

The Dark Side of Consumer–Brand Relationship: Do Ideal Self-Congruence, Brand Attachment and Personality Factors Affect Negative Consumer Behaviors?

Elham Ebrahimi^{1*}, Faraz Sadeghvaziri², Soroush Shazai Abyaneh²

1. Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, Tehran, Iran

2. Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran

(Received: August 11, 2019; Revised: December 2, 2019; Accepted: December 11, 2019)

Abstract

The present study aims to investigate the effect of ideal self-congruence, brand attachment and some personality factors on the negative behaviors of consumers such as compulsive buying, anti-brand actions, and trash talking. The research population was comprised of customers of four IT service brands including Samsung, HP, Sony, and Apple in Iran. Structural equation modeling approach and PLS software were used to test the research hypotheses. The results indicated that ideal self-congruence had a significant positive effect on compulsive buying and trash talking. In addition, ideal self-congruence influenced the negative behaviors of consumers toward the brand through brand attachment. Neuroticism had a significant positive effect on compulsive buying and trash talking. However, conscientiousness only influenced trash talking and did not have any significant effect on compulsive buying. The results of this study show the negative behaviors toward brand. The recognition of negative aspects of the relationship between consumers and brands will help practitioners such as marketing managers with appropriate policy making of brand impression based on the characteristics of the target population. This paper has three key contributions. Since brand is one of the most important social factors, the evaluation of its effects on consumers has been considered by many researchers in recent years. However, studying the effects of branding on the negative behaviors of consumers is an under-researched issue. Studying the effect of neuroticism and conscientiousness as two personality characteristics on the negative behaviors toward brands is another neglected area. The third contribution is evaluating the research model in an Eastern culture with specific characteristics and preferences of consumers which make their behaviors different from customers of other cultures such as European or American consumers.

Keywords

Ideal self-congruence, Brand attachment, Compulsive buying, Trash talking, Personality.

* Corresponding Author, Email: e.ebrahimi@ihcs.ac.ir

Introduction

Like other organizational capitals, brand increases the value of organization and its products. Therefore, brand promotion has become an organizational strategy in many cases. People also search for the brands to achieve quality or specific features which make the brand special. A large number of studies in marketing, have focused on the effects of self-congruence on the favorable behaviors of consumers such as consumers satisfaction, brand attachment, desirable attitudes, word-of-mouth marketing, and consumer loyalty (Ekinci & Riley, 2003; Kressmann et al., 2006; Ekinci, Dawes, & Massey, 2008; Nam, Ekinci, & Whyatt, 2011; Wallace, Buil, & de Chernatony, 2017). A comprehensive review of the literature indicates that often positive behaviors of consumers are investigated as the consequences of self-congruence (Hosany & Martin, 2012). Few studies have investigated the negative behaviors of consumers toward brand and little attention has been paid to the impact of other characteristics such as personality traits on these behaviors. In addition, these studies have not limited their scope to the brands of a specific area such as IT brands (e.g., Japutra, Ekinci, & Simkin, 2018). On the other hand, the results of most studies indicate that self-congruence has a direct impact on the behavior of consumers (Ekinci et al., 2008; Nam, Lee, Youn, & Kwon, 2016; Roy & Rabbanee, 2015) but they fail to consider the indirect effect of self-congruence on the negative behaviors of consumers. Therefore, in order to fill this research gap, the present study investigates the relation between ideal self-congruence, brand attachment, compulsive buying, anti-brand actions, trash talking, and personality traits. In other words, the present study aims to highlight the dark side of ideal-congruence, brand attachment, and accordingly, their negative consequences. In addition, it evaluates these negative outcomes practically for IT brands. The reason for choosing IT brands is that the information technology has influenced all aspects of human life and has transformed the world into the information society. This phenomenon has developed in various economic, social, cultural and political dimensions, and brand attachment in this field is of great importance for consumers. Additionally, research on the negative aspects of consumer behaviors toward the brand is limited to

European or American countries (e.g., Johnson, Matear, & Thomson, 2010; Romani, Grappi, Zarantonello, & Bagozzi, 2015).

Considering the abovementioned issues, the present study has three main contributions.

First, unlike most studies, which have addressed the positive aspects of the consumer and brand relation (e.g. Zhang, & Bloemer, 2008; Aggarwal, 2004; Elbedweihy, Jayawardhena, Elsharnouby, & Elsharnouby, 2016), this study takes into account the negative behaviors of consumers such as compulsive buying, trash talking and anti-brand actions.

Second, this article investigates the effect of neuroticism (which refers to the ability to tolerate stressors) and conscientiousness (which refers to trustworthiness) on the negative behaviors of consumers towards the brand. In fact, few studies have investigated the relationship between personality factors and the negative behaviors of consumers (e.g. Otero-López & Villardefrancos, 2013). Therefore this is an under-researched issue.

