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سعادة أ. د. رئيس تحرير المجلة المصرية للدراسات المتخصصة المحترم
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يسر معامل التأثير والاستشهادات المرجعية للمجلات العلمية العربية (ارسیف - ARCIF)، أحد مبادرات قاعدة بيانات "معرفة" للإنتاج والمحتوى العلمي، إعلامكم بأنه قد أطلق التقرير السنوي الثامن للمجلات للعام 2023.

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- Obsessive-Compulsive Behavior to Buy
Branded Apparel The Mediating Role of Brand
Attachment

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Dr. Hayat E. Abloushy
Dr. Muna Mohammed Jafar

**Obsessive-Compulsive
Behavior to Buy Branded
Apparel
The Mediating Role of Brand
Attachment**

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Obsessive-Compulsive Behavior to Buy Branded Apparel

The Mediating Role of Brand Attachment

Dr. Hayat . Albloushy

Dr. Muna Mohammed Jafar

Abstract

Deeply rooted in the fields of medicine and psychiatry, obsessive-compulsive behavior continues to gain considerable attention in marketing. This study aims to examine the major factors driving obsessive-compulsive buying behavior and the mediating role of brand attachment in Kuwait. The study used partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) on a random sample of 302 branded apparel consumers. The results show that materialism and utilitarian values are positively and significantly related to brand attachment, which, in turn, mediates the relation between materialism, utilitarian and pleasure values, and obsessive-compulsive buying behavior. The study contributes to the literature by investigating the predictors of obsessive-compulsive buying behavior in a non-Western collectivist culture. Furthermore, the study highlights the essential role played by brand attachment as a mediator within the context of branded apparel.

Keywords: Obsessive-compulsive buying, brand attachment, self-congruence, materialism, utilitarian value, pleasure value.

ملخص:

العنوان : سلوك الوسواس القهري لشراء الملابس ذات العلامات التجارية - الدور الوسيط لارتباط العلامة التجارية-

المؤلفون : حياة إبراهيم البلوشي ، منى محمد جعفر

لا يزال سلوك الوسواس القهري، المتجذر بعمق في مجالات الطب والطب النفسي، يحظى باهتمام كبير في مجال التسويق. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى دراسة العوامل الرئيسية التي تحرك سلوك الشراء القهري والدور الوسيط للارتباط بالعلامة التجارية في الكويت. استخدمت الدراسة نموذج المعادلات الهيكلية للمربعات الصغرى الجزئية (PLS-SEM) على عينة عشوائية مكونة من 302 من مستهلكي الملابس ذات العلامات التجارية. وأظهرت النتائج أن المادية والقيم النفعية ترتبط بشكل إيجابي وكبير بالارتباط بالعلامة التجارية، والذي بدوره يتوسط العلاقة بين المادية والقيم النفعية وقيم المتعة، وسلوك الشراء الوسواسي القهري. تسلط الدراسة الضوء على الدور الأساسي الذي يلعبه الارتباط بالعلامة التجارية كوسيط في سياق الملابس ذات العلامات التجارية.

الكلمات الدالة : الوسواس القهري ، العلامة التجارية ، الملابس ، الدور الوسيط.

Introduction

Consumers tend to communicate their aesthetic preferences through “appearance management” products such as branded apparel (Guthrie et al., 2008, p. 164), which is defined as any apparel owned, controlled, and sold exclusively by a specific retailer (Fitzell, 1982). Examples of branded apparel include Zara, H&M, Aldo, Mango, and forever 21 branded apparel signals uniqueness and symbolize the consumer’s identity and status (Cham et al., 2018). The attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979) has often been employed in marketing literature to explain the emotional bonding between consumers and brands (Chen & Dwyer, 2018; VanMeter et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2017). Nevertheless, brand attachment is not just an emotion-laden construct as “it is reflected by mental representations (rich cognitive schemas) that include brand-self cognitions, thoughts, and autobiographical brand memories” (Park et al., 2010, p. 3). Consumer brand attachment can sometimes take extended periods of time to develop as the relationship between the self and the brand evolve (MacInnis&Folkes, 2017; Yu & Yuan, 2019).

