THE INFLUENCES OF BRAND PERSONALITY, CULTURE, AND SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY ON ICONIC BRAND PREFERENCES

by

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ABSTRACT

Brian Whelan. THE INFLUENCES OF BRAND PERSONALITY, CULTURE, AND SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY ON ICONIC BRAND PREFERENCES.
(Under the direction of Dr. Sangkil Moon)

Despite the strong appeal of iconic brands, research on how consumers form attachments and loyalty to them has been limited. To fill this knowledge gap, this research is aimed at identifying factors that may determine consumers' emotional attachment and ensuing loyalty to iconic brands, focused on brand personality, cultural disposition, and social media activity as influencing factors. To accomplish this, a survey was administered on the general population available on Amazon Mechanical Turk (Mturk) (n=759). Empirical results from a multi-level linear regression model indicates that brand personality, cultural disposition and social media activity influence both loyalty and attachment to iconic brands. Detailed findings are presented. Lastly, theoretical and managerial implications, limitations and future research directions are discussed.

Keywords: iconic brands, brand personality, Hofstede's cultural dimensions, social media, emotional attachment to brands, brand loyalty.

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Arriving at this point is the culmination of a journey that began nearly 9 years ago, when I first attended the UNC Charlotte Economic Forecast, hosted by the Belk College of Business as an attendee. Looking back over the decade that has transpired, it is surreal to be here. The dream is has become reality. It is something I didn't think was even possible. And, it most certainly would not have been possible without the following people, who I am extremely grateful for.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in memory of my mentor and friend, Dr. Steven Ott, Crosland Distinguished Professor of Real Estate, and former Dean of the Belk College of Business.

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Introduction

When one thinks of the term, "icon", it may evoke thoughts of something sacred, having deep meaning or even religious undertones. Icons are meant to be worshipped, and people can ascribe profound meaning to icons they connect with or idolize. In pre-modern society, the term "icon" was reserved to describe depictions of religious art portraying sacred subjects, such as saints, deities or some aspect of belief (Testa, Cova and Cantone, 2017). But in modern society, the term "icon" has metamorphosed into something much broader and commercially important. People, places, things, and—most relevant to this dissertation—brands can all be icons in modern society.

Brands that achieve culturally sacred adoration from consumers may considered "iconic" brands, representing the pinnacle of brand success. Consumers value these brands as much for what they symbolize as for what they offer (Holt, 2004), and in this manner iconic brands effectively transcend the normal brand-consumer relationship dyad, by becoming the embodiment of the ideals that consumers admire, identify with, and even love (Holt, 2004; Testa, Cova and Cantone, 2017). Consumers develop strong affinity for iconic brands, and become passionate endorsers of those brands and are willing to invest not just their money in the brand's products, they will invest their time and energy as well. Consider, for example, Airstream, the iconic maker of shiny metallic RV trailers that traces its roots to 1896. Airstream's owners blog connects thousands of loyal Airstream brand patrons and invites them to share a wide array of content on RV living (www.airstream.com/blog). Or try visiting a Tesla dealership and

purchasing a vehicle to drive home off the lot, which is standard practice at virtually all automotive dealerships globally. But with Tesla, depending on the model, consumers will wait a month or longer before they get their vehicle after paying (Eletrek, 2020). These and other recognizable iconic brands, such as McDonalds, Coca Cola, Harley Davidson, Nike and many more have passionate, loyal customer bases that patronize the brand, evangelize about the brand in their social circles and invest both their time and money in building and prolonging a relationship with the brand.

The consumer research domain has long been interested in how consumers form relationships with brands, and understanding and measuring the symbolic meaning that consumers attribute to brands (Aaker, 1997; Escalas and Bettman, 2003; Hogg, Cox and Keeling, 2000; Fournier, 1993; Ligas, 2000). Fournier (1993) offered a framework to help better evaluate and understand the relationships consumers form with brands, arguing that brands can serve as viable relationship partners. Aaker (1997) created a Brand Personality Scale that serves as an accepted framework to understand the symbolic meaning of brands to consumers by leveraging the "Big Five" human personality characteristics (Extroversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Openness). Aaker's Brand Personality Scale consists of five dimensions (Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Excitement and Ruggedness) and 15 facets and 42 sub-dimensions which I will describe later in this dissertation. In doing so, Aaker effectively created a lens through which a brand's personality may be analyzed, bringing the consumer psychology domain closer to understanding the influence of brand personality on consumer attitudes and preferences.

Iconic brands are, in effect, cultural icons and the most powerful iconic brands sit at the precipice of cultural change in a society (Holt, 2004). Although there is extensive research that

examines the role of culture and consumer behavior, there is a lack of research that attempts to examine the role of culture and social media usage in driving consumers' brand preferences, as measured by emotional brand attachment and brand loyalty, in iconic brands. Part of the challenge is rooted in the difficulty of identifying a broadly acceptable construct through which to evaluate the effects of culture and social media activity on emotional brand attachment and brand loyalty. While there is no definitive agreement on what constitutes cultural influence, the widely cited work of Geert Hofstede outlined a framework for five cultural dimensions of work-related values at the national level: individualism-collectivism; power-distance; masculinity-femininity; uncertainty avoidance; time orientation; (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). Hofstede defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005, p. 400). In this manner, Hofstede's cultural dimensions outlines distinct and unifying constructs of cultural influence at the national level.

Social media has brought with it massive societal change, much in the same disruptive manner as did the Cotton Gin, Steam Engine, Printing Press, Telephone, Radio and Television did. As happened with those technological achievements, social media has changed the very nature of how we live, work and connect with each other. It has changed how we consume information, and influences how and what we value as individuals. From a brand perspective, social media has engineered a shift in the its balance of power away from companies to consumers, precipitated by global connectivity, the ability to share information in real-time and the proliferation of online brand communities. Earlier research on brand communities in general defined it as a "specialized non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand." (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001, p. 412). Social media

has enabled the rise of online brand communities, and literature suggests that online brand communities enhance feelings of community among members and has a positive effect on brand loyalty (Laroche et al., 2012).

Purpose of this Study, Knowledge Gap & Expected Contributions

Despite the expanse of literature covering brand personality, cultural disposition and social media activity, a significant knowledge gap still exists in understanding how consumers' preferences for iconic brands are constructed as a result of this powerful triad. The literature tables on the following pages show a comparison of how this study will contribute to our understanding of how these three components shape consumers' iconic brand preferences

Table 1: Comparison of This Study with Relevant Existing Studies

Author (s) (Year)	Study Type	Sample	Key Theoretical Contributions	Contributions by Thematic Area			
				Iconic Brands	Brand Loyalty	Culture	Social Media
This Study	Empirical	Survey	Provides framework for marketers and brand managers of iconic brands to position their brands to preserve iconic status and increase customer loyalty	X	X	X	X
Dwivedi et al. (2019)	Empirical	Survey	Outlines how emotional brand attachment with social media shapes consumer-based brand equity perceptions		X		
Tarnovskaya & Biedensbach (2018)	Theoretical	Case study (Gap)	Brand meaning co-creation can cause conflict in consumer perceptions, leading to failures in corporate rebranding initiatives		X		
Baldus (2018)	Empirical	1,127 online community members	Online marketing activities positively influence psychological sense of community		X		
Tuskej & Podnar (2018)	Empirical	Survey	Anthropomorphism & brand prestige positively influence consumer-brand identification		X		
Testa, Cova & Cantone (2017)	Empirical	Interviews & archive Sources	Identifies characteristics that can lead to brand de-iconization	X	X		
Shields & Johnson (2016)	Empirical	Survey	Nostalgic consumers resist changes to brand elements, positioning and other characteristics	X	X		
Brexendorf, Bayus & Keller (2015)	Theoretical		Provides conceptual framework for interrelationship between branding and innovation		X		
Kim & Johnson (2015)	Empirical	Facebook UGC Analysis	User generated content (UGC) has a significant impact on consumer purchase intentions		X		X

Author (s) (Year)	Study Type	Sample	Key Theoretical Contributions	Contributions by Thematic Area			
				Iconic Brands	Brand Loyalty	Culture	Social Media
Ibrahim, Wang & Bourne (2015)	Empirical	Twitter Analysis	Online engagement impacts consumer sentiment, brand image		X		X
Hudson et al. (2014)	Empirical	Survey	Social media interactions between consumers can lead to high levels of emotional attachment to brands		X		X
Enginkaya & Yilmaz (2014)	Empirical	Survey	Five distinct motivating factors for brand purchase intentions defined: Brand affiliation; Investigation; Opportunity seeking; Conversation; Entertainment		X		X
Fritz, Schoenmueller & Brun (2014)	Empirical	Survey	Brand heritage positively influences brand authenticity, which in turn positively influences consumer purchase intentions		X		
Hudson et al. (2014)	Empirical	Survey	Social media interactions between consumers can lead to high levels of emotional attachment to brands		X		X
Pawels-Delassus & Descotes (2013)	Empirical	Survey	Certain influencing factors can alleviate resistance to brand name changes		X		
Pawels-Delassus & Descotes (2012)	Empirical	Survey	Illuminates key determinants of perceived brand equity transfer		X		
Yoo, Donthy, Lentartowicz (2011)	Empirical	Survey	Develops a 26-item five-dimensional scale of individual cultural values that assess Hofstede's dimension at the individual level		X	X	
deMooij & Hofstede (2010)	Theoretical		Provides conceptual insight into applying Hofstede's model of national culture to branding and advertising		X	X	

Author (s) (Year)	Study Type	Sample	Key Theoretical Contributions	Iconic Brands	Brand Loyalty	Culture	Social Media
Thomson, MacInnis & Park (2005)	Empirical	Survey	Develops psychometrically reliable measure of the strength of a consumers EAB		X		

				Contributions by Thematic Area			
Author (s) (Year)	Study Type	Sample	Key Theoretical Contributions	Iconic Brands	Brand Loyalty	Culture	Social Media
Merrilees (2005)	Empirical	Case study	Successful branding is dependent on alignment of brand vision, orientation and strategy implementation		X X		
Holt (2004)	Theoretical		Defines "iconic brand" and characterizes what constitutes the nature of iconic brands and cultural branding	X	X	X	
House (2004)	Empirical	Survey	Establishes measures for nine dimensions of national culture at the national level and the organizational level			X	
Muniz & O'Guinn (2001)	Theoretical		Defines "brand community" and its implications for branding, sociological theories of community and consumer behavior		X		
Fournier (1998)	Empirical	Case Study	Provides critical understanding and importance of brands and consumers' relationships to the advancement of marketing theory		X		
Aaker (1997)	Empirical	Questionnaires	Provides theoretical framework for brand personality and an understanding of the symbolic use of brands		X		
Park, Jaworski & MacInnis (1986)	Theoretical		Define "brand concept management", which outlines a framework for a sequential process of selecting, introducing, and fortifying a brand concept		X		
Hofstede (1980, 2001)	Empirical	Survey	Established five dimensions of national culture (individualism; power distance uncertainty avoidance; masculinity; long-term orientation)			X	

Based on examination of the existing body of knowledge, this study represents the only one that provides contributions across all four domains (iconic brands, brand loyalty, social media, and culture), and is the only one that examines these constructs in a single framework. The purpose of this study is to enhance our understanding of the effects of brand personality, cultural disposition and social media activity on consumers' iconic brand preferences, as indicated by their brand loyalty and emotional brand attachment to them.

Specifically, I will be exploring the following research question:

- RQ: What roles do brand personality, cultural disposition and social media activity play in consumers' iconic brand preferences?

This study leverages theoretical underpinnings of attachment theory and social identity theory, two seminal theories in social psychology which seek to explain human behavior. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1951), seeks to explain the impact of the parent-child relationship, and its subsequent impact on ability to evolve into a mentally healthy adult. According to Bowlby, for an individual to successfully transition from childhood into adulthood he or she must as an infant or young adult "experience a warm, intimate, and continuous relationship with his mother (or permanent mother substitute) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment" Bowlby, 1951, p. 13). Attachment theory has led to the development of extensive research on myriad topics related to individual relationships and well-being, including cognition, emotional responses, values, mental health, courtship

and psychopathology (Ein-Dor & Hirschberger, 2016), and is also used in the development of the scale used by Thompson, MacInnis and Park (2005) to measure an individual's emotional attachment to brands, which is leveraged in this study. Attachment theory is intertwined through a wide variety of scholarly marketing literature, including theoretical underpinnings on brand switching (Thomson et al., 2005; Louriero et al., 2012). In relation to consumers' attachment to brands, Park et al., (2010) argues that attachment is represented in the strength of the connection between consumers and brands. Hinson et al., (2019) posit that consumers demonstrate brand attachment through a process of continual emotional bonding and identification with it.

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) posits that an individual's social identity represents the knowledge and understanding that he or she belongs to a certain social category or group (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). These categories or groups consist of individuals who express a common identity and consider themselves a member of the same social category. Lam et al., (2010) note that social identity theory has broad applicability in evaluating the relationships that consumers have with brands, given that category inclusion and identification has important implications in building long-term relationship efficacy. Social identity theory relates directly to an individual's self-concept and how it is defined. According to social identity theory, an individual's self-concept is wholly intertwined with their connections with social groups or organizations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Much of the extant literature on social identity theory as it relates to brands focuses on brand communities (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; McAlexander, Schouten & Koenig, 2002; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006), which examines the interactions between

consumers who patronize similar or competing brands. In this study, social media activity is examined through the lens of social identity theory, most notably in the development of online brand communities, where like-minded patrons of a particular brand interact online with both the brand and each other.

Branding itself is an emotional endeavor, and there has been considerable interest among marketing and branding scholars about the role of memory in the formation of brand associations and attachment. Anderson and Bower (1979) proposed the Associative Network Theory of Memory (ANTM), which conceptualizes human memory formation as a representation of connections where one piece of information (i.e., a brand) has links to other pieces of information (i.e., a usage situation for the brand); the resulting linkage suggests an association in the consumer's mind (Nenycz-Thiel et al., 2010). Keller (1993) notes that the overall network of information about a brand in a consumer's memory effectively constitute brand image and various other brand associations, the primary role of which is to serve as a memory retrieval cue for the brand in consumers' minds (Nedungadi, 1990). For iconic brands, consumers' memory of their interactions with these brands can enhance nostalgic feelings and attachments of specific emotions to a particular brand (Rossiter & Bellman, 2012). These types of connections can include, among other examples, consumer affinity or love for a particular iconic brand, such as Kodak film, Jim Beam bourbon, or McDonald's hamburgers (Rossiter & Bellman, 2005).

In understanding how these constructs work together in shaping consumers' brand preferences in iconic brands, this study will make important strategic contributions to marketing practice. By expanding upon the existing knowledge base in consumer behavior

research and building upon the work of Aaker and Hofstede, the findings in this study will

provide brand managers and marketing practitioners with a framework from which to

create brand positioning that may lead to stronger development of consumers' emotional

attachment to brands and ultimately greater brand loyalty in iconic brands.

To accomplish this, the study begins with a comprehensive literature review

covering iconic brands, brand personality, cultural influence in branding, and branding in

social media. The literature review will provide a holistic understanding of what is known

in these areas, as well as additional context for my proposed theoretical framework, which

follows the literature review. Following the literature review, the methods section will

propose the sample and research instruments used to measure the conceptual model, along

with the statistical method used to analyze collected data. The study closes with

subsequent chapters on data analysis and results, and discussion.

CHAPTER2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study seeks to understand influence of brand personality, cultural disposition and social media activity on consumer preferences in iconic brands. While each of these constructs has been studied individually, there is a lack of scholarship that examines the interactions between these constructs and the moderating variables of cultural dimensions and social media usage. In order to understand the framework of this research, a comprehensive literature review encompassing iconic brands, brand personality, cultural influence in branding, and branding on social media will be discussed in the following sections.

