

Samy Belaid
Enseignant-chercheur à l'ESSEC de Tunis
4, rue Abou Zakaria El Hafsi
Montfelury
Tunis,
Tunisie
smbelaid@ yahoo.fr

Azza Temessek BEHI

Enseignante-chercheur à l'école des Sciences Humaines du Kef

The outcomes of brand attachment

**An empirical investigation of the role of attachment on building brand consumer's
relationships for utilitarian products**

Abstract

The adoption of attachment construct in marketing literature is relatively recent. Few studies developed in this field attempted to conceptualise this construct. However, little attention has been addressed to modelise its relation with several outcomes and antecedents. In this paper we examine the role of attachment in consumer brand relationship and it's relation with constructs as trust, satisfaction, commitment and behavioral loyalty. The two studies conducted provide a model that explains the relationship between brand attachment and its outcomes. A set of theoretical and empirical implications are then discussed.

Résumé

L'adoption du construit d'attachement en marketing est relativement récente. Seulement quelques études ont tenté de conceptualiser ce construit. Néanmoins, peu d'études ont tenté de modéliser la relation qu'entretient le concept d'attachement avec ses antécédents et des conséquences. Dans le cadre de ce papier, nous avons examiné le rôle de l'attachement à la marque et sa relation avec les construits comme la confiance, la satisfaction, l'engagement et la fidélité à la marque. Les deux études que nous avons menées aboutissent à la modélisation de la relation entre l'attachement à la marque et ses résultats. Un ensemble d'implications empiriques et théoriques sont présentées.

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Introduction

The literature on brand marketing has generated a considerable amount of theoretical and empirical research that focused on various topics concerning brand extension, co-branding (Cegarra and Michel, 2001) or brand personality (Aaker, 1997; Ambroise and al. 2004). In recent publications it has been argued that the affective component of brand is an issue that required conceptual and empirical elaboration.

This fundamental question should receive more attention because it may help to understand the formation of emotional ties between consumers and their brands to explain the role of this particular tie in brand relationship and behavioral intentions. Brand attachment can be considered as an emerging construct that can be particularly salient to represent affective component of consumer-brand relationships. Researches in many disciplines investigated attachment in diverse contexts as interpersonal relationships (Maissoneuve, 1966, Bowlby, 1969) or in evaluating relationships between persons and material possessions (Ball and Tasaki, 1992).

The adoption of attachment construct in marketing literature is relatively recent (Fournier, 1998; Lacoueilhe, 2000; Cristau, 2001; Heilbrunn, 2001) two approaches in brand marketing have supported the relevance of attachment in brand level.

The first approach has provided evidence for symbolic benefits of brands by investigating brand associations and brand personality. As a personified entity, the brand contributes to an affect-laden evaluation by consumers and a strong feeling of affiliation. This brand perception can be described as attachment (Mc Queen and al.; 1993; Feldwick, 1996).

The second approach is based on marketing paradigm which focuses on determinants of long-term relationships and more particularly on defining the key construct of brand commitment. Two components of commitment have been identified, one is cognitive it includes perceived risk and switching costs and the affective one expressing emotional ties that refers to attachment.

Few studies on brand attachment have attempted to conceptualise and to develop a scale to measure this construct (Lacoeuilhe, 2000; Cristau, 2001; Heilbrunn, 2001; Thomson and al., 2005). However, little attention has been addressed to modelisation of brand attachment to investigate how it relates to several outcomes and antecedents (e.g., satisfaction, trust, commitment, loyalty).

In this paper we focus on the exam of a relationship model integrating brand attachment. We try to examine the role of attachment in consumer-brand relationship and showing the link between attachment construct and salient antecedents and consequences as trust, commitment, behavioral loyalty and satisfaction.

Moreover, we try to provide evidence for the relevance of attachment for utilitarian products such car battery.

We begin this study by a literature review of attachment construct by giving a relevant definition in brand context. We will show the relationship between the consumer strongly attached to the brand and his behavior and attitude to it. We will test a brand attachment relationship model. We subsequently discuss the results of the study to achieve the goals mentioned previously. We conclude by discussing from our findings, and we provide several directions for future research.