Brand attachment has been linked to favorable consumer behaviors, including brand loyalty (Japutra et al., 2014; Pansari& Kumar, 2017), positive word of mouth (Gomez-Suarez & Veloso, 2020; Vlachos, 2012), brand trust (Huang et al., 2018), brand attitude (Schmalz & Orth, 2012), customer advocacy (Shimul&Phau, 2018), customer lifetime value (Thomson et al., 2005) and stronger positive intentions (Kim & Chao, 2019). However, research has also recently started to show that brand attachment can result in creating negative consumer behaviors, such as schadenfreude, trash-talking, and obsessive-compulsive consumption (Japutra et al., 2014, 2019; Jhonson et al., 2011). Deeply rooted in the fields of medicine and psychiatry (Mudrack, 2001), obsessive-compulsive behavior continues to gain considerable attention in marketing (Aw et al., 2018; Cheah et al., 2020; Darrat et al., 2023). Although obsession-compulsion is regarded in clinical literature as a personality disorder (Solomon

et al., 1996), psychological literature views this behavior as a set of personality traits that is not tantamount to a disorder (Pollak, 1997). Recent research found that branded apparel is among the top compulsively purchased products (Cheah et al., 2020; Cook & Yurchisin, 2017; Ye & Lau, 2018). Therefore, it is imperative to understand the basic drivers of such behavior (Valaei & Nikhashemi 2017).

Previous research has linked obsessive-compulsive consumer behavior to self-congruence discrepancies, materialism, and utilitarian and/or hedonic values (Duroy et al., 2014; Pradhan et al., 2018). However, with the notable exception of Cheah et al. (2020), the intermediate role of brand attachment in the context of obsessive-compulsive consumption has largely been bypassed (Gonzalez-Jimenez et al., 2018; Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). In this research, we fill this gap as we argue that brand attachment mediates the relation between self-congruence discrepancies, materialism, utilitarian and/or hedonic values, and obsessive-compulsive consumer behavior in branded apparel. By so doing, we contribute to the scant literature on compulsive buying behavior by empirically examining the antecedents of obsessive-compulsive consumer behavior in Kuwait. More specifically, our study makes two major contributions; First of all, this study examines the mediating effect of brand attachment on obsessive-compulsive consumer behavior. Although most of the previous studies suggest a direct effect between self-congruence and materialism on obsessive-compulsive consumer behavior (Ahn et al., 2013; Wallace et al., 2017), a stream of research has argued that this effect might be indirect (Ekinici et al., 2008; Nam et al., 2011; Roy & Rabbanee, 2015). Secondly, although most of the existing research examines the positive outcome of self-congruence and materialism on consumer behavior (Gomez-Suarez & Veloso, 2020; Vlachos, 2012), this study evaluates the negative consequence / dark side of self-congruence and materialism on consumer behavior.

This paper is organized as follows. Part two reviews the previous studies and develops the research hypotheses. Part three describes the methodology used to carry out the analysis. Part four deals with research findings, while Part five discusses the research findings. As the final Part deals with research limitations and explores potential avenues for future research.

Literature review and hypotheses development

Previous studies consider self-brand connections as an antecedent to brand attachment (Banerjee & Shaikh, 2022; Gill-Simmen et al., 2018; Japutra et al., 2018; Vredeveld, 2018). The fit between the self-concept and the brand personality is known as self-congruence (Aaker, 1999; Sirgy, 1982). Also, argues that the self-concept is composed of two different types: the actual self and the ideal self (Malar et al., 2011). Japutra et al. (2019, p. 457) noted that “the actual self represents the state where individuals consider who they really are, whereas the ideal self represents the state of individuals’ aspirations of their ideas and goals in the future.” Thus, the actual self-congruence represents the perceived fit between the actual self and the brand personality, whereas the ideal self-congruence reflects the consumer’s perception of the fit between the ideal self and the brand personality.

There has been strong theoretical and empirical support for the link between the consumers’ self-concept and brand attachment (Kleine et al., 1993; Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005). This line of reasoning is based on the idea that emotional brand attachment “depends on the degree to which consumers view the brand as being part of themselves” (Malar et al., 2011, p. 37). The actual-self congruence is supported by some basic theoretical underpinnings. For example, the self-verification theory (Swann, 1983) argues that individuals are constantly motivated to verify, validate, and sustain their existing self-concepts as they search to avoid experiences that threaten their sense of self (Swann et al., 1992). On the other hand, the ideal-self congruence is supported by the self-enhancement theory (Ditto & Lopez, 1992). This theory argues that individuals are

motivated to fulfill their aspirations and their self-esteem (Sedikides & Strube, 1997; Higgins, 1987).