Iconic Brands

Brands serve a multitude of needs for individuals and firms alike. Individuals use brands to simplify choice, to signal quality, to reduce purchase risk and to engender trust (Keller and Lehman, 2006). At the firm level, brands play a vital role in a company's marketing strategy (Grace and O'Cass, 2002), and an increasing number of firms utilize branding as the organizing principle of its marketing strategy to develop long-lasting competitive advantages (Urde, 1999). Brands are also used as a form of self-expression (Aaker, 1999), and firms spend considerable resources developing, enhancing and protecting their brands in an attempt to strengthen relationships with their customers. The

value of a brand is ultimately a function of the consumer's mindset—that is, the consumer's subjective judgment as to how well the brand has delivered on its promises, what the brand represents to them, how the brand makes them feel, and how authentic the brand is relative to its foundational principles (Keller, 2015).

Despite the numerous benefits and uses brands provide individuals and organizations, surprisingly there is no universally accepted definition for what exactly a brand is. The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines a brand as a "name, term sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competition." (AMA, 2019). Many marketing practitioners, however, view brands as something more intangible—i.e., something that has generated a certain degree of awareness, reputation, prominence in the marketplace (Keller and Swaminathan, 2019). Brands are not products, yet "branding" a product can imbue it with dimensions that differentiate it from other products designed to satisfy the same need. This differentiation may be rational and tangible—related to product performance—or, they be more symbolic, intangible and emotional, related to what the brand represents (Keller and Swaminathan, 2019). In the latter case, a brand's intangible qualities can be a powerful means by which marketers differentiate their brands with consumers (Park et al., 2010).

What makes a Brand Iconic?

One reason for the growing emphasis on branding is the emotional attachment that may develop between consumers and brands, which may be amplified in brands that are considered "iconic", which are described in literature as brands that achieve a high degree of salience and which represent the "values, needs and aspirations of the members of a particular group" (Torelli et al., 2010, p. 119). Hollis (2007) argues that iconic brands have three distinctive characteristics that separate them from traditional brands: 1) profound roots in culture that connect with a society's values, sometimes effecting a change in those values; 2) instant salience and recognizability through distinctive physical features or symbolism; 3) a compelling narrative that aligns with the brand's identity and values while connecting them with contemporary culture. Briss (2018) notes that the core benefit to iconic brands is the competitive advantage it provides over competing brands, along with greater emotional levels of attachment with consumers. Through these advantages, iconic brands are able to attain leadership positions in their brand category or segment (Briss, 2018; Kravets & Orge (2010). Top-of-mind awareness is also an indicator of iconic brand status (Ries & Trout, 1981), and research indicates that brands deemed as iconic enjoy significantly higher levels of top-of-mind awareness (Hollis, 2007; Yu & Briss, 2018). When brands successfully reach the icon phase, they are more adept at sustaining competitive advantages through deeper emotional attachment levels and consumer relationships (Torelli, 2013).

Table 2: Attributes of Iconic Brands

Current Literature	Iconic Brand Attributes
Testa et al. (2017)	Symbols embodying meanings that people admire, respect and love
Ries & Trout (1981)	Top-of-mind awareness within their product category
Holt (2012)	Brands collectively valued in society as a widely shared symbol of a particular ideology for a segment of a population
Torelli (2013)	Brands symbolizing and matching with the values, needs and aspirations of a particular group
Hollis (2007); Briss (2018)	Profound roots in culture that connect with a society's values; instant salience and recognizability through distinctive physical features or symbolism; a compelling narrative that aligns with the brand's identity and values while connecting them with contemporary culture
Holt (2004)	Brands that grow and adapt with emerging sociocultural trends
Testa, Cova & Cantone (2017)	Brands that deliver innovative forms of cultural expression on a national or international scale
Briss (2018)	Competitive advantage over competitors; increased emotional attachment
Kravets & Orge (2010)	Leadership positions in their respective brand category or segment

Achieving iconic brand status is not a defined, linear process; there is no consensus

in the existing literature on exactly what steps a firm should take to achieve iconic status

(Torelli, 2013). A brand may achieve iconic status when it is able to provide a tie to

cultural identity or expression on a large scale—nationally or globally (Holt, 2012). Apple,

Coca Cola, Ford, Harry Potter, Lego, Starbucks, McDonalds and Nike, for example,

represent a selection of iconic brands from various industries and sectors. Each of these

brands have successfully found a way to integrate their brand narrative into a consumer's

personal narrative and life experience. Precisely how these brands were able to accomplish

that goal is uncertain, but there are common elements that are critical to successfully achieving iconic status according to extant research.

One common element in the development of iconic brands is the ability for the brand to grow and adapt with emerging sociocultural trends (Holt, 2004). This adaptation should manifest itself at the core of the brand itself, and not merely in marketing messaging or in changing the component of a brands identity. For example, McDonalds has changed not only its menu in recent years to become more health-conscious as consumers demand healthier fast-food options, it has also integrated these principles into its core brand by implementing changes to virtually every part of the customer experience, from food ordering, restaurant environment, and shift to fresh-made products in its restaurants.

Another important component to achieving iconic brand status is a brand's ability to adapt to changing societal conditions (Holt, 2004). Research also indicates that a brand becomes an icon when "it delivers innovative forms of cultural expression by offering a compelling myth, a story that can be of help to a large group of people," (Testa, Coca and Cantone, 2017, p. 492). Yet, a measure of organizational flexibility is required to maintain iconic brand status, but the brand cannot stray too far from its core positioning in an attempt to stay relevant with emerging sociocultural trends. Iconic brands must be able to balance consistency of messaging with required changes in its core-positioning, meet emerging needs in their respective markets (Holt and Cameron, 2010). This is an

inherently difficult task, as consumers may develop strong levels of emotional attachment with iconic brands, and loyal followers may bristle at any change to the brand's identity. This tendency to reject brand change is a manifestation of brand attachment, which is the psychological relationship that consumers have with a brand that is based on an emotional, durable and inalterable link (Pawels-Delassus and Descotes, 2013).

Table 3: Differences between Strong Brands & Iconic Brands

Strong Brand	Iconic Brand
Loose connection to culture or symbolism	Deep cultural roots & compelling brand narrative aligned with contemporary culture
Brand narrative focused more on product usage and utilitarian function	Brand symbolism embodying meanings that people admire, respect and love
High levels of awareness within product category	Instant salience and recognizability generally & top-of-mind awareness within product category
Generally unaffected by emerging sociocultural trends	Adaptability to emerging sociocultural trends and cultural themes
Low-to-moderate levels of consumer emotional attachment	Deep levels of consumer emotional attachment
Competitive advantage based on price or product function	Competitive advantage based on emotional attachment

Changes to any brand must be made strategically and carefully, but given the intense emotional connection consumers are likely to develop with iconic brands, it is

perhaps even more important that iconic brand implement the aforementioned brand

adaptations delicately. Research suggests that when consumers loyal to a particular brand

are confronted with an element of the brand that changes (i.e., logo, font, color, packaging,

messaging), they exhibit a positive bias towards the original version of the brand, and

perceive the brand change as more significant than it may actually be (Shields and

Johnson, 2016). In instances where emotional attachment to the brand is high, as is the

case with iconic brands, this underscores the need for delicacy when managing brand

changes. Organizations are faced with a challenging problem to overcome: How to balance

the brand's evolution and maintain relevance, necessary for its survival, with a highly loyal

consumer base that may perceive any modification as a large-scale change? This is a

complicated task, and its difficulty is compounded by, among other factors, cultural

influences, a consumer's emotional attachment to the brand, the influence of consumer-

driven social media content and the collective power that these three elements have in

influencing consumer perceptions.

Brand Authenticity & Iconic Brand Status

To understand the concept of "brand authenticity" it must be linked and described

with "brand identity" as this is the core element on which brand authenticity is measured.

Brand identity as described in literature refers to the image a company intends to project in

the consumer's mind, while brand authenticity is described as Ogre the degree to which a

brand's identity is causally linked to brand behavior (Schallen, Burman & Riley, 2014; Keller & Lehman, 2006). Both of these factors positively affect brand trust and are vital to the strategic management of a brand (Keller & Lehman, 2006). Brand authenticity can be influenced by many factors, including brand heritage, brand nostalgia, brand commercialization, brand clarity, brand legitimacy and others (Fritz, Shoenmueller and Bruhn, 2016). Most importantly for the purposes of this study, brand authenticity serves as an antecedent to achieving iconic brand status, as research suggests that the perceived authenticity of a brand creates strong emotional bonds between the consumer and the brand, which in turn strengthens consumer loyalty (Fritz, Shoenmueller and Bruhn, 2016).

The importance of brand authenticity in developing positive, long-lasting consumer relationships is well documented (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Holt, 2002; Leigh, Peters & Shelton, 2006; Rose & Wood, 2005). For many consumers, brand authenticity may be rooted in their subjective belief that a brand has met their obligations in providing a well-defined, consistent experience aligned with their expectations. Morhart et al. (2015) posit that brand authenticity perception are rooted in essentially four dimensions of customer experience: continuity, credibility, integrity and symbolism, and taken as a whole these dimensions form a consumer's general impression or perception of a brand's authenticity. Eggers et al. (2012) emphasize the important of brand authenticity on firm growth, noting that consumers are more apt to trust brands that they perceive as authentic. Other brand scholars suggest that brand authenticity represents the foundational principle of corporate

reputation (Beverland, 2005; Gilmore & Pine, 2007), and the basis for effective marketing in the postmodern world (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003).

Brand authenticity is critical for iconic brands because consumers not only patronize the brand for the utilitarian or materialistic attributes it provides, they do so because the iconic brand connects with what consumers believe about themselves. Norris et al., (2020) believe that "iconic brands bear a symbolic weight for consumers who rely on these brands to announce to the world around them who they are or who they aspire to be" (p. 26). Iconic brands can help consumers feel connected to a community of like-minded individuals (Yu & Briss, 2018), and also help them to manage their own identities internally and externally (Torelli et. al, 2010).

Brand Personality

Brand personality is described as "a set of human personality characteristics that are both applicable to and relevant for brands" (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003, p. 151). Brand intangibles are commonly seen as primary method in which marketers successfully differentiate their brands with consumers (Park et. al, 1986), and these intangibles may cover a wide array of brand associations that are aspirational, symbolic or experiential (Keller & Lehman, 2006). Brand personality, therefore, may be viewed through this lens, and within the current the brand literature, there is a considerable amount that seeks to classify brands according to their symbolism and non-utilitarian brand meanings.

Starting in the 1990s, marketing researchers began placing increased emphasis on understanding how consumers attribute symbolic meaning to brands (Aaker, 1997; Escalas and Bettman, 2003; Hogg, Cox and Keeling, 2000). Brown (1991) noted that consumers often feel the need to ascribe a set of humanlike characteristics and symbols to products and brands as a means to enhance their interactions with them. This focus on symbolic meaning in brands followed a long period of literature which essentially ignored the importance of consumer's symbolism in favor of a nearly myopic focus on product attributes and narrow conceptualizations of products (Austin, Siguaw and Mattila, 2003). Other noted scholars have published extensively on the meaning of brands from a consumer-centric rather than a product-centric view, including an examination of some of the symbolic aspects of branding relating to brand attachment (e.g., Keller, 1993, 1998; Ligas, 2000; Fournier, 1998; Park, Jaworski and MacInnis, 2015; Park and Srinivasan, 2005).

The construct of brand personality is grounded in the belief that consumers often project human-like characteristics onto brands, either consciously or subconsciously. Fournier (1992) believes that in their pursuit of self-definitional needs and the growing influence of branding on an individual's personal life, individuals increasingly perceive brands as viable relationship partners. In her seminal work, Fournier viewed brand relationships as multifaceted, comprising of six dimensions: self-concept connection; commitment or nostalgic attachment; behavioral interdependence; love/passion; intimacy;

and brand partner quality. Building upon the work of Fournier, Aaker (1997) defined

brand personality as "the set of human characteristics or traits associated with a brand

based on the consumer's perception of the brand" (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). Aaker noted that

although there may be overlap between human and brand personality traits, their

antecedents differ (Aaker, 1997). Human personality traits are typically congruent with an

individual's behavior, physical and demographic characteristics, attitudes and beliefs

(Park, 1986), while brand personality conceptions may arise through any direct or indirect

contact a consumer may have with a brand (Plummer, 1985). This may include a

consumer's interpretation of user imagery, product attributes, company employees or

management, and marketing communications activities (Aaker, 1997).

While other measures of brand personality have been created (e.g., Bao and

Sweeney, 2009; Geuens, Weijters & De Wulf, 2007), the Aaker Brand Personality

framework is the most widely used and recognized standard for brand personality measures

(Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer, 2013). The Aaker Brand Personality framework consists of

five dimensions—Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness.

These five dimensions have 15 facets and 42 sub-items, which are shown in Figure 2.

Aaker's framework is grounded in human psychology research that quantify human

personalities across the "Big Five" personality traits—Extraversion, Agreeableness,

Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Intellect. (Borkenau and Ostenderdorf, 1990;

Digman, 1997). Aaker's goal when developing her brand personality framework was to

"develop a theoretical framework of brand personality dimensions, and a reliable, valid and generalizable scale to measure these dimensions." (Aaker 1997, p. 347).

Brand personality measures, while undoubtedly interesting and providing a lens through which to study and evaluate how consumers ascribe meaning to brands, is of little use to marketing scholars and practitioners if the ultimate outcome of such study is not tied to tangible commercial benefits, such as higher levels of loyalty or attachment. Consensus among marketing and branding scholars indicates, however, that brand personality matters significantly in affecting positive commercial outcomes (e.g., Fournier, 1998; D.A. Aaker, 1992; Sirgy, 1982; Frehling and Forbes, 2005.) Within these research streams, brand personality has been shown to influence consumer preference and usage, increase levels of trust and loyalty, encourage self-expression and provide a basis for product differentiation.

A sizable segment of the brand personality literature focuses on the examination of brand personality as perceived by the individual, and the most significant contribution is the identification and empirical validation of the specific dimensions of brand personality. A similar research stream within brand personality literature examines the antecedents of realized brand personalities (Grohmann, 2009), employee behavior (Wentzel, 2009), brand extensions (Diamantopoulos et al., 2005), and brand experiences (Brakus et al. 2009). Collectively, these research streams indicate that brand personality can have positive performance indications, including enhanced brand identification, greater brand trust, and

improved customer satisfaction and brand loyalty (Ambler, 1997; (Brakus et al. 2009;

Sung and Kim, 2010).

Freling et al. (2009) notes that it is not sufficient to simply understand how

consumers perceive a brand's personality traits; it is also necessary to understand how

consumers view the brand's underlying attributes as well. An attribute of a brand that is

perceived as satisfying will be viewed more favorably and will result in a more positive

attitude towards the brand. Conversely, attributes that are not perceived as satisfactory will

result in a more negative attitude towards the brand (Cohen et al., 1972). Keller (1993)

also writes about brand personality appeal and its role in creating successful marketing

programs, noting that favorable brand associations subsequently instill positive overall

brand impressions, leading consumers to regard the brand as satisfying their needs and

wants.

Interestingly, literature suggests that brand personality favorability alone cannot

predict brand loyalty outcomes, nor all the variance in reactions to different brand

personalities (Freling et al., 2009). In a given consumer brand consideration set, upon

evaluating the brand personalities of numerous competing brands within a category, an

individual may find it difficult to differentiate between them when many or all brands in

the consideration set have favorable brand personality associations. It is this precise

knowledge gap that this study seeks to address, by introducing cultural disposition and

social media activity as interaction variables that seek to explain the link between brand

personality preferences and brand loyalty.

Cultural Influence in Branding

During the past several decades, cultural branding has emerged as a powerful lens

through which brands may be analyzed (Holt, 2004; 2006). One of the main reasons for the

increased emphasis on cultural branding is the valuable information that the confluence of

cultural and commercial study provides—particularly in identifying emerging sociocultural

themes and trends that may help foster brand attachment and loyalty among consumers.

