



Impact of brand attachment on trash talking: mediating role of compulsive buying and moderating role of consumer age

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article History Received: 2 February 2025 Revised: 8 March 2025 Accepted: 9 June 2025 Key Words Dark Side of Brands - Brand Attachment – Compulsive Buying – Trash Talking. Corr. Author Email motevakelamir@gmail.com z.jamshidi@e-damavandihe.ca gharibi1364@gmail.com	Brand attachment is commonly considered a positive factor in marketing, as it fosters consumer loyalty and encourages repeat purchases. However, the darker side of brand attachment suggests that strong consumer devotion and loyalty can also have negative consequences, such as price discrimination and compulsive buying. Despite its importance, limited research has examined these destructive effects within consumer–brand relationships. This study focuses on the negative and dark aspects of brand attachment, highlighting how intense attachment can lead to compulsive and impulsive buying behaviors. The research investigates three key dimensions of brand attachment—brand passion, brand prominence, and brand turbulence—and analyzes their relationship with unhealthy purchasing behaviors. The findings provide insights for designing consumer-friendly communication strategies and regulatory measures. This study employs a quantitative research design with descriptive data collection methods. Participants were randomly sampled among fans of selected brands. Notably, age was found not to act as a moderating variable; in some instances, it even showed a direct relationship with impulsive buying. Data were collected from 309 respondents through online and in-person questionnaires. Results indicate that all three dimensions of brand attachment can significantly increase irrational purchasing behaviors. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the negative impacts of emotional brand relationships and offers practical recommendations to mitigate harmful consumer behaviors.

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1. Introduction

In today's world, brands are not merely names or logos; they have become an integral part of consumers' identities. Many individuals develop emotional attachments to their favorite brands, often making purchases based on feelings rather than actual needs.

The dark side of branding, particularly within consumer–brand relationships, has become a focus of recent research. For instance, studies have examined brand communities and their negative effects (Liashou et al., 2019), extreme consumer attachment to brands (Okazaki et al., 2019), brand identity (Merk & Michael, 2019), and excessive brand loyalty (Riquelm et al., 2019). Riquelm et al. (2019) found that brand loyalty can increase negative outcomes, such as price discrimination, for reputable retailers. Similarly, Okazaki et al. (2019) demonstrated that strong consumer attachment can trigger compulsive buying. Despite its significance, research specifically addressing the dark aspects of brand attachment remains limited, though recent studies increasingly focus on this area.

This study investigates the impact of brand attachment on two detrimental consumer behaviors: compulsive buying and sniping (mocking) of competing brands. Additionally, it examines whether consumer age acts as a moderating variable.

Compulsive Buying is defined as an uncontrollable urge to purchase, leading to negative personal and financial consequences (O'Guinn & Faber, 1989). It encompasses two forms: impulsive buying and compulsive–functional buying (Ridgway et al., 2008; Japutra et al., 2019). Impulsive buying is unplanned, spontaneous, and emotionally driven, characterized by rapid, spontaneous decision-making and an immediate desire for ownership (Rook, 1987; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Kacen & Lee, 2002; Japutra et al., 2019). Compulsive buying involves an uncontrollable urge to shop repeatedly to alleviate distress (Ridgway et al., 2008). Previous research has shown a positive relationship between compulsive buying and impulsive traits, such as urgency, lack of effort, and absence of premeditation (Biliox et al., 2008). Hence, compulsive–functional buying, which involves uncontrolled urgency, represents a stronger form of compulsive behavior compared to impulsive buying.

Compulsive buying is a growing concern due to its negative effects on individuals' lives, including increased credit card debt and depressive symptoms (Maraz et al., 2016; Müller et al., 2019; Joireman et al., 2010; Müller et al., 2011; Japutra & Song, 2020). Gallagher et al. (2017) reported that consumers often feel guilt and regret following compulsive purchases. Fenton, O'Kriely, and colleagues (2018) found that impulsive buying is associated with poorer quality of life, including family conflicts and work-related issues (Müller et al., 2019).

Sniping (Mocking of Competing Brands) refers to negative communications about rival brands, a form of indirect word-of-mouth, often using statements with superficially contradictory meanings to convey criticism or ridicule. The primary aim is to discredit competing brands in favor of one's preferred option. In fact, sniping can be viewed as a distinct type of loyalty. Brand loyalty, according to Japutra et al. (2018), involves negative

attitudes and behaviors toward competing brands as a result of strong attachment to a specific brand. Consumers may verbally discredit alternatives to justify their own choice and reinforce brand prominence (Martikot et al., 2016).

Previous research distinguishes between **internal sniping** and **external sniping** (Hickman & Ward, 2007; Japutra et al., 2018). Internal sniping occurs when negative communications about other brands are directed at individuals using the same brand, whereas external sniping occurs when these communications are directed at those using different brands. Consumers engage in internal sniping to elevate their brand above competitors and in external sniping to defend their choice or undermine rival brands.

While previous studies suggest that negative emotions toward brands are detrimental and positive emotions beneficial (Desart et al., 2020; Hegner et al., 2017; Fortier & Alvarez, 2013), strong brand attachment can amplify both brand obsession and brand-related negative feelings. This study also investigates which age groups are more likely to engage in harmful behaviors.