In the consumer behavior literature, the actual and the ideal self are found to predict brand attachment (Liu et al., 2012; Roy & Rabanee, 2015; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). For example, Ekinci and Riley (2003) found that the ideal self is strongly correlated with brand attachment and consumers' attitudes toward the brand. Similarly, Hyun and Han (2015) found that consumers are more likely to become attached to brands that better represent their self-identity and self-esteem. Holenbeck and Kaikati (2012) found that consumers prefer brands that invoke both the actual and ideal selves. In a similar vein, Kaufmann et al. (2012) found a positive influence of both the actual and the aspiration self on emotional brand attachment. Finally, Kressmann et al. (2006) found that prompt self-verification and self-enhancement motives greatly enhance brand attachment. This discussion suggests the following hypotheses:

H1: Actual self-congruence has a positive impact on brand attachment.

H2: Ideal self-congruence has a positive impact on brand attachment.

Materialism represents the importance attached to the possession and acquisition of material goods (Johnson & Attmann, 2009). Thus, materialism reflects consumers' "attempt to engage in the construction and maintenance of the self through the acquisition and use of products, services, experiences, or relationships that are perceived to provide desirable symbolic value" (Kaufmann et al., 2016, p. 5736). Rindfleisch et al. (2009) found that through attachment to brands, materialistic consumers achieve symbolic security. Pieters (2013) found that consumers who fail to obtain interpersonal attachment usually rely on material possessions as a secondary attachment. In a similar vein, prior research found that materialistic attachment to brands may be used by consumers as a substitute for deteriorating social

connections (Moulding et al., 2017; Rahman et al., 2017). Previous research has also established a direct link between materialism and brand attachment and brand attitudes (Dittmar, 2005; Prendergast & Wong, 2003). This discussion suggests the following hypothesis:

H3: Materialism has a positive impact on brand attachment.

Tseng and Lee (2018) noted that brand attachment can be influenced by utilitarian and affective or hedonic motivations. Utilitarian or functional benefits achieved from brand experience are referred to as “cognitive” benefits, whereas the hedonic or sensory experience with the brand can result in “emotional” benefits (Voss et al., 2003, p. 317). Thus, the hedonic consumer value, which basically originated from the hedonic consumption theory (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), appears to be “more particular and individualistic” (Chauhan et al., 2021, p. 405). Owing to its expressive and perceptual effects, branded apparel has been categorized as products with high hedonic value (Rossiter et al., 1991). Prior research has shown that hedonic value can be as important as utilitarian value (Duman & Mattila, 2005; Yang & Mattila, 2016). This line of research has also shows that both functional and excitement experienced by the consumer during shopping are related positively to emotional brand attachment (Ladhari et al., 2017). This discussion suggests the following hypotheses:

H4: Utilitarian value has a positive impact on brand attachment.

H5: Pleasure value has a positive impact on brand attachment.

Previous research found that when consumers are emotionally attached to brands, they will be more willing to use their personal resources such as time and money to purchase their preferred brands (Impett & Gordon, 2010; Park et al., 2010). Thus, a strong brand attachment “may lead to higher compulsive buying

behavior” (Japutra et al., 2019, p. 458). In fact, several studies have linked brand attachment to obsessive-compulsive buying behavior (Doron et al., 2009; Horvath & Birgelen, 2015; Kessous et al., 2015; O’Guinn & Faber, 1989). These studies found that obsessive-compulsive consumers tend to exhibit high emotional bonds with brands and a higher predisposition to compulsive buying in general. This discussion suggests the following hypotheses:

H6: Brand attachment has a positive impact on obsessive-compulsive buying behavior.

Several consumer behavior studies have investigated the mediating or moderating role of brand attachment. For example, Jahn et al. (2012). Found that brand attachment mediates the relation between customer engagement and brand loyalty. Liu et al. (2022) reported that brand attachment mediates the relation between lifestyle congruence and grocery stores’ loyalty. Banerjee and Shaikh (2022) found that brand attachment moderates the relation between brand nostalgia and the intention to purchase brand extensions. However, with the notable exceptions of Japutra et al., 2017, 2018, virtually no studies have examined the mediating role of brand attachment within the context of undesirable shopping behaviors.