However, existing literature indicates that while extremely valuable in understanding

pathways through which brands become icons, the mere expanse of the "culture" discipline

can be challenging in itself, even from a definitional perspective (McCort and Malhotra,

1993). Buzzell (1968), for example, describes culture as "a convenient catch-all for the

many differences in market structure and behavior that cannot be readily explained in

terms of more tangible factors (p. 191). Other scholars, (McCort & Malhotra, 1993; Manrai

and Manrai, 1996; Clark, 1990, Dawar et al. 1996; Lenartowicz and Roth, 1999) note that

part of the challenges of cultural research in branding is the inherently difficult task of

separating out strictly cultural factors from other macro-level influences not associated

with culture. Cultural factors differ intrinsically from macro-level factors—such as

economic, political, legal, religious, linguistic, educational, technological and industrial—

but they can be interrelated, making isolating purely cultural influences challenging

because no clear-cut boundaries exist (Soares et al., 2007).

Over many decades, a significant number of scholars have attempted to

conceptualize cultural influence across disciplines (Bond 1987; Clark, 1990; Dorfman &

Howell, 1988; Inkeles and Levinson, 1969; Keilor and Hult, 1999; Schwartz, 1994; Smith

et al, 1996; Steenkamp, 2001). Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions framework (1980; 2001.)

is by far, however, the most widely used national cultural framework in psychology,

sociology, marketing, and management studies (Sondergaard, 1994; Steenkamp, 2001). To

create his framework, Hofstede utilized 116,000 questionnaires from over 60,000

participants in seventy countries. Through his empirical work, Hofstede identified five

dimensions of national culture and linked the dimensions with demographic, geographic,

economic, and political aspects of a society, which is essentially unmatched in other

studies. (Kale and Barnes, 1992). Hofstede's Five Dimensions of National Culture are

briefly summarized here, and a more detailed review for each dimension follows:

- *Individualism:* the extent to which people feel independent, as opposed to being

   interdependent as members of larger wholes.

- *Power Distance:* the extent to which the less powerful members of

   organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is

   distributed unequally.

- *Masculinity:* the extent to which the use of force in endorsed socially.

- *Uncertainty Avoidance:* reflects a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. Uncertainty avoidance has nothing to do with risk avoidance, nor with following rules. It has to do with anxiety and distrust in the face of the unknown, and conversely, with a wish to have fixed habits and rituals, and to know the truth.

- *Long-Term Orientation:* deals with change. In a long-time-oriented culture, the basic notion about the world is that it is in flux, and preparing for the future is always needed.

In Hofstede's seminal work (1980, 2001), individualism is represented as a national culture dimension where the connections between individuals are loose and unstructured. In individualistic societies, individuals are expected to look after themselves and their immediate family or close social circle only. This cultural dimension is described by Hofstede as the opposite of collectivism, where societal organizations are clear and distinct and individuals from birth onward are integrated into strong, unified groups, which "throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioned loyalty" (Hofstede, 2001, P. 225).

Differences in cultural ideation related to individualism and collectivism are rooted in an individual's sense of self, or self-concept and their tendency to adhere to societal norms (Hofstede, 1980). Individualism is associated with self-actualization, and individual identity is comprised mainly of their own subjective beliefs. Conversely, collectivism

manifests in cultures where self-concept is based on the social system to which they belong

(deMooij & Hofstede, 2010).

Individualism	Collectivism
Everyone is supposed to take care of him- or herself and his or her immediate family only	People are born into extended families or clans which protect them in exchange for loyalty
"I" – consciousness	"We" –consciousness
Right of privacy	Stress on belonging
Speaking one's mind is healthy	Harmony should always be maintained
Others classified as individuals	Others classified as in-group or out-group
Personal opinion expected: one person one vote	Opinions and votes predetermined by in-group
Transgression of norms leads to guilt feelings	Transgression of norms leads to shame feelings
Languages in which the word "I" is indispensable	Languages in which the word "I" is avoided
Purpose of education is learning how to learn	Purpose of education is learning how to do
Task prevails over relationship	Relationship prevails over task

(Source: Hofstede, 2011, p. 11)

Hofstede's concept of power distance is based on the work of Mulder (et al., 1971; Mulder, 1976; 1977) which utilized a series of laboratory and field experiments to measure the "degree of inequality in power between a less powerful individual and a more powerful individual belonging to the same (loosely or tightly knit) social system (Mulder 1977, p. 90). According to Hofstede, human inequality may manifest through a variety of means, including prestige, wealth, power or status, and societal norms will impact the collective need to either accept or reduce these inequities (Hofstede, 1980). In most organizations, distributed power is formalized in a hierarchy (Hofstede, 1980), and the relationships between managers and subordinates bears similarity to fundamental human relationships (Levinson et al., 1962; Kakar, 1971). Mulder's Power Distance Reduction theory posits

that in organizations, subordinates will try to reduce the power distance between themselves and their managers, while the managers will try to maintain or expand it (Mulder, 1977). In examining power distance at a cultural level. Hofstede's definition of power distance aligns to Mulder's, with the caveat that "cultural differentiation determines the level at which the tendency of the powerful to maintain or increase power distances and the tendency of the less powerful to reduce them will find their equilibrium" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 99).

Small Power Distance	Large Power Distance
Use of power should be legitimate and is subject to criteria of good and evil	Power is a basic fact of society antedating good or evil: its legitimacy is irrelevant
Parents treat children as equals	Parents teach children obedience
Older people are neither respected nor feared	Older people are both respected and feared
Student-centered education	Teacher-centered education
Hierarchy means inequality of roles, established for convenience	Hierarchy means existential inequality
Subordinates expect to be consulted	Subordinates expect to be told what to do
Pluralist governments based on majority vote and changed peacefully	Autocratic governments based on co-optation and changed by revolution
Corruption rare; scandals end political careers	Corruption frequent; scandals are covered up
Income distribution in society rather even	Income distribution in society very uneven
Religions stressing equality of believers	Religions with a hierarchy of priests

(Source: Hofstede, 2011, p. 9)

Hofstede's masculinity dimension deals with the impact of biological differences between the sexes, and whether these differences have implications for human behavior norms in society. According to Hofstede, the predominant socialization pattern across cultures is that men are supposed to be more assertive, and women are expected to be more nurturing (Hofstede, 1980). Leveraging the anthropological work of social science scholars

(Barry et al, 1957; McClelland, 1975; Spenner & Featherman, 1978), Hofstede notes that

with few exceptions, behavior defined as "male" is generally associated with autonomy,

aggression, exhibition and dominance, while behavior defined as "female" is commonly

associated with nurturance, affiliation, helpfulness and humility (Hofstede, 1980). These

behavioral patterns translate to, and have implications for, organizational hierarchies. For

example, business goals may be seen as "achievement driven", which aligns to the

achieving role of the male. Thus, most business organizations have male-dominated

executive teams; conversely, fields where goals are more humanistic in nature, like nursing

or primary education, tend to be more female-dominated. (Hofstede, 1980). It is

important to underscore that these traditional sex role definitions have eroded in the

roughly 40 years since Hofstede's seminal work was published, reflecting changing

societal and organizational norms.

Femininity	Masculinity
Minimum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders	Maximum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders
Men and women should be modest and caring	Men should be and women may be assertive and ambitious
Balance between family and work	Work prevails over family
Sympathy for the weak	Admiration for the strong
Both fathers and mothers deal with facts and feelings	Fathers deal with facts, mothers with feelings
Both boys and girls may cry but neither should fight	Girls cry, boys don't; boys should fight back, girls shouldn't fight
Mothers decide on number of children	Fathers decide on family size
Many women in elected political positions	Few women in elected political positions
Religion focuses on fellow human beings	Religion focuses on God or gods
Matter-of-fact attitudes about sexuality; sex is a way of relating	Moralistic attitudes about sexuality; sex is a way of performing

(Source: Hofstede, 2011, p. 11)

Uncertainty avoidance is commonly assumed to related to risk-aversion, but this is actually a misinterpretation of Hofstede's UA dimension. Uncertainty avoidance as described by Hofstede deals with "the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity and try to avoid these situations" (deMooij & Hofstede, 2010). Rather than risk mitigation, this dimension refers more towards how people deal with uncertainty. Hofstede notes that "ways of coping with uncertainty belong to the cultural heritage of societies…and reflected in collectively held values of the members of a particular society" (Hofstede, 1980). Individuals who manifest high levels of uncertainty avoidance may prefer structure, order, rules and formality and may be less open to change and innovation (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010). Uncertainty avoidance manifests in organizations as well, through the unpredictability of the behavior of its employees and stakeholders and as a result, organizations attempt to reduce internal uncertainty through the use of rules, regulations and rituals (Hofstede, 1980; Perry, 1972).

Weak Uncertainty Avoidance	Strong Uncertainty Avoidance
The uncertainty inherent in life is accepted and each day is taken as it comes	The uncertainty inherent in life is felt as a continuous threat that must be fought
Ease, lower stress, self-control, low anxiety	Higher stress, emotionality, anxiety, neuroticism
Higher scores on subjective health and well-being	Lower scores on subjective health and well-being
Tolerance of deviant persons and ideas: what is different is curious	Intolerance of deviant persons and ideas: what is different is dangerous
Comfortable with ambiguity and chaos	Need for clarity and structure
Teachers may say 'I don't know'	Teachers supposed to have all the answers
Changing jobs no problem	Staying in jobs even if disliked
Dislike of rules - written or unwritten	Emotional need for rules – even if not obeyed
In politics, citizens feel and are seen as competent towards authorities	In politics, citizens feel and are seen as incompetent towards authorities
In religion, philosophy and science: relativism and empiricism	In religion, philosophy and science: belief in ultimate truths and grand theories

(source: Hofstede, 2011, p. 13)

The four aforementioned cultural dimensions served as the foundation of

Hofstede's original work until the addition of long-term orientation, which reflects cultural

tendencies to value future rewards (Bukowski & Rudnicki, 2019). More specifically, long-

term orientation is described by Hofstede as "the extent to which a society exhibits a

pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historic or short-term

point of view" (deMooij & Hofstede, 2010, p, 90). Individuals who demonstrate high

levels of long-term orientation are those who are comfortable and even prefer to delay

short-term gains or material success in order to prepare for the future. Conversely,

individuals who have a short-term orientation are likely to concentrate on the present or

past rather than the future. Hofstede added this dimension as a means to explain

differences between Eastern and Western cultural philosophies, and the prioritization of

long-term vs. short-term goals. Long-term orientation has been studied in organizational

psychology, most notably by Ouchi & Suzuki (1993) in their work on the practice of the

kaizen model of operation in Japan, where institutions are focused on a constant adaptation

to innovation through making small changes in all aspects of business activity with a focus

on long-term organizational success and stability (Ouchi & Suzuki, 1993; Lam, 2000).

Short-Term Orientation	Long-Term Orientation
Most important events in life occurred in the past or take place now	Most important events in life will occur in the future
Personal steadiness and stability: a good person is always the same	A good person adapts to the circumstances
There are universal guidelines about what is good and evil	What is good and evil depends upon the circumstances
Traditions are sacrosanct	Traditions are adaptable to changed circumstances
Family life guided by imperatives	Family life guided by shared tasks
Supposed to be proud of one's country	Trying to learn from other countries
Service to others is an important goal	Thrift and perseverance are important goals
Social spending and consumption	Large savings quote, funds available for investment
Students attribute success and failure to luck	Students attribute success to effort and failure to lack of effort
Slow or no economic growth of poor countries	Fast economic growth of countries up till a level of prosperity

(Source: deMooij and Hofstede, 2010, p. 14)

Hofstede's work was originally applied to human resources management, but has

become the standard in international marketing studies (Soares et al., 2007). One of the

main reasons that Hofstede's framework remains popular in marketing studies is that its

cultural dimensions fully cover and extend major conceptualizations of culture developed

through decades of research (Yoo, Donthu & Lenartowicz, 2011). Clark (1990) noted that

there are many similarities among the different typologies of culture, and that their

dimensions are well captured in the Hofstede framework. Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework has been heavily replicated in social sciences and cross-cultural studies literature, and found to be the most important theory of cultural types (Chandy & Williams, 1994; Sondergaard, 1994). In addition, Soares et al. (2007) confirmed the relevance of the Hofstede cultural dimensions framework through a comprehensive review of related literature. Kale and Barnes (2002) note that researchers have found meaningful relationships between national culture and important demographic, geographic, economic and political facets of a society. Hofstede's framework has been used to compare cultures, support hypotheses, and as a theoretical framework for comparing cultures (Lu et al., 1999). Holt argues that iconic brands can only be created through tacit cultural branding strategies, believing that that basic foundation that underpins all iconic brands have their root in cultural branding (Holt, 2004).

Hofstede's work is not without detractors. Hofstede's work was not meant to specifically apply to individuals, and scholars have encountered methodological difficulties in doing so (Robinson, 1983; Sondergaard, 1994). In addition, there are several competing models of cultural orientation (Ingelhart, 1971; Schwartz, 1994; House et al, 2004) which take different views on the nature of cultural disposition in society. House's GLOBE study (2004), for example, included nine dimensions of culture, in the form of both practices and values, and at the national and organizational level. Scholars are divided, however, on the applicability of Hofstede and GLOBE dimensions to individuals.

Brewer and Venaik (2013) argue that neither the Hofstede or GLOBE dimensions may be translated to individual behavior, noting that in both studies, "questionnaire items that reflect cultural constructs are correlated at the mean national level but are not significantly correlated at the individual or organizational level; as such, they do represent constructs of individuals or organizational characteristics" (Brewer & Venaik, 2013, p. 470). This does not, however, render either Hofstede or GLOBE values completely useless as it pertains to individual behavior. Brewer and Venaik note that in order for either the Hofstede or GLOBE constructs to meaningfully apply to individuals, that scholars must design and test culture scales that are valid at either the cultural or organizational level (Brewer & Venaik, 2013). Yet this is precisely what Yoo et al. (2011) did in creating CVSCALE, a psychometrically sound measure of Hofstede's cultural dimensions at the individual level that is used in this study. CVSCALE, a 26-item five-dimensional scale shows adequate reliability, validity, and across-sample and across-national generalizability (Yoo, Donthu & Lenartowicz, 2011). This study uses a scale that successfully links individual attitudes and behaviors to individual-level cultural dispositions. They posit that through measuring individual cultural dispositions and not linking them with national culture, researchers "can avoid the ecological fallacy that occurs when ecological or country-level relationships are interpreted as if they are applied to individuals." (Yoo, Donthu & Lenartowicz, 2011, P. 195).

Social Media and Branding

With the rise of social media, consumers have become empowered to connect with each other through digitally connected networks and share their likes and dislikes of their favorite brands. Existing research has examined the focuses on the social networking impact of social media on overall brand image (Kim and Johnson, 2015; Tarnovskaya and Biedensback, 2017; Baldus, 2018; Hudson et. al., 2014; and Tuskej and Podnar, 2018), but there is a lack of research specific to iconic brands and emotional attachment to brands. What is clear, however, is that through social media, consumers can influence brand image through the ability to share their views and exert influence on other consumers, which in turn affects brand perceptions (Kim and Johnson, 2015). This undoubtedly affects iconic brands, perhaps more so than other brands given the propensity for higher levels of consumer emotional brand attachment in iconic brands.

Social media empowers consumers to actively share their insights exert influence over other consumers to levels not seen prior to its creation (Kim and Johnson, 2015). Aided by the ongoing global expansion of internet access and mobile devices, social media provides a highly interactive platform where customers can share ideas, information and interact in an engaging way in real time (Ibrahim, Wang and Bourne, 2017). Companies have attempted to leverage social media for brand-related activities, including creating and disseminating information about their brands, effectively using social media as an additional content-distribution channel (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011). The

challenge, however, is that social media is not a captive distribution channel and operates

differently from the way traditional marketing communications are implemented. Prior to

the advent of social media, consumers received brand messages through traditional media

channels, including television, radio and print advertising. These channels facilitate a one-

way dissemination of messaging, from the brand to the consumer, and there is no option

for engagement or interactivity on the part of the consumer. Social media by its very nature

is inherently different from traditional media channels. Consumers are able to engage

directly with a company's brand messaging through social media, and facilitate interaction

with other consumers through user-generated content (Kim and Johnson, 2015).

