

## Scale Development of the Lovemark Experience for Fashion Brands

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**Background** Given the variety of product options offered in the current market and ubiquitous marketing efforts, consumers often turn to brands to facilitate purchase decisions. Thus, it is critical for companies to clarify their brand identity to differentiate their brand (Keller, 2008). Brands fulfill desires and needs, and consumers form an emotional connection with such brands (Gobe, 2001; Roberts, 2004). The positive emotional connection with brands influences consumers' shopping behaviors, such as brand loyalty and consumers' willingness to pay a premium price (Gobe, 2001; Keller, 2008; Riesenbeck & Perrey, 2007). Great brands can maximize their connections with consumers by creating strong emotional bonds (Riesenbeck and Perrey, 2007; Roberts, 2004).

**Theoretical framework** Roberts' (2004) "lovemarks" theory suggests a company/brand must create a lovemark to build customer loyalty. In this theory, a lovemark is defined as a deep emotional connection, which distinguishes the experience with the brand. Roberts posited that lovemarks require both high love and high respect; whereas, a brand may reflect a situation of high respect, but low love. To create a lovemark, a brand must provide the consumer with three elements of experience: a sense of mystery, sensuality, and intimacy (Roberts, 2004). Whereas a number of researchers and industry practitioners have emphasized that a company/brand must form a positive emotional connection with consumers to increase purchase intentions (Gobe, 2001; Keller, 2008; Riesenbeck & Perrey, 2007), we have found no research that has examined all these three elements of experience and the impact of these constructs on creating a deep emotional connection.

**Purpose** Previous research clearly addressed the importance of an emotional connection by proposing a measure of brand love capturing affective aspects (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001); however, cognitive and sensory respects (e.g., sense of mystery, sensuality) have not been captured in past research. The purpose of this research was to test Roberts' theory by (a) creating a reliable composite measure that includes the three elements of lovemark experience (mystery, sensuality, and intimacy), and by empirically examining if these three constructs substantially affect (b) brand love and (c) brand respect, as proposed by Roberts.

**Method** This study followed the scale development procedure suggested by Churchill (1979) to develop a reliable and valid measure of the lovemark experience. A bank of 171 items was developed by the researchers to measure a sense of mystery, sensuality, and intimacy. These items were generated after reviewing qualitative data from interviews with consumers, ranging in age from 21 to 54 (8 females and 3 males), about their experiences with brands they love; a comprehensive literature review of consumer experience with brands; and consumers' comments

about their favorite brands from the lovemarks Website; [www.lovemarks.com](http://www.lovemarks.com). Reliable and valid measures of brand love and brand respect were adapted and modified from Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) and Frei & Shaver (2002), respectively. A total of 218 students (198 females and 20 males) enrolled in Textiles & Clothing courses at a major midwestern university participated in an online survey of the study through links on course Websites. They received extra course credit for participating. Five-point Likert-type scales, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), were used with respondents to capture experiences with fashion brands they liked or loved, including clothing, accessories, footwear, and cosmetics brands.

**Results** First, exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted as a data reduction technique for the constructs. One factor for each construct was extracted with an Eigenvalue greater than 1.0. Items were retained if they loaded above .50 on the factor, but below .30 on the other factors. As a result, 11 items were highly loaded on the mystery factor ( $\alpha = .94$ ), 10 items loaded on the sensuality factor ( $\alpha = .92$ ), 15 items loaded on intimacy ( $\alpha = .97$ ), 8 items loaded on brand love ( $\alpha = .94$ ), and 13 items loaded on the respect factor ( $\alpha = .91$ ). Overall these factors explained 66 percent of total variance. Second, confirmatory factor analysis was used to examine construct validity. Two items from the mystery factor and 1 item from the respect factor were removed, due to lower factor loadings ( $< .50$ ). The fit indices of the SEM measurement model showed good fit of the data ( $\chi^2 (55, N = 218) = 110.79, p = .00, CFI = .98, TLI = .98, RMSEA = .068, SRMR = .02$ ) which supports construct validity of the scales. All proposed paths in the SEM model were statistically significant ( $p = .00$ ), except one path (e.g., from sensuality to brand love).

**Conclusions and Implications** A reliable and valid scale capturing the three lovemark constructs of mystery, sensuality, and intimacy was developed. Mystery and intimacy predicted brand love and all three constructs predicted brand respect, which partially supports the lovemark theory. This research suggests marketers should consider building mystery, sensuality, and intimacy into brand experiences. The researchers will test convergent and discriminant validity of the developed scales in a future research. The effect of these experiences on brand loyalty and patronage intentions for the brand will also be examined.

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