Finally, the manuscript has focused on evaluating a brand model in an Eastern culture with specific characteristics and preferences. More specifically, the dark side of branding as a novel issue has been researched mainly in European countries or U.S. (e.g. Ridgway, Kukar-Kinney, & Monroe, 2008; Japutra, Ekinici, & Simkin, 2019; Hickman and Ward, 2007). Thus, examining the issue in another culture seems to be required.

Literature Review

Self-congruence

Recently, congruence and the marketing theories related to it have attracted a large number of researchers (Van Quaquebeke, Becker, Goretzki, & Barrot, 2019; Huber et al., 2018). Self-congruence is rooted in the interest of individuals to compare themselves with environmental subjects (Kressmann et al., 2006). In terms of consumer behavior, the terms “self-image congruence,” “self-congruence,” “self-congruity,” and “image congruence,” are used interchangeably. Sirgy (1982) defines self-congruence as the “equality of product image and individual self-concept” which involves two dimensions of real and ideal self. The real self means something or someone that the individual

thinks she “is at the moment” (perceived reality), while the ideal self means something or someone that the individual “likes to be” (Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011).

Individuals show empathy toward a set of objects and brands naturally and unconsciously, which means that the intended brand has some kind of inner resemblance to individuals (Kumar, 2013). Sometimes, the consumers buy products to approach their own ideals. Further, some products are selected because they are compatible with the real self of customer. Consumers match up their values and the products since there is a relationship between consumption activity and self-definition. Based on self-image congruence model, those products whose characteristics match with the consumer image are selected more. In these models, it is assumed that a cognitive adaptation is created between the characteristics of the product and the self-image of consumer. On the other hand, the self-image congruence means matching between the self-concept of consumer (ideal or real) and the image or characteristics of the brand (Kressmann et al., 2006).

According to Malär, Herzog, Krohmer, Hoyer, and Kähr (2018), brands which target the consumer’s ideal self-congruence may result in both positive and negative consumer reactions and emotions. Therefore, in this study, we targeted the negative side of the relationship between self-congruence and consumers’ reaction (as an under-researched issue) in terms of compulsive buying, trash talking and anti-brand actions, as shown in the following sections.

Brand Attachment

The concept of brand attachment is supported by attachment theory in psychology (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). Translating the concepts of attachment theory in psychology into marketing and brand field, we might assert that the brand attachment is a profound desire to maintain the security felt through brand. The security felt by brand actively prevents the consumer’s separation from the brand. In these circumstances, customers show behaviors such as re-purchasing of brand and refusal to replace one brand with others, which have roots in their emotions. Based on the attachment theory, emotional attachment to a brand is defined as an emotional bond between the customer and the attributes of brand (Read, Robertson, & McQuilken,

2011). Self-congruence could have a positive relationship with brand attachment. Amjad, Amjad, Jamil, and Yousaf (2018) revealed that brand attachment could be increased by enhancing self-congruence as a facilitator variable. In other words, consumers who buy brands highly congruent with their ideal or real self tend to have an emotional relation with the brand. Therefore, when the image of brand is congruent with the self-image of consumer, it is likely to create emotional attachment and brand loyalty (Malär et al., 2011). Additionally, self-image congruence could be achieved in both ideal and real self-dimensions, though the present study focused only on ideal self. Therefore, the following research hypothesis is suggested:

H₁: Ideal self-congruence has a significant positive effect on brand attachment.

Compulsive Buying

Today, knowledge acquisition in marketing is useful for predicting and controlling the human behaviors, not only based on the approaches of behavioral psychologists, but also for the sake of identifying the factors affecting consumers' behaviors so that companies can compete in the competitive market. Compulsive buying is regarded as a kind of purchasing behavior discussed in marketing and consumer behavior discourse which refers to the dark side of consumer behaviors. Compulsive buying is a recurring and uncontrollable motivation for buying, and is primarily associated with negative events and feelings with distressing financial, social, and psychological consequences (Roberts, Manolis & Pullig, 2014). In fact, compulsive buying is repeated chronic purchases which affect not only the individual but the family and the community, leading to excessive indulgence, severe debt, and bankruptcy. There are many labels or terms for this behavior. Compulsive buying, compulsive hoarding, and obsessive-compulsive disorder are the terms applied to explain excessive and insane buying (Frost, Steketee, & Williams, 2002). It may seem an advantage of a brand, but it is not often beneficial for all members of the community. Even in a recent research, compulsive buying and brand addiction are considered as comorbid (Mrad & Cui, 2019). Compulsive buying can lead to higher levels of debt and economic crisis and may threaten the well-being of

consumers (Garðarsdóttir & Dittmar, 2012). Compulsive consumers buy products to achieve their ideal self, improve their social image, and increase their self-esteem through expressing their ideal self (Kukar-Kinney, Ridgway, & Monroe, 2012; Jupatra, 2018). Therefore, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H₂: Ideal self-congruence has a significant positive effect on compulsive buying.