Through social media platforms, interactions between consumers and brands are

strengthened through the enhanced ability for consumers to interact with each other and

with brands (Hajli et al. 2017). On social media, user-generated content is created not by

the brand; it is created by the consumer and shared through various social networking

platforms like Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn or through online brand communities, which

may be defined as "a grouping of individuals sharing a mutual interest in a brand, using

electronic mediation to overcome real-life space and time limitations." (Dessart, Veloutsu

and Morgan-Thomas, 2015). This puts immense power in the hands of the consumer, as

research indicates that brand-related consumer-generated content shared through social

media may have more influence than traditional media sources since it is being transmitted

by a trust-worthy source from the consumer's personal network (Chu and Kim, 2011).

Through online brand communities, for example, like-minded consumers are able to share content about their favorite brands in a real-time, facilitating dialogue and strengthening the dynamic interactions that occurs between consumers in a social interaction.

In addition, research indicates that through the information exchange process that occurs in online brand communities, where consumers have these social interactions and share their knowledge, information and experiences with brands, helps foster and enhance emotional brand attachment (Algensheimer et al., 2005; Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006). This has not gone unnoticed by companies, who have recognized not only the growing influence of online brand communities, but also the benefits that they provide from a corporate perspective, including gathering consumer insights and providing a medium for effective communication with consumers when used appropriately (Jang et al., 2008). Given its meteoric rise and ubiquitous influence, social media today is largely seen as a vital space for brands to interact with their consumers (Zwass, 2010), and represents a critical variable in maximizing the lifetime value of customer segments (Payne & Frow, 2005).

Perhaps one of its most powerful and long-lasting implications is the level of emotional attachment that may be gained through the effective use of social media, which has the potential to create deeper emotional engagement with a brand, since the consumer is not a passive recipient of information but is an active creator and distributor of the information (Stewart and Pavlou, 2002). This gives individuals significant influence over

perceptions of a brand's identity and authenticity, which play critical roles in shaping

consumer perceptions of a brand's value and help differentiate the brand from its

competitors (Zaichowsky, 2010).

Emotional Attachment to Brands and Brand Loyalty to Measure Brand Preferences

Consumers' preferences toward brands is a broad concept that reveals consumers'

internal likeliness to choose brands. In this study, two theoretically well-established

constructs are applied as two measures of brand preferences: (1) emotional attachment to

brands (EAB) and (2) brand loyalty.

The concept of emotional attachment to brands is a relatively new construct in

consumer behavior (Grisaffe and Ngyuen, 2009), and traces its theoretical underpinnings

to the concept of Attachment theory, which investigated emotional attachments in the

context of parent-child relationships (Dwivedi et al., 2019). Attachment theory is described

as a disposition to seek proximity and contact with another individual who is the object of

the attachment (Bowlby, 1988), and in consumer behavior literature it is recognized that

consumers develop emotional attachments with a variety of marketable entities, including

brands (Percy at al., 2004; Slater, 2000). Fournier (1998) indicates that in close consumer-

brand relationships, consumers identify with and become involved with many of the brands

they regularly consume, leading to the development of emotional attachment. Emotional

attachment—and therefore long-standing brand relationships—can also manifest through

consumer socialization and sentimentality, where consumers place a meaningful pairing between a brand and a positive childhood memory or social tie to family, community or social group (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001).

Individuals may develop emotional attachments to a wide array of objects, both living as in the case of people or animals, and material, including gifts, geographies and ideas (Thomson, MacInnis & Park, 2006). Brand attachment is defined in literature as "an emotion-laden bond between a person and a brand characterized by deep feelings of connection, affection, and passion involving the thoughts and feelings about the brand and its relationship to the self" (Pedeliento et al., 2016, p. 195). Stronger levels of brand attachment can lead to better margins, as Thomson, MacInnis and Park (2005) note that in cases where brand attachment is high, consumers are more willing to pay a price premium.

Given the close relationships developed between iconic brands and consumers, when elements of a brand change (i.e., logo, color, packaging, messaging, spokesperson) consumers are apt to react either positively, negatively or apathetically to the changes, depending on their attachment levels. (Shields and Johnson, 2016; Testa et. al., 2017; Brexendorf, Bayus and Keller, 2015; Zaichowsky, 2010; Pauwels-Delassus and Descotes, 2013). Iconic brands enjoy high levels of emotional attachment among its consumers and become symbols that consumers identify with, respect, admire and even love (Testa et. al., 2017). In this manner, iconic brands effectively transcend the bounds of the typical brand/consumer relationship by creating deep emotional ties with their consumers, and a

core consumer base that is intensely loyal and resistant to attacks on the brand (Luedicke, Thompson and Geisler, 2010).

Brand loyalty is a widely studied construct in marketing literature, and a consumer's propensity to be loyal to particular brands is of paramount important to academics and practitioners alike. In earlier academic study, brand loyalty was viewed primarily as a customer's tendency to continue to exhibit similar over time, in similar situations that had been previously encountered (Reynolds et al., 1974). Within this overall framework, there is considerable early work and empirical research on brand loyalty and consumer behavior (Howard & Sheth, 1969; Sheth, 1973; Jacoby, 1971; Day, 1969). Sheth (1973) viewed brand loyalty as a multidimensional construct that is determined by numerous distinct psychological processes, and believed that repeat purchase behavior was not necessarily indicative of consumer loyalty towards a brand.

More recently, marketing scholars have devoted significant study in understanding the very nature of brand loyalty, attempting to identify and analyze its antecedent constructs, including customer satisfaction, brand trust and brand evaluation (Fornell, 1992; Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Oliver, 1999; Hes and Story, 2005). Veloutsu (2007) examined the direct effect of trust, satisfaction, brand evaluation and brand relationship strength on the development of brand loyalty, noting that while all of these play significant roles in brand loyalty creation, the consumer's relationship with the brand "seems to be a key determinant of brand loyalty" (Veloutsu, 2007, p. 414). As the literature has

developed, brand loyalty is widely accepted as being more than purchase repetition; rather, it has both behavioral and attitudinal dimensions where commitment is a primary feature (El-Manstrly and Harrison, 2013; Beerli et al., 2004; Gremler and Brown, 1999; Gournaris and Stathakopoulous, 2004).

Precisely how consumers become loyal to brands, and the psychological processes that consumers apply in in that journey remains a focal issue in marketing research (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Oliver, 1999; Woodside & Walser, 2007). Marketing and brand scholars have taken both attitudinal and behavioral views on brand loyalty, with behavioral loyalty generally being synonymous with repeat purchase behavior (Farr & Hollis, 1997; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Quester & Lim, 2003). The concept of attitudinal loyalty implies that true authentic brand loyalty transcends repeat purchase behavior, and indicates a true commitment to a specific brand (Day, 1969; Zins, 2001; Back & Parks, 2003; Quester & Lim, 2003). Harris and Goode (2004) suggest that key marketing constructs form the core of loyalty generation, including trust, consumer satisfaction, and perceived value. Studies also suggest that a social identity perspective, which advocates the study of consumers' identity motives, most notably self-expression, self-enhancement, and self-esteem, plays a vital role in how consumers form relationships and loyalty with brands (Aherne et al., 2005; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Mukerjee & He, 2008; Escalas, 2004; He et al., 2012).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The remainder of this chapter discusses a proposed theoretical framework to explore the role of an individual's culture and social media activity on two brand personality preference constructs, emotional attachment to brands and brand loyalty. A proposed conceptual model revealing the interactions previously mentioned appears below in Figure 1.
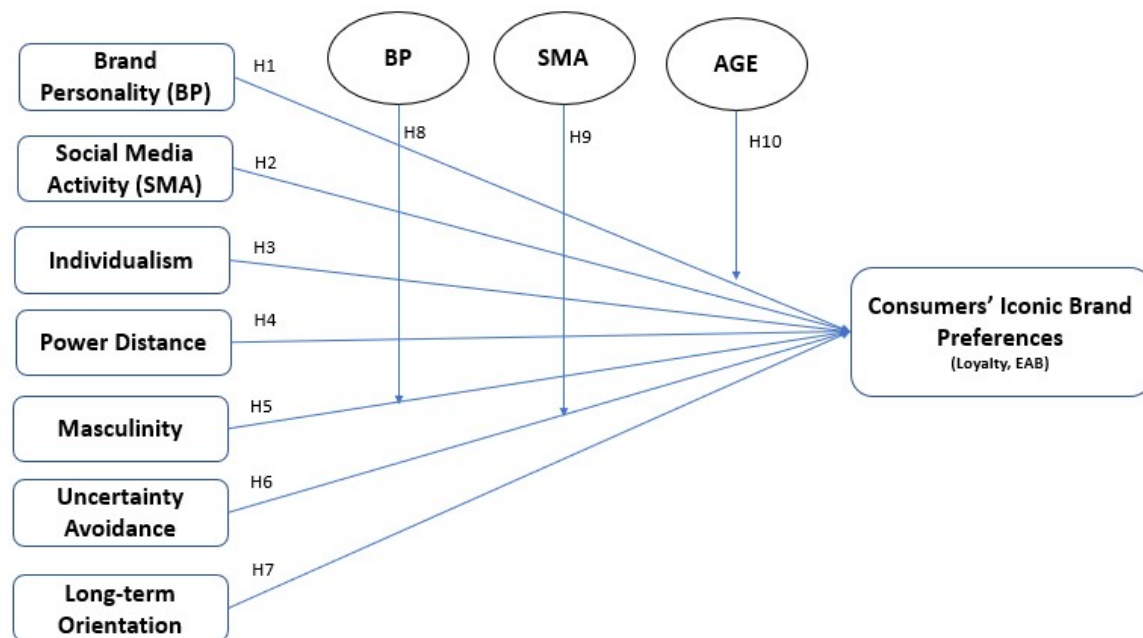
Figure 1. Overview of Conceptual Model

BP=Brand Personality; SMA=Social Media Activity; EAB=Emotional Attachment to Brands

From a theory perspective, this model is based upon the theoretical underpinnings of several well-researched disciplines. Building on the aforementioned works of Aaker (1997) (Brand Personality), Hofstede (1980; 2001) (Cultural Disposition), and Thompson, MacInnis and Park (2005) (Brand Loyalty; Emotional Attachment to Brands) this conceptual model seeks to explain the relationship between brand personality, cultural disposition and social media activity and consumers' iconic brand preferences. To test this model, a series of theory-supported hypotheses are proposed below:

H1: Brand personality positively influences consumers' iconic brand preferences.

A firm's brand personality can serve as a powerful means for consumers to classify and identify with brands. Aaker's seminal work on brand personality (1997) categorized brand personality according to five groups: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. Brands studied within the Aaker framework were domiciled in the U.S., and it was noted there were some differences across cultures, where interpretations of these five categories did not necessarily translate, or other more culturally relevant terms emerged (i.e., in both Japan and Spain, "passion" emerged and replaced "competency" as a brand personality item) (Keller & Lehman, 2002). Aaker explained this variance in terms of the "malleable self", which consists of self-conceptions that gain relevance in social situations (Aaker, 1997).

Despite a consumer's individual interpretation of a particular brand personality item or definition, research indicates that measurement reliabilities for Aaker's brand personality items differed minimally across cultures. Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer (2013) found that the brand personality dimensions are not independent from each other, concluding that "brand personality dimensions show appropriate predictive potential as related to performance measures, thereby resembling the results found for performance outcomes of human personality factors and supporting the relevance of the concept in brand research in marketing," (p. 957).

Iconic brands represent a subset of commercial brands that consumers have intense admiration for. With iconic brands, the brands "become collectively valued in society as a widely shared symbol of a particular ideology for a segment of the population (Holt, 2012, p. 314). To achieve this level of customer admiration, it is assumed that iconic brand personalities should be strong and distinct, as it would be highly unlikely that a brand having an ill-defined, tepid or malleable brand personality would ever achieve iconic status based on existing descriptions of iconic brands in literature (Holt, 2012; Testa et al., 2017; Norris et al., 2020; Eisenrich et al., 2009). Thus, strong and distinct brand personalities are likely to constitute the core nature of iconic brands and, accordingly, will serve as a positive influence on consumers' iconic brand preferences.

H2: Consumers with reduced social media activities have stronger preferences towards iconic brands than those with increased social media activities.

Marketing and branding scholars have long sought to identify the impact of collective consumers' mindset, relationships and interactions between consumers who share an affinity for a particular brand (Muniz & O-Guinn, 2001; Arnould, 2009; Franke & Shaw, 2003; McAlexander et al., 2002). In studying brand communities, marketers are able to glean valuable insights that may be used to create new products and services, and find ways to form better relationships with brands and their most loyal followers (Laroche et al., 2012). Social media has proven to be a massively disruptive force in the brand community construct, giving rise to online brand communities where organizations are able to better interact with consumers, gain access to information in real-time and establishing connections with consumers.

Prior to the advent of social media, brand communities were constrained by physical and geographic boundaries. With the rapid proliferation of mobile devices and the internet, these constraints have largely vanished, with social media becoming the key to forming online brand communities of existing and potential consumers to share insights through the active creation of content shared between social media users. It is this active content creation that has the greatest influence on brand community member opinions and their purchase intentions (Algesheimer, Dholakia & Hermann, 2005).

Iconic brands enjoy strong support for their online brand communities, and use them as vital sources of information about their consumers. For example, Lego has successfully leveraged its social media presence to not only connect Lego brand enthusiasts, but also gain input for new product ideas through its Lego Ideas online community. Through Lego Ideas, Lego brand devotees submit ideas for new Lego products, and those deemed most appealing by community members, has the potential to be developed as a new Lego product (http://www.ideas.lego.com).

Dessart et al. (2012) postulate that "participation with a community of like-minded consumers is an important contributing factor to overall brand success" (p. 30). Yet the overabundance of content available on the internet today could be having the opposite of the intended impact of greater brand loyalty through social media usage. Jang et al. (2008), note that in a company-controlled online brand community, consumer participation and experiences can be effectively managed by the company, but this may not be sufficient to retain consumers and build loyal, profitable relationships. Thus, the veritable explosion of internet and social media content available today may be having the opposite effect, where individuals who have less activity on social media may develop stronger brand preferences towards iconic brands. In addition, high levels of social media activities may be an indicator of a consumer's diverse preferences, which can lower the consumer's interest in a specific brand, even an iconic one.

H3: Individualism has a negative impact on consumers' iconic brand preferences.

Individualism and its counterpart, 'Collectivism' represent two opposing societal dispositions. Individualism is described by Hofstede as "a preference for a loosely knit social framework, where individuals take care of themselves and their immediate families" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 402). With Collectivism, the societal norm is to "integrate into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 225). In this manner, consumers who may have individualistic tendencies are likely to be less loyal to brands in general, preferring instead to ascribe their own meaning and relevance to brands that may not be consistent with the brand's stated identity or messaging. This may have a notable impact on an individual's overall concept of loyalty. Individualism as described in the Hofstede framework manifests in individual identities, where the individual's identity is based on the person, rather than in Collectivism where an individual's identity is based on the social ecosystem in which they belong (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010).

Individualism may have significant implications for consumers' iconic brand preferences, particularly their propensity to be loyal to them. Individualist consumers naturally may ascribe to a more myopic worldview that influences their concepts of self, personality and loyalty, whereas collectivist consumers reject the separation between concepts of self, personality and their surrounding social context (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010.). This may lead to a decrease in brand loyalty, constituting a negative influence on

brand preferences towards iconic brands. In addition, individualistic consumers, tend to construct their own preferences independently, which creates preferences for diverse brands (Bukowski & Rudnicki, 2019). This tendency will be stronger with iconic brands, since iconic brands contain strong cultural elements and often relate to subcultures of a minority group. By contrast, collectivist consumers tend to construct their preferences as a result of their interactions with other consumers, leading to more similar preferences among these consumers. Thus, individualism will have a negative impact on consumers' iconic brand preferences.

H4: Power distance has a positive impact on consumers' preferences towards iconic brands.