Brand Attachment comprises two complementary concepts: attachment strength and attachment styles. Attachment strength reflects the emotional bond between a consumer and a brand (Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005) and is rooted in attachment theory from psychology (Bowlby, 1979). It occurs when consumers perceive the brand as a part of themselves and integrate it into their self-identity (Park et al., 2010). In this study, brand attachment is treated as a multidimensional construct, encompassing brand passion, brand prominence, and brand turbulence, representing both affective and cognitive connections between the consumer and the brand.

Brand Passion refers to a strong, positive emotional state toward a brand that motivates sustained engagement (Bauer et al., 2007). According to Albert et al. (2013), it combines deep interest and high valuation of the brand, becoming part of the individual's identity. Zhu et al. (2021) conceptualized brand passion as a strong motivational state involving both intrinsic enjoyment and instrumental value, distinguishing it from brand loyalty, which is more behavioral than emotional.

Brand Prominence denotes the salience and importance of a brand in the consumer's mind (Park et al., 2010), reflecting how easily and quickly a brand is activated in memory (Keller, 1993). It indicates the degree to which a brand captures attention and preference relative to competitors (Pang et al., 2020) and its ability to influence consumer choice even when not actively considered (Netemier et al.).

Brand Turbulence refers to negative emotional states and anxiety related to the potential disruption of the relationship with a favorite brand (Jimenez & Wes, 2014). It reflects the stress consumers experience when faced with threats that may interfere with their preferred brand. Thompson et al. (2005) describe it as psychological distress arising from potential threats to the emotional bond with a beloved brand, while Park et al. (2013) emphasize negative emotional reactions due to the possible loss of engagement opportunities with the brand. Lastovicka & Sirianni (2011) highlight the anxiety stemming from the perception that the brand may fail to meet consumers' psychological needs.

2. Literature Review

Brand attachment is a key concept in marketing and consumer behavior, referring to the long-term emotional bond between a consumer and a brand. Traditionally, it has been regarded as a positive factor, leading to outcomes such as loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and increased customer lifetime value. Early studies often emphasized brand attachment as a competitive advantage, highlighting its role in fostering stable consumer–brand relationships. However, in recent years, research has begun to focus on the dark side of brand attachment, exploring the psychological and social mechanisms that contribute to negative behaviors. These studies suggest that beyond positive emotional connections, factors such as attachment anxiety, excessive emotional dependency, and ideal self–brand congruence can play a critical role in generating adverse outcomes. Reviewing the literature in this area is crucial, as it helps identify key variables and existing research gaps.

Lee (2009), in a study titled *The Effect of Money Attitudes on Compulsive Buying among Young Chinese Consumers*, demonstrated that individuals' attitudes toward money significantly influence compulsive buying behavior. The study, conducted with 303 undergraduate students in two major Chinese cities, indicated that understanding money attitudes is useful for marketers and policymakers to better comprehend spending patterns and plan strategic interventions.

Japutra (2016) examined both positive and negative consumer behaviors stemming from brand attachment and the moderating role of attachment styles. Using data from 432 respondents, the study found that brand attachment, while fostering loyalty, can also trigger negative behaviors such as brand sniping and anti-brand actions. Additionally, avoidant attachment style moderated the relationship between brand attachment and these negative behaviors.

In a 2018 study, Japutra explored the role of ideal self–brand congruence in shaping negative consumer behaviors. Using a two-stage approach and structural equation modeling, the findings showed that higher congruence with the ideal self increases emotional attachment to the brand, which in turn intensifies compulsive buying and sniping behaviors.

Lim (2020) investigated *Compulsive Branded Clothing Purchases and the Role of Brand Attachment* in Malaysia. Data collected from 600 young consumers indicated that materialism and hedonic values, mediated by brand attachment, increase both impulsive and compulsive–functional buying. The study underscored the importance of brand attachment as a mechanism influencing compulsive purchasing behaviors.

Japutra (2022), in *The Dark Side of Brand Attachment*, found that brand attachment can trigger negative behaviors, including impulsive buying, compulsive purchasing, and brand sniping. He concluded that stronger emotional attachment increases the likelihood of maladaptive behaviors, highlighting implications for brand–consumer relationship management.

San (2023), in a study titled *Live Commerce and Compulsive Buying*, showed that fear of missing out (FOMO) and social influence in live commerce environments exacerbate

compulsive buying. Data from 242 participants confirmed that both informational and normative social influences directly and indirectly, through FOMO, reinforce compulsive purchasing behavior.

Liao (2023), in *Avoidance or Sniping: The Role of Brand Identification in Negative Consumer Behavior*, demonstrated that brand identification can lead consumers to avoid competing brands, but does not necessarily induce sniping. Conversely, de-identification with a brand increases both avoidance and sniping toward competitors.

Eghbali (2022), in a study on prison inmates in Kashan, examined the relationship between early maladaptive schemas, dark personality traits, and attachment styles. Using a descriptive-correlational design with 334 inmates (179 randomly sampled), the study utilized questionnaires measuring maladaptive schemas (Young & Brown, 2003), dark personality traits (Jennings & Webster, 2010), and attachment styles (Hazan & Shaver, 1986). Regression analysis via SPSS revealed significant relationships, suggesting that dark personality traits and attachment patterns play a critical role in shaping maladaptive behaviors.