In their seminal work, Japutra et al., 2017, 2018 found support for brand attachment mediating the relation between self-congruence and compulsive buying behavior. Several authors found that brand attachment increases the purchase likelihood, which results in compulsive buying (Cheah et al., 2020; Horvath & Birgelen, 2015; Kaufmann et al., 2016). Studies also have shown that consumers highly attached to brands that resemble their actual or ideal selves are more likely to compulsively buy such brands (Huang et al., 2017; Kessous et al., 2015). In a similar vein, previous research has also demonstrated that there is an indirect link between self-congruence and consumer buying behavior (Nam et al., 2011; Roy & Rabbane, 2015), which

implies that brand attachment plays a mediating role between self-congruence and obsessive-compulsive buying behavior.

Previous research has documented the positive and significant link between materialism and obsessive-compulsive buying behavior (Moschis, 2017; Reeves et al., 2012). Since materialism has also been found to be linked positively to brand attachment (Dittmar, 2005; Ridgway et al., 2008), this implies that brand attachment may mediate the relation between materialism and obsessive-compulsive buying behavior. Finally, brand attachment was found to have a mediating effect on the relation between both utilitarian and Pleasure values and obsessive-compulsive buying behavior (Cheah et al., 2020). This discussion suggests the following set of hypotheses:

H7a: Brand attachment mediates the relation between actual self-congruence and obsessive-compulsive buying behavior.

H7b: Brand attachment mediates the relation between ideal self-congruence and obsessive-compulsive buying behavior.

H7c: Brand attachment mediates the relation between materialism and obsessive-compulsive buying behavior.

H7d: Brand attachment mediates the relation between utilitarian value and obsessive-compulsive buying behavior.

H7e: Brand attachment mediates the relation between pleasure value and obsessive-compulsive buying behavior.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model to be tested in this study. As shown in the graph, brand attachment is conceptualized as comprising five primary antecedents – actual and ideal self-congruence, materialism, and utilitarian and hedonic values. Brand attachment, in turn, is hypothesized to mediate the relation between these antecedents and consumers' obsessive-compulsive buying behavior.

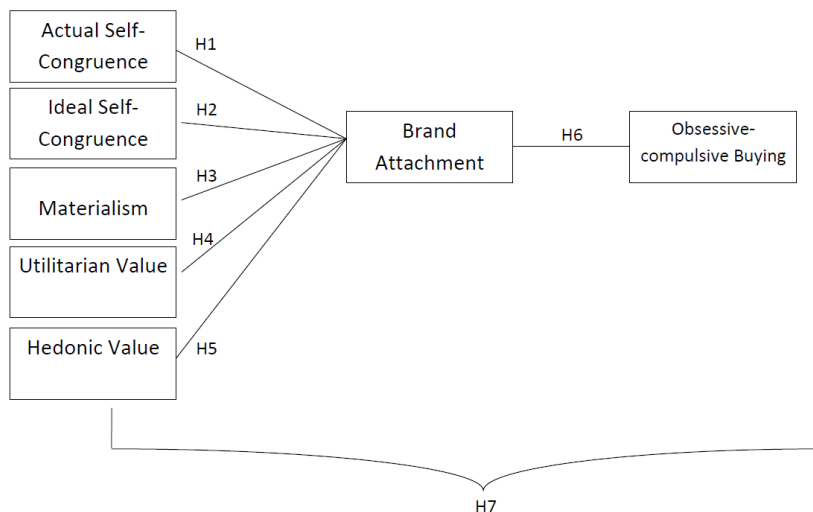


Figure 1. Conceptual research model

3. Method

3.1 Sampling and data collection

To test the research conceptual model, data were collected online through Survey Monkey - a leading survey management solution. Following Cheah et al. (2020), three eligibility criteria were implemented: (1) the respondent must be a Kuwaiti citizen; (2) he or she must be at least 18 years old; and (3) he or she must have purchased branded apparel before. The effective sample size included 302 consumers who met all eligibility criteria.