Rules, order, hierarchy and status are all manifestations of high power distance cultures, where individuals readily accept that power is distributed unequally. This overall view is likely to have significant implications on how consumers with high power distance value and interact with brands. For these consumers, brands may represent reflections of their social status and place in a societal hierarchy than consumers with low power distance. Hofstede et al. (2010) noted that low power distance is associated with more individualistic tendencies, including more independent thinking and the expression of individual opinions and disagreements openly. Accordingly, consumers with low power distance would be less likely to patronize and be loyal to brands simply because of their

perceived cultural iconicity or status. For consumers who have cultural dispositions that align to high power distance values, hierarchical boundaries of status are both accepted and respected, and it is likely that individuals who manifest high levels of power distance are likely to desire to show their status and authority through their brand choices.

Testa et al., (2017) note that iconic brands represent a small subset of brands that embody meanings that consumers identify with, admire, respect and even love. This level of admiration reinforces the sense of status or hierarchy that may appeal to consumers with high power distance. For these consumers, owning, consuming and displaying cultural iconic brands may be seen as a social status symbol or a reflection of in-group membership. Sorensen and Nielsen's (2015) description of iconic brands as, "a commercialized, yet sacred visual, aural or textual representation anchored in a specific temporal/historical and special/geographical context, broadly recognized by its recipients as having iconic status," (p. 6), aligns almost seamlessly with high power distance characteristics. These types of consumers tend to value such symbols more strongly than those with low power distance.

H5: Masculinity has a positive impact on consumers' preferences towards iconic brands.

Masculinity as described by Hofstede as the acceptance of defined gender roles for men and women which are manifest across society. According to Hofstede, the

predominant socialization pattern in most societies is for men to be assertive, dominant and tough, while women are expected to be more nurturing (Hofstede, 1980). In the years since Hofstede's work was first published, however, there has been a marked shift in societal acceptance of strictly defined gender roles in modern society, and brands rarely, if ever, portray a brand identity that is anti-egalitarian.

Social identity theory posits that an individuals' self-concept is connected with how the individual comes to see themselves as members of a group (Stets & Burke, 2000). As part of this view of self-concept, one's social identity directly relates to the feeling of: 1) being part of that group; and 2) viewing things from the group's perspective (Stets & Burke, 2000). Despite the notable shift both culturally and commercially that eschews strict gender roles, high masculinity may lead to enhanced preferences towards iconic brands associated with ruggedness, which is a component of brand personality. Many iconic brands, including Marlboro, Harley Davidson, Jeep, Caterpillar, and others possess a brand personality that is strongly associated with ruggedness. For consumers with high masculinity, the overall brand positioning of these types of brands may be appealing, as their brand image aligns with traditional gender-role stereotypes of toughness, ruggedness and durability. This appeal is likely to be exacerbated in iconic brands that have a strong social media presence and online brand communities, which enables consumers to share ideas, stories and brand interactions with each other.

H6: Uncertainty avoidance has a negative impact on consumers' preferences towards iconic brands.

Uncertainty avoidance is defined by Hofstede as "the extent to which members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations" (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005, p. 403). This not risk-aversion, but rather an unease with the lack of predictability, order or structure. Hofstede notes that uncertainty is part of the basic human condition, postulating that extreme uncertainty creates intolerable anxiety, and as such society has developed methods to cope with uncertainty through the use of technology, rules and rituals (Hofstede, 1980). For individuals who manifest high levels of uncertainty avoidance, the perceived stature, strength and stability that underpin iconic brands may serve as a buffer against uncertainty for them.

One of the core principles of brands achieving iconic status is their alignment to emerging sociocultural trends, and their historical fit between the brand and society (Testa et al., 2017). In order to maintain iconic status, brands must also adapt their narratives to changing societal conditions (Holt, 2004), and in doing so the brand's ambidexterity and success in adapting to cultural shifts may provide a level of discomfort for individuals who are highly averse to ambiguity. This discomfort level may be exacerbated by like-minded consumers sharing content in the online brand communities for iconic brands, which may

promote feelings of self-congruence, which is defined as the alignment of a consumers'

self -image and a brand personality or image (Aaker, 1997; Sirgy, 1992). Literature

suggests that self-congruence can enhance affective, attitudinal, and behavioral consumer

responses to a brand (Aaker, 1999; Grohman, 2009), and plays a vital role in generating

emotional brand attachment (Chaplin and John, 2005; Park et al., 2010). Since iconic

brands must, as a matter of their own efficacy and survival, adapt and change with

emerging sociocultural trends and shifting societal norms, this propensity for change may

not be liked by those with high uncertainty avoidance, even though the brands themselves

by adapting and changing have a stronger chance to endure. Thus, for consumers with high

uncertainty avoidance, any change is discomforting and viewed negatively.

**H7: Long-term orientation has a positive impact on consumers' preferences towards
iconic brands.**

Long-term orientation as described by Hofstede represents the extent to which

members of a culture are cognitively programmed to accept delayed gratification of

material, social, or emotional needs (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Iconic brands tend to

elicit strong loyalty from their core customers (Holt, 2004; Eisengerich et al, 2009). This

loyalty is also typically enduring (Luedicke, Thompson & Geisler, 2010), provided the

iconic brand successfully maintains its historical fit and coherence with existing societal

values.

Unlike consumers with high uncertainty avoidance, the overall enduring nature of iconic brands is likely to appeal to individuals who have a long-term cultural disposition, especially those who prefer view the stability that iconic brands provide. For these types of consumers, who prefers to delay gratification in the short term and prioritize long-term needs, the characteristics of iconic brands will be highly appealing. Brand iconization itself is a long-term process (Holt & Cameron, 2010). To move a brand towards iconic status, brand managers must imbue the brand with abstract characteristics that define its culture, while simultaneously embracing new ideologies that consumers will find meaningful (Torelli & Cheng, 2015). This takes time, and the acceptance of a brand's iconic status in society typically results after a time period in which the brand makes appearance in popular culture (i.e., films, books, music), largely in mass media (Torelli & Cheng, 2015).

Once iconicity is achieved, although it should not be considered a perpetual state, iconic brands typically have longevity that in some cases may span generations (Norris et al., 2020). Yu and Briss (2018) believe that iconic brands embody the principles of longevity, and that relevance to an individual consumer's personal history make it easier for them to relate to the brand in the future. Thus, once a brand is established as an icon, consumers who have a cultural disposition that prefers a long-term orientation may find the perceived strength of the iconic brand positively, since that strength aligns to their tendency towards long-term planning.

H8: The positive influence of brand personality on iconic brand preferences will be weaker for consumers with high masculinity than those with low masculinity.

Consumers with high masculinity are likely to prefer brands that manifest a rugged brand identity, which supports traditional gender-role expectations that men are expected to be assertive, tough and aggressive. These preferences align with social identity theory, which notes that a person's social identity directly relates the person's feeling that they are part of a group, and that they view things from the group's perspective (Stets & Burke, 2000). Consumers with high masculinity may be considered, in effect, a group of likeminded consumers who have an affinity for iconic brands that have a distinct rugged brand personality, which is one of the five dimensions of brand personality (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, ruggedness). These brand personality dimensions are positively correlated, however, which is likely to dilute or weaken the positive appeal of masculinity. For example, Harley Davidson may be considered an iconic brand with a distinct, rugged brand personality. Its brand community, Harley Owners Group, portrays outward displays of ruggedness through video and editorial content that is sourced from both the brand itself and from other community members (https://www.harley-davidson.com). Because of the existing strong positive effect of brand personality on iconic brand preferences, the differentiating effect between consumers with high vs. low masculinity will be weakened. By contrast, consumers with low masculinity may perceive

iconic brands in a more balanced way. Therefore, consumers with high masculinity may have an unbalanced perception of brand personality, which may weaken the positive association between brand personality and brand preferences in iconic brands.

H9: Increased social media activity weakens the negative effect of Uncertainty Avoidance on iconic brand preferences.

For individuals who manifest high levels of uncertainty avoidance, ambiguity represents a negative emotional state. Hofstede notes that "extreme uncertainty creates intolerable anxiety, and human society has developed ways to cope with the inherent uncertainty of living on the brink of an uncertain future" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 154). Coping mechanisms to counter uncertainty, according to Hofstede, evolved in different ways across different societies, but the use of coping mechanisms has a singular purpose: to reduce short-term uncertainty and enhance short-term outcome predictability (Hofstede, 1980).

For individuals with high uncertainty avoidance dispositions, social media may serve as a coping mechanism. Social media enables consumers to have real-time interactions with individuals, other consumers, and brands, which fosters a sense of community. Algensheimer et al., (2005, p. 21) conceptualizes community engagement as "community members' intrinsic motivation to interact and cooperate with community members". Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), note that within communities, sharing brand

stories reinforces the communal aspects between community members, explaining that "by interacting with other community members, any one member feels more secure in his or her understanding that there are many other like-minded consumers "out there" (p. 423).

Through social media, consumers are able to create and exchange content with other social media users, whether as part of an online brand community or through more general social media channels and networks like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. In doing so, consumers feel more connected to those with shared values, interests and norms (Tardini & Cantoni, 2005), and to the brands they follow. This dampens the feelings of ambiguity, since their connection to other consumers and brands represent a tangible means to minimize uncertainty through the shared expression of user-generated content that resonates with the individual. Accordingly, consumers with high social media activity are able to reduce their uncertainty discomfort by obtaining more positive information and securing others' confirmations on social media when they evaluate iconic brands.

H10: The positive influence of brand personality on iconic brand preferences will be stronger in older consumers that in younger consumers.

Kravets and Orge (2000) suggest that consumers associate iconic brands with deep-held cultural values which help foster and reinforce a sense of inclusion and continuity among individuals. These values typically emerge slowly, however, as the process for a brand to achieve iconic status is not a rapid one (Testa et al., 2017). These values represent

what Holt (2004) refers to as the historical fit between the brand and society, and as sociocultural trends and themes develop, the iconic brand must delicately adapt itself and create new narratives.

Consumers who have witnessed the successful ambidexterity of an iconic brand to align to changing societal values and cultural trends will have had more exposure to the brand than younger consumers. Thus, older consumers will be more heavily influenced by the iconic brand's personality, since they have witnessed and experienced its evolution firsthand. Younger consumers will be less influenced by the iconic brand's personality, since their only conception of it will reflect their limited personal experience. For younger consumers, Holt's concept of "historical fit" between an iconic brand and society (Holt, 2004) has reduced relevance, given that their historical frame of reference will be smaller than those of older consumers. Thus, brand personality perception is more internalized in older consumers because of their longer consumption history than younger consumers. In addition, research suggests that while younger consumers have a greater propensity to change brands, older consumers exhibit a tendency to remain attached to the same brand (Lambert-Pandraud & Laurent, 2010).

CHAPTER 3: SURVEY EXPERIMENTS

In this chapter, a detailed description of the empirical methods used to examine the hypotheses discussed in Chapter 2 is provided. First, a preliminary study that was used to refine the main study constructs is discussed, followed by a description of the main study and sample. The chapter closes with a review of the analytical techniques used to examine the collected data.

Preliminary Survey Experiment

A preliminary survey created using the Qualtrics survey platform was conducted during the summer of 2020 (n=205) and administered through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (Mturk) platform. Qualtrics is one of the world's leading online survey tools, and is used by over 100,000 of the world's leading brands to conduct survey research globally (Qualtrics, 2020). Amazon's Mturk platform is a crowdsourcing platform that links firms and individuals to facilitate collaboration across a variety of tasks, including survey participation, data collection and analysis and more.

The preliminary survey contained 21 questions covering brand personality, cultural disposition, social media usage and utilized five brands (Apple, Louis Vuitton, Coca Cola, Nike and Facebook) in evaluating consumer loyalty and emotional attachment to brands. Data gathered through the preliminary survey were used to shape the main survey, which was administered using the same online tools and distribution platforms. The preliminary survey experiment was also instrumental in finalizing the final model in Figure 1.

Specifically, some initially considered variables were removed as they showed weak empirical results.

Boundary Conditions for Iconic Brand Selection

Although there is general agreement on what types of characteristics constitute the nature of iconic brands, there is no universally accepted singular definition of them. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the following selection characteristics are used as selection parameters for iconic brands chosen for this study. Iconic brands as described in literature are:

- A subset of commercial brands that constitute symbols embodying meanings that people admire, respect and love (Testa et al., 2017)

- Top-of-mind awareness within their product category (Ries & Trout, 1981)

- Brands that are collectively valued in society as a widely shared symbol of a particular ideology for a segment of a population (Holt, 2012)

- Brands that symbolize and match with the values, needs and aspirations of the members of a particular cultural group (Torelli, 2013)

Using these criteria as the basis for selection criteria, six brands across three product categories were chosen for the study:

Product Category	Iconic Brand Selections
Athletic Apparel	Nike & Adidas
Beverage	Coca-Cola & Pepsi
Electronics	Apple iPhone & Samsung Galaxy

Rationale for Brand Selection

Based on the aforementioned iconic brand descriptions (Testa et al., 2017; Holt, 2012; Ries & Trout, 2018; Torelli, 2013), these brands effectively meet the criteria previously set out in literature. Since the survey experiment involves individual consumer opinions and attitudes, brands chosen to represent iconic brands needed to be those that consumers are both familiar with and interact with in a simple and understandable manner. Thus, while brands like Intel, Exxon, and American Express might meet the criteria to be considered an iconic brand, brand like these were omitted since consumer interaction with and knowledge of these brands would vary widely.

Each of the six brands chosen for the experiment represent the leading first or second top-of-mind brands in their respective category by (Statista, 2020), and are represented on Interbrand's Most Valuable Brand list. (Interbrand, 2020). Statista is a global research firm that collects data on over 80,000 topics from over 22,500 sources (Statista, 2020), and Interbrand is one of the world's leading brand consultancy firms and publisher of the annual Interbrand Global Brand Report, an in-depth report of global brand valuation based on three primary areas: financial return, the role of the brand in driving purchasing decisions, and brand loyalty (Interbrand, 2020).

Table 4: Global Brand Value Rankings for Selected Brands

Brand	Global Brand Value	Category Ranking
Nike	$34.8 billion	1
Adidas	$16.5 billion	2
Coca-Cola	$84.1 billion	1
Pepsi	$67.3 billion	2
Apple*	$352.0 billion	1
Samsung*	$102.6 billion	2

(Interbrand, 2020)

*Apple and Samsung brand value is based on overall corporate brand. Apple iPhone and Samsung Galaxy represent the 1st and 2nd most popular mobile phones by net global sales.

Main Survey Experiment

Leveraging the findings and learnings from the preliminary survey, the main survey contained 23 questions related to brand personality, cultural disposition, social media usage, emotional brand attachment and brand loyalty, focused on the six brands chosen. The survey was distributed through Amazon Mturk, generating a usable sample of n=759. Demographic information gathered through the survey included gender, age, highest level of education obtained and combined household income. Of the sample n=759, 61.9% were identified as "male", 36.5% identified as "female", and 1.4% did not identify a binary gender choice, electing "prefer not to say". Self-reported ethnic representation: African American (8.7%), Asian (21.5%), Caucasian (58.6%, Hispanic (6.6%), Other (3.7%) and 0.9% did not identify an ethnic category, selecting "prefer not to say". Tables outlining additional demographic data, including age, highest level of education obtained and household income are shown in Chapter 4. A copy of the survey instrument is provided in the Appendix.

<div align="center">

Variable Measurement

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The conceptual model developed for this study examines the effects of brand personality, cultural disposition and social media activity on consumers' iconic brand preferences. Within the conceptual model, there are four separate constructs that will be measured: 1) brand personality, 2) cultural disposition, 3) social media activity, 4) iconic

brand preferences, measured by two dependent variables: 1) loyalty; and 2) emotional brand attachment. Given this model construction, this study uses multiple linear regression for testing purposes. To ensure internal consistency reliability between the construct items, Cronbach's Alpha is used.

