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Exploring Deviant Behavior in Customers: The Role Emotional Branding Plays with a Customer's Perception of Injustice and Anti-Branding

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EXPLORING DEVIANT BEHAVIOR IN CUSTOMERS: THE ROLE EMOTIONAL BRANDING PLAYS WITH A CUSTOMER'S PERCEPTION OF INJUSTICE AND ANTI-BRANDING

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CB-SEM	Covariance Based Structural Equation Modeling
CCA	Confirmatory Composite Analysis
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CR	Composite Reliability
EB	Emotional Branding
FL	Fornel-Larcker
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio
LM	Linear Regression Model
MD	Moral Disengagement
PLS	Partial Least Squares
PLS RMSE	Partial Least Squares Root Mean Squared Error
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
WoM	Word-of-Mouth

ABSTRACT

Mandy A. Kasprzyk, PhD in Business Administration, University of South Alabama, May 2023. Exploring deviant behavior in customers: The role emotional branding plays with a customer's perception of injustice and anti-branding. Chair of Committee: Matt C. Howard, Ph.D.

Utilizing moral disengagement (MD) and social exchange theories, this paper proposes that perceived injustice can lead to customers actively participating in anti-branding activities through a process of MD. However, emotional branding might be an effective intervention tool that mitigates the anti-branding behavior in morally disengaged customers due to the positive feelings that relationship marketing endues. This paper will explore the relationship between the customer's perception of injustice and their anti-branding behavior using MD as an explanatory mechanism. Additionally, emotional branding will be explored as a possible boundary condition that weakens the relationship between MD and anti-branding behavior.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"*The customer's perception is your reality*." — Kate Zabriskie

A perception of injustice may begin to form in a customer's mind if a situation fails to meet their expectations, whether or not an organization has actually transgressed. Sometimes the injustices are minor, and customers can dismiss them more readily (e.g. having to wait a long time at a doctor's office), while others are more serious and may incite customers to have damaging reactions at the organization (e.g. going to the media to create negative publicity) (Tsarenko et al. 2018). For example, customers might vengefully create and propagate negative brand visuals, sometimes going as far as practicing brand defamation (Thompson et al. 2006). Other deviant behaviors might include brand avoidance, culture jamming (brand activism through memes), boycotting, creating hate websites, and posting disparaging brand images online. Because of the potential for negative word-of-mouth (WoM) to go viral, anti-branding behavior poses a threat for most organizations in this digital age.

When a customer perceives that an organization has transgressed, they may begin to cognitively justify reciprocating with unethical responses, including revenge behaviors and retaliation activities. Moral disengagement (MD) is a person's psychological tendency of cognitively justifying negative behavior, enabling a person to avoid internal

conflict for behaviors that would normally be deemed as inappropriate (Bandura et al., 1996). Rather than avoiding the brand or regulating their behavior so that their reactions do not compromise their moral standards, the customer instead turns off their normally-engaged moral compass through some kind of justification process.

For example, after they've perceived a company has wronged them, a customer might justify creating a hate website through any of the eight mechanisms described by Bandura (2002). These include *dehumanization* (the organization is just a big, heartless corporation that won't even notice this small website); *attribution of blame* (the organization deserves having this website created about them because they were in the wrong in the first place); *distortion of consequences* (lying about the company is no big deal); *diffusion of responsibility* (everyone spreads memes about companies sometimes)*; advantageous comparison* (spreading rumors about a company is tiny compared to others' violations)*; displacement of responsibility* (the company's own employees complain about the company, so why can't I?)*; moral justification* (being a bold voice online is more important than telling the truth)*;* and *euphemistic labelling* (spreading a negative meme about the company is ok because it is "just joking"). Ultimately, anti-branding behavior competes with the original brand identity that an organization is attempting to instill in customers (Thompson et al. 2006) and needs to be managed. Therefore, the demand for studies exploring potential diffusers for customer MD has unquestionably grown (Eissa and Lester, 2021; Moore, 2015).

Moore (2015) concludes that there is little empirical evidence showing how MD is initiated and calls for more work to demonstrate the underlying explanatory processes. One possible influence on MD is a customer's perception of injustice. Justice perceptions

are evaluations of fairness or unfairness (Cohen and Avrahami, 2006). While justice perceptions have been linked to organizational citizenship behaviors and employee engagement in workplace settings (Organ et al. 2005; Saks, 2006), their influence on cognitive mechanisms in customers has had limited attention. Because justice perceptions may be a key mechanism in explaining the occurrence of anti-branding behaviors, this study examines the direct relationship between the perception of injustice and MD in customers.

In addition, recent calls in the literature have focused on investigating boundary conditions for the effects of MD, highlighting the need to explore relationship-building tactics that might act as diffusers for unethical behavior in customers (Eissa and Lester, 2021; Zheng et al., 2019). In particular, emotional branding might be particularly relevant because of its potential to dissipate a customer's desire harm the organization. Emotional branding "is a consumer-centric, relational, and story-driven approach to forging deep and enduring affective bonds between consumers and brands" (Thompson et al. 2006). Social exchange theory would suggest that when a customer feels like the business that they patronize works to create a harmonious bond with them, they will be motivated to reciprocate with a positive response (Blau, 1964).

Given the fragmented nature of current research surrounding the triggers and boundary conditions for MD (Moore, 2015), an empirical study is needed to extend prior theory-building efforts. The model shown in Figure 1 demonstrates the relationships tested in this research. Moral disengagement serves as the mediator for the relationship between the customer's perception of injustice and anti-branding behavior. Emotional

branding serves as a boundary condition, influencing both the direct relationship between MD and anti-branding behavior and the overall mediating effect.

This present study makes three important theoretical and managerial contributions. First, this study explores *if and why* perceived injustice increases the likelihood of unethical behavior in customers. By examining MD as a mediating construct between a perception-based variable and a deviance-related outcome, the separate literature streams of ethics, branding and impression management can be fused together, allowing marketing leadership to be better equipped for mitigating and diffusing negative customer reactions. Such an integration can uncover several directions for future interdisciplinary research, which are highlighted in our future directions section based on the results of the present investigation.

Second, this study uses both MD and social exchange as the theoretical underpinnings to examine the fundamental issues that not only enhance a customer's propensity to morally disengage but also minimizes the likelihood of them performing unethical actions. MD provides a foundation for understanding how a customer's negative perception of an organization influences their deviant behavior. Social exchange theory helps us understand why emotional branding may be a helpful strategy to turn off a customer's urge to react negatively. The results of this study may provide further insight into the theoretical lenses of MD and social exchange, which is discussed in the future directions section.

In addition to enhancing our understanding of MD and social exchange theories, this study provides value by examining the interactive effect between MD and emotional branding and its influence on the customer's propensity to participate in anti-branding.

Integrating these two areas may offer a way in which managers can limit unethical behavior in customers, and thereby prevent negative WoM. By doing so, the current results can provide immediate benefits to modern practitioners involved with customer relationship management.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 Moral Disengagement in Customers

Bandura (1986) described MD as a cognitive process that allows people to turn off their internal moral codes of conduct and behave immorally without feeling guilt or distress. While self-control would normally keep a person morally engaged through emotional circumstances, this resource can be depleted, and it is much easier for MD to be triggered. The eight mechanisms that are used by people to morally disengage include distortion of consequences, diffusion of responsibility, advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility, moral justification, euphemistic labeling, dehumanization, and attribution of blame (Bandura 1990). Several works have explored MD as an explanatory mechanism for unethical behavior in employees in an organizational setting (He et al. 2019; Ilies et al. 2020; Probst et al. 2020; and Zheng et al. 2019). Additional works have explored the boundary conditions that mitigate or amplify the effects of MD (Moore, 2015).

An example of a customer going through the MD process, because of an organizational service transgression, might involve the *attribution of blame* mechanism. Specifically, a customer might create a meme that parodies or criticizes the organization's brand image. In the customer's mind, the organization first wronged them

with their service transgression, and they "deserve" what they get. While it's reasonable to assume that attribution of blame may be used by many customers to justify their anti-branding practices, other customers might pursue other cognitive mechanisms to alleviate their guilt.

Moral disengagement is a fairly reliable predictor of negative behavior and unethical decision making (Moore, 2015; Probst et al., 2020). In terms of behaviors that violate organizational and societal norms, MD has been linked to lower safety performance (Probst et al., 2020), cheating behavior (Fida et al., 2018), employee silence (He et al., 2019), and incivility to coworkers (Ilies et al., 2020). Although MD can be described as a fairly steady trait, it can be influenced by context, making it a state-like variable. For example, Zheng et al. (2019) showed how creativity in employees may lead to a higher propensity to morally disengage in people who are low in moral identity.

Consequently, any circumstance that promotes justification of unethical behavior increases the chances that the behavior will actually be enacted (Schweitzer and Hsee, 2002). The revenge and retaliation literature provide further insight here. Nepomuceno et al. (2017) depicts the revenge framework as being triggered by a brand failure experience. The consumer will go through cognitive evaluations to determine the fairness of the situation, leading to negative emotions such as anger and frustration. The negative emotions can motivate a person to execute vengeful or retaliatory actions against an organization to cope with their feelings (Fida et al., 2018; Nepomuceno et al., 2017). Moral disengagement fits in during the emotional phase of the revenge framework, serving as a disruptor to otherwise benign responses.

To clarify how the emotional component of the revenge framework and MD are distinct phases, several researchers have expounded upon MD's definition and antecedents. For example, Koops et al. (2010) describes emotions simply as "how a person feels about moral issues," but indicates MD is different because it is the process of a person thinking through their rules of ethical conduct. Therefore, revenge/retaliation is a behavior that might result, but MD is the process to get there.

It has been well-established in the literature that emotions can guide moral decision making (Fida et al., 2018; Koops et al., 2010; Rozin et al., 1999; Rubio-Garay et al., 2016). In fact, anger has been particularly highlighted as an effective antecedent to hostile behavior through MD (D-Errico and Paciello, 2018; Rubio-Garay et al., 2016). For example. D-Errico and Paciello (2018) showed in an online setting, negative emotions (which include anger) are associated with MD, and people who experience intense hostile emotions are likely to use the *blame attribution* and *dehumanization* justifications to disengage from their normal moral code of behavior. In addition, Antonetti et al. (2020) shows anger has many varieties: it is vindictive anger in particular that motivates consumers to seek revenge against a company after they perceive the organization is to be blamed for a transgression. While research shows many other triggering mechanisms may be involved besides anger, the issue is that MD usually leads to negative consequences.

Because MD allows a person to behave unethically without feeling guilt, it could be viewed as a coping mechanism. Coping refers to how an individual might try to master, tolerate or minimize a situation causing them stress (Haj-Salem and Chebat, 2014; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). When considering retaliatory action against a brand,

an emotional customer might normally be able to pull back (self-regulate) because they feel bad about their punitive actions due to their internal moral beliefs. However, MD allows a person to disengage from their moral code (through reasoning such as *attribution of blame* or *dehumanization*) so that guilt and remorse do not come up, and they can move forward with their anti-branding behaviors. Moore et al. (2012) explains that there is value in exploring MD beyond moral reasoning, dispositional emotions, and morally-related traits. If MD is thought of as a coping mechanism, it enhances our understanding of the revenge literature as well as the research surrounding MD.

2.2 Customers' Perceptions of Injustice

Perceived justice refers to a customer's evaluation of fairness of a company's activities (Jung and Seock, 2017) The concept is typically broken down into three categories: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Furby, 1986). In the business-to-consumer relationship, distributive justice is based in social exchange theory, and refers to the service recovery consumers receive. Service recovery involves any action an organization takes in response to a service failure or the process of dealing with service mistakes (Wu et al., 2020). Distributive justice could come in the form of monetary compensation as well as cognitive and affective reactions (Wu et al., 2020).

Procedural justice relates to how customers receive the service recovery. The actual process leads customers to make evaluations about the flexibility, efficiency, and transparency of the recovery process (Jung and Seock, 2017). Interactional justice refers to the process of interaction and communication between the company and the customer (McColl-Kennedy and Sparks, 2003). Prior studies have demonstrated a direct

relationship of perceived justice on a customer's post-recovery satisfaction (Chang and Chang, 2010); however, there has been limited research on the effect of each dimension of justice on post-recovery behavior (Jung and Seock, 2017). Further, the results of service recovery efforts on the different dimensions of perceived justice have been mixed (Jung and Seock, 2017; Wu et al., 2020); with perceived distributive justice being the most crucial predictor of satisfaction (Homburg and Fürst, 2005). This study will add empirical evidence to further explore this issue.

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between perception of injustice and customer moral disengagement.

2.3 Moral Disengagement and Anti-Branding Behavior

Anti-branding practices are becoming very common with users on the Internet (Awasthi et al. 2012; Kucuk, 2016). Organizations want to mitigate this type of behavior because sometimes the opposing brand image can confuse or deceive other customers, ultimately impacting their purchase behavior. While brand defamation is illegal according to the Lanham Act and the Federal Trademark Dilution Act, it is difficult to keep the millions of users developing and sharing doppelganger brand imagery every day on social media platforms (Kucuk, 2016). Due to the damage that anti-branding practices can have on a business' reputation, brand repair strategies are needed.

According to Thompson et al. (2006), when a customer thinks that a brand has transgressed, customers can create significant backlash, especially for customers that were formerly loyal followers of the brand. The reactions that customers can have, can be drastic, going far beyond cultural norms, depending on the severity of the situation

(Awasthi et al. 2012). Sometimes these negative reactions are against the customer's normal moral code; however, the mechanisms for moral detachment can be activated because of service transgressions, leading the customer to behave unethically without feeling guilt. Therefore, activities such as creating hate sites, boycotting, brand avoidance, negative word-of-mouth, lying about a brand, and uncivil or aggressive behavior towards employees might ensue.

*Hypothesis 2***:** There is a positive relationship between customer MD and anti-branding.

A consumer's perception of justice majorly influences their post-purchase behavior (Jung and Seock, 2017). Social exchange theory proposes consumers have expectations about gains being made equivalent to their costs, and when they believe this outcome has not been achieved, they consider it to be injustice (Jung and Seock, 2017). In line with this theory, a perception of justice would lead a consumer to behave unethically to reciprocate negative behavior back at the organization.

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between perception of injustice and anti-branding behavior.

Combining the predictions above, this study predicts a customer's perception of injustice may also have an indirect impact on anti-branding behavior through a process of MD. This indirect effect may be explained by MD because of the cognitive mechanisms being employed, which allow a person to reason through their deviant behavior without feeling guilt. For example, if a customer has the perception that the organization wronged them, the customer might use a process of moral justification, citing that it is actually a good thing for them to do this deviant act in because it spreads public awareness and

helps others be more informed (Moore, 2015). The process of morally disengaging explains the relationship between perception of injustice and anti-branding behavior.

Hypothesis 4: Moral disengagement partially mediates the relationship between perception of injustice and anti-branding behavior.

2.4 Emotional Branding

Being in the customer relationship era, organizations increasingly have used emotional branding to build deeper connections with customers including brands such as Apple and Starbucks (Akgün et al., 2013; Rossiter and Bellman, 2012; Singla and Gupta, 2019; Thompson et al., 2006). Additionally, Chick-Fil-A is known for emotional branding in their promotions. Consider Chick-Fil-A's commercials, where the company emphasizes how employees have connected with someone in the community more often than they emphasize their product lines. Roberts (2004) defines emotional branding as "a consumer-centric, relational, and story-driven approach to forging deep and enduring affective bonds between consumers and brands." Therefore, the focus of emotional branding is telling stories that inspire and captivate consumers to demonstrate a genuine understanding of customers' lifestyles and dreams. The ultimate goal is to show how the brand can enrich the customer's lives (Thompson et al., 2006), and get them to attach strong emotions - such as bonding, companionship, or love - to the brand (Rossiter and Bellman, 2012).

Although all brands have the capacity to emphasize their emotional qualities as well their functional attributes, emotional branding has an advantage over other types of promotional strategies in that they tend to connect better with audiences (Efrat and

Asseraf, 2019; Panda et al., 2013). Two simple examples of non-emotional branding given by Gobe (2010) would include marketing a computer as simply "technology equipment" and an airplane as a "transportation vehicle" instead of "lifestyle entertainment" and "travel organizations" respectively. Emotional branding strategies include sensory branding, storytelling, and cause-related marketing. Sensory marketing engages consumers' senses like sight, sound, and smell, while storytelling uses authentic narratives to appeal to consumers and inspire them (Kim and Sullivan, 2019). Additionally, cause-related branding is linked to social issues, offering consumers opportunities to make positive changes through their purchases (Kim and Sullivan, 2019). These emotional branding strategies are more effective at inspiring emotional bonds and lasting impressions with consumers than traditional benefit-driven positioning.