3.2. Survey Tools

A two-section, self-completion questionnaire was developed based on an extensive literature review. The first section captured demographic variables, whereas the other section consisted of items measuring the study constructs. All items were assessed on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Both actual and ideal self-congruence were measured with three items each taken from Malar et al. (2011) and Sirgy et al. (1997), respectively. Examples include: “This branded apparel is consistent with how I see

myself” and “This branded apparel is a mirror image of the person I would like to be.” The brand attachment dimensions (self-brand connection and brand prominence) were adapted from Dwivedi (2014), Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012), and Han et al. (2010). Examples include: “This branded apparel embodies what I believe in” and “When buying apparel, I only look for branded ones.” Materialism was measured by eight items taken from Richins (2004). Examples include: “I admire people who own expensive branded apparel”, “I like a lot of luxury branded apparel in my life”, and “My life would be better if I owned certain branded apparel that I do not have.” The utilitarian and hedonic value items were adapted from Babin et al. (1994). Examples include: “I only buy branded apparel that I really need” and “The branded apparel I buy is fun to use.” Finally, obsessive-compulsive buying behavior was measured using three items taken from Ridgway et al. (2008). Examples include: “My closet has unopened shopping bags of this branded apparel” and “Others might consider me a shopaholic for this branded apparel.”

3.3 Procedures

Following Fastoso and Gonzalez-Jimenez (2020), the questionnaire, developed originally in English, was translated into Arabic using the double back-translation method (Craig & Douglas, 2005). First, the original 29 items of the research tool were first translated from the English language into Arabic language by a bilingual expert. Second, another bilingual expert retranslated the same items back into English. The back-translation method did not identify any problematic items. However, some items were paraphrased to ensure translation equivalence (Musa & Pevalin, 2012).

4. Results

4.1 Common method variance test

Because data on both the antecedents and consequences were collected using the same Likert-type scale from the same respondent, a common-method variance must be checked (Du et

al., 2007). We checked for the common-method variance problem using Harman’s single-factor test. Podsakoff et al. (2003) argued that the common-method variance can pose a problem if the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) results in a single non-rotated factor solution or if one general factor dominates most of the covariance among the measures. Figure 2 shows that the non-rotated factor solution reveals five factors with eigenvalues > 1, with the first-factor accounting for less than the recommended limit of 50%, indicating that the common-method variance is not a significant problem that might affect the results of the study.

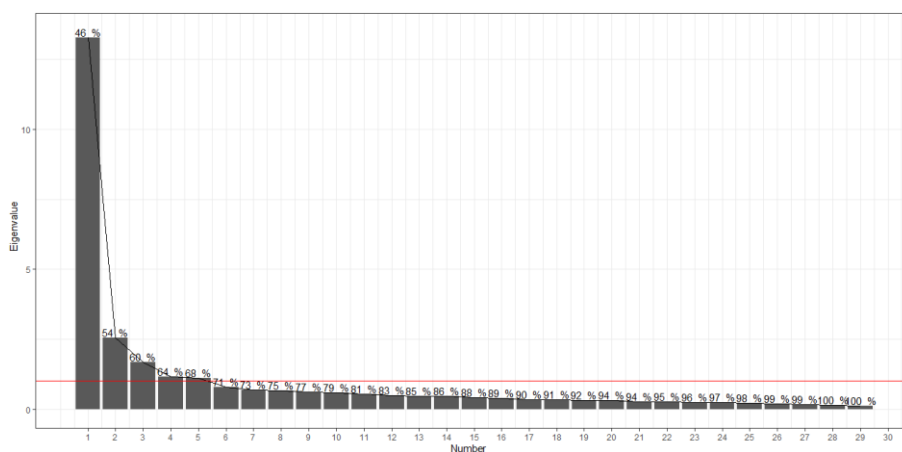


Figure 2. Exploratory factor analysis screen plot with variance explained

4.2 Descriptive statistics

The effective sample included 302 branded apparel consumers. 75.2 percent were female. This was to be expected because branded apparel “is predominantly targeted towards female shoppers” (So et al., 2013). The mean age was 29.9 (SD = 17.5). 37.7 percent of the respondents have a pre-university education, 47.7 percent have a university degree, and 14.6 have a graduate degree. The average income in the sample was 1100 KD (SD = 8330 KD). Figure 3 depicts the distribution of responses to the questionnaire items across the sample.