Brand Personality Construct

Brand personality defined as a multi-faceted construct that enables consumers to express themselves along several dimensions aligned to human personalities (Aaker, 1997). Leveraging Aaker's Brand Personality Scale, brand personality was measured across five dimensions, 15 facets and 42 personality traits. The *sincerity* dimension includes the four facets "down-to-earth", "honest", "wholesome" and "cheerful", which include, respectively, three, three, two and three items. The *excitement* dimension includes four facets— "daring", "spirited", "imaginative" and "up-to-date", which include, respectively, three, three, two and three items. The *competence* dimension includes the three facets "reliable, "intelligent", and "successful, which include three items each. The *sophistication* dimension includes the two facets "upper class" and "charming", which include three items each. The *ruggedness* dimension includes the two facets "outdoorsy" and "tough", which include three and two items, respectively. All brand personality items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1= "not at all descriptive" to 7 "extremely descriptive".

TABLE 5. Brand Personality Scale (α: 0.794)

Scale Dimension	Scale Facet	Scale Item
Sincerity	Down-to-earth	* Down-to-earth
		* Family-oriented
		* Small-town
	Honest	* Honest
		* Sincere
		* Real
	Wholesome	* Wholesome
		* Original
	Cheerful	* Cheerful
		* Sentimental
		* Friendly
Excitement	Daring	* Daring
		* Trendy
		* Exciting
	Spirited	* Spirited
		* Cool
		* Young
	Imaginative	* Imaginative
		* Unique
	Up-to-date	* Up-to-date
		* Independent
		* Contemporary
Competence	Reliable	* Reliable
		* Hard working
		* Secure
	Intelligent	* Intelligent
		* Technical
		* Corporate
	Successful	* Successful
		* Leader
		* Confident
Sophistication	Upper class	* Upper class
		* Glamorous
		* Good-looking
	Charming	* Charming
		* Feminine
		* Smooth
Ruggedness	Outdoorsy	* Outdoorsy

	* Masculine
	* Western
Tough	* Tough
	* Rugged

Cultural Disposition Construct

Hofstede's dimensions of national culture is a seminal work in measuring cultural values. Using Hofstede's research, scholars have discovered meaningful relationships between national culture and important demographic, geographic, economic and political indicators of a society (Kale and Barnes, 1992). To measure cultural values at the individual level, this study will leverage a combined, 26-item six-dimensional scale developed by Yoo, Donthu and Lenartowicz (2011), measuring Individualism, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity, and Long-term orientation. A sixth cultural dimension was added in 2010 (Indulgence), however, as a new dimension there is considerably less literature on this dimension specifically. In addition, in an effort to caution against misuse of the Hofstede dimensions which has been previously discussed in Chapter 2 (ascribing national-level constructs incorrectly to individuals), given the lack of an acceptable individual-level scale for, it has been omitted in this study. These scale items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Alphas were shown above 0.6.

TABLE 6.   Individual Cultural Values Scale

Individualism (α: 0.681)

I often do "my own thing".
One should live one's life independently of others.
I like my privacy.
I prefer to be direct and forthright when discussing with people.
I am a unique individual.
What happens to me is my own doing.
When I succeed, it is usually because of my abilities
I enjoy being unique and different from others in many ways.

Power Distance (α: 0.678)

People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions
People in higher positions should not ask the opinions of people in lower positions too frequently.
People in higher positions should avoid social interaction with people in lower positions.
People in lower positions should not disagree with decisions by people in higher positions.
People in higher positions should not delegate important tasks to people in lower positions.

Uncertainty Avoidance (α: 0.690)

It is important to have instructions spelled out in detail so that I always know what I'm expected to do.
I always know what I'm expected to do.
It is important to closely follow instructions and procedures.
Rules and regulations are important because they inform me of what is expected of me.
Standardizes work procedures are helpful.
Instructions for operations are important.

Masculinity (α: 0.739)

It is more important for men to have a professional career than it is for women.
Men usually solve problems with logical analysis; women usually solve problems with intuition.

Solving difficult problems usually requires an active, forcible approach, which is typical of men.
There are some jobs that a man can always do better than a woman.

Long-Term Orientation (α: 0.697)

Respect for tradition is important to me.
I plan for the long term.
Family heritage is important to me.
I value a strong link to my past.
I work hard for success in the future.
I don't mind giving up today's fun for success in the future.
Traditional values are important to me.
Persistence is important to me.

Social Media Activity

An individual subject's level of social media activity was directly measured in the following manner:

1. Estimate your overall level of social media activity (1-7)
   (1) Never / (2) Rarely / (3) Monthly / (4) A few times per month/ (5) Weekly / (6) A few times per wk./ (7) Daily

Emotional Brand Attachment Construct

A consumer's emotional attachment to brands is a reflection of the emotional bond

between the consumer and a specific brand. This construct, based on attachment theory, is

helpful in predicting an individual's attitude toward satisfaction with a brand, their

involvement with the brand, their commitment and loyalty to the brand, along with their

willingness to pay more for that brand (Thompson, MacInnis and Park, 2005). The scale

developed my Thompson, MacInnis and Park (2005), consists of 10 single adjective items

that represent three dimensions (Affection, Passion, Connection).

TABLE 7. Consumers' Emotional Attachment to Brands (α: 0.780)

Affection Items

Affectionate
Friendly
Loved
Peaceful

Passion Items

Passionate
Delighted
Captivated

Connection Items

Connected
Bonded
Attached

Brand Loyalty Construct

This study examines brand loyalty through the overarching theoretical framework of

consumer-based brand equity, drawing on the brand equity framework of Aaker (1991) and

Keller (1993). In this framework, consumer-based brand equity may be defined as

"consumers' different response between a focal brand and an unbranded product when

both have the same level of marketing stimuli and product attributes." (Yoo and Donthu,

2001). Accordingly, brand loyalty in this context refers to the tendency of consumers to be

loyal to a given brand, and is reflected in their intention to purchase the brand. Yoo and

Donthu developed a multi-dimensional brand equity scale consisting of 10 items representing brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand awareness/ associations. This study uses Yoo and Donthu's scale focused on Brand Loyalty, which encompasses three scale items.

TABLE 8. Brand Loyalty (α: 0.815)

I consider myself to be loyal to (brand X)
(Brand X) would be my first choice
I will not buy other brands if (brand X) is available at the store.

Descriptive statistics for all variables are presented in the following tables.

TABLE 9. Demographic profile of survey participants

Gender	Freq	%	Ethnicity	Freq	%	Age Range	Freq	%	Educ. Level	Freq	%	HHI	Freq	%
M	470	61.9	African American	66	8.7	18-25	87	11.5	Less than HS	3	0.4	Under $25k	92	12.1
F	277	36.5	Asian	163	21.5	26-34	304	40.1	HS Graduate	38	5	$25-49.9k	240	31.6
			Caucasian	445	58.6	35-49	235	31	Some College	55	7.2	$50-74.9k	199	26.2
			Hispanic	50	6.6	50-64	117	15.4	2-yr degree	34	4.5	$75-99.9k	147	19.4
			Other	28	3.7	65+	16	2.1	4-yr degree	480	63.2	$100-124.9k	42	5.5
			Prefer not to say	7	0.9				Master's degree	145	19.1	$125-149.9k	16	2.1
									Doctorate	4	0.5	$150-174.9k	11	1.4
												$175-199.9k	7	0.9
												$200k+	5	0.7

TABLE 10. Composite Reliability Analysis

Composite Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Apple Brand Personality	0.823
Apple EAB	0.846
Apple Loyalty	0.784
Samsung Brand Personality	0.810
Samsung EAB	0.842
Samsung Loyalty	0.706
Coca-Cola Brand Personality	0.873
Coca-Cola EAB	0.829
Coca-Cola Loyalty	0.710
Pepsi Personality	0.875
Pepsi EAB	0.865
Pepsi Loyalty	0.717
Nike Brand Personality	0.812
Nike EAB	0.844
Nike Loyalty	0.775
Adidas Brand Personality	0.820
Adidas EAB	0.851
Adidas Loyalty	0.780

All scales demonstrated adequate reliability as indicated by Cronbach's Alpha (<.07).

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Multi-Level Linear Regression

A multi-level linear regression was applied to test the hypotheses. Two different dependent variables were used to measure consumers' iconic brand preferences: Emotional Attachment to Brands (EAB) and Brand Loyalty. Since these dependent variables were measured on a 7-point Likert scale, we apply a linear regression model. Further, since each survey respondent answered the aforementioned variable questions for the six iconic brands used (Apple iPhone, Samsung Galaxy, Nike, Adidas, Pepsi, and Coca-Cola) repeatedly, we apply multi-level regression.

In the model, there are two hierarchical levels: brands and brand-related questions for each brand (brand personality, EAB, brand loyalty). To account for demographic variations, typical demographic variables (ethnic group, gender, age, education, and income) were included as control variables.

Brand personality is treated as a composite variable, consisting of the five dimensions (sincerity, competence, excitement, sophistication, ruggedness) in the study, based on two primary factors. First, the five individual components identified in the study are highly correlated, as indicated in Table 11, which supports the use of brand personality as a single unified construct.

Table 11: Brand Personality Dimension Correlations

Pearson Correlation Coefficients					
	Sincerity	Excitement	Competence	Sophistication	Ruggedness
Sincerity	1.00000	0.70561	0.62262	0.67047	0.64432
		<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001
Excitement	0.70561	1.00000	0.70020	0.66381	0.57387
	<.0001		<.0001	<.0001	<.0001
Competence	0.62262	0.70020	1.00000	0.58416	0.45492
	<.0001	<.0001		<.0001	<.0001
Sophistication	0.67047	0.66381	0.58416	1.00000	0.59704
	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001		<.0001
Ruggedness	0.64432	0.57387	0.45492	0.59704	1.00000
	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	

Second, the brand personality framework, as described by Aaker, is a metaphorical attempt to ascribe human personality traits to non-human, non-living entities (Aaker, 1997). In this manner, the brand personality items individually do not create brand personality; rather they are the reflection of an individual's projection of human personality traits on brands.

4.2 Hypothesis Testing & Results

Table 12: Regression Estimation Results for Loyalty

Effect	Estimate	P-Value	Hypothesis
Intercept	0.5819	0.2744	
Brand Personality (BP)	0.9033***	<.0001	H1 (+)
Social Media Activity (SMA)	-0.2541***	0.0032	H2 (-)
Individualism	-0.05434*	0.0689	H3 (-)
Power Distance	0.2129***	<.0001	H4 (+)
Masculinity	0.3969***	<.0001	H5 (+)
Uncertainty Avoidance (UA)	-0.5282***	<.0001	H6 (-)
LT Orientation	0.06708**	0.0123	H7 (+)
BP x Age	0.05713***	0.0004	H8 (-)
SMA x UA	0.06726***	<.0001	H9 (+)
BP x Masculinity	-0.05687***	<.0001	H10 (+)
African American	-0.2217**	0.0164	
Asian	-0.09278	0.2762	
Caucasian	-0.09318	0.2385	
Hispanic	0.03528	0.7135	
Age	-0.3468***	<.0001	
Education	0.1480***	<.0001	
Income	-0.00685	0.5315	

Notes: *, **, and *** indicate significance at 10%, 5%, and 1%, respectively. AIC = 12,746.5; BIC = 12,742.1.

Table 13: Regression Estimation Results for Emotional Attachment to Brand

Effect	Estimate	p-value	Hypothesis
Intercept	-0.02625	0.9243	
Brand Personality (BP)	0.9644***	<.0001	H1 (+)
Social Media Activity (SMA)	-0.09878**	0.0269	H2 (-)
Individualism	0.05343***	0.0006	H3 (-)
Power Distance	-0.01056	0.2037	H4 (+)
Masculinity	0.2860***	<.0001	H5 (+)
Uncertainty Avoidance (UA)	-0.1619***	0.0004	H6 (-)
LT Orientation	0.08463***	<.0001	H7 (+)
BP x Age	0.05214***	<.0001	H8 (-)
SMA x UA	0.02989***	0.0003	H9 (+)
BP x Masculinity	-0.05017***	<.0001	H10 (+)
African American	-0.05852	0.2220	
Asian	-0.04197	0.3422	
Caucasian	-0.08991**	0.0283	
Hispanic	-0.05980	0.2302	
Age	-0.3079***	<.0001	
Education	0.03175***	0.0001	
Income	-0.00761	0.1804	

Notes: *, **, and *** indicate significance at 10%, 5%, and 1%, respectively. AIC = 6831.5; BIC = 6869.1.

Robustness Check

As a robustness check, the five components of brand personality were measured individually, and results supported the overall H1 hypothesis that brand personality positively influences iconic brand preferences. With the exception of Excitement, all components showed a significant, positive effect on Loyalty and EAB. Excitement showed a positive impact on both Loyalty and EAB, but significant only on EAB.

Table 14: Robustness Check

Effect	DV= Loyalty		DV=EAB		Hypothesis
	Estimate	p-value	Estimate	p-value	
Intercept	0.9688	0.0648	0.0341	0.8972	
Sincerity	0.4313***	<.0001	0.3305***	<.0001	H1: Brand Personality (+)
Excitement	0.0371	0.144	0.2033***	<.0001	
Competence	0.1415***	<.0001	0.2273***	<.0001	
Sophistication	0.1969***	<.0001	0.1712***	<.0001	
Ruggedness	0.0767***	<.0001	0.0542***	<.0001	
Social Media Activity	-0.2778***	0.001	-0.0931**	0.0287	H2 (-)
Individualism	-0.0645**	0.0287	0.0253*	0.0883	H3 (-)
Power Distance	0.2033***	<.0001	0.0011	0.8903	H4 (+)
Masculinity	0.3301***	<.0001	0.2572***	<.0001	H5 (+)
Uncertainty Avoidance	-0.535***	<.0001	-0.1683***	<.0001	H6 (-)
Long-Term Orientation	0.0703***	0.0076	0.0751***	<.0001	H7 (+)
Brand Personality x Masculinity	-0.0456***	<.0001	-0.0439***	<.0001	H8 (-)
Social Media Activity x Uncertainty Avoidance	0.0697***	<.0001	0.0292***	0.0002	H9 (+)
Brand Personality x Age	0.0511***	0.0012	0.0475***	<.0001	H10 (+)
African American	-0.268***	0.0032	-0.0683	0.1349	
Asian	-0.1293	0.1231	-0.05265	0.2125	
Caucasian	-0.1397*	0.0727	-0.122***	0.0019	
Hispanic	-0.0555	0.5574	-0.114*	0.0167	
Age	-0.3026***	0.0004	-0.2714***	<.0001	
Education Level	0.1335***	<.0001	0.0209**	0.0082	
Household Income	-0.0053	0.6211	-0.0116**	0.0322	

Notes: *, **, and *** indicate significance at 10%, 5%, and 1%, respectively. For DV = Loyalty, AIC = 12,537.4; BIC = 12,582.2. For DV = EAV, AIC =6446.6, BIC=6441.4.

The study's 10 hypotheses were tested using a series of multiple linear regressions using two outcome variables: loyalty and emotional attachment to brands (EAB) (DV2). In multiple linear regression, the nature of the effect is measured from the sign of the estimated value of the regression coefficient, and its significance from the P-value.

Hypothesis 1 (H1) predicted that brand personality positively influences brand preferences for iconic brands. Based on the regression coefficients and reported P-values, the effects of Sincerity ($\beta = 0.4313$), (P-value = <0.0001 < 0.05), Competence ($\beta = 0.1415$), (P-value = <0.0001 < 0.05), Sophistication ($\beta = 0.1969$), (P-value = <0.0001 < 0.05), and Ruggedness ($\beta = 0.07673$), (P-value = <0.0001 < 0.05) have a significant positive effect on loyalty. The effect of Excitement ($\beta = 0.3717$), (P-value = <0.1440 >0.05) was insignificant.

For EAB, the effects of Sincerity ($\beta = 0.3305$), (P-value = <0.0001 < 0.05), Excitement ($\beta =0.2033$), (P-value = <0.0001 < 0.05), Competence ($\beta = 0.2273$), (P-value = <0.0001 < 0.05), Sophistication ($\beta = 0.1712$), (P-value = <0.0001 < 0.05), and Ruggedness ($\beta = 005424$), (P-value = <0.0001 < 0.05), were significantly positive. Thus, H1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2 (H2) predicted that consumers with reduced social media activities have stronger preferences toward iconic brands than those with increased social media activities. For loyalty, the effect of social media activity ($\beta =-0.2778$), (P-value = <0.0010 < 0.05) indicate that social media activity has a significant negative impact on brand loyalty. For EAB, the effect of social media activity ($\beta =-0.09311$), (P-value = <0.0287 <

0.05) indicates that social media activity has a significant negative impact on EAB. Thus, H2 was supported.

