Favourite Brands' Personality Traits

Upon exploring the structure and composition of respondents' perceptions of own personalities, the next step in order to investigate H1 and H2 was to explore the structure and composition of respondents' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities. Respondents had been asked to rate (from 1: Extremely inaccurate to 7: Extremely accurate) the personality traits of their favourite brand on the same 40-item scale they used to rate their own personalities, that is, Saucier's (1994) 40-item mini-markers of personality. Once again, each trait represented a separate variable, resulting in a total of 40 variables that were subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis (PCA with Varimax rotation). Negatively-inflected items were reverse-coded, as before.

The first step in the inspection of the results was to examine the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic, which was more than satisfactory (.807). Bartlett's test of sphericity (p < .05) showed that there were adequate correlations among the variables. The inspection of the variable-specific MSA values across the anti-image correlation matrix's diagonal (all above the .50 threshold) also confirmed that the variables were all adequately correlated.

However, the examination of the rotated factor loadings for each of the five factors extracted indicated that there were a few problems: two variables (Unintellectual, Unenvious) suffered from insignificant loadings (below the .40 threshold), three variables (Uncreative, Quiet, Shy) were loading significantly to more than one factor (i.e. they were cross-loading); moreover, three variables had low communalities, below the accepted threshold of .30 (Unintellectual, Unenvious, Relaxed). As recommended (Hair, et al., 2010), these variables become candidates for deletion, starting with items that do not load significantly onto any factor. In this case, the one item with the lowest insignificant loading was Unintellectual; it was excluded and the analysis was run again. This time, four variables (Uncreative, Quiet, Shy and Withdrawn) cross-loaded, one variable had a low communality (Relaxed), albeit very close to the .30 threshold, and the item Unenvious still loaded below the recommended threshold of .40. Hence, Unenvious was excluded and the analysis was conducted again. The results showed that all communalities were above .30, but there were still cross-loadings (Uncreative, Quiet, Shy, Withdrawn and Cold), and while all items had significant loadings, one (Touchy) was below the .40 threshold, albeit very close (.397). Still, it was excluded and

the analysis was conducted again. This time, all factor loadings were above .40, and all communalities were above .30; however, there were still some variables (Uncreative, Shy, Withdrawn and Cold) that cross-loaded onto more than one factor. It had been observed that two of those variables, Uncreative and Shy, had been consistently cross-loading from the very first round of the analysis, therefore they were strong candidates for deletion. It was decided that, although all were above the .30 threshold, the one with the lowest communality, (i.e. the one variable whose variance was captured the least by the factor it had been assigned to) would be deleted. This variable, Uncreative, was therefore dropped and the analysis was conducted again. The process was repeated until no more cross-loadings could be identified; items Quiet, Withdrawn and Shy were sequentially deleted. At that point, one variable (Rude) appeared to marginally cross-load onto two factors. Hence, it was dropped, followed by one more (Intellectual) that was also marginally cross-loading. After the deletion of the variable Intellectual, no more problems were identified.

The final five-factor solution, containing 31 items (presented in Table 8-2), explained 51.3% of the total variance. The KMO value was .802, the Bartlett's test of sphericity remained statistically significant, all variable-specific MSA values across the anti-image correlation matrix's diagonal were above .50, all communalities above .30 and all factor loadings above .40. The reliability analysis also showed that three of the five Cronbach's alpha coefficients were well above the threshold (.70) commonly recommended (Hair, et al., 2010), while the other two were lower. This was not considered an issue of concern, first because values close to .60 are not surprising in exploratory studies (Hair, et al., 2010; Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011) and second, because Cronbach's alpha is positively related to the number of items in the scale (Hair, et al., 2010); in this case, the two factors with Cronbach's alpha below the .70 threshold were also the two factors with the smallest number of items (4 and 2 items, respectively).

The 31-item solution was validated using ten-fold cross-validation on random subsamples. As the sample size did not permit splitting into two sub-groups where EFA could be conducted separately as generally recommended (Hair, et al., 2010), a different approach was followed: each observation/case was assigned a random number from 0 to 1. Then, the cases were sorted and the sample was split in 4 groups of 20 observations and 6 groups of 21 observations (206 in total), and EFA was repeatedly conducted ten times, each time taking out one of the subsamples, until all subsamples had been excluded once (Hair, et al., 2010). All solutions were inspected for

major differences with the original solution (e.g. opposite directionality of loadings). No major differences were identified in the composition of the five factors.

Table 8-2: Trait-to-factor loadings for respondents' perceptions of their favourite brands' personality traits

	1 Emotional Instability	2 Practicality	3 Dynamism	4 Friendli-ness	5 Reflective ness
Sloppy(R)	.731				
Fretful(R)	.725				
Envious(R)	.703				
Jealous(R)	.674				
Moody(R)	.670				
Careless(R)	.621				
Unsympathetic(R)	.620				
Temperamental(R)	.615				
Harsh(R)	.599				
Disorganised(R)	.579				
Bashful(R)	.555				
Cold(R)	.533				
Inefficient(R)	.515				
Efficient		.826			
Organised		.797			
Systematic		.773			
Practical		.708			
Cooperative		.611			
Bold			.673		
Imaginative			.666		
Extroverted			.643		
Talkative			.560		
Energetic			.552		
Creative			.495		
Complex			.476		
Kind				.735	
Warm				.719	
Sympathetic				.634	
Relaxed				.474	
Philosophical					.745
Deep					.564
Cronbach's alpha	.877	.834	.725	.669	.508

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
(R) indicates reversed items.

The five factors were then carefully examined in order to identify labels that would appropriately summarise their meanings. As Table 8-2 shows, the first factor included

all the unfavourable items of the human personality (HP) factor Emotional Stability, plus all the negatively-inflected items from the other HP dimensions (e.g. Sloppy was a negatively-inflected item of the HP Conscientiousness factor; Unsympathetic of the HP Agreeableness factor, etc.). For this reason, it was decided that the factor would be named 'Emotional Instability'. The second factor, comprised of items relating to a brand's efficiency and practical aspects, was labelled 'Practicality'. The items included in the third factor described more dynamic and unreserved aspects of a brand's personality; therefore the label 'Dynamism' was considered appropriate. The label 'Friendliness' was assigned to the fourth factor as it was comprised of items describing a brand as welcoming and socially approachable. Finally, the fifth factor was named 'Reflectiveness' to denote this factor's capturing of a brand's cerebral personality traits.

A closer examination of the dimensions describing respondents' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities reveals some interesting issues when these are compared with the dimensions underlying respondents' perceptions of their own personalities, a process largely assisted through the summary of these results in Table 8-3 below. First, both respondents' perceptions of their own personalities and of their favourite brands' personalities exhibited a 5-factor structure when measured using the same scale. This finding demonstrates that a scale based on the Five Factor Model of Human Personality can be meaningfully applied to describe a brand's personality; therefore H1 is corroborated. Second, the composition of the underlying dimensions describing respondents' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities (BP) presents some similarities, but also some differences with the composition of the factors describing respondents' perceptions of their own personalities (HP), hence providing full support for H2. Specifically, the BP factor 'Practicality' shares four out of its five items with the HP factor 'Conscientiousness'. Moreover, three out of the four items of the BP factor 'Friendliness' are also parts of the HP factor 'Agreeableness'. There is also a high degree of similarity between the BP factor 'Dynamism' and the HP factor 'Extraversion', with three items of the latter comprising a significant proportion of the items assigned to the former. BP 'Reflectiveness' represents a condensed version of HP 'Openness', focusing on those items in the factor that express more reserved aspects of personality. The most striking difference, however, between the factors underpinning respondents' perceptions of their own personalities and those underpinning respondents' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities is the formation of a single factor that incorporates all negatively-inflected, unflattering items

of brand personality: the BP 'Emotional Instability' factor. This dimension includes not only the negatively-inflected items of the HP 'Emotional Stability' factor (Envious, Jealous, Temperamental, Fretful, Moody) but also the unfavourable items from the rest of the HP factors (Disorganised, Inefficient, Sloppy, Careless from HP 'Conscientiousness'; Unsympathetic, Harsh, Cold from HP 'Agreeableness'; Bashful from HP 'Extraversion'; the negatively-inflected items from the original 'Openness' factor, Uncreative and Unintellectual were not retained as they were loading insignificantly during the BP factor extraction process).

Table 8-3: Composition of human personality and brand personality factors

Respondents' perceptions of their own personalities				
Conscientious-ness	**Agreeableness**	**Emotional Stability**	**Extraversion**	**Openness**
Organised Efficient Systematic Practical	Sympathetic Warm Kind	Relaxed Unenvious	Talkative Extroverted Bold	Philosophical Deep Creative Imaginative Intellectual Complex
Disorganised Inefficient Sloppy Careless	Unsympathetic Harsh Cold Rude	Envious Jealous Temperamental Fretful Moody Touchy	Quiet Shy Withdrawn Bashful	Uncreative

Respondents' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities				
Practicality	**Friendliness**	**Emotional Instability**	**Dynamism**	**Reflectiveness**
Organised Efficient Systematic Practical Cooperative	Sympathetic Warm Kind Relaxed	Envious Jealous Temperamental Fretful Moody Disorganised Inefficient Sloppy Careless Unsympathetic Harsh Cold Bashful	Talkative Extroverted Bold Creative Imaginative Complex Energetic	Philosophical Deep

This finding has many significant implications. First and foremost, it demonstrates that, while respondents had related the uncomplimentary items to their corresponding dimensions when they were asked to rate their own personalities, when asked to

consider their favourite brands as personalities, they evaluated these less favourable personality traits separately and in a way that was exclusive of the other dimensions. This conclusion is in accordance with the suggestions by Caprara, et al. (2001) that: i) human personality descriptors might be allocated in a different position in the brand personality factor structure, and ii) their relationship with other traits might not retain its original form. The finding is also in full consistency with the evidence from the exploratory qualitative phase of the study, where interviewees clearly distinguished between the positively- and the negatively-inflected personality traits by sometimes, for example, starting with the positives and then referring to a chain of negative ones. Second, in this study, respondents were asked to rate the personality of their favourite brand; therefore, the revelation that respondents assigned negative personality items to their favourite brands implies that consumers, in some circumstances, might actually prefer certain brands exactly because these project a less 'comme-il-faut' or 'proper' personality. This can certainly be the case for the sample of this study. Students, amidst a transitional phase in their lives between adolescence and early adulthood, known as 'emerging adults' (Arnett, 2004), may make brand choices that allow them to express a more rebellious character in order to release tension as they struggle to conform to social norms and to gain entrance to the adult world; their identity is less clear at this dark, liminal phase of their lives (Marchant & O'Donohoe, 2013). Whether this complementary relationship between respondents' own personalities and the personalities of their chosen brands extends beyond a difference in factor structure is the topic of investigation in the next section.

8.5. Patterns of Alignment between Respondents' Own Personality Traits and their Favourite Brands' Personality Traits

8.5.1. Introduction

From the literature review, it has been shown that self-brand congruence theory, a widely-accepted explanation behind consumers' brand preferences, proposes that consumers tend to prefer brands with images that align with their own self-images (Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy, 1982). Previous research however assumes that this alignment exhibits a similarity configuration (i.e. consumers prefer brands with characteristics that mirror their own). By adopting a relational view of consumer-brand relationships, and following the propositions of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano &

Mitchell, 2005; Emerson, 1976; Homans, 1974; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), this thesis hypothesises that self-brand personality alignment might also exhibit a complementarity configuration, besides similarity (H3). This section will discuss the testing of this hypothesis, starting with a detailed account of the analytical technique used to examine the patterns of alignment between respondents' perceptions of own personalities and those of their favourite brands: Canonical Correlation Analysis.

8.5.2. Canonical Correlation Analysis: Description of the Technique

In order to investigate H3, an analytical technique that could explore the relationships between two sets of multiple variables was needed. The reason for this is because the exploration of H3 would essentially require a multivariate technique that: i) could investigate the nature of the relationship between batteries of variables representing respondents' perceptions of own personalities and respondents' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities, and ii) could derive useful conclusions about the dimensions that are most prominent in this relationship and how exactly they relate to each other. Canonical Correlation Analysis (CCA) is the most appropriate multivariate technique to accommodate such an analytical problem.

CCA is considered to be the most appropriate technique for studies that seek to explore the nature of the relationship between two sets of multiple variables (Alpert & Peterson, 1972; Sherry & Henson, 2005) and to better capture the complex dimensional relationships between variables that describe human behaviour; for example, the 40 personality items (variables) are categorised in five dimensions that represent a single concept, personality, and it would be inappropriate to study them separately (Hair, et al., 2010; Sherry & Henson, 2005). Moreover, CCA is considered to minimise the risk of committing Type I errors (i.e. finding a statistically significant result when it does not exist in reality), as, instead of conducting multiple statistical tests (e.g. multiple regressions), the researcher can simultaneously assess the relationship between multiple variables (Hair, et al., 2010; Joshanloo, Rastegar, & Bakhshi, 2012; Mai & Ness, 1999; Sherry & Henson, 2005). Therefore, CCA, instead of focusing on the individual variables, maximises the relationship between the two sets of variables (Mazzocchi, 2008): the predictor (independent) set and the criterion (dependent) set.

Specifically, CCA starts with applying a linear equation to the observed variables in each of the sets and with generating a synthetic variable, known as the canonical variate (i.e. linear composites), for each set (Hair, et al., 2010; Holbrook & Moore, 1982; Schinka, Dye, & Curtiss, 1997; Sherry & Henson, 2005). Then, the technique derives equations, known as canonical functions, so as to yield the maximum possible correlation (i.e. the canonical correlation coefficient, R_c) between the canonical variates (i.e. the synthetic variables). The first canonical function represents the strongest relationship between the two synthetic variables. The process re-starts with new canonical variates being generated and with each successive canonical function representing different relationships found between the two sets of variables, based on residual variance; hence, all canonical functions are orthogonal (independent) to each other and the researcher can interpret them separately (Hair, et al., 2010; Holbrook & Moore, 1982; Mazzocchi, 2008; Schinka, et al., 1997; Sherry & Henson, 2005). The process continues as many times as the number of variables in the smaller set (Mai & Ness, 1999; Sherry & Henson, 2005).

A final issue to address before implementing CCA is to exclude any overlapping variance among the variables inserted in the analysis (Hair, et al., 2010; Joshanloo, et al., 2012). To do this, the researcher can first employ factor analysis in order to remove multicollinearity (Mazzocchi, 2008), and then insert the factor scores into the CCA, instead of inserting the original variables (Alpert & Peterson, 1972; Green, Halbert, & Robinson, 1966). For the current study, therefore, each respondent's HP and BP factor scores, summed from their raw ratings of the original 40 HP and 40 BP items, were entered as predictor and criterion variable sets, respectively.

8.5.3. Implementation of Canonical Correlation Analysis in This Study

As indicated above, in order to investigate H3, each respondent's HP and BP factor scores, calculated from the two EFAs presented earlier in this chapter, were entered into the CCA as predictor and criterion variable sets, respectively. SPSS does not offer direct access to CCA via one of its menus; therefore, the researcher needs to use the macro command editor (Mazzocchi, 2008; Sherry & Henson, 2005) and the MANOVA command (Mai & Ness, 1999), which follows this general format:

```
MANOVA
(NAMES OF CRITERION VARIABLES) WITH (NAMES OF PREDICTOR VARIABLES)
/PRINT=SIGNIF(MULTIV EIGEN DIMENR)
/DISCRIM=(STAN ESTIM COR ALPHA(.999)).
```

Using this command, the first part of the SPSS output provided information about the statistical significance of the full model (Sherry & Henson, 2005). One of the most common indicators of a model's overall statistical significance is the Wilks's λ value (Sherry & Henson, 2005), which tests the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between the two variable sets (Mai & Ness, 1999) and in essence represents the variance *not* shared between the predictor and the criterion variables. In this case, Wilks's λ = .534 criterion, $F (25, 729.61) = 5.38$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected; there was a statistically significant relationship between the two variable sets, and the proportion of variance shared between them across all canonical functions can be calculated by taking $1-\lambda$ (.466), indicating that the full model explained a substantial portion, 46.6%, of the shared variance.

The next part of the analysis refers to the individual canonical functions. Only functions that are statistically significant and explain a considerable proportion of variance shared by the two synthetic variables (represented by the squared canonical correlation coefficients, R_c^2) are retained and interpreted further (Alpert & Peterson, 1972; Sherry & Henson, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). In this case, the analysis yielded five canonical functions, with squared canonical correlations (R_c^2) of .278, .184, .050, .035 and .011 respectively. While three of the five functions were statistically significant, only functions 1 and 2 were considered noteworthy for further examination, explaining 27.8% and 18.4% of the shared variance, respectively.

For the interpretation of the functions and the identification of those observed variables that contribute the most to the relationship between the two sets, there are three different choices that the researcher can use: canonical weights, canonical loadings and canonical cross-loadings. Canonical cross-loadings (reflecting the correlation between an observed variable of one set to the synthetic variable of the other set) are generally recommended as the most reliable, followed by canonical loadings, which are in turn considered superior to canonical weights (Hair, et al., 2010). However, the researcher is significantly restrained in using canonical cross-loadings as these are not produced by the MANOVA command in SPSS (Mai & Ness, 1999). For this reason, Table 8-4, which summarises the results relating to the two functions, presents

the canonical weights (also known as standardised canonical function coefficients) and the canonical loadings (also known as structure correlations/coefficients, r_s) for each observed variable in each of the two functions.

Table 8-4: Canonical correlation analysis relating respondents' perceptions of own personalities and their perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities

	Function 1		Function 2	
	Canonical weights	Canonical loadings	Canonical weights	Canonical loadings
Predictor variables (HP factor scores)				
Agreeableness	.690	**.690**	.273	.273
Emotional Stability	.585	**.585**	.061	.061
Conscientiousness	.332	.332	-.275	-.275
Openness	.021	.021	.730	**.730**
Extraversion	.265	.265	-.560	**-.560**
Criterion variables (BP factor scores)				
Emotional Instability	.941	**.941**	-.206	-.206
Reflectiveness	.042	.042	.825	**.825**
Friendliness	.269	.269	.386	.386
Practicality	.199	.199	.261	.261
Dynamism	.014	.014	.244	.244
% of variance shared	**27.8**		**18.4**	

Canonical weights show the relative contribution (magnitude and directionality/sign) of the observed variable to the synthetic variate; variables with larger weights contribute more to the variates, while those with opposite signs are inversely related to each other. Canonical loadings reflect the correlation between an observed variable in a set and the synthetic variable of that set (Schul, Pride, & Little, 1983). They assist in identifying the structure of each synthetic variable (e.g. which observed variables create the synthetic variable) and in this sense, they are similar to factor loadings in EFA (Sherry & Henson, 2005): the larger the canonical loading of a given variable, the more prominent its role in deriving the canonical function is. The same cut-off value is used as in EFA (.40). The squares of the canonical loadings (also known as squared canonical structure coefficients, r_s^2) essentially describe the variance that is shared between the observed variable and the synthetic variable of the same set (Sherry &

Henson, 2005). In Table 8-4, the values of the canonical weights and canonical loadings are identical, because, according to Thorndike (1976), weights and loadings are equal when the variables in a set are uncorrelated, that is, when *"intra-set correlations are zero"* [Wildt, Lambert, and Durand (1982), p. 100].

8.5.4. Correlation between Respondents' Own Personality Traits and their Favourite Brands' Personality Traits: Interpretation of Canonical Correlation Analysis

The examination of the canonical loadings in Table 8-4 shows that there are three variables contributing significantly (above .40, p < .005) to function 1, based on their magnitudes (highlighted in bold): HP Agreeableness and HP Emotional Stability from the predictor set, and BP Emotional Instability from the criterion set. This result reveals that the more respondents rated themselves as warm, kind and emotionally well-balanced, the more they rated their favourite brand as having opposing traits, such as capricious, temperamental and neurotic, and vice versa: the more someone rated him/herself as cold and temperamental, the more their favourite brand was rated with warm, kind and emotionally stable traits. Overall, this is a striking result that provides full support for the hypothesis that self-brand personality alignment may exhibit a complementarity configuration (H3). In simpler terms, the results from function 1 clearly show that respondents' favourite brand choices were described with personality traits that were complementary, rather than similar, to their own personality traits. It seems that respondents sought to access, through the branded relationship partner, characteristics that they did not own themselves, yet they desired.

The existence of complementarity might seem surprising, but is fully explicable. On the one hand, one possible explanation that seemed to emerge from the qualitative phase of this study with regards to showing preference for brands with more emotionally stable personality traits in order to tone down our own less favourable traits, is our constant quest for self-enhancement; self-enhancement has been found to be more prominent than our need for self-verification (Sedikides, 1993), and this also seems to be the case for the basic motivational mechanisms behind self-brand congruence processes, according to recent meta-analyses (Aguirre-Rodriguez, et al., 2012). The opposite is also explicable for the student population on which this study was conducted. As mentioned earlier, students are amidst a transitional phase in their lives

struggling to conform to social norms and others' increasingly demanding expectations as they grow and enter adulthood (Arnett, 2004). Their brand choices may thus reveal the conflict of identities they currently experience as part of this transition (Reed II, et al., 2012); hence, their favourite brand choices might be the ones that allow them to achieve a playful release of this accumulated tension. In this sense, an emotionally secure and cooperative, socially adept person might be attracted to those brand relationship partners that represent rebellion and capriciousness.

Table 8-4 also shows that there are three variables (in bold) contributing significantly to function 2: HP Openness and HP Extraversion (the latter is negatively loaded) from the predictor set, and BP Reflectiveness from the criterion set. This result indicates that the more respondents rated themselves as intellectually open and introverted, the more they rated their favourite brands as cerebral, philosophical and deep (and vice versa). This finding therefore supports the similarity configuration in self-brand personality alignment; favourite brand choices shared personality similarities with the respondents' themselves, acting more as reinforcements to the respondent's own self-image. Once again, this result is consistent with the evidence from the literature (Sedikides, 1993) that places self-verification as the second most powerful motive for self-presentation, after self-enhancement. The result is again fully explicable for members of the student population; imagination, creativity and depth are important to students' identity and academic/career progression, and it is therefore logical that respondents are drawn to brands that would reinforce these aspects of their personality and would allow them to project these images to their social circles.

Figure 8-2: Diagrammatic illustration of the two statistically significant canonical functions maximising the correlation between respondents' perceptions of own personalities and of their favourite brands' personalities

Function 1 (27.8%): Complementarity

Function 2 (18.4%): Similarity
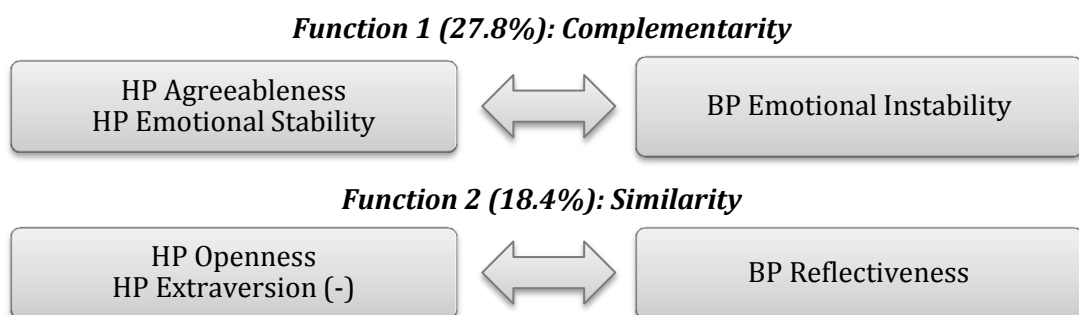
Figure 8-2 diagrammatically summarises the aforementioned findings, that self-brand personality alignment exhibits both a complementarity (function 1) and a similarity (function 2) configuration. Overall, the results fully support H3. In accordance with recommendations from the literature (Alpert & Peterson, 1972; Hair, et al., 2010; Schul, et al., 1983), a process to validate these results was followed. Although validating CCA results on multiple samples is one of the recommended approaches (Hair, et al., 2010), additional data collection presented serious practical difficulties, hence, an alternative approach was followed. A sub-sample accounting for 60% of the original sample size was extracted randomly from the dataset and CCA was performed again on it. The full model was statistically significant (Wilks's λ = .534, F (25, 451.00) = 3.32, p < .001) with two significant functions exhibiting the same variables and configurations as the original analysis. Hence, the stability of the original functions was confirmed. It should be noted that issues relating to common method variance were investigated using Hartman's single-factor test as generally recommended (Chang, van Witteloostuijn, & Eden, 2010), and were not found of concern.

8.6. Development of the New Self-Brand Personality Alignment Measure

8.6.1. Introduction

The revelation of a complementarity configuration in self-brand personality alignment in the previous section has significant implications for its measurement. Since previous research has hitherto considered self-brand congruence (S-BC) as exclusively exhibiting a similarity configuration, the measures currently available can only capture similarity patterns. A new measure is needed that can capture a fuller spectrum of nuance in self-brand personality alignment patterns, that is both similarity and complementarity. This section will describe in detail the processes that were followed for the development of the new self-brand personality alignment measure.

The first question that needs to be addressed is which of the two methods of S-BC measurement identified in the literature (section 3.4.4) is the most appropriate for the purposes of this study: direct measures or discrepancy scores (Sirgy, et al., 1997).

Briefly, direct measures are single statements asking consumers to indicate the extent to which they feel a certain brand's image is consistent with their own self-image. Direct measures are by far the most commonly used measures of S-BC, and have been

almost exclusively employed in recent research [e.g. Malär, et al. (2011)]. However, the technique is not appropriate to capture complementarity effects, because by asking consumers to indicate the degree to which a brand image is consistent with their own self-image, only similarity configurations can be captured. Moreover, it does not provide additional detail with regards to patterns of trait alignment; it is not possible for example to identify which consumer and brand personality aspects take more prominent role in the alignment process and how they are related to each other.

The discrepancy scores technique involves recording consumers' perceptions of their own personality and of a brand's personality on the same items, and mathematically computing a discrepancy score for each item/dimension (the smaller the difference, the more similar they are) using one of the many different mathematical indices available (Sirgy, 1982). The discrepancy scores technique is not without criticism (Peter, Churchill Jr, & Brown, 1993; Sirgy, et al., 1997). For example, by asking consumers to consider a list of pre-determined items, it is argued that discrepancy scores essentially force consumers to consider aspects of brand image that might be irrelevant to the brand or that the consumer might not have considered before (Sirgy, et al., 1997). Moreover, discrepancy scores may have the effect of compartmentalising consumers' perceptions of congruence with brands: as consumers are asked to consider a battery of characteristics, discrepancy scores assume that consumers consider self-brand congruence for each of the individual aspects/items they are presented with and that their decisions about brands are based on a carefully summed calculation of congruence across all these fragmented perceptions, which may not always be the case.

Nevertheless, it is exactly this additional level of detail that is the main advantage of discrepancy scores over direct measures for the purposes of capturing a fuller range of trait alignment patterns and of acquiring more information about which aspects of the consumer's personality and which aspects of a brand's personality enter the alignment process and whether they are related in a similar or complementary way. For these reasons, the discrepancy scores technique was considered as the appropriate approach for the measurement of self-brand personality alignment in this study. However, as with the direct measures technique, existing discrepancy score formulas are problematic for the purposes of this study: i) they focus on individual items rather than broader personality aspects; ii) they do not account for the potentially different degrees of prominence/importance of these personality aspects in the alignment process; and iii) they only assess discrepancy between the same personality traits (e.g.

a consumer's kindness with a brand's kindness), hence allowing only similarity configurations to be revealed. Therefore, a modification to the original discrepancy scores technique was employed in this study, in order to derive a new measure of self-brand personality alignment, as described in the next section.

8.6.2. Development of the New Self-Brand Personality Alignment Measure

In order to develop a new measure of self-brand personality alignment that captures both similarity and complementarity configurations, a modification to the traditional discrepancy score technique was made to take account of the following issues: i) that respondents' perceptions of their own personalities and of their favourite brands' personalities did not follow the same structure, ii) that their alignment exhibits both complementarity and similarity configurations, iii) that not all aspects of consumer and brand personality entered the alignment process. It was therefore considered that the new measure should express the difference between what respondents had actually reported about their own and their favourite brands' personalities (observed factor scores) and what would be expected for each respondent on these, based on the canonical correlation analysis results (predicted factor scores).

The *observed* factor scores were each respondent's factor scores for each of the five dimensions of brand personality perceptions (BP_i, i=1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and for each of the five dimensions of own personality perceptions (HP_j, j=1, 2, 3, 4, 5). These are the same factor scores that had been derived from the EFAs and had been entered in the canonical correlation analysis (described in the previous sections). For example, each respondent had one factor score for BP Emotional Instability (BP1), one for BP Practicality (BP2), one for BP Dynamism (BP3), one for BP Friendliness (BP4) and one for BP Reflectiveness (BP5); they also had one factor score for HP Conscientiousness (HP1), one for HP Agreeableness (HP2), one for HP Extraversion (HP3), one for HP Emotional Stability (HP4) and one for HP Openness (HP5).

To calculate the *predicted* factor scores (pBP_i, i=1, 2, 3, 4, 5), first the canonical correlation results were reviewed in order to identify only the canonical correlation coefficients of the BP_i (i=1, 2, 3, 4, 5) scores and HP_j (j=1, 2, 3, 4, 5) scores that were statistically significant. Then, each one of these was multiplied by the relevant HP_j (j=1,

2, 3, 4, 5) scores, and were eventually summed to derive the predicted factor score for each BP factor (pBP$_i$, i=1, 2, 3, 4, 5). This can be represented by the following formula:

$$pBP_i = \sum_{j=1}^{5} w_{ji}HP_j \qquad \textbf{(1)}$$

where w_{ji} is the statistically significant coefficient for the jth HP score (HP$_j$) for the ith BP score (BP$_i$), derived from the CCA.

The predicted score for BP Emotional Instability will be used as an example to describe the process. First, the statistically significant coefficients for each of the five HP scores were identified in the CCA results; this process showed that four of the five coefficients were statistically significant (the BP Emotional Instability<->HP Conscientiousness, the BP Emotional Instability<->HP Agreeableness, the BP Emotional Instability<->HP Extraversion, and the BP Emotional Instability<->HP Emotional Stability; the BP Emotional Instability<->HP Openness was not statistically significant). These were multiplied by the respondent's respective HP factor scores (HP Conscientiousness, HP Agreeableness, HP Extraversion, and HP Emotional Stability factor scores), and the products were summed to derive the predicted score for BP Emotional Instability (BP1). Hence:

> Predicted score for BP Emotional Instability (BP1) = (HP Conscientiousness factor score * BP1<->HP Conscientiousness coefficient) + (HP Agreeableness factor score * BP1<->HP Agreeableness coefficient) + (HP Extraversion factor score * BP1<->HP Extraversion coefficient) + (HP Emotional Stability factor score * BP1<->HP Emotional Stability coefficient)

The process was repeated for each BP factor; hence, predicted values were calculated for Emotional Instability (BP1), for BP Practicality (BP2), for BP Dynamism (BP3), for BP Friendliness (BP4) and for BP Reflectiveness (BP5).