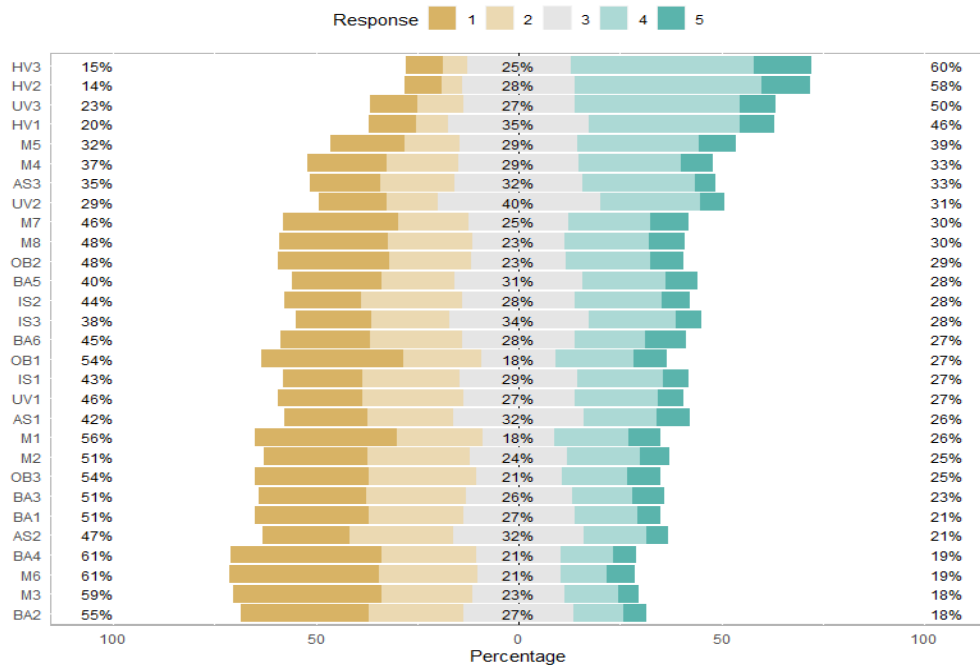


Figure 3. The distribution of questionnaire responses across the sample

4.3 PLS-SEM estimation

The PLS-SEM statistical technique was used to test the research hypotheses. The *sempr* package was used within the R 4.2 environment (R Core Team, 2022) to estimate the model parameters. Table 1 reports the item loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and the average variance extracted (AVE). All Cronbach's alpha and composite reliabilities exceeded the cut-off value of 0.70 usually used in the social sciences (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). Thus, the results confirm the internal consistency and the convergent validity ($AVE > 0.5$) of the scales used. Discriminate validity was evaluated using the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion. As shown in Table 2, all constructs exhibit satisfactory discriminate validity as the ratio correlation values were all less than the threshold of 0.85 (Kline, 2011).

Table 1. Factor Loadings, Reliability, and Convergent Validity

	Λ	Alpha	CR	AVE
AS1	0.780	0.804	0.883	0.716
AS2	0.894			
AS3	0.859			
IS1	0.905	0.908	0.942	0.845
IS2	0.936			
IS3	0.916			
M1	0.801	0.912	0.928	0.619
M2	0.795			
M3	0.823			
M4	0.763			
M5	0.689			
M6	0.832			
M7	0.800			
M8	0.782			
UV1	0.949	0.689	0.931	0.607
UV2	0.918			
UV3	0.836			
HV1	0.875	0.872	0.818	0.811
HV2	0.857			
HV3	0.567			
BA1	0.863	0.884	0.913	0.638
BA2	0.868			
BA3	0.855			
BA4	0.812			
BA5	0.683			
BA6	0.688			
OB1	0.846	0.837	0.902	0.754
OB2	0.882			
OB3	0.876			

Note: Λ = Loadings

Alpha = Cronbach's alpha

CR = Composite reliability

AVE = Average Variance Extracted

Table 2. Discriminant validity – Fornell&Larcker Criterion

Construct							
	AS	IS	M	UV	HV	BA	OB
AS	0.846						
IS	0.737	0.919					
M	0.574	0.652	0.787				
UV	0.507	0.589	0.664	0.779			
HV	0.347	0.417	0.431	0.595	0.901		
BA	0.587	0.636	0.782	0.688	0.352	0.799	
OB	0.531	0.599	0.675	0.552	0.498	0.311	0.868