1 Attachment in consumer-brand relationships: Legitimacy and conceptualisation

Attachment has been investigated in several contexts such as interpersonal relationships (Bowlby, 1979, 1980) material possessions (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988; Belk, 1988), places (Rubinstein and Parmelee, 1992), experiences (Arnould and Price 1993), and more recently, person-brand relations (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995, Lacoëuilhe, 2000, Thomson and al., 2005).

Psychological studies on material possessions have provided a clear delineation of the attachment concept and set up a first platform for the emergence of brand attachment.

Material possessions attachment is considered as “a multi-faceted property of the relationship between an individual or group of individuals and a specific material object that has been psychologically appropriated, and singularized through person-object interaction” (Kleine and Baker, 2004, p.1) this definition shows that: (1) attachment requires a psychological appropriation that goes behind the physical possession of the material object; (2) material possession attachment is a kind of self –extension process, possessions express “who I am” “and who I was”; (3) attachment is formed for singular and irreplaceable possession, the object of attachment has personal meanings and a symbolic value that comes from personal history between self and possession; (4) there are degrees of attachment, a person can be strongly or weakly attached to possession; (5) attachment is multi-faceted, people are attached to possessions for various motivations; (6) attachment evokes deep emotional meanings of the possession; (7) attachment is dynamic, the degree of possession attachment evolves with the person self evolution and changes in symbolic meanings of the possession.

Several prerequisites of attachment for possessions are obvious in brand literature and particularly in brand relationships research. The studies of brand image have focused explicitly on functional and emotional associations of brand (Park and al; 1991; Park and Srinivasan, 1994).

Functional associations refer to utilitarian benefits of brand consumption with regard to intrinsic and extrinsic brand attributes (brand performance).

Emotional associations are the symbolic meanings of the brand that lead to a process of self extension. Brand is a symbolic entity that carries emotional, cultural and historical meanings in which the consumer extends himself. McCracken (1988) suggested that although some consumers engaging in “*consumption pathologies*” (e.g., defining one self in terms of material things only), normally “*the individual uses goods in an unproblematic manner to constitute crucial parts of the self and world*” (p. 88).

The conceptualisation of brand as “*collection of perceptions held in the mind of the consumer*” (Fournier 1998, p. 345), and the emphasis on brand personality in the field of brand research (Fournier, 1994, Aaker, 1997) give more legitimacy to investigate brand attachment (Lacoeuilhe, 2000; Thomson and al., 2005). Examining the brand relationship quality (Fournier, 1998), we find the first similarity between facets of brand relationships and psychological attachment. Consumers may develop a close relation with their brands that includes “passion”, “nostalgic connexions” (Fournier, 1994), “brand resonance” includes the dimensions of “attitudinal attachment” (love for the brand and a feeling that it is something special) and “sense of community” (affiliation with other people associated with the brand) (Keller, 2003). Conceptually, Brand attachment is characterized as similar to possession attachment when considering brand as source of emotions, self-identity (Belk, 1988; Heilbrunn, 1996) shared personal history and shared values (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2000). Brand attachment involves psychological appropriation of specific brands, self-extension, and a personal history between self and brand (Escalas 1996; Escalas and Bettman, 2000; Fournier 1998; Lacoeuilhe, 2000). Brand attachment can be considered as “*a psychological variable that refers to a long-lasting and inalterable (the separation is painful) affective reaction towards the brand, expressing psychological proximity with this one*” (Lacoeuilhe, 2000, p 66).

This conceptualisation suggest that, (1) brand attachment expresses the consumer's desire to maintain, through the brand consumption a nostalgic connexion; (2) self-brand connections lead to a strong brand connections. There are economic and psychic costs associated with buying and consuming the brand; (3) Consumer brand-bonds are strong when the brand enhances self-identity but also when it is based on psychological similarity (the brand shares the same cultural or personal values as the consumer); (4) As possession attachment, brand attachment involve psychological appropriation of specific brands, self-extension, a personal history between self and brand (Escalas 1996; Escalas and Bettman 2000; Fournier 1998; Lacoëuilhe, 2000); (5) As possession attachment, brand attachment involve psychological appropriation of specific brands, self-extension, a personal history between self and brand (Escalas 1996; Escalas and Bettman 2000; Fournier 1998; Lacoëuilhe, 2000) and (6) Brand attachment evolves with a person's life cycle.