In benefit-driven approaches, promotions are focused more on touting the product's/service's benefits rather than building relationships with customers. Consequently, supporters of emotional branding believe that benefit-driven positioning is simply not a long-term strategy because most benefits are tied to product design or technological features, which means these promotions can be easily emulated. (Thompson et al., 2006). In contrast, emotional branding goes beyond functional and tangible characteristics and integrates feeling and emotion. Brandt (1997) explains how easy it is for competitors to copy functions and features; however, a brand that delivers emotional experiences will be unique and special, building resilience in the long-term. Emotional branding also tends to be more successful at developing passionate consumers who act like brand missionaries, spreading their personal brand stories wherever they can (Thompson et al., 2006) Emotional branding is an effective tool that many marketing

managers have found success in using to buffer against negative consequences of organizational transgressions.

Hypothesis 5: Emotional branding is related negatively to anti-branding behaviors.

Furthermore, emotional branding may have other impactful consequences. Since it has a benevolent, relationship-oriented approach, it may have the power to weaken the positive effect between MD and anti-branding behavior in customers. According to the theory of social exchange, individuals would be motivated to reciprocate with their moral obligations, loyalty, and devotion once they see the organization put in effort to connect with them outside of a purchase relationship (He et al., 2019. Burger et al. (2009) explained the need to reciprocate may be motivated by either the sense of self-satisfaction it produces, or the dread of negative self-presentation that may ensue if the action is not reciprocated. Regardless of the motivation, the compulsion of reciprocity may lead consumers to attach positive emotions to the organization that has bonded with them (Thompson et al., 2006), dispelling the temptation to participate in deviant behavior. Thus, a high degree of emotional branding serves as a powerful moderator in the framework presented in

Figure 1.

Hypothesis 6: Emotional branding moderates the relationship between customer moral disengagement and anti-branding, such that the relationship is weaker when emotional branding is relatively high, and stronger when emotional branding is relatively low.

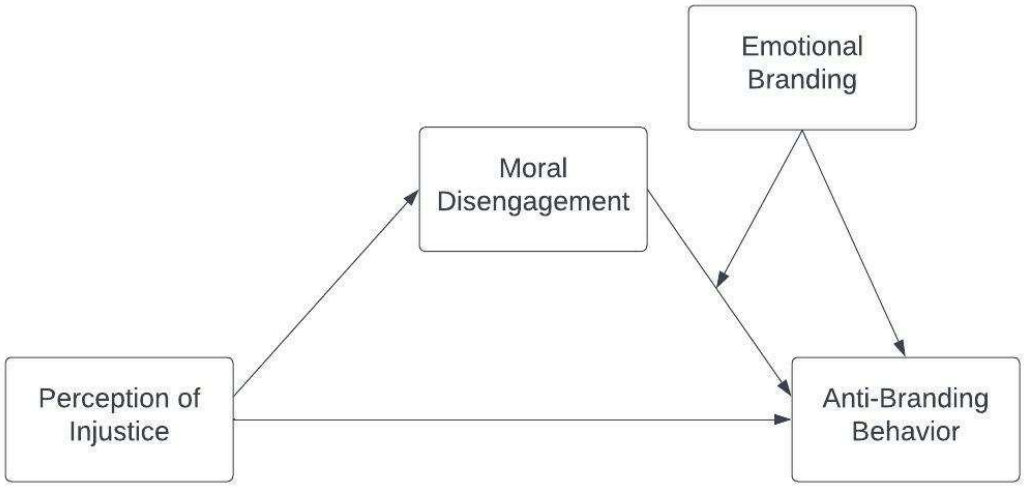

Figure 1.1. *Overarching Conceptual Moderated Mediation Model*

A moderating effect on the indirect relationship between perception of injustice and anti-branding behavior through MD is also predicted. Emotional branding in an organization counteracts the detrimental influence of MD. According to Akgün et al. (2013), successful emotional branding leads the customer to not only approve of the brand, but to also identify with it because the brand relates to core parts of his/her life. Social exchange theory posits customers would feel obligated to reciprocate positive behaviors and feelings towards the organization. Consequently, the interactive effect of MD and emotional branding will decrease the likelihood of unethical behavior in customers.

> *Hypothesis 7:* Emotional branding moderates the indirect effect between perception of injustice and anti-branding behavior through moral disengagement such that the relationship is weaker when emotional branding is relatively high, and stronger when emotional branding is relatively low.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology used in our pilot test and study. Each study's design, sampling and data collection procedures, scales, and methodology used to empirically test the conceptual model are discussed below.

3.1 Pilot Study Methods

I conducted a pilot study to measure the reliability and effectiveness of my questionnaire. In the study, participants were asked to recall a situation in which a company failed to meet their expectations (through a service failure incident) or when an organization's policy change adversely affected them. Questions were asked to gauge the observer's perception of injustice, moral disengagement, and anti-branding intentions. Subsequently, participants were also asked about their feelings regarding the company's emotional branding efforts.

3.1.1 Pilot Study Procedure

A questionnaire was formed using the online survey company, Qualtrics and participants were recruited from *Prolific* to answer questions on the survey using a cross-

sectional design to investigate the effects of customer perception of injustice on anti-branding behaviors via MD with emotional branding as a moderator. Included in this questionnaire was an explanation of the survey's goal, an assurance of the confidentiality of their responses, and a link to the Qualtrics survey where they had to start by signing an informed consent. The data collected was analyzed at the individual level of analysis.

3.1.2 Pilot Study Sample

The retrospective experience sampling method was used asking respondents to describe a service failure or unfair experience they've had with an organization. The hope was that by having respondents identify a personal negative experience, the attitudes and feelings surrounding the experience would be reignited as they were asked to respond to different items based on their experience. Respondents for this study included 92 people after eliminating responses with missing data, failed attention checks, or those that were unable to be matched (15 participants removed). Respondents were compensated $10.01/hour to participate in this online study in compliance with Prolific ethical payment principles, and the median time it took to complete the surveys was 8:38.

In terms of demographic characteristics, 68% of participants were female, 30% male, and 2% identified as other. The average age was 36 years old and the ethnicity breakdown was as follows: 71% white, 4% Hispanic or Latino, 15% Black or African American, 2% Native American, 5% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 3% other.

Two attention checks were also included within the surveys. An example statement of one of the attention checks read, "Please mark 'strongly disagree' for this statement to show that you are paying attention." If participants selected any other answer, their surveys were removed from the final sample. Participants were also

screened for flatlining/ straight-lining their answers. The long-string index, which is defined as the "maximum number of consecutive invariant responses provided by a respondent," was used to find surveys that were straight-lined (DeSimone and Harms, 2018). The cutoff of nine invariant responses was used based on previous research (Costa and McCrae, 2008; DeSimone and Harms, 2018). Based on this criterion, no participants were thrown out for flatlining. In contrast, three participants failed to answer *any* of the survey questions, and an additional three participants omitted their prolific ID or written-out scenario. These entries were deleted.

With the remaining data, there was few missing values. Only the indicators Trans_Int1 (1 missing value) projust9 (2 missing values, lying4 (1 missing value), dysfun8 (1 missing value), revenge19 (1 missing value), emotbrand6 (1 missing value), and age (4 missing values, 4% of all responses on this indicator) have missing values. Since the number of missing values is relatively small (i.e. less than 5% missing values per indicator (Sarstedt et al., 2021), I used mean value replacement for missing values.

The data was examined for outliers by calculating z scores specifically for the time that it took participants to complete surveys (duration in seconds). There were 5 outliers (2 were more than 2 standard deviations, 2 were more than 3 standard deviations, and 1 was more than 4 standard deviations away from the mean). However, these were retained in the dataset because the scenarios the participants typed for their service failure experiences provided justification for why it took them longer to complete the surveys.

3.1.3 Pilot Study Measures

After conducting an extensive review, measures for each construct were identified. In some cases, items from two or more scales were combined for the purpose

of increasing scale reliability as well as seizing the richness of each construct by incorporating the contributions of multiple researchers. Additionally, several scales were adapted to fit the context of the study. Carillat et al. (2007) explains that it is not uncommon for researchers to adapt, add measures to, or omit measures from existing scales. The scales for perception of justice, anti-branding actions, and emotional branding were assessed using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Moral disengagement was assessed using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

3.1.3.1 Perception of Injustice

Respondents rated their own perception of justice in three dimensions following Jung and Seock's (2017) approach, in which eight items were adapted from Smith et al. (1999) measuring perceived distributive justice (α = .94) and interactional justice (α = .88), and 5 items were adapted from del Rio-Lanza et al. (2009)'s measure of procedural justice (α = .94). An example item is "I got what I deserved."

3.1.3.2 Moral Disengagement

Respondents rated their own MD using eight items adapted from Moore et al.'s (2012) article. An example item is "If an organization gets mistreated, they have usually done something to bring it on themselves" (α = .82).

3.1.3.3 Anti-Branding Behavior

Because the literature shows that certain anti-branding practices such as boycotting, creating hate sites, or performing brandalism (creating parodies and spoofs of the brand image) may not be considered unethical, the items selected to measure unethical anti-branding behaviors were based on the researcher's judgement of illegal

behaviors or behaviors that most people would consider immoral. For example, lying, complaining, vengeful behaviors, dysfunctional behaviors, and other consumer misbehaviors were evaluated. Respondents rated their own unethical anti-branding actions using 4 items adapted from Ward and Ostrom's (2006) measure of *lying and exaggeration* (α = .76); 4 items adapted from Yi and Gong's (2008) scale of *customer dysfunctional behavior* (α = .78); 6 items adapted from Fullerton and Punj's (2004) scale of *consumer misbehavior* (α = .92); 3 items adapted from Grégoire and Fisher's (2008) measure of *vindictive complaining* (α = .85); and 4 items adapted from McColl-Kennedy et al.'s (2009) measure of *revenge* (α = .91). An example item is "I thought about ways to sabotage the company or its employee(s)."

3.1.3.4 Emotional Branding

Different reactions to emotional brand strategies will be examined, including the customer's sensory, affective, and intellectual responses. Following Wiedmann et al.'s (2018) example, respondents will rate their own perception of emotional branding by using 3 items adapted from Wiedmann et al.'s (2018) measure of brand experience, Wiedmann et al.'s (2018) measure of multisensory marketing, and Roy's (2010) measure of cause marketing since sensory marketing, storytelling, and cause-related marketing are critical strategies for emotional branding (Kim and Sullivan, 2019; Schmitt, 1999). An example item is "This brand's storytelling in their advertisements makes a strong impression on my senses." (α = .94).

3.1.3.5 Control Variables

Due to the potential effects that demographic variables can have on the customer's propensity to participate in anti-branding activities or other deviant behavior

(Gove, 2018), this study will control for customer's gender and age in years. Prior research has shown differences in a person's propensity to participate in deviant behavior based off gender (Anwar et al., 2011). Also, age may account for different types of emotional responses in customers (Zimmermann and Iwanski, 2014) and has the potential to influence an observer's answer. Because these demographic factors may account for some of the variance in the observer's responses, they will be controlled for in this study.

Also, a consumer's perception of transgression intensity may influence their answers regarding evaluations of justice and moral behavior (Tsarenko and Tobjib, 2012). Therefore, this variable will be included as a control for this study using Tsarenko and Tojib's (2012) measure of service failure severity, which includes 4 items on a 3-point Likert-type scale. An example item is "How unfair do you think the situation was?" ($\alpha = .79$).

3.1.4 Pilot Study Analyses

I began the analyses by running bivariate correlations and establishing the descriptive statistics of the data in SPSS. I also used partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS Version 4 to test the hypotheses. The PLS software was used to examine the measurement and structural model relationships for several reasons.

First, although PLS-SEM is primarily exploratory in nature, the CCA procedure can be applied to confirm established scales (Hair et al., 2020). Therefore, PLS-SEM is appropriate to use for both exploration and confirmation objectives. Second, PLS has the ability to include both specific variance as well as common variance, which results in higher loadings. Although a substantial portion of the error variance and a small portion

of the specific variance is removed when PLS is executed, CB-SEM excludes error variance and specific variance altogether. Third, PLS-SEM does not require normally distributed data, as does covariance-based SEM (Hair et al., 2018), and can facilitate assessment of more complex models (a much larger number of variables), which is more realistic and common in social science research. PLS is better for models that include mediation, which most closely resembles reality, because mediation is executed in a single step in PLS, rather than the multiple steps required by the PROCESS approach. Thus, it is more precise to examining indirect relationships between constructs (Sarstedt et al., 2021). A fourth reason PLS was utilized was because the SmartPLS algorithm is also designed to run complex models with smaller sample sizes to maximize the variance extracted in predicting the dependent variables (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

To analyze our proposed model, I performed a Confirmatory Composite Analysis (CCA) via SmartPLS4, which involved (1) examining the measurement model to ensure the model meets the required criteria, and (2) executing and assessing the structural model to confirm the relationships specified in the hypotheses. SmartPLS4 enables exploration of a single theoretical model while simultaneously examining all the hypothesized direct and indirect effects between the independent variable, mediator, and dependent variables. It also allows for examination of the hypothesized direct effect of emotional branding on my dependent variable, anti-branding, as well as the moderating effect on the relationship between the proposed mediator and dependent variable (moral disengagement and anti-branding respectively). The measurement model was evaluated first, followed by an assessment of the structural model (Hair et al., 2020).

The first step in analyzing the data using a PLS-SEM approach is to confirm the composite measurement models, which is a similar approach to testing measurement models using a CB-SEM confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) approach (Hair et al., 2018). However, in PLS-SEM, confirming the measurement model involves four steps: estimating the model's outer loadings and significance, checking indicator reliability, assessing the model's reliability using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, and verifying convergent and discriminant validity for the constructs (Hair et al., 2018).

Next, the structural model was assessed using SmartPLS4 to test our hypotheses. Bootstrapping was also applied to estimate the conditional indirect effect of perceptions of injustice on anti-branding behavior through moral disengagement at varying levels of the moderator – emotional branding. Bootstrapping is a process that uses sampling with replacement from the original sample to create a large number of new samples that have similar properties to the original sample in order to replicate the population from which the original sample was drawn. Results from the analyses conducted on the bootstrap samples are used to create a 95% confidence interval around all model metrics consisting of an upper and lower boundary. The conditional indirect effect would fall into this confidence interval 95% of the time.

3.2 Focal Study Methodology

3.2.1 Procedure

Data collection began with gathering data from the online data collection platform, *Prolific*, after creating a survey with a cross-sectional design using Qualtrics.

Key components of the survey included the purpose of the study, a statement that participation was voluntary and that the results would be kept confidential. Analyzed at the individual level of analysis, I sought to confirm whether the effects of a customer's perception of injustice on anti-branding behaviors via MD with emotional branding as a moderator.

3.2.2 Sample

Respondents were asked to describe a service failure experience or a time when an organization's policies adversely affected them. Eliminating responses with missing data, such as omitted Prolific codes or absent service failure explanations, was prioritized first. Then, surveys were removed if one or both the attention checks were failed. An example of one of the attention check questions was "Please mark 'strongly disagree' for this statement to show that you are paying attention." This resulted in a sample size of 377 (46 respondents removed), The number of missing values in the remaining data was relatively small (i.e. less than 5% missing values per indicator (Hair et al., 2020), I used mean value replacement to treat the missing values when running the algorithm.

Respondents were compensated approximately $10/hour. Those that agreed to participate were 55% female, 42% were male, and 3% identified as "other." The average age was 36 years and the ethnicity breakdown was 71% white, 6% Hispanic/Latino, 8% Black/African American, 1% Native American, 10% Asian/ Pacific Islander, and 4% identified as "other." The same two attention checks were included in the surveys for the focal study, and participants who failed to answer the attention checks properly, had their surveys omitted from the sample.

3.2.3 Measures

Constructs were operationalized with the same measures for the pilot study. The scales contain various response anchor formats, which decreases the likelihood that participant responses will be influenced by systematic response tendencies (MacKenzie and Podsakoff, 2012). Each scale's items are provided in Appendix C.

3.2.3.1 Perception of Injustice

Respondents rated their own perception of justice in three dimensions following Jung and Seock's (2017) approach, in which eight items were adapted from Smith et al. (1999) measuring perceived distributive justice (α = .92) and interactional justice (α = .92), and 5 items were adapted from del Rio-Lanza et al. (2009)'s measure of procedural justice (α = .95). An example item is "I got what I deserved."3

3.2.3.2 Moral Disengagement

Respondents rated their own MD using eight items adapted from Moore et al.'s (2012) article. Although the original intention was to include 16 items from Moore's 24-item scale, a technical error caused some of the items to not be included. All of the original items from the pilot study were included on the survey for the focal study. An example item is "If an organization gets mistreated, they have usually done something to bring it on themselves" (α = .83).