Samadi Azar (2022) investigated the effects of dark dimensions of brand attachment on cognitive dissonance among clothing consumers in Chalus. Using a descriptive-survey design, data were collected from 384 customers (145 valid responses). The study measured dark brand attachment (impulsive and compulsive–functional buying) and cognitive dissonance. Analysis using SmartPLS showed that dark dimensions of brand attachment increase cognitive dissonance. The study recommended that brand managers and clothing retailers provide transparent information and honest advertising to prevent emotionally driven purchase behaviors and associated cognitive dissonance.

Background. Based on attachment theory, the dark dimension of brand attachment suggests that brand attachment can lead to compulsive buying and, in turn, influence brand sniping behaviors. According to Bowlby's attachment theory (1969), humans have an inherent and biological tendency to form strong emotional bonds with brands, similar to the attachment formed with significant individuals in their lives. Attachment theory posits that strong bonds encourage individuals to invest resources or make sacrifices for the sake of the relationship partner (Impett & Gordon, 2010; Japutra et al., 2018).

Scholars in this field argue that individuals can establish strong brand bonds through three key components of attachment: brand passion, brand prominence, and brand turbulence (Thomson et al., 2005; Park et al., 2010; Mend & Bolton, 2011). Most companies aim to enhance brand attachment through these three components to build strong relationships with their target consumers.

However, as previously discussed, strong brand attachment does not always result in desirable behaviors. Observations indicate that high brand passion, significant brand prominence, and elevated brand turbulence can influence compulsive–functional buying and impulsive buying. Within the conceptual framework, brand sniping is considered a negative outcome of both impulsive and compulsive–functional buying.

The conceptual model also suggests that consumer age moderates the relationships between the three brand attachment components (brand passion, brand prominence, and brand turbulence) and compulsive buying. Age is a crucial demographic variable in this research and is regarded as a strong moderating factor when examining consumer behavior relationships (Haman-Ramirez & Merunka, 2019; Khan et al., 2020).

Age affects fundamental consumer interactions, including engagement, experience, and behavioral patterns (Japutra et al., 2021; Rader & Holbeck, 2021). Prior research indicates that younger consumers may be more susceptible to overconsumption and compulsive buying (Kyriou et al., 2020), whereas older individuals are generally less prone to such behaviors (Adamszic et al., 2020).

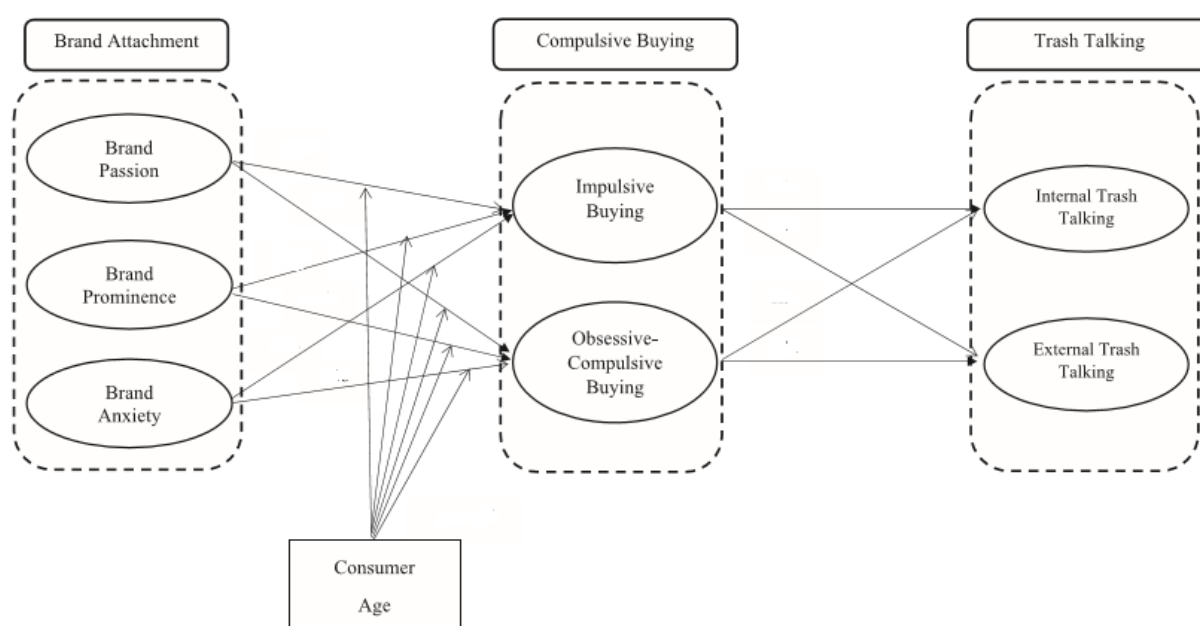


Figure 1. Conceptual model

Developing hypotheses

Brand Passion and Compulsive Buying

Brand passion refers to an individual's emotional attachment and interest in a brand, which can be either harmonious or obsessive. Harmonious passion arises from the autonomous internalization of the brand into the individual's identity and is associated with enjoyment and positive advocacy. Obsessive passion, on the other hand, results from controlled internalization and may lead to dependency, compulsive buying, and negative emotions when access to the brand is restricted. Research indicates that obsessive passion is linked to addiction and impulsive behaviors, with passionate consumers more likely to invest resources, support, and defend the brand; however, limitations can cause distress and negative behavior.