Considering the definition of brand attachment and compulsive buying, brand attachment can be expected to influence compulsive buying. Individuals with emotional attachment to a brand will use their personal resources (money or time) to buy that brand (Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010, Horváth & Birgelen, 2015). Kessous, Roux, and Chandon (2015) argue that the brand attachment and its nostalgic status increase the tendency to collect the brand. Consumers go back to the past events where they were comforted by brand buying (Kyrios, Frost, & Steketee, 2004).

According to Sacramento and Flight (2014), few studies have paid attention on the negative consequences of brand attachment. These authors have shown the possible relationship between brand attachment and compulsive buying behavior as a negative consumer reaction. Therefore, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H₃: Brand attachment has a significant positive effect on compulsive buying.

Trash Talking

Aggressive acts occur in many forms, among which physical and verbal aggression could be highlighted. Physical aggression refers to some activities such as beating, pushing, jostling, throwing objects, and threatening. Trash talking includes verbal abuse by an aggressive person using words to insult, humiliate, intimidate, threaten, slander, and label others (Wang, Iannotti, Luk, & Nansel, 2010). Rainey and Granito (2010) indicated that competitors are regarded as one of the reasons for trash talking. For example, decreasing the motivation of competitors is considered as one of the reasons for trash talking in athletes.

In the marketing literature, trash talking refers to the verbal abuse of competitors (Simons, 2003), which is a form of negative

communication between rival brands. Trash talking is done by members of a brand as a result of desire to distinguish their preferred brand. Trash talking is similar to the word of mouth (WOM) concept though there are differences between the two (Japutra, Ekinci, Simkin, & Nguyen, 2014) because trash talking refers to the verbal abuse of rival brands but WOM could be related to the brand used by consumer (Simons, 2003).

Consumers feel that brand can help them achieve their ideal self when there is a high degree of congruence between the brand image and their ideal self-image. Therefore, it is expected that trash talking would target higher competitors when consumers feel a higher level of convergence toward a particular brand. Studies show that variables such as brand loyalty, brand community identification, and self-brand connection influence oppositional referrals to a rival brand, which here means trash-talking (Marticotte et al., 2016). Specifically some studies indicate that the perceived self-congruence with a brand is relevant to the word of mouth. It means that when the perceived self-congruence is higher, brand love and therefore word of mouth are enhanced (Wallace et al., 2017). Therefore, as trash talking is similar to the word of mouth in a reverse manner, the following research hypothesis is suggested:

H4: Ideal self-congruence has a significant positive effect on trash talking.

Brand attachment may cause the consumer to show some negative behaviors. For example, Japutra et al. (2014) found that strong brand attachment leads to a wide range of adverse consequences such as trash talking, seeking pleasure in brand destruction, and anti-brand actions. Brand attached consumers may provoke trash talking to defend their social identity (Colliander & Hauge Wien, 2013). In addition, consumers trash talk because they are active members of the brand community (Hickman & Ward, 2007). When a person shows a brand as non-important, consumers feel that she insults their community. Therefore, they retaliate by humiliating the rival brand (Muniz & Hamer, 2001). Altogether and in line with Sacramento and Flight (2014), in order to highlight the dark side of brand attachment and its negative consequences, the following research hypothesis is suggested:

H₅: Brand attachment has a significant positive effect on trash talking.

Anti-brand Actions

Anti-brand actions occur in two types. In the first type, the customer does not want other buyers to use her desired brand because of her jealousy. In the second type of anti-brand actions, the customer not only prevents others from using that brand, but also cannot tolerate brand. Further, she is considered as one of the opponents to use that brand (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). In general, the cause of the first type of anti-brand actions are the identity of the brand and its desirability for the customer; while the second type of anti-brand actions are more related to the weakness in brand quality, the lack of brand responsibility, and sometimes its disadvantage for health and society (Anderson & Jap, 2005). This study focuses on the second-type of anti-brand actions such as aggressive behaviors and hostility as well as behaviors such as reimbursement, harassment, and complaints which harm the brand.

Romani, Sadeh and Dalli (2009) discussed that consumers feel negative when their brand disappoints them. In addition, Hegner, Fetscherin, and van Delzen (2017) stated that consumers' dissatisfaction with brand brings hatred. According to Tripp and Grégoire (2011), not all consumer show anti-brand actions; consumers who provoke anti-brand actions think they are betrayed by the company after investing significant amounts of their resources (money, time or energy) into it. Other reasons suggested for the relationship between brand attachment and anti-brand activities include the opportunistic activities of brand such as abusing trust (Anderson & Jap, 2005) and the heterogeneity of values between consumers and brands (Palazzo & Basu, 2007).