3.2.3.3 Anti-branding Behavior

Respondents rated their own unethical anti-branding actions using 21 items altogether. Four items were adapted from Ward and Ostrom's (2006) measure of *lying and exaggeration* (α = .79); four items were adapted from Yi and Gong's (2008) scale of *customer dysfunctional behavior* (α = .78); six items were adapted from Fullerton and

Punj's (2004) scale of *consumer misbehavior* (α = .90); three items were adapted from Grégoire and Fisher's (2008) measure of *vindictive complaining* (α = .83); and four items were adapted from McColl-Kennedy et al.'s (2009) measure of *revenge* (α = .87). An example item is "I thought about ways to sabotage the company or its employee(s)."

3.2.3.4 Emotional Branding

Respondents rated their own perception of emotional branding by using 3 items adapted from Wiedmann et al.'s (2018) measure of brand experience, Wiedmann et al.'s (2018) measure of multisensory marketing, and Roy's (2010) measure of cause marketing since sensory marketing, storytelling, and cause-related marketing are critical strategies for emotional branding (Kim and Sullivan, 2019; Schmitt, 1999). An example item is "This brand's storytelling in their advertisements makes a strong impression on my senses." (α = .95).

3.2.3.5 Control Variables

This study will control for customer's gender and age in years because prior research has shown differences in a person's propensity to participate in deviant behavior based off gender (Anwar et al., 2011), and age may account for different types of emotional responses in customers (Zimmermann and Iwanski, 2014). Also, a consumer's perception of transgression intensity was included as a control using Tsarenko and Tojib's (2012) measure of service failure severity, which included 4 items on a 3-point Likert-type scale. An example is "How unfair do you think the situation was?" (α = .79).

3.2.4 Focal Study Analyses

I began by collecting the descriptive statistics of the data by running bivariate correlations in SPSS. I also used partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-

SEM) via SmartPLS Version 4 to test the hypotheses. To analyze my proposed moderated-mediation model, I performed a Confirmatory Composite Analysis (CCA), involving a two-step process of examining the measurement model to ensure the model meets the required criteria and assessing the structural model to confirm the relationships specified by the hypotheses (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

4.1 Pilot Study Data Analysis

Data was examined to assess whether it exhibited a normal distribution, even though PLS does not require it. Two measures of the distributions were examined to assess the data's normality – skewness and kurtosis. Skewness examines the extent to which a variable's distribution is symmetrical, while kurtosis examines whether the distribution is too peaked (Hair et al., 2020). The skewness of anti-branding was found to be 2.16, indicating the distribution was somewhat right-skewed. The kurtosis of anti-branding was found to be 7.24, indicating the distribution was more peaked compared to the normal distribution. More peaked distributions indicate the values of the data set have high rate; that is, they increased rapidly (Hair et al., 2018).

The means, standard deviations, and correlations among study variables are shown in Table 4.1. The Cronbach alphas for the scales ranged from .76 to .94. Thus, all scales demonstrated good reliability in the initial analysis. Two of the three the proposed control variables (Transgression Intensity and Gender) were also significantly correlated with the dependent variable – anti-branding behavior. As expected, the correlation between moral disengagement and anti-branding behavior was positive and highly significant. In

addition, two of the three control variables (transgression intensity and gender) had significant correlations with the dependent variable, anti-branding behavior.

Table 4.1. *Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for Pilot Study Variables*

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Perception of Injustice	2.60	1.43						
2. Moral Disengagement	3.11	1.08	-0.119					
3. Antibranding Behavior	1.97	0.80	-0.066	0.611**				
4. Emotional Branding	2.91	1.31	0.239*	0.149	0.182			
5. Transgression Intensity	1.70	0.51	0.467**	-0.275**	-0.296**	0.065		
6. Gender	1.73	0.49	-0.142	-0.184	-0.312**	-0.185	0.020	
7. Age	35.80	10.62	-0.110	-0.012	0.061	-0.090	-0.128	-0.058

Notes: N=92, listwise
Gender was coded as follows: 1=Male, 2=Female, 3=Other
*p < .05 (2-tailed)
**p < .01 (2-tailed)
***p < .00 (2-tailed)

4.1.1 Pilot Study Measurement Model Assessment

Perception of injustice and anti-branding behavior are theoretically proposed as higher order constructs (HOCs) consisting of three lower order constructs (LOCs) and five lower order constructs, respectively. The higher order constructs were included as a means of reducing the number of relationships in the structural model to achieve a more parsimonious path model. The measurement models were designed as reflective-formative using the repeated indicators method (Sarstedt et al., 2021), in which the indicators are reflectively attached to the LOCs, and then the LOCs are attached formatively to the HOCs (Hair et al., 2020). The model was designed as reflective formative to demonstrate the reflective relationships represent indicators of causality, and the formative latent variables are defined by their respective indicators. For example, a

reflective relationship between moral disengagement and anti-branding behavior is appropriate because according to moral disengagement theory, when a person is morally disengaged, it may lead to immoral acts or revenge because the self-regulatory processes that normally prevent this type of behavior has been deactivated (Bandura, 1990). This causal relationship suggests a reflective connection is appropriate. However, in formative relationships, the formative latent variable is defined by its respective indicators and is considered a consequence of the corresponding variable to which it is attached (Hanafiah, 2020). In our conceptual model, distributive, interactional, and procedural justice all define the overarching concept of justice while complaining, lying, revenge, consumer misbehavior and dysfunctional behavior all help define anti-branding behavior (Fullerton and Punj, 2004; Grégoire and Fisher, 2008; Jung and Seock, 2017; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2009; Ward and Ostrom, 2006; Yi and Gong, 2008). The formative relationships formed between perception of injustice and its dimensions as well as anti-branding and its dimensions are depicted in Figure 4.1, and all paths from the exogenous driver constructs to the higher order constructs are statistically significant and positive.

When assessing the loadings for Moral Disengagement, MD1 had a loading of 0.67, MD 2 had an item loading of 0.60, MD3 had an item loading of 0.47, and MD4 had a loading of .69. While these loadings fell well below the recommended level of .70, these indicators were retained to contribute to content validity for the construct (Sarstedt et al., 2021). An additional analysis was run in which MD3 was removed from the analysis (see Appendix A). This procedure demonstrated that removing the indicator did not contribute to convergent validity. Hence, MD1, MD2, MD3, and MD4 were all retained to enhance content validity of the construct.

When assessing the Anti-Branding items, Lying2 (0.68) and Dysfun5 (0.67) also fell slightly below the recommended criteria (.70).

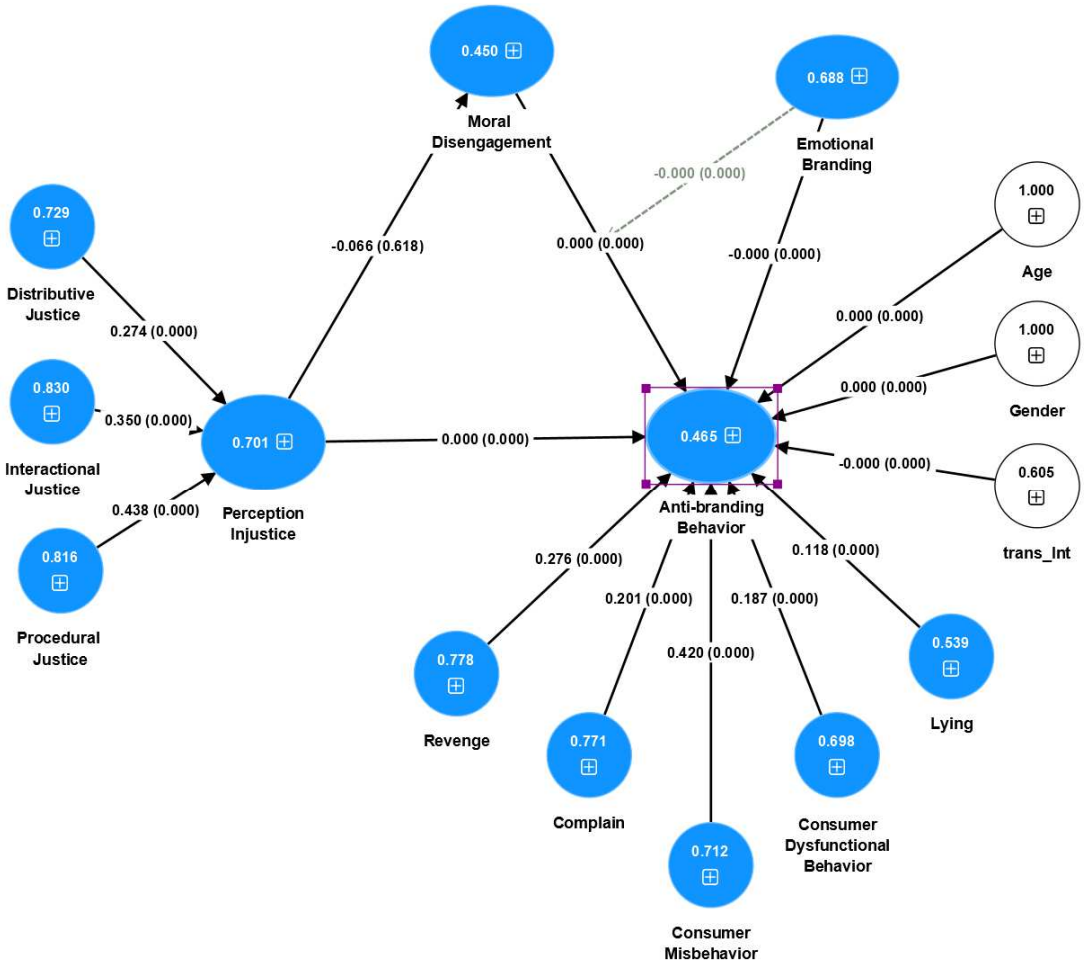

Figure 4.1. *Model of the Structural Path Relationships with Control Variables, Path Coefficients, P-Values, and AVE's*

However, Lying2 was close to the recommended cutoff and removing the item did not improve convergent reliability (see Appendix A) and supported content validity. In contrast, Dysfun5 was removed from the construct and convergent validity was

improved. Building on this process, the measurement model analysis was performed a second time in which all values demonstrated sufficient indicator reliability. Table 4.2 displays the results with the retained items.

Table 4.2. *Item Loadings for Perception of Injustice, Moral Disengagement, Antibranding, and Emotional Branding*

Perception of Injustice	Loadings	Emotional Branding	Loadings
distjust1	0.85	Emotbrand1	0.83
distjust2	0.80	Emotbrand2	0.88
distjust3	0.86	Emotbrand3	0.83
distjust4	0.91	Emotbrand4	0.85
interjust5	0.93	Emotbrand5	0.83
interjust6	0.92	Emotbrand6	0.73
interjust7	0.90	Emotbrand7	0.79
interjust8	0.89	Emotbrand8	0.91
projust9	0.88	Emotbrand9	0.81
projust10	0.86		
projust11	0.95		
projust12	0.94		
projust13	0.88		
Antibranding	**Loadings**	**Moral Disengagement**	**Loadings**
Lying1	0.71	MD1	0.67
Lying2	0.68	MD2	0.60
Lying3	0.84	MD3	0.47
Lying4	0.70	MD4	0.69
Dysfun6	0.87	MD5	0.75
Dysfun7	0.88	MD6	0.73
Dysfun8	0.76	MD7	0.72
Consmis9	0.77	MD8	0.70
Consmis10	0.75		
Consmis11	0.94		
Consmis12	0.86		
Consmis13	0.91		
Consmis14	0.82		
Complain15	0.94		
Complain16	0.90		
Complain17	0.79		
Revenge18	0.88		
Revenge19	0.90		
Revenge20	0.90		
Revenge21	0.85		

Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using two criteria, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). Cronbach's alpha and the composite reliability for each construct confirm an acceptable level of reliability (above .70), according to Sarstedt et al. (2021). Convergent validity was assessed by considering the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct. An AVE value of 0.50 or higher indicates that, on average, the construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators (Sarstedt et al., 2021). As Table 4.3 shows, the AVE's for the lower order constructs in perception of justice met the criteria (above .50) (.88 for distributive justice, .93 for interactional justice, and .94 for procedural justice). Anti-branding's lower-order constructs also meet the .50 criteria: lying (.76), customer dysfunctional behavior (.78), consumer misbehavior (.92), complain (.85), and revenge (.91). Emotional branding had an AVE of .69 and moral disengagement had an AVE of .45, which has been recognized as an acceptable level in prior research since it is close to the recommended cutoff (Lam 2012).

Table 4.3. *Construct Reliability and Validity for Measurement Model Variables*

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Anti-branding_Behavior	0.933	0.947	0.465
Complain	0.848	0.855	0.771
Consumer_Dysfunctional_Behavior	0.781	0.791	0.698
Consumer_Misbehavior	0.917	0.921	0.712
Distributive _Justice	0.876	0.883	0.729
Emotional _Branding	0.943	0.967	0.688
Interactional_Justice	0.932	0.933	0.830
Lying	0.759	0.911	0.539
Moral _Disengagement	0.823	0.840	0.450
Perception_Injustice	0.963	0.967	0.701
Procedural _Justice	0.943	0.946	0.816
Revenge	0.905	0.911	0.778
trans_Int	0.794	0.873	0.605

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) of the correlations between constructs. The HTMT ratio is considered a better metric than simply examining cross loadings or using the Fornel-Larcker (FL) criterion because it is more sensitive and based on the original correlation numbers before averaging, making it more precise (Henseler et al., 2015). A value of .85 was used as the threshold cutoff for constructs that were conceptually distinct (Hair et al., 2020). All of the second-order constructs fell below the recommended HTMT cutoff, sufficiently demonstrating discriminant validity. In addition, I also tested whether the HTMT values are significantly different from the threshold value by computing bootstrap confidence intervals using 10,000 samples. As can be seen in Table 4.4, none of the confidence intervals include the threshold value of .85 for all higher-order construct combinations. In fact, all the HTMT values are substantially lower than this value, indicating the criteria has been met effectively. The bootstrap confidence interval results of the HTMT criterion clearly demonstrate the discriminant validity of the constructs. Next, I evaluated the structural model.

Table 4.4. *Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) – Confidence Intervals*

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	2.5%	97.5%
Emotional Branding <-> Anti-branding	0.272	0.313	0.215	0.440
Moral Disengagement <-> Anti-branding	0.699	0.697	0.557	0.823
Moral Disengagement <-> Emotional branding	0.216	0.287	0.125	0.342
Perception of Injustice <-> Anti-branding	0.247	0.302	0.220	0.411
Perception of Injustice <-> Emotional Branding	0.237	0.255	0.122	0.433
Perception of Injustice <-> Moral Disengagement	0.152	0.237	0.151	0.367

4.1.2 Pilot Study Structural Model Assessment

Next, assessment of the structural model was addressed following the five steps of the confirmatory composite analysis (CCA) procedure recommended by Hair et al. (2020). These procedures involve (1) checking for multicollinearity by assessing the variance inflation factor's (VIF) of the inner model, (2) evaluating the significance and relevance of the structural model relationships (path coefficients), (3) assessing the model's explanatory power by evaluating the coefficients of determination, f^2 effect size, (4) evaluating the model's predictive power using the PLS predict procedure, and (5) comparing different model configurations.

First, the structural model was assessed for collinearity issues by examining the variance inflation factor (VIF) values of all sets of predictor constructs in the structural model. Specifically, the following sets of (predictor) constructs were assessed for collinearity: (1) *perception of injustice* as a predictor of *moral disengagement* and (2) *perception of injustice*, *moral disengagement*, and *emotional branding* as predictors of anti-branding. As can be seen on Table 4.5, all VIF values were below 3.0, indicating multicollinearity among the predictor constructs is not an issue (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

Table 4.5. *Collinearity Statistics (VIF values)* for all Predictor Constructs

	Anti-branding	Moral Disengagement
Anti-branding		
Emotional Branding	1.245	
Moral Disengagement	1.886	
Perception of Injustice	1.548	1.000
Emotional Branding x Moral Disengagement	1.326	

The second step of the structural model assessment procedure involves assessing the significance and relevance of the structural model relationships. Bootstrapping with 90% confidence level and two-tailed test using 10,000 subsamples was performed on the higher order constructs. Hypothesis 1 predicted a positive relationship between perception of injustice and moral disengagement, and hypothesis 2 predicted a positive relationship between moral disengagement and anti-branding. As Table 4.6 shows, Hypothesis 1 was negative and not significant ($\beta = -.08$, $t = .46$, $p > .10$), but hypothesis 2 was positive and highly significant as predicted ($\beta = .55$, $t = 8.36$, $p < .00$). These results suggest that a customer's perception of injustice does not directly influence their moral disengagement, but when customers are morally disengaged, it influences their anti-branding behavior.