H₁: Brand passion is positively associated with impulsive buying.

H₂: Brand passion is positively associated with compulsive–functional buying.

Brand Prominence and Compulsive Buying

Brand prominence is a key component of brand attachment, reflecting the ease with which brand-related thoughts and feelings are activated in memory. Prominent brands are associated with the individual's social or personal identity and evoke positive emotions and immediate memories. This closeness to the brand increases purchase intentions, market share, and spending. Consumers who identify with prominent brands exhibit stronger attachment, which can also stimulate impulsive and spontaneous purchases, as the brand fulfills their identity and social needs.

H₃: Brand prominence is positively associated with impulsive buying.

H₄: Brand prominence is positively associated with compulsive–functional buying.

Brand Turbulence and Compulsive Buying

Attachment styles guide behavior in interpersonal and brand relationships and are conceptualized along two dimensions: anxiety and avoidance (Mend & Bolton, 2011; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Attachment anxiety reflects a strong need for validation and fear of rejection and is linked to compulsive behaviors (Weinstein et al., 2015; Darat et al., 2016; Harnish et al., 2018). High-anxiety consumers are more prone to compulsive buying, as it reduces distress and enhances social status (Roberts & Jones, 2001; Valence et al., 1988). Anxiety is also associated with impulsivity and immediate reactions (Van den Berg et al., 2005; Taylor et al., 2008).

H₅: Brand turbulence is positively associated with impulsive buying.

H₆: Brand turbulence is positively associated with compulsive–functional buying.

Compulsive Buying and Brand Sniping. Brand sniping (mocking) can be problematic for both brands and consumers. It often arises from brand support and defense of personal choices and may escalate to aggressive behaviors (Owing et al., 2013). Sniping can be internal—directed at supporters of other brands—or external—occurring in neutral spaces and forums against competitor brands (Hickman & Ward, 2007; Dinwa et al., 2017). Examples include user attacks on rival brands in fan pages or public forums, such as disparaging Apple products on GSM Arena or defending Samsung while mocking Apple on YouTube.

Research indicates that compulsive buying and strong brand attachment increase sniping behaviors, as consumers act to defend their self-concept and social identity (Japutra et al., 2018, 2019; Lim et al., 2020). Compulsive purchasing can lead to regret, dissatisfaction, and negative behaviors, including sniping (Gallagher et al., 2017). Impulsive and compulsive–functional buyers are more attached to brands that reinforce their social identity, making them more likely to engage in sniping to reduce distress and aggression (Craig, 1998).

H₇: Impulsive buying is positively associated with internal brand sniping.

H₈: Impulsive buying is positively associated with external brand sniping.

H₉: Compulsive–functional buying is positively associated with internal brand sniping.

H₁₀: Compulsive–functional buying is positively associated with external brand sniping.

Moderating Role of Consumer Age. Age plays a crucial role in interpreting consumer behavior, particularly influencing compulsive buying (Japutra et al., 2021; Rader & Holbeck, 2021). Younger consumers, especially Generation Y, are more likely to engage in compulsive, excessive purchasing and post-purchase complaints (Suarez et al., 2017; Curran et al., 2006; Dietmar, 2005). These behaviors are not only driven by materialistic tendencies but also by strong emotional attachment to brands (Park et al., 2010, 2013; Japutra et al., 2018). Younger consumers spend more time interacting with brands, which enhances passion and purchase intentions (Wang & Yang, 2008; Sorce et al., 2005).

Additionally, younger consumers' lower emotional regulation, including anxiety and turbulence, increases the likelihood of impulsive and compulsive–functional purchases (Thomson, 2006). They are more inclined to defend their worldview and reduce distress through purchases, whereas older consumers are less likely to engage in such behaviors (Mikulincer & Florian, 2000; Maxfield et al., 2007). Therefore, age serves as a significant moderator, influencing the relationship between brand prominence, brand turbulence, and both impulsive and compulsive–functional buying.

H₁₁: Consumer age is negatively associated with the relationship between brand turbulence and impulsive buying.

H₁₂: Consumer age is negatively associated with the relationship between brand prominence and impulsive buying.

H₁₃: Consumer age is negatively associated with the relationship between overall brand attachment and impulsive buying.

H₁₄: Consumer age is negatively associated with the relationship between brand turbulence and compulsive–functional buying.

H₁₅: Consumer age is negatively associated with the relationship between brand prominence and compulsive–functional buying.

H₁₆: Consumer age is negatively associated with the relationship between overall brand attachment and compulsive–functional buying.

3. Research Methodology

This study is applied in purpose and descriptive in terms of data collection, employing a quantitative research design due to its suitability for assessing attitudes across a large population. The target population of this research included 309 fans of selected brands, such as Iran Khodro and Saipa, iPhone and Samsung, Café Lamis and Café Viona, and Sib 360 Fast Food and Atavich Fast Food.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered both online and in-person. The sample size was determined using the Morgan table. The questionnaire served as the primary data collection instrument, distributed in both virtual and face-to-face formats.