When consumers realize that brands abuse their trust, they tend to retaliate (Grégoire, Tripp, & Legoux, 2009). Additionally, it is more likely for consumers provoke harmful behaviors against selfish brands (Japutra et al., 2014), which occurs when there is a mismatch between the social and personal consumption values of the consumer and the actions of the brand (Palazzo & Basu, 2007). A brand may produce high-quality products, but may not be socially and environmentally

conscientious. Thus, socially conscientious consumers may feel betrayed and provoke anti-brand actions.

Researches have shown that brands and their moral misconducts (as evaluated by consumers) result in hatred, which then motivates consumers to adopt anti-brand behaviors. In addition, the intensity of these feelings for showing anti-brand actions is governed by the level of perceived consumer empathy (Romani et al., 2015). Thus, it could be hypothesized that consumers with high brand attachment have a potential to show more anti-brand actions. Therefore, the following research hypothesis is suggested:

H₆: Brand attachment has a significant positive effect on anti-brand actions.

Personality factors

The simplest definition for personality is “The way through which a person generally responds to problems”. Personality is characterized as a set of attributes which are relatively stable,; although certain situations and conditions may cause a person to behave in a way contrary to her common and regular personality. In order to measure personality variables, hundreds of scales are designed, many of which measure similar structures with different names, while some of them have similar names but measure different structures. The five-factor model of personality (Big Five) is one of the well-known scales for assessing personality traits. Costa and McCrae (1992) created a personality scale with the three factors of neuroticism, extraversion, and openness to new experiences. This was the NEO Inventory. In 1985, conscientiousness and agreeableness were added as two other factors, and the NEO-Personality Inventory-Revised (NEO-PI-R) was developed as the Big Five-factor Model or the Five-factor Model of Personality (Landy & Conte, 2017).

A growing interest in personality issues has emerged in marketing studies (Egan, & Taylor, 2010). In the present study, two aspects of personality traits including conscientiousness and neuroticism were highlighted. The conscientiousness implies trustworthiness. The individuals who are conscientious are stable and trustworthy. These individuals have emotional stability, self-esteem, and are also steady and calm. Neuroticism refers to the lack of ability of individual to

tolerate stressors. Neurotic people have traits such as nervousness, tension, excessive sensitivity, and furiousness (Lin, 2010).

The findings of previous studies indicate that there is a significant relationship between low self-confidence, depression, anxiety, and compulsive buying. Individuals who are worried, nervous, disappointed, desperate, stressed, shy, vulnerable, hasty and furious are more likely to embark upon compulsive buying (Otero-López & Villardefrancos, 2013).

In addition, the conscientiousness is regarded as a factor associated with controlling impulses, self-restraint, determination, planning, and tendency to succeed. The subscales of this factor include competence and adequacy, discipline, determination to succeed, and foresight. Therefore, it could be expected that conscientiousness will lead a person to make repeated purchases.

In a comprehensive research about antecedents and consequences of compulsive buying, researchers suggested that neuroticism and conscientiousness appeared to be significant predictors of compulsive buying (Mikołajczak-Degrauwe, Wauters, Rossi, & Brengman, 2012). Therefore, the following research hypotheses are considered:

H₇: Neuroticism has a significant positive effect on compulsive buying.

H₈: conscientiousness has a significant positive effect on compulsive buying.

Recent brand studies have investigated the personality traits and their potential interactions with consumer brand behaviors (Kucuk, 2019). Using the five-factor model of personality in their research, Judge, Erez, Bono and Thoresen (2002) concluded that neurotic individuals and those with negative emotionality (such as anger, hostility, anxiety and aggression) are not able to control their negative emotions when facing conflicts. Neuroticism is considered as one of the most important correlates of anxiety, aggression, depression, and vulnerability. Thus, there is a possibility to consider a relationship between neuroticism and trash talking.

Further, there is a possibility of having a positive relationship between conscientiousness and trash talking because a conscientious individual can provoke trash talking due to the importance she gives

to the action and the outcome. Participants in brand communities tend to develop a “consciousness of kind”. It is a personality trait that shows a sense of “we” versus “them.” One of the consequences of this sense is the focus on rivals (Hickman & Ward, 2007). Therefore, it could be hypothesized that consciousness as a personality trait has an effect on the suppression of rivals via trash talking. Consequently, the following research hypotheses are considered:

H₉: Neuroticism has a significant positive effect on trash talking.

H₁₀: Conscientiousness has a significant positive effect on trash talking.

Accordingly, the conceptual model of the research is illustrated in Fig 1.