Hypothesis 3 predicted a positive relationship between perception of injustice and anti-branding behavior. Table 4.6 shows that the relationship between these constructs is positive, but not significant ($\beta = .09$, $t = .70$, $p > .10$) suggesting that a customer's increased perception of injustice does not increase their likelihood to participate in anti-branding activities. Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

I also tested the indirect effects using SmartPLS Version 4. The indirect effects were based on 10,000 bootstrap samples estimated with a 90% confidence interval following the guidelines discussed by Hair et al. (2020). Hypothesis 4 predicted moral disengagement partially mediates the relationship between perception of injustice and anti-branding behavior. Results of this structural model analysis indicate a negative

relationship, which is not statistically significant ($\beta = -.04$, $t = .47$, $p > .10$); therefore, hypothesis 4 was not supported as can be seen on Table 4.5.

Hypothesis 5 predicted emotional branding is related negatively to anti-branding behaviors. Interestingly, the results show that the relationship is positive (opposite of what was predicted) and not statistically significant ($\beta = .11$, $t = 1.33$, $p > .10$); therefore, hypothesis 5 was not supported. The results of the tests for hypothesis 5 can also be found on Table 4.6, confirming that hypothesis 5 was not supported.

A conditional indirect effect was predicted in Hypothesis 6 in which I predicted emotional branding moderated the relationship between customer moral disengagement and anti-branding, such that the relationship is weaker when emotional branding is relatively high, and stronger when emotional branding is relatively low. The interactive effect on the dependent variable is not supported. While the effect is statistically significant, it is positive, indicating that higher emotional branding actually makes the positive relationship between moral disengagement and anti-branding stronger rather than weaker ($\beta = .19$, $t = 1.67$, $p = .10$).

Additionally, hypothesis 7 predicted emotional branding would moderate the indirect effect between perception of injustice and anti-branding behavior through moral disengagement such that the relationship is weaker when emotional branding is relatively high, and stronger when emotional branding is relatively low. The results of the simple slopes test (see Figure 4.2) are also shown below to verify statistically significant moderated relationships are present in the hypothesized model. The slopes are significantly different, indicating a moderating effect does exist. However, my predictions in hypothesis 6 and hypothesis 7 are not supported. These relationships

instead indicate that the moderator strengthens the relationship between the mediator and dependent variable when emotional branding is high. As shown on Table 4.6, hypothesis 6 and 7 were not supported. I also examined the effects of the proposed control variables on the dependent variable. The three control variables (transgression intensity, age, and gender) were treated as independent variables for anti-branding. Results are in Table 4.6.

Additionally, the model was run omitting the control variable, transgression intensity, because of the similarity of this construct to perception of injustice, possibly contributing much of the variance. The results omitting this control variable can be found in Appendix A. While the impact of age and transgression intensity on anti-branding was not significant ($p = .41$ and .44, respectively), the impact of gender on anti-branding was statistically significant ($\beta = -.20$, $t = 2.34$, $p < .05$). This suggests people who identify as males are more likely to participate in anti-branding activities than females (n=65) or people who identify as "other" (n=2). I then examined the R^2 values of the endogenous latent variables. The coefficient of determination (R^2), a measure of in-sample prediction, is examined to determine how well the hypothesized model explains the variance in the endogenous constructs. In-sample prediction assigns a weight (path coefficient) for each structural relationship, which enables you to identify the extent to each independent variable (construct) predicts the dependent constructs (Hair et al., 2018). The R^2 metric ranges from 0 to 1, with higher scores indicating a higher level of explanatory power for the structural model (Hair et al., 2018). Figure 4.2 depicts the structural model of the hypothesized relationships for the direct and indirect effects (with the path coefficients and the levels of significance), the interaction between moral disengagement and emotional branding, and the path coefficients and the levels of significance for the

controls (transgression intensity, age, and gender) on the dependent variable, anti-branding.

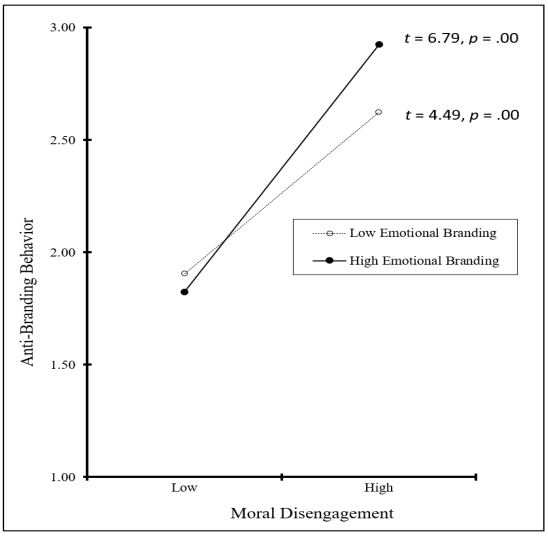

Figure 4.2. *The Moderating Effect of Emotional Branding*

Table 4.6. *Path Coefficients, T Statistics, & P-Values for Hypotheses 1-7*

Dependent Variable:	Moral Disengagement (H1)					Anti-Branding Behavior (H2)				
Variable	*B*	*t*	*p*	5% LLCI	95% ULCI	*B*	*t*	*p*	5% LLCI	95% ULCI
Control										
Transgression Intensity						-.06	.77	.44	-.20	.06
Gender[a]						-.20	2.34	.02**	-.35	-.07
Age						.06	.83	.41	-.05	.18
Independent Variable										
Perception of Injustice	-.07	.50	.62	-.32	.20	.09	.70	.44	-.17	.24
Mediator										
Moral Disengagement						.55	8.36	.00***	.43	.64
Moderator										
Emotional Branding						.11	1.33	.18	-.02	.26
Interaction										
MD x EB						.19	1.67	.10*	-.04	.33
R^2						.01				.54
Indirect Effect	*B*	*t*	*p*							
PI -> *MD -> AB*	-0.04	0.47	0.64							

Note: N = 92. H1 = hypothesis 1. H2 = hypothesis 2. LLCI = Lower level confidence interval. ULCI = Upper level confidence interval. MD = Moral Disengagement. EB = Emotional Branding

[a] Dummy variable (1 = male, 2 = female, 3 = other)

*p<0.10

**P<0.05

***P<0.000

. The coefficients of determination are also displayed on the endogenous constructs, indicating the hypothesized model accounts for 1% of the variance in moral disengagement and 54% of the variance in anti-branding.

The effect sizes (f^2 values) for all structural model relationships are also shown in Table 4.7. The effect size guidelines established by Cohen (1992) describe small (greater than or equal to .02), medium (greater than or equal to .15), and large effect sizes (greater than or equal to .35). Results indicate the relationships between perception of injustice and moral disengagement and perception of injustice and anti-branding have very small effect, both with an f^2 value of .01. In contrast, the effect size of moral disengagement to anti-branding is large ($f^2 = .58$), indicating a strong predictive relationship. The effect size of emotional branding to antibranding is small ($f^2 = .03$), while the interaction between emotional branding and moral disengagement produces a relatively small effect as well ($f^2 = .10$). Finally, the effect sizes for the control variables were small as well. Their results are as follows: transgression intensity > anti-branding ($f^2 = .01$), gender > anti-branding ($f^2 = .08$), and age > anti-branding ($f^2 = .01$).

As a final assessment of the structural model, I evaluated the structural model's out-of-sample predictive power using PLSpredict (Hair et al., 2020) to assess whether the results not only apply to the data that have been used in the model estimation process, but also to other datasets outside this study. The PLSpredict process is a means of identifying

the extent to which the model results can be inferred to the population (Manley et al., 2021).

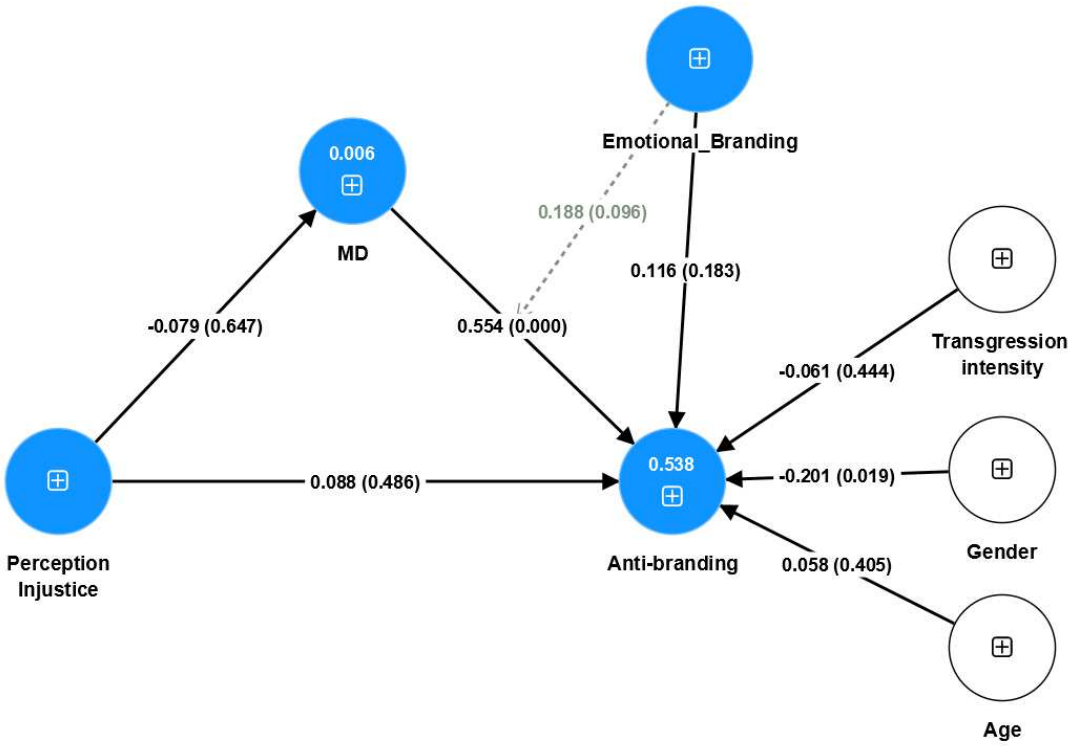

Figure 4.3. *Structural Model of the Hypothesized Relationships with Path Coefficients, Significance Values, and Coefficients of Determination for Pilot Study*

. The Q^2 statistic is used to assess a model's out-of-sample predictive power. To do so, I focused on the model's key endogenous construct: anti-branding, rather than the prediction errors for all endogenous constructs' indicators (Hair et al., 2020). Anti-branding had a Q^2 value of .06, suggesting the PLS path model outperforms the most naïve linear model (LM) benchmark (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

Table 4.7. *F^2 Effect Sizes for Perception of Injustice, Moral Disengagement, and Control Variables, on their respective Endogenous Construct*

	F^2 Effect Size	Effect Size Level
Transgression Intensity → Anti-branding	0.01	very small
Gender → Anti-branding	0.08	small
Age → Anti-branding	0.01	very small
Perception of Injustice → Moral Disengement	0.01	very small
Perception of Injustice → Anti-branding	0.01	very small
Moral Disengagement → Anti-branding	0.58	large
Emotional Branding → Anti-branding	0.03	small
Emotional Branding x MD → Anti-branding	0.10	small

Then the PLS RMSE errors for each indicator of anti-branding were compared to the LM RMSE errors for each anti-branding indicator. Out of the 21 indicators, 20 had smaller RMSE prediction errors than the LM. The PLS RMSE error for lying1 was 1.905, compared to the LM RMSE for lying 1 was 1.65. Overall, these findings suggest high predictive power as the PLS-SEM analysis outperforms the LM benchmark model for all anti-branding indicators (Sarstedt et al., 2021). Seven hypotheses were examined to determine whether a customer's perception of injustice influence a customer's unethical anti-branding behavior through a process of moral disengagement, and whether or not emotional branding potentially mitigated the anti-branding behavior. The results of these hypotheses are summarized in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8. *Summary of Pilot Study's Hypotheses and Findings for H1-H7*

Hypothesis	Path	Findings
H1	Perception of Injustice → MD	Rejected
H2	Moral Disengagement → Anti-branding	Supported
H3	Perception of Injustice → Anti-branding	Rejected
H4	Perception of Injustice → MD → Anti-branding	Rejected
H5	EB → Anti-branding	Rejected
H6	EB x MD → Anti-branding	Rejected
H7	EB x MD → Perception of injsutice → MD → Anti-branding	Rejected

Note : MD = Moral Disengagement. EB = Emotional Branding

One possible explanation for why most relationships were not supported may be poor measurement of the model's constructs. Both emotional branding and anti-branding are relatively new concepts being studied in the marketing area. Since they do not have established scales, both constructs were represented by proxies based on the branding literature. Moral disengagement theory could still provide logical support for the conceptual model even if both constructs had better scales. It is possible that different results would come about if the constructs had better measurements.

4.1.3 Pilot Study Alternative Models

I tested three alternate models to the initially-proposed model to see if variables performed better in the CCA. The first alternate model omitted the higher order constructs and tested all relationships between the lower order constructs. The second alternate model reflectively connects the perception of injustice dimensions to the HOC instead of formatively connecting them. Given the high degree of intercorrelation among

all the injustice items, formative representation may be inappropriate (Hair et al., 2018); therefore, an alternate model was tested to see if it outperformed the original model with the CCA. The third alternate model was composed of only first order constructs.

A confirmatory composite analysis was performed on all alternative models following the two-step process laid out by Sarstedt et al. (2021). These processes indicated the results for initial model were meaningful since they were consistent with previous research in this field and more methodologically sound. The results of all the alternative models were reported in Appendix B.

4.2 Focal Study Data Analysis

The final sample includes a total of 366 respondents with complete data. The means, standard deviations, and correlations among study variables are shown in Table 4.9. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.78 to 0.95; thus, all scales demonstrated good reliability. The proposed control variables, transgression intensity and gender, are also significantly correlated with the proposed DV, anti-branding behavior. Additionally, the high correlation between Anti-branding and moral disengagement highlight the importance of this concept in relation to negative consumer behavior. This finding is also consistent with previous findings in the marketing literature (Seriki et al., 2020) and indicates that moral disengagement may be a meaningful concept to study further in relation to its explanatory role in deviant customer behavior.

Table 4.9. *Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for IV, DV, Mediator, Moderator, and Control variables in focal study*

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Perception of Injustice	2.62	1.49						
2. Moral Disengagement	3.05	1.10	-0.071					
3. Antibranding Behavior	2.11	0.70	-0.078	0.546**				
4. Emotional Branding	2.97	1.37	0.260**	-0.083	0.068			
5. Transgression Intensity	1.72	0.53	0.499**	-0.137**	-0.258**	0.111*		
6. Gender	1.62	0.55	-0.082	-0.063	-0.151**	-0.034	-0.058	
7. Age	36.17	12.89	-0.103*	-0.139**	-0.031	-0.017	-0.167**	-0.015

Notes: N=366, listwise
Gender was coded as follows: 1=Male, 2=Female, 3=Other
*p < .05 (2-tailed)
**p < .01 (2-tailed)

4.2.1 Focal Study Measurement Model Assessment

I followed the confirmatory composite analysis (CCA) process to examine the reflective-formative measurement model (Hair et al., 2020). The goal of this assessment is to ensure the reliability and validity of the construct measures, thus providing statistical support for their inclusion in the model. I utilized the SmartPLS Version 4 software and a dataset of N=377 to assess the validity and reliability of the construct measures and to ensure that this model meets the required criteria prior to assessing the structural model. This process includes looking at factor loadings and their significance, assessing composite reliability, reviewing the AVEs of each DV to assess convergent validity, and reviewing HTMT Ratios to verify discriminant validity. Figure 4.3 depicts the hypothesized relationships.

I began by examining the size and significance of the outer loadings and indicator reliability. The recommended cutoff for item loadings in PLS-SEM is 0.70 (Hair et al., 2018). Also, the decision to remove indicators was based on whether the removal

affected the content validity of each construct as well as whether or not removal increased internal consistency reliability and convergent validity.