Having established the validity and reliability through measurement model assessment, we assessed the research hypotheses via a bootstrapping technique with 5000 iterations as shown in Figure 4. As suggested by Hair et al/ (2016), the assessment was conducted in two phases: R^2 and path coefficients. First, the R^2 for brand attachment (0.69) and obsessive-compulsive buying (0.44) indicate medium or high predictive power of corresponding constructs. Second, from the graph, we see that materialism ($\beta = 0.499$, $T = 8.736$) and utilitarian value ($\beta = 0.325$, $T = 5.109$) have a positive impact on brand attachment, which supports H3 and H4. The brand attachment also was found to have a positive and significant impact on obsessive-compulsive buying behavior, which supports H6. Surprisingly, actual self-congruence ($\beta = 0.117$, $T = 1.710$) and ideal self-congruence ($\beta = 0.089$, $T = 1.208$) do not have any direct effect on obsessive-compulsive buying behavior. Contrary to H5, the hedonic value ($\beta = -0.134$, $T = -3.309$) has a negative and significant effect on brand attachment. Table 3 summarizes the results of the direct relationships.

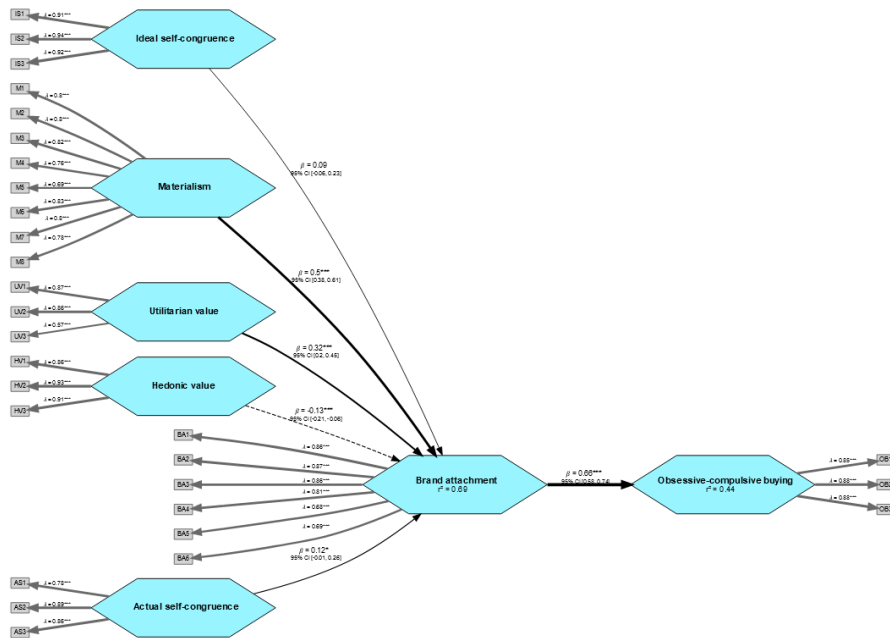


Figure 4. Bootstrapped PLS-SEM model.

Table 3. Direct Relationships

	B	T
AS ->BA	0.117	1.710
IS ->BA	0.089	1.208
M ->BA	0.499	8.736**
UV ->BA	0.325	5.109**
HV ->BA	-0.134	-3.309*
BA ->OB	0.660	15.607***

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Following Nitzl et al. (2016), the mediation analysis was examined via bootstrapping the indirect effect. Table 4 shows that brand attachment mediates the relationship between materialism and obsessive-compulsive buying behavior ($\beta = 0.329$, $T = 7.035$), which supports H7c. Similarly, brand attachment mediates both the relationship between utilitarian value and obsessive-compulsive buying behavior ($\beta = 0.329$, $T = 7.035$), which supports H7d and also the relation between hedonic value and obsessive-compulsive buying behavior ($\beta = 0.088$, $T = -3.223$), which supports H7e. However, the results show that there is no

mediating influence of brand attachment between actual self-congruence ($\beta = 0.077$, $T = 1.727$) and ideal self-congruence ($\beta = 0.058$, $T = 1.169$) and obsessive-compulsive buying behavior, which reject H7a and H7b.