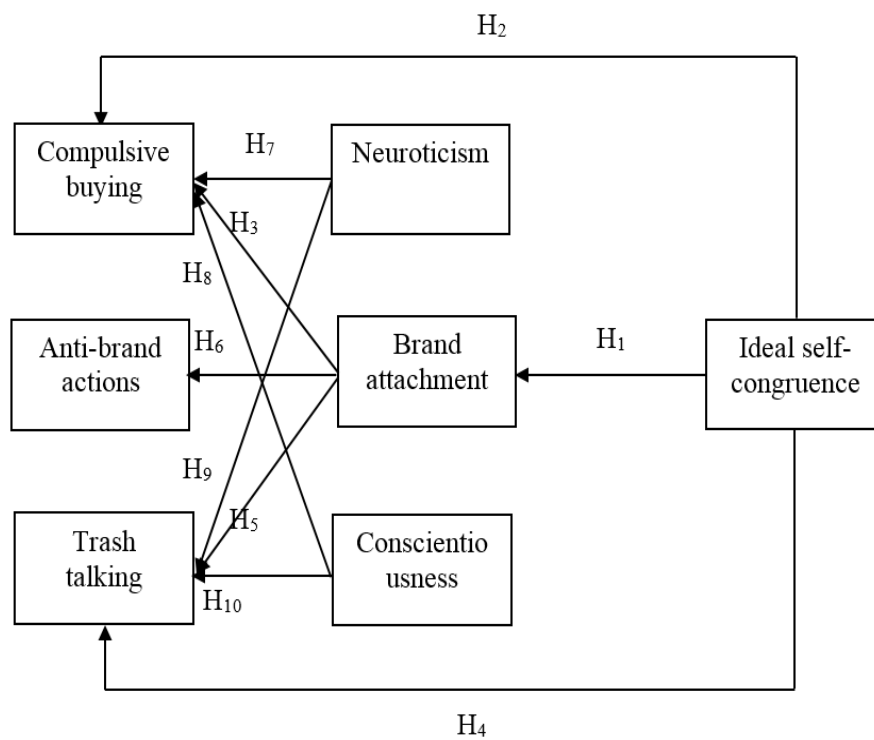


Fig. 1. Conceptual model of the study

Methodology

The research population included all users of IT brands (Samsung, HP, Sony and Apple) in Tehran. Due to the lack of accurate statistics about the population and its large size, it was considered as unlimited. In this study, convenience sampling was used and 395 questionnaires were distributed in northern, northwestern, southern, and central parts of Tehran. Three to five central department stores (such as Paytakht and Aladdin malls) were targeted and the questionnaires were distributed among customers of the stores. Demographic analysis results showed that 66.6% of the respondents were male and 33.4% were female. The highest frequency was related to graduate students (35.5%). The highest frequency was related to the 31-40 ages. Among respondents, 38.0% of respondents were single and 62.0% were married.

The questionnaire consisted of four questions about demographic characteristics of the brand users (Gender, education, age and marital status). The ideal self-congruence variable was assessed by three questions (Japutra et al., 2019), brand attachment and anti-brand each by four questions (Japutra et al., 2018), compulsive buying by five questions (Ridgway et al., 2008), trash talking by three questions (Hickman & Ward, 2007), neuroticism by six questions (Eysenck, 1958), and conscientiousness by five questions (Haigler & Widiger, 2001), as shown in Table 1. These questionnaires were the only or the most common measures which had been used in the related literature. There were several questionnaires available to measure personality variables; but for solving the limitation of proper number of questions, we used a short but complete questionnaire for measuring neuroticism and conscientiousness. These 30 questions were assessed using 5-point scale anchored by 1= totally disagree to 5= totally agree.

Data Analysis and Results

Table 1 shows the main variables and the related factor loadings of the items. As shown in this table, the factor loadings are greater than 0.5 and therefore items measuring the related variables are properly defined.