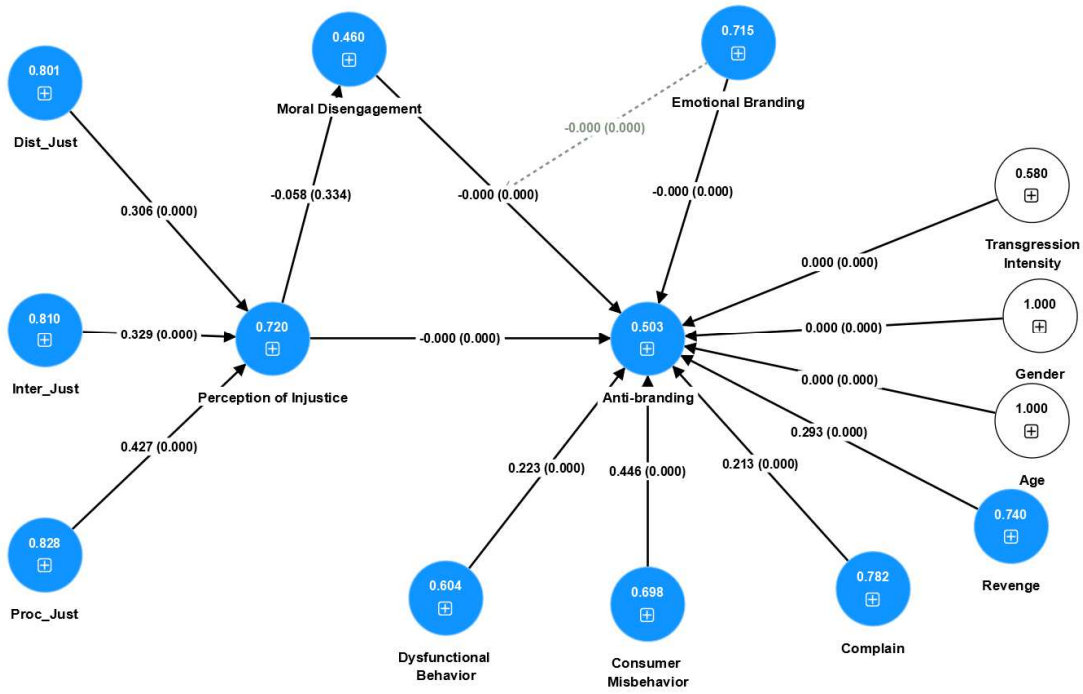

Figure 4.4. *Model of the Seven Hypothesized Structural Relationships with Path Coefficients, Significance Values, and Coefficients of Determination for Focal Study*

Moral Disengagement's AVE value of .46 falls below the recommended cutoff, and MD5 and MD15 fall below the .70 guideline for indicators. However, these items were retained to preserve content validity. Anti-branding's AVE value of .43 fell below the recommended guidelines of .50 (Hair et al., 2020); however, by removing the Lying1, Lying2, Lying3, and Lying4, the AVE for the Anti-branding construct improved to .503; therefore, they were removed. This may suggest that the construct – lying – poorly represented the overarching concept of unethical anti-branding. Table 4.10 illustrates the

remaining items for the focal study. Additionally, the composite reliability scores for each construct exceed the 0.70 threshold (Hair et al., 2020) with a range of 0.78 - 0.97 (See Table 4.11) These results provide further indication of convergent validity and internal consistency reliability.

The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations was also used to assess the discriminant validity of the measurement model. Adequate discriminant validity suggests that the reflective constructs in the measurement model share more variance with each of their indicators than with other constructs in the measurement model (Hair et al., 2020). Based on Hair et al.'s (2020) guidelines, each of these values fell below the cutoff of .85 for conceptually-unrelated constructs (See Table 4.12), confirming discriminant validity. In addition, I also tested whether the HTMT values are significantly different from the threshold value by computing bootstrap confidence intervals using 10,000 samples. As can be seen in Table 4.12, none of the confidence intervals include the threshold value of .85, clearly demonstrating discriminant validity.

Table 4.10. *Item Loadings for IV, DV, Mediator and Moderator for focal study*

Perception of Injustice	Loadings	Emotional Branding	Loadings
distjust1	0.89	Emotbrand1	0.78
distjust2	0.86	Emotbrand2	0.83
distjust3	0.90	Emotbrand3	0.83
distjust4	0.93	Emotbrand4	0.86
interjust5	0.90	Emotbrand5	0.85
interjust6	0.92	Emotbrand6	0.85
interjust7	0.88	Emotbrand7	0.86
interjust8	0.90	Emotbrand8	0.89
projust9	0.92	Emotbrand9	0.86
projust10	0.88		
projust11	0.92		
projust12	0.93		
projust13	0.90		
Antibranding	**Loadings**	**Moral Disengagement**	**Loadings**
Dysfun5	0.76	MD1	0.71
Dysfun7	0.79	MD3	0.71
Dysfun8	0.80	MD5	0.41
Dysfun8	0.76	MD7	0.77
Consmis9	0.72	MD9	0.76
Consmis10	0.78	MD11	0.69
Consmis11	0.91	MD13	0.71
Consmis12	0.86	MD15	0.60
Consmis13	0.92		
Consmis14	0.80		
Complain15	0.94		
Complain16	0.93		
Complain17	0.78		
Revenge18	0.87		
Revenge19	0.88		
Revenge20	0.89		
Revenge21	0.80		

Table 4.11. *Construct Reliability and Validity for Measurement Model Constructs in focal study*

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Anti-branding	0.937	0.941	0.503
Complain	0.858	0.875	0.782
Consumer _Misbehavior	0.911	0.913	0.698
Dist_Just	0.917	0.921	0.801
Dysfunctional _Behavior	0.782	0.782	0.604
Emotional Branding	0.951	0.964	0.715
Inter_Just	0.922	0.924	0.810
Moral Disengagement	0.831	0.852	0.460
Perception of Injustice	0.967	0.969	0.720
Proc_Just	0.948	0.949	0.828
Revenge	0.883	0.894	0.740
Transgression_Intensity	0.794	0.898	0.580

Table 4.12. *HTMT Ratio Confidence Intervals for focal study's Measurement Model*

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	2.5%	97.5%
Emotional Branding <-> Anti-branding	0.154	0.169	0.108	0.251
Moral Disengagement <-> Anti-branding	0.554	0.555	0.466	0.636
Moral Disengagement <-> Emotional Branding	0.110	0.144	0.095	0.222
Perception of Injustice <-> Anti-branding	0.139	0.156	0.107	0.235
Perception of Injustice <-> Moral Disengagement	0.128	0.148	0.103	0.209
Perception of Injustice <-> Emotional Branding	0.277	0.278	0.175	0.380

4.2.2 Focal Study Structural Model Assessment

In the second step of the analysis, I used the SmartPLS software to evaluate the structural model. This step assesses the empirical relationships among the theoretical constructs (Hair et al., 2020). This process involves six steps including the assessment of 1) multicollinearity using VIF statistics, 2) path coefficient significance, 3) R^2 values of the endogenous constructs, 4) F^2 effect sizes, 5) predictive relevance, and 6) out-of-sample predictive power using $PLS_{predict}$ (Hair et al., 2020).

I first examined the VIF ratios for all relevant constructs to test for multicollinearity. As shown in Table 4.13, the VIF for each independent confirms multicollinearity is not an issue since the ratios fall below 3.0 (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

Table 4.13. *Collinearity Statistics (VIF values) for focal study's structural model*

	Anti-branding	Moral Disengagement
Anti-branding		
Perception of Injustice	1.417	1.000
Emotional Branding	1.141	
moral disengagement	1.625	
Emotional Branding x MD	1.120	

The next step in evaluating the structural model includes evaluating the significance and relevance of the hypothesized relationships in the model as indicated by the size and statistical significance of the path coefficients (Sarstedt et al., 2021). The bootstrapping option was run using 10,000 subsamples in the SmartPLS software to obtain significance levels of the path coefficients. Hypothesis 1 predicted a positive relationship between perception of injustice and moral disengagement, and hypothesis 2 predicted a positive relationship between moral disengagement and anti-branding. As Table 4.14 shows, Hypothesis 1 was negative and not significant ($\beta = -.06$, $t = .97$, $p = .33$), but hypothesis 2 was positive and highly significant as predicted ($\beta = .57$, $t = 14.39$, $p < .00$). These results support the pilot study's results in that a customer's perception of injustice does not directly influence their moral disengagement, but when customers are morally disengaged, it influences their anti-branding behavior.

Hypothesis 3 predicted a positive relationship between perception of injustice and anti-branding behavior. Table 4.14 shows that the relationship between these constructs is positive, but not significant ($\beta = .09$, $t = .70$, $p = .44$) suggesting that a customer's increased perception of injustice does not increase their likelihood to participate in anti-branding activities. As in the pilot study, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

I also tested the indirect effects based on 10,000 bootstrap samples estimated with a 90% confidence interval following the guidelines discussed by Sarstedt et al. (2021). Hypothesis 4 predicted moral disengagement partially mediates the relationship between perception of injustice and anti-branding behavior. Results of this structural model

analysis indicate a negative relationship, which is not statistically significant ($\beta = -.03$, $t = .96$, $p > .10$); therefore, hypothesis 4 was not supported as can be seen on Table 4.14.

Hypothesis 5 predicted emotional branding would be *negatively* related to anti-branding behaviors, but the results show that the relationship is positive and statistically significant ($\beta = .19$, $t = 4.40$, $p < .00$). Because the effect was opposite of what was predicted, hypothesis 5 was not supported. Additionally, a conditional indirect effect was predicted in Hypothesis 6 in which I predicted emotional branding moderated the relationship between customer moral disengagement and anti-branding, such that the relationship would be weaker when emotional branding was relatively high, and stronger when emotional branding was relatively low. The interactive effect on the dependent variable was statistically significant; however, it was positive. This demonstrated higher emotional branding actually makes the positive relationship between moral disengagement and anti-branding stronger rather than weaker ($\beta = .16$, $t = 2.74$, $p < .05$).

In hypothesis 7, I predicted emotional branding would moderate the indirect effect between perception of injustice and anti-branding behavior through moral disengagement such that the relationship is weaker when emotional branding is relatively high, and stronger when emotional branding is relatively low. The results of the simple slopes test verify statistically significant moderated relationships are present in the hypothesized model, but these relationships indicate that the moderator strengthens the relationship between the mediator and dependent variable when emotional branding is high. As shown on Table 4.14, hypothesis 6 and 7 were not supported. I also examined the effects of the proposed control variables on the dependent variable. The three control variables

(transgression intensity, age, and gender) were treated as independent variables for anti-branding.

Table 4.14. *Path Coefficients, T Statistics, and P-Values for structural model in focal study*

Dependent Variable:	Moral Disengagement (H1)					Anti-Branding Behavior (H2)				
Variable	*B*	*t*	*p*	5% LLCI	95% ULCI	*B*	*t*	*p*	5% LLCI	95% ULCI
Control										
Transgression Intensity						-.10	1.59	.11	-.19	.09
Gender[a]						-.11	.04	.00***	-.18	.04
Age						.05	1.47	.14	-.01	.12
Independent Variable										
Perception of Injustice	-.06	.97	.33	-.17	.06	.09	.70	.44	-.21	.24
Mediator										
Moral Disengagement						.57	14.39	.00***	.49	.64
Moderator										
Emotional Branding						.19	4.40	.00***	.11	.27
Interaction										
MD x EB						.16	2.74	.01**	.04	.26
R^2						.00				.35
Indirect Effect	*B*	*t*	*p*							
PI -> *MD* -> *AB*	-0.03	0.96	0.34							

Note: N = 92. H1 = hypothesis 1. H2 = hypothesis 2. LLCI = Lower level confidence interval. ULCI = Upper level confidence interval. MD = Moral Disengagement. EB = Emotional Branding

[a] Dummy variable (1 = male, 2 = female, 3 = other)

*p<0.10

**P<0.05

***P<0.000

The effect sizes (f^2 values) for all structural model relationships were evaluated next. I followed the effect size guidelines established by Cohen (1992) who described small effect sizes as greater than or equal to .02, medium effect sizes as greater than or equal to .15, and large effect sizes as greater than or equal to .35. Results indicate the relationship between perception of injustice and moral disengagement had a small effect size (f^2 = .003, not significant).

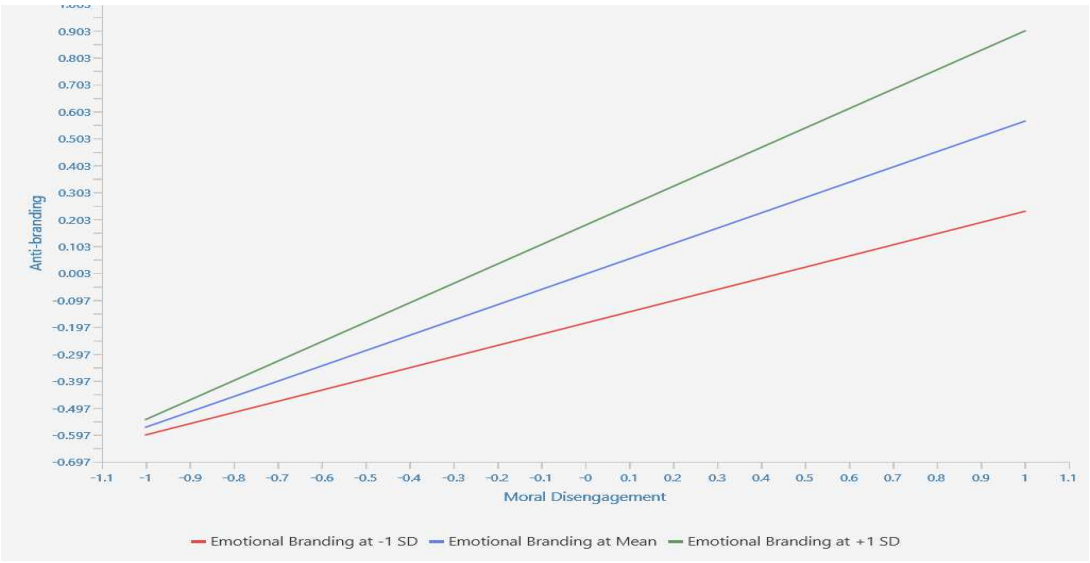

Figure 4.5: *The Moderating Effect of Emotional Branding*

.Perception of injustice and anti-branding had a significant medium effect (f^2 = 0.250, $p < .00$). The absolute value of the effect size of moral disengagement to anti-branding is also medium and highly significant (f^2 = -.25, $p < .00$), indicating a moderate predictive relationship. Emotional branding > Anti-branding had a small effect size that was not significant (f^2 = .05, not significant). Additionally, the interaction between emotional branding and moral disengagement produces a large effect (f^2 = .50, $p < .00$). Finally, the effect sizes for the control variables had mixed results. Their effect sizes were as follows: large effect for transgression intensity > anti-branding (f^2 = -.75, $p < .00$); medium effect for gender > anti-branding (f^2 = -.25, $p < .00$), and a large effect for age > anti-branding (f^2 =.50, $p < .00$). The negative medium effect between gender and anti-branding suggests females are less likely to participate in anti-branding than males.

Table 4.15. *F^2 Effect Sizes for all Exogenous Variables on each Endogenous Variable Examined in Structural Model of Primary Study*

	F^2 Effect Size	Effect Size Level
Transgression Intensity → Anti-branding	-0.75	large
Gender → Anti-branding	-0.25	medium
Age → Anti-branding	0.50	large
Perception of Injustice → Moral Disengement	0.00	small
Perception of Injustice → Anti-branding	0.25	medium
Moral Disengagement → Anti-branding	-0.25	medium
Emotional Branding → Anti-branding	0.05	small
Emotional Branding x MD → Anti-branding	0.50	large

As a final assessment of the structural model, I evaluated the structural model's out-of-sample predictive power using PLSpredict (Sarstedt et al., 2021) to assess whether the results not only apply to the data that have been used in the model estimation process, but also to other datasets outside this study. The Q^2 statistic was used to assess a model's out-of-sample predictive power. Anti-branding had a Q^2 value of .01, suggesting the PLS path model outperforms the most naïve linear model (LM) benchmark since it has a value greater than zero (Sarstedt et al., 2021). Next, I compared the PLS RMSE errors for each indicator of anti-branding to the LM RMSE errors for each anti-branding indicator. All 17 indicators had smaller RMSE prediction errors than the LM. Overall, these findings suggest high predictive power as the PLS-SEM analysis outperforms the LM benchmark model for all anti-branding indicators (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

Overall, seven hypotheses were examined to determine whether a customer's perception of injustice influences a customer's unethical anti-branding behavior through a process of moral disengagement, and whether or not emotional branding potentially

mitigated the anti-branding behavior. The results of these hypotheses are summarized in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16. *Summary of Structural Model's Hypotheses and Findings in focal study*

Hypothesis	Path	Findings
H1	Perception of Injustice → MD	Rejected
H2	Moral Disengagement → Anti-branding	Supported
H3	Perception of Injustice → Anti-branding	Rejected
H4	Perception of Injustice → MD → Anti-branding	Rejected
H5	EB → Anti-branding	Rejected
H6	EB x MD → Anti-branding	Rejected
H7	EB x MD → Perception of injsutice → MD → Anti-branding	Rejected

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This paper was designed to extend previous research by examining the psychological processes through which unethical anti-branding behavior may occur in customers. Our results from both our pretest and focal study were consistent with previous findings in that MD was significantly and positively related to unethical anti-branding behavior. It shows support for the notion that customers who are morally disengaged will participate in unethical brand-related activities. This finding, which aligns with moral disengagement theory, highlights the fact that when an individual experiences moral disengagement as a customer, it can increase the potential for them to participate in things such as lying about the company, complaining to others, revenge-related activities, general consumer misbehaviors or dysfunctional behaviors.