Among the respondents, 63% were female and 37% male. Age distribution was as follows: 16–24 years (21%), 25–34 years (41%), 45–54 years (10%), and above 55 years (5%). Monthly income distribution included: 1–10 million IRR (28%), 10–20 million IRR (38%), 20–30 million IRR (26%), and above 30 million IRR (8%). Regarding educational attainment, participants held: diploma or lower (26%), bachelor's degree (44%), master's degree (24%), and doctoral degree (6%).

Brand preference among participants was distributed as follows: 22% for Iran Khodro and Saipa, 38% for iPhone and Samsung, 19% for Café Viona and Café Lamis, and 21% for Sib 360 Fast Food and Atavich Fast Food.

Table 1. Construct and Scale of Questioner

Item	Item Description	Construct / Scale	Response Scale
1	My feelings toward the brand can be described by the following items:	Brand Attachment / Brand Passion	1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High
2	Passion	Brand Attachment / Brand Passion	1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High
3	Enjoyment	Brand Attachment / Brand Passion	1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High
4	Fascination	Brand Attachment / Brand Passion	1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High
5	To what extent are your thoughts and feelings about [this brand] often automatic and come to mind spontaneously?	Brand Prominence	1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High
6	To what extent do your thoughts and feelings about [this brand] naturally and immediately come to mind?	Brand Prominence	1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High
7	To what extent does this word automatically evoke many positive thoughts about the past, present, and future?	Brand Prominence	1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High
8	To what extent do you have many thoughts about this brand?	Brand Prominence	1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High
9	[This brand] changes its behavior toward me without any reason.	Brand Turbulence	1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree
10	I worry that [this brand] does not really like me as a consumer.	Brand Turbulence	1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree
11	I worry that [this brand] does not care about me as much as I care about it.	Brand Turbulence	1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree
12	I buy things from [this brand] that I don't really need.	Impulsive Buying	1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree
13	I buy things from this brand that I had not planned to purchase.	Impulsive Buying	1 = Strongly Disagree

			5 = Strongly Agree
14	I consider myself an impulsive buyer for this brand.	Impulsive Buying	1 = Strongly Disagree 5 = Strongly Agree
15	I have unopened packages from this brand in my closet.	Compulsive–Functional Buying	1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High
16	Others may consider me a buyer of this brand.	Compulsive–Functional Buying	1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High
17	Much of my life revolves around purchasing from this brand.	Compulsive–Functional Buying	1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High
18	I talk with other users of this brand about negative feelings toward rival brands.	Brand Sniping – Internal	1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High
19	I discuss the inferiority of rival brands with other users of this brand.	Brand Sniping – Internal	1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High
20	I make negative statements about rival brands to other users of this brand.	Brand Sniping – Internal	1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High
21	I talk to others about negative feelings toward competing brands.	Brand Sniping – External	1 = Strongly Disagree 5 = Strongly Agree
22	I talk with others about how I compare inferior rival brands to this brand.	Brand Sniping – External	1 = Strongly Disagree 5 = Strongly Agree
23	I make negative statements to others about rival brands.	Brand Sniping – External	1 = Strongly Disagree 5 = Strongly Agree
—	Age	Demographic Variable	1 = 16–24, 2 = 25–34, 3 = 35–44, 4 = 45–54, 5 = 55 and above

All aspects of previous research were considered in developing the measurement scales. These scales have established criteria and have been widely used in numerous studies across different samples and contexts due to their reliability and validity.

Brand Passion is measured using a single-item scale (Malar et al., 2011).

Brand Prominence is measured using items adapted from Park et al. (2010).

Brand Turbulence is measured with three items based on Mend & Bolton (2011).

Impulsive Buying and **Compulsive–Functional Buying** are each measured with three items, adopted from Ridgway et al. (2008).

Internal and External Brand Sniping are measured with three items each, adapted from Hickman & Ward (2007).

These measures have been validated in prior research, ensuring both content and construct validity. Their consistent use across multiple studies demonstrates their robustness for assessing the intended constructs in different populations and settings

Table 2. Reliability and Validity of the Constructs:

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Anxiety	0.766	0.889	0.858	0.675
Brand Prominence	0.831	0.837	0.888	0.665
Impulsive Buying	0.679	0.694	0.820	0.604
Obsessive – Compulsive Buying	0.702	0.789	0.831	0.630
Brand Passion	0.890	0.891	0.931	0.819
Internal Trash Talking	0.756	0.794	0.857	0.666
External Trash Talking	0.773	0.849	0.868	0.688

4.Data Analysis

This study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the

research model. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS version 3 following a two-stage

approach, which included the development and assessment of both the outer (measurement) model and the inner (structural) model (Hair et al., 2019).

Outer Model Assessment: The outer model was evaluated using the algorithm to assess the **reliability** and **validity** of the constructs.

- **Reliability** was assessed using **Cronbach's alpha** and **Composite Reliability (CR)**. According to Hair et al. (2019), reliability should exceed 0.70, and all constructs in this study met this threshold, indicating adequate internal consistency.
- **Indicator reliability** and **convergent validity** were evaluated using the **Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**. Convergent validity is considered adequate when AVE exceeds 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In this study, all AVE values were above 0.50, confirming convergent validity.