2 Attachment and relational outcomes

Little empirical results has focused explicitly on the relationship between attachment and other relational constructs as brand trust, brand satisfaction, commitment and brand loyalty.

Examining the correlations between those variables provide a deeper insight into the role of brand attachment in consumer behavior.

Brand attachment and brand trust

The transcription of trust in brand context is obviously based on the theory of brand personality. This anthropomorphisation of brand implies that it possesses some characteristics that a person have and so, we can trust in a set of brands as we trust in some people (Aaker, 1991; Fournier, 1998; Chernatony and McDonald, 1998). Brand trust reflects that the relationship between a consumer and a brand could go beyond satisfaction (functional performance). This qualitative dimension of brand value has been studied by many authors as Blackston, (1995), Gurviez (1996), Heilbrunn (1995).

In brand domain, Gurviez (1998, P.81) defined trust as “*The consumer presumption that the brand, as a personified entity, is committed to have a predictable action, in accordance with his expectations, and to maintain this orientation in the length.*” This conceptualization pointed out two main components of brand trust of cognitive and affective nature. The cognitive component of trust refers to credibility. This dimension of trust is related to the perceived reliability of the information on the brand, brand performance and its aptitude to satisfy consumer’s need. The affective component of trust is integrity. It is the consumers’ evaluative judgment related to brand motivations toward him (Gurviez, 1998). In other words, the consumer wonder whether the brand, as a personified entity favor his best interests. In summary, brand credibility results from a rational and cognitive process based on the assessment of brand performance and reputation, whereas integrity is an affective and social trust outcome built on consumer perception of brand orientation, and intentions towards him.

Taking into account this former dimension of trust we can suppose a relationship with brand attachment.

Trust is not necessarily a perquisite to brand attachment but it plays a main role in enhancing this affective bond. Moreover, Brand attachment could reinforce brand trust. In fact, as in interpersonal relationships, passion and feelings of attachment lead to a high desire to rely on the partner and to belief that he will accomplish his promises. Being attached to a brand, the consumer can believe that the latter one does not intend to lie, to break promises or take advantage of its vulnerability.

H1: The higher the attachment with one brand the more the customer will trust that brand.

Brand attachment and satisfaction

Satisfaction is considered as a “central element in the marketing concept” (Ervelles and Young, 1992, p.104). Various definitions on satisfaction are given in the abundant literature. The conceptualisations have either emphasized an evaluation process (Fornell 1992; Hunt 1977; Oliver 1981) a response to an evaluation process (Halstead, Hartman, and Schmidt 1994; Oliver 1997,

1981; Tse and Wilton 1988), an overall evaluation (Fornell 1992) or a psychological state (Howard and Sheth 1969; Duffer et Moulins, 1989). Besides this definitional inconsistency, there is a disagreement on the affective or cognitive nature of satisfaction response, and the period of time of it occurs.

In General, satisfaction has been depicted as (1) affective, cognitive and /or conative response; (2) based on an evaluation of product-standards (expectancy disconfirmation paradigm), product consumption experience and or product attributes; (3) occur before or after choice, after consumption (transactional satisfaction) or after extended experience (relational satisfaction).

The link between satisfaction and attachment has not been explicitly evoked in the literature. The affective dimension of satisfaction can suggest a possible relation with brand attachment; however, this is not so obvious.

Brand attachment has been defined as an inalterable affective bond. This implies that the relation is mature and sustainable. In contrast, the affective dimension of satisfaction could be described as a deep and brief emotion related to an experience or to a transaction with an ephemeral character (“contentment”, “surprise”). In this context, satisfaction could not be considered as an antecedent of brand attachment.

Brand attachment could strengthen the consumer satisfaction. When a consumer is attached to the brand, each experience of consumption is pleasurable and leads to positive emotions and favourable evaluation.

H2: The higher the attachment with one brand the more the customer will be satisfied with that brand.