Hypotheses 3 (H3) predicted that Individualism has a negative impact on iconic brand preferences. For loyalty, the effect of Individualism (β =-0.06458), (P-value = <0.0287 < 0.05) has a significant negative impact on brand loyalty. For EAB, the effect of Individualism (β = 0.2533), (P-value = <0.0883>0.05) has an insignificant impact on EAB. Thus, H3 was supported.

Hypothesis 4 (H4) predicted that Power Distance has a positive impact on iconic brand preferences. For loyalty, the effect of Power Distance (β = 0.2033), (P-value = <0.0001 < 0.05) indicates that Power Distance has a significant positive impact on brand loyalty. For EAB, the effect of Power Distance (β = 0.001113), (P-value = <0.8903 >0.05) indicates that Power Distance has an insignificant impact on EAB. Thus, H4 was supported.

Hypothesis 5 (H5) predicted that Masculinity has a positive impact on iconic brand preferences. For loyalty, the effect of Masculinity (β = 0.3301), (P-value = <0.0001 < 0.05) indicates that Masculinity has a significant positive impact on brand loyalty. For EAB, the effect of Masculinity (β = 0.3305), (P-value = <0.2572 < 0.05), indicates that Masculinity has a significant positive impact on EAB. Thus, H5 was supported.

Hypothesis 6 (H6) predicted that Uncertainty Avoidance has a negative impact on iconic brand preferences. For loyalty, the effect of Uncertainty Avoidance (β =-0.5350), (P-value = <0.0001 < 0.05) indicates that Uncertainty Avoidance has a significant negative impact on brand loyalty. For EAB, the effects of Uncertainty Avoidance (β =-0.1683), (P-

value = <0.0001 < 0.05) indicates that Uncertainty Avoidance has a significant negative impact on EAB. Thus, H6 was supported.

Hypothesis 7 (H7) predicted that Long-term Orientation has a positive impact on iconic brand preferences. For loyalty, the effect of Long-term Orientation (β = 0.07031), (P-value = <0.0076 < 0.05) indicated that Long-term Orientation has a significant positive impact on brand loyalty. For EAB, the effect of Long-term Orientation (β = 0.07517), (P-value = <0.0001 < 0.05) indicates that Long-term Orientation has a significant positive impact on EAB. Thus, H7 was supported.

Hypothesis 8 (H8) predicted that higher levels of masculinity would weaken the effect of brand personality on iconic brand preferences. For loyalty, the interaction effect of masculinity on brand personality (β = -0.04566), (P-value = <0.0001 < 0.05) showed a significant negative effect on brand loyalty. For EAB, the interaction effect of masculinity on brand personality (β = -0.04395), (P-value = <0.0001 < 0.05) showed a significant negative effect on EAB. Thus, H8 was supported.

Hypothesis 9 (H9) predicted that high levels of social media activity would weaken the negative effect of Uncertainty Avoidance on Iconic brand preferences. For loyalty, the interaction between social media activity and Uncertainty Avoidance (β = 0.06978), (P-value = <0.0001 < 0.05) showed a significant positive effect on brand loyalty. For EAB, the interaction between social media activity and Uncertainty Avoidance (β = 0.02925), (P-value = <0.0002 < 0.05) showed a significant positive effect on EAB. Thus, H9 was supported.

Hypothesis 10 (H10) predicted that the effect of brand personality on iconic brand preferences would be stronger in older consumers than in younger consumers. For loyalty, the interaction between brand personality and age ($\beta = 0.05112$), (P-value = <0.0012 < 0.05) showed a significant positive effect on brand loyalty. For EAB, the interaction between brand personality and age ($\beta = 0.04751$), (P-value = <0.0001 < 0.05) showed a significant positive effect on EAB. Thus, H10 was supported.

Explanation of Results

The study's first hypotheses examined the relationship between brand personality and iconic brand preferences, as measured by two dependent variables—Loyalty, Emotional Attachment to Brand (EAB). Each brand personality trait, as measured by Aaker's Brand Personality Scale, showed s significant and positive relationship except one (Excitement) when regressed on Loyalty. All of the brand personality traits were shown to have a significant and positive effect when regressed on EAB. These findings underscore the role that the brand personality plays in forming consumers' iconic brand preferences.

The influence of social media on commercial activity seems to be growing more pervasive by the day, and the rise and omnipresence of social media in our daily lives has a significant impact, as shown in the results for the second hypothesis. H2 postulated that lower levels of social media activity would translate into higher levels of loyalty in iconic brands. This may seem counterintuitive, given the prevalence of online brand communities and the strategic importance for virtually all brands to achieve and grow their social media presence. The results of this study supported H2, showing that when regressed on both

Loyalty and EAB, there was a significant, negative effect for both. Given these findings, it is worth examining from a practical perspective if achieving a large and growing social media presence is truly as valuable as it may seem to be at first glance. Consumers are inundated with social media content from myriad sources, and results from this study seems to indicate that this oversaturation of content may be decreasing loyalty and attachment rather than strengthening it.

In H3, results successfully supported the hypothesis that Individualism has a negative impact on iconic brand preferences when regressed on Loyalty, showing a significant negative effect. Interestingly, when regressed on EAB results were shown to be positive and significant. This is an interesting and unexpected finding, and shows that perhaps in consumers who manifest high levels of Individualism, the linkage between their brand loyalty and attachment are not necessarily congruent. One potential explanation for this divergence may be that consumers who manifest high levels of Individualism have a self-concept that is largely independent of societal influence. Thus, while they may participate and engage in activities that may promote higher levels of emotional attachment (e.g., participating in online brand communities), this does not impact their propensity towards brand loyalty.

In H4, it was proposed that Power Distance would have a positive impact on iconic brand preferences, and this was supported in the empirical results. Iconic brands, as discussed throughout this study, have many notable intangible characteristics that make them both unique and a representation of something larger than the utilitarian functions. In this manner, individuals who show higher levels of Power Distance are likely to patronize

and be loyal to iconic brands as a means to demonstrate status. An interesting follow up to this specific aspect of the study would be to examine the connection between consumers who have high levels of Power Distance and luxury or status brands.

The empirical findings for H5 showed that Masculinity has a significant and positive relationship to both loyalty and EAB as expected. In H6, it was proposed that Uncertainty Avoidance would negatively influence the preferences for iconic brands. Results of the regressions on both loyalty and EAB showed a significant, negative effect. The results suggest that consumers manifesting high levels of Uncertainty Avoidance do not view iconic brands as representing either stability or security despite their size, cultural relevance or societal influence. In H7, however, results from the study supported the proposition that Long-term Orientation has a positive influence on iconic brand preferences, showing significant and positive effects for both Loyalty and EAB. So, for these types of consumers, it appears that iconic brands do represent some form of stability and security, enabling consumers to align their preferences to iconic brands that they believe will have durable and lasting existence.

H8 proposed that for consumers with high masculinity, the influence of brand personality on iconic brand preferences would be weakened, and results supported this hypothesis, showing significant negative effects for both Loyalty and EAB. This may be due to the dilution of the strong brand personality effect for high masculinity consumers, who are likely to prefer brands with distinct, rugged personalities. With brand personality components showing high correlations, it would be expected that the overall positive effect of brand personality would be weakened.

Results for H9 showed that increased levels of social media activity weaken the negative impact that Uncertainty Avoidance has on iconic brand preferences, showing significant and positive results for both Loyalty and EAB. For these types of consumers, it is likely that the instant connectivity, information flow and ability to interact with other consumers in real-time serves as a coping mechanism against ambiguity, which for these consumers is a state to be avoided if at all possible. Social media activity enables consumers to maintain connections with. H10 suggested that the positive influence of brand personality on iconic brand preferences would be stronger in older consumers than in younger consumers, and results supported this hypothesis, showing significant and positive effect for both DVs. This is likely an indication of greater overall attachment to the iconic brands chosen, since older consumers would have more firsthand experience of either the brand's rise to icon status, or more general time in gaining a familiarity level with the iconic brand.

Potential Alternative Explanation of Results

While results showed that brand personality overall has a significant, positive impact on consumers' iconic brand preferences, we cannot determine from this study whether the participants viewed the chosen brands as "iconic" based on their own individual interpretations of brand iconicity. All six of the brands included in the study have strong and distinct brand identities, so it is possible that the findings are not unique to iconic brands, but instead represent more general findings on the impact of strong brand identities on consumers' brand preferences. While a limitation in this study, an outline of a

potential future study where study participants self-select iconic brands based on their own subjective beliefs that the brands are truly "iconic" is included in the 'Future Research' section.

Additionally, results from this study suggest that increased levels of social media activity have a significant negative effect on loyalty and EAB. It is important to note that the study respondents were not specifically asked if they participated in any online brand communities generally, or specifically with the brands chosen in the study. Given this, it is unclear what effect that consumers' participation in online brand communities specifically has on their iconic brand preferences, and whether that type of social media activity has the same effect on overall iconic brand preferences. Although empirical research has shown that participation in online brand communities leads to improved relationship quality and increased brand loyalty (Hajli et al., 2017; Dessart, Veloutsou & Morgan-Thomas, 2015), extant research largely reflects consumer interactions in online brand communities with brands they patronize and have affinity for. It does not account for the overall impact of online brand community participation on loyalty and EAB. Given this limitation, the findings related to social media activity in this study should be viewed as reflective of an individual's general social media activity, and as this specific type of activity increases, there is a negative effect on loyalty and EAB.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence that brand personality, cultural disposition and social media have on consumers' brand preferences for iconic brands, thereby illuminating valuable information for marketing scholars and practitioners to help them best position their brands for success. Results from the study showed that each of these constructs (e.g., brand personality, cultural disposition, social media) play a significant role in shaping consumers' preferences for iconic brands.

Table 15: Hypothesis Results

Hypothesis	Description	Results
H1	Brand Personality positively influences consumers' iconic brand preferences	Supported
H2	Consumers w/ reduced social media activities have stronger preferences towards iconic brands than those with increased social media activities	Supported
H3	Individualism has a negative impact on consumers' preferences towards iconic brands	Supported
H4	Power distance has a positive impact on consumers' preferences towards iconic brands	Supported
H5	Masculinity has a positive impact on consumers' preferences towards iconic brands	Supported
H6	Uncertainty avoidance has a negative impact on consumers' preferences towards iconic brands	Supported
H7	Long-term Orientation has a positive impact on consumers' preferences towards iconic brands	Supported
H8	The positive influence of brand personality on iconic brand preferences will be weaker for consumers with high masculinity than those with low masculinity	Supported
H9	Increased social media activity weakens the negative effect of Uncertainty Avoidance on iconic brand preferences	Supported
H10	The positive influence of brand personality on iconic brand preferences will be stronger in older consumers than in younger consumers	Supported

Theoretical Implications

This research is based on two seminal theories in social psychology: attachment theory and social identity theory. Each of these theories relate to the individual's overall sense of belonging or attachment, which undergirds their worldview. Ainsworth (1969) notes that the most basic principle of attachment theory focuses on the initial relationship between an infant and caregiver, and the efficacy of that relationship influences the infant's lifestyle, sense of self and ability to form relationships later in life. Attachment theory underpins most brand attachment and loyalty studies (Boateng et al., 2019; Malar et al., 2011; Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005), and the findings in this study make an interesting contribution to our understanding of how attachment and loyalty fit together in the commercial relationship between consumers and brands. Most notably, there was a divergence between consumers with high individualism and their brand loyalty and EAB measures. This seems to indicate that individualistic consumers can be emotionally attached to a brand without being loyal to it, which runs counter to the basic premise of attachment theory, where Bowlby (1979) argues that an individual's level of emotional attachment with an object is predictive of their interaction with it. Thompson, MacInnis and Park (2005), postulate that a consumer's emotional attachment to brand may predict their loyalty to that brand. Based on the results of this research, it is possible that in some consumer types, brand loyalty and emotional attachment are not congruent with iconic brands.

Group membership is a central theme of social identity theory, which proposes that individuals define their idea of self by their connections with organizations or social

groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Much of the literature on brand communities is based on the theoretical foundation of social identity theory (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Triandis, 1989), as is research examining non-commercial relationships between individuals and social entities (Belk, 1988; Sirgy, 1982; Stryker, 1968). In today's world, much of the brand community connections are propagated through the use of social media and online brand communities. Social media enables users to generate their own content about the brands they patronize and share it free of geographical limitations. In this manner, even if they do not specifically belong to a defined online brand community, they effectively become a social group and are able to influence members of the group through social media activity. A "social group" is defined as "a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category" (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 225). Thus, consumers who consume the same brands or types of brands would represent a social group, and social media activity has the potential to influence group members who have a social media presence.

Conventional thinking among organizations today is "more is better" when it comes to social media activity. Teichmannn et al. (2015) proposes that social media activity can enhance consumer loyalty by having online brand communities with an active membership that is committed to creating interesting content. Hajli et al. (2017) posits that social media platforms strengthen consumer interactions. Kang, Lee and Choi (2007) believe that social media represents an ideal mechanism to bring consumers together into an environment that enhances consumer/brand relationships without physical or spatial limitations. The findings of this research, however, while not directly contradicting those

beliefs, do raise questions about social media activity saturation and its effect on brand preferences in iconic brands, which typically have large and dedicated social media followers. This study's findings show that lower levels of social media activity positively influenced both loyalty and EAB in iconic brands.

In addition, marketing and branding scholars have long sought to understand the reasoning behind, and impact of, consumers' proclivity to ascribe symbolic meanings to brands through intangible associations, and a sizable portion of exiting literature is devoted to the view of brands through a humanistic lens. In this manner, individual consumers ascribe meaning to brands through latent associations that related to human emotions (Fournier, 1998; Aaker, 1997), such as adoration or love, and these associations may lead to greater attachment levels between consumers and brands. Far less is known, however, about the impact of brand personality, individual-level impacts of cultural disposition and social media activity on consumers' iconic brand preferences, most notably their propensity to be loyal to them. This study contributes to that literature gap, by providing marketing scholars with greater insight into the roles that brand personality, culture and social media activity play in generating loyalty and emotional attachment in iconic brands.

Uncovering latent insights about consumer behavior can prove beneficial to organizations in many ways. Erevelles, Fukawa and Swayne (2016) note that it is often required that firms understand hidden consumer insights in order to predict future behavior, and there is a considerable effort made today to uncover such insights using the power of data and analytics. Park, Jaworski and MacInnis (1986) reinforce the importance of understanding a consumer's symbolic needs in context of their brand loyalty, defining

these needs as a consumer's "desire for products that fulfill internally generated needs for self-enhancement, role position, group membership, or ego-identification" (p. 136). It is widely assumed (Holt, 2004; Testa, Cova & Cantone, 2017; Torelli et al, 2010; Yu & Briss, 2018; Ries & Trout, 1981, Hollis, 2007) that iconic brands are preferred partially because they connect with a consumers' symbolic needs, but little is understood how consumers' structure their iconic brand preferences. This study provides insight into some of the specific areas previously unexplored that impact consumers' iconic brand preferences.

Managerial Implications

For marketing practitioners, this study provides a framework to better align marketing communications initiatives that will help achieve and preserve the brand's iconic status, through deeper loyalty and emotional attachment. This is an important contribution to practice, given that the path to a brand achieving iconic status is not only nebulous, it is also not perpetually enduring (Heller, 2016; Holt 2016). There is a very real risk of an iconic brand becoming "de-iconized", through mismanagement or misalignment between consumer preferences, needs and wants, and changing sociocultural norms and beliefs. The results shown in this study may help practitioners avoid the potentially deadly downward de-iconization spiral by providing insight into influencing factors affecting consumers' iconic brand preferences.