Another goal of our research was to examine whether a customer's perception of injustice served as a stressor, leading to moral disengagement and unethical anti-branding activities. Both our pilot test and primary study could not confirm these relationships, suggesting further exploration of moral disengagement precedents might be needed. Future researchers might need a better antecedent to fully capture the tenets of the moral disengagement theory. As previously mentioned, MD might be viewed as a coping mechanism, allowing a person to behave unethically without feeling guilt. Alternatively,

someone could be aware of a transgression, but simply not care about committing the "sin." Perhaps whether or not a person participates in anti-branding has more to do with their moral philosophies that they live by, such as an "eye-for-an-eye" mentality or the golden rule (LaFleur et al., 1995; Singhapakdi et al., 1999). Future researchers might want to consider the moral philosophies people ascribe to that shape their ethical decision making.

Additionally, I examined whether emotional branding mitigated anti-branding activities when individuals were experiencing moral disengagement. Surprisingly, I found the opposite to be true. When customers are morally disengaged, high levels of emotional branding are likely to intensify the customer's unethical-branding practices rather than lessen them. Future researchers may need to explore other theoretical frameworks, such as psychological contract theory or self-regulation theory, to explain these findings. Specifically, psychological contract breaches (Morrison and Robinson, 1997) may provide insight into why morally disengaged customers would be more likely to increase their anti-branding behaviors when faced with emotional branding from a company. Morally disengaged customers may believe the company has failed to meet their contractual obligations, inciting further negative feelings and attitudes (Eckerd et al., 2013). Additionally, future researchers might find that these relationships can be better explained with self-regulation theory because a morally disengaged customer may have diminished self-regulatory capabilities when faced with a service failure (Baumeister, 1997).

Future researchers might also explore other boundary conditions for the conceptual model. For example, emotional branding might be an interesting boundary

condition to consider for the relationship between perception of injustice and moral disengagement, based on the logic established previously in this paper. It would be interesting to see if emotional branding prevents or amplifies moral disengagement when customers perceive injustice has happened to them. Also, it might be interesting to look at using the control variable, transgression intensity, as a moderator in the conceptual model. It is interesting that the correlations between transgression intensity and both moral disengagement and anti-branding, are negative (see Table 4.9). This is unexpected because one would assume the higher the transgression intensity, the higher the moral disengagement and anti-branding. Perhaps further testing this control and how it relates to the other outcome variables would reveal other important insights.

In the focal study, I offer a constructive replication as recommended by Lykken (1968), examining emotional branding as a boundary condition for the effect of moral disengagement on anti-branding behavior for the mediated relationship between perception of injustice and anti-branding through moral disengagement. Adding a second study allowed us to retest the key mediated relationship examined in the pilot study as well as explore whether customers who experience service failures are more likely to engage in unethical anti-branding behaviors when faced with high emotional branding efforts than customers who experience less emotional branding.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The purpose of this research was to explore the relationship of a customer's perception of injustice to anti-branding through moral disengagement and how emotional branding acts as a boundary condition for moral disengagement and anti-branding. Our

empirical study supported the idea that moral disengagement can lead to unethical anti-branding activities. I found that emotional branding from the offending company can actually enhance the chances that a morally disengaged person will perform unethical anti-branding. However, a person's perception of injustice does not necessarily lead to a morally disengaged customer, nor does it lead to unethical anti-branding practices directly. In both of these cases, no significant relationship was found with perception of injustice, suggesting a different antecedent may be more appropriate.

This article contributes to the ethics literature in the marketing area in several ways. It highlights how morally disengaged customers are likely to participate in unethical anti-branding activities. Previous research has identified important outcomes to moral disengagement in the employment side of the workplace (Fida et al., 2018, He et al., 2019; Probst et al., 2020). I extend this research by showing customer moral disengagement results in unethical anti-branding behaviors such as complaining, vengeful acts, or other forms of consumer misbehavior. This research demonstrates that people who are morally disengaged will participate in multiple forms of deviance and do so because they are able to more easily justify it than people who are not morally disengaged.

Additionally, the role emotional branding plays in *promoting* unethical behavior when customers are morally disengaged rather than *mitigating* is also noteworthy. One explanation for this finding may be in connection to psychological contract breaches. While social exchange theory helps us understand why emotional branding may turn off a customer's urge to react negatively, the results of this study suggests that the exchange relationship has been broken in the customer's eyes; therefore, any emotional branding

efforts by the organization may be viewed as hypocritical, angering the customer to the point that they are more likely to participate in unethical anti-branding practices. As a boundary condition on the relationship between moral disengagement and anti-branding, emotional branding did have a strong effect, but the moderating effect predicted by hypothesis 6 and 7 were not supported. However, this research presents two other contributions to the marketing field: an empirical study using the emotional branding construct as well as a broad measurement of unethical anti-branding practices.

While emotional branding has had a lot of attention in recent marketing research (Gobe, 2010; Thompson et al., 2006), very few empirical studies have been presented (Kustini, 2011; Singla and Gupta, 2019). Most research in this area focuses on research that is conceptual-only or are experimental in design. I not only attempt to measure this concept using a cross-sectional survey design, but I also try to test it as a boundary condition to understand its influencing nature. In addition, while the emotional branding construct draws from three proxy scales (storytelling, cause branding, and sensory building), and the unethical anti-branding construct draws from five different scales (complaining, lying, revenge, customer misbehavior, and customer dysfunctional behavior), this research takes a step forward in developing definitive measurements for both overall concepts.

Finally, focusing on consumer anti-branding practices contributes to the revenge literature in the marketing area. Our understanding of what contributes to vengeful behavior (morally-disengaged customers) and what increases the likelihood that a customer will participate (emotional branding strategies) is improved. It is evident here that the interaction between emotional branding and moral disengagement explain why

consumers are motivated to participate in activities that are hurtful back to the organization when they have been wronged. From a theoretical perspective, the current research offers new insight into how moral disengagement theory may underpin negative acts carried out by consumers out of spite.

5.2 Practical Implications

Given the prevalence of unethical behavior conducted by upset consumers (especially in the online sphere), this research provides both theoretical and practical implications. This research clearly demonstrates that when customers are morally disengaged, they do contribute to deviant behaviors against an organization. Our findings advance theory by testing key tenets of moral disengagement theory and finding some evidence that unethical anti-branding may be enhanced by certain promotional strategies, such as emotional branding. The complexity of these results suggests that there is room for further research investigating the mechanisms of moral disengagement theory and its practical applications.

Extending this study's findings from the theoretical realm into the marketplace, a practical implication of this research is that marketers can ignite a consumer to perform hurtful acts against the company just through their promotional efforts. Thus, it is important that managers work to identify morally disengaged clients so they can prevent deviant behaviors that attack the company's branding. They might do so by getting customer feedback after every service encounter and training employees to recognize and report signs of disengaged clientele, with all reports being responded to in a swift, and consistent manner that de-escalates the situations.

5.3 Strengths and Limitations

There are several strengths of this research. First, it provided a test of the power that moral disengagement has on people to perform unethical branding practices. The results of this study suggest that people who can justify turning off their internal moral code, are more likely to participate in anti-branding without guilt towards the organization. Second, I performed a preliminary pilot study followed up by a larger, main study to confirm our findings. Third, it examined a contextual factor of an organization using emotional branding to determine if the theoretically derived relationships still held under that boundary condition. I found that emotional branding is relevant, but it served to enhance the relationship between moral disengagement and anti-branding, rather than mitigate it.

As with all research there are opportunities for improvement. While the one boundary condition of emotional branding was relevant, perhaps other boundary conditions that are relevant to consumer behavior, such as personality characteristics or empathy levels of the consumer, could further illuminate this process. Further, I only considered one antecedent to moral disengagement - perception of injustice. Another potential antecedent would be customer-brand disidentification since it is an important reason for the breakdown of consumer-brand relationships and a pertinent reason for why consumers turn against brands (Anaza et al., 2021). It is also possible that the model may produce better results if both the unethical anti-branding and emotional branding constructs had more solidly-defined scales in the marketing literature. Including more established scales in future work might help paint a clearer picture of how a person's perception of injustice and a company's emotional branding influences a customer's

willingness to participate in anti-branding activities. Another limitation relating to methodology relates to the use of cross-sectional data. When testing causal models, longitudinal time studies can provide insight beyond just a specific time and potentially can offer more-accurate insights.

5.4 Conclusions

In conclusion, this research tested the roles of both moral disengagement and social exchange theories in a customer's participation of unethical anti-branding practices and found that although a customer's perception of injustice does not influence them to morally disengage or participate in anti-branding directly, situations in which consumers are morally disengaged are likely to have unethical anti-branding behaviors. Emotional branding does influence the relationship between moral disengagement and anti-branding; however, this promotional activity serves to enhance the relationship, not to mitigate it. These findings suggest that perhaps a psychological contract breach has been invoked in the moral disengagement process and our understanding of the process and implications of moral disengagement begs deeper investigation than has been conducted thus far. I hope that this research inspires future research into this area and spurs greater interest in the multiple facets of this theory.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Additional Figures and Tables

Table A1. *Model for Hypothesized Relationships H1-H6 without the control variable Transgression Intensity*

Dependent Variable:	Moral Disengagement (H1)					Anti-Branding Behavior (H2)				
Variable	*B*	*t*	*p*	5% LLCI	95% ULCI	*B*	*t*	*p*	5% LLCI	95% ULCI
Control										
Gender[a]						-.21	2.41	.02**	-.38	-.05
Age						.06	.89	.37	-.07	.21
Independent Variable										
Perception of Injustice	-.08	.45	.62	-.35	.24	.09	.70	.44	-.21	.24
Mediator										
Moral Disengagement						.57	8.89	.00***	.42	.67
Moderator										
Emotional Branding						.12	1.35	.18	-.07	.29
Interaction										
MD x EB						.19	1.68	.09*	-.11	.35
R^2						.01				.54
Indirect Effect	*B*	*t*	*p*							
PI -> *MD* -> *AB*	-0.04	0.46	0.65							

Note: N = 92. H1 = hypothesis 1. H2 = hypothesis 2. LLCI = Lower level confidence interval. ULCI = Upper level confidence interval. MD = Moral Disengagement. EB = Emotional Branding

[a] Dummy variable (1 = male, 2 = female, 3 = other)

*p<0.10

**P<0.05

***P<0.000

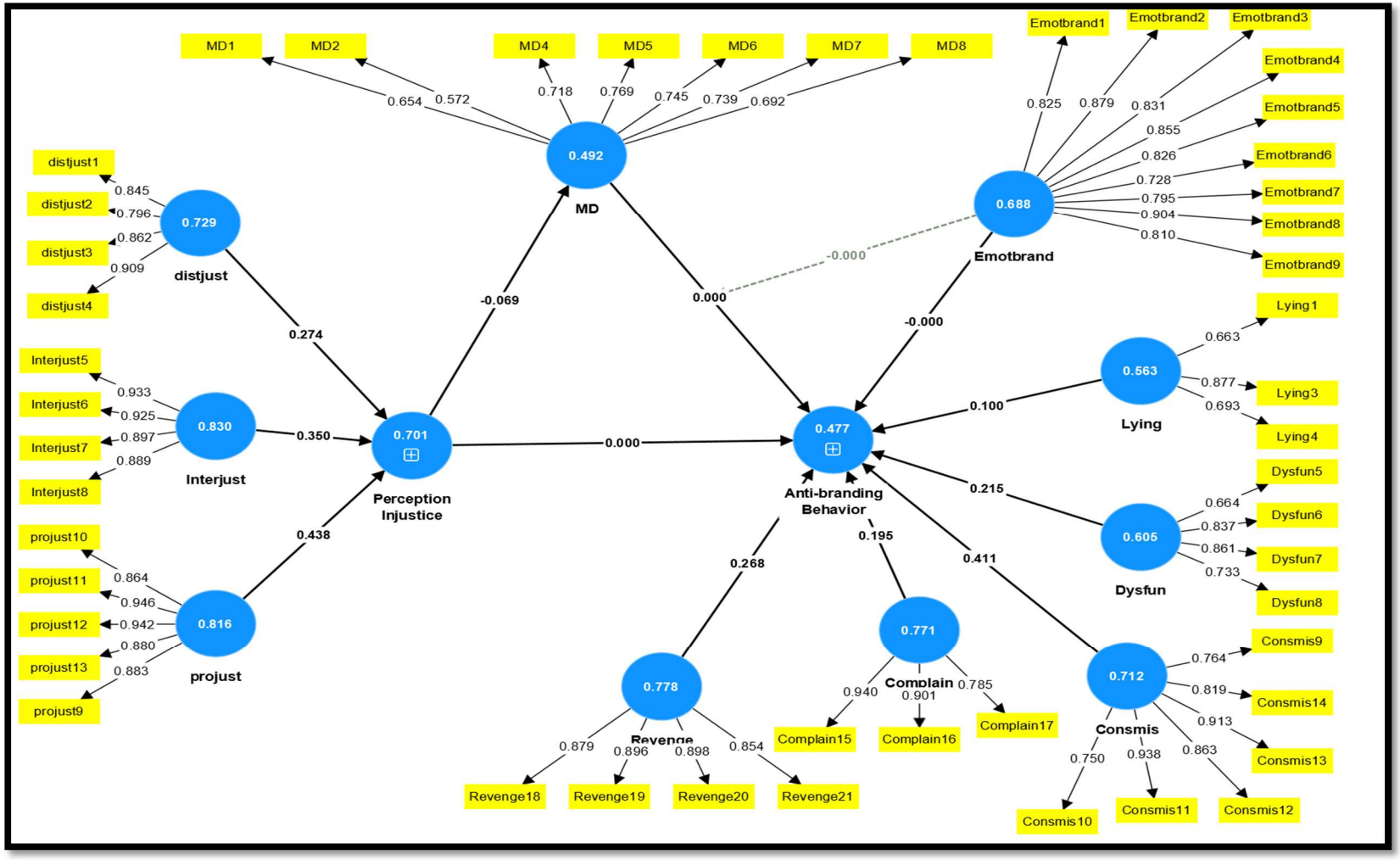

Figure A1. *Overarching Conceptual Model with MD3 and Lying2 removed. AVE's reported on construct*

Appendix B: Alternative Models

Alternative Model 1:

The assessment began with an evaluation of the measurement model in which all HOCs were removed (see B1). The first step of evaluating the measurement model involved evaluating the factor loadings for each indicator. Moral disengagement had several indicators that fell below the recommended criteria of .70 (Hair et al., 2020): MD1 has a loading of .67, MD2 has a loading of .59, and MD3 has a loading of .47, and MD4 has a loading of .69. However, they were retained in the analysis because each contributes to the content validity of the construct. Dysfun5 had a loading 0.587; therefore, it was removed. Lying3 also had a low loading of .65, and it was removed. B2 shows the results for the retained items.

Reliability and convergent validity were assessed next for the alternate model. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability. All of the constructs meet the criteria of .70 (Hair et al., 2020), effectively demonstrating reliability. Convergent validity was assessed using AVE values for each construct. As with the original model, MD had an AVE of .45, which is below the recommended criteria of .50. However, previous literature has demonstrated that it is close enough to the recommended threshold to be considered minimally acceptable within the context of this

research (Hair et al., 2020; Lam 2012). B3 shows the reliability and validity measures for the alternate model.