Brand attachment as a key predicator of commitment and brand loyalty

In contrast with the different factors contributing to the explanation of brand loyalty formation (perceived risk, brand implication, perceived quality, satisfaction) attachment is depicted as consumer-brand relationship which is independent from instrumental and functional motives

(Amine, 1996). Then, it allows accounting for the intentionality of repetitive buying behavior. Attachment could predict in this context the attitudinal component of loyalty, brand commitment.

Loyalty and commitment should be regarded as related, but distinct phenomena. Loyalty is a behavioral and attitudinal construct, although, commitment is primarily an attitude. Investigations in commitment brand relationship have found that commitment has central role in predicting brand loyalty.

Loyalty can be conceptualised with regard to three approaches. In the early literature (1950's, and 1960's) conceptualisations and measurements of brand loyalty were based on the pattern of past purchases. (Brown, 1952; Lawrence and Trapey, 1975; McConnell, 1968; Tucker, 1964). Loyalty is defined as a consumer's repetitive and systematic purchasing behavior of a given brand. Given the great controversy about this brand loyalty vision several researchers have subscribe in a perspective that emphasis in consumer attitude. In the second approach, researches assume that loyalty should be interpreted as primarily an attitude toward a given brand (Day, 1969; Jacoby and chestnut, 1978; Mellens and al., 1996; Reichheld, 1996; Simon, 2000). This attitude shows the degree to which a consumer's disposition toward a brand is favourably inclined (Azjen and Fishbein, 1980). This approach have also been criticised on some aspects. A conciliation of the two previous approaches has generated the most agreed definition of brand loyalty among marketing researchers. This definition was provided by Jacoby (1971) and Jacoby and Kyner (1973) and suggested that brand loyalty is *"An effective buying behavior of a particular brand, repeated over time, and reinforced with a strong commitment to that brand"* (p.2) This composite approach captures the true complex nature of loyalty and incorporates a behavioral and an attitudinal component (Dick and Basu, 1994). The integration of commitment in the brand loyalty literature contributes to a better understanding of this phenomenon and spreads its definition beyond its behavioral aspect (Samuelson and Sandivik, 1997). Commitment has generally been conceptualized as an intention and a desire of continuity in the relationship.

In the brand context, commitment is defined as the consumer's strong willingness to maintain a lasting relationship with the brand (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Dholakia, 1997). More recently, Gurviez and Korchia (2002) defined this concept as follows: "*commitment from the consumer standpoint is defined as the implicit or explicit intention to maintain a durable relationship.*" (p. 2)

In organization theory and relationship-marketing fields, researchers underline the double nature of commitment: they distinguish a calculated commitment from an affective commitment (Allen and Meyer, 1984). Calculated commitment expresses the extent to which consumers "*maintain consistent purchasing behavior as long as benefits attached to the brand exceed the costs of switching to another brand*" (Amine, 1998 P. 309). It is necessary to underline the opportunistic and rational character of such a commitment. The consumer belief in the superiority of the brand (McQueen and al., 1993), the perception of the differences between brands, and notably a high perceived risk during the purchase (Amine, 1998; Lacoeyllhe, 2000) are the major motivations of such a dimension.

The other form of commitment, which is prevalent in the literature, is called *affective commitment*. It is based on the pleasure to maintain a relationship with a partner and on the development of an emotional attachment. From the consumers' standpoint, affective commitment refers to their devotion and their identification to the brand without any material consideration. Of these two views of brand commitment, affective commitment is the most effective factor in predicting the willingness to maintain the same purchasing behavior. At this time, researchers have recognized the double nature of brand commitment.

Given this clarification of loyalty and brand commitment concepts, the link with brand attachment is clear. The research on attitudinal loyalty approach extended in the early 1990's evoke that consumers may form relationships with a given set of brands (Fournier, 1998), "loyalty is a committed and affect-laden partnership between consumers and brands (Fournier, 1998, in Uncles and al; 2003, p.296).