Table 1. Research variables

Variable	Source	Item	Factor Loadings
Ideal self-congruence	Japutra et al. (2019)	This brand is a mirror image of the person I would like to be.	0.876
		This brand is similar to the person I would like to be.	0.776
		This brand is consistent with how I would like to be.	0.866
Brand attachment	Japutra et al. (2018)	This brand is part of me and who I am	0.880
		I feel that I am personally connected to this brand	0.808
		My thoughts and feelings towards this brand are often automatic, coming to mind seemingly on their own	0.866
		My thoughts and feelings towards this brand come to me naturally and instantly	0.822
Compulsive buying	Ridgway et al. (2008)	I buy things from this brand that I don't need	0.886
		I consider myself an impulse purchaser of this brand	0.935
		My closet has unopened shopping bags of this brand in it	0.846
		Others might consider me a shopaholic for this brand	0.816
		Much of my life centers around buying things from this brand	0.847
Anti-brand actions	Japutra et al. (2018)	<i>In case a brand abuses my trust:</i>	
		I would make it one of my life's missions to damage this brand	0.925
		I would become obsessed over what I could do to get back at this brand	0.937
		This brand is my enemy	0.922
		I am a fanatic against this brand	0.950
Trash Talking	Hickman and Ward (2007)	I talk to other people about how negative I feel about the rival brands	0.888
		I talk to other people about how inferior rival brands are compared to this brand	0.857
		I say negative things about rival brands to other people	0.870
Conscientiousness	Haigler and Widiger (2001)	I keep my belongings neat and clean	0.795
		I think things through before coming to a decision	0.824
		I am a productive person who always gets the job done	0.839
		I adhere strictly to my ethical principles	0.797
		I'm something of a "workaholic" (R)	0.755
Neuroticism	Eysenck (1958)	I sometimes feel happy, sometimes depressed, without any apparent reason.	0.837
		I have frequent ups and downs in mood, either with or without apparent cause.	0.815
		I am inclined to be moody.	0.887
		My mind often wanders while I am trying to concentrate.	0.817
		I am frequently "lost in thought" even when supposed to be taking part in a conversation.	0.809
		I am sometimes bubbling over with energy and sometimes very sluggish.	0.809

Reliability and validity of the instruments and constructs (outer model)

The content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by experts' opinions. To do this, four professors of a faculty of management, specialized in the area of marketing and brand, were consulted in the adaptation process to adjust and correct some items, and use more appropriate words in translating English version of the questionnaire into Persian in order to ensure the content validity of the scale items.

Convergent validity was employed to show the construct validity using factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). All loadings exceeded 0.5 (Table 1) and as shown in Table 2, the results showed that all constructs exceeded 0.5, indicating sufficient convergent validity. Furthermore, the construct reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). Both Cronbach's alpha and CR values were found to be above the threshold level of 0.7, which means the appropriate internal consistency of measurement scales and the acceptable reliability of the questionnaire.

The goodness of fit (GOF) was measured by calculating the average R Square and the geometric mean of AVE for the endogenous constructs. According to Wetzels, Odekerken-Schröder and Van Oppen (2009), the threshold values of 0.36 = strong, 0.25 = medium and 0.1 = weak. The GOF of the model was found to be 0.66, which is considered as strong and confirms the validity of the model.

Table 2. Reliability and validity of the variables

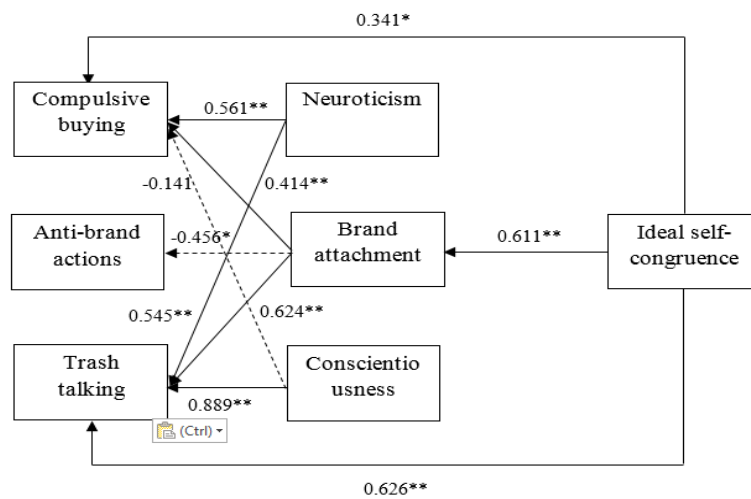
Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (alpha > 0.7)	Average variance extracted (AVE > 0.5)
Ideal self-congruence	0.798	0.878	0.706
Brand attachment	0.870	0.893	0.737
Compulsive Buying	0.916	0.938	0.752
Anti-brand actions	0.949	0.964	0.871
Trash Talking	0.844	0.905	0.760
Neuroticism	0.930	0.893	0.501
Consciousness	0.932	0.941	0.639

Results of the structural model and hypothesis testing

To test the hypotheses, t-values and path coefficients (β) were calculated by running Smart PLS Algorithm and Bootstrapping technique with a re-sampling of 500. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of testing hypotheses

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	Result
1	Ideal self-congruence → Brand attachment	0.611	21.750	supported
2	Ideal self-congruence → Compulsive Buying	0.341	3.990	supported
3	Brand attachment → Compulsive Buying	0.414	10.110	supported
4	Ideal self-congruence → Trash Talking	0.625	26.279	supported
5	Brand attachment → Trash Talking	0.624	23.237	supported
6	Brand attachment → Anti-brand actions	-0.456	11.427	Not supported
7	Neuroticism → Compulsive Buying	0.561	16.899	supported
8	Consciousness → Compulsive Buying	-0.141	1.248	Not supported
9	Neuroticism → Trash Talking	0.545	17.765	supported
10	Consciousness → Trash Talking	0.889	61.808	supported



Notes: * p<0.05; ** p<0.01

Fig. 2. Path coefficients results

Correspondingly, Fig. 2 shows Path coefficients and the results of testing the hypotheses in the form of a conceptual model.