Finally, the new discrepancy scores (DS) for each respondent were derived by calculating the difference between the observed (BP$_i$, i=1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and the predicted BP factor scores (pBP$_i$, i=1, 2, 3, 4, 5). This can be expressed in the following formula:

> DS$_i$ = BP$_i$ - pBP$_i$ for i = 1,...,5 $\qquad \textbf{(2)}$

> Example: Discrepancy score for BP Emotional Instability (BP1) = Observed BP Emotional Instability (BP1) factor score – Predicted BP Emotional Instability (BP1) factor score

As a result, the new measure of self-brand personality alignment comprised five discrepancy scores for each respondent, one for each BP dimension. A small discrepancy score (closer to zero) signified a high degree of self-brand personality alignment; a high discrepancy score (either negative or positive) indicated a low degree of self-brand personality alignment. **Table 8-5** presents a descriptive overview of the five discrepancy scores while Figure 8-3 illustrates their distribution; the inspection of the distributions showed no problems with kurtosis and skewness, as all five variables were within the acceptable ranges.

Table 8-5: Descriptive results for the five discrepancy scores

	Std. Error of Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Minimum	Maximum
Discrepancy score (observed-predicted) for BP Emotional Instability	0.060	0.864	0.747	-3.951	2.780
Discrepancy score (observed-predicted) for BP Practicality	0.068	0.977	0.954	-4.269	1.931
Discrepancy score (observed-predicted) for BP Dynamism	0.069	0.987	0.975	-2.549	2.191
Discrepancy score (observed-predicted) for BP Friendliness	0.068	0.970	0.940	-3.441	2.508
Discrepancy score (observed-predicted) for BP Reflectiveness	0.065	0.938	0.881	-2.352	2.941

Figure 8-3: Histograms displaying the distribution of the five discrepancy scores
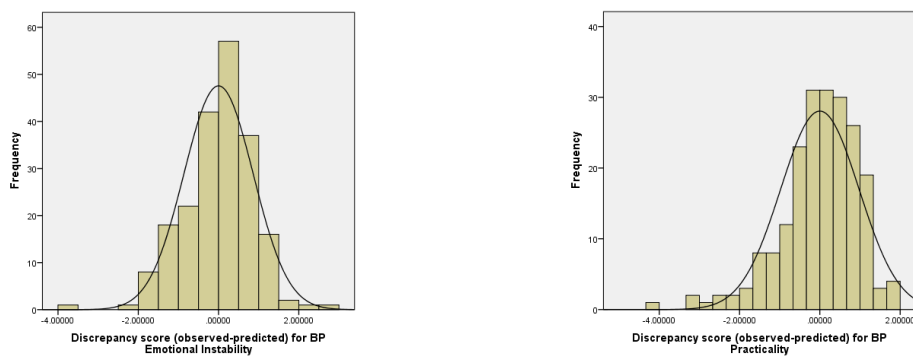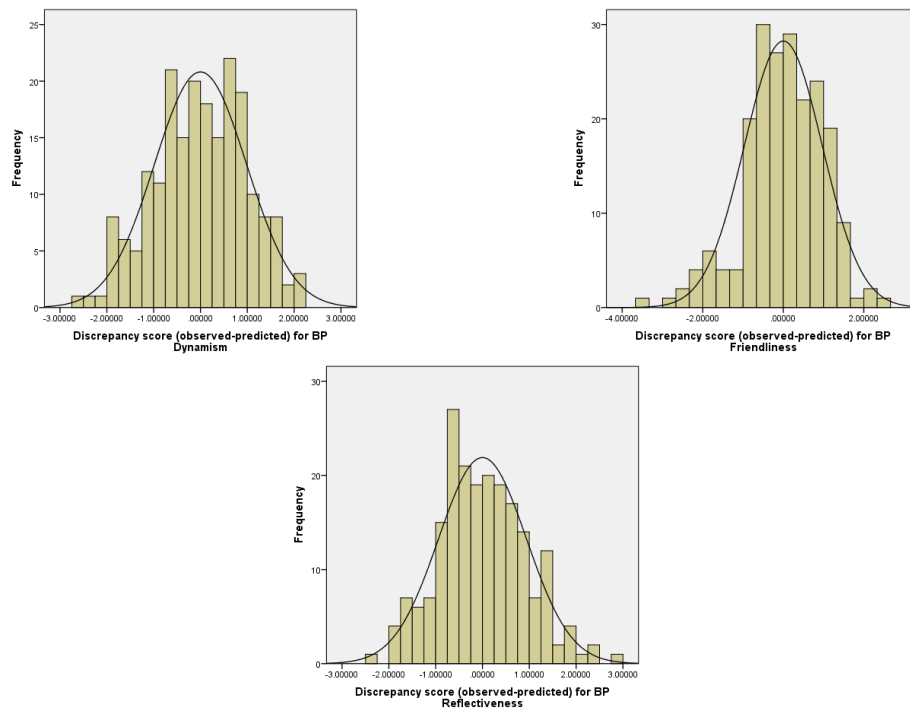
8.6.3. The Role of the Consumer-Brand Relationship Length

Upon confirming the existence of both similarity and complementarity configurations in self-brand personality alignment and developing the new measure, the next step of the analysis focused on the investigation of H4, which proposes that complementarity configurations are more likely in long-term consumer-brand relationships.

The literature on interpersonal attraction has suggested that similarity and complementarity configurations might be particularly fostered in different stages of a relationship (section 3.3.3). Similarity, for example, has been considered as more crucial in the early stages of the relationship (Klohnen & Luo, 2003), because at that period the identification of similarities in characteristics (e.g. opinions, values, personality, etc.) allows partners to feel more familiar with each other and offers them a sense of security that they have made the right choice of partner; hence increasing attraction to the other person. Complementarity, on the other hand, has been suggested to be more critical as the relationship progresses over time (Kerckhoff & Davis, 1962); the reason for this being that in those later stages, partners seek to achieve self-growth and enhancement within the relationship, and in this sense, they seek to be associated with characteristics their partner has but they themselves do not hold, yet they desire.

In a similar vein, given the conceptualisation of brands as active relationship partners (Fournier, 1998), H4 proposes that a complementarity configuration is more likely in a long-term consumer-brand relationship than in a short-term one. As respondents had been asked to indicate how long it had been since they first bought their favourite brand, by selecting one of six options: i) Less than 1 month, ii) 1-6 months, iii) 7-12 months, iv) 1-3 years, v) 4-6 years or vi) Above 6 years (Table 7-4 in Chapter 7), they were split in two groups in order to investigate H4: the short-term relationship group (up to 3 years) and the long-term relationship group (above 3 years). An Independent Samples t-test was performed on the self-brand personality discrepancy scores of respondents in each of these categories. H4 would be corroborated if the discrepancy scores for respondents in the long-term relationship group were significantly smaller (thus denoting greater congruence) than those in the short-term relationship group.

Levene's test indicated that the variances across the two groups were homogeneous for each of the five discrepancy scores (F = .859 for DS BP Emotional Instability, .011 for DS BP Practicality, .068 for DS BP Dynamism, .018 for DS BP Friendliness, .713 for DS BP Reflectiveness, all with $p > .05$). Although the inspection of the descriptive statistics and the pooled variance estimates revealed that the long-term relationship group indeed exhibited smaller discrepancy scores (hence greater self-brand personality congruence) than the short-term relationship group, these differences were not statistically significant [$t(204)$ = .932 for DS BP Emotional Instability, t = .405 for DS BP Practicality, .058 for DS BP Dynamism, .084 for DS BP Friendliness, .948 for DS BP Reflectiveness, all with $p > .05$]. Therefore, H4 was not supported.

This result is unexpected but may be explained as follows. First, evidence from the interpersonal attraction domain with regards to the configuration of personality complementarity taking precedence in long-term relationships is limited. Previous research has not exactly pinpointed the stage of the relationship where complementarity takes over (Nowicki & Manheim, 1991). In addition, it is worth highlighting that similarity and complementarity are not mutually exclusive (Furnham & Tsoi, 2012); this means that in a relationship both configurations might be exhibited, each one referring to different combinations of characteristics. It is therefore possible that, although complementarity might be exhibited simultaneously with similarity, this does not necessarily mean that it takes prevalence over similarity after a certain point. Second, it is possible that the complementarity effect in the later stages of a relationship is shaded by the fact that personality similarities take longer to be

discovered (Luo & Klohnen, 2005). Third, as consumers tend to consider their favourite objects as part of their extended selves (Belk, 1988), the more familiar they become with them and the longer these brands have been parts of their lives, it is increasingly possible that they consciously or subconsciously consider that a certain brand has rubbed-off on them its personality traits (Park & Roedder-John, 2010); hence, they may *perceive* their long-term brand partner's personality as similar to their own, at least in some aspects, rather than complementary, a conclusion consistent with previous research studying complementarity in interpersonal styles (Dryer & Horowitz, 1997). One final explanation might rest with the youthful profile of the sample. Even though more than 53% of respondents indicated that they had interacted with their favourite brand for more than 3 years (see Table 7-4 in Chapter 7), almost 80% of them were less than 26 years old at the time (see Table 7-1). It is possible that their self-reported length of consumer-brand relationship includes discontinuous interactions with the favourite brand, especially if we take into consideration students' tendency to experiment with brands (Moore, et al., 2002) as explained in Chapter 5; interviewees in the qualitative stage also referred to on-and-off brand relationships. It is thus highly likely that long-enduring, stable consumer-brand relationships were not sufficiently represented in the sample, resulting in a weakened manifestation of the complementarity configuration to the long-term relationship group.

8.7. Testing the Predictive Power of the New Self-Brand Personality Alignment Measure over Existing, Similarity-Based Self-Brand Congruence Measures

8.7.1. Introduction

The influence of actual and ideal self-brand congruence (S-BC) on desirable brand-related outcomes has been extensively investigated in previous research (section 3.4.5), as a means to explain, for example, consumers' brand preferences or loyalty (Bellenger, et al., 1976; Kressmann, et al., 2006; Sirgy, 1985). To date, only measures capturing similarity configurations have been employed in such analyses. It is proposed that the newly developed measure of self-brand personality alignment capturing both similarity and complementarity configurations will have greater predictive power against existing measures capturing only similarity (H5). For this reason, a series of

brand-related outcomes were investigated, and the relative predictive powers of existing, similarity-based congruence measures and the new measure of self-brand personality alignment were tested and compared for each one of them. In this sense, H5 is an umbrella for a series of hypotheses relating to individual outcomes (H5a-H5o).

The direct, similarity-based measures of S-BC that were compared against the new measure of self-brand personality alignment were drawn from the Malär, et al. (2011) study. Specifically, in the final section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate (from 1: Strongly disagree to 7: Strongly agree) their level of agreement/disagreement to four statements: the first two referred to actual S-BC ("*The personality of my favourite brand is consistent with how I see myself*" & "*The personality of my favourite brand is a mirror image of me*") and the other two to ideal S-BC ["*The personality of my favourite brand is consistent with how I would like to be (my ideal self)*" & "*The personality of my favourite brand is a mirror image of the person I would like to be (my ideal self)*"]. Respondents' answers to the two original statements in each case were subjected to individual Exploratory Factor Analyses (Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation) in order to derive single composite measures of actual and ideal S-BC, respectively. Two factor scores were thus calculated for each participant, based on their responses in each set of items. Results showed that the two items of actual S-BC loaded onto a single factor and explained 88.0% of the overall variance, while the two items of ideal S-BC explained 91.2% of the total variance. The reliability analysis of both sets confirmed internal consistency (.86 for actual S-BC and .90 for ideal S-BC).

Therefore, for each brand-related outcome, the predictive powers of three measures were compared: i) direct, similarity-based actual S-BC measure (from Malär, et al.), ii) direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC measure (from Malär, et al.), and iii) the new measure of self-brand personality alignment from this study (capturing both similarity and complementarity configurations). For most tests, discriminant analysis was performed, with the exception of two outcomes (current loyalty and separation distress), where regression analysis was used due to the nature of the corresponding variables (metric).

In essence, discriminant analysis assesses whether a set of independent variable(s) (in this case, respondents' S-BC scores) can predict respondents' membership of groups (e.g. low vs high levels of satisfactions, trust, and so on for all outcomes tested). Discriminant analysis was considered an appropriate technique because it could: i) accommodate for the fact that the new alignment measure consisted of five metric

variables (i.e. the five discrepancy scores) which would be inputted as the independent variables; ii) accommodate for the fact that additional, non-metric variables [the binary variables: respondents' gender (male/female), product category of the favourite brand (clothing/technology) and length of consumer-brand relationship (up to 3 years/above 3 years)] were to be inputted into the tests as additional independent variables in order to control for their effects as well; iii) provide a comparison platform for the predictive power of the three different measures. Discriminant analysis was therefore used as it is the most appropriate technique to accommodate one categorical dependent variable (as was the case for most of the brand-related outcomes) and the inclusion of multiple metric (i.e. the five discrepancy scores) and non-metric (i.e. gender, product category, length of consumer-brand relationship) independent variables (Hair, et al., 2010). One issue of caution in discriminant analysis is that groups need to have approximately equal sizes in order to avoid problems in estimation (Hair, et al., 2010; Morrison, 1969).

For each outcome (i.e. dependent variable), six rounds of tests were conducted. In the first round, the five discrepancy scores (i.e. the new measure) were inputted as the independent variables. In the second round, the five discrepancy scores along with three additional variables, respondents' gender, category of the favourite brand and length of consumer-brand relationship, were inputted as the independent variables. The rest of the rounds referred to the direct, similarity-based measures. Specifically, in the third round, the direct, actual S-BC composite score (from Malär, et al.) was inputted as the independent variable. In the fourth round, respondents' gender, category of the favourite brand and length of consumer-brand relationship were included as additional independent variables. The fifth and sixth rounds repeated the third and fourth round but this time, the direct, ideal S-BC composite score (from Malär, et al.) was inputted. All results were inspected and compared based on three criteria: i) the significance ($p < .05$) of the model (i.e. the overall significance when the model is consisted of only one discriminant function as in the case of two groups, and the significance of each of the discriminant functions when there are more than two groups), ii) the percentage of variance explained (represented by $1 -$ Wilks' λ), and iii) for those tests that were conducted via discriminant analysis, the percentage of cases correctly classified (i.e. how well the discriminant analysis classified respondents in the groups). In this sense, the results that will be presented in the next sections will essentially consist of one table for each outcome providing information on these three criteria, plus information on those variables that entered the discriminant function

significantly (loading above .40); these will be presented in the order of significance (i.e. the variable with the higher loading is presented first, etc.).

The section is structured as follows. First, the results relating to the brand-related outcomes predicted better by the new measure of self-brand personality alignment are presented and explained. The second sub-section reports and explains the results of outcomes predicted better by either or both the direct, similarity-based, actual and/or ideal S-BC measures (from Malär, et al.). Then, the results of outcomes explained equally well by all the measures are presented. The final sub-section presents the outcomes that were not predicted in a statistically significant way by any measure.

8.7.2. Brand-Related Outcomes Predicted Better by the New Self-Brand Personality Alignment Measure

Among all the brand-related outcomes that had been included in the survey and respondents had been asked to offer their opinions on, five were predicted better by the new measure of self-brand personality alignment that captures both complementarity and similarity configurations; each one is discussed separately below.

Perceptions of Favourite Brand's Quality (H5a)

Respondents' perceptions of their favourite brand's quality were captured by asking them to indicate the extent to which they believed that products of their favourite brand have high quality, from 1: Not at all to 7: Very much. Respondents were then split in three groups of approximately equal sizes: those who perceived that their favourite brand had low/medium quality, high quality and very high quality, respectively.

Discriminant analysis was conducted with perceptions of favourite brand's quality as the dependent variable in six rounds, each with the following independent variables: i) the five discrepancy scores, ii) the five discrepancy scores plus respondents' gender (G), product category of the favourite brand (PC) and length of consumer-brand relationship (LoR), iii) the direct, similarity-based, actual S-BC measure (from Malär, et al.), iv) the direct, similarity-based, actual S-BC measure (from Malär, et al.) plus G, PC, and LoR, v) the direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure (from Malär, et al.), vi) the direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure (from Malär, et al.), plus G, PC, and LoR. The results were compared on three criteria: the significance of the model/individual

functions in the case of more than two groups in the dependent variable, the percentage of variance explained and the percentage of cases correctly classified. Table 8-6 shows that the new measure of self-brand personality alignment was the only one to predict respondents' perceptions of their favourite brand's quality. Neither the direct, similarity-based actual nor ideal S-BC measures (from Malär, et al.) entered their discriminant functions significantly. The results therefore provide full support for H5a.

Table 8-6: Comparison of discriminant analysis tests for respondents' perceptions of their favourite brand's quality

Independent variables	Statistical significance of the model	% of variance explained	% of cases correctly classified	Variables contributing significantly (discriminant loading above .40)
The new measure	Function 1	11.1%	48.1%	Discrepancy scores of BP Practicality, Emotional Instability, Reflectiveness
The new measure plus G, PC, LoR	Function 1	16%	52.4%	Discrepancy score BP Practicality
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC	No			
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Function 1	10.7%	47.1%	PC
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC	No			
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Function 1	9.9%	48.1%	PC

Intuitive Fit with the Favourite Brand (H5f)

Respondents' perceptions of the extent to which each time they purchased/used their favourite brand it felt 'right' to them intuitively (from 1: Not at all to 7: Very much), were used to split respondents into two groups of approximate equal size: those perceiving low/medium levels and those perceiving high levels of intuitive fit. Table 8-7 shows that the new measure has greater predictive power than both the actual and

ideal S-BC measures capturing only similarity (from Malär, et al.), as it explains the largest percentage of variance of the three measures. H5f is therefore supported.

Table 8-7: Comparison of discriminant analysis tests for respondents' perceptions of intuitive fit with their favourite brand

Independent variables	Statistical significance of the model	% of variance explained	% of cases correctly classified	Variables contributing significantly
The new measure	Yes	7.3%	64.1%	Discrepancy score of BP Friendliness, BP Dynamism, BP Reflectiveness
The new measure plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	10.7%	64.1%	Discrepancy score of BP Friendliness (marginally)
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC	Yes	5.4%	61.7%	Direct, similarity-based, actual S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	5.9%	62.1%	Direct, similarity-based, actual S-BC measure & PC
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC	Yes	6%	64.1%	Direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	6.6%	61.7%	Direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure & PC

Passion towards the Favourite Brand (H5g)

Table 8-8 presents the comparison of predictive power among the three measures in relation to respondents' feelings of passion towards their favourite brands. Respondents had been asked to indicate, from 1: Not at all to 7: Very much, the extent to which they found themselves desiring to use their favourite brand. Two groups of approximately equal size were created: those perceiving/experiencing low/moderate levels and those perceiving/experiencing high levels of passion. It can clearly be seen that the new measure of self brand personality alignment explains the largest percentage of variance and has the greatest predictive accuracy, as exhibited by the large percentage of cases correctly classified. The results provide full support for H5g.

Table 8-8: Comparison of discriminant analysis tests for respondents' perceptions of passion towards their favourite brand

Independent variables	Statistical significance of the model	% of variance explained	% of cases correctly classified	Variables contributing significantly
The new measure	Yes	7.1%	64.6%	Discrepancy scores of BP Practicality, BP Dynamism, BP Reflectiveness
The new measure plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	10%	67.5%	Discrepancy scores of BP Practicality, BP Dynamism
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC	Yes	2.7%	61.2%	Direct, similarity-based, actual S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	No			
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC	Yes	3.6%	64.1%	Direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	No			

Pleasure from Using the Favourite Brand (H5h)

Two groups of almost equal size were formed from respondents' answers to the question of the extent to which they found the experience of using their favourite brand pleasurable (from 1: Not at all to 7: Very much): those experiencing low/moderate levels of pleasure and those experiencing high levels of pleasure. Once again, the results (shown in Table 8-9) confirmed the hypothesis that the new measure of self-brand personality alignment is stronger than both of Malär, et al.'s direct, similarity-based measures; H5h is thus corroborated. Indeed, Table 8-9 shows that the direct, similarity-based actual S-BC measure (from Malär, et al.) does not even produce a statistically significant discriminant function, whilst the direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC measure, although producing a function, explains much less variance than the new measure.

Table 8-9: Comparison of discriminant analysis tests for respondents' perceptions of pleasure from using their favourite brand

Independent variables	Statistical significance of the model	% of variance explained	% of cases correctly classified	Variables contributing significantly
The new measure	Yes	5.6%	59.7%	Discrepancy scores of BP Dynamism, BP Practicality, BP Emot/al Instability
The new measure plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	7.9%	60.7%	Discrepancy scores of BP Dynamism, BP Practicality, LoR and marginally discrepancy score of BP Emotional Instability
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC	No			
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	No			
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC	Yes	3.1%	52.9%	Direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	4.8%	62.1%	Direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure & LoR

Resistance to Negative Comments Made by Others about the Favourite Brand (H5o)

Respondents' answers about the extent to which they would question in their mind others' negative comments about their favourite brand (from 1: Not at all to 7: Very much) were used to split them into three groups of approximately equal sizes (low, moderate and high levels of resistance to negative comments). The comparison of the predictive power and accuracy of the three measures demonstrated the superiority of the new measure of self-brand personality alignment capturing both similarity and complementarity configurations over both of Malär, et al.'s measures, as it was the only one that produced a statistically significant discriminant function (Table 8-10). H5o is therefore fully supported.

**Table 8-10: Comparison of discriminant analysis tests for respondents'
perceptions of resistance to negative comments made by others about their
favourite brand**

Independent variables	Statistical significance of the model	% of variance explained	% of cases correctly classified	Variables contributing significantly
The new measure	Function 1	10.5%	49.5%	Discrepancy scores of BP Dynamism, BP Reflectiveness and BP Emotional Instability
The new measure plus G, PC, LoR	No			
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC	No			
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	No			
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC	No			
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	No			

8.7.3. Brand-Related Outcomes Predicted Better by the Existing, Similarity-Based Self-Brand Congruence Measures

Among the 15 different brand-related outcomes that were investigated for the
purposes of H5, there were only two for which Malär, et al.'s direct, similarity-based
measures of actual and/or ideal S-BC demonstrated stronger predictive power:
perceptions of frequency of thoughts relating to the favourite brand and perceptions of
the favourite brand's contribution/importance to the respondent's life meaning. The
results for each outcome are presented and explained below.

Frequent Thoughts about the Favourite Brand (H5l)

Respondents had been asked to indicate the extent to which they found themselves having thoughts about their favourite brand, from 1: Not at all to 7: Very much. Their responses were used to split the sample into two groups of almost identical sizes: low frequency and moderate/high frequency of thoughts. Interestingly, the new measure of self-brand personality alignment did not produce a statistically significant discriminant function (Table 8-11); hence H5l is not supported. In contrast, both the actual and the ideal S-BC measures significantly predicted respondents' frequency of thoughts about their favourite brands, with the former exhibiting greater predictive power.

Table 8-11: Comparison of discriminant analysis tests for respondents' perceptions of frequency of thoughts about their favourite brand

Independent variables	Statistical significance of the model	% of variance explained	% of cases correctly classified	Variables contributing significantly
The new measure	No			
The new measure plus G, PC, LoR	No			
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC	Yes	10.4%	63.6%	Direct, similarity-based, actual S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	13.6%	66.5%	Direct, similarity-based, actual S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC	Yes	7.6%	63.6%	Direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	10.2%	62.1%	Direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure

The result is difficult to interpret. It seems that, for some reason, complementarity configurations in self-brand personality alignment are not related at all with frequency of thoughts about the branded relationship partner. One possible explanation for this is that, in order to avoid feelings of insecurity and dissonance arising when making brand choices, consumers might be actively choosing to focus their thoughts to those personality aspects of their favourite brand which they consider similar to their own.

Contribution/Importance of the Favourite Brand to Consumer's Life Meaning (H5m)

An effort was made to capture respondents' perceptions about the contribution/importance of their favourite brand to their lives, by asking them to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement (from 1: Strongly disagree to 7: Strongly agree) with the following statement: *"It is easy to imagine a fulfilled life without my favourite brand"*. The statement was phrased using negation in order to control for acquiescence effects (Corbetta, 2003; Fowler, 2009; Weijters & Baumgartner, 2012). Upon reverse-coding for the purposes of subsequent analysis, respondents were split into two groups between those who considered that their favourite brand made a small or moderate/high contribution to their life. The results did not support H5m, as the new alignment measure did not produce a statistically significant solution (Table 8-12).

Table 8-12: Comparison of discriminant analysis tests for respondents' perceptions of their favourite brand's contribution/importance to their life meaning

Independent variables	Statistical significance of the model	% of variance explained	% of cases correctly classified	Variables contributing significantly
The new measure	No			
The new measure plus G, PC, LoR	No			
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC	Yes	5.4%	62.6%	Direct, similarity-based, actual S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	6.7%	64.1%	Direct, similarity-based, actual S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC	Yes	2.4%	58.3%	Direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	No			

Malär, et al.'s direct, similarity-based measure of actual S-BC exhibited the strongest predictive power, albeit it only explained 5.4% of the variance when inputted as the sole independent variable. One explanation is that the negation phrasing of the questions may have confused respondents (De Vaus, 2002b; Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011). Besides this, it is also possible that the question could not appropriately capture the full nuance of a concept as complex as the overall importance of a brand in a consumer's life.

8.7.4. Brand-Related Outcomes Predicted Equally Well by both the New Self-Brand Personality Alignment Measure and the Existing, Similarity-Based Self-Brand Congruence Measures

In addition to the five brand-related outcomes which the new measure of self-brand personality alignment predicted better, there were also three outcomes which the new measure predicted equally well with the direct, similarity-based measures of actual and/or ideal S-BC (from Malär, et al.): respondents' future loyalty intentions, overall love towards the favourite brand, and their perceptions of the potential distress they would feel in the scenario of their favourite brand not existing anymore in their lives. Each one is individually discussed below.

Future Loyalty Intentions (H5e)

In the questionnaire, respondents had been asked to indicate the extent to which they believed that they would continue buying their favourite brand in the future (from 1: Not at all to 7: Very much). Their responses were used to split the sample into two almost equal-sized categories: those with low/moderate intentions to continue purchasing their favourite brand and those with strong intentions.

The results from the comparison of the predictive power of the three measures (Table 8-13) showed partial support for H5e. When entered in the analysis individually, the new measure did not produce statistically significant results, while the actual and ideal S-BC measures explained a very low percentage of variability (2% and 4%, respectively). However, when the measures were inputted along with the additional variables controlling for effects of respondents' gender, product category of the favourite brand and length of the relationship, the new measure performed significantly better than the other two, explaining the largest percentage of variance; hence, H5e is partially supported.

Table 8-13: Comparison of discriminant analysis tests for respondents' perceptions of their future loyalty intentions towards their favourite brand

Independent variables	Statistical significance of the model	% of variance explained	% of cases correctly classified	Variables contributing significantly
The new measure	No			
The new measure plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	10.3%	66.5%	Discrepancy score of BP Dynamism, PC & LoR
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC	Yes	2%	62.1%	Direct, similarity-based, actual S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	6.6%	67.5%	PC, LoR & Direct, similarity-based, actual S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC	Yes	4%	59.7%	Direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	8.4%	68.4%	Direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure. PC, LoR

The product category of the favourite brand and the length of the consumer-brand relationship entered all discriminant functions significantly. This implies that these two factors played an important role in respondents' intentions to continue purchasing their favourite brand in the future. This result may be explained as follows.

When respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire for their favourite brand in either clothing or technology, there was no restriction imposed on them about the actual product type they would select. They were left to decide for themselves whether they would complete the questionnaire for clothing for different occasions (shoe-wear, gym-wear, accessories, etc.). Upon revisiting the list of the most frequently mentioned favourite brands (Table 7-3 in Chapter 7) it could be argued that, while respondents currently view these brands as favourites, they may consider that this might change in the future. For example, Topshop might not be a favourite brand anymore when respondents enter a professional career and more formal clothing styles may be needed, hence shifting the focus from the product type of casual clothing to the product

type of formal/work-related clothing. Similarly with technology, Sony PlayStation might descend off its status as favourite once the respondents start their own families and other forms of entertainment may take precedence. This explanation is consistent with the findings from the qualitative phase, where some interviewees suggested that, despite being loyal to a certain brand now, which represented their current ideal choice, they intended to switch to other brands in the future that would suit better the images they would like to project or that would suit their future life circumstances.

It is also not surprising that the length of the consumer-brand relationship entered the function significantly as well. It is possible that, while a consumer might feel enthusiastic about a certain brand with which they have interacted for a short period of time, this does not necessarily mean that the brand has established itself as a relationship partner, at least not until the relationship is tested further and the brand's characteristics are validated as meaningful to the consumer in the long run. Therefore, while a consumer might feel more committed to a long-term brand partner, and thus, more hesitant to disrupt the relationship, this is not necessarily the case with brief brand interactions, such as Fournier's (1998) 'flings'.

Overall Love for the Favourite Brand (H5i)

Respondents were also asked to explicitly declare 'love' for their favourite brands. Specifically, they were invited to indicate, from 1: Not at all to 7: Very much, how much they thought they loved their favourite brand. The sample was split into two groups of approximately equal size: those with low/moderate and with high expression of love. The comparison of the predictive power of the three measures (Table 8-14) showed that, when entered individually, the new measure of alignment performed comparably well with the other two measures, explaining much more variability than the ideal S-BC measure and slightly less than the actual S-BC measure. Therefore, H5i is partially supported. The difference is so minimal that it could still be argued that the new measure performs better than the other two measures, especially if we take into consideration that it is much stronger than the other two in terms of predictive accuracy (65% of cases correctly classified in comparison to 62.1% and 62.6% for the actual and ideal S-BC measures, respectively).