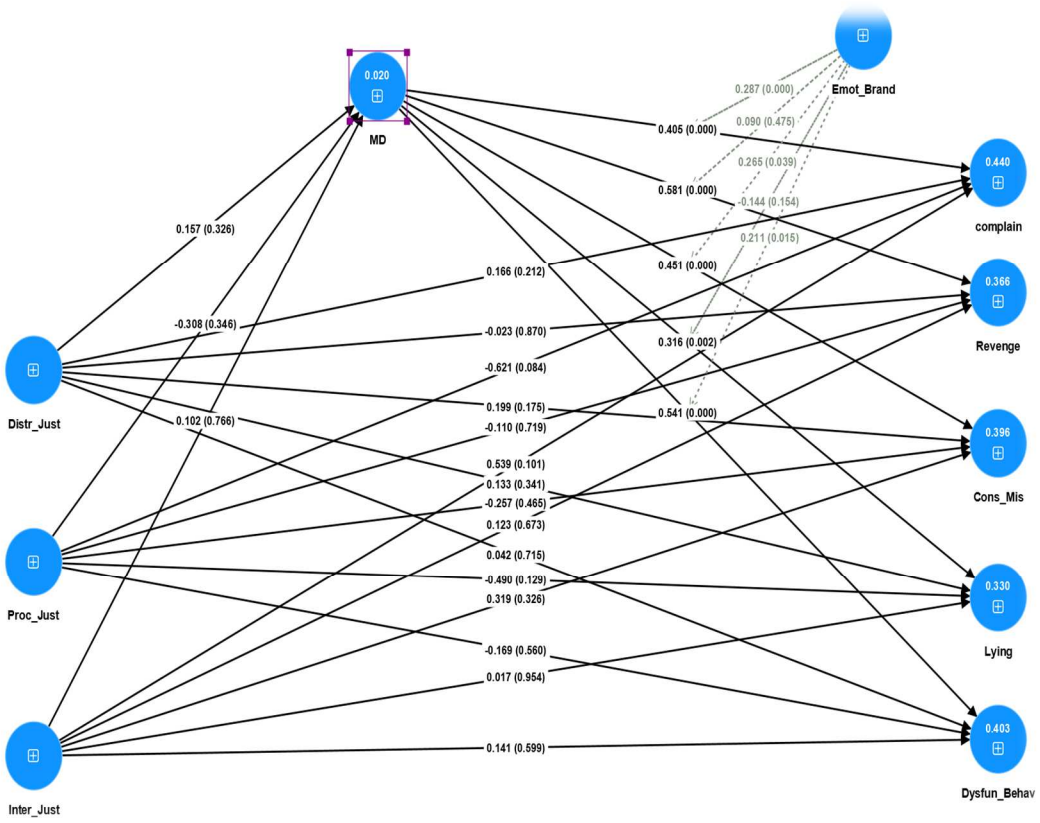

Figure A2: *Alternate Conceptual Model 1 with Path Coefficients, Significance Values, and Coefficients of Determination*

Table A2. *Item Loadings for IV, DV, Mediator and Moderator for Alternate Model 1*

Perception of Injustice	Loadings	Emotional Branding	Loadings
distjust1	0.86	Emotbrand1	0.81
distjust2	0.80	Emotbrand2	0.87
distjust3	0.86	Emotbrand3	0.83
distjust4	0.90	Emotbrand4	0.86
interjust5	0.93	Emotbrand5	0.85
interjust6	0.92	Emotbrand6	0.74
interjust7	0.91	Emotbrand7	0.80
interjust8	0.89	Emotbrand8	0.90
projust9	0.87	Emotbrand9	0.82
projust10	0.89		
projust11	0.95		
projust12	0.94		
projust13	0.87		
Antibranding	**Loadings**	**Moral Disengagement**	**Loadings**
Lying1	0.89	MD1	0.68
Lying2	0.86	MD2	0.59
Lying4	0.75	MD3	0.48
Dysfun6	0.85	MD4	0.69
Dysfun7	0.85	MD5	0.75
Dysfun8	0.80	MD6	0.73
Consmis9	0.77	MD7	0.72
Consmis10	0.73	MD8	0.70
Consmis11	0.94		
Consmis12	0.86		
Consmis13	0.92		
Consmis14	0.82		
Complain15	0.93		
Complain16	0.88		
Complain17	0.81		
Revenge18	0.85		
Revenge19	0.92		
Revenge20	0.87		
Revenge21	0.89		

Table A3. *Construct Reliability and Validity Measures of Measurement Model for Alternate Model 1*

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Cons_Mis	0.917	0.925	0.713
Distr_Just	0.876	0.885	0.729
Dysfun_Behav	0.781	0.781	0.696
Emot_Brand	0.943	0.956	0.689
Inter_Just	0.932	0.936	0.830
Lying	0.783	0.803	0.699
MD	0.823	0.840	0.450
Proc_Just	0.943	0.963	0.815
Revenge	0.905	0.915	0.777
complain	0.848	0.854	0.769

The analysis continued with an assessment of discriminant validity using the HTMT matrix. When the path model includes constructs that are conceptually similar, Henseler et al. (2015) suggest a threshold value of .90. All HTMT values were lower than the threshold of .90 except for the value for Proc_Just and Inter_Just, which has an HTMT value of 1.010. This suggests a lack of discriminant validity. In addition to examining the HTMT ratios, I tested whether the values are significantly different from the threshold value. Specifically, I assume a 0.85 threshold for all pairs of constructs except for Proc_Just and Inter_Just, for which I assume a higher threshold (0.90) because of their conceptual similarity. This required computing bootstrap confidence intervals obtained by running the bootstrapping option in PLS-SEM. I selected 10,000 subsamples and a one-tailed test at a 0.05 significance level. This test further demonstrates a lack of discriminant validity of the constructs. As can be seen in B4, several confidence intervals include the corresponding threshold value of .85 for conceptually distinct constructs and .90 for Procedural Justice and Interactional Justice, clearly demonstrating the lack of discriminant validity for the alternate structural model.

Table A4. *HTMT Confidence Intervals for Alternate Model 1*

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	5.0%	95.0%
Dysfunctional Behavior <-> Consumer Misbehavior	0.831	0.828	0.706	0.943
Interactional Justice <-> Distributive Justice	0.775	0.776	0.668	0.871
Revenge <-> Consumer Misbehavior	0.710	0.694	0.507	0.854
Revenge <-> Dysfunctional Behavior	0.683	0.671	0.428	0.861
Complain <-> Consumer Misbehavior	0.791	0.790	0.656	0.906
Complain <-> Dysfunctional Behavior	0.823	0.817	0.628	0.980
Procedural Justice <-> Interactional Justice	1.010	1.011	0.995	1.028

The second step of PLS-SEM includes a structural model assessment. First, collinearity was assessed using VIF statistics for all predictor constructs in the structural model. The predictor constructs include: *distributive justice*, *procedural justice*, *interactional justice* as predictors of moral disengagement as well as all anti-branding constructs (complain, consumer misbehavior, dysfunctional behavior, lying, and revenge). In addition, I looked at *moral disengagement*, *emotional branding*, and the *interaction* of emotional branding and moral disengagement as predictors of all anti-branding constructs. As shown on B5, several VIF values were above the threshold of 3, indicating an issue of common method bias (Hair et al., 2020).

Table A5. *VIFs for Predictor Constructs in Alternate Model 1*

	Moral Disengagement	Complain	Consumer Misbehavior	Dysfunctional Behavior	Lying	Revenge
Distributive Justice	2.323	2.383	2.383	2.383	2.383	2.383
Procedural Justice	11.453	11.871	11.871	11.871	11.871	11.871
Interactional Justice	9.811	10.162	10.162	10.162	10.162	10.162
Moral Disengagement		1.040	1.040	1.040	1.040	1.040
Emotional Branding		1.110	1.110	1.110	1.110	1.110
Emotional Branding x MD		1.037	1.037	1.037	1.037	1.037

Second, the significance and relevance of the structural model relationships were examined for the alternate model. Bootstrapping was performed with a 90% confidence level and two-tailed test using 10,000 subsamples. While most structural model relationships were not significant, a few relationships did have a p-value that fell below .10. These relationships are depicted below on B6.

Table A6. *Significance levels, Beta Coefficients, and T Statistics for Significant Direct Effects Between the IV, DV, Mediator and Moderator of Alternate Model 1*

Path	P-Value	Beta Coefficient	T Value
Emotional Branding > Complain	0.008	0.246	2.647
Moral Disengagement > Consumer Misbehavior	0.000	0.451	6.039
Moral Disengagement > Dysfunctional Behavior	0.000	0.541	7.637
Moral Disengagement > Lying	0.002	0.316	3.141
Moral Disengagement > Revenge	0.000	0.581	6.767
Moral Disengagement > Complain	0.000	0.405	6.365
Procedural Justice > Complain	0.084	0.621	1.729
EB x MD > Complain	0.039	0.265	2.063
EB x MD > Consume Misbehavior	0.015	0.211	2.445
EB x MD > Dysfunctional Behavior	0.000	0.287	3.850

I also tested the indirect effects using 10,000 bootstrap samples estimated with a 90% confidence interval following the guidelines discussed by Hair et al. (2020). Distributive justice and interactional justice have all positive relationships with their outcome variables (lying, complain, consumer misbehavior, revenge, and dysfunctional behavior) through moral disengagement, but are not statistically significant (p>.10) All the indirect effects of procedural justice to anti-branding outcomes through moral disengagement were negative and statistically insignificant (p>10) (see B7).

In the alternative model, I also tested several moderating relationships between emotional branding and each of the five anti-branding outcomes (complain, lying, consumer misbehavior, revenge, and dysfunctional behavior). The interactive effect of emotional branding and moral disengagement on consumer misbehavior was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = .27$, $t = 2.06$, $p < .05$); the interactive effect on dysfunctional behavior was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = .21$, $t = 2.45$, $p < .05$); and the interactive effect on complaining was positive and highly significant ($\beta = .29$, $t = 3.85$, $p < .00$). However, the interactive effects between emotional branding and moral

disengagement and lying (β = -.14, t = 1.43, p > .10) and revenge (β = .09, t = .71, p > .10) were not statistically significant.

Table A7. *Significance levels, Beta Coefficients, and T Statistics for Significant Indirect Effects Between IV, DV, Mediator and Moderator in Alternate Model 1*

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Distr_Just -> MD -> Lying	0.050	0.053	0.055	0.899	0.369
Distr_Just -> MD -> complain	0.063	0.068	0.068	0.935	0.350
Inter_Just -> MD -> complain	0.041	0.048	0.140	0.295	0.768
Proc_Just -> MD -> Cons_Mis	-0.139	-0.152	0.151	0.922	0.357
Distr_Just -> MD -> Dysfun_Behav	0.085	0.090	0.089	0.951	0.342
Inter_Just -> MD -> Lying	0.032	0.047	0.115	0.280	0.779
Proc_Just -> MD -> Lying	-0.098	-0.112	0.119	0.823	0.411
Proc_Just -> MD -> Revenge	-0.179	-0.197	0.196	0.913	0.361
Distr_Just -> MD -> Cons_Mis	0.071	0.074	0.074	0.955	0.339
Inter_Just -> MD -> Cons_Mis	0.046	0.054	0.152	0.302	0.763
Inter_Just -> MD -> Dysfun_Behav	0.055	0.067	0.187	0.295	0.768
Proc_Just -> MD -> Dysfun_Behav	-0.167	-0.185	0.183	0.914	0.361
Distr_Just -> MD -> Revenge	0.091	0.096	0.094	0.964	0.335
Inter_Just -> MD -> Revenge	0.059	0.071	0.199	0.297	0.766
Proc_Just -> MD -> complain	-0.125	-0.138	0.136	0.916	0.360

I then examined the R^2 values of the endogenous latent variables for the alternate model. The R^2 values were as follows: moral disengagement (.02), complain (.44), revenge (.37), consumer misbehavior (.40), lying (.33) and consumer dysfunctional behavior (.40). The coefficients of determination indicate the alternative model accounts for 2% of the variance in moral disengagement, 44% of the variance in complaining, 37%

of the variance in revenge, 40% of the variance in consumer misbehavior, 33% of the variance in lying, and 40% of the variance in consumer dysfunctional behavior.

The effect sizes for all structural model relationships were examined as well using the guidelines established by Cohen (1992). Results indicate the relationship between distributive, procedural, and interactional justice and all outcome variables of anti-branding (complain, lying, revenge, consumer misbehavior, and dysfunctional behavior) were small and insignificant (f^2 = less than .15).

Additionally, all the interactive effects between MD and emotional branding on the anti-branding outcomes were statistically insignificant. The interactions on the outcome variables were as follows: consumer misbehavior (medium effect, f^2 = .15), dysfunctional behavior (small effect, f^2 = .09), lying (small effect, f^2 = .04), revenge (small effect, f^2 = .02), and complain (medium effect, f^2 = .19). However, a few direct relationships had significant effects: the effect between MD and consumer misbehavior (f^2 = .07), MD and dysfunctional behavior (f^2 = .01), MD and revenge (f^2 = .03), and MD and complain (f^2 = .04) were small, but statistically significant.

Next, I evaluated the structural model's out-of-sample predictive power using $PLS_{predict}$ based on the recommendations by Hair et al. (2020). The Q^2 statistic was used again to assess the model's out-of-sample predictive power. The anti-branding outcome variables had Q^2 values of -.053 for MD, .004 for consumer misbehavior, -.042 for dysfunctional behavior, .119 for lying, -.066 for revenge, and .069 for complain. Since 3 out of the 6 variables are below zero, we can assume the PLS path model does not perform better than even the most naïve benchmark (Hair et al., 2020). I also examined the PLS-RMSE for each indicator of the outcome variables in the alternative model to the

LM-RMSE for each indicator. All 27 indicators had smaller prediction errors than the LM. When considering the Q^2 statistics and PLS-RMSE's for each indicator altogether, it can be concluded that the model has high predictive power (Hair et al., 2020).

In comparing the results from the CCA between the first model and alternative model 1, it can be concluded that alternate model 1 lacks discriminant validity, has several issues with multicollinearity, has mixed results for significance and relevance for the structural paths, small effect sizes for most relationships in the model, and has weak out-of-sample predictive power. Therefore, I opted for the original model, which is more parsimonious and out-performs alternate model 1 on most tests in the CCA.

Alternative Model 2:

The second alternate model reflectively connected the perception of injustice dimensions to the HOC instead of formatively connecting them. Then, a CCA was performed following the two-step process laid out by Hair et al. (2020). The measurement model was assessed first, and as with the previous models, moral disengagement had several factor loadings that fell below the Hair et al.'s (2020) recommended cutoff of .70 including MD1 (.67), MD2 (.60), and MD3 (.47). However, these items were retained because they help address content validity. Also, by removing them, convergent validity is not improved. However, Dysfun5 (.67) was removed from the analysis, having not met the recommended cutoff.

B8 depicts the relationships for the second alternate model including the reflectively measured dimensions of perception of injustice.

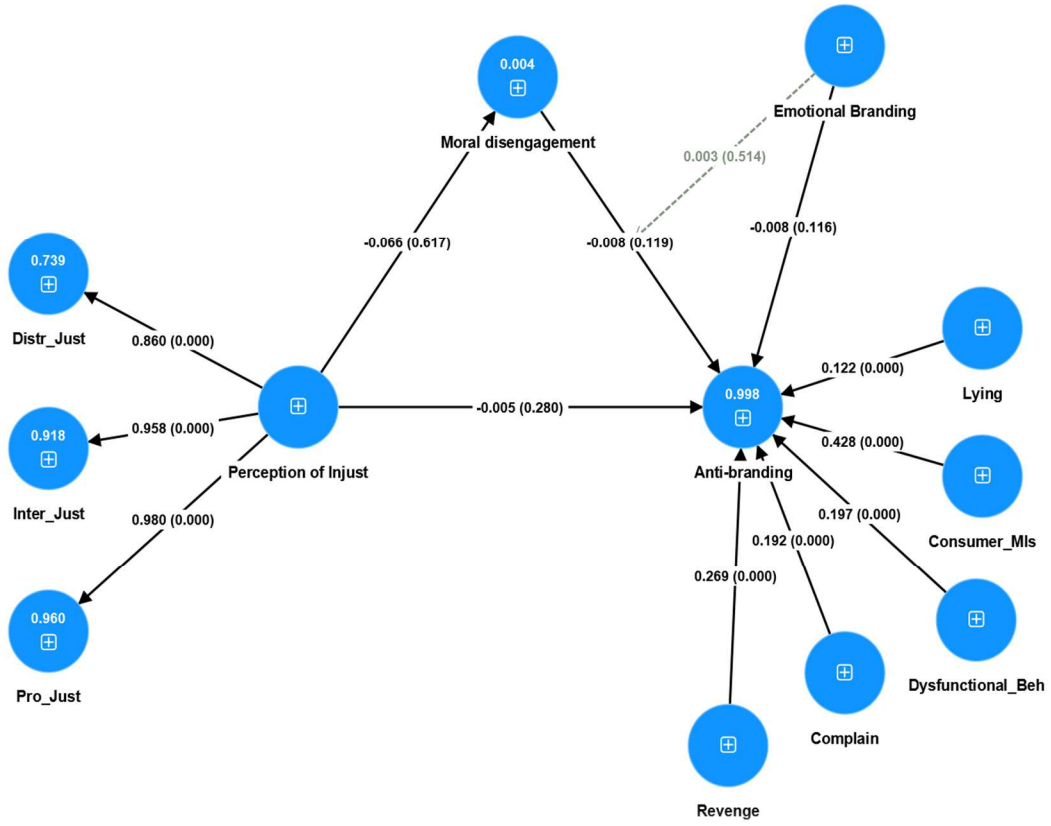

Figure A3. *Alternate Conceptual Model 2 with Path Coefficients, Significance Values, and Coefficients of Determination*

Next, the model was assessed for reliability and validity. Each variable's Cronbach's alpha and Composite reliability exceeded .70 (Hair et al., 2020); therefore, reliability was confirmed. The AVE's for each construct was inspected as well to test for convergent validity. Both anti-branding and moral disengagement had AVE's that fell below the recommended level of .50 with anti-branding at .46 and moral disengagement at .45. However, prior literature has demonstrated that it is close enough to the recommended threshold to be considered minimally acceptable within the context of this research (Hair et al., 2020; Lam 2012).