With regard of this definition, loyalty necessities brand attachment to be formed. Considering attachment as a strong feeling that unites the consumer and the brand (independent from purchasing situations) it constitutes a barrier to brand switching, and a pledge of consumer loyalty. This issue shows that the affection developed by the consumer towards the brand, can be materialized as a fixation in the choice and the purchase of this brand (Sierra and McQuitty, 2005) Furthermore, brand attachment appears as a component of affective commitment (Lacoeuilhe, 2000; Amine, 1998; Aaker, 1991; Mc Queen, 1993). Furthermore, “true brand loyalty” comes from a strong commitment to the brand that leads to brand repetitive buying behavior. Several researches suggest that commitment to a brand enhances consumer’s perceptions and behavioral responses. Brand commitment lead to an emotional and cognitive bonding driving to a need to maintain brand purchasing consistency. Moreover, further researches have posited that higher degree of commitment lead to more positive loyalty behavior (Amine, 1998; Terrasse, 2003).

H3: The higher the attachment with one brand the more the customer will be committed with that brand.

H4: a higher attachment with one brand lead to a higher behavioral loyalty with that brand

H5: The higher the commitment with one brand the more the customer will be loyal with that brand.

In order to take into account the all the relational chain, it is required to present the interactions between loyalty, satisfaction and trust.

The link between satisfaction and loyalty has been investigated in a large marketing literature. Despite the recognition of the non –linearity of this interaction (Olivia and al., 1992, Duffer and Moulins, 1989), several research have found that a high consumer satisfaction lead to a repetitive buying behavior (Mc Dougall and Levesque, 2000, Gotlieb and al., 1994; Lassar and al., 2000; Ostrowski and al., 1993; Duffer and Moulins, 1989).

H6: The higher the satisfaction with one brand the more the customer will be loyal to that brand.

The interaction trust-loyalty has also received a significant attention among researchers. Both credibility and integrity components of brand trust seem to be predictors of brand loyalty (Ganasan, 1994; Hennig-Thureau and Klee, 1997; Garbino and Johnson, 1999, Cristau, 2003; Bansal, Irving and Taylor, 2004; Sere De Lanauzh., 2006),

H7: The higher the feeling of trust in a brand the more the customer is loyal to it.

In the upstream of the relational chain, we could check the link between satisfaction and trust.

The idea that satisfaction generates trust is supported by several authors (Ganesan, 1994; Selnes, 1998). But little studies have attempted to investigate whatever trust could generate satisfaction. On the one hand, Trust development is related to consumption experiences and prior interactions with the brand, in this sense, the satisfaction cumulated form the consumer's trust. On the other, when the consumer perceives that the brand has fulfilled its commercial promises and taken into account his welfare and interest, his overall evaluation of the brand performance will be positive. And so a trustworthy brand is a satisfactory brand.

H8: The higher the satisfaction in a brand the more the customer trusts in that brand

Methodology

The conceptual model and the corresponding hypothesis were investigated by studying Tunisian consumers. Two data collection procedures were employed in order to determine the relationships between brand attachment construct and its antecedents and consequences. The first study focused on the test of psychometrics properties of scales used in the model. The second data collection entailed to evaluate the hypothetical relation between the variables in the model.

Product investigated

In this study we selected the car battery because it reflects an industrial reality of competitiveness in the Tunisian market between domestic brands and international ones and there are intensive mass media advertising campaign concerning this kind of brands.

Hence Tunisian consumers show more familiarity and have a positive perception toward Tunisian cars battery. In spite of the unconventionality of this product in brand studies, we consider that it would be interesting to investigate the relationship which is established between consumers and this kind of product.

Study 1

Previously used scales for measuring brand trust (Gurviez, 1999), brand commitment (Amine, 1998), and brand attachment (Lacoeuilhe, 2000) were identified (see appendix 1) for which we assessed dimensionality and reliability. All scales were translated in Arabic language using the back translation method and items were measured on 5 point likert -type scales.

The unavailability of a scale to measure car's battery brand satisfaction necessitated developing an ad hoc, 10 items scale referring to calibrated satisfaction's expression (Bartikowski, Belaid and Chandon, 2005).

A quota sampling procedure based on the car type (tourism, trucks, taxi and pick-up) was conducted in Tunis and its suburbs. We validated 193 questionnaires that are administered on face to face method to people that have experience in buying battery for their cars.

Based on the eigen value greater than one rule to determine the scale structure, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and the test of sphericity of Bartlett to confirm that the data set are appropriate for factor analysis.

The table 1 shows that the K-M-O was up to 0.75, the test of sphericity of Bartlett were significant (0.000) and the alpha coefficients show the reliability of each scale.