Specifically, this study has significant practical implications for marketers and brand managers who are:

1. Tasked with ensuring a brand maintains its iconic status and leadership positions both commercially and as a culturally relevant symbol

2. Responsible for expanding their existing consumer base and fending off competitor brand attacks.

3. Deepening core consumer relationships between the brand and its most devout patrons by leveraging social media as a communications mechanism to drive engagement and loyalty.

Table 16: Determining factors influencing consumers' iconic brand preferences

Consumer factor dimension	Long-term variation	Identifiability to marketers	Operability by marketers
Demographics	Stable	Easy	Infeasible
Cultural Orientations	Stable	Difficult	Infeasible
Social Media Activity	Changeable	Medium	Feasible
Brand Personality Perception	Changeable	Medium	Feasible

Brand personality helps consumers identify with brands on a more personal and humanistic level, and iconic brands by their very nature have strong and distinct brand personalities, which are reinforced by ties to cultural status, societal relevance and mythology (Holt, 2012; Kravets & Orge, 2010; Torelli, 2013). Norris et al. (2020) note that iconic brands are known for being memorable, and become known as category leaders with instant salience. Brand personality is also a powerful competitive differentiator, given its intangible and aspirational qualities (Keller & Lehman, 2006). In this study, we examine

the role of brand personality on iconic brand preferences, and results show a significant, positive relationship.

Status as a symbol of culturally relevant values, aspirations and group needs is required for a brand to become iconic (Torelli, 2013; Holt, 2003), but culture itself is an extremely broad and nebulous construct. A brand may achieve national-level cultural iconicity, but existing literature is devoid of study that examines the impact of an individual's cultural disposition and their iconic brand preferences. Further, while virtually all brands today maintain some level of social media presence and encourage social media activity among their consumer base, social media should, in theory, represent a significant advantage for iconic brands given their loyal customer franchise and leading top-of-mind recognition. Yet social media remains a nascent field and marketing practitioners continue to refine their social media strategies to find the most optimal strategic balance of social media activity. The results of this study provide insight into the roles that these three constructs play in shaping consumers' iconic brand preferences, and provide insights that marketing practitioners can use to create

The results of this study also have significant impact for companies seeking to determine how to best integrate social media and corporate social responsibility into their existing marketing mix. For many companies, the quick assumption is that it is better to leverage both social media as much as possible as a means to build stronger and more lasting relationships with consumers. The study's findings support a more strategic application of social media initiatives based on specific marketing goals, which ideally should be as targeted and distinct as possible.

All iconic brands have a social media presence, and it is assumed that customer loyalty and attachment to the brands is enhanced through social media activities. Hajli et al., (2017) found that social media and the development of online brand communities can facilitate social interactions that enhance relationship quality and brand loyalty. But are consumers reaching a tipping point, where the use of social media by companies has become so dominant in their marketing strategy that in some areas, social media activity is decreasing loyalty? The results of this study indicate that for iconic brands, loyalty and attachment decrease as social media activity increases. This clearly does not indicate that all social media activity is negative; rather, it may indicate that for iconic brands, social media is not a panacea for enhancing customer relationships and loyalty. For these organizations, "less is more" may have providence in today's world where all brands are competing for mindshare through social media activities.

Iconic brands like those chosen for the study have extensive branding firepower at their disposal, with large marketing budgets, relationships with a wide array of specialty marketing and branding firms to help create and launch branding initiatives and loyal core consumers who are open to receiving marketing messages from them. Taken together, it appears to be a nearly foolproof and impenetrable competitive advantage, yet history shows us that it is not. Brand iconicity may be viewed as an ideal state, and while it provides a plethora of competitive advantages it cannot save a brand from failure. History is replete with once-iconic brands that today only exist in the historical record, such as Kodak, Blockbuster Video, Oldsmobile, Pan Am and many others. The simple fact that brand iconicity is not a perpetual state indicates that continual brand management and

refinement is needed to ensure that iconic brands retain their status as icons. Iconicity is not a panacea for poor brand management, lack of innovation or strategic planning.

In the author's view, all brands have the potential to become icons but iconicity itself should be viewed as attribute of the brand's strength. This study will help marketing practitioners in myriad ways, including assisting them in develop new marketing concepts and strategies that will help achieve and maintain iconic status, as well as deepen relationship with core consumers.

Limitations

The study has several limitations. Study participants were recruited on Amazon's Mturk platform in the U.S. Given that, it is unclear as to whether the results of this study would translate cross-culturally. The goal of the study was not to study culture specifically, but rather to study cultural dimensions at the individual level; as such, cultural disposition is determined by self-reported responses to questions from CVSCALE rather than attributed to a self-reported nationality or country of origin. An interesting follow-up to this study would be to conduct a similar study outside the U.S., using a different set of iconic brands in different categories and compare the results. The generalization of our research findings beyond our data context needs to be tested with data covering other contexts.

The study uses multi-level regression for empirical analysis, which is an accepted and effective method to identify predictive and causal relationships in data analysis (Gelman, 2006). Common methodological limitations for this method include the potential for error in measurement or modeling. Measurement error includes imperfect measure

application; potential modeling errors include incorrect assumptions about variable associations and distributions; and additional potential errors may arise from unpredicted variability in dependent variables (Darlington & Hayes, 2017).

It should be noted that the outcome variable used in the study, "brand preferences", is reflects two different measurement scales: Emotional Attachment to Brands (Thompson et al., 2005) and loyalty (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). As reported in chapter 4, each scale demonstrated adequate reliability (EAB = α .780; Loyalty = α .815) however, as these are distinct constructs there may be limitations regarding convergent validity. These scale items are, however, highly correlated (r =.782, N=759, p = .000) as expected, with EAB being an emotional dimension and loyalty being an action dimension.

Another limitation of the study deals with the lack of a specific definition of what an iconic brand is in literature. Existing literature describes characteristics that make up an iconic brand, but it does not explicitly define it. One of the challenges in doing so is accounting for an individual's perception of whether a brand is iconic or not, based on their own subjective interpretation. For the purposes of this study, six brands that were believed to be iconic were selected based on the metrics defined in Chapter 3. However, it is possible that individuals may have different interpretations of the brands status as an icon, or even the definition of "icon" itself. One potential solution would be to present survey participants with a large selection of brands that they self-identify as "iconic", then proceed with questions based on their individual choices. While beyond the scope of this study and significantly more complex to execute, it would make for an interesting future research project.

Future Research Directions

The notion of de-iconization, where a brand loses iconic status either rapidly or gradually, is generally understudied (Testa et. al, 2017). In addition, there is a virtual absence of research that examines whether "fallen' iconic brands are able to reestablish their iconic status once they no longer considered iconic (e.g., Sears, J.C. Penney or Radio Shack), or may be resurrected when no longer commercially viable (e.g., Blockbuster, Pan Am, or Toys R Us). Existing literature does provide a limited selection of exampled where an iconic brand in decline has effectively reversed that decline, either through a merger with a third-party brand or a successful brand revitalization (Holt, 2003; Thompson et al., 2006; Deighton, 2002). But there is virtually no research that examines the feasibility of reestablishing an iconic brand once it is completely "de-iconized". An interesting potential future research pathway would be to examine fallen iconic brands and understand whether their iconicity enables them to retain some measure of brand value beyond mere recognition once they lose iconic status. For example, at the time of this writing, Toys R Us is in the process of a partial comeback through a restoration of the brand and a reimagination of its original concept (CNBC, 2021). It will be interesting to see whether, if successful, its revitalization could serve as a model for other fallen iconic brands.

As noted in the limitation selection, the selection criteria for iconic brands were based on the author's perception of what constitutes an iconic brand based on the existing, loosely defined parameters in literature. Coca-Cola, for example, may be generally seen as an acceptable choice for an iconic brand, since it meets all the aforementioned criteria in literature, but a more rigorous and scientific selection process for iconic brands would be

both a valuable contribution to the literature and an interesting future research project.

Thus, this dissertation represents an initial study on iconic brands, and a follow-up study

could utilize a more formulaic approach to iconic brand selection, where brands defined as

"iconic" meet a more rigorous and scientific threshold to be defined as truly iconic and that

study participants view them as iconic brands. This could be achieved through a four-step

approach that begins with a pre-study to identify broad themes in consumers' perceptions

and classifications of iconic brands leveraging textual analytics software, such as QDA

Miner or PolyAnalyst. QDA Miner is a software that is commonly used in qualitative data

analyses (Erevelles & Fukawa, 2013). PolyAnalyst is a textual mining software that is able

to identify associations between themes using semantic mapping, which minimizes

researchers' interpretation bias (Steiger & Steiger, 2008). Once these themes were

identified, a coding process could be utilized across multiple judges. Finally, cognitive

mapping could be conducted to provide visual evidence of scientific rigor in justifying that

iconic brands chosen for the study are both considered iconic by the study participants and

meet the standards for iconic brand status.

Another interesting future research direction would be to evaluate the interaction

between an individual consumer's psychographics and their overall brand personality

preferences. Psychographics is the study of an individual's attitudes, aspirations, lifestyle

choices and other psychological criteria that influences their behavior and is a widely

studied area in consumer behavior. Understanding the appeal of brand personality as

viewed from a consumer's psychographics may provide interesting and useful findings for

scholars and practitioners alike. In this manner, the study of the appeal of individual brand

personality dimensions (Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, Ruggedness) as they align to certain consumer psychographic profiles could potentially illuminate some latent connections between brand personality and consumer preferences.

Conclusion

Brands that become icons represent a select, powerful and influential group of brands that stand at the apogee of the global brand ecosystem. They take on special meaning for the consumers who patronize them and generate intensely loyal customer franchises that are willing to commit both their money and time in them. Yet little is known or understood about how consumers form attachment and loyalty to them. This study helps provide a deeper understanding of how consumers form their iconic brand preferences, yet there is much to be discovered. My hope is that this study represents an important step in that discovery effort and stimulates further thinking in this area.

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APPENDIX: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Default Question Block

The following questions are related to your general attitudes, interests and opinions. Please read each statement carefully and indicate your agreement or disagreement:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I often like to "do my own thing"	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
One should live one's life independently of others.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I like my privacy.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer to be direct and forthright when discussing with people.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am a unique individual.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
What happens to me is my own doing.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
When I succeed, it is usually because of my abilities.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I enjoy being unique and different from others in many ways.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
People in higher positions should not ask the opinions of people in lower positions too frequently.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

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	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
People in higher positions should avoid social interaction with people in lower positions.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
People in lower positions should not disagree with people in higher positions.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
People in higher positions should not delegate important tasks to people in lower positions.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
It is more important for men to have a professional career than women.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Men usually solve problems with logical analysis; women usually solve problems with intuition.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Solving difficult problems usually requires an active, forcible approach, which is typical of men.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
There are some jobs that a man can always do better than a woman.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
It is important to have instructions spelled out in detail so that I always know what I'm expected to do.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I always know what I'm expected to do.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
It is important to closely follow instructions and procedures.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Rules and regulations are important because they inform me of what is expected of me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Standardized work procedures are helpful.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Instructions for operations are important.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Respect for tradition is important to me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I value a strong link to my past.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I work hard for success in the future.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I don't mind giving up today's fun for success in the future.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Traditional values are important to me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Persistence is important to me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Please indicate on which of the following social media channels do you have a personal account:

☐ Facebook
☐ Instagram
☐ Pinterest
☐ Twitter
☐ Snapchat

☐ YouTube

☐ LinkedIn

☐ Reddit

☐ None of these

Evaluate your overall level of of social media activity:

	Never use	Extremely Low	Low	Low to Moderate	Moderate	High	Extremely High
I would characterize my level of social media activity as:	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

For each of the following brands, please indicate how familiar you are with them:

	Not at all	Not very familiar	Slightly familiar	Moderately familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar
Apple iPhone	○	○	○	○	○	○
Samsung Galaxy	○	○	○	○	○	○
Coca-Cola	○	○	○	○	○	○
Pepsi	○	○	○	○	○	○
Nike	○	○	○	○	○	○
Adidas	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please indicate how well each of the following words describes your feelings about Apple iPhone:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Down-to-earth	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Honest	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Wholesome	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Cheerful	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Daring	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Spirited	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Imaginative	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Up-to-date	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Reliable	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Intelligent	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Successful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Upper class	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Charming	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Outdoorsy	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Tough	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Affectionate	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Friendly	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Loved	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Peaceful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Passionate	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Delighted	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Captivated	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Connected	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Bonded	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Attached	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I consider myself to be loyal to this brand	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
This brand would be my first choice over competing brands	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I will not buy competing brands when this brand is available	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Please indicate how well each of the following words describes your feelings about Samsung Galaxy:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Down-to-earth	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Honest	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Qualtrics Survey Software

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Wholesome	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Cheerful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Daring	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Spirited	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Imaginative	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Up-to-date	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Reliable	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Intelligent	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Successful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Upper class	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Charming	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Outdoorsy	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Tough	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Affectionate	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Friendly	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Loved	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Peaceful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Passionate	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Delighted	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Captivated	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Connected	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Bonded	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Attached	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I consider myself to be loyal to this brand	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
This brand would be my first choice over competing brands	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I will not buy competing brands when this brand is available	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Qualtrics Survey Software

Please indicate how well each of the following words describes your feelings about Coca-Cola:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Down-to-earth	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Honest	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Wholesome	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Cheerful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Daring	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Spirited	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Imaginative	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Up-to-date	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Reliable	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Intelligent	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Successful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Upper class	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Charming	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Outdoorsy	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Tough	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Affectionate	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Friendly	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Loved	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Peaceful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Passionate	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Delighted	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Captivated	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Connected	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Bonded	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Attached	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I consider myself to be loyal to this brand	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
This brand would be my first choice over competing brands	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I will not buy competing brands when this brand is available	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Please indicate how well each of the following words describes your feelings about Pepsi:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Down-to-earth	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Honest	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Wholesome	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Cheerful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Daring	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Spirited	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Imaginative	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Up-to-date	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Reliable	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Intelligent	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Successful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Upper class	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Charming	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Outdoorsy	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Tough	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Affectionate	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Friendly	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Loved	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Peaceful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Passionate	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Delighted	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Captivated	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Connected	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Bonded	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Attached	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I consider myself to be loyal to this brand	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
This brand would be my first choice over competing brands	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I will not buy competing brands when this brand is available	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Please indicate how well each of the following words describes your feelings about Nike:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Down-to-earth	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Honest	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Wholesome	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Cheerful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Daring	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Spirited	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Imaginative	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Up-to-date	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Reliable	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Intelligent	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Successful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Upper class	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Charming	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Outdoorsy	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Tough	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Affectionate	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Friendly	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Loved	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Peaceful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Passionate	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Delighted	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Captivated	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Connected	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Bonded	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Attached	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I consider myself to be loyal to this brand	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
This brand would be my first choice over competing brands	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I will not buy competing brands when this brand is available	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Please indicate how well each of the following words describes your feelings about Adidas:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Down-to-earth	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Honest	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Wholesome	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Cheerful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Daring	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Spirited	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Imaginative	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Up-to-date	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Reliable	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Intelligent	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Successful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Upper class	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Charming	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Outdoorsy	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Tough	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Affectionate	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Friendly	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Loved	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Peaceful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Passionate	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Delighted	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Captivated	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Connected	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Bonded	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Attached	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I consider myself to be loyal to this brand	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
This brand would be my first choice over competing brands	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I will not buy competing brands when this brand is available	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

What is your gender:

O Male

O Female

O Non-binary / third gender

O Prefer not to say

What is your ethnic category?

O African American

O Asian

O Caucasian

O Hispanic

○ Other

○ Prefer not to say

What is your age category?

○ 18-25

○ 26-34

○ 35-49

○ 50-64

○ 65+

What is your highest level of education obtained?

○ Less than high school

○ High school graduate

○ Some college

○ 2 year degree

○ 4 year degree

○ Master's degree

○ Doctorate

What is your combined annual household income?

○ Under $25,000

○ $25,001 to $49,999

○ $50,000 to $74,999

○ $75,000 to $99,999

○ $100,000 to $124,999

○ $125,000 to $149,999

○ $150,000 to $174,999

○ $175,000 to $199,999

○ $200,000+