To test for discriminant validity, the HTMT matrix was examined. It highlighted collinearity issues between consumer misbehavior and anti-branding (.96); dysfunctional behavior and anti-branding (1.00); perception of injustice and distributive justice (.94); perception of injustice and interaction justice (1.00); procedural justice and interactional justice (1.01); and procedural justice and perception of justice (1.02). Additionally, I tested whether the values are significantly different from the threshold value. Specifically, I assumed a 0.85 threshold for all pairs of constructs except for Proc_Just and Inter_Just, for which we assume a higher threshold (0.90) because of their conceptual similarity. This required computing bootstrap confidence intervals obtained by running the bootstrapping option in PLS-SEM. I selected 10,000 subsamples and a one-tailed test at a 0.05 significance level. This test further demonstrates a lack of discriminant validity of the constructs. As can be seen in B9, several confidence intervals include the corresponding threshold value of .85 for conceptually distinct constructs and .90 for conceptually similar constructs. This demonstrated a lack of discriminant validity for the second alternate model.

The next step of the CCA is to assess the structural model relationships. Collinearity was evaluated using VIF statistics for all predictor constructs in the structural model. As shown on B10, the only VIF above the threshold of 3 was for consumer misbehavior and anti-branding, indicating no issue with multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2020).

Table A8. *HTMT Confidence Intervals for Alternate Measurement Model 2*

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	2.5%	97.5%
Complain <-> Anti-branding	0.875	0.876	0.750	0.972
Consumer Misbehavior <-> Anti-branding	0.958	0.963	0.920	1.013
Consumer Misbehavior <-> Complain	0.791	0.790	0.622	0.924
Dysfunctional Behavior <-> Anti-branding	0.997	0.995	0.909	1.085
Dysfunctional Behavior <-> Complain	0.800	0.794	0.537	0.992
Dysfunctional Behavior <-> Consumer Misbehavior	0.858	0.852	0.714	0.974
Interactional Justice <-> Distributive Justice	0.775	0.776	0.648	0.886
Perception of Injustice <-> Distributive Justice	0.944	0.945	0.896	0.990
Perception of Injustice <-> Interactional Justice	1.005	1.005	0.990	1.022
Procedural Justice <-> Distributive Justice	0.834	0.836	0.745	0.914
Procedural Justice <-> Interactional Justice	1.010	1.011	0.991	1.031
Procedural Justice <-> Perception of Injustice	1.023	1.023	1.010	1.039
Revebge <-> Anti-branding	0.894	0.885	0.779	0.959
Revenge <-> Consumer Misbehavior	0.710	0.694	0.476	0.873
Revenge <-> Dysfunctional Behavior	0.695	0.682	0.396	0.887

Table A9. *VIFs for Predictor Constructs in Alternate Measurement Model 2*

	Anti-branding	Moral Disengagement
Anti-branding		
Complain	2.594	
Lying	1.963	
Revenge	2.424	
Dysfunctional Behavior	2.622	
Consumer Misbehavior	3.268	
Perception of Injustice		1.000
Procedural Justice	1.836	
Emotional Branding	1.230	
Emotional Branding x MD	1.303	

The significance and relevance of the structural model relationships were examined next. Bootstrapping was performed with a 90% confidence level and two-tailed test using 10,000 subsamples. While most structural model relationships were not

significant, a few relationships did have a p-value that fell below .10. As can be seen on B11, none of the relationships were statistically significant.

Table A10. *Significance levels and Beta Coefficients, for Direct and Indirect Effects in Alternate Structural Model 2*

Path	P-Value	Beta Coefficient
Emotional Branding > Anti-branding	0.116	-0.008
Moral Disengagement > Anti-branding	0.119	-0.008
Perception of Injustice > Anti-branding	0.280	-0.005
Perception of Injustice > Moral Disengagement	0.617	-0.066
Emotional Branding X MD > Anti-branding	0.514	0.003

I then examined the R^2 values of the endogenous latent variables for the second alternate model. The R^2 values were as follows: moral disengagement (.004) and anti-branding (.998). The coefficients of determination indicate the alternative model accounts for 0.4% of the variance in moral disengagement, 99.8% of the variance in anti-branding behavior. The effect sizes for all structural model relationships were examined as well using the guidelines established by Cohen (1992). Results indicate the relationship between perception of injustice and distributive and interactional justice were small, but statistically significant (f^2 = less than .15). The relationship between perception of injustice and procedural justice was medium (greater than .15) and statistically significant. All other effect sizes for the relationships in the model were not statistically significant. Next, I evaluated the structural model's out-of-sample predictive power using $PLS_{predict}$ based on the recommendations by Hair et al. (2020). The Q^2 statistic was used

again to assess the model's out-of-sample predictive power. The Q^2 values for anti-branding was 0.998, for moral disengagement was -0.034. For the justice dimensions, distributive justice was 0.733, interactional justice was 0.917, and procedural justice was 0.959. Since moral disengagement was the only value below zero, I can assume the PLS path model does perform better than even the most naïve benchmark (Hair et al., 2020). I also examined the PLS-RMSE for each indicator of the outcome variables in the alternative model to the LM-RMSE for each indicator. Nine out of the 42 indicators had smaller prediction errors than the LM. When considering the Q^2 statistics and PLS-RMSE's for each indicator altogether, it can be concluded that the model has medium predictive power (Hair et al., 2020).

In comparing the results from the CCA between the first model and alternative model 2, it can be concluded that alternate model 2 lacks discriminant validity, has mixed results for significance and relevance for the structural paths, small effect sizes that are not significant for most relationships in the model, and has weak out-of-sample predictive power.

Alternative Model 3:

The third alternate model was composed of only first order constructs: perception of injustice, moral disengagement, anti-branding behavior, and emotional branding. This model is depicted in Figure B3. To complete the CCA, the measurement model was analyzed first, starting with evaluating indicators. Lying2 (0.217), Lying1 (0.287), Lying4 (0.317), Dysfun5 (0.512), Dysfun8 (0.630), Lying3 (0.657), Revenge21 (0.664), and Revenge19 (0.607). All other factor loadings were close enough to the recommended cutoff of .70 (Hair et al. 2020). Reliability was examined next by evaluating Chronbach's

alpha and Composite Reliability. All of the constructs have reliability values above the recommended cutoff of .70, demonstrating convergent reliability. Next, the AVE's for each construct were examined to confirm convergent validity. As with the previous models, moral disengagement's AVE was .45, which is slightly below the recommended cutoff of .50 according to Hair et al. (2018).

Discriminant validity was assessed using HTMT ratios. All HTMT ratios were lower than the threshold value of .90, as recommended by Henseler et al. (2015). This suggests sufficient discriminant validity. In addition to examining the HTMT ratios, I tested whether the values are significantly different from the threshold value, assuming a 0.85 threshold for all pairs of constructs because of their conceptual distinctiveness (Hair et al. (2020). This required computing bootstrap confidence intervals obtained by running the bootstrapping option in PLS-SEM. I selected 10,000 subsamples and a one-tailed test at a 0.05 significance level. This test further confirmed discriminant validity of the constructs since all the confidence intervals do not include the corresponding threshold value of .85.

The structural model was examined next in the CCA. The VIF statistics were evaluated for collinearity issues. None of the VIFs were above the threshold of 3, indicating no issue with multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2020). In addition, the structural paths in the model were examined for relevance and significance. The effect of Moral disengagement on anti-branding ($\beta = .52$, $t = 8.14$, $p < .05$) as well as the interactive effect of emotional branding and moral disengagement on anti-branding ($\beta = .27$, $t = 2.76$, $p < .05$) were positive and statistically significant. In contrast, emotional branding on anti-branding was positive but not statistically significant ($\beta = .16$, $t = 1.64$, $p > .05$);

the effect of perception of injustice on moral disengagement was negative, but not significant (β = -.06, t = 0.35, p > .05); and moral disengagement on anti-branding was positive but not significant (β = .13, t = 1.63, p > .05).

I then examined the R^2 values of the endogenous latent variables for the third alternate model. The R^2 values were as follows: moral disengagement (.003) and anti-branding (.474). The coefficients of determination indicate the alternative model accounts for 0.3% of the variance in moral disengagement, 47% of the variance in anti-branding. Using guidelines by Cohen (1992), the effect sizes for each relationship in the structural model was as follows: emotional branding on anti-branding was small, but not significant (f^2 = 0.037); however, moral disengagement on anti-branding was large and statistically significant (f^2 = 0.501). Perception of injustice on anti-branding and perception of injustice on moral disengagement had small effects that were not significant (f^2 = 0.042 and f^2 = 0.003, respectively). Finally, the interactive effect was medium, but not significant (f^2 = 0.192).

Next, I evaluated the structural model's out-of-sample predictive power using $PLS_{predict}$ based on the recommendations by Hair et al. (2020). The Q^2 statistic was used again to assess the model's out-of-sample predictive power. The Q^2 values for anti-branding was 0.006 and moral disengagement was -0.042. Since moral disengagement was below zero, it can be assumed the PLS path model performs adequately compared to the most naïve benchmark (Hair et al., 2020). I also examined the PLS-RMSE for each indicator of the outcome variables in the alternative model to the LM-RMSE for each indicator. All 22 indicators had smaller prediction errors than the LM. When considering

the Q^2 statistics and PLS-RMSE's for each indicator altogether, it can be concluded that the model has medium predictive power (Hair et al., 2020).

In comparing the results from the CCAs of the alternative models, it can be concluded that alternate model 3 performs the best in terms of discriminant validity, has slightly better results for significance and relevance for the structural paths, contains one large and significant effect and one small, significant effect. Additionally, it has stronger out-of-sample predictive power compared to the other alternate models.

Appendix C: Scales

Perceived Injustice 7 point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

- Smith et al. (1999) measured perceived *distributive justice* (4 items)
  - **distj1** - The outcome I received was fair
  - **distj2** - I got what I deserved
  - **distj3** - In resolving the problem, this company gave me what I needed
  - **distj4** - The outcome I received was right.
- Smith et al. (1999) measured perceived *interactional justice* (4 items)
  - **Intj5** - This company was appropriately concerned about my problem
  - **Intj6** - This company put the proper effort into resolving my problem
  - **Intj7 -** This company's communications with me were appropriate
  - **Intj8** - This company gave me the courtesy I was due
- del Rio-Lanza et al. (2009) measured perceived *procedural justice* (5 items)
  - **Proj9-**- I think my problem was resolved in the right way
  - **proj10** - I think this company has good policies and practices for dealing with problems
  - **proj11** - Despite the trouble caused by the problem, this company was able to respond adequately
  - **proj12** - The company proved flexible in solving the problem.
  - **proj13** - The company tried to solve the problem as quickly as possible.

Moral Disengagement 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree)

- Adapted from Moore et al.'s (2012) measured perceived *moral disengagement* (8 items)
  - **MD1 -** Playing dirty towards the organization that wronged you is sometimes necessary in order to achieve noble ends. (moral justification)
  - **MD3 -** When telling others about the problem you experienced, it's okay to gloss over certain facts to make your point (euphemistic labeling)
  - **MD5 –** Compared to the immoral things that other people do, telling others a 'horror' story about the incident I experienced isn't worth worrying about (advantageous comparison)
  - **MD7 -** People should not be blamed for misbehaving towards the organization that wronged them if an online community pressured them to do it. (displacement of responsibility)
  - **MD9 -** People can't be blamed for doing things that are technically wrong against the offending company, when all their friends are doing it too. (diffusion of responsibility)
  - **MD11** – Giving employees a hard time at the company that offended me is no big deal. (Distortion of consequences)

- **MD13** - The offending company doesn't deserve to be treated like a normal human being because it lacks feelings that can be hurt. (dehumanization)
- **MD15** - If a company gets mistreated, they have usually done something to bring it on themselves. (attribution of blame).

Emotional Branding: 7 point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

- Adapted from Wiedmann et al.'s (2018) measure of brand experience, Wiedmann et al.'s (2018) measure of multisensory marketing, Roy's (2010) measure of cause marketing (9 items)
  - Brand Experience
    - **Emot1** - This brand's storytelling in their advertisements makes a strong impression on my senses
    - **Emot2** - This brand's storytelling in their advertisements are interesting in a sensory way
    - **Emot3** - This brand's visuals and acoustics in their advertisements appeal to my senses.
  - Multisensory marketing
    - **Emot4** - This brand's cause-centered advertisements induce warm feelings and sentiments.
    - **Emot5** - This brand's cause-centered advertisements are emotional
    - **Emot6** - I have strong emotions for this brand's cause-centered advertisements.
  - Cause marketing
    - **Emot7** - With this brand's cause-related marketing, I engage in a lot of thinking
    - **Emot8** - This brand's storytelling makes me think
    - **Emot9** - This brand's visuals and acoustics stimulate my curiosity

Transgression Intensity 7 point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

- Tsarenko's and Jojib's (2012) measure of service failure severity (4 items)
  - **TrInt1** - How severe do you think the above-mentioned problem was?
  - **TrInt2** - What level of inconvenience did the above-mentioned problem cause you?
  - **TrInt3** - What level of stress did the above-mentioned problem cause you?
  - **TrInt4** - How unfair do you think the situation was?

Anti-Branding 7 point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

- Lying and Exaggeration measure adapted from Ward and Ostrom's (2006) *Injustice framing scale* (4 items)
  - **Lying1** - I have told others the firm betrayed my rights as a customer.
  - **Lying2** - I have told others how I felt disrespect or indignity as a result of the firm's actions.

    - **Lying3** - I have told others about having a personal goal of revenge against this company.
    - **Lying4** - I have told others a "horror" story about the incident with this company.
- Dysfunctional behavior measure adapted from Yi and Gong (2008)'s *customer dysfunctional behavior scale* (4 items)
    - **Dysf5** - I delayed payment to this supplier intentionally
    - **Dysf6** - I demanded this business discount the delivery price unreasonably
    - **Dysf7** - I did not follow this business' requests and directions.
    - **Dysf8 -** I acted rudely toward this business.
- Consumer misbehavior measure adapted from Fullerton and Punj (2004)
    - **Conmis9** - I verbally abused the business' employees.
    - **Conmis10** - I willfully disobeyed the rules of the organization.
    - **Conmis11** - I made a fraudulent return
    - **Conmis12** - I stole something from the business.
    - **Conmis13** - I made fraudulent assertions to avoid payment
    - **Conmis14** - I started rumors to sabotage the business' reputation.
- Vindictive complaining measure adapted from Grégoire and Fisher's (2008) measure of *vindictive complaining* (3 items)
    - **Compl15** - I complained to the company to give the employees a hard time.
    - **Compl16** - I complained to the company to be unpleasant with the employees of the company.
    - **Compl17** - I complained to the company to make someone from the organization pay for its poor service.
- Revenge measure adapted from McColl-Kennedy et al.'s (2009) measure of *revenge* (4 items)
    - **Rev18** - I took actions to get revenge on the company or its employee(s)
    - **Rev19** - I considered ways to seek revenge against the company or its employee(s)
    - **Rev20** - I took actions to attempt to sabotage the company or its employee(s)
    - **Rev21** - Thought about ways to sabotage the company or its employee(s)

Appendix D: IRB approval Letter

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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
December 13, 2022

Principal Investigator:	Mandy Kasprzyk		
IRB # and Title:	IRB PROTOCOL: 22-429 [1987204-1] A Study on your Experience with Branding Interactions after a Service Failure		
Status:	APPROVED	Review Type:	Exempt Review
Approval Date:	Dec 13, 2022	Submission Type:	New Project
Initial Approval:	Dec 13, 2022	Next Report Due:	December 12, 2023
Review Category:	45 CFR 46.104 (d)(2): Research that only includes interaction involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording): i. Information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of human subjects cannot be readily ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects		

This panel, operating under the authority of the DHHS Office for Human Research and Protection, assurance number FWA 00001602, and IRB #00000286 or #00011574, has reviewed the submitted materials for the following:

1. *Protection of the rights and the welfare of human subjects involved.*
2. *The methods used to secure and the appropriateness of informed consent.*
3. *The risk and potential benefits to the subject.*

The regulations require that the investigator not initiate any changes in the research without prior IRB approval, except where necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to the human subjects, and that **all problems involving risks and adverse events be reported to the IRB immediately!**

Subsequent supporting documents that have been approved will be stamped with an IRB approval and expiration date (if applicable) on every page. Copies of the supporting documents must be utilized with the current IRB approval stamp unless consent has been waived.

Notes:

The IRB Administrative Office grants approval for this project with the reminder that any additions or alterations to the survey/questionnaire must be submitted as an Amendment to IRBNet for further review and approval.

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