Table 8-14: Comparison of discriminant analysis tests for respondents' perceptions of overall love towards their favourite brand

Independent variables	Statistical significance of the model	% of variance explained	% of cases correctly classified	Variables contributing significantly
The new measure	Yes	5.9%	65%	Discrepancy scores of BP Practicality, BP Reflectiveness
The new measure plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	8%	64.6%	Discrepancy score of BP Practicality, G, Discrepancy score of BP Reflectiveness, PC
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC	Yes	6.4%	62.1%	Direct, similarity-based, actual S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	11.2%	66%	Direct, similarity-based, actual S-BC measure & G
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC	Yes	4.8%	62.6%	Direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	9%	62.6%	Direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure & G

The results are so similar that it is difficult to meaningfully interpret the measures' slight differences in the percentage of variance explained. What could perhaps be worth highlighting is the fact that the favourite brand's product category only enters the discriminant function significantly alongside the new self-brand personality alignment measure, but not alongside the actual and ideal S-BC measures. This means that only the solution with the new measure was able to capture a potentially important explanatory factor in regards to consumers' perceptions of overall love: that of product category. According to Belk (1988), we tend to consider as part of our selves entities that fall beyond our very own bodies, irrespective of the 'distance' between us and them. Clothing is one of these types of possessions that we often consider as our own, assisting us in shaping our identities, but which is very close to our bodies and is considered a very central element of who we are; it affects our perceptions of ourselves and of others (Belk, Bahn, & Mayer, 1982). Belk (1988) provides substantive evidence to support that clothing is an integral part of one's self, when he refers to our hesitancy to wear pieces of clothing previously worn by someone else. It seems that the closer our possessions are to the body, the more central they are to our sense of self. If we

consider that respondents in this study were invited to complete the questionnaire for their favourite brand in either clothing or technology, then it is easy to understand why the inclusion of the product category variable in the discriminant function is important: because it possibly captures the fact that we perhaps consider brands belonging to product categories closer to our bodies (clothing), as more integral parts of our selves than others which are for example objects we simply use (e.g. favourite tablet device). This closeness is perhaps a crucial factor determining the intensity of emotional engagement (e.g. explicit declaration of love) with brands in certain product categories in comparison to brands in others. An Independent samples t-test was conducted for this purpose, yet did not produce statistically significant differences (p > .05) in regards to the perceptions of overall love for those that completed the questionnaire for their favourite brand in clothing and those that completed the questionnaire for their favourite brand in technology. This is actually not surprising given that 60 out of the 206 responses referred to a currently very popular technology brand (Apple).

Separation Distress (H5j)

Respondents' perceptions of the distress they would feel in a potential separation from their favourite brands were captured using a two-item scale. Survey participants were asked to respond to the following two questions: i) *"Suppose your favourite brand were to go out of existence, to what extent, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (very much), would you feel Anxiety?"*; and ii) *"Suppose your favourite brand were to go out of existence, to what extent, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (very much), would you feel Fear?"*. Responses to the two items were aggregated into a single composite measure (section 7.7), computed using Exploratory Factor Analysis (Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation).

As the composite measure of separation distress was now a metric variable, it was inputted as the dependent variable in a linear regression. As with the rest of the outcomes, six rounds of tests were conducted. The results, presented in Table 8-15, show that when entered individually, the new measure of self-brand personality alignment predicted respondents' perceptions of separation distress better than Malär, et al.'s direct, similarity-based measures, as it explained the largest percentage of variance. When additional explanatory variables are entered in the model, the new measure performs equally well with Malär, et al.'s ideal S-BC measure, but explains a

smaller percentage of variance than the actual S-BC measure. Although the new measure is clearly superior when entered individually, H5j is partially supported.

Table 8-15: Comparison of regression analysis tests for respondents' perceptions of distress resulting from their potential separation from their favourite brands

Independent variables	Statistical significance of the model	% of variance explained	Variables contributing significantly
The new measure	Yes	10.5%	Discrepancy scores of BP Emotional Instability and BP Practicality
The new measure plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	16.6%	Discrepancy score of Emotional Instability & G
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC	Yes	7.6%	Direct, similarity-based, actual S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	20.6%	Direct, similarity-based, actual S-BC measure, PC & G
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC	Yes	4.7%	Direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	16.3%	PC, Direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure & G

Once again, the differences among the three measures are minimal and difficult to interpret. The only real difference that seems to account for the larger percentage of variance explained by the direct, similarity-based measure of actual S-BC is the statistically significant presence of the variable 'product category', which did not enter significantly alongside the new measure of alignment. Similarly to overall brand love, this result also seems to suggest that product category is crucial for the respondent's high emotional engagement with a certain brand (i.e. to such an extent that they explicitly express love for, and anxiety/fear towards the possibility of being separated from the branded relationship partner).

The discussions with the interviewees in the qualitative phase showed that these strong feelings towards the favourite brands were not experienced by all; this was also supported by the examination of the descriptive results for the two statements referring to Anxiety and Fear (see Table 7-9), which both presented relatively low mean scores. The interviews clearly confirmed that the product category, and

specifically the level of involvement with a certain product category, is a significant factor influencing whether the consumer is distraught when presented with the scenario of potential separation from their favourite brand: interviewees indicated that they would not be particularly upset if some of their favourite brands in relatively unimportant categories did not exist anymore; however, when presented with the same scenario for brands in categories such as clothing and technology, they seemed much more stricken.

While the results from the qualitative study can by no means be considered conclusive, some examples from the interviews could perhaps help explain the role of the product category and why the measure of actual S-BC explained the largest percentage of variance. For instance, although interviewees seemed to also experience some forms of separation distress for technology brands, they seemed to be more concerned with the expected inconvenience, and that they would need substantial amounts of time and effort to re-learn a new technology device/software, rather than with the personal, emotional effect this potential separation would have on them. In contrast, when they referred to clothing (or make-up) brands, their reactions revealed much more tension and angst, and some of them admitted that they would even feel a loss of self.

This relates back to what was discussed earlier about the possessions being part of the extended sense of self (Belk, 1988) and that perhaps the closeness between consumers and their favourite clothing brands plays a more central role to one's actual identity. Once again, Independent samples t-tests were conducted to investigate the relationship between product category and consumers' feelings of Anxiety and Fear; results indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the two product categories, with respondents reporting higher levels of Anxiety and Fear for their favourite technology brands than for their favourite clothing brands. The results are attributed to the fact that 60 respondents out of 206 completed the questionnaire for Apple, a highly popular and iconic brand that currently attracts intense emotional reactions from consumers.

8.7.5. Brand-Related Outcomes Not Predicted by either the New Self-Brand Personality Alignment Measure or the Existing, Similarity-Based Self-Brand Congruence Measures

Five brand-related outcomes were not predicted by either the new self-brand personality alignment, or the direct, similarity-based actual/ideal S-BC measures (from Malär, et al.): overall satisfaction with, and trust towards the favourite brand, perceptions of current loyalty towards the favourite brand, willingness to forgive its potential transgressions, and engagement in positive word-of-mouth about the favourite brand. Before proceeding further to discuss each one separately, it is worth mentioning that this lack of relationship may be attributed to the fact that in some cases, self-brand congruence effects do not always materialise, because other factors become more important (Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987).

Overall Satisfaction with the Favourite Brand (H5b)

In order to capture their overall satisfaction with their favourite brands, respondents were invited to consider all their experiences with their favourite brand until that point and to indicate their level of overall satisfaction, from 1: Very dissatisfied to 7: Very satisfied. Respondents' perceptions of overall satisfaction were not predicted by any of the three measures, including the new one; hence, H5b was not supported.

Besides the fact that previous research has also provided inconsistent findings with regards to the relationship between self-brand congruence and satisfaction (see section 4.2.3), there are many possible explanations for this result. First, the single-item response scale that was used for the purposes of brevity might have not captured the full nuance of the concept; past studies have used multi-item scales to measure consumers' satisfaction [e.g. Jamal and Al-Marri (2007)]. Moreover, responses to the question were concentrated towards the top end of the scale: out of the 206 respondents, only 9 cases indicated levels of satisfaction below the middle point (4: neither dissatisfied nor satisfied) and the vast majority of respondents (84%) indicated that they were very satisfied with their favourite brand, which is not surprising given that they were asked about their *favourite* brands. As a matter of fact, all interviewees in the qualitative phase had clearly indicated that they were very satisfied with their

favourite brands. The concentration on the higher ends of the scale, however, made the formation of the groups of respondents for the purposes of discriminant analysis difficult, as, besides the need to be of approximate equal size, the groups also need to be meaningful. In this case, the first group (low/medium satisfaction) consisted of 33 respondents; the second group (high satisfaction) consisted of 103 respondents and the third group (very high satisfaction) of 70 respondents. This size inequality is perhaps the most important reason why the discriminant analyses failed to discriminate among the three groups.

Overall Trust towards the Favourite Brand (H5c)

Respondents were also urged to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement with the following sentence: *"I trust my favourite brand"*, from 1: Strongly disagree to 7: Strongly agree. Similar to perceptions of overall satisfaction, respondents' perceptions of overall trust were also quite concentrated to the higher end of the scale, with approximately 88% placing high or very high trust in their favourite brands. Once again, the responses were used to split the sample into three groups: low/moderate, high, and very high levels of trust. Although meaningful, the groups' sizes differed.

The results from the six rounds of discriminant analysis showed that the only statistically significant function was the one where the new measure of self-brand personality alignment was inputted as the sole independent variable. In fact, the function accounted for 9.5% of between group variability and the inspection of the structure matrix revealed that the discrepancy scores of BP Emotional Instability and BP Dynamism were the two significant predictors, with 51% of the cases being correctly classified. Although these results seem to suggest the superiority of the new measure in predicting respondents' levels of trust towards their favourite brands, it was decided that the result would not be retained as valid. The reason for this related to the violation of the assumption in discriminant analysis that variance-covariance matrices are equivalent. The statistic that examines this null hypothesis (i.e. that the covariance matrices do not differ between the three groups) is the Box's M test, which was found statistically significant. However, this is not an issue of concern for relatively large samples as this one. What was an area of concern though were the relatively unequal log determinants, which need to be similar. Therefore, the results were discarded and it was decided that H5c was not supported.

Respondents' current loyalty towards their favourite brand was captured by asking them to indicate their agreement/disagreement (from 1: Strongly disagree to 7: Strongly agree) with three statements: i) *"I'll 'do without' rather than buy another brand"*; ii) *"I always find myself consistently buying this particular brand over other brands in the same product category"*; iii) *"Even if another brand is on sale, I still buy this brand".* In order for loyalty perceptions to be included in further analysis, multicollinearity needed to be removed and a single score of current loyalty to be derived for each respondent. The process has already been described in section 7.6.4. The single composite score of overall current loyalty perceptions was now a metric variable; hence it was inputted as the dependent variable to linear regression analysis. The results from the six rounds of linear regression are presented in Table 8-16.

Table 8-16: Comparison of regression analysis tests for respondents' perceptions of current loyalty towards their favourite brand

Independent variables	Statistical significance of the model	% of variance explained	Variables contributing significantly
The new measure	No		
The new measure plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	8.4%	LoR
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC	Yes	3.1%	Direct, similarity-based, actual S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	12.1%	LoR, PC & Direct, similarity-based, actual S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC	Yes	1.9%	Direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Yes	10.5%	LoR, PC & Direct, similarity-based, ideal S-BC measure

The results show that the new measure of alignment did not produce statistically significant results. H5d is therefore not supported. Respondents' current loyalty was better predicted by Malär, et al.'s actual S-BC measure, although when entered individually, the percentage of variance explained by the actual S-BC and the ideal S-BC measures was very small (3.1% and 1.9%). These findings overall suggest that S-BC in

general (i.e. irrespective of whether it is similarity-based or incorporates both similarity and complementarity configurations) may not be a particularly strong predictor of consumers' current loyalty towards their favourite brand. In light of the evidence from the qualitative phase and from previous research on the relationship between S-BC and loyalty, several reasons may explain this.

First, it is possible that respondents to this survey exhibited multi-brand rather than single-brand loyalty (Cunningham, 1956). The evidence from the in-depth interviews confirms this: although some interviewees had engaged in strong, and in some cases, long relationships with their favourite brands, they were not necessarily exclusively loyal to them. This supports research suggesting that exclusive devotion might not always be a reality within the context of consumer-brand relationships (Fournier & Yao, 1997), and that consumers tend to feel committed towards certain brands but do not necessarily treat them as exclusive relationship partners. Hence, what the results may be revealing is that the degree of congruence between the consumer's and the brand's characteristics may not significantly influence their loyalty to the brand. The in-depth interviews revealed some of the reasons why this might be the case: higher price of the favourite brand than others in the same category; the brand belonging to a relatively unimportant product category (e.g. shampoo); lack of availability or difficulty in accessing it, etc., or most importantly, the perception that the favourite brand was not appropriate for certain situations/occasions, or when the interviewees wished to project certain images. This desire to be associated with different images was very clear during the interviews and seems to be central for this study's respondents, namely students, that actively experiment with different brands (Moore, et al., 2002) in order to project different identities and to differentiate themselves from others.

The careful examination of the descriptive statistics for participants' responses to each of the three statements used to measure respondents' current loyalty (extensively discussed in section 7.6.4) also supports the lack of exclusive loyalty. Respondents seemed to consistently prefer their favourite brand over others in the same product category (statement ii: mean = 5.02), and this preference seemed to recede when the other brands were available in a lower price (statement iii: mean = 4.14), in full agreement with the findings from the qualitative study. But when taking a closer look of participants' responses to the first statement (i.e. *"I'll 'do without' rather than buy another brand"*), the much lower mean score (2.77) suggests that responses to this particular question are differentiated from responses to the other two items, because

this statement strongly emphasises an unconditional, absolute loyalty to the brand. The low mean score of this first statement is therefore one more indication that respondents seemed to reject exclusive purchase/use of the favourite brand.

Finally and most importantly, previous research has not offered conclusive findings about the direct influence of S-BC on consumers' brand loyalty (see section 4.2.3). Some previous studies exploring the influence of similarity-based S-BC on brand loyalty have found an indirect effect through the inclusion of other variables, such as level of involvement or satisfaction (He & Mukherjee, 2007; Ibrahim & Najjar, 2008; Park & Lee, 2005). It is therefore possible that the predictive power of the new measure of self-brand personality alignment on consumers' perceptions of current loyalty towards their favourite brand might improve upon the inclusion of other moderating variables.

In conclusion, it can be supported that the failure of all measures, including the new measure, to predict consumers' current loyalty towards their favourite brands, stems from the fact that consumers seem to prefer their favourite brands over others in the same product category, but do not necessarily treat them as exclusive relationship partners. In this sense, in the context of consumer-brand relationships, brand loyalty might not be an appropriate term to describe consumers' overall commitment towards their favourite brands, and perhaps the focus of attention should shift towards more emotionally-related outcomes that capture consumers' emotional engagement with their favourite brand choices.

Willingness to Forgive Favourite Brand's Transgressions (H5k)

The insight gained from the qualitative phase suggested that respondents largely trusted that their favourite brand would not disappoint them. Especially for those brands with which respondents were emotionally engaged, they seemed to be much more forgiving when asked to consider how they would react if their favourite brand failed to deliver what was promised or what they had been accustomed to. In the survey therefore, respondents were invited to imagine that up to that point their favourite brand had met/exceeded their expectations, and then to imagine that their favourite brand fails to meet their expectations. They were then asked to indicate, from 1: Not at all to 7: Very much, how willing they would be to purchase the brand again. To test H5k, the sample was split into three groups: low/moderate, high, and very high willingness to forgive the brand's transgressions. The results are shown in Table 8-17.

Table 8-17: Comparison of discriminant analysis tests for respondents' perceptions of willingness to forgive their favourite brand's transgressions (and to re-purchase)

Independent variables	Statistical significance of the model	% of variance explained	% of cases correctly classified	Variables contributing significantly
The new measure	No			
The new measure plus G, PC, LoR	Function 1	12.4%	51.5%	LoR, PC & Discrepancy score of BP Practicality (marginally)
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC	No			
Direct, similarity-based actual S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Function 1	8.9%	48.5%	LoR & PC
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC	No			
Direct, similarity-based ideal S-BC plus G, PC, LoR	Function 1	8.8%	48.1%	LoR & PC

The results show that none of the three measures, either when entered individually or along with additional predictor variables, exhibited a statistically significant association with respondents' willingness to forgive the favourite brand's transgressions. As a result, H5k is not supported. The new measure of self-brand personality alignment, however, seemed to be superior to the other two, as one discrepancy score (BP Practicality) entered the discriminant function, albeit with a marginally significant loading. The result is not easily interpreted; however, the insight from the qualitative phase suggests that it is possible that trust towards the favourite brand is an important moderating variable. Moreover, as previous research has shown (section 4.2.3), the type of transgression plays a significant role; consumers only seem to forgive transgressions that are not self-relevant and are product-related (Trump, 2014). However, in this study, respondents were not informed about the type of transgression, hence each one of them may have interpreted the question differently.

The final outcome that was also not predicted by any of the measures was respondents' engagement in positive word-of-mouth, which was captured by asking participants to indicate, from 1: Never to 7: Very often, how often they have found themselves saying positive things about their favourite brand to other people. The sample was split into three groups of approximately equal size: low/moderate, high and very high frequency of spreading positive word-of-mouth. The results showed no statistically significant association between any of the measures and respondents' engagement in positive word-of-mouth; hence, H5n is not supported. This finding is nonetheless not surprising. We may be avoiding engaging in WOM for brands that have characteristics that complement our own out of fear that others will recognise that we indeed do not have these traits. Moreover, a recent review of WOM-related literature (Lovett, et al., 2013) suggested that there are a number of factors influencing consumers' willingness to engage in word-of-mouth, such as satisfaction (Anderson, 1998). It is therefore possible that aspects such as quality, satisfaction, etc. need to be considered as moderating variables (De Matos & Rossi, 2008).

8.8. Summary & Discussion of Results from Hypotheses Testing

The second phase of the empirical study, the survey, sought to quantitatively investigate the hypotheses relating to the structure and composition of consumers' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities, the patterns of alignment these exhibit with their own personalities, and the influence of these patterns on desirable brand-related outcomes. The results are discussed below and are also summarised in Table 8-18.

With regards to the first objective (i.e. the examination of the structure and composition of consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and of their favourite brands' personalities using the same scale), the results provided full support for H1 and H2, as respondents' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities followed a similar structure but a different factor composition than that of their own personalities, when measured using the same scale of personality. Three of the factors describing respondents' perceptions of their own personalities (Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Extraversion) shared many similarities with three of the dimensions describing respondents' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities (Practicality,

Friendliness and Dynamism, respectively), while one dimension of the favourite brands' personalities perceptions (Reflectiveness) was a condensed version of the corresponding factor of respondents' own personalities (Openness). The most striking difference, however, referred to the formation of a single factor (Emotional Instability), which comprised all negatively-inflected brand personality items.

The examination of the patterns of alignment between respondents' perceptions of their own personalities and those of their favourite brands' personalities revealed a significant result: that this alignment exhibits a complementarity configuration, besides similarity, therefore providing full support for H3. Specifically, the examination of the patterns of alignment between respondents' perceptions of own personalities (HP) and those of their favourite brands' personalities (BP) through Canonical Correlation Analysis revealed two significant relationships: the one between HP Agreeableness, HP Emotional Stability and BP Emotional Instability, which confirmed the Complementarity configuration (i.e. some traits of respondents' favourite brand choices were complementary to respondents' own traits); the other between HP Openness, HP Extraversion (negatively loaded) and BP Reflectiveness which confirmed the Similarity configuration (i.e. some traits of respondents' favourite brand choices were similar to respondents' own traits). This finding is significant for many reasons. First, it represents an original contribution to brand personality and self-brand congruence research areas, as it is the first empirical effort to test in a branding context the complementarity hypothesis originating from the theoretical domain of interpersonal attraction. It also advances research in self-brand congruence, as previous studies had hitherto assumed that self-brand congruence exclusively exhibited a similarity configuration. Furthermore, the revealing of the complementarity configuration contributes to consumer-brand relationship research, as it enhances understanding of the consumer-brand interactions by drawing from theories of interpersonal interaction. Finally, it provides a framework which allows the exploration of the dimensional relationship between consumer and brand personality and can add nuance and detail about the exact aspects of personality that seem to play more (or less) prominent role to the alignment process.

By applying an original modification to the discrepancy scores technique, a new measure of self-brand personality alignment that captures both similarity and complementarity configurations was developed. Following research from the interpersonal attraction domain suggesting that complementarity configurations are

more likely in long-term relationships (Kerckhoff & Davis, 1962), the study examined this proposition in a branding context, using the new alignment measure. While the results did not provide statistically significant support for the premise, respondents' scores indicated that those in longer-term relationships exhibited higher levels of congruence (incorporating both similarity and complementarity effects) than those in shorter-term relationships. H4 was therefore not supported, but a range of explanations were offered [e.g. previous literature has not pinpointed the exact stage when complementarity becomes more prevalent (Nowicki & Manheim, 1991)].

The final survey objective was to test the predictive power of the new measure of self-brand personality alignment capturing both similarity and complementarity configurations over existing, direct, similarity-based measures of actual and ideal self-brand congruence, for a range of brand-related outcomes (H5a-H5o). Overall, the results provided moderately good support for the superiority of the new measure.

Specifically, out of the 15 different outcomes that were investigated, five outcomes were not predicted by either measure (overall satisfaction, overall trust, current loyalty, willingness to forgive the favourite brand's potential transgressions, and engagement in positive word-of-mouth). Perhaps the most notable outcome which was not predicted at all was respondents' current loyalty. One explanation is that it seems brands are not necessarily treated as exclusive relationship partners within the context of consumer-brand relationships (Fournier, 1998), especially if we take into consideration that the sample of the study consisted of students, who actively experiment with brands in order to project different identities (Moore, et al., 2002). Moreover, previous studies have not provided conclusive evidence with regards to a direct influence of similarity-based self-brand congruence on brand loyalty; it has been observed that there is an indirect effect through the inclusion of other variables, such as level of involvement or satisfaction (He & Mukherjee, 2007; Ibrahim & Najjar, 2008; Park & Lee, 2005); hence, the predictive power of the new measure on consumers' perceptions of current loyalty might improve upon the inclusion of other moderating variables.

For the rest of the outcomes, the new measure of alignment predicted five of them better than the actual and ideal self-brand congruence measures capturing only similarity (perceptions of favourite brand's quality, intuitive fit, passion, pleasure, and resistance to negative comments made by others about the favourite brand). The new measure also performed equally well with the other two measures in predicting three

outcomes (future loyalty intentions, overall brand love, and separation distress). What is perhaps worth highlighting at this point is that most of the outcomes that the new measure predicted better or equally well refer to respondents' emotional engagement with their favourite brands: intuitive fit, passion, pleasure, love, separation distress, even the resistance to negative comments made by others, which can be considered as a form of defence for the brand partner. It seems therefore that the new measure might be particularly strong and superior in predicting emotionally-related brand outcomes.

Only two outcomes (frequency of thoughts relating to the favourite brand, and perceptions about the favourite brand's contribution/importance to the consumer's life meaning) were predicted better by the direct, similarity-based measures of actual and/or ideal self-brand congruence. The lack of statistically significant association between the new measure of self-brand personality alignment and respondents' perceptions relating to the frequency of thoughts about their favourite brands might be due to consumers' focusing their thoughts on those personality aspects of the brand that are similar to their own in order to avoid feelings of insecurity/dissonance. The lack of support for the hypothesis relating to the favourite brand's contribution/importance to the respondent's life might be due to the fact that the question, besides its reversed polarity, could not appropriately capture the complex nuance of the concept.

A condensed summary of the results relating to each hypothesis is presented in Table 8-18 below. As a general conclusion, this research demonstrated that there are some self-brand congruence contexts where consumer and brand partners with complementary characteristics indeed attract, and in such contexts, alignment measures incorporating complementarity configurations are advantageous, particularly where the objective is to predict emotionally-related outcomes. The conclusions of both stages of the empirical study will be further discussed in the next and final chapter of the thesis, along with their theoretical, managerial and future research implications.

Table 8-18: Summary of the testing of hypotheses

	Hypothesis confirmed?
H1: The Five Factor Model trait inventory can be meaningfully applied to describe the structure of consumers' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities.	Yes
H2: The factor composition of consumers' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities is different to that of consumers' perceptions of their own personalities.	Yes
H3: Self-brand personality alignment may exhibit a complementarity configuration, besides similarity.	Yes
H4: Complementarity configurations in self-brand personality alignment are more likely in longer-term consumer-brand relationships.	No
H5: A new measure of self-brand personality alignment capturing both complementarity and similarity configurations has greater power than existing measures based solely on similarity configurations in predicting consumers' perceptions of…	Moderately good support
H5a: …their favourite brand's quality	Yes
H5b: …overall satisfaction with their favourite brands	Not predicted by any measure
H5c: …overall trust towards their favourite brands	Not predicted by any measure
H5d: …current loyalty towards their favourite brands	Not predicted by any measure
H5e: …future loyalty intentions towards their favourite brands	Predicted equally well
H5f: …intuitive fit with their favourite brands	Yes
H5g: …feelings of passion relating to the use of their favourite brands	Yes
H5h: …feelings of pleasure relating to the use of their favourite brands	Yes
H5i: …overall love towards their favourite brands	Predicted equally well
H5j: …distress resulting from their potential separation from their favourite brands	Predicted equally well
H5k: …willingness to forgive their favourite brands' potential transgressions	Not predicted by any measure
H5l: …the frequency of their thoughts about their favourite brands	No
H5m: …their favourite brands' contribution/importance to their lives' meaning	No
H5n: …engagement in positive word-of-mouth for their favourite brands	Not predicted by any measure
H5o: …resistance to negative comments made by others about their favourite brands	Yes

9. CONCLUSION

9.1. Introduction

With the goal of enhancing explanations behind consumers' strong preferences for certain brands and of enriching understanding of consumer-brand interactions, this thesis has investigated the patterns of alignment between consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and those of their favourite brands, as well as its influence on desirable brand outcomes. For the fulfilment of its objectives, the study reviewed the relevant literature and developed a conceptual framework with a series of hypotheses. The empirical study consisted of two phases: an exploratory qualitative phase that shed light on complex aspects of consumers' relationships with their favourite brands and a large-scale quantitative phase that tested the conceptual framework and hypotheses.

This chapter reprises the objectives of the thesis, and proceeds to summarise the main findings according to the research objectives. The next two sections consider the theoretical and managerial implications of the findings, while the final two sections outline the study's limitations and propose directions for future research.

9.2. Restatement of Research Objectives

The overarching goal of this thesis was to enhance understanding behind consumers' strong preferences for certain brands. There is a burgeoning literature seeking to explain how consumers make their brand decisions, how they relate to brands, and ultimately why certain brands are preferred over others; two perspectives in particular have recently attracted much interest: the brand as a relationship partner and as a personality. These two perspectives have largely shaped the development of the key theoretical explanation that has prevailed in consumer behaviour and branding research with regards to why and how consumers engage with certain brands more than with others: the Self-Brand Congruence theory (S-BC) (Sirgy, 1982;1985), which proposes that consumers show stronger preference for, and are more likely to develop relationships with, brands that have traits which are congruent with their own traits. Although existing contributions have been highly useful in enhancing our understanding of consumer-brand interactions, this thesis identified that previous research in consumer behaviour and branding has unquestioningly assumed that consumers are drawn to brands with characteristics that *mirror* their own personality

characteristics, that is, that S-BC exhibits a similarity configuration. Yet, by viewing brands as relationship partners and as personalities, research on consumer-brand attraction could draw from interpersonal attraction theories in psychology in order to enrich our understanding of self-brand interactions in general and S-BC mechanisms in particular. Such insight reveals that similarity is not the only configuration exhibited between partners' characteristics, and that a complementarity configuration may be possible. Therefore, this thesis sought to explore self-brand personality alignment in more depth. Specifically the thesis aimed to investigate the possibility of a complementarity configuration between consumers' and brands' personalities, and to explore and test the relationship between consumer and brand personality traits in more detail. The precise research objectives for the thesis therefore were:

i. To review and critique existing literature on the conceptualisation and measurement of human personality and of brand personality.

ii. To examine and critique existing literature relating to the conceptualisation and measurement of self-brand congruence, and to its influence on desirable brand-related outcomes.

iii. To develop a conceptual model of the structure and composition of human and brand personality, the alignment patterns between them, and the effect of this alignment on desirable brand-related outcomes.

iv. To explore, qualitatively, complex aspects of consumers' relationships with brands, their perceptions of those brands' personalities and of the alignment with their own personalities.

v. To investigate, quantitatively, the structure and composition of consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and brands' personalities, the patterns of alignment existing between the two, and the influence of these patterns on desirable brand-related outcomes (i.e. to test the conceptual framework and the hypotheses).

vi. To derive useful, practical recommendations for brand managers regarding the implications of the patterns of self-brand personality alignment for their brands.

The above objectives will be used as the structure according to which the main findings of the thesis will be summarised in the next section.

9.3. Main Findings of the Thesis

9.3.1. Conceptualisation & Measurement of Human and Brand Personality

The first objective of the thesis was to review and critique existing literature on the conceptualisation and measurement of human personality and of brand personality.

In terms of human personality, the thesis identified that the Five Factor Model (Costa Jr & McCrae, 1985;1992), consisted of five human personality dimensions (Emotional Stability, Openness, Agreeableness, Extraversion and Conscientiousness), is considered as the most reliable framework for the measurement of personality perceptions, both for self- and peer-reports. As a result, the FFM was deemed most suitable to measure consumer personality. The evaluation of the different scales that are available to operationalise the FFM showed that one of the most reliable but also parsimonious personality inventories is Saucier's (1994) 40 mini-markers, hence this specific scale was chosen for the empirical study.

In terms of brand personality, the literature review identified two main approaches for the measurement of brand personality perceptions: the free association-based (i.e. data-driven) approach and the human psychology-driven approach. The data-driven approach, with Aaker's (1997) seminal study being the most representative, asks respondents to free-associate items to brands that the researchers themselves have pre-selected irrespectively of their salience to respondents, often adds items from previous scales, and then factor-analyses them to derive underlying dimensions of brand personality; the approach has however been criticised (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003) primarily for including non-personality items and for overlooking a range of personality traits. The human psychology-driven approach involves adopting theories/models of personality directly from the psychology literature to explore the structure of brand personality; while many models exist [e.g. Wiggins (1979)' Interpersonal Circumplex Model], the FFM (Costa Jr & McCrae, 1985;1992) was deemed as a more appropriate choice due to its remarkable robustness across different cultures, life stages and samples. The model has been used in the past to measure brand personality perceptions with at least some success (Caprara, et al., 2001; Ferrandi, et al., 2002; Huang, et al., 2012), yet results seemed to suggest that it might not be *directly and exactly* applied to brand personality.