As shown, all hypotheses except for hypothesis 6 and 8 were supported. A positive and significant relationship was observed between 1) Ideal self-congruence and Brand attachment ($\beta = 0.611$, $t = 21.750$), 2) Ideal self-congruence and Compulsive Buying ($\beta = 0.341$, $t = 3.990$), 3) Brand attachment and Compulsive Buying ($\beta = 0.414$, $t = 10.110$), 4) Ideal self-congruence and Trash Talking ($\beta = 0.625$, $t = 26.279$), 5) Brand attachment and Trash Talking ($\beta = 0.624$, $t = 23.237$), 7) Neuroticism and Compulsive Buying ($\beta = 0.561$, $t = 16.899$), 9) Neuroticism and Trash Talking ($\beta = 0.545$, $t = 17.765$) and 10) Consciousness and Trash Talking ($\beta = 0.889$, $t = 61.808$). Interestingly, hypothesis 6 was not supported, or in other words, supported in a diverse direction. However, hypothesis 8 was not supported at all.

Discussion

In this research, the dark sides of ideal self-congruence and brand attachment were investigated, which have been considered less by the researchers. In fact, the implication of the present study is providing a basis for shedding further light on the dark side of the consumer-brand relationship, because their positive relationship is much more developed than its negative relation. In addition, as implied earlier, two important contributions of this research are assessing the model in an Eastern culture with its specific features and characteristics, and studying the impact of personality traits such as conscientiousness and neuroticism on compulsive buying and trash talking, which has not been studied so far.

Overall, the results of testing the hypotheses indicated that self-congruence has a significant and positive effect on brand attachment. According to Escalas and Bettman (2003), emotional attachment increases when brands help consumers to be as their own dreams (ideal-self). Park et al., (2013) believe that individuals will consider the brands as congruent with their own ideals if the brands are able to provide their future ambitions. Therefore, the emotional connection between consumers and brands becomes stronger because the consumers feel

that brands provide their enrichment needs (Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005). The confirmation of this hypothesis suggests that matching brand image with ideal self-image of individuals affects the attachment to the intended brand. The more brands understand the ideal self of their consumers, the better they can adapt their own image and are more likely to create the projection of the self-image in their consumers. Since projection psychologically implies the transmission of a part of self to another person or object, it may cause the interest in the brand. Therefore, projection on an immortal object can magically make it alive, like a person who attributes human qualities to her car or gives her dear musical instrument mysterious qualities. Now, this object could be considered as an IT product or a brand of this industry. This way, increasing the matching between the ideal self-image and brand increases the likelihood of these projections, and affects the attachment of consumers to the brand.

The ideal self-congruence has a positive and significant impact on compulsive buying. According to O'Guinn and Faber (1989), consumers have a compulsive buying motivation when they want to escape what they cannot control. Further, Verplanken and Sato (2011) indicate that the desire to reduce the gap between the real and ideal self can affect compulsive buying. The results of testing this hypothesis suggest that matching the image of the consumer with the brand influences the recurring and obsessive purchases. Hence, if a brand is able to match its image with the ideal self of the consumer, it can even affect the negative behavior (compulsive buying).

Furthermore, brand attachment positively influences compulsive buying, which is consistent with the results of some other studies (e.g., Doron, Moulding, Kyrios, Nedeljkovic, & Mikulincer, 2009; Kessous et al., 2015; Lawrence, Ciorciari & Kyrios, 2014; Park et al., 2010). Therefore, if brands could provoke the feelings, thoughts and experiences of an individual, the consumer will be strongly attached to that brand. In addition, the possibility of the obsessive and repetitive purchases increases unreasonably when this attachment becomes stronger.

The ideal self-congruence has a significant positive effect on trash talking. As implied earlier, trash talking targets rivals. Based on the results of this hypothesis, matching the brand with the ideal self of an individual will cause him to engage in trash talking against rival

brands, which happens almost every day about sports enthusiasts like football, basketball and the like. In fact, the reason for this aggression toward rivals can be self-motivation, reducing the motivation of competitors, or the negative influence on their performance (Rainey & Granito, 2010).

Further, there is a positive relationship between brand attachment and trash talking. According to the research conducted by Japutra et al. (2014) and Muniz and Hamer (2001), when a person considers a brand as an unimportant brand, the brand-attached consumers feel that this person insults their community and as a result insult the rival brand.