The scale for brand trust was validated. The original scale contains 3 subscales. For this research, only one subscale composed of 6 items was adopted. The attachment construct was taken from Lacoeuilhe scale (2000), which was developed in French context and validated in Tunisian context. The original scale consisted of 5 items with high quality psychometrics properties ($\alpha = 0,89$).

For the final scale one item was eliminated because it was not adapted to the product. Amine, 1998 measure was used in assessing commitment to brand.

Table 1 scales structure and reliability

	Brand attachment	Brand trust	Brand satisfaction			Brand commitment
KMO	0.81	0.81	0.82			0.75
Explained variance %	68.03	55.51	39.71	12.99	10.24	63,34
Coefficient Alpha	0.84	0.83	0.78	0.79	0.58	0.8

Study 2

Following the first study a second study based on confirmatory factor analysis was performed.

A face to face questionnaire procedure was selected to collect data. The target population for the study was the car owners that are in charge to by their car batteries.

Data were collected via a quota sampling procedure. The car's type and geographic location were used to select a respondent. Questionnaires were administered on face to face method. We collected 416 usable responses for the analysis.

Analysis and results

Preliminary data analysis

To specify the mean score of attachment within the sample and to examine the differences in the mean values of the model's different constructs associated with the effect of brand attachment (low, medium and high degree of brand attachment) we conducted a One-Way ANOVA. We began by the Leven test to check the assumption that the variances of the three attachment groups are equal.

We noticed that for repurchase behavior, trust, perceived differences between brands, commitment and perceived risk, the test was significant, thus, the assumption of equal variances is violated so variances are significantly different. However, for brand sensitivity (significance = 0.25) and satisfaction (significance = 0.07) the Leven test are not significantly different.

The Fisher test was significant for the former cited constructs. Hence the different attachment groups differ significantly on repurchase behavior $F(2,413)=106.93$, $p=0.000$, satisfaction $F(2,413)=78.30$, $p=0.000$, brand trust $F(2,413)=60.64$, $p=0.000$, commitment $F(2,413)=234.588$, $p=0.000$, and perceived risk $F(2,413)=14.890$, $p=0.000$. We noticed that the higher brand attachment is, the higher the means of repurchase behavior, brand trust, satisfaction and commitment are. However for the perceived risk, the mean decrease for the high attachment level group.

The brand attachment mean reveals that for car battery respondents are inclined to be attached (mean= 2.8). This result confirms that even for a utilitarian product the consumer can develop an affective bond with the brand.

Statistical method

We used structural equation modelling to test the different relationships of the model (Lisrel 8.5). The stepwise procedure recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) and Jöreskog (1993) was used. A first step consisted in estimating the different measurement models, without imposing structural constraints. It allowed us to check if there is a lack of fit attributable only to the measurement. The second step included all the structural relationships presented in figure 2. This procedure helps to avoid the confusion in interpretation resulting from a single approach (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). After an iterative procedure in which standardized residuals and modification indices were examined, non-significativ relationships were eliminated (Roussel and al., 2002). The goodness of fit was found to be good. RMSEA, RMR, GFI and AGFI are satisfactory and allow the conclusion that the goodness-of-fit of the model to the data is globally good (Table 3).

Table 2 : The model fit

χ^2	DL	χ^2 /df	RMSEA	RMR	GFI	AGFI	CFI	ΣR^2
301.28 (P = 0.0)	107	2.81	0.066	0.043	0.93	0.88	0.95	1.6

A test of the hypotheses mentioned in the conceptual model (H1 to H6) was performed. Path coefficients and significance help us to test the causal relationships of our model (Table 4).

The validation of the hypothesis H1 leads to support the assumption according to which an attached consumer is trustworthy toward the considered brand. This shows the crucial importance of the affective ties formed with a brand to enhance the reliability of the brand in consumer mind. We observe a high correlation between brand attachment and brand trust ($\gamma = 0.77$ (t-value = 10.53 at the level of 5%).