Discriminant Validity:

Discriminant validity was assessed using the **Fornell–Larcker criterion**, which requires that the square root of the AVE of each construct exceeds its correlation with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results indicated that all constructs satisfied this criterion, demonstrating adequate discriminant validity.

Overall, the measurement model exhibits satisfactory reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, confirming that the constructs are valid and reliable for testing the structural relationships in the research model.

Hypotheses Testing :

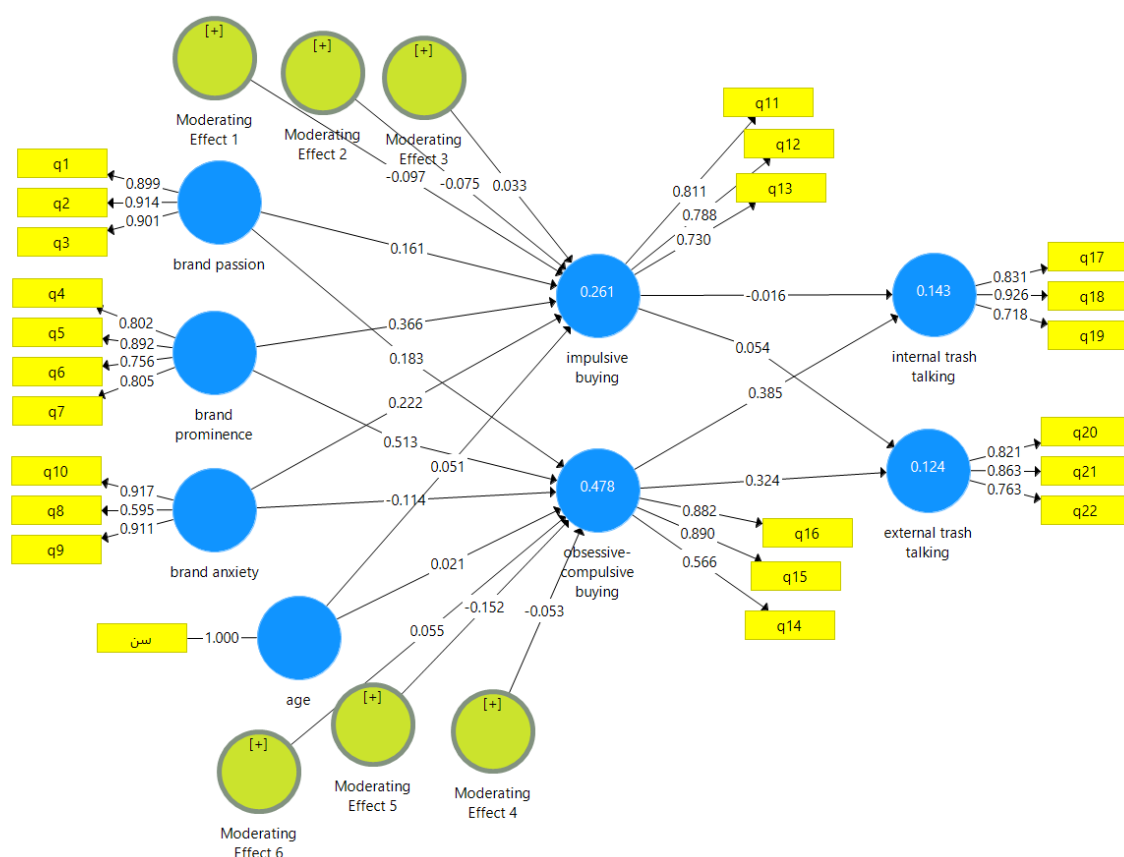


Figure 1. Research Model with path coefficient

The inner model was tested using the bootstrapping method to examine the research hypotheses and to assess the mediating effects.

The first model's R^2 values were 0.261, 0.478, 0.124, and 0.143 for Impulsive Buying, Compulsive-Functional Buying, External Brand Sniping, and Internal Brand Sniping, respectively. Multicollinearity was checked using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). According to Hair et al. (2019), VIF values above 5 indicate potential multicollinearity. In this study, VIF values ranged from 1.06 to 2.10, indicating no multicollinearity issues.

The hypotheses were tested based on the t-values, with values greater than 1.96 indicating support at a 95% confidence level. The results are summarized as follows:

1. **H₁**: $t = 2.503$, $\beta = 0.161 \rightarrow$ Supported: Brand Passion has a positive effect on Impulsive Buying.
2. **H₂**: $t = 3.142$, $\beta = 0.183 \rightarrow$ Supported: Brand Passion has a positive effect on Compulsive–Functional Buying.
3. **H₃**: $t = 6.021$, $\beta = 0.366 \rightarrow$ Supported: Brand Prominence has a positive effect on Impulsive Buying.
4. **H₄**: $t = 10.493$, $\beta = 0.513 \rightarrow$ Supported: Brand Prominence has a positive effect on Compulsive–Functional Buying.
5. **H₅**: $t = 4.123$, $\beta = 0.222 \rightarrow$ Supported: Brand Turbulence has a positive effect on Impulsive Buying.
6. **H₆**: $t = 2.435$, $\beta = -0.144 \rightarrow$ Supported: Brand Turbulence has a positive effect on Compulsive–Functional Buying.
7. **H₇**: $t = 0.264$, $\beta = -0.016 \rightarrow$ Not Supported: Impulsive Buying does not significantly affect Internal Brand Sniping.
8. **H₈**: $t = 0.816$, $\beta = 0.054 \rightarrow$ Not Supported: Impulsive Buying does not significantly affect External Brand Sniping.
9. **H₉**: $t = 7.028$, $\beta = 0.385 \rightarrow$ Supported: Compulsive–Functional Buying positively affects Internal Brand Sniping.
10. **H₁₀**: $t = 6.076$, $\beta = 0.324 \rightarrow$ Supported: Compulsive–Functional Buying positively affects External Brand Sniping.
11. **H₁₁**: $t = 1.733$, $\beta = -0.097 \rightarrow$ Not Supported: Consumer Age does not moderate the relationship between Brand Turbulence and Impulsive Buying.
12. **H₁₂**: $t = 1.155$, $\beta = -0.075 \rightarrow$ Not Supported: Consumer Age does not moderate the relationship between Brand Prominence and Impulsive Buying.
13. **H₁₃**: $t = 0.541$, $\beta = 0.033 \rightarrow$ Not Supported: Consumer Age does not moderate the relationship between Brand Attachment and Impulsive Buying.
14. **H₁₄**: $t = 0.941$, $\beta = -0.053 \rightarrow$ Not Supported: Consumer Age does not moderate the relationship between Brand Turbulence and Compulsive–Functional Buying.
15. **H₁₅**: $t = 2.476$, $\beta = -0.152 \rightarrow$ Supported: Consumer Age negatively moderates the relationship between Brand Prominence and Compulsive–Functional Buying.
16. **H₁₆**: $t = 0.935$, $\beta = 0.055 \rightarrow$ Not Supported: Consumer Age does not moderate the relationship between Brand Attachment and Compulsive–Functional Buying.

Mediating Effects:

The mediating role of Impulsive Buying and Compulsive–Functional Buying was tested for the effects of Brand Passion, Brand Prominence, and Brand Turbulence on Internal and External Brand Sniping.

- **Impulsive Buying** did not significantly mediate the relationships, as its indirect effects were statistically insignificant.
- **Compulsive–Functional Buying**, however, significantly mediated the effects of Brand Passion, Brand Prominence, and Brand Turbulence on both Internal and External Brand Sniping. Since there was no direct significant effect of Brand Passion on Internal Brand Sniping, this mediation is classified as **indirect mediation** (Zhao et al., 2010). For Brand Prominence, the mediation effect is considered **complementary mediation**, indicating that Compulsive–Functional Buying enhances the relationships between Brand Prominence, Internal Brand Sniping, and External Brand Sniping.

These findings suggest that **Compulsive–Functional Buying** plays a key mediating role in amplifying the effects of Brand Attachment dimensions on negative consumer behaviors such as Internal and External Brand Sniping.