9.3.2. Conceptualisation & Measurement of Self-Brand Congruence and its Influence on Brand-Related Outcomes

The second objective of the thesis was to review the literature on the conceptualisation and measurement of self-brand congruence and how it influences brand-related outcomes. The review showed that S-BC basically refers to a psychological process of comparison between consumers' own self-images with brand images (Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy, 1982); a close match is referred to as 'high congruence' (and vice versa) and is suggested to lead to consumer-brand attraction and to desirable brand-related behaviour. Indeed, previous research has provided some evidence for the influence of S-BC on brand-related outcomes (e.g. purchase intention, preference, satisfaction, loyalty, etc.), yet results have not always been universally significant.

The review also identified that, overall, the S-BC literature has assumed that this matching between consumer and brand characteristics/images exhibits a similarity configuration (i.e. that consumers are drawn to brands with characteristics/images that *mirror* their own). Under a relational perspective of consumer-brand interactions, the thesis drew from literature in interpersonal attraction, and specifically Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Emerson, 1976; Homans, 1974; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), to reveal that partners' characteristics can exhibit two forms of alignment, similarity *and* complementarity. Complementarity refers to a configuration that allows the one partner to be associated, through their relationship with their partner, with some characteristics that they do now own, yet they desire, in order to fulfil certain goals (Dryer & Horowitz, 1997) and/or reach an ideal state. As S-BC research, to date, has only assumed the existence of a similarity configuration in self-brand personality alignment, this thesis sought to address this important gap in the literature, that is, to explore the possibility that both complementarity and similarity exist in self-brand personality alignment.

Moreover, these two forms of alignment, although not mutually exclusive (Dryer & Horowitz, 1997; Furnham & Tsoi, 2012) as they may refer to separate characteristics, may differ in terms of importance as the relationship progresses: similarity seems important in the initial stages of a relationship (Klohnen & Luo, 2003) when partners seek confirmation that they have made the right choice of partner, while complementarity seems more critical after the relationship has matured (Kerckhoff &

Davis, 1962) because at that stage partners seek to achieve self-growth and enhancement within the relationship.

In terms of measurement of S-BC, the review of the literature revealed that existing measurement techniques, discrepancy scores and direct measures, can only capture similarity configurations. Hence, this thesis identified a need to develop a novel self-brand personality alignment measure that could capture both similarity and complementarity configurations.

Finally, although the review of existing research on self-brand congruence revealed that self-brand congruence has been connected with a range of desirable brand-related outcomes, previous findings are based on measures that only capture similarity. The possibility of a complementarity configuration thus renders the re-examination of the influence of self-brand personality alignment on these outcomes necessary, and dictates that other outcomes/behaviours that are particularly important in the context of consumer-brand relationships and which have been underexplored will also need to be examined further.

9.3.3. *Development of the Conceptual Model of Self-Brand Personality Alignment*

The third objective of the thesis was to develop a conceptual model of self-brand personality alignment and its outcomes. Following the literature review, a conceptual framework was devised, which proposed a series of hypotheses relating to the structure and composition of brand personality, the alignment patterns between consumer and brand personality, and the influence of this alignment on desirable brand-related outcomes:

H1: The Five Factor Model trait inventory can be meaningfully applied to describe the structure of consumers' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities.

H2: The factor composition of consumers' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities is different to that of consumers' perceptions of their own personalities.

H3: Self-brand personality alignment may exhibit a complementarity configuration, besides similarity.

H4: Complementarity configurations in self-brand personality alignment are more likely in longer-term consumer-brand relationships.

H5: A measure of self-brand personality alignment capturing both complementarity and similarity configurations has greater predictive power than measures based solely on similarity configurations (consisted of hypotheses H5a-H5o referring to a series of outcomes).

9.3.4. Consumers' Complex Relationships with their Favourite Brands

The fourth objective of the thesis was to explore, empirically, the complexities of consumers' relationships with their favourite brands. The exploratory, qualitative phase of the empirical study provided useful insight with regards to this, and informed the design of the second stage, the online survey, in multiple ways.

First, the discussion with respondents about their general brand preferences showed that clothing and technology brands were very relevant product categories for this student sample; hence, they were selected for inclusion in the online survey.

Second, the analysis of respondents' comments about their general brand preferences, their dislikes and their favourite brands led to the identification of some crucial differentiating points among the three. The most significant reasons respondents provided for preferring their favourite brands, were issues relating to self-expression and self-enhancement. It was clearly signalled that those brands that fitted their self-concept, their lifestyle and age, that allowed them to fit-in with their peers or other desirable social groups, or allowed them to feel special/unique and present themselves in a differentiated way, were the ones that held special places in their minds/hearts.

Third, the part of the discussions that focused specifically on interviewees' favourite brands allowed a more holistic understanding of the roles of these brands within respondents' personal and social lives, and of their integration as part of respondents' selves. This was achieved through trailing the pathways that those brands follow until they reach the status of 'favourites', and past and present consumption patterns surrounding them. In addition, following these brand relationships throughout their course revealed a range of respondents' cognitive, emotional and behavioural reactions that seemed related to the self-brand personality alignment, such as perceptions of

quality, satisfaction, trust, current and future loyalty intentions, as well as pleasurable experiences from the favourite brand, intuitive fit, overall brand love, separation distress, and willingness to forgive the brand's potential transgressions. These brand-related outcomes were thus included in the online survey as well, in order for their relationship with self-brand personality alignment to be investigated further.

With regards to perceptions of brand personality, it was clear that most respondents did indeed attribute a quite extensive range of human personality traits to brands, including negatively-inflected ones, a finding which supported one of this study's premises that a personality inventory which includes a wider spectrum of traits as well as less favourable characteristics is more appropriate for the measurement of brand personality perceptions. In addition, their descriptions of brands' personalities revealed two important issues: first, some of the favourite brands were selected exactly because they projected a less 'comme-il-faut' personality; second, they indicated that respondents tended to group positive and less favourable characteristics separately. Moreover, the insight from the interviews suggested that those brands that have more central role in the expression of self-images and are more actively incorporated in respondents' personal and social lives were imbued with human personality traits more easily than other brands, and this seemed to be the case for the most favourite brands irrespectively of the product category (i.e. favourite brands were more easily associated with brand personality traits in comparison to less familiar or preferred brands, and the effect was observed across product categories).

Finally, when presented with the idea that consumers choose brands with traits that mirror their own, respondents' comments supported the central hypothesis of this thesis, that although sometimes this might be true (similarity), some of their favourite brands were selected exactly because they provided them with the opportunity to associate with characteristics that they did not possess themselves (complementarity).

9.3.5. Empirical Investigation of the Conceptual Model of Self-Brand Personality Alignment

The fifth objective of the thesis was to empirically test, on a large-scale, the structure and composition of consumer and brand personality, the alignment between the two and its influence on desirable brand-related outcomes. This was achieved through an online survey. The results are presented in separate sub-sections below.

The Structure & Composition of Consumers' Perceptions of their Own Personalities and of their Favourite Brands' Personalities (H1 & H2)

This section summarises the results relating to the structure and composition of consumers' perceptions of their own personalities and those of their favourite brands.

The ratings respondents gave for their perceptions of their own personalities, and of their favourite brands' personalities, were subjected to individual Exploratory Factor Analyses. The results showed that the Five Factor Model of human personality can be meaningfully applied to measure consumers' perceptions of brand personality (**H1**). As expected, when measured on the same FFM-based scale [Saucier's (1994) 40-item scale], the factor composition of respondents' ratings of their favourite brands' personality traits was different to that of their own personality traits (**H2**).

Specifically, respondents' perceptions of their own personalities, with the exception of three deleted items, followed the original structure and composition of Saucier's (1994) mini-markers: Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Emotional Stability, Extraversion, and Openness. The five-factor structure for respondents' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities on the other hand exhibited two important differences. First, as expected, 31 items instead of the original 40 were retained, which confirms suggestions from previous research [e.g. Azoulay and Kapferer (2003)] that some descriptors of human personality are not relevant/applicable to brands. Second, the composition of the five factors bore some similarities, but also some striking differences in comparison to consumers' personalities, which led to different labels being assigned to them: Practicality, Friendliness, Emotional Instability, Dynamism, and Reflectiveness.

The brand personality dimensions Practicality, Friendliness and Dynamism largely resembled the human personality dimensions Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Extraversion, while the brand personality factor Reflectiveness represented a much more condensed and reserved version of the Openness human personality dimension. The most outstanding difference however was the brand personality dimension of Emotional Instability, which was in essence a collection of all the negatively-inflected traits not only from the corresponding human personality factor of Emotional Stability, but also from all the rest of the dimensions. This result provides a substantial empirical verification of suggestions from previous research (Caprara, et al., 2001) that some human personality descriptors might be assigned to different factors and their relationship with other traits might not retain its original form when used to describe

brands' personalities. This result also confirmed the evidence from the exploratory phase of the empirical study, which had shown that respondents tended to attribute negative personality traits even to their favourite brands and to group positive and negative brand traits separately. Overall, this finding lends credibility to the idea that some consumers may prefer certain brands with less favourable characteristics, and hence provides a first confirmation of the idea that perhaps consumers prefer brands with characteristics that do not necessarily mirror their own.

Patterns of Alignment between Consumers' Own Personality Traits and Those of their Favourite Brands (H3) and Implications for the Measurement of Self-Brand Personality Alignment

This section summarises the survey results relating to self-brand personality alignment, which, from the conceptual framework, was hypothesised that may exhibit both similarity and complementarity configurations (**H3**). To test this proposition, respondents' ratings (factor scores) of their own personalities and those of their favourite brands were subjected to Canonical Correlation Analysis. Results revealed, in fact, the existence of both types of configuration.

A complementarity configuration, which explained the largest percentage of the variation in the data, was identified between Agreeableness and Emotional Stability from consumers' own personalities and Emotional Instability from consumers' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities. This implied that the more respondents rated their own personalities as warm and emotionally well-balanced, the more they preferred brands with capricious/neurotic traits (and vice versa). Therefore, this finding confirmed the supporting evidence from the qualitative phase and provided full support for the central hypothesis of this thesis, that consumers may also be preferring brands with characteristics that complement their own characteristics because these brand associations allow them to access personality traits that they do not own, and which they desire, for whatever reasons, such as for example their constant effort for self-enhancement.

A similarity configuration between consumer and brand personalities, and specifically Openness and Extraversion (the latter with a negative loading) from consumers' perceptions of own personalities, and Reflectiveness from respondents' perceptions of their favourite brands' personalities, also emerged from the CCA results. In essence, the

finding demonstrates that the more respondents rated themselves as intellectually open and introverted, the more they rated their favourite brands as cerebral, philosophical and deep (and vice versa). It signals that there are some occasions where consumers tend to prefer brands with personality traits that reinforce their own traits; this may be motivated by their effort to confirm their sense of self (self-verification).

The confirmation of the existence of a complementarity configuration, besides similarity, in self-brand personality alignment meant that existing measures of self-brand congruence capturing only similarity configurations were no longer appropriate, and thus a novel measure of self-brand personality alignment capturing both configurations was developed, using the following formula:

$$DS_i = BP_i - pBP_i \text{ for } i = 1,...,5$$

The new alignment measure is in essence consisted of five discrepancy scores (DS), one for each brand personality dimension, with a value closer to zero signifying high degree of self-brand personality alignment; these scores were derived by calculating the difference between the observed (BP_i, i=1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and the predicted BP factor scores (pBP_i, i=1, 2, 3, 4, 5), calculated from the CCA results.

The Role of the Length of the Consumer-Brand Relationship (H4)

With regards to whether complementarity configurations were particularly fostered in respondents' long-term relationships with their favourite brands (**H4**), results showed that although those respondents in long-term brand relationships did exhibit greater self-brand personality alignment than those in shorter relationships, the differences were not significant. This finding was unexpected but explicable for the sample on which the study was conducted. First, previous research has not exactly pinpointed the stage of the relationship where complementarity configurations become more prevalent (Nowicki & Manheim, 1991). Second, complementarity may be shadowed by the fact that personality similarities take longer to be discovered (Luo & Klohnen, 2005), or because consumers may believe that after a prolonged interaction with it, their favourite brand has rubbed-off its characteristics on them (Park & Roedder-John, 2010). However, it is also possible that long-enduring, continuous consumer-brand relationships were not sufficiently represented in this sample due to students' tendency to experiment with brands (Moore, et al., 2002).

This section reports the results relating to the influence of self-brand personality alignment on desirable brand-related outcomes (**H5**). Specifically, the study sought to test whether the new measure of self-brand personality alignment capturing both similarity and complementarity configurations would have greater predictive power than measures capturing only similarity. The predictive power of the new measure was tested and compared against two existing measures of actual and ideal self-brand congruence, drawn from Malär, et al. (2011), which only capture similarity configurations. Fifteen different outcomes were investigated. Overall, the results supported the superiority of the new measure, especially for emotionally-related outcomes which are particular relevant in the context of consumer-brand relationships.

Specifically, out of the 15 outcomes, the new measure capturing both similarity and complementarity configurations predicted five outcomes (perceptions of favourite brand's quality, intuitive fit, passion, pleasure, and resistance to negative comments made by others about the favourite brand) better than the two other measures. Three outcomes (future loyalty intentions, overall brand love, and separation distress) were predicted equally well with the two other measures. These outcomes are primarily emotionally-focused reactions from the consumer's part, hence these results attest to the new measure's superiority when the objective is to capture more complex consumer responses.

Only two outcomes (frequency of thoughts and perceptions about the favourite brand's contribution/importance to the consumer's life meaning) were predicted better by the two measures capturing only similarity configurations. While unexpected, the results were explicable. On the one hand, the fact that respondents' perceptions relating to the frequency of thoughts about the favourite brand were not predicted by the new measure might be attributed to the focus of consumers on those characteristics that are similar to their own in order to avoid feelings of insecurity, dissonance and disappointment. On the other hand, the result for the role of the brand in a consumer's life meaning is most probably explained by the rather complex nature of the concept which could not be appropriately captured by the question used to measure it.

Finally, five outcomes (overall satisfaction with, and overall trust towards the favourite brand, current loyalty, willingness to forgive the favourite brand's potential

transgressions and engagement in positive word-of-mouth) were not predicted by any measure. The most striking of these results is respondents' current loyalty towards their favourite brands, which can however be explained by the evidence emerging from the qualitative phase of the study, and by the descriptive analysis of the individual items that were used to measure current loyalty perceptions. Specifically, the insight from the exploratory interviews suggested that brands are not necessarily treated as exclusive relationship partners, as has also been proposed by previous research (Fournier & Yao, 1997). The interviewees revealed that although in some cases they had developed long relationships with certain brands, these were not necessarily continuous, for various reasons (e.g. high price which could not always be afforded, lack of availability of the brand when needed, inappropriateness of the brand for certain situations/contexts, etc.). The finding is even more understandable for the student sample of this study that actively experiments with brands in order to project different identities (Moore, et al., 2002). The descriptive analysis of the three individual items that were used to measure current loyalty also confirmed this notion, as the item indicating unconditional exclusivity to the favourite brand received a much lower mean that the other two items which compared respondents' preference of the favourite brand over other brands. What this practically means is that, while a certain brand might be a consumer's most favourite, elevated above the rest of the brands in the same product category, this does not necessarily signifies that the consumer will stay loyal to the brand if it is not available or does not suit their purposes for a certain occasion.

9.4. Theoretical Contribution of the Thesis

Through its mixed-method research design, consisted of in-depth interviews and an online survey, this thesis has provided substantial insight on consumer-brand interactions in general and self-brand personality alignment in particular. The results of this thesis address some important research problems and make some original contributions to brand-related consumer behaviour research. Overall, this study, responding to calls of previous research for embracing a broader range of theoretical perspectives in explaining consumer behaviour [e.g. Pham (2013)], has drawn from psychological theories of personality and interpersonal relationships and has provided additional insight on academic researchers' continuous pursuit for enhanced explanations with regards to the reasons for and the ways in which consumers engage

with certain brands more than with others. This section summarises the main academic contributions of the thesis in three areas: to brand personality research, to consumer-brand relationships research, and to self-brand congruence research.

Contribution to Brand Personality Research

First, this study is one of the few academic studies employing qualitative research to understand the mechanisms and processes consumers follow when making brand personality inferences, but the first to use this insight in order to deduce the implications of these processes for the measurement of brand personality perceptions. On the one hand, the qualitative study confirmed that indeed consumers attribute human personality traits to brands and that these attributions derive from a wide range of sources. However, one of the insightful revelations of this approach was that these attributions do not seem to automatically occur for all consumers; most consumers, however, when asked, can easily portray a basic personality profile of a brand, and the process becomes easier as the degree of familiarity with the brand increases. The other important finding is that consumers appear to associate a quite wide range of both positively- and negatively-inflected personality traits to brands, including to their very favourite ones, but not necessarily in the format of single words. It seems that consumers can indeed associate personality traits to brands but when asked to think of these associations within the pressures of an interview, exact articulation may be more difficult and some personality aspects might also be ignored, although they might be relevant. The conclusion from the qualitative insight therefore is that free association-based approaches are not really appropriate or effective in deducing holistic portrayals of a brand's personality. Instead, this study proposed that a more reliable and well-established personality framework, the Five Factor Model and its corresponding personality inventories, should be employed; such tools can present consumers with a more comprehensive list of both positively- and negatively-inflected universal descriptors of personality, hence allowing a more wholesome portrait of a brand's personality to be created without straining consumers' minds.

Second, by employing a reliable and parsimonious FFM-based scale [Saucier's (1994) 40 mini-markers], this study provided further evidence to support the argument that the FFM can be meaningfully applied to a branding context, although it does not retain its original factor composition due to the fact that some personality descriptors may

not be considered as applicable to brands and might be imbued with different meanings, which in turn signifies that their relations with other traits is modified. This finding makes a substantial contribution as it provides further evidence to a sustaining dispute in the literature with regards to whether the FFM can be used, in its original form, to measure consumers' perceptions of brand personality, and prepares the road for subsequent research that could explore further the changes of trait meanings in brand personality contexts.

Contribution to Consumer-Brand Relationships Research

The adoption of the conceptualisation of brands as active relationship partners (Fournier, 1998) provided the platform for this thesis to make an insightful contribution to consumer-brand relationships research as well, by drawing insight from the literature on interpersonal relationships and thus informing our theoretical understanding of consumer-brand relationships.

The results confirmed that consumers indeed form bonds with brands that largely resemble, but are obviously not identical to, interpersonal relations. The insight from the qualitative phase provided evidence in support of the fact that consumers react to brands in a variety of cognitive, emotional and behavioural ways which are normally associated with interpersonal relations, and thus consolidated further the notion of brands as active relationship partners. Similarly, the quantitative phase provided additional support to the idea that consumers include brands in their selves in a similar way as humans consider their partners as part of themselves, by: i) demonstrating that, at least in terms of personality alignment, attraction to brands mirrors that of interpersonal attraction, and ii) establishing the positive influence of this alignment on outcomes that attest to the quality of the relationship.

Contribution to Self-Brand Congruence Research

The primary contribution of this thesis relates to one of the most prominent theoretical explanations behind consumers' strong preferences for certain brands, that is, self-brand congruence theory (Sirgy, 1982), which, ever since Aaker's (1997) seminal paper, proposes that consumers are drawn to brands with images/personalities that match their own. The thesis informs the relevant literature in multiple ways.

First, the thesis reveals, for the first time, that self-brand personality alignment can also exhibit a complementarity configuration, besides similarity. The significance of this contribution is two-fold: one the one hand, the existence of complementarity questions the enduring assumption in consumer research that self-brand personality alignment exhibits only a similarity configuration; on the other hand, the results of the thesis clearly illustrate that, at least in certain contexts, there is less self-brand personality similarity than suggested in previous literature. The thesis therefore reinvigorates S-BC research and questions a long-enduring assumption. By revealing previously unexplored forms of self-brand personality alignment, the thesis informs existing knowledge on the phenomenon and advances our understanding of the S-BC processes.

Second, the study adds more detail and precision to the patterns of self-brand personality alignment. The results of this study reveal which aspects of a consumer's and a brand's personality assume a more central and prominent role in the alignment process, which was unclear in previous work. Specifically, brand Emotional Instability and consumer Agreeableness and Emotional Stability traits appeared as the most salient, along with brand Reflectiveness and consumer Openness and low Extraversion traits. Reversely, brand traits relating to Dynamism, Friendliness and Practicality did not seem to play a significant role in the self-brand personality alignment process, nor did consumer Conscientiousness traits. In other words, the results of the thesis provide insight not only for those aspects of consumer and brand personality that are more prevalent in the alignment process, how they relate to each other and in what direction, but also which aspects assume a less important role.

A third contribution to knowledge in the field of self-brand congruence is the development of a new measure of self-brand personality alignment that captures a fuller spectrum in alignment, that is, both similarity and complementarity configurations. Through a series of tests against existing measures based exclusively on similarity configurations, the new measure was found to have greater predictive power across a range of brand-related outcomes. The results advance research in the measurement of self-brand personality alignment by clearly showing that measures capturing a fuller nuance in self-brand personality alignment can explain a wider spectrum of brand-related behaviour better than traditional measures.

9.5. Managerial Implications of the Thesis

Understanding more deeply the reasons why and the ways in which consumers show strong preferences towards certain brands has been a key issue of interest not only for academic research but also for practitioners. In the contemporary competitive landscape, where brands can rarely achieve differentiation through functional attributes (Graeff, 1996b; van Rekom, et al., 2006; Veryzer, 1995), intangible/symbolic brand characteristics, including personality, are integral to their success (Arora & Stoner, 2009; Veryzer, 1995). This section seeks to bring to light the practical usefulness of this study's results, and thus fulfil the last research objective of the thesis.

First, the study offers managers evidence for the advantages of using FFM-based scales to assess their brands' personalities. The easily-administered and reliable Saucier's (1994) 40-item scale, for instance, presents managers with a quite comprehensive inventory more than capable to capture a broad range of all relevant aspects of personality. By administering this measurement tool to both users and non-users of their brands, managers can assess consumers' perceptions of their brands' personalities and form accurate brand personality profiles; they can also identify those personality aspects that are mostly associated with their brands as well as those negatively-inflected characteristics that portray a less favourable image of the brand and may cause problems to the brand's performance. This approach thus provides information at the most basic level: that of individual traits, where real differentiation between brands can be achieved. An FFM-based scale provides managers with more flexibility in interpreting the findings of the factorial compositions for their brands' personalities and comparing them to those of other competitive brands in the same product category. This process can assist them in recognising those personality aspects on which their brands own a superior or weaker position than their competitors. Marketers can thus accordingly modify, either reinforce or downplay, specific personality characteristics through the marketing communications or other consumer-brand touch-points. This is a significant contribution to managerial practice as one key area of concern for marketers is the need to make decisions around what personality characteristics their brands should be imbued with (Cohen, 2014).

Second, as also suggested by Huang (2009), marketers can use the same FFM-based tool to assess the personalities of their brands and those of their target consumers. The analytical method followed in this study, however, Canonical Correlation Analysis,

opens up for them a range of opportunities for further exploration of the relationship between the two. CCA, employed for the first time in a self-brand congruence context by the present study, is a straightforward technique that could be easily used in commercial contexts. On the one hand, it allows managers to identify those aspects of personality, both from the consumer's side and the brand's side, that become more prevalent and are considered as central when consumers use the brand as a means of self-expression. On the other hand, it empowers marketers to understand more deeply which aspects of their brands' personalities are the ones that their consumers most commonly use to verify/reinforce their own personalities and which they most commonly use to account for qualities they do not own. Identifying which aspects of personality are most crucial in the alignment process is important because, as Veloutsou (2007) suggests, only the brand characteristics that are relevant for the consumer should be communicated through the brand's activities. As a result, brand managers can accordingly tailor the marketing communications that highlight the brand's self-expressive capabilities, so that they can reinforce particular aspects of a brand's personality according to what characteristics the target market values most.

CCA can also shed light on those aspects that do not enter the self-brand personality alignment process, hence providing further opportunities for refinement of a brand's personality. Two illustrative examples can be derived from the results of this study for clothing and technology product categories: characteristics relating to a brand's Dynamism did not enter significantly the alignment process, which is surprising given that the projection of dynamic, imaginative personality traits is often a core element of the positioning strategy of clothing brands; similarly, characteristics relating to a brand's Practicality (e.g. efficiency, etc.) did not emerge as relevant for the alignment process, at least in this sample, a result quite surprising if we consider that brands in the technology product category often centre their communication strategy around technical superiority, efficiency and excellence in delivering reliable service to the consumer. Obviously, these characteristics are fundamental for the success of a brand; however, their importance does not seem to relate to the alignment process itself. Overall, understanding which personality traits to emphasise or downplay will help marketers to refine the positioning and the personalities of their brands in order to set the appropriate foundations for increasing consumers' emotional attachment to the brands and hence, creating strong consumer-brand relationships.

Finally, while complementarity was not, in statistical significance terms, more prevalent in longer-term consumer-brand relationships in this sample, marketers may find that different alignment configurations assume more critical roles depending on the length of the relationship consumers have with their brands, in which case, their communication strategies would need to be adapted accordingly. In other words, it is possible that different personality traits may need to be particularly highlighted depending on who the communication is targeted to, new or established consumers.

9.6. Limitations of the Thesis & Critical Reflection

Although this study's mixed-method research design provided convergent results, which were cross-validated to the extent that was possible, as recommended (Pham, 2013), and special care was taken to avoid overgeneralisations when presenting the study's theoretical and managerial implications, some limitations do exist, and their acknowledgement is an essential part of a researcher's reflexive practice (Guillemin, et al., 2004).

First, in relation to the conceptualisation of brand personality, the study drew insight from the trait approach to human personality and specifically the Five Factor Model. This decision was based on the fact that this framework has by far dominated the psychology literature, and has created some interesting debates in brand personality research as well [e.g. Caprara, et al. (2001); Huang, et al. (2012)], to which this study has contributed. It is possible, however, that other models of personality can also enhance our understanding of self-brand personality alignment, such as the Interpersonal Circumplex Model (Wiggins, 1979), which focuses on those personality traits that express how individuals behave towards each other, and has also been validated in a branding context (Bao & Sweeney, 2009; Sweeney & Brandon, 2006). Given the widespread acceptance the conceptualisation of brands as active relationship partners (Fournier, 1998) has received, the Interpersonal Circumplex could have been used as complementary to the FFM in order to add more detail and precision to the particular configurations between consumers' perceptions of their own interpersonal traits and those of their favourite brands; it would however had increased the amount of time and effort respondents would need to complete the questionnaire.

Second, as one of the objectives of this study was to explore the possibility that the self-brand personality alignment may exhibit a complementarity configuration besides

similarity and to investigate its relationship with a range of brand-related behaviours, the empirical study was designed in such a way in order to uncover the possibility of some of these relationships existing, rather than focusing on each one of these outcomes extensively. The review of the literature on both interpersonal relations and person-object/brand relations, but most importantly, the in-depth interviews, revealed a quite wide range of cognitive, emotional and behavioural outcomes which were important for this study. This large compilation originally led to a very lengthy questionnaire that would need a substantial amount of time and effort from respondents, and participant fatigue would have undoubtedly led to low quality data. As a result, a decision was made to reduce, to the extent that was possible, the number of items used to measure each of these outcomes (for instance, the brand's contribution to the consumer's life meaning was one such item). Although the consumer behaviour and branding literatures were extensively scrutinised, to the degree that was possible, in order to identify those items that would most effectively convey to respondents the central meaning of those concepts, and questions that have been validated by previous research in prestigious journals of the field were selected, as recommended in the literature (Baker, 2003), this decision may have resulted into some of the outcomes not being captured holistically by the items eventually included in the questionnaire.

Third, although the selection of the two product categories that were eventually included in the questionnaire, clothing and technology, was based on their consistent emergence from interviewees' personal brand preferences and opinions, it is worth noting that both categories are described by high involvement-thinking/feeling from a consumer's point-of-view (Ratchford, 1987); it is possible that either or both configurations of self-brand personality alignment might not have been corroborated in product types with which consumers are less involved.

Fourth, although the sample was relevant for the purposes of this study, and the youth market segment presented specific qualities that were important for the exploration of the subject matter, it was a convenience sample compiled of students. Student samples have been criticised in previous literature (see section 5.4), especially in consumer behaviour research, which has been accused of over-reliance to student samples (Pham, 2013). In this sense, although the original intent of the study was to serve exploratory purposes in providing initial evidence for the existence of a complementarity configuration in self-brand personality alignment besides similarity, the results of this study cannot be considered as generalisable to other segments.

Some of the study's limitations consequently present fruitful platforms for future research. These opportunities will be discussed in the next section.

9.7. Avenues for Future Research

In relation to the use of the FFM for the measurement of brand personality perceptions, there are three areas towards which future research could direct its interest. First, as previously suggested (Austin, et al., 2003; Avis, 2012; Maehle, et al., 2011), it is possible that when respondents are asked to rate a brand's traits, their ratings may also incorporate their perceptions of the personality traits that are generally attributed to the product category to which the brand belongs. Indeed, evidence from Maehle, et al. (2011) has shown that consumers have some pre-existing perceptions or expectations about the personality characteristics of brands in certain product categories (e.g. fast food brands are considered as insincere). With regards to the current study for example, it is possible that when respondents rated Apple as 'efficient', they may have included in their response their perceptions of the efficiency shared by technology brands in general. This idea of brand personality perceptions being product specific is further supported by the findings of the qualitative phase of this study, as some respondents referred to examples of product categories for which the process of assigning human personality characteristics to brands is more or less difficult in comparison to other product categories; for instance, it seemed that the process was more difficult for product categories with which respondents were not interacting to a great extent (banks were such an example for the student sample of this study). Future research should thus seek to establish techniques that allow consumers' product category personality perceptions and brand personality perceptions to be differentiated.