Table 3: Results synthesis

Hypothesis	Relationships	Standardized path coefficients	t-test	Hypothesis testing
H1	Att→ Trust	0.77	10.53	Supported
H2	Att→ Sat	0.03	0.36	Not Supported
H3	Att →Comm	0.92	9.63	Supported
H4	Att→ Loyalty	0.01	0.05	Not supported
H5	Comm →Loyalty	0.71	5.10	Supported
H6	Sat→Loyalty	-0.21	-3.22	Not Supported
H7	Trust→ Loyalty	0.35	3.81	Supported
H8	Trust→Sat	0.74	6.82	Supported

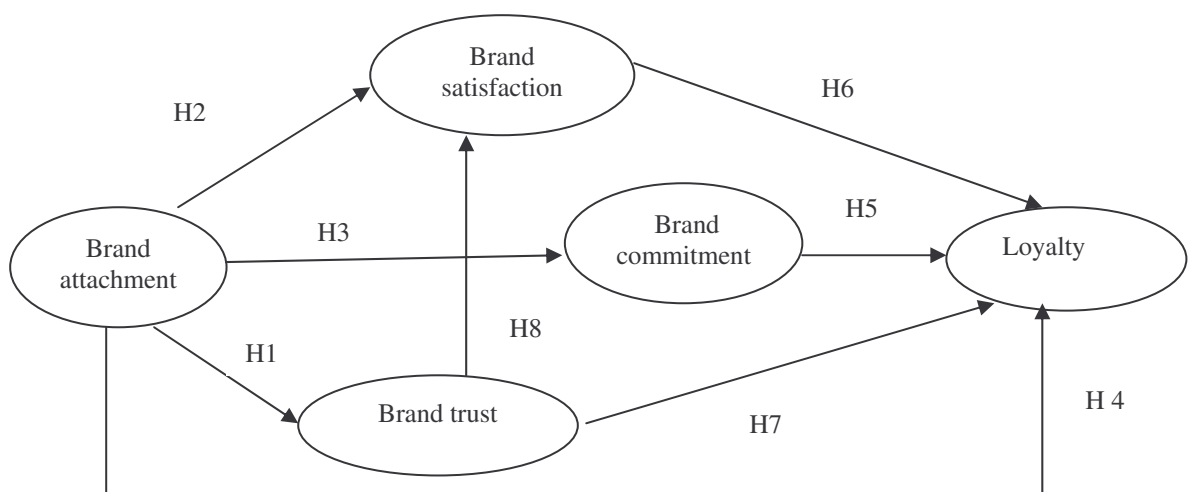
When the consumer develop emotional ties with a particular brand he feels less vulnerable toward that brand, believes more in its ability to satisfy his needs and consider that the brand pay attention of his expectations.

Brand attachment appear as a key predictor of brand commitment ($\gamma = .92$, $t\text{-value} = 9.63$ at the level of 5%). The strong correlation between these two constructs has been supported in other studies in interpersonal theory, organizational theory and brand literature. Attachment is considered as an affective component of commitment which reinforces the addiction of the consumer to the brand and so, reduces the probability of switching to another brand.

However, we failed to confirm the two hypothesized links: brand attachment-satisfaction and brand attachment-loyalty. The test of the relationships between the remaining constructs of the structural model shows that trustworthy relationships with the brand could be a good predictor of brand satisfaction ($\gamma = .74$, $t\text{-value} = 6.82$ at the level of 5%) and repetitive purchasing behavior ($\gamma = 0.35$, $t\text{-value} = 3.81$ at the level of 5%);

As predicted by the literature review, brand commitment affects the repetitive buying behavior of the brand. The strength correlation between commitment and behavioral loyalty ($\beta = .71$, $t\text{-value} = 5.10$ at the level of 5%) corroborate the pertinence of the composite approach of loyalty. In contrast with the majority of literature results, we find a low and negative correlation between brand satisfaction and loyalty.

Figure 1 the structural model



Discussion

Brand attachment is a phenomenon that is currently receiving a great deal of interest. In this study we proposed a model that describes the relationships between brand attachment and some key relational constructs. We also investigated whether affective bonds could be formed toward a pure functional product category.