Table 4: Mediation Analysis

	β	T	95% CI
AS ->BA ->OB	0.077	1.727	(-0.008, 0.167)
IS ->BA ->OB	0.058	1.169	(-0.039, 0.0158)
M ->BA ->OB	0.329	7.035**	(0.238, 0.422)
UV ->BA ->OB	0.214	5.218*	(0.133, 0.295)
HV ->BA ->OB	-0.088	-3.223*	(-0.144, -0.036)

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

5. Conclusion

From a theoretical perspective, the results of this study contribute to the existing literature on consumer-brand relationships in several ways. First, although prior research has generally advocated consumers' identification with their preferred brands (Borghini et al., 2021; Hegner et al., 2017), the results of this study show that this identification comes with an important caveat as a strong brand attachment may lead to undesirable consumer behaviors (Lucic et al., 2021; Aw et al., 2018). Thus, the major contribution of this research is to show how brand attachment operates in relation to negative consumer behaviors. In fact, some scholars have noted that companies that condone compulsive buying might face ethical dilemmas related to their social responsibilities (Horvath & Birgelen, 2015). Thus, if most consumers consider the brand irresponsible, this might result in a decline in the reputation of the brand in the long run. Second, through a series of mediation analyses, this research adds new insights into the important mediating role of brand attachment of the link between materialism and utilitarian value and obsessive-compulsive buying behavior. This finding supports a growing number of prior studies proposing an indirect link between materialism and/or shopping value and brand behaviors (Cifci et

al., 2016; Nam et al., 2011). Finally, by conducting the study in an Arab nation, we extend the existing obsessive-compulsive buying literature conducted mainly in Western countries such as the US (Harnish et al., 2017, 2018), Canada (Yi, 2012), and Western Europe (Duroy et al., 2018; Maccarrone-Eaglen & Schofield, 2018).

From a practical perspective, the results of this study also offer initial empirical evidence showing that materialism and utilitarian values drive brand attachment. Because materialist consumers seek brands that allow them to join an aspiration social group (Shrum et al., 2013), brand managers should strive to develop marketing and advertising campaigns that associate their brands with prestige and status. For instance, brand managers might create exclusive and/or limited-edition product lines geared toward materialist consumers. Branded apparel marketers in Kuwait should also pay more attention to highlighting the importance of the utilitarian aspect of the products. For example, branded apparel may be marketed based on its ability to meet practical needs and solve practical problems. Finally, although we did not find a positive and significant relation between self-congruence and brand attachment as was the case in research conducted in the West, it appears that consumers' definition of self-concept is focused on social dimensions (actual social self and ideal social self) (Liu et al., 2022) in a collectivist Arab culture. The social self or "the self-glass appearance" (Rabbane et al., 2020, p. 1409) refers to "how the consumer believes significant others see him/her." Thus, branded apparel managers should focus on the social motivations behind brand attachment. For example, advertising campaigns for branded apparel should focus on the social comparison between the self and others by highlighting feelings such as envy or jealousy. Finally, since brand attachment can lead to obsessive-compulsive buying behavior, we argue that policymakers in Kuwait should regulate marketing and advertising content that indirectly influences obsessive-compulsive buying. One way to do that is by regulating

excessive claims related to branded apparel marketing communications.

5. Limitations and future research

Despite the several contributions of this study to the body of knowledge of consumer-brand relationships, it suffers from some limitations that future research needs to address. First, the study sample is limited to Kuwaiti consumers, which limits the generalizability of the results. A cross-cultural research examining antecedents of obsessive-compulsive buying behavior is needed to test whether the results of this study hold. Second, we used five variables as antecedents to the brand attachment. To increase the explanatory power of the model used, future research may add to this list. For example, Wen et al. (2019) showed that brand trust is a major antecedent of brand attachment. Social self-congruity (Gonzalez-Jimenez et al., 2019) is another potential antecedent that can be tested in a collectivistic culture. Future research might also add responsiveness, quality, and reputation (Japutra et al., 2017). Third, with the exponential growth of online shopping, future research should examine brand attachment and the obsessive-compulsive buying behavior of branded apparel. Prior research found that drivers of online brand attachment drivers include social media presence (Tag, 2015), negative online information (Chiou et al., 2013), and engagement in relevant virtual communities (Brodie et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2012).

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