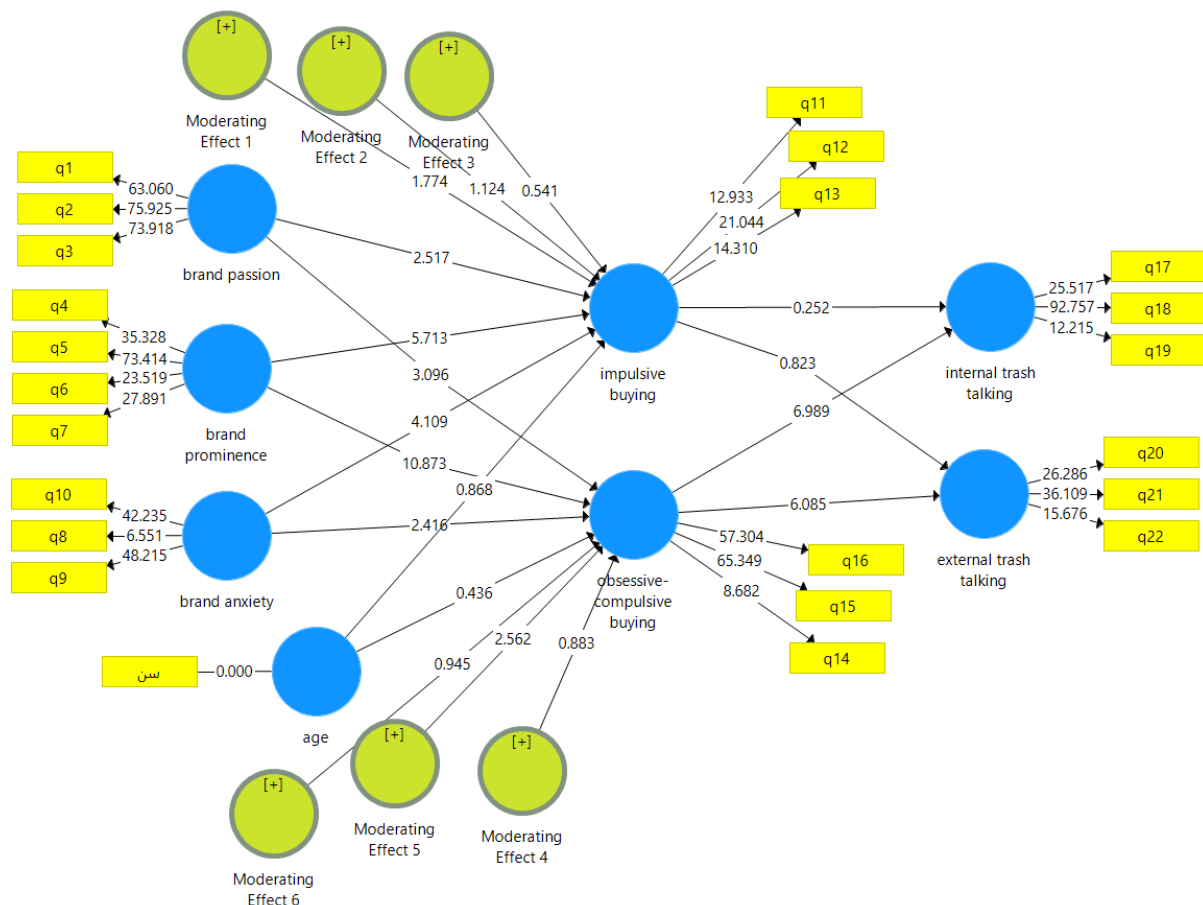


Figure 2. Research Model with *t* value

5. Conclusion

This study makes several contributions to the field of consumer–brand relationships by highlighting different dimensions of the dark side of brand attachment. The findings demonstrate that strong attachment to a brand can lead to negative consumer behaviors, such as compulsive buying and brand sniping, which may harm both consumers and brands. The study addresses whether positive emotions toward a brand can paradoxically trigger harmful behaviors (Riquelme et al., 2019; Merck & Michael, 2019; Okazaki et al., 2019).

The results indicate that companies must carefully manage consumer–brand interactions, as these behaviors act as a double-edged sword, potentially damaging brand reputation. Brand managers should develop targeted strategies for different consumer segments, especially for those most susceptible to such harmful behaviors.

The findings reveal that highly passionate consumers are more likely to engage in compulsive buying. High levels of brand passion motivate consumers to over-invest in the brand, resulting in excessive purchases. Likewise, when brands occupy a prominent place in consumers' minds (high brand prominence), consumers are more likely to engage in impulsive and compulsive–functional buying. Similar results were observed for brand turbulence, where heightened consumer anxiety or instability toward a brand also leads to impulsive and compulsive–functional buying.

These results extend the marketing literature by showing that strong brand attachment can transform consumers into vulnerable buyers, confirming that excessive love for a brand may produce negative outcomes. Our findings expand on the research of Okazaki et al. (2019) and Japutra et al. (2022), confirming the impact of brand attachment on compulsive buying through its three key dimensions. However, it is noteworthy that high brand passion does not always lead to compulsive–functional buying.

The study also confirms the relationship between compulsive–functional buying and internal and external brand sniping. Interestingly, impulsive buying does not always trigger sniping behaviors, whereas compulsive–functional buying more consistently leads to both internal and external brand sniping. This suggests that compulsive–functional buying is more detrimental than impulsive buying. Consumers engaging in compulsive–functional buying tend to denigrate rival brands, both within and outside their consumer groups, to defend their preferred brand.

The results further indicate that consumer age does not significantly moderate the relationships between brand passion, brand turbulence, and compulsive–functional buying. This implies that even older consumers can exhibit the negative side of brand attachment.

Moreover, impulsive buying only partially mediates the relationship between brand attachment dimensions (passion, prominence, turbulence) and brand sniping. Compared to compulsive–functional buying, impulsive buying appears to be less harmful, as the latter more strongly drives negative behaviors. Consumers are more likely to engage in brand sniping when they have over-invested resources in the brand. Importantly, highly passionate consumers do not begin sniping unless they have engaged in compulsive–functional buying, highlighting the role of behavioral investment in triggering negative outcomes (Hickman & Ward, 2007).

From a theoretical perspective, Kurt Lewin's interactionist theory (1936) posits that behavior is a function of both the person and their environment. The results suggest that economic and situational constraints may reduce impulsive buying, while compulsive–functional buying directly predicts sniping behaviors. Managers, therefore, should carefully cultivate strong consumer–brand attachment (enhancing passion and prominence) without triggering excessive or compulsive behaviors.

Practical recommendations include avoiding overly aggressive communications targeting consumers' social or personal identities, refraining from exaggerated claims about the brand's ability to help consumers achieve an ideal self, and implementing educational campaigns on financial planning or the negative consequences of compulsive buying. Marketers should also minimize promotions that encourage rivalry or envy toward other brands to reduce potential sniping behaviors (Dinova et al., 2017).

Finally, younger consumers appear more susceptible to compulsive buying, while older adults may engage in similar behaviors for reasons such as compensating for unmet childhood needs, activating reward systems when receiving attention, or displaying social status through material, behavioral, and digital signals. Brands that are highly valued for status signaling among adults (e.g., Rolex, Mercedes-Benz, Apple, Louis Vuitton, Harvard education) require careful management to avoid creating long-term negative effects. Overall, managers should promote ethical consumption and avoid exaggerated brand claims, as today's youth are tomorrow's adults, and overstated messages may generate feelings of inadequacy in their future consumers.

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