First of all, the results show that brand attachment means are high for a large proportion car's battery buyers. In the case of high brand attachment, consumers exhibit more desire to rely on this brand, and to maintain the relationship over a repetitive buying behavior. In high brand attachment group, the perception of differences between brands is more obvious; consumer have the belief that his brand is superior to other existent brands in the given product category. These results indicate that attachment formation seems to be independent of product category and not necessary attributed to objects or brands laden with affective associations.

The findings of the structural model confirm the majority of hypothesised relationships. Brand attachment is considered as an important input to brand commitment and explain 85% of its variance. Such a result demonstrates the explanatory power of affective factors. A consumer who shows affective predispositions with a brand becomes unconsciously fixed on the choice of this brand. In other words, this strong and durable affective relationship with the brand drives the consumer to a feeling of inseparability towards this brand (Cristau, 2001; Lacoëuilhe, 2000).

Brand attachment contributes also to more trusted consumers toward the brand. Brand attachment appears as a main antecedent to brand trust since it explain 60% of its variance. The affection formed with the brand reinforces the feeling of security and the need to believe that the brand as a partner is interested in the consumer's welfare. However, we failed to support the link between brand attachment and satisfaction. This finding is built on the satisfaction measure used in this investigation. The developed scale of battery's car satisfaction is basically cognitive using items that refer to the brand performance, price, reliability or guarantee.

This can explain the absence of correlation between the two constructs. Moreover, brand attachment doesn't affect directly behavioral loyalty. However, as attachment is related to brand commitment, it indirectly affects loyalty.

Our study indicates that brand commitment leads to a repetitive buying behavior of this brand. This finding is supported by several researchers (Jacoby and al., 1971; de Ryter and al, 1998; Amine, 1998). Brand trust is also an antecedent of behavioral loyalty. Besides the well known correlation between trust and commitment we can assert that brand trust affect directly the consumer repetitive behavior. Brand trust it's so a belief concerning the brand's intentions but also a behavior that lead to rebury the reliable brand.

The negative and low correlation between loyalty and satisfaction implies that consumer satisfaction do not seem to matter in making a trusted and committed consumer a loyal consumer.

Theoretical implications

Certain caveats should be kept in mind when interpreting results reported in this paper. First, the attachment construct represent very complex phenomena. Future studies will have to determine a reliable conceptualisation and measurement. Second, important questions remains concerning the formation of brand attachment across product categories. This research emphasised only on a particular product (utilitarian) and doesn't refer to emotional one or to compare the differences between the two types. Future research could be duplicated for other types and categories of product. Third, in this paper only the attachment outcomes are investigated, future research should focus on the antecedents of brand attachment such as nostalgia, brand familiarity and brand personality. This perspective could be a good way to develop a security-based strategy that lead consumer's to deal actively and constructively with brand. Forth, to improve the brand attachment-satisfaction link, additional research is needed to include in the model the emotional dimension of brand satisfaction.

Fifth, It should be noted that all scales, except the satisfaction scale, were conceptualised from French studies and measures were adapted in Arabic from French literature. Furthermore, the major purpose of this article was not to develop psychometrically rigorous cross-cultural scales but to test the proposed hypotheses. Hence, cross cultural research could also contribute to understanding cultural differences in the developmental brand attachment. Finally all constructs are measured at one point in time, thus essentially from a static perspective. It may be judicious to study behavioral loyalty over time in order to capture its dynamic nature.

Managerial implications

A notable managerial implications of this study is the importance of identifying relevant outcomes of brand attachment in a given market context and for a specific product. It provides marketing managers with a useful result for understanding consumer's relationships with brand. It provides useful information for producer and marketers to know that improving emotional ties contribute to build proximity with customer and influencing its commitment and loyalty toward a brand. The brand attachment could be a useful segmenting variable to formulate appropriate advertising strategy to enhance and/or to maintain a relationship between consumers and brands. Hence different strategies could be designed for segments identified according to their degree of attachment. The conceptualisation of attachment -related constructs is a preliminary step to understand the implications of brand attachment development on related constructs such as brand trust, commitment, satisfaction and loyalty.

In order to protect their customer portfolio, firms should focus on creating and keeping affective relationships between consumers and their brands even for utilitarian products. Managers should pay attention on affective brand consumers bonds by promoting a brand image corresponding and close to consumer's values in order to enhance brand commitment and loyalty.

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