Second, while the FFM has been found remarkably stable across cultures when used to measure human personality perceptions, this might not necessarily be the case for brand personality perceptions. Previous research has implied that brand personality is perceived differently in different cultures (Foscht, Maloles III, Swoboda, Morschett, & Sinha, 2008; Maehle & Shneor, 2010), therefore it is possible that, in different cultural settings, some brand personality traits might become more valued/important (Eisingerich & Rubera, 2010) or relevant (Bosnjak, et al., 2007). It is also possible that trait meaning changes from one cultural milieu to another, or more generally, that

traits assume different meaning when applied to humans and brands, a possibility that has not gone unnoticed in the literature (Austin, et al., 2003; Caprara, et al., 2001) and is thus an issue that needs to be investigated further; one relevant suggestion from previous work (Austin, et al., 2003) is for the traits to be embedded in short phrases instead of being presented to the respondent in a single-word format.

Third, future research should seek to control for the fact that some consumers might not have formed any personality-related perceptions about a brand or might find it difficult to associate a particular trait with a certain brand (Avis, et al., 2014). This is an important issue, as it suggests that consumers that do not have any personality perceptions about a brand are essentially forced to describe its personality, hence their reported perceptions are not real (Avis, et al., 2014). Similarly, in case they can indeed associate with a certain brand some but not all personality traits in a scale, they might be using the mid-point of the scale (Romaniuk, 2008) to indicate lack of applicability of those particular items; again, however, this would provide unreliable information to researchers. Therefore, a formula needs to be established that prevents such issues (e.g. including a 'not applicable' option).

Perhaps the most evident avenue that could be followed by future research is the extent to which the results about the existence of the two patterns of alignment, similarity and complementarity, can be replicated with different respondents, different types of product categories and in other contexts, as generally recommended in the literature (Pham, 2013). In this sense, a fruitful area would be to examine whether the study's findings apply to consumers in other age groups: while young people, such as students, are still in the process of developing their self-concepts and are thus particularly concerned about issues of self-expression and like experimenting, this might not be the case for older consumers (Chernev, et al., 2011), who might for example be more confident about who they are, hence choosing brands with similar traits. Future research could also explore whether the results are corroborated in different product categories. The current study focused on two product categories, yet the sample size did not permit separate analyses; it is possible that the results about the existence or the importance of the one or the other configuration are not the same across product categories. Besides individual product categories, a comparison between brands in privately- and socially-consumed product categories seems to require further exploration; previous work has considered this possibility [e.g. Dolich (1969); Graeff (1996a); Graeff (1996b); Graeff (1997)] for similarity-based congruence

but results have been mixed, hence it would be interesting to see whether similarity or complementarity configurations are more prominent for privately- or socially-consumed brands. The importance of exploring self-brand personality alignment patterns in different product categories becomes very clear if we return to the point that was made in the beginning of this section about the influence of the product category in shaping consumers' brand personality perceptions. If consumers perceive that all brands in a certain product category share or are expected to share some common personality characteristics (e.g. all laptop brands should exhibit competence), then the processes that consumers follow in order to match their own personality traits in a similar or complementary way to those of the brands available in that product category become more complicated, and it is worth exploring further how they achieve the one or the other or both types of configuration.

Besides these contextual issues however, future research should examine in more depth the conditions/factors that perhaps influence the extent to which the two forms, similarity and complementarity, are exhibited and their importance in the alignment processes. One interesting avenue for instance would be to investigate whether an independent or interdependent self-construal (Markus and Kitayama, 1991) influences whether the one or the other configuration is more crucial. Wu, Cutright, and Fitzsimons (2011) for example found that those with independent selves were selecting a magazine which they had previously assessed as having completely opposite personality traits (in terms of competence and excitement) than their own, while those with interdependent were selecting the magazine with similar characteristics. It would be interesting to see under what conditions an independent or interdependent person would select a brand with complementary characteristics, and which characteristics these would be.

One of the most challenging future inquiries would be to investigate how a consumer achieves similarity and complementarity across the spectrum of personality characteristics through multiple brands, but also other self-expressive choices. If what previous research (Chernev, et al., 2011) has indicated about consumers' need for self-expression through brands being finite due to an almost unlimited range of self-expressive choices, including non-branded ones, holds true, then academic research could explore the complex processes of self-brand personality alignment in the context of multiple consumer-brand relationships; questions relating to whether consumers use more than one brand to compensate for specific traits they do not currently own

(e.g. using brand x and brand y that are perceived as highly extraverted brands to compensate for introversion), whether they use more than one brand to confirm that they hold specific traits, or whether they actively manage their brand portfolios, assigning separate roles to each brand, remain unexplored.

A final avenue for future research would be the further exploration of the predictive power of the new alignment measure on desirable outcomes, including outcomes that were not investigated in this study, such as emotional brand attachment (Thomson, et al., 2005). Further studies may compare the predictive power of the new measure with direct measures of similarity-based S-BC, and particularly social and ideal social S-BC which were not investigated in this study. Moreover, as the influence of S-BC on brand outcomes depends on a number of factors [see Aguirre-Rodriguez, et al. (2012)], it would be worth re-examining the predictive power of the new measure of alignment for some of the outcomes that have moderating variables associated with them; for example, the predictive power of the new measure on consumers' loyalty towards their favourite brands might improve upon the inclusion of other moderating variables, such as trust, or satisfaction, the relationship of which with loyalty has long been established (Picón, et al., 2014). This is also the case with outcomes that have traditionally been found to be influenced by many more factors besides S-BC. For example, previous research has found that people may be reluctant to engage in positive word-of-mouth because they are afraid that by spreading good comments for a brand (especially those that are publicly-consumed), others will adopt it and therefore they will not be unique any more (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010); people with a higher power position in respect to others have also been considered to avoid engaging in positive word-of-mouth in their effort to seek uniqueness (Zou, et al., 2014). Another example is consumers' attachment style, which may be influencing their willingness to forgive brand transgressions (Swaminathan & Dommer, 2012). Finally, it also remains unknown how the two forms of alignment might influence perceptions of brand relationship quality and its specific dimensions; this line of inquiry can be further assisted by recently developed measurement scales of BRQ dimensions [e.g. Kim, H. K., et al. (2005)].

"Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end."

Seneca the Younger, Roman philosopher

Appendix I: Saucier's (1994) Mini-Markers of Personality (p. 512)

TABLE 2
Varimax-Rotated Factor Loadings of 40 Mini-Marker Scale Items

Item	I	II	III	IV	V
Talkative	.73*	.14	−.12	−.05	−.05
Extroverted	.70*	.07	−.07	.11	−.01
Bold	.51*	−.17	.00	.24	.03
Energetic	.44*	.18	.18	.18	.02
Shy	−.79*	.15	.04	−.08	−.03
Quiet	−.76*	.02	.13	.05	.07
Bashful	−.73*	.19	.04	−.06	−.06
Withdrawn	−.71*	−.15	−.07	−.10	.02
Sympathetic	−.05	.72*	−.06	−.03	.00
Warm	.20	.67*	.08	.00	−.01
Kind	.02	.66*	.14	−.01	−.01
Cooperative	−.11	.52*	.21	.20	−.06
Cold	−.21	−.65*	.03	−.05	−.02
Unsympathetic	−.02	−.64*	.03	.07	−.10
Rude	.14	−.55*	−.18	−.03	−.04
Harsh	.10	−.54*	.00	−.14	−.06
Organized	−.06	−.01	.83*	−.01	−.02
Efficient	.01	.04	.65*	.07	.05
Systematic	−.11	−.02	.63*	.13	.02
Practical	−.08	.13	.51*	.15	−.10
Disorganized	.01	.02	−.82*	.05	−.02
Sloppy	−.01	−.10	−.62*	.13	.02
Inefficient	−.16	−.05	−.62*	−.01	−.05
Careless	.09	−.10	−.61*	−.05	−.05
Unenvious	−.03	.00	.00	.68*	.08
Relaxed	.11	.16	.07	.49*	−.10
Moody	−.06	−.12	−.04	−.64*	.12
Jealous	−.04	−.01	−.03	−.63*	−.15
Temperamental	.03	−.17	−.03	−.62*	.03
Envious	−.10	.07	−.03	−.61*	−.15
Touchy	−.09	.01	.04	−.59*	−.01
Fretful	−.17	.09	−.07	−.54*	−.08
Creative	.05	.01	.01	.15	.69*
Imaginative	.11	.03	.01	.07	.65*
Philosophical	−.08	.04	−.03	.07	.56*
Intellectual	−.03	−.01	.12	.15	.54*
Complex	−.09	.01	−.10	−.13	.51*
Deep	−.13	.22	−.09	.03	.44*
Uncreative	−.13	.06	−.01	.00	−.66*
Unintellectual	−.02	.01	−.09	.09	−.52*

Note. N = 636. Loadings of .30 and above are listed in italic type. *Indicates highest factor loading of each item. I = Extraversion, II = Agreeableness, III = Conscientiousness, IV = Emotional Stability, V = Intellect or Openness.

299

Appendix II: Invitation Email for Participation to the Interviews

Dear Student,

My name is Maria Karampela and I am a second-year PhD student in the Business School, supervised by Dr Angela Tregear and Dr Susan Dunnett. The purpose of my study is to investigate consumers' preferences for brands.

I would like to invite you to participate in an interview including questions regarding your brand preferences. The interview will last approximately 50 minutes. Your participation is anonymous and no personal information will be kept for you. The data from the interview session will remain confidential and will only be used by me and solely for the purposes of my PhD research. The Research Ethics Committee of the University of Edinburgh has approved this study.

If you are interested in participating, please reply back to me at M.Karampela@sms.ed.ac.uk with the date and time you are available for the interview. Please note that the interview can be held at any point from Monday 28th January till Friday 8th February, except Wednesdays' mornings. The interview will be held in the Business School premises.

Finally, in appreciation of your participation, you will receive a £15 Amazon voucher at the end of the interview. Juice and biscuits will also be provided during our interview together.

Thank you for your consideration!

Maria Karampela

PhD Candidate

University of Edinburgh Business School

M.Karampela@sms.ed.ac.uk

Appendix III: Interview Discussion Guide

Section 1: Introduction

- Greeting, introduction of the researcher and the project, and explanation of its overall purpose.
- Informing the interviewee about adherence to ethical guidelines, reassurance about anonymity and confidentiality.
- Asking permission to audio-record the interview.

Section 2: General Brand Preferences

- Starting with questions about brands they generally like and brands they consider as their favourite ones, irrespectively of previous usage/ownership.
- Delving deeper into what they find so appealing about them.
- Asking about their least favourite brands and what they find unappealing about them.

Section 3: Aspects of Consumer-Brand Relationships

(This is the least structured section, exactly because the purpose is to gain insight on interviewees' personal experiences with their favourite brands.)

- Asking about the interviewee's first interactions with their favourite brands, the length of the relationships and their consumptions practices/habits.
- Focusing on cognitive and emotional responses towards the favourite brands.
- Revealing respondents': current commitment to each of their favourite brands; brand switching; intentions of future loyalty; reactions to price sensitivity.
- Delving deeper into the importance of these favourite brands in the interviewee's life, by presenting them with a scenario of separation from them.
- Capturing the interviewee's overall perceptions of their favourite brands and their own interpretations of the overall brand images; uncovering symbolic associations they assign to them, personally and socially.

(This section introduces interviewees to the concept of brand personality by using an example from any brand in the room.)

- Gauging initial reactions to the concept of brand personality and whether it is an active component of their brand perceptions: *"Some people say that brands can have human personality traits. For example, they say that if… (e.g. showing a Kit Kat chocolate on the table) Kit Kat were a person, it would have a joyful, playful and extroverted personality. How well do you relate to that idea, of brands being considered as having human characteristics? Is this something that you consider often?"*
- Asking the interviewee to think of each one of his/her favourite brands as if it was a person and to indicate what kind of personality characteristics they would associate with them. Prompting again, if necessary.
- Bringing counter-examples in order to observe how they describe the personalities of less familiar brands, as well as of their least favourite brands.
- Exploring further the overall degree of difficulty the interviewee encounters when making brand personality associations; capturing reactions as to whether they find the task easier for favourite brands than less familiar brands.
- Gauging the interviewee's reactions to the self-brand personality alignment (exploring the possibility that another type of alignment, apart from similarity, might exist within consumers' relationships with their favourite brands); prompting again for their friends or family members: *"Some people argue that we tend to like brands which have personalities that mirror our own personalities. Do you agree with this view?"*

Section 5: Relevance

(This section relates to students' general consumption habits in order to identify those product categories that are most relevant to the population investigated so that they can be selected for the administration of the next stage, the online survey.)

- Explaining to the interviewee about the second phase and asking them to consider what product categories are more salient to their peers.
- Reading through a pre-prepared list of specific product categories (Banking services, Beers/Drinks, Cars, Clothing/Accessories, Cosmetics, Digital cameras,

Jeans, Laptops/desktop computers/technology (incl. mobile phones), Perfumes, Restaurants, Sunglasses/Eye glasses, Watches) and asking the interviewee to comment on each, by indirectly deducing their perceptions (e.g. how easily brands from these specific product types come to their minds).

- Exploring whether the task of associating personality traits to brands is easier for brands in specific product categories than in others.

Section 6: Closing

- Debriefing: is there anything else the interviewee wants to add? Any questions they found difficult to answer to?
- Thanking the interviewee, offering the £15 Amazon voucher and dismissal.

Appendix IV: Invitation Email for Participation to the Online Survey

Dear Students,

My name is Maria Karampela and I am a second-year PhD student at the Business School. I am conducting a survey as part of my research. This School-wide survey has been approved by the Head of the Business School, Professor Ian Clarke.

The purpose of the survey is to investigate the meanings consumers attach to brands and their preferences for them. I would greatly appreciate if you could take part.

For each completed questionnaire, you can choose one of three charities where a £1 donation will be made: Maggie's Cancer Support Groups, UNICEF and the Edinburgh Young Carers Project. You can make your choice at the end of the questionnaire. Moreover, as a "thank you" for your participation, you can also choose to be included in a prize draw for £360 worth of vouchers for Blackwell's Booksellers.

For the purposes of validity, please choose the survey link that corresponds to you, based on the first letter of your surname:

If your surname begins with A-F then click on the following link: http://www.eSurveysPro.com/Survey.aspx?id=262138e6-e367-438c-bb3b-72a0dae05919

If your surname begins with G-L then click on the following link: http://www.eSurveysPro.com/Survey.aspx?id=193f5cc1-5cf7-488b-b91b-8f4cbdb84f4b

If your surname begins with M-R then click on the following link: http://www.eSurveysPro.com/Survey.aspx?id=4e29d435-4df4-48ac-8b34-1f13f439d383

If your surname begins with S-Z then click on the following link: http://www.eSurveysPro.com/Survey.aspx?id=d6312967-e384-4627-ab51-c425d3e9e43a

If you would like further information, please contact me (M.Karampela@sms.ed.ac.uk) or my supervisor, Dr Angela Tregear (Angela.Tregear@ed.ac.uk).

Thank you for your consideration!

Yours faithfully,

Maria Karampela

PhD Candidate & Principal's Career Development Scholarship Tutor

University of Edinburgh Business School

M.Karampela@sms.ed.ac.uk

Appendix V: Overview of Questions & Measurement Items Used in the Online Questionnaire

Construct	Questions & Measurement items		Original source from which questions and measurement items were drawn or adapted
Human personality	40 mini-markers of personality (listed in Appendix I)		Saucier (1994)
Perceptions of the brand's quality	Please indicate, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much), the extent to which you believe that products of your favourite brand have high quality.		Batra, et al. (2012)
Overall satisfaction with the brand	Considering all your experiences to date with your favourite brand, how satisfied are you with it, from 1 (Very dissatisfied) to 7 (Very satisfied)?		Batra, et al. (2012)
Willingness to forgive the brand's potential transgressions	Imagine that up to this point your favourite brand has met or exceeded your expectations. Now imagine an occasion where your favourite brand fails to meet your expectations. In future, how willing would you be to purchase it again, from 1 (Not all all) to 7 (Very much)?		Batra, et al. (2012)
Overall trust towards the brand	Keeping in mind your favourite brand, please indicate your agreement or disagreement to the following statement, from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree): ▪ I trust my favourite brand.		Batra, et al. (2012)
Current loyalty towards the brand	Keeping in mind your favourite brand, please indicate your agreement or disagreement to the following statements, from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree):	▪ I'll 'do without' rather than buy another brand.	Carroll and Ahuvia (2006)
		▪ I always find myself consistently buying this particular brand over other brands in the same product category.	Quester and Lim (2003)
		▪ Even if another brand is on sale, I still buy this brand.	Quester and Lim (2003)
Contribution/ importance of the brand to the consumer's life meaning	Keeping in mind your favourite brand, please indicate your agreement or disagreement to the following statement, from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree): ▪ It is easy to imagine a fulfilled life without my favourite brand.		Eisingerich and Rubera (2010)

Engagement in positive WOM about the brand	How often have you found yourself saying positive things about your favourite brand, to other people, from 1 (Never) to 7 (Very often)?	Batra, et al. (2012)
Frequency of thoughts about the brand	Please indicate, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much), the extent to which you find yourself having thoughts about your favourite brand?	Batra, et al. (2012)
Resistance to others' negative comments about the brand	Please indicate, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much), the extent to which you would question in your mind, something negative you heard about your favourite brand?	Batra, et al. (2012)
Future loyalty intentions towards the brand	Please indicate, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much), the extent to which you believe that you will continue buying your favourite brand in the future?	Batra, et al. (2012)
Intuitive fit with the brand	Please express, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much), the extent to which each time you purchase/use your favourite brand, it just feels 'right' to you?	Batra, et al. (2012)
Feelings of passion relating to the use of the brand	Please express, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much), the extent to which you find yourself desiring to use your favourite brand?	Batra, et al. (2012)
Feelings of pleasure relating to the use of the brand	Please express, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much), the extent to which you find the experience of using your favourite brand pleasurable?	Batra, et al. (2012)
Overall love towards the favourite brand	Overall, how much do you 'love' your favourite brand, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much)?	Batra, et al. (2012)
Separation anxiety (distress resulting from potential separation)	Suppose your favourite brand were to go out of existence, to what extent, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much) would you feel: ▪ Anxiety ▪ Fear	Batra, et al. (2012)
Brand personality	40 mini-markers of personality (listed in Appendix I)	Saucier (1994)
Actual (similarity-based) self-brand congruence	Please indicate your agreement or disagreement to the following statements (1: Strongly disagree to 7: Strongly agree): ▪ The personality of my favourite brand is consistent with how I see myself. ▪ The personality of my favourite brand is a mirror image of me.	Malär, et al. (2011)

Ideal (similarity-based) self-brand congruence	Please indicate your agreement or disagreement to the following statements (1: Strongly disagree to 7: Strongly agree): ▪ The personality of my favourite brand is consistent with how I would like to be (my ideal self). ▪ The personality of my favourite brand is a mirror image of the person I would like to be (my ideal self).	Malär, et al. (2011)

Appendix VI: Online Survey Questionnaire

First page of the questionnaire

Welcome!

Thank you for considering taking part in this survey.

The Research Ethics Committee of the University of Edinburgh has approved this survey. Your participation is voluntary. I will consider that you have consented to take part in this survey, if you return the completed questionnaire. However, you may choose to withdraw from any part of the survey, at any stage, simply by closing your web browser or by clicking the "Quit" button. The questionnaire should not take more than 15 minutes to complete.

After you have finished the questionnaire, you will have the chance to choose one of three charities where a £1 donation will be made: Maggie's Cancer Support Groups, UNICEF and the Edinburgh Young Carers Project. Moreover, you can also choose to be included in a prize draw for £300 worth of vouchers for Blackwell's Booksellers.

For most questions, all you need to do is tick the box that most closely relates to how you feel and what you believe in each case. Everyone is different and there are no right or wrong answers – I am only interested in your opinion. So, please answer as honestly as you can.

Your responses to this survey are anonymous and will be treated in complete confidence, in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Apart from some demographic information, no personal data is asked for or retained. The material gathered will only be used for the purpose of the current study.

If you would like further information, please contact me (M.Karampela@sms.ed.ac.uk) or my supervisor, Dr Angela Tregear (Angela.Tregear@ed.ac.uk).

Thank you for your time!

Yours faithfully,

Maria Karampela

Q1: What is your gender?
Male   ○
Female   ○

Q2: What is your age?
17-22 years old   ○
23-25 years old   ○
26 years old and above   ○

Q3: Which programme of study are you enrolled on?
Undergraduate   ○
Taught postgraduate   ○
Research postgraduate   ○

Q4: Please select the country in which you have lived for the most part of your life.
(Drop-down menu)

Q5: What is your family status?
Single   ○
In a relationship   ○
Living with partner/flatmates   ○
Married   ○
In civil union   ○
Divorced/Separated   ○
Widowed   ○
Prefer not to say   ○

Q6: Please rate each of the following personality traits in terms of how accurately they describe you as a person using the following scale: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 in which: 1=Extremely inaccurate, 7=Extremely accurate.

	Extremely inaccurate						Extremely accurate
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Talkative	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Bold	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Shy	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Bashful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Sympathetic	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Kind	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Cold	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Rude	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Organised	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Systematic	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Disorganised	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Inefficient	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Unenvious	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Moody	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Temperamental	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Touchy	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Creative	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Philosophical	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Complex	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Uncreative	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Q7: Please rate each of the following personality traits in terms of how accurately they describe you as a person using the following scale: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 in which: 1=Extremely inaccurate, 7=Extremely accurate.

	Extremely inaccurate						Extremely accurate
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Extroverted	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Energetic	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Quiet	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Withdrawn	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Warm	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Cooperative	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Unsympathetic	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Harsh	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Efficient	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Practical	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Sloppy	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Careless	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Relaxed	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Jealous	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Envious	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Fretful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Imaginative	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Intellectual	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Deep	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Unintellectual	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Q8: We would like you to consider your favourite brand either in clothing (clothes, shoe wear, handbags, etc.) or in technology (computers, laptops, tablets, MP3s, etc.). By the term "favourite", we mean ONE brand that you have purchased or used and is your most preferred one in either clothing or technology. Please type the name of the brand.

[_____]

Q9: Is this a clothing or a technology brand?
Clothing   ○
Technology   ○

Q10: How long is it since you first bought the brand?
< 1 month   ○
1-6 months   ○
7-12 months   ○
1-3 years   ○
4-6 years   ○
>6 years   ○

Q11: Please indicate, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much), the extent to which you believe that products of your favourite brand have high quality.
○   1   (Not at all)
○   2
○   3
○   4   (Moderately)
○   5
○   6
○   7   (Very much)

Q12: Considering all your experiences to date with your favourite brand, how satisfied are you with it, from 1 (Very dissatisfied) to 7 (Very satisfied)?
○   1   (Very dissatisfied)
○   2
○   3
○   4   (Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied)
○   5
○   6
○   7   (Very satisfied)

Q13: Imagine that up to this point your favourite brand has met or exceeded your expectations. Now imagine an occasion where your favourite brand fails to meet your expectations. In future, how willing would you be to purchase it again, from 1 (Not all all) to 7 (Very much)?
○   1   (Not at all)
○   2
○   3
○   4   (Moderately)
○   5
○   6
○   7   (Very much)

Q14: Keeping in mind your favourite brand, please indicate your agreement or disagreement to the following statements, from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree).

	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I trust my favourite brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I'll 'do without' rather than buy another brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I always find myself consistently buying this particular brand over other brands in the same product category.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Even if another brand is on sale, I still buy this brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
It is easy to imagine a fulfilled life without my favourite brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Q15: How often have you found yourself saying positive things about your favourite brand, to other people, from 1 (Never) to 7 (Very often)?

O   1   (Never)
O   2
O   3
O   4
O   5
O   6
O   7   (Very often)

313

Section III: Your Favourite Brand (Screen 2 cont.)

Q16: Please indicate, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much), the extent to which...

	Not at all			Moderately			Very much
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
...you find yourself having thoughts about your favourite brand?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
...you would question in your mind, something negative you heard about your favourite brand?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
...believe that you will continue buying your favourite brand in the future?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q17: Please express, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much), the extent to which...

	Not at all			Moderately			Very much
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...each time you purchase/use your favourite brand, it just feels 'right' to you?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
...you find yourself desiring to use your favourite brand?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
...you find the experience of using your favourite brand pleasurable?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q18: Overall, how much do you 'love' your favourite brand, from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much)?

○   1   (Not at all)
○   2
○   3
○   4   (Moderately)
○   5
○   6
○   7   (Very much)

Q19: Suppose your favourite brand were to go out of existence, to what extent would you feel:

	Not at all			Moderately			Very much
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Anxiety	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Fear	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Section IV: How You See Your Favourite Brand (Screen 1)

Q20: We would now like you to consider your favourite brand as if it were a person. Please rate the extent to which your brand has the following characteristics, from 1 (Extremely inaccurate) to 7 (Extremely accurate).

	Extremely inaccurate						Extremely accurate
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Talkative	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Bold	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Shy	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Bashful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Sympathetic	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Kind	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Cold	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Rude	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Organised	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Systematic	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Disorganised	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Inefficient	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Unenvious	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Moody	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Temperamental	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Touchy	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Creative	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Philosophical	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Complex	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Uncreative	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Section IV: How You See Your Favourite Brand (Screen 2)

Q21: We would now like you to consider your favourite brand as if it were a person. Please rate the extent to which your brand has the following characteristics, from 1 (Extremely inaccurate) to 7 (Extremely accurate).

	Extremely inaccurate						**Extremely accurate**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Extroverted	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Energetic	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Quiet	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Withdrawn	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Warm	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Cooperative	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Unsympathetic	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Harsh	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Efficient	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Practical	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Sloppy	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Careless	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Relaxed	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Jealous	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Envious	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Fretful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Imaginative	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Intellectual	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Deep	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Unintellectual	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Q22: Please indicate your agreement or disagreement to the following statements:

	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The personality of my favourite brand is consistent with how I see myself.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The personality of my favourite brand is a mirror image of me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The personality of my favourite brand is consistent with how I would like to be (my ideal self).	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The personality of my favourite brand is a mirror image of the person I would like to be (my ideal self).	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

You can now choose one of three charities where a donation of £1 will be made for your completed questionnaire, as well as whether you would like to be included in our prize draw.

Q23: Please select one of the three following charities:
MAGGIE'S CANCER SUPPORT GROUPS: "Maggie's is about empowering people   ○
to live with, through and beyond cancer by bringing together professional help, communities of support and building design to create exceptional centres for cancer care."

UNICEF: "UNICEF works in the UK to champion children's rights, win support   ○
and raise money for their work with children everywhere. For over 60 years UNICEF has been the world's leading organisation for children, working to help them survive and thrive from early childhood through adolescence."

Edinburgh Young Carers Project: "Edinburgh Young Carers Project works with   ○
young people aged 5 to 20 years old who care for or are affected by someone else at home - usually a parent or sibling. The person they care for may suffer from mental health problems, disability, chronic ill-health, drug and alcohol misuse."

Q24: Would you like to be included in the prize draw for Blackwell's Booksellers vouchers?
Yes   ○
No   ○

Q25: If you replied YES in the previous question, please provide your email address in the space below, in order to be included in the prize draw:

This is the end of the survey.

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix VII: Profile of Interviewees

Amy	(Female, UK)

Amy seems to be very interested in prices and wants to ensure that she gets the brands that fit who she is and for which she feels an intuitive fit. It appears that she carefully avoids associations with brands that are endorsed by celebrities whose personalities she does not like. For her, brand personality perceptions stem from the celebrity endorsers and the employees selling the products, and she seems to find it quite easy to associate human personality characteristics to brands. Amy is very aware that her brand choices are likely to change as she enters different stages of her life cycle, but she thinks she will keep returning to her favourite brands to see if they would have anything suitable for her, before she shifts to something else. She straightforwardly admits she would feel very angry and frustrated if she were to separate from her favourite brands. She recognises that she is not very loyal to one of her favourite cosmetics brand, but the brand somehow always manages to win her back. Overall, it seems that her favourite brands represent something that she aspires to achieve.

Aidan	(Male, International)

Aidan does not appear to have mainstream brand preferences. The brands he considers as his favourite ones are those that have shown that they have earned their places, with good business practices, and he is particularly obsessed with brands that have shown innovation - he does not really care if they do not know to market their brands well, as long as they innovate. He puts great focus on tradition and history, the legacy of a brand and he has done extensive research for those favourite brands. He mentions that brands that are dishonest are at the bottom of his list. It appears that his favourite brands represent safe choices for him, and that he puts a lot of trust to them. Brand personality for him seems to mainly stem from his image of a typical consumer.

Beth	(Female, International)

Beth seems to repeatedly choose international, well-recognised brands, some of which are not available in her home country. She has established long-term relationships with those brands, sometimes reaching up to 10 years according to her. She places her trust with these brands and it was clear that she distinguishes them from others. She seems very interested in the packaging and the shopping experience in general apart from the brand; she likes to feel catered. She straightforwardly admits she does not like brands that project something that they do not have, without justification; ordinary brands without distinctive personalities do not seem to appeal to her. She mentions that she would feel unhappy if her favourite brands ceased to exist in her life. Showing off to her social circle is something that she admits she would do for specific brands. She can quite easily associate a very broad range of personality characteristics both to brands she likes and to those she does not. She seems to draw these perceptions mainly from advertisements and packaging.

Charlotte	(Female, UK)

Charlotte claims that she does not have a special bond with any brand, and she describes her relationships with these brands as a relationship of convenience. She uses them because they make her life easier but she does not give much thought into them; she admits she would feel annoyed if the brands were not available to her any more. For her, brand personality perceptions seem to stem from the type of people that buy these brands, i.e. typical consumers. She also mentions that she finds it difficult to think of her favourite brands as having personalities and that she would not buy a

brand for the personality it projects. However, throughout the discussion of her experiences with these brands, it is revealed that she would stay away from brands if she did not like what they symbolise; also her feelings differ depending on the situations she uses them in, e.g. her favourite clothing brand is for 'special occasions'.

Emily   **(Female, International)**

Emily seems quite oriented towards her appearance and she focused the discussion on clothing and cosmetics brands. She has kept some long-term relationships with some of her favourite brands but is not necessarily always loyal to them, and sometimes is attracted to other brands that offer something new. However, her favourite daily facial care brand is something that she admits she does not switch from, for any reason. She has only been using the brand for a couple of months, after being treated with it in a beauty salon, and she instantly fell in love with it; she explicitly stated that she would not change it for any other brand and considers it irreplaceable. For her, brand personality seems to stem from the people who she can see buying them, i.e. the typical customer. She believes that brands in some product categories are easier to associate with human personality characteristics.