Although the positive relationship between brand attachment and anti-brand actions was rejected, the results indicated a significant and negative relationship between these two variables, which is inconsistent with the results of Japutra et al. (2014) and Palazzo and Basu (2007). This result may be due to the fact that anti-brand actions do not necessarily occur in every society. In Iran, the lack of laws to complain against brands or the frustration of consumers about anti-brand actions could result in the unwillingness of consumers in showing anti-brand actions.

Based on the results, neuroticism has a positive significant effect on compulsive buying. Otero-López and Villardefrancos (2013) and Johnson and Attmann (2009) argue that a neurotic person has low self-esteem or experiences negative emotions. Therefore, buying a brand can have a compensatory effect for these consumers.

No significant relation is observed between conscientiousness and compulsive buying. Since a person with a high level of conscientiousness is forethoughtful, this foresight can prevent her from taking an action which might lead to self-harm. Compulsive buying is a recurring purchase which can ultimately cause various damages to the individual, and its least damage may be the time loss in the recurring process of buying. A conscientious person with the knowledge of her time value does not allow for the spending of such a cost to herself.

There is a significant relation between neuroticism and trash talking. Neuroticism refers to the tendency of experiencing a negative mood. Neurotic individuals are often uncertain in the decision-making process and consider the negative side of their experiences. Generally, low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety lead to compulsive buying. A

neurotic person can be strict to herself, and her ability to tolerate the negative feelings is low. These two factors together can lead to inner anger within the individual and this anger is transmitted by the psychological defense mechanisms to the rival brand, which results in trash talking towards them.

Finally, there is a significant relationship between conscientiousness and trash talking. The conscientious person is highly output-oriented and could be strict toward herself and others. Therefore, she is strict toward the brand, and could see the weaknesses of that brand if she does not choose it. Furthermore, the fact that a conscientious person has a high ability of candor as the result of being output-oriented influences her trash talking because she openly discusses the weaknesses she sees in the brands.

Due to the high level of competition in IT brand sector, brands have to be more sensitive and dedicated to considering their effect on consumers both in the positive and the negative sides in order to develop customers' brand attachment and to get matched with them. The findings of this research have several theoretical and practical implications. One of the important theoretical implications of this study is considering the negative consequences of brand self-congruency and brand attachment on the anti-brand actions of the consumers. Compulsive buying and trash talking are two important negative effects of this relationship which have been under-researched in comparison with positive effects of brand such as brand loyalty and brand trust (Amjad et al., 2018). In fact, this study shows that brand self-congruence and brand attachment may also produce unfavorable behaviors. In this regard, this study provides guidance for managers who wish to understand a complete picture of the relationship between brand self-congruence and brand attachment and their consequences. For example, consumers – especially those who are high self-congruent and brand attached – have the tendency to conduct anti-brand actions when their brands severely disappoint them. One practical suggestion for avoiding these consequences is setting up self-contained and cognizant employees as a contact point between brand and consumers. Brand managers need to take extra care in dealing with these types of consumers and offer personalized treatment toward them (Japutra et al., 2018).

Directions for Future Research

The research findings will significantly contribute to both practice and theories in future. The present research could be followed from several aspects, some of which are addressed below. Various types of personality profiles can have different effects on trash talking, compulsive buying, and anti-brand actions. For example, among the MBTI personality types, the INFP type can experience high neuroticism while the ENTJ type can experience a high level of conscientiousness. All of these factors and their effects could be investigated in future studies. Further, other personality profiles in the five-factor model can be taken into account.

A neurotic person is not interested in tension due to her low tolerance of negative emotions. Therefore, trash talking can be analyzed at various levels. If the severity of trash talking is high, there is a probability that the neurotic person will stay away, which can be considered in future studies. Druschel and Sherman (1999) discussed that conscientiousness and neuroticism are related to the experience of disgust. Therefore, a study of the relation of these personality factors and the disgust toward anti-brand actions can be the subject of future research.

Furthermore, the results indicated that culture may affect the negative behaviors of consumers as there are significant differences between Western and Asian cultures. For example, some personality traits such as “face”, “generosity against non-generosity”, and “saving against lavishness” are necessary for describing the personality of the Chinese staff (Tyler & Newcombe, 2006). Therefore, it may seem that we need more research on the nature of personality in Eastern societies, but there is some other evidence that it can be used for different cultures, although the five-factor model varies slightly in different cultures (Landy and Conte, 2017). This issue can be investigated in future studies via a qualitative approach.

Finally, it is possible to examine the model of this research in the form of employer branding. For example, how an employee who is ideally self-congruent with the brand behaves toward the rival organizations, or what anti-brand actions an employee shows in the case of feeling the abuse of her trust to the organization.

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