Michael   **(Male, International)**

Michael seems really into clothing brands and he has specific favourite brands for different pieces of clothing. He seemed reluctant to admit loyalty or any special preference to these brands, but his account of his shopping experiences revealed that he is very loyal, and if he does not find a certain shirt in his favourite brand store for example, he tends to visit other stores of the same brand in other locations until he finds it! For him, it seems brand personality perceptions stem from the celebrities that endorse the brands and the people that seem to typically purchase/use brands. He considers difficult to think of brands as personalities; however, he goes into great detail to describe them, not only in terms of personality but also giving characteristics like what job the brand would do if it were a person!

Irene   **(Female, UK)**

Although Irene has quite a few brands that she considers as brands she really likes, her complete, non-negotiable devotion lies to her favourite make-up brand; she tends to purchase all her make-up products from that brand and she considers 'dreadful' the scenario of the brand not existing anymore. It seems she finds it easier to associate personality traits to brands in some product categories than others, and she implies that her brand personality perceptions stem from her idea of the typical consumers. She describes the personality of her favourite brands as complementary to her own, making up for what she does not currently have but she wishes to acquire.

Langdon   **(Male, International)**

Langdon seems to pay great attention to his appearance and to the image he wants to project. He does not think himself only as a student but also as a future professional, and takes great care to start building an image about this new identity. According to his view, his favourite brands provide him with the ability of projecting a nice image of himself, but also of feeling good, so he is not reluctant to admit that he would feel hopeless and annoyed if those brands did not exist in his life anymore. For him, brand personality perceptions seem to stem from a brand's spokesperson, its presence in social media and its endorsers. He notices that sometimes people tend to choose brands with personality characteristics that do not necessarily match who they are, but who they want to be.

Jo **(Female, UK)**

Jo does not straightforwardly admit any special preference for brands. However, throughout the discussion, she reveals strong preferences for some brands, but only in specific products, e.g. never buying any other brand than her favourite when it comes to watches, but not considering this same brand for clothing. She also tends to show clearly opposing preferences, depending on the product category, e.g. hating the brand's perfume but loving the formal dresses range. She prefers those brands that do not project a cheap image. Quality is important to her. For her, brand personality perceptions seem to stem from those people most often buying these brands, and she mentions that she cannot clearly perceive personality traits of brands whose stores she has not visited.

Katia **(Female, International)**

As a new international student, this is the first time that Katia has the chance to interact with some brands and she seems to enjoy experimenting with a lot of them, mainly in clothing and cosmetics. It appears that buying and using luxury brands is her primary objective, and she seems to avoid anything that is very casual, very common or used a lot by others. She is restrained by their high prices, but she actively seeks for discounts, not hesitating to travel far to get her favourite brand dress. She finds the notion of brand personality as something new to her, but she admits that she wants to project the image that her favourite brands project. Presented with the scenario of her favourite brand not existing tomorrow, she responds that she would buy as much of it as she could today!

Lydia **(Female, International)**

Lydia seems to be divided between two worlds, the student life and the attraction to luxury. Some of the brands that she mentions as her favourite are casual clothing but others are really expensive, luxury brands. She delves into this luxury through buying them for her mom (she buys the brands and sends them to her mom back home). Buying these brands is important for her, and she admits she likes to show off, but only to her friends from the same home country, not all her university friends. Brand personality is a notion that seems enjoyable to her. She believes that, in some occasions, brands help you project a personality that is not really you.

Yvonne **(Female, International)**

Yvonne is an international student that comes from a well-off family. Her favourite brands are mainly luxury brands but throughout the discussion it is apparent that she takes great care to differentiate herself from the masses. She explicitly states she wants to be differentiated, rather than buying the luxury brands that others are buying. For her, it is very important to look 'representable', and she repeats that throughout the discussion. On the other hand, she also takes great care of not showing off. For her, perceiving a brand's personality seems a bit of a difficult task, and she implies that there are some products for which you can create personality perceptions more easily than for other types of products; these perceptions seem to stem from her ideas of the people that use these brands.

References

Aaker, D. (2013, April 10th). Three Models of How a Brand Personality Impacts Retrieved 26-12-2014, from https://www.prophet.com/blog/aakeronbrands/135-three-models-of-how-a-brand-personality-impacts

Aaker, D. A. (1996). *Building Strong Brands*. New York; London: Free Press.

Aaker, J., Fournier, S., & Brasel, S. A. (2004). When Good Brands Do Bad. *Journal of Consumer Research, 31*(1), 1-16.

Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of Brand Personality. *Journal of Marketing Research, 34*(3), 347-356.

Aaker, J. L., Benet-Martínez, V., & Garolera, J. (2001). Consumption Symbols as Carriers of Culture: A Study of Japanese and Spanish Brand Personality Constructs. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 81*(3), 492-508.

Aggarwal, P. (2004). The Effects of Brand Relationship Norms on Consumer Attitudes and Behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research, 31*(1), 87-101.

Aggarwal, P., & McGill, A. L. (2007). Is That Car Smiling At Me? Schema Congruity as a Basis for Evaluating Anthropomorphized Products. *Journal of Consumer Research, 34*(4), 468-479.

Aggarwal, P., & McGill, A. L. (2012). When Brands Seem Human, Do Humans Act Like Brands? Automatic Behavioral Priming Effects of Brand Anthropomorphism. *Journal of Consumer Research, 39*(2), 307-323.

Aguirre-Rodriguez, A. (2014). Cultural Factors That Impact Brand Personification Strategy Effectiveness. *Psychology & Marketing, 31*(1), 70-83.

Aguirre-Rodriguez, A., Bosnjak, M., & Sirgy, M. J. (2012). Moderators of the Self-Congruity Effect on Consumer Decision-Making: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Business Research, 65*(8), 1179-1188.

Ahuvia, A. C., Batra, R., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2009). Love, Desire and Identity: A Conditional Integration Theory of the Love of Things. In D. J. MacInnis, C. W. Park & J. R. Priester (Eds.), *The Handbook of Brand Relationships* (pp. 342-357). New York: M. E. Sharpe.

Albert, N., Merunka, D., & Valette-Florence, P. (2008). When Consumers Love Their Brands: Exploring the Concept and its Dimensions. *Journal of Business Research, 61*(10), 1062-1075.

Allport, G. W. (1937). *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*. London: Constable.

Allport, G. W., & Odbert, H. S. (1936). Trait-Names: A Psycho-Lexical Study. *Psychological Monographs, 47*(1), 1-171.

Alpatova, A., & Dall'Olmo Riley, F. (2011). *Comparing Brand Personality Measures*. Paper presented at the Academy of Marketing Conference 2011: Marketing Fields Forever, Liverpool, UK.

Alpert, M. I., & Peterson, R. A. (1972). On the Interpretation of Canonical Analysis. *Journal of Marketing Research, 9*(2), 187-192.

Alvarez-Ortiz, C., & Harris, J. (2002). *Assessing the Structure of Brand Personality Among Global and Local Mexican Brands*. Paper presented at the American Marketing Association Summer Educators Proceedings: Enhancing Knowledge Development in Marketing, San Diego.

Alvarez, C., & Fournier, S. (2012). Brand Flings: When Great Brand Relationships Are Not Made At Last. In S. Fournier, M. Breazeale & M. Fetscherin (Eds.), *Consumer-Brand Relationships: Theory and Practice* (pp. 74-96). London; New York: Routledge.

Anderson, E. W. (1998). Customer Satisfaction and Word of Mouth. *Journal of Service Research, 1*(1), 5-17.

Anderson, E. W., Fornell, C., & Lehmann, D. R. (1994). Customer Satisfaction, Market Share, and Profitability: Findings From Sweden. *Journal of Marketing, 58*(3), 53.

Ang, S. H., & Lim, E. A. C. (2006). The Influence of Metaphors and Product and Product Type on Brand Personality Perceptions and Attitudes. *Journal of Advertising, 35*(2), 39-53.

Arksey, H., & Knight, P. (1999). *Interviewing For Social Scientists: An Introductory Resource With Examples*. London: Sage.

Arnett, J. J. (2004). *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road From the Late Teens Through the Twenties* (2nd ed.). New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Aron, A., & Aron, E. (1986). *Love and the Expansion of Self: Understanding Attraction and Satisfaction*: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation.

Aron, A., Aron, E. N., Tudor, M., & Nelson, G. (1991). Close Relationships as Including Other in the Self. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60*(2), 241-253.

Aron, A., Norman, C. C., Aron, E. N., McKenna, C., & Heyman, R. E. (2000). Couples' Shared Participation in Novel and Arousing Activities and Experienced Relationship Quality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78*(2), 273-284.

Aron, A., Steele, J. L., Kashdan, T. B., & Perez, M. A. X. (2006). When Similars Do Not Attract: Tests of a Prediction From the Self-Expansion Model. *Personal Relationships, 13*(4), 387-396.

Aron, E. N., & Aron, A. (1996). Love and Expansion of the Self: The State of the Model. *Personal Relationships, 3*(1), 45-58.

Arora, R., & Stoner, C. (2009). A Mixed Method Approach to Understanding Brand Personality. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 18*(4), 272-283.

Arthur, S., & Nazroo, J. (2003). Designing Fieldwork Strategies and Materials. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (pp. 109-137). London: Sage Publications.

Ashworth, L., Dacin, P., & Thomson, M. (2009). Why on Earth Do Consumers Have Relationships with Marketers? Toward Understanding the Functions of Brand Relationships. In D. J. MacInnis, C. W. Park & J. R. Priester (Eds.), *Handbook of brand relationships* (pp. 5-23). Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.

Austin, J. R., Siguaw, J. A., & Mattila, A. S. (2003). A Re-Examination of the Generalizability of the Aaker Brand Personality Measurement Framework. *Journal of Strategic Marketing, 11*(2), 77-92.

Avis, M. (2012). Brand Personality Factor Based Models: A Critical Review. *Australasian Marketing Journal, 20*(1), 89-96.

Avis, M., Aitken, R., & Ferguson, S. (2012). Brand Relationship and Personality Theory: Metaphor or Consumer Perceptual Reality? *Marketing Theory, 12*(3), 311-331.

Avis, M., Forbes, S., & Ferguson, S. (2014). The Brand Personality of Rocks: A Critical Evaluation of a Brand Personality Scale. *Marketing Theory, 14*(4), 451-475.

Azoulay, A., & Kapferer, J.-N. (2003). Do Brand Personality Scales Really Measure Brand Personality? *Journal of Brand Management, 11*(2), 143-155.

Baker, M. J. (2003). Data Collection - Questionnaire Design. *Marketing Review, 3*(3), 343-370.

Ballantyne, R., Warren, A., & Nobbs, K. (2006). The Evolution of Brand Choice. *Journal of Brand Management, 13*(4/5), 339-352.

Bao, J. Y. E., & Sweeney, J. C. (2009). Comparing Factor Analytical and Circumplex Models of Brand Personality in Brand Positioning. *Psychology & Marketing, 26*(10), 927-949.

Barelds, D. P. H., & Barelds-Dijkstra, P. (2007). Love at First Sight or Friends First? Ties Among Partner Personality Trait Similarity, Relationship Onset, Relationship Quality, and Love. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships, 24*(4), 479-496.

Baron, R. A., Branscombe, N. R., & Byrne, D. E. (2008). *Social Psychology* (12th international ed.). Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Batra, R., Ahuvia, A., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2012). Brand Love. *The Journal of Marketing, 76*(2), 1-16.

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation. *Psychological Bulletin, 117*(3), 497-529.

Baumgarten, F. (1933). *Die Charaktereigenschaften [The Character Traits]*. Bern: A. Francke.

Baumgartner, H. (2002). Toward a Personology of the Consumer. *Journal of Consumer Research, 29*(2), 286-292.

Beatty, P. C., & Willis, G. B. (2007). Research Synthesis: The Practice of Cognitive Interviewing. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 71*(2), 287-311.

Bechhofer, F., & Paterson, L. (2000). *Principles of Research Design in the Social Sciences*. London; New York: Routledge.

Belaid, S., & Behi, A. T. (2011). The Role of Attachment in Building Consumer-Brand Relationships: An Empirical Investigation in the Utilitarian Consumption Context. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 20*(1), 37-47.

Belch, G. E., & Landon, E. L. (1977). Discriminant Validity of a Product-Anchored Self-Concept Measure. *Journal of Marketing Research, 77*(14), 252-256.

Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the Extended Self. *Journal of Consumer Research, 15*(2), 139-168.

Belk, R. W., Bahn, K. D., & Mayer, R. N. (1982). Developmental Recognition of Consumption Symbolism. *Journal of Consumer Research, 9*(1), 4-17.

Bell, J. (2005). *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide For First-Time Researchers in Education, Health and Social Science* (4th ed.). Maidenhead, England; New York: Open University Press.

Bellenger, D. N., Steinberg, E., & Stanton, W. W. (1976). The Congruence of Store Image and Self Image as it Relates to Store Loyalty. *Journal of Retailing, 52*(1), 17-32.

Beltramini, R. F. (1983). Student Surrogates in Consumer Research. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 11*(4), 438-443.

Benet-Martinez, V., & John, O. P. (1998). Los Cinco Grandes Across Cultures and Ethnic Groups: Multitrait Multimethod Analyses of the Big Five in Spanish and English. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75*(3), 729-750.

Bengtsson, A. (2003). Towards a Critique of Brand Relationships. *Advances in Consumer Research, 30*(1), 154-158.

Berger, C. R., & Calabrese, R. J. (1975). Some Explorations in Initial Interaction and Beyond: Toward a Developmental Theory of Interpersonal Communication *Human Communication Research, 1*(2), 99-112.

Berger, J., & Heath, C. (2007). Where Consumers Diverge from Others: Identity Signaling and Product Domains. *Journal of Consumer Research, 34*(2), 121-134.

Bergkvist, L., & Bech-Larsen, T. (2010). Two Studies of Consequences and Actionable Antecedents of Brand Love. *Journal of Brand Management, 17*(7), 504-518.

Berscheid, E., & Walster, E. H. (1978). *Interpersonal Attraction* (2nd ed.): Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.

Bian, X., Moutinho, L., & Reast, J. (2010). Drop or Adopt? - Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scales. In G. Christodoulides, C. Veloutsou, C. Jevons, L. de Chernatony & N. Papadopoulos (Eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Brand Research* (pp. 61-80). Athens, Greece: ATINER.

Birdwell, A. E. (1968). A Study of the Influence of Image Congruence on Consumer Choice. *Journal of Business, 41*(1), 76-88.

Bitner, M. J. (1990). Evaluating Service Encounters: The Effects of Physical Surroundings and Employee Responses. *Journal of Marketing, 54*(2), 69-82.

Blaikie, N. (1991). A Critique of the Use of Triangulation in Social Research. *Quality & Quantity, 25*(2), 115-136.

Blaikie, N. (2009). *Designing Social Research: The Logic of Anticipation* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity.

Blau, P. M. (1964). *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. New York: J. Wiley.

Bosnjak, M., Bochmann, V., & Hufschmidt, T. (2007). Dimensions of Brand Personality Attributions: A Person-Centric Approach in the German Cultural Context. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal, 35*(3), 303-316.

Bosnjak, M., & Tuten, T. L. (2003). Prepaid and Promised Incentives in Web Surveys: An Experiment (English). *Social Science Computer Review, 21*(2), 208-217.

Botwin, M. D., Buss, D. M., & Shackelford, T. K. (1997). Personality and Mate Preferences: Five Factors in Mate Selection and Marital Satisfaction. *Journal of Personality, 65*(1), 107-136.

Boudreaux, C., & Palmer, S. E. (2007). A Charming Little Cabernet: Effects of Wine Label Design on Purchase Intent and Brand Personality. *International Journal of Wine Business Research, 19*(3), 170-186.

Bouhlel, O., Mzoughi, N., Hadiji, D., & Slimane, I. S. (2011). Brand Personality's Influence on the Purchase Intention: A Mobile Marketing Case. *International Journal of Business and Management, 6*(9), 210-227.

Brakus, J. J., Schmitt, B. H., & Zarantonello, L. (2009). Brand Experience: What Is It? How Is It Measured? Does It Affect Loyalty? *Journal of Marketing, 73*(3), 52-68.

Brandirectory. (2014). Global 500 2014: The World's Most Valuable Brands Retrieved 01-05-2014, from http://brandirectory.com/

Brannen, J. (2005). Mixing Methods: The Entry of Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches into the Research Process. *International Journal Of Social Research Methodology, 8*(3), 173-184.

Brodie, E., Hughes, T., Jochum, V., Miller, S., Ockenden, N., & Warburton, D. (2011). Pathways Through Participation: What Creates and Sustains Active Citizenship? *Report, National Council for Voluntary Organisations, Institute for Volunteering Research & Involve* Retrieved 09-01-2014, from http://pathwaysthroughparticipation.org.uk/resources/finalreport/

Brody, R. P., & Cunningham, S. M. (1968). Personality Variables and the Consumer Decision Process. *Journal of Marketing Research, 5*(1), 50-57.

Brown, S. (2014). She Was Fine When She Left Here: Polysemy, Patriarchy, and Personification in Brand Titanic's Birthplace. *Psychology & Marketing, 31*(1), 93-102.

Brownsell, A. (2012, September 26th). iPhone Queues Boost Apple. *Marketing*.

Bryman, A. (1988). *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*. New York: Routledge.

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

BSA. (2002). Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association Retrieved 08-09-2014, from

http://www.britsoc.co.uk/media/27107/StatementofEthicalPractice.pdf?1410
712687709

Bulmer, S., & Buchanan-Oliver, M. (2014). Contextualising Brand Consumption Experiences: A Multi-Modal Enabling Technique. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 17*(2), 151-167.

Burnham, W. H. (1929). Personality Differences and Mental Health. *Pedagogical Seminary and Journal of Genetic Psychology, 36*(3), 361-389.

Burton, D. (2000a). Chapter 21: Sampling Strategies in Survey Research. In D. Burton (Ed.), *Research Training For Social Scientists: A Handbook For Postgraduate Researchers* (pp. 307-319). London: Sage Publications.

Burton, D. (2000b). Chapter 22: Data Collection Issues in Survey Research In D. Burton (Ed.), *Research Training For Social Scientists: A Handbook For Postgraduate Researchers* (pp. 320-334). London: Sage Publications.

Burton, D. (2000c). Chapter 23: Questionnaire Design In D. Burton (Ed.), *Research Training For Social Scientists: A Handbook For Postgraduate Researchers* (pp. 335-346). London: Sage Publications.

Buss, D. M. (1985). Human Mate Selection. *American Scientist, 73*(1), 47-51.

Buss, D. M., & Craik, K. H. (1983). The Act Frequency Approach to Personality. *Psychological Review, 90*(2), 105-126.

Byrne, D. (1961). Interpersonal Attraction and Attitude Similarity. *Journal of Abnormal & Social Psychology, 62*(3), 713-715.

Byrne, D., & Rhamey, R. (1965). Magnitude of Positive and Negative Reinforcements as a Determinant of Attraction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2*(6), 884-889.

Calder, B. J., Phillips, L. W., & Tybout, A. M. (1981). Designing Research for Application. *Journal of Consumer Research, 8*(2), 197-207.

Callaghan, J., & Lazard, L. (2011). *Social Psychology*. Exeter: Learning Matters Ltd. (SAGE Publications).

Capelli, S., & Jolibert, A. (2009). Metaphor's Validity in Marketing Research. *Psychology & Marketing, 26*(12), 1079 - 1090.

Caprara, G. V., Barbaranellie, C., & Guido, G. (2001). Brand Personality: How to Make the Metaphor Fit? *Journal of Economic Psychology, 22*(3), 377-395.

Carroll, B. A., & Ahuvia, A. C. (2006). Some Antecedents and Outcomes of Brand Love. *Marketing Letters, 17*(2), 79-89.

Chan, C., Berger, J., & Van Boven, L. (2012). Identifiable But Not Identical: Combining Social Identity and Uniqueness Motives in Choice. *Journal of Consumer Research, 39*(3), 561-573.

Chang, P.-L., & Chieng, M.-H. (2006). Building Consumer–Brand Relationship: A Cross-Cultural Experiential View. *Psychology & Marketing, 23*(11), 927-959.

Chang, S.-J., van Witteloostuijn, A., & Eden, L. (2010). From the Editors: Common Method Variance in International Business Research. *Journal of International Business Studies, 41*(2), 178-184.

Chaudhuri, A., & Holbrook, M. B. (2001). The Chain of Effects from Brand Trust and Brand Affect to Brand Performance: The Role of Brand Loyalty. *Journal of Marketing, 65*(2), 81-93.

Chaudhuri, H. R., Mazumdar, S., & Ghoshal, A. (2011). Conspicuous Consumption Orientation: Conceptualisation, Scale Development and Validation. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 10*(4), 216-224.

Cheema, A., & Kaikati, A. M. (2010). The Effect of Need for Uniqueness on Word of Mouth. *Journal of Marketing Research, 47*(3), 553-563.

Cheng, S. Y. Y., White, T. B., & Chaplin, L. N. (2012). The Effects of Self-Brand Connections on Responses to Brand Failure: A New Look at the Consumer–Brand Relationship. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 22*(2), 280-288.

Chernev, A., Hamilton, R., & Gal, D. (2011). Competing For Consumer Identity: Limits to Self-Expression and the Perils of Lifestyle Branding. *Journal of Marketing, 75*(3), 66-82.

Choy, M., & Kim, J., II. (2013). New Brands Diluting the Personality of Existing Brands. *Journal of Brand Management, 20*(7), 590-607.

Chu, S.-C., & Sung, Y. (2011). Brand Personality Dimensions in China. *Journal of Marketing Communications, 17*(3), 163-181.

Clammer, J. (1992). Aesthetics of the Self: Shopping and Social Being in Contemporary Japan. In R. Shields (Ed.), *Lifestyle Shopping: The Subject of Consumption* (pp. 197-216). London: Routledge.

Clark, M. S., & Mills, J. (1979). Interpersonal Attraction in Exchange and Communal Relationships. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 37*(1), 12-24.

Cohen, R. J. (2014). Brand Personification: Introduction and Overview. *Psychology & Marketing, 31*(1), 1-30.

Connell, P. M., & Schau, H. J. (2012). Examining Childhood Consumption Relationships. In S. Fournier, M. Breazeale & M. Fetscherin (Eds.), *Consumier-Brand Relationships: Theory and Practice* (pp. 97-114). London; New York: Routledge.

CoolBrands. (2014). An Insight Into Some of Britain's Coolest Brands Retrieved 27-11-2014, from http://s3.coolbrands.uk.com/files/2014/09/CB-2014-15-Official-Results-53f39h.pdf

Cooley, C. H. (1902). *Human Nature and the Social Order*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons.

Corbetta, P. (2003). *Social Research: Theory Methods And Techniques*. London: Sage Publications.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria. *Qualitative Sociology, 13*(1), 3-21.

Costa Jr, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1985). *The NEO Personality Inventory manual*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.

Costa Jr, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1989). *NEO PI/FFI Manual Supplement for Use with the NEO Personality Inventory and the NEO Five-Factor Inventory*: Psychological Assessment Resources.

Costa Jr, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1992). *NEO PIR-R™ - Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R™) and NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) - Professional manual*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.

Côté, J. E., & Levine, C. (2002). *Identity formation, agency, and culture: a social psychological synthesis*. Mahwah, N.J.; London: Erlbaum.

Coviello, N. E., Brodie, R. J., & Munro, H. J. (1997). Understanding Contemporary Marketing: Development of a Classification Scheme. *Journal of Marketing Management, 13*(6), 501-522.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif.; London: Sage.

Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social Exchange Theory: An Interdisciplinary Review. *Journal of Management, 31*(6), 874-900.

Cunningham, R. M. (1956). Brand Loyalty - What, Where, How Much? *Harvard Business Review, 34*(1), 116-128.

Cupchik, G. (2001). Constructivist Realism: An Ontology That Encompasses Positivist and Constructivist Approaches to the Social Sciences. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 2*(1), 29-39.

Cutright, K. M., Samper, A., & Fitzsimons, G. J. (2013). We Are What We Buy? In A. A. Ruvio & R. W. Belk (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to identity and consumption* (pp. 91-98). Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge.

d'Astous, A., & Levesque, M. (2003). A Scale for Measuring Store Personality. *Psychology & Marketing, 20*(5), 455- 469.

Dall'Olmo Riley, F., & De Chernatony, L. (2000). The Service Brand as Relationships Builder. *British Journal of Management, 11*(2), 137-150.

Das, G. (2014). Impacts of Retail Brand Personality and Self-Congruity on Store Loyalty: The Moderating Role of Gender. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 21*(2), 130-138.

Das, G., Datta, B., & Guin, K. K. (2012). From Brands in General to Retail Brands: A Review and Future Agenda for Brand Personality Measurement. *Marketing Review, 12*(1), 90-106.

Davies, G., & Chun, R. (2003). The Use of Metaphor in the Exploration of the Brand Concept. *Journal of Marketing Management, 19*(1/2), 45-71.

Davis, D. F., Golicic, S. L., & Boerstler, C. N. (2011). Benefits and Challenges of Conducting Multiple Methods Research in Marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 39*(3), 467-479.

Davis, D. F., Golicic, S. L., Boerstler, C. N., Choi, S., & Oh, H. (2013). Does Marketing Research Suffer From Methods Myopia? *Journal of Business Research, 66*(9), 1245-1250.

Dawes, J. (2013). Can Consumers Really Have Love Relationships With Brands? (I Think Not.). *Marketing News, 47*(12), 22-22.

De Chernatony, L. (2001). *From Brand Vision to Brand Evaluation: Strategically Building and Sustaining Brands*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2001.

De Chernatony, L., & Dall'Olmo Riley, F. (1998). Defining A "Brand": Beyond The Literature With Experts' Interpretations. *Journal of Marketing Management, 14*(4/5), 417-443.

De la Paz Toldos Romero, M. (2012). Dimensions of Brand Personality in Mexico. *Global Journal of Business Research, 6*(5), 35-47.

De Matos, C. A., & Rossi, C. A. V. (2008). Word-of-Mouth Communications in Marketing: A Meta-Analytic Review of the Antecedents and Moderators. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 36*(4), 578-596.

De Vaus, D. A. (2001). *Research Design in Social Research*. London: Sage Publications.

De Vaus, D. A. (2002a). *Analyzing Social Science Data*. London: Sage.

De Vaus, D. A. (2002b). *Surveys in Social Research* (5th ed.). London: Routledge.

Delbaere, M., McQuarrie, E. F., & Phillips, B. J. (2011). Personification in Advertising: Using a Visual Metaphor to Trigger Anthropomorphism. *Journal of Advertising, 40*(1), 121-130.

Denissen, J. J. A., Geenen, R., van Aken, M. A. G., Gosling, S. D., & Potter, J. (2008). Development and Validation of a Dutch Translation of the Big Five Inventory (BFI). *Journal of Personality Assessment, 90*(2), 152-157.

Diamantopoulos, A., Smith, G., & Grime, I. (2005). The Impact of Brand Extensions on Brand Personality: Experimental Evidence. *European Journal of Marketing, 39*(1/2), 129-149.

Diamond, N., Sherry, J. F., Jr., Muniz, A. M., Jr., McGrath, M. A., Kozinets, R. V., & Borghini, S. (2009). American Girl and the Brand Gestalt: Closing the Loop on Sociocultural Branding Research. *Journal of Marketing, 73*(3), 118-134.

Dichter, E. (1966). How Word-of-Mouth Advertising Works. *Harvard Business Review, 44*(6), 147-166.

Digman, J. M. (1997). Higher-Order Factors of the Big Five. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73*(6), 1246-1256.

Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2009). *Internet, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method* (3rd ed.). Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley & Sons.

Dimofte, C. V., Johansson, J. K., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2010). Global Brands in the United States: How Consumer Ethnicity Mediates the Global Brand Effect. *Journal of International Marketing, 18*(3), 81-106.

Dolich, I. J. (1969). Congruence Relationships Between Self Images and Product Brands. *Journal of Marketing Research, 6*(1), 80-84.

Dolnicar, S., & Grün, B. (2014). Including Don't Know Answer Options in Brand Image Surveys Improves Data Quality. *International Journal of Market Research, 56*(1), 33-50.

Donovan, L. A. N., Priester, J., MacInnis, D. J., & Park, C. W. (2012). Brand Forgiveness: How Close Brand Relationships Influence Forgiveness. In S. Fournier, M. Breazeale & M. Fetscherin (Eds.), *Consumer-Brand Relationships: Theory and Practice* (pp. 184-203). London; New York: Routledge.

Downes-Le Guin, T., Baker, R., Mechling, J., & Ruyle, E. (2012). Myths and Realities of Respondent Engagement in Online Surveys. *International Journal of Market Research, 54*(5), 613-633.

Dryer, D. C., & Horowitz, L. M. (1997). When Do Opposites Attract? Interpersonal Complementarity Versus Similarity. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 72*(3), 592-603.

Duck, S. W., & Craig, G. (1978). Personality Similarity and the Development of Friendship: A Longitudinal Study. *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 17*(3), 237-242.

Dwight, S. A., Cummings, K. M., & Glenar, J. L. (1998). Comparison of Criterion-Related Validity Coefficients for the Mini-Markers and Goldberg's Markers of the Big Five Personality Factors. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 70*(3), 541-550.

Dwivedi, A. (2014). Self-Brand Connection With Service Brands: Examining Relationships With Performance Satisfaction, Perceived Value, and Brand Relationship Quality. *Services Marketing Quarterly, 35*(1), 37-53.

Eisend, M., & Stokburger-Sauer, N. (2013). Brand Personality: A Meta-Analytic Review of Antecedents and Consequences. *Marketing Letters, 24*(3), 205-216.

Eisend, M., & Stokburger-Sauer, N. E. (2013). Measurement Characteristics of Aaker's Brand Personality Dimensions: Lessons to be Learned from Human Personality Research. *Psychology & Marketing, 30*(11), 950-958.

Eisingerich, A. B., & Rubera, G. (2010). Drivers of Brand Commitment: A Cross-National Investigation. *Journal of International Marketing, 18*(2), 64-79.

Ekelund, B. Z., & Langvik, E. (2008). *Diversity Icebreaker: How to Manage Diversity Processes*. Oslo: Human Factors Publishing.

Elliot, S., & Barth, J. E. (2012). Wine Label Design and Personality Preferences of Millennials. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 21*(3), 183-191.

Elliott, R. (1994). Exploring the Symbolic Meaning of Brands. *British Journal of Management, 5*(2), 13-19.

Elliott, R., & Wattanasuwan, K. (1998). Brand as Symbolic Resources for the Construction of Identity. *International Journal of Advertising, 17*(2), 131-144.

Elliott, R., & Yannopoulou, N. (2007). The Nature of Trust in Brands: A Psychosocial Model. *European Journal of Marketing, 41*(9/10), 988- 998.

Emerson, R. M. (1976). Social Exchange Theory. *Annual Review of Sociology, 2*, 335-362.

Epley, N., Waytz, A., Akalis, S., Cacioppo, J. T., Kwan, V. S. Y., & Fiske, S. T. (2008). When We Need a Human: Motivational Determinants of Anthropomorphism. *Social Cognition, 26*(2), 143-155.

Epley, N., Waytz, A., & Cacioppo, J. T. (2007). On Seeing Human: A Three-Factor Theory of Anthropomorphism. *Psychological Review, 114*(4), 864-886.

Escalas, J. E. (2004). Narrative Processing: Building Consumer Connections to Brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 14*(1/2), 168-180.

Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2003). You Are What They Eat: The Influence of Reference Groups on Consumers' Connections to Brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 13*(3), 339-348.

Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2005). Self-Construal, Reference Groups, and Brand Meaning. *Journal of Consumer Research, 32*(3), 378-389.

Eysenck, H. J. (1947). *Dimensions of Personality*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Fajer, M. T., & Schouten, J. W. (1995). Breakdown and Dissolution of Person-Brand Relationships. *Advances in Consumer Research, 22*(1), 663-667.

Fennis, B. M., & Pruyn, A. T. H. (2007). You Are What You Wear: Brand Personality Influences on Consumer Impression Formation. *Journal of Business Research, 60*(6), 634-639.

Ferrandi, J. M., Merunka, D., Valette-Florence, P., & De Barnier, V. (2002). *Brand Personality: How Well Does a Human Personality Scale Apply to Brands?* Paper presented at the Asia Pacific Advances in Consumer Research, Valdosta.

Ferrandi, J. M., Valette-Florence, P., & Fine-Falcy, S. (2000). Aaker's Brand Personality Scale in a French Context: A Replication and a Preliminary Test. *Developments in Marketing Science: Proceedings of the 2000 Academy of Marketing Science Annual Conference, 23*, 7-13.

Ferraro, R., Kirmani, A., & Matherly, T. (2013). Look At Me! Look At Me! Conspicuous Brand Usage, Self-Brand Connection and Dilution. *Journal of Marketing Research, 50*(4), 477-488.

Festinger, L. (1954). A Theory of Social Comparison Processes. *Human Relations, 7*(2), 117-140.

Fetscherin, M., & Dato-on, M. C. (2012). Brand Love: Investigating Two Alternative Love Relationships. In S. Fournier, M. Breazeale & M. Fetscherin (Eds.), *Consumer-Brand Relationships: Theory and Practice* (pp. 151-164). London; New York: Routledge.

Finkel, E. J., Rusbult, C. E., Kumashiro, M., & Hannon, P. A. (2002). Dealing With Betrayal in Close Relationships: Does Commitment Promote Forgiveness? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 82*(6), 956-974.

Fischer, M., Volckner, F., & Sattler, H. (2010). How Important Are Brands? A Cross-Category, Cross-Country Study. *Journal of Marketing Research, 47*(5), 823-839.

Fiske, D. W. (1949). Consistency of The Factorial Structures of Personality Ratings From Different Sources. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 44*(3), 329-344.

Fleck, N., Michel, G., & Zeitoun, V. (2014). Brand Personification Through The Use of Spokespeople: An Exploratory Study of Ordinary Employees, CEOs, and Celebrities Featured in Advertising. *Psychology & Marketing, 31*(1), 84-92.

Fletcher, G. J. O., Simpson, J. A., Thomas, G., & Giles, L. (1999). Ideals in Intimate Relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Responsibility, 76*(1), 72-89.

Foa, U. G., & Foa, E. B. (1980). Resource Theory: Interpersonal Behavior As Exchange. In K. J. Gergen, M. S. Greenberg & R. H. Willis (Eds.), *Social Exchange: Advances in Theory and Research* (pp. 77-94). New York; London: Plenum Press.

Forbes. (2014). The World's Most Valuable Brands. *Factset* Retrieved 21-12-2014, from http://www.forbes.com/powerful-brands/list/

Foscht, T., Maloles III, C., Swoboda, B., Morschett, D., & Sinha, I. (2008). The Impact of Culture on Brand Perceptions: A Six-Nation Study. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 17*(3), 131-142.

Fournier, S. (1995). Toward the Development of Relationship Theory at the Level of the Product and Brand. *Advances in Consumer Research, 22*(1), 661-662.

Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research. *Journal of Consumer Research, 24*(4), 343-373.

Fournier, S. (2009). Lessons Learned About Consumers' Relationships With Their Brands. In D. J. MacInnis, C. W. Park & J. R. Priester (Eds.), *Handbook of Brand Relationships* (pp. 5-23). Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.

Fournier, S., & Alvarez, C. (2012). Brands As Relationship Partners: Warmth, Competence, and In-Between. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 22*(2), 177-185.

Fournier, S., & Yao, J. L. (1997). Reviving Brand Loyalty: A Reconceptualization Within the Framework of Consumer-Brand Relationships. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 14*(5), 451-472.

Fowler, F. J. (2009). *Survey Research Methods* (4th ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Fox, J., Murray, C., & Warm, A. (2003). Conducting Research Using Web-Based Questionnaires: Practical, Methodological, and Ethical Considerations. *International Journal Of Social Research Methodology, 6*(2), 167-180.

Francisco-Maffezzolli, E. C., Semprebon, E., & Prado, P. H. M. (2014). Construing Loyalty Through Brand Experience: The Mediating Role of Brand Relationship Quality. *Journal of Brand Management, 21*(5), 446-459.

Franzak, F., Makarem, S., & Jae, H. (2014). Design Benefits, Emotional Responses, and Brand Engagement. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 23*(1), 16-23.

Freeman, K., Spenner, P., & Bird, A. (2012, May 23, 2012). Three Myths about What Customers Want. *Harvard Business Review* Retrieved 01-12-2014, from https://hbr.org/2012/05/three-myths-about-customer-eng/

Freling, T. H., Crosno, J. L., & Henard, D. H. (2011). Brand Personality Appeal: Conceptualization and Empirical Validation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 39*(3), 392-406.

Freling, T. H., & Forbes, L. P. (2005a). An Empirical Analysis of the Brand Personality Effect. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 14*(7), 404-413.

Freling, T. H., & Forbes, L. P. (2005b). An Examination of Brand Personality Through Methodological Triangulation. *Journal of Brand Management, 13*(2), 148-162.

Furnham, A. (2009). Sex Differences in Mate Selection Preferences. *Personality and Individual Differences, 47*(4), 262-267.

Furnham, A., & Tsoi, T. (2012). Personality, Gender, and Background Predictors of Partner Preferences. *North American Journal of Psychology, 14*(3), 435-454.

Galton, F. (1884). Measurement of Character. *Fortnightly Review, 36*, 179-185.

Gardner, B. B., & Levy, S. J. (1955). The Product and the Brand. *Harvard Business Review, 33*(2), 33-39.

Garsvaite, K., & Caruana, A. (2014). Do Consumers of FMCGs Seek Brands with Congruent Personalities? *Journal of Brand Management, 21*(6), 485-494.

Geuens, M., Weijters, B., & De Wulf, K. (2009). A New Measure of Brand Personality. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 26*(2), 97-107.

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity And Self-Identity: Self And Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press in association with Blackwell.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory; Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co.

Gleitman, H., Gross, J. J. P. D., & Reisberg, D. (2011). *Psychology* (8th, International student ed.). New York; London: W.W. Norton and Company.

Goldberg, L. R. (1981). Language and Individual Difference: The Search for Universals in Personality Lexicons. In L. Wheeler (Ed.), *Review of Personality and Social Psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 141-165). Beverly Hills: Sage.

Gosling, S. D., Rentfrow, P. J., & Swann, J. W. B. (2003). A Very Brief Measure of the Big-Five Personality Domains. *Journal of Research in Personality, 37*(6), 504-528.

Gouldner, A. W. (1960). The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement. *American Sociological Review, 25*(2), 161-178.

Graeff, T. R. (1996a). Image Congruence Effects on Product Evaluations: The Role of Self-Monitoring and Public/Private Consumption. *Psychology and Marketing, 13*(5), 481-499.

Graeff, T. R. (1996b). Using Promotional Messages to Manage the Effects of Brand and Self-Image on Brand Evaluations. *The Journal of Consumer Marketing, 13*(3), 4-18.

Graeff, T. R. (1997). Consumption Situations and the Effects of Brand Image on Consumers' Brand Evaluations. *Psychology & Marketing, 14*(1), 49-70.

Graziano, D. (2013). Apple Awarded 'Brand of the Year' for iPhone, iPad and MacBook. *Yahoo News (Tech)* Retrieved 01-05-2014, from http://news.yahoo.com/apple-awarded-brand-iphone-ipad-macbook-001556327.html

Green, P. E., Halbert, M. H., & Robinson, P. J. (1966). Canonical Analysis: An Exposition and Illustrative Application. *Journal of Marketing Research, 3*(1), 32-39.

Greene, J. C., Caracelli, V. J., & Graham, W. F. (1989). Toward a Conceptual Framework for Mixed-Method Evaluation Designs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 11*(3), 255-274.

Greeno, D. W., Sommers, M. S., & Kernan, J. B. (1973). Personality and Implicit Behavior Patterns. *Journal of Marketing Research, 10*(1), 63-69.

Grisaffe, D. (2014). Feeling the Brand Love. *Marketing News, 48*(2), 26-27.

Grisaffe, D. B., & Nguyen, H. P. (2011). Antecedents of Emotional Attachment to Brands. *Journal of Business Research, 64*(10), 1052-1059.

Grohmann, B., Giese, J. L., & Parkman, I. D. (2013). Using Type Font Characteristics To Communicate Brand Personality of New Brands. *Journal of Brand Management, 20*(5), 389-403.

Gross, R. D. (1987). *Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behaviour*. London: Edward Arnold Hodder & Stoughton.

Grubb, E. L., & Grathwohl, H. L. (1967). Consumer Self-Concept, Symbolism and Marketing Behavior: A Theoretical Approach. *Journal of Marketing, 31*(4), 22-27.

Grubb, E. L., & Hupp, G. (1968). Perception of Self, Generalized Stereotypes, and Brand Selection. *Journal of Marketing Research, 5*(1), 58-63.

Grubb, E. L., & Stern, B. L. (1971). Self-Concept and Significant Others. *Journal of Marketing Research, 8*(3), 382-385.

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How Many Interviews Are Enough? An Experiment With Data Saturation and Variability. *Field Methods, 18*(1), 59-82.

Guevremont, A., & Grohmann, B. (2013). The Impact of Brand Personality on Consumer Responses to Persuasion Attempts. *Journal of Brand Management, 20*(6), 518-530.

Guillemin, M., Gillam, L., Cannella, G. S., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2004). Ethics, Reflexivity and Ethically Important Moments in Research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 10*(2), 261-280.

Hair, J., Black, W., Babin, B., & Anderson, R. (2010). *Multivariate Data Analysis: A Global Perspective* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, USA: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Hammersley, M. (1996). The Relationship Between Qualitative and Quantitative Research: Paradigm Loyalty Versus Methodological Eclecticism. In J. T. E. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for Psychology and the Social Sciences*. Leicester: British Psychological Society.

Hanslin, K., & Rindell, A. (2014). Consumer-Brand Relationships in Step-Down Line Extensions of Luxury and Designer Brands. *Journal of Fashion Marketing & Management, 18*(2), 145-168.

Harmon-Kizer, T. R., Kumar, A., Ortinau, D., & Stock, J. (2013). When Multiple Identities Compete: The Role of Centrality in Self-Brand Connections. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 12*(6), 483-495.

Hayes, J. B., Alford, B. L., Silver, L., & York, R. P. (2006). Looks Matter in Developing Consumer-Brand Relationships. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 15*(4/5), 306-315.

He, H., & Mukherjee, A. (2007). I Am, Ergo I Shop: Does Store Image Congruity Explain Shopping Behavior of Chinese Consumers? *Journal of Marketing Management, 23*(5/6), 443-460.

Heath, A. P., & Scott, D. (1998). The Self-Concept and Image Congruence Hypothesis: An Empirical Evaluation in the Motor Vehicle Market. *European Journal of Marketing, 32*(11/12), 1110-1123.

Heath, T. B. (1992). The Reconciliation of Humanism and Positivism in the Practice of Consumer Research: A View From the Trenches. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 20*(2), 107-118.

Heere, B. (2010). A New Approach to Measure Perceived Brand Personality Associations Among Consumers. *Sport Marketing Quarterly, 19*(1), 17-24.

Heerwegh, D., Vanhove, T., Matthijs, K., & Loosveldt, G. (2005). The Effect of Personalization on Response Rates and Data Quality in Web Surveys. *International Journal Of Social Research Methodology, 8*(2), 85-99.

Heider, F. (1958). *The psychology of interpersonal relations.* New York: Wiley.

Heinrich, D., Albrecht, C.-M., & Bauer, H. H. (2012). Love Actually? Measuring and Exploring Consumers' Brand Love. In S. Fournier, M. Breazeale & M. Fetscherin (Eds.), *Consumer-Brand Relationships: Theory and Practice* (pp. 137-150). London; New York: Routledge.

Helgeson, J. G., & Supphellen, M. (2004). A Conceptual and Measurement Comparison of Self-Congruity and Brand Personality. *International Journal of Market Research, 46*(2), 205-233.

Herbst, U., & Merz, M. A. (2011). The Industrial Brand Personality Scale: Building Strong Business-To-Business Brands. *Industrial Marketing Management, 40*(7), 1072-1081.

Hess, S., Bauer, H., Kuester, S., & Huber, F. (2007). *In Brands We Trust: Marketing's Impact On Service Brand Personality And Trust.* Paper presented at the European Marketing Academy 36th Conference, Reykjavik, Iceland.

Higgins, E. T. (1987). Self-Discrepancy: A Theory Relating Self and Affect. *Psychological Review, 94*(3), 319-340.

Hoeffler, S., & Keller, K. L. (2003). The Marketing Advantages of Strong Brands. *Journal of Brand Management, 10*(6), 421-445.

Hogg, M. A., & Abrams, D. (1988). *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes*: Routledge.

Hohenstein, N., Sirgy, M. J., Herrmann, A., & Heitmann, M. (2007). *Self-Congruity: Antecedents and Consequences*. Paper presented at the La Londe Conference, La Londe les Maures, France.

Holbrook, M. B., & Hirschman, E. C. (1982). The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun. *Journal of Consumer Research, 9*(2), 132-140.

Holbrook, M. B., & Moore, W. L. (1982). Using Canonical Correlation to Construct Product Spaces for Objects with Known Feature Structures. *Journal of Marketing Research, 19*(1), 87-98.

Hollebeek, L. (2011). Exploring Customer Brand Engagement: Definition And Themes. *Journal of Strategic Marketing, 19*(7), 555-573.

Hollenbeck, C. R., & Kaikati, A. M. (2012). Consumers' Use of Brands to Reflect Their Actual and Ideal Selves on Facebook. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 29*(4), 395-405.

Holt, D. B. (1995). How Consumers Consume: A Typology of Consumption Practices. *Journal of Consumer Research, 22*(1), 1-16.

Holt, D. B., Quelch, J. A., & Taylor, E. L. (2004). How Global Brands Compete. *Harvard Business Review, 82*(9), 68-75.

Homans, G. C. (1958). Social Behavior As Exchange. *American Journal of Sociology, 63*(6), 597-606.

Homans, G. C. (1961). *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms*: Harcourt, Brace & World.

Homans, G. C. (1974). *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms*: Harcourt, Brace & World.

Hosany, S., Ekinci, Y., & Uysal, M. (2006). Destination Image and Destination Personality: An Application of Branding Theories to Tourism Places. *Journal of Business Research, 59*(5), 638-642.

Hosany, S., & Martin, D. (2012). Self-Image Congruence in Consumer Behavior. *Journal of Business Research, 65*(5), 685-691.

Hsiao, C.-H., Shen, G. C., & Chao, P.-J. (2015). How Does Brand Misconduct Affect the Brand–Customer Relationship? *Journal of Business Research, 68*(4), 862-866.

Huang, H. H. (2009). *Self-Identity and Consumption: A Study of Consumer Personality, Brand Personality, and Brand Relationship.* Doctoral Thesis, University of Warwick.

Huang, H. H., Mitchell, V.-W., & Rosenbaum-Elliott, R. (2012). Are Consumer and Brand Personalities the Same? *Psychology & Marketing, 29*(5), 334-349.

Hughes, G. D., & Guerrero, J. L. (1971). Automobile Self-Congruity Models Reexamined. *Journal of Marketing Research, 8*(1), 125-127.

Hung, K., & Petrick, J. F. (2011). The Role of Self- and Functional Congruity in Cruising Intentions. *Journal of Travel Research, 50*(1), 100-112.

Hunt, S. D. (1991). Positivism and Paradigm Dominance in Consumer Research: Toward a Critical Pluralism and Re-approchement. *Journal of Consumer Research, 18*(1), 32-44.

Ibrahim, H., & Najjar, F. (2008). Assessing the Effects of Self-Congruity, Attitudes and Customer Satisfaction on Customer Behavioural Intentions in Retail Environment. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 26*(2), 207-227.

Irmak, C., Vallen, B., & Sen, S. (2010). You Like What I Like, But I Don't Like What You Like: Uniqueness Motivations in Product Preferences. *Journal of Consumer Research, 37*(3), 443-455.

Ivens, B., & Valta, K. S. (2011). Customer Brand Personality Perception: A Taxonomic Analysis. *Journal of Marketing Management, 28*(9/10), 1062-1093.

Izard, C. E. (1960). Personality Similarity, Positive Affect, and Interpersonal Attraction. *Journal of Abnormal & Social Psychology, 61*(3), 484-485.

Jacoby, J., & Kyner, D. B. (1973). Brand Loyalty Vs. Repeat Purchasing Behavior. *Journal of Marketing Research, 10*(1), 1-9.

Jamal, A. (2004). Retail Banking and Customer Behaviour: A Study of Self Concept, Satisfaction and Technology Usage. *International Review of Retail, Distribution & Consumer Research, 14*(3), 357-379.

Jamal, A., & Al-Marri, M. (2007). Exploring the Effect of Self-Image Congruence and Brand Preference on Satisfaction: The Role of Expertise. *Journal of Marketing Management, 23*(7/8), 613-629.

Jamal, A., & Goode, M. M. H. (2001). Consumers and Brands: A Study of the Impact of Self-Image Congruence on Brand Preference and Satisfaction. *Marketing Intelligence And Planning, 19*(6/7), 482-492.

Jamal, A., Khan, M. S., & Tsesmetzi, M. S. (2009). Perceived Quality, Packaging and Self-Image Congruence: An Application in the Cosmetics Market. *Advances in Consumer Research, 36*, 1019-1021.

James, W. (1890). *The Principles of Psychology*. London: Macmillan.

Jevons, C., Gabbott, M., & de Chernatony, L. (2005). Customer and Brand Manager Perspectives on Brand Relationships: A Conceptual Framework. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 14*(5), 300-309.

Jick, T. D. (1979). Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Triangulation in Action. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 24*(4), 602-611.

Jie, Y., Chou, T.-J., & Chou, N. (2012). Assessing The Fit of Two Brand Personality Scales in a Chinese Context and Revisiting the Predictive Validity of Two Methods of Measuring Self-Congruity. *Journal of Brand Management, 19*(6), 525-540.

Jin, L. (2011). Improving Response Rates in Web Surveys With Default Setting. *International Journal of Market Research, 53*(1), 75-94.

John, O. P. (1989). Towards a Taxonomy of Personality Descriptors. In D. M. Buss & N. Cantor (Eds.), *Personality psychology: Recent trends and emerging directions* (pp. 261-271). New York: Springer-Verlag.

John, O. P. (1990). The "Big Five" Factor Taxonomy: Dimensions of Personality in the Natural Language and in Questionnaires. In L. A. Pervin (Ed.), *Handbook of personality: theory and research*. New York; London: Guilford Press.

John, O. P., Angleitner, A., & Ostendorf, F. (1988). The Lexical Approach to Personality: A Historical Review of Trait Taxonomic Research. *European Journal of Personality, 2*(3), 171-203.

John, O. P., Donahue, E. M., & Kentle, R. L. (1991). *The Big Five Inventory - Versions 4a and 54*. Berkeley, CA: University of California,Berkeley, Institute of Personality and Social Research.

John, O. P., Naumann, L. P., & Soto, C. J. (2008). Paradigm Shift to the Integrative Big-Five Trait Taxonomy: History, Measurement, and Conceptual Issues. In O. P.

John, R. W. Robins & L. A. Pervin (Eds.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (3rd ed., pp. 114-158). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Joshanloo, M., Rastegar, P., & Bakhshi, A. (2012). The Big Five Personality Domains as Predictors of Social Wellbeing in Iranian University Students. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships, 29*(5), 639-660.

Kaiser, H. F. (1974). An Index of Factorial Simplicity. *Psychometrika, 39*(1), 31-36.

Kalafatis, S. P., Riley, D., Tsogas, M., & Clodine-Florent, J. (2012). The Effects of Source Credibility and Message Variation on Mail Survey Response Behaviour. *International Journal of Market Research, 54*(3), 391-406.

Kapferer, J.-N. (2008). *The New Strategic Brand Management: Creating and Sustaining Brand Equity Long Term* (4th ed.). London, UK: Kogan Page Limited.

Karanika, K., & Hogg, M. K. (2010). The Interrelationship Between Desired and Undesired Selves and Consumption: The Case of Greek Female Consumers' Experiences. *Journal of Marketing Management, 26*(11/12), 1091-1111.

Kassarjian, H. H. (1971). Personality and Consumer Behavior: A Review. *Journal of Marketing Research, 8*(4), 409-418.

Kauppinen-Räisänen, H., Finne, Å., Gummerus, J., Helkkula, A., Koskull, C. v., Kowalkowski, C., et al. (2014). Am I Worth It? Gifting Myself With Luxury. *Journal of Fashion Marketing & Management, 18*(2), 112-132.

Kelle, U. (2001). Sociological Explanations Between Micro and Macro and the Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Methods. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 2*(1), 204-222.

Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing, 57*(1), 1-22.

Keller, K. L. (1998). *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring and Managing Brand Equity*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Kerckhoff, A. C., & Davis, K. E. (1962). Value Consensus and Need Complementarity in Mate Selection. *American Sociological Review, 27*(3), 295-303.

Kim, C. K., Han, D., & Park, S.-B. (2001). The Effect of Brand Personality and Brand Identification on Brand Loyalty: Applying the Theory of Social Identification. *Japanese Psychological Research, 43*(4), 195-206.

Kim, H. K., Lee, M., & Lee, Y. W. (2005). *Developing a Scale for Measuring Brand Relationship Quality.* Paper presented at the Asia Pacific Advances in Consumer Research, Duluth.

Kim, H. R., Lee, M., & Ulgado, F. M. (2005). *Brand Personality, Self-Congruity and the Consumer-Brand Relationship.* Paper presented at the Asia Pacific Advances in Consumer Research, Duluth.

Kim, H. Y., & Kwon, Y. J. (2011). Soulmates, Best Friends, and Casual Buddies: The Relationship of US College Students to Retailer Brands. *Clothing & Textiles Research Journal, 29*(1), 67-82.

Kirmani, A. (2009). The Self And The Brand. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 19*(3), 271-275.

Klages, L. (1929). *The Science of Character (translated from the fifth and sixth German editions by W. H. Johnston).* London: G. Allen & Unwin.

Kleine, S. S., Kleine, R. E., & Allen, C. T. (1995). How is a Possession 'Me' or 'Not Me'? Characterizing Types and an Antecedent of Material Possession Attachment. *Journal of Consumer Research, 22*(3), 327-343.

Klink, R., & Athaide, G. (2012). Creating Brand Personality With Brand Names. *Marketing Letters, 23*(1), 109-117.

Klohnen, E. C., & Luo, S. (2003). Interpersonal Attraction and Personality: What is Attractive-Self Similarity, Ideal Similarity, Complementarity, or Attachment Security? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 85*(4), 709-722.

Klohnen, E. C., & Mendelsohn, G. A. (1998). Partner Selection for Personality Characteristics: A Couple-Centered Approach. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin, 24*(3), 268-278.

Kressmann, F., Sirgy, M. J., Herrmann, A., Huber, F., Huber, S., & Lee, D.-J. (2006). Direct and Indirect Effects of Self-Image Congruence on Brand Loyalty. *Journal of Business Research, 59*(9), 955-964.

Krohmer, H., Malär, L., & Nyffenegger, B. (2007). The Fit Between Brand Personality and Consumer's Self: The Importance of Self-Congruence for Brand Performance. *AMA Winter Educators' Conference Proceedings, 18*, 172-173.

Kruger, D., & Byker, D. (2009). Evolved Foraging Psychology Underlies Sex Differences in Shoping Experiences and Behaviors. *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology, 3*(4), 328-342.

Kuhn, M. H. (1960). Self-Attitudes by Age, Sex, and Professional Training. *Sociological Quarterly, 1*(1), 39-55.

Kuhn, T. S. (1970). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (2nd enlarged ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kum, D., Bergkvist, L., Lee, Y. H., & Siew Meng, L. (2012). Brand Personality Inference: The Moderating Role of Product Meaning. *Journal of marketing management, 28*(11/12), 1291-1304.

Kwak, D. H., & Kang, J.-H. (2009). Symbolic Purchase in Sport: The Roles of Self-Image Congruence and Perceived Quality. *Management Decision, 47*(1), 85-99.

Lakin, M. (2008, July 14). Hard-core Apple Fans Queue Up For iPhone 3G. *Advertising Age, 79.*

Landon, E. L. (1974). Self Concept, Ideal Self Concept, and Consumer Purchase Intentions. *Journal of Consumer Research, 1*(2), 44-51.

Laurie, H., & Sullivan, O. (1991). Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Data in the Longitudinal Study of Household Allocations. *The Sociological Review, 39*(1), 113-130.

Lee, D. (2004). Image Congruence and Attitudes toward Private Brands. *Advances in Consumer Research, 31*(1), 435-441.

Lee, E. J. (2013). A Prototype of Multicomponent Brand Personality Structure: A Consumption Synmbolism Approach. *Psychology & Marketing, 30*(2), 173-186.

Lee, H. J., & Kang, M. S. (2013). The Effect of Brand Personality on Brand Relationship, Attitude and Purchase Intention with a Focus on Brand Community. *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal, 17*(2), 85-97.

Legard, R., Keegan, J., & Ward, K. (2003). In-Depth Interviews. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (pp. 138-169). London: Sage Publications.

Leonard, E., & Katsanis, L. P. (2013). The Dimensions of Prescription Drug Brand Personality as Identified by Consumers. *The Journal of Consumer Marketing, 30*(7), 583-596.

Levy, S. J. (1959). Symbols for Sale. *Harvard Business Review, 37*(4), 117-124.

Lewis, J. (2003). Design Issues. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (pp. 47-76). London: Sage Publications.

Lin, J.-S., & Sung, Y. (2014). Nothing Can Tear Us Apart: The Effect of Brand Identity Fusion in Consumer-Brand Relationships. *Psychology & Marketing, 31*(1), 54-69.

Lin, Y.-C., & Huang, P.-W. (2012). Effects of the Big Five Brand Personality Dimensions on Repurchase Intentions: Using Branded Coffee Chains as Examples. *Journal of Foodservice Business Research, 15*(1), 1-18.

Little, R. J. A. (1988). A Test of Missing Completely at Random for Multivariate Data with Missing Values. *Journal of the American Statistical Association, 83*(404), 1198-1202.

Liu, F., Li, J., Mizerski, D., & Soh, H. (2012). Self-Congruity, Brand Attitude, and Brand Loyalty: A Study on Luxury Brands. *European Journal of Marketing, 46*(7), 922-937.

Louis, D., & Lombart, C. (2010). Impact of Brand Personality on Three Major Relational Consequences (Trust, Attachment, and Commitment to the Brand). *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 19*(2), 114-130.

Lovett, M. J., Peres, R., & Shachar, R. O. N. (2013). On Brands and Word of Mouth. *Journal of Marketing Research, 50*(4), 427-444.

Luo, S., & Klohnen, E. C. (2005). Assortative Mating and Marital Quality in Newlyweds: A Couple-Centered Approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88*(2), 304-326.

Lynch Jr., J. G. (1982). On the External Validity of Experiments in Consumer Research. *Journal of Consumer Research, 9*(3), 225-239.

Maehle, N., Chunyan, X., & Supphellen, M. (2009). Forming Brand Personality: Company-Based vs. Consumer-Based Sources. *Advances in Consumer Research - North American Conference Proceedings, 36*, 899-901.

Maehle, N., Otnes, C., & Supphellen, M. (2011). Consumers' Perceptions of the Dimensions of Brand Personality. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 10*(5), 290-303.

Maehle, N., & Shneor, R. (2010). On Congruence Between Brand and Human Personalities. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 19*(1), 44-53.

Maehle, N., & Supphellen, M. (2011). In Search of the Sources of Brand Personality. *International Journal of Market Research, 53*(1), 95-114.

Mai, L. W., & Ness, M. R. (1999). Canonical Correlation Analysis of Customer Satisfaction and Future Purchase of Mail-Order Speciality Food. *British Food Journal, 101*(11), 857-870.

Malär, L., Krohmer, H., Hoyer, W. D., & Nyffenegger, B. (2011). Emotional Brand Attachment and Brand Personality: The Relative Importance of the Actual and the Ideal Self. *Journal of Marketing, 75*(4), 35-52.

Malhotra, N. K. (1988). Self-Concept and Product Choice: An Integrated Perspective. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 9*(1), 1-28.

Manfreda, K. L., Bosnjak, M., Berzelak, J., Haas, I., & Vehovar, V. (2008). Web Surveys Versus Other Survey Modes - A Meta-Analysis Comparing Response Rates. *International Journal of Market Research, 50*(1), 79-104.

Manstead, A. S. R., & Hewstone, M. (1999). *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Psychology*. Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell.

Marchant, C., & O'Donohoe, S. (2013). *An Apple All Day Makes Liminality Okay: The Influence of the iPhone on Teenage Girls' Consumption Practices*. Paper presented at the Academy of Marketing Conference 2013, Cardiff, UK.

Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible Selves. *American Psychologist, 41*(9), 954-969.

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation. *Psychological review, 98*(2), 224-253.

Marston, P. J., Hecht, M. L., & Robers, T. (1987). `True Love Ways': The Subjective Experience and Communication of Romantic Love. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 4*(4), 387-407.

Martin, G. N., Carlson, N. R., & Buskist, W. (2007). *Psychology* (3rd ed.). Harlow: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.

Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative Researching* (2nd ed.). London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Mathison, S. (1988). Why Triangulate? *Educational Researcher, 17*(2), 13-17.

Matzler, K., Pichler, E., Fuller, J., & Mooradian, T. A. (2011). Personality, Person-Brand Fit, and Brand Community: An Investigation of Individuals, Brands, and Brand Communities. *Journal of Marketing Management, 27*(9/10), 874-890.

Mazzocchi, M. (2008). *Statistics For Marketing and Consumer Research*. Los Angeles; London: SAGE.

McColl, E., Jacoby, A., Thomas, L., Soutter, J., Bamford, C., Steen, N., et al. (2001). Design and Use of Questionnaires: A Review of Best Practice Applicable to Surveys of Health Service Staff and Patients. *Health Technology Assessment, 5*(31), 1-256.

McCracken, G. (1986). Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods. *Journal of Consumer Research, 13*(1), 71-84.

McCracken, G. D. (1988). *The Long Interview* (Vol. 13). Newbury Park, Calif.; London: Sage Publications.

McCrae, R. R., & Costa Jr, P. T. (1985). Updating Norman's "Adequate Taxonomy": Intelligence and Personality Dimensions in Natural Language and in Questionnaires. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 49*(3), 710-721.

McCrae, R. R., & Costa Jr, P. T. (1997). Personality Trait Structure as a Human Universal. *The American Psychologist, 52*(5), 509-516.

McCrae, R. R., & John, O. P. (1992). An Introduction to the Five-Factor Model and its Applications. *Journal of Personality, 60*(2), 175-215.

Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press.

Miles, C., & Ibrahim, Y. (2013). Deconstructing The Meerkat: Fabular Anthropomorphism, Popular Culture, and the Market. *Journal of Marketing Management, 29*(15/16), 1862-1880.

Miller, F. M., Fournier, S., & Allen, C. T. (2012). Exploring Relationship Analogues in the Brand Space. In S. Fournier, M. Breazeale & M. Fetscherin (Eds.), *Consumer-Brand Relationships: Theory and Practice* (pp. 30-56). London; New York: Routledge.

Mohtar, M., Taha, A. Z., Mutum, D., & Ghazali, E. (2013). *Brand Personality Dimensions and Traits in Malaysia*. Paper presented at the Academy of Marketing Conference 2013, Cardiff, Wales, UK.

Montoya, R. M., Horton, R. S., & Kirchner, J. (2008). Is Actual Similarity Necessary for Attraction? A Meta-Analysis of Actual and Perceived Similarity. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships, 25*(6), 889-922.

Mooi, E., & Sarstedt, M. (2011). *A Concise Guide to Market Research: The Process, Data, and Methods Using IBM SPSS Statistics*. Berlin; New York: Springer.

Mooradian, T. A., & Nezlek, J. B. (1996). Comparing the NEO-FFI and Saucier's Mini-Markers As Measures of the Big Five. *Personality and Individual Differences, 21*(2), 213-215.

Moore, E. S., Wilkie, W. L., & Lutz, R. J. (2002). Passing the Torch: Intergenerational Influences as a Source of Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing, 66*(2), 17-37.

Moran-Ellis, J., Alexander, V. D., Cronin, A., Dickinson, M., Fielding, J., Sleney, J., et al. (2006). Triangulation and Integration: Processes, Claims and Implications. *Qualitative Research, 6*(1), 45-59.

Morrison, D. G. (1969). On the Interpretation of Discriminant Analysis. *Journal of Marketing Research, 6*(2), 156-163.

Mulyanegara, R. C., Tsarenko, Y., & Anderson, A. (2009). The Big Five and Brand Personality: Investigating the Impact of Consumer Personality on Preferences Towards Particular Brand Personality. *Journal of Brand Management, 16*(4), 234-247.

Murase, H., & Bojanic, D. (2004). An Examination of the Differences in Restaurant Brand Personality Across Cultures. *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing, 11*(2/3), 97-113.

Musante, M. D., Bojanic, D. C., & Zhang, J. (2008). A Modified Brand Personality Scale for the Restaurant Industry. *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing, 16*(4), 303-323.

Nenycz-Thiel, M., & Romaniuk, J. (2014). The Real Difference Between Consumers' Perceptions of Private Labels and National Brands. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 13*(4), 262-269.

Nevid, J. S., & Pastva, A. (2014). 'I'm a Mac' versus 'I'm a PC': Personality Differences between Mac and PC Users in a College Sample. *Psychology & Marketing, 31*(1), 31-37.

Norman, W. T. (1963). Toward an Adequate Taxonomy of Personality Attributes: Replicated Factor Structure in Peer Nomination Personality Ratings. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 66*(6), 574-583.

Nowicki, S. J., & Manheim, S. (1991). Interpersonal Complementarity and Time of Interaction in Female Relationships. *Journal of Research in Personality, 25*(3), 322-333.

O'Cass, A., & Lim, K. (2002). The Influence of Brand Associations on Brand Preference and Purchase Intention: An Asian Perspective on Brand Associations. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing, 14*(2/3), 41-72.

O'Malley, L. (2014). Relational Marketing: Development, Debates and Directions. *Journal of Marketing Management, 30*(11/12), 1220-1238.

O'Malley, L., & Tynan, C. (2000). Relationship Marketing in Consumer Markets – Rhetoric or Reality? *European Journal of Marketing, 34*(7), 797-815.

Ogilvy, D. (1983). *Ogilvy on Advertising*. London: Orbis.

Ogilvy, D. (1985). *Ogilvy on Advertising*. New York: Vintage Books.

Ok, C., Shanklin, C. W., & Back, K.-J. (2008). Generalizing Survey Results from Student Samples: Implications from Service Recovery Research. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism, 8*(4), 1-23.

Onkvisit, S., & Shaw, J. (1987). Self-Concept and Image Congruence: Some Research and Managerial Implications. *Journal of Consumer Marketing, 4*(1), 13.

Pandey, A. (2009). Understanding Consumer Perception of Brand Personality. *IUP Journal of Brand Management, 6*(3/4), 26-50.

Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., Priester, J., Eisingerich, A. B., & Iacobucci, D. (2010). Brand Attachment and Brand Attitude Strength: Conceptual and Empirical Differentiation of Two Critical Brand Equity Drivers. *Journal of Marketing, 74*(6), 1-17.

Park, J. K., & Roedder-John, D. (2010). Got to Get You Into My Life: Do Brand Personalities Rub Off on Consumers? *Journal of Consumer Research, 37*(4), 655-669.

Park, S. Y., & Lee, E. M. (2005). *Congruence between Brand Personality and Self-Image, and the Mediating Roles of Satisfaction and Consumer-Brand Relationship on Brand Loyalty.* Paper presented at the Asia Pacific Advances in Consumer Research, Duluth.

Parker, B. T. (2009). A Comparison of Brand Personality and Brand User-Imagery Congruence. *Journal of Consumer Marketing, 26*(3), 175-184.

Parker, J. (2008). Email, Ethics and Data Collection in Social Work Research: Some Reflections From a Research Project. *Evidence & Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate & Practice, 4*(1), 75-83.

Pervin, L. A. (1990). A Brief History of Modern Personality Theory. In L. A. Pervin (Ed.), *Handbook of personality: theory and research*. New York; London: Guilford Press.

Peter, J. P., Churchill Jr, G. A., & Brown, T. J. (1993). Caution in the Use of Difference Scores in Consumer Research. *Journal of Consumer Research, 19*(4), 655-662.

Peterson, R. A. (2001). On the Use of College Students in Social Science Research: Insights from a Second-Order Meta-analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research, 28*(3), 450-461.

Peterson, R. A., & Merunka, D. R. (2014). Convenience Samples of College Students and Research Reproducibility. *Journal of Business Research, 67*(5), 1035-1041.

Pham, M. T. (2013). The Seven Sins of Consumer Psychology. *23*(4), 411-423.

Phau, I., & Lau, K. C. (2001). Brand Personality and Consumer Self-Expression: Single or Dual Carriageway? *Journal of Brand Management, 8*(6), 428-444.

Picón, A., Castro, I., & Roldán, J. L. (2014). The Relationship Between Satisfaction and Loyalty: A Mediator Analysis. *Journal of Business Research, 67*(5), 746-751.

Plummer, J. (1984). How Personality Makes a Difference. *Journal of Advertising Research, 24*(6), 27-31.

Plummer, J. (1985). *Brand Personality: A Strategic Concept for Multinational Advertising* Paper presented at the Marketing Educators' Conference, New York.

Presser, S., & Blair, J. (1994). Survey Pretesting: Do Different Methods Produce Different Results? *Sociological Methodology, 24*(1), 73-104.

Priede, C., & Farrall, S. (2011). Comparing Results From Different Styles of Cognitive Interviewing: 'Verbal Probing' vs. 'Thinking Aloud'. *International Journal Of Social Research Methodology, 14*(4), 271-287.

Puleston, J. (2011). Improving Online Surveys. *International Journal of Market Research, 53*(4), 557-560.

Puzakova, M., Kwak, H., & Rocereto, J. F. (2009). Pushing the Envelope of Brand and Personality: Antecedents and Moderators of Anthropomorphized Brands. *Advances in Consumer Research - North American Conference Proceedings, 36*, 413-420.

Puzakova, M., Kwak, H., & Rocereto, J. F. (2013). When Humanizing Brands Goes Wrong: The Detrimental Effect of Brand Anthropomorphization Amid Product Wrongdoings. *Journal of Marketing, 77*(3), 81-100.

Quester, P., & Lim, A. L. (2003). Product Involvement / Brand Loyalty: Is There A Link? *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 12*(1), 22-38.

Raffelt, U., Schmitt, B., & Meyer, A. (2013). Marketing Function and Form: How Functionalist and Experiential Architectures Affect Corporate Brand Personality. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 30*(3), 201-210.

Rahman, K. (2013). 'Wow! It's Cool': The Meaning of Coolness in Marketing. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 31*(6), 620-638.

Ramaseshan, B., & Tsao, H.-Y. (2007). Moderating Effects of the Brand Concept on the Relationship Between Brand Personality and Perceived Quality. *Journal of Brand Management, 14*(6), 458-466.

Ratchford, B. T. (1987). New Insights About the FCB Grid. *Journal of Advertising Research, 27*(4), 24-38.

Reed II, A., Forehand, M. R., Puntoni, S., & Warlop, L. (2012). Identity-Based Consumer Behavior. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 29*(4), 310-321.

Richins, M. L. (1994). Special Possessions and the Expression of Material Values. *Journal of Consumer Research, 21*(3), 522-533.

Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., & Elam, G. (2003). Designing and Selecting Samples. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (pp. 77-108). London: Sage Publications.

Robins, R. W., Caspi, A., & Moffitt, T. E. (2000). Two Personalities, One Relationship: Both Partners' Personality Traits Shape the Quality of Their Relationship. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*(2), 251-259.

Rojas-Méndez, J., Erenchun-Podlech, I., & Silva-Olave, E. (2004). The Ford Brand Personality in Chile. *Corporate Reputation Review, 7*(3), 232-251.

Romaniuk, J. (2008). Comparing Methods of Measuring Brand Personality Traits. *Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice, 16*(2), 153-161.

Rosenbaum-Elliott, R., Percy, L., & Pervan, S. (2011). *Strategic Brand Management*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rosenbaum, M. E. (1986). The Repulsion Hypothesis: On the Nondevelopment of Relationships. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 51*(6), 1156-1166.

Rosenberg, M. (1979). *Conceiving The Self*. New York: Basic Books.

Rossiter, J. (2012). A New C-OAR-SE-Based Content-Valid and Predictively Valid Measure that Distinguishes Brand Love From Brand Liking. *Marketing Letters, 23*(3), 905-916.

Roulston, K. (2014). Interactional problems in research interviews. *Qualitative Research, 14*(3), 277-293.

Roy, S. K., Eshghi, A., & Sarkar, A. (2013). Antecedents and Consequences of Brand Love. *Journal of Brand Management, 20*(4), 325-332.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. (2005). *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Rubin, Z. (1973). *Liking and Loving: An Invitation to Social Psychology*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Rubin, Z., & McNeil, E. B. (1983). *The Psychology of Being Human*: Harper & Row.

Sargeant, A., Ford, J. B., & Hudson, J. (2008). Charity Brand Personality: The Relationship With Giving Behavior. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 37*(3), 468-491.

Sarkar, A., Ponnam, A., & Murthy, B. K. (2012). Understanding and Measuring Romantic Brand Love. *Journal of Customer Behaviour, 11*(4), 325-348.

Saucier, G. (1994). Mini-Markers - A Brief Version of Goldberg Unipolar Big-Five Markers. *63*(3), 506-516.

Saucier, G., & Goldberg, L. R. (1996). The Language of Personality: Lexical Perspectives on the Five-Factor Model. In J. S. Wiggins (Ed.), *The Five-Factor Model of Personality: Theoretical Perspectives* (pp. 21-50). New York: Guilford.

Schinka, J. A., Dye, D. A., & Curtiss, G. (1997). Correspondence Between Five-Factor and RIASEC Models of Personality. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 68*(2), 355-368.

Schmitt, B. (2012). The Consumer Psychology of Brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 22*(1), 7-17.

Schmitt, D. P., Allik, J., McCrae, R. R., & Benet-Martínez, V. (2007). The Geographic Distribution of Big Five Personality Traits: Patterns and Profiles of Human Self-Description Across 56 Nations. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 38*(2), 173-212.

Schul, P. L., Pride, W. M., & Little, T. L. (1983). The Impact of Channel Leadership Behavior on Intrachannel Conflict. *Journal of Marketing, 47*(3), 21-34.

Sedikides, C. (1993). Assessment, Enhancement, and Verification Determinants of the Self-Evaluation Process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 65*(2), 317-338.

Sedikides, C., & Strube, M. J. (1997). Self-Evaluation: To Thine Own Self Be Good, To Thine Own Self Be Sure, To Thine Own Self Be True, And To Thine Own Self Be Better. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 29, pp. 209-269). San Diego: Academic Press.

Selfhout, M., Denissen, J., Branje, S., & Meeus, W. (2009). In the Eye of the Beholder: Perceived, Actual, and Peer-Rated Similarity in Personality, Communication, and Friendship Intensity During the Acquaintanceship Process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 96*(6), 1152-1165.

Shank, M. D., & Langmeyer, L. (1994). Does Personality Influence Brand Image? *Journal of Psychology, 128*(2), 1152-1165.

Sherry, A., & Henson, R. K. (2005). Conducting and Interpreting Canonical Correlation Analysis in Personality Research: A User-Friendly Primer. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 84*(1), 37-48.

Shimp, T. A., & Madden, T. J. (1988). Consumer-Object Relations: A Conceptual Framework Based Analogously on Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love. *Advances in Consumer Research, 15*(1), 163-168.

Siguaw, J. A., & Mattila, A. (1999). The Brand-Personality Scale: An Application for Restaurants. *Cornell Hotel & Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 40*(3), 48-55.

Sikkel, D. (2013). Brand Relations and Life Course: Why Old Consumers Love Their Brands. *Journal of Marketing Analytics, 1*(2), 71-80.

Siminski, P. (2008). Order Effects in Batteries of Questions. *Quality and Quantity, 42*(4), 477-490.

Sirgy, M. J. (1982). Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior: A Critical Review. *Journal of Consumer Research, 9*(3), 287-300.

Sirgy, M. J. (1985). Using Self-Congruity & Ideal Congruity to Predict Purchase Motivation. *Journal of Business Research, 13*(3), 195-206.

Sirgy, M. J., Grewal, D., Mangleburg, T. F., Park, J.-O., Chon, K.-S., Claiborne, C. B., et al. (1997). Assessing the Predictive Validity of Two Methods of Measuring Self-Image Congruence. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 25*(3), 229-241.

Sirgy, M. J., Johar, J. S., Samli, A. C., & Claiborne, C. B. (1991). Self-Congruity Versus Functional Congruity: Predictors of Consumer Behavior. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 19*(4), 363-375.

Sirgy, M. J., & Samli, A. C. (1985). A Path Analytic Model of Store Loyalty Involving Self-Concept, Store Image, Geographic Loyalty, and Socioeconomic Status. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 13*(3), 265.

Smit, E. G., van den Berge, E., & Franzen, G. (2003). Brands are just like real people! The development of SWOCC's Brand Personality Scale. In F. Hansen & L. B. Christensen (Eds.), *Branding and Advertising* (pp. 22-43). Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School Press.

Smith, A. C. T., Graetz, B. R., & Westerbeek, H. M. (2006). Brand personality in a membership-based organisation. *International Journal of Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Marketing, 11*(3), 251-266.

Snyder, C. R., & Fromkin, H. L. (1980). *Uniqueness : the human pursuit of difference*. New York: Plenum Press.

Song, D., & Lee, J. (2013). Balancing "We" and "I": Self-Construal and an Alternative Approach to Seeking Uniqueness. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 12*(6), 506-516.

Spielmann, N., & Babin, B. J. (2011). Service With Personality: A Note On Generalizing Personality Across Services Contexts. *Journal of Services Marketing, 25*(7), 467-474.

Spiggle, S. (1994). Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data in Consumer Research. *Journal of Consumer Research, 21*(3), 491-503.

SRA. (2003, 08-09-2014). Ethical Guidelines Retrieved 01-08-2014, from http://the-sra.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ethics03.pdf

Srull, T. K., & Wyer, R. S., Jr. (1989). Person Memory And Judgment. *Psychological Review, 96*(1), 58-82.

Stern, B. L., Bush, R. F., & Hair, J. F. (1977). The Self-Image/Store Image Matching Process: An Empirical Test. *The Journal of Business, 50*(1), 63-69.

Sternberg, R. J. (1986). A Triangular Theory Of Love. *Psychological review, 93*(2), 119-135.

Stokburger-Sauer, N., Ratneshwar, S., & Sen, S. (2012). Drivers of Consumer-Brand Identification. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 29*(4), 406-418.

Stroh, M. (2000). Qualitative Interviewing. In D. Burton (Ed.), *Research Training For Social Scientists: A Handbook For Postgraduate Researchers.* (pp. 196-214). London: Sage Publications.

Sue, V. M., & Ritter, L. A. (2007). *Conducting Online Surveys*. Los Angeles, Calif.; London: Sage.

Sung, Y., & Kim, J. (2010). Effects Of Brand Personality On Brand Trust And Brand Affect. *Psychology & Marketing, 27*(7), 639-661.

Sung, Y., Kim, J., & Jung, J.-H. (2009). The Predictive Roles of Brand Personality on Brand Trust and Brand Affect: A Study of Korean Consumers. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing, 22*(1), 5-17.

Sung, Y., & Tinkham, S. F. (2005). Brand Personality Structures in the United States and Korea: Common and Culture-Specific Factors. *Journal of Consumer Psychology 15*(4), 334-350.

Sung, Y. J., & Choi, S. M. (2010). "I Won't Leave You Although You Disappoint Me": The Interplay Between Satisfaction, Investment, and Alternatives in Determining

Consumer-Brand Relationship Commitment. *Psychology & Marketing, 27*(11), 1050-1074.

Supphellen, M., & Grønhaug, K. (2003). Building Foreign Brand Personalities in Russia: The Moderating Effect of Consumer Ethnocentrism. *International Journal of Advertising, 22*(2), 203-226.

Swaminathan, V., & Dommer, S. L. (2012). When Is Our Connection To Brands Like Our Connection To People? Differentiating Between Consumer-Brand Relationships And Interpersonal Relationships. In S. Fournier, M. Breazeale & M. Fetscherin (Eds.), *Consumer-Brand Relationships:Theory And Practice* (pp. 15-29). London: Routledge.

Swaminathan, V., Page, Karen L., & Gürhan-Canli, Z. (2007). 'My' Brand or 'Our' Brand: The Effects of Brand Relationship Dimensions and Self-Construal on Brand Evaluations. *Journal of Consumer Research, 34*(2), 248-259.

Swaminathan, V., Stilley, K. M., & Ahluwalia, R. (2009). When Brand Personality Matters: The Moderating Role of Attachment Styles. *Journal of Consumer Research, 35*(6), 985-1002.

Sweeney, J. C., & Brandon, C. (2006). Brand Personality: Exploring the Potential to Move from Factor Analytical to Circumplex Models. *Psychology & Marketing, 23*(8), 639-663.

Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2007). *Using Multivariate Statistics* (5th International ed.). Boston, Mass.; London: Allyn & Bacon.

Tajfel, H., & Tumer, J. C. (1986). The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (2nd ed., pp. 7-24). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

Tashakkori, A., & Creswell, J. W. (2007). Editorial: The New Era of Mixed Methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*(1), 3-7.

Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thibaut, J. W., & Kelley, H. H. (1959). *The Social Psychology of Groups*. New York: J. Wiley.

Thomas, B. J., & Sekar, P. C. (2008). Measurement and Validity of Jennifer Aaker's Brand Personality Scale for Colgate Brand. *Vikalpa: The Journal for Decision Makers, 33*(3), 49-61.

Thomas, R. K., Cook, W., Fulgoni, G., Gloeckler, D. O. N., & Terhanian, G. H. (2014). Fast and Furious ... or Much Ado About Nothing? Sub-Optimal Respondent Behavior and Data Quality. *Journal of Advertising Research, 54*(1), 17-31.

Thompson, C. J. (2004). Beyond Brand Image: Analyzing the Culture of Brands. *Advances in Consumer Research, 31*(1), 98-100.

Thomson, M., MacInnis, D. J., & Park, C. W. (2005). The Ties That Bind: Measuring the Strength of Consumers' Emotional Attachments to Brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 15*(1), 77-91.

Thorndike, R. M. (1976). Studying Canonical Analysis: Comments on Barcikowski and Stevens. *Multivariate Behavioral Research, 11*(2), 249-253. doi: 10.1207/s15327906mbr1102_10

Thrillist. (2013, 23-01-2014). Blind Taste Test: Ranking 9 Classic Colas, From Mexican Coke to Zevia Retrieved 21-12-2014, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/thrillist/blind-taste-test-ranking_b_4255165.html

Tian, K. T., Bearden, W. O., & Hunter, G. L. (2001). Consumers' Need for Uniqueness: Scale Development and Validation. *Journal of Consumer Research, 28*(1), 50-66.

Tifferet, S., & Herstein, R. (2012). Gender Differences in Brand Commitment, Impulse Buying, and Hedonic Consumption. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 21*(3), 176-182.

Torelli, C. J., Özsomer, A., Carvalho, S. W., Keh, H. T., & Maehle, N. (2012). Brand Concepts as Representations of Human Values: Do Cultural Congruity and Compatibility Between Values Matter? *Journal of Marketing, 76*(4), 92-108.

Tregear, A., & Gorton, M. (2009). The Challenges of Sharing: Brands as Club Goods. *European Journal of Marketing, 43*(5/6), 826-842.

Triplett, T. (1994). Brand Personality Must Be Managed Or It Will Assume A Life Of Tts Own. *Marketing News, 28*(10), 9.

Trump, R. K. (2014). Connected Consumers' Responses to Negative Brand Actions: The Roles of Transgression Self-Relevance and Domain. *Journal of Business Research*(9), 1824-1830.

Tsiotsou, R. (2012). Developing a Scale for Measuring the Personality of Sport Teams. *Journal of Services Marketing, 26*(4/5), 238-252.

Tupes, E. C., & Christal, R. E. (1961). Recurrent Personality Factors Based on Trait Ratings. Lackland Air Force Base, TX: US Air Force.

UoeBusinessSchool. (2013). Fast Facts Retrieved 01-05-2014, from http://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/facts

Usakli, A., & Baloglu, S. (2011). Brand Personality of Tourist Destinations: An Application of Self-Congruity Theory. *Tourism Management, 32*(1), 114-127.

Valette-Florence, P., Guizani, H., & Merunka, D. (2011). The Impact of Brand Personality and Sales Promotions on Brand Equity. *Journal of Business Research, 64*(1), 24-28.

Valette-Florence, R., & De Barnier, V. (2013). Towards a Micro Conception of Brand Personality: An Application for Print Media Brands in a French Context. *Journal of Business Research, 66*(7), 897-903.

van Osselaer, S. M. J., & Alba, J. W. (2000). Consumer Learning and Brand Equity. *Journal of Consumer Research, 27*(1), 1-16.

van Rekom, J., Jacobs, G., & Verlegh, P. (2006). Measuring and Managing the Essence of a Brand Personality. *Marketing Letters, 17*(3), 181-192.

van Selm, M., & Jankowski, N. W. (2006). Conducting Online Surveys. *Conduire Des Enquêtes En Ligne (French), 40*(3), 435-456.

van Teijlingen, E. R., & Hundley, V. (2001). The Importance of Pilot Studies. *Social Research Update*(35).

Veloutsou, C. (2007). Identifying the Dimensions of the Product-Brand and Consumer Relationship. *Journal of Marketing Management, 23*(1/2), 7-26.

Veloutsou, C., & Taylor, C. S. (2012). The Role of the Brand as a Person in Business to Business Brands. *Industrial Marketing Management, 41*(6), 898-907.

Venable, B. T., Rose, G. M., Bush, V. D., & Gilbert, F. W. (2005). The Role of Brand Personality in Charitable Giving: An Assessment and Validation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 33*(3), 295-312.

Veryzer, J. R. W. (1995). The Place of Product Design and Aesthetics in Consumer Research. *Advances in Consumer Research, 22*(1), 641-645.

Wallace, E., Buil, I., & De Chernatony, L. (2014). Consumer engagement with self-expressive brands: brand love and WOM outcomes. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 23*(1), 33.

Wallendorf, M., & Arnould, E. J. (1988). "My Favorite Things": A Cross-Cultural Inquiry into Object Attachment, Possessiveness, and Social Linkage. *Journal of Consumer Research, 14*(4), 531-547.

Wang, X., Yang, Z., & Liu, N. R. (2009). The Impacts of Brand Personality and Congruity on Purchase Intention: Evidence From the Chinese Mainland's Automobile Market. *Journal of Global Marketing, 22*(3), 199-215.

Wang, X. H., & Yang, Z. L. (2008). Does Country-of-Origin Matter in the Relationship Between Brand Personality and Purchase Intention in Emerging Economies? Evidence from China's Auto Industry. *International Marketing Review, 25*(4), 458-474.

Wang, Y., & Griskevicius, V. (2014). Conspicuous Consumption, Relationships, and Rivals: Women's Luxury Products as Signals to Other Women. *Journal of Consumer Research, 40*(5), 834-854.

Waternaux, C. M. (1976). Asymptotic Distribution of the Sample Roots for a Nonnormal Population. *Biometrika, 63*(3), 639-645.

Wattanasuwan, K. (2005). The Self and Symbolic Consumption. *Journal of American Academy of Business, Cambridge, 6*(1), 179-184.

Wee, T. T. T. (2004). Extending Human Personality to Brands: The Stability Factor. *Journal of Brand Management, 11*(4), 317-330.

Weijters, B., & Baumgartner, H. (2012). Misresponse to Reversed and Negated Items in Surveys: A Review. *Journal of Marketing Research, 49*(5), 737-747.

Wetzel, C. G., & Insko, C. A. (1982). The Similarity-Attraction Relationship: Is There An Ideal One? *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 18*(3), 253-276.

Wien, A. H., & Olsen, S. O. (2014). Understanding the Relationship between Individualism and Word of Mouth: A Self-Enhancement Explanation. *Psychology & Marketing, 31*(6), 416-425.

Wiggins, J. S. (1979). A Psychological Taxonomy of Trait-Descriptive Terms: The Interpersonal Domain. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 37*(3), 395-412.

Wildt, A. R., Lambert, Z. V., & Durand, R. M. (1982). Applying the Jackknife Statistic in Testing and Interpreting Canonical Weights, Loadings, and Cross-Loadings. *Journal of Marketing Research, 19*(1), 99-107. doi: 10.2307/3151534

Wiles, R., Crow, G., Heath, S., & Charles, V. (2008). The Management Of Confidentiality And Anonymity In Social Research *International Journal Of Social Research Methodology, 11*(5), 417-428.

Wiles, R., Heath, S., Crow, G., & Charles, V. (2005). Informed Consent in Social Research: A Literature Review. In E. N. C. f. R. Methods (Ed.), *NCRM Methods Review Papers (NCRM/001)* (Vol. 11, pp. 1-12).

Williams, P. (2014). Winter 2013 Research Curation: Emotions and Consumer Behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research, 40*(5), viii-xi.

Williams, R. (2014, September 19th, 2014). Fans Queue Outside Apple's London Stores For New iPhone 6 Retrieved 02-01-2014, from http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/apple/iphone/11106696/Fans-queue-outside-Apples-London-stores-for-new-iPhone-6.html

Winch, R. F. (1958). *Mate-selection: a study of complementary needs*. New York: Harper.

Wong, H.-Y., & Merrilees, B. (2007). Multiple Roles for Branding in International Marketing. *International Marketing Review, 24*(4), 384-408.

Wong, P., Hogg, M., & Vanharanta, M. (2012). Consumption Narratives of Extended Possessions and the Extended Self. *Journal of Marketing Management, 28*(7/8), 936-954.

Wu, E. C., Cutright, K. M., & Fitzsimons, G. J. (2011). How Asking 'Who Am I?' Affects What Consumers Buy: The Influence of Self Discovery on Consumption. *Journal of Marketing Research, 48*(2), 296-307.

Yang, Y., Harkness, J. A., Chin, T.-Y., & Villar, A. (2010). Response Styles and Culture. In J. A. Harkness, M. Braun, B. Edwards, T. P. Johnson, L. Lyberg, P. P. Mohler, B.-E. Pennell & T. W. Smith (Eds.), *Survey Methods In Multinational, Multiregional, And Multicultural Contexts* (pp. 203-223). Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.

Zeithaml, V. A. (1988). Consumer Perceptions of Price, Quality, and Value: A Means-End Model and Synthesis of Evidence. *Journal of Marketing, 52*(3), 2-22.

Zentes, J., Morschett, D., & Schramm-Klein, H. (2008). Brand Personality of Retailers - An Analysis of its Applicability and its Effect on Store Loyalty. *International Review of Retail, Distribution & Consumer Research, 18*(2), 167-184.

Zou, D., Jin, L., He, Y., & Xu, Q. (2014). The Effect of the Sense of Power on Chinese Consumers' Uniqueness-Seeking Behavior. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing, 26*(1), 14-28.