

Customer-Brand Disidentification: Conceptualization, Scale Development, and Validation

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Abstract

Research suggests that customer-brand disidentification is a pertinent source for the breakdown of consumer-brand relationships and a reason why consumers turn against brands. However, practical and theoretical interest in customer-brand disidentification has been hindered by the absence of a reliable scale with confirmed predictive validity. As a result, the purpose of this study is to develop, operationalize, and test a measure of customer-brand disidentification based on a theoretically valid definition. Drawing on data from six samples, as well as a thorough literature review, the authors develop and validate a scale for measuring customer-brand disidentification. Furthermore, via the application of a nomological net, the authors reveal that customer-brand disidentification is predicated on negative emotions experienced after customers have been violated by a brand in a contract breach. Various consumer-based outcomes including patronage reduction and negative word of mouth are found to be consequences of customer-brand disidentification.

Keyword: Customer-brand disidentification; Negative emotions; Patronage reduction; Scale development; Social identity theory

1. Introduction

In the last three decades, a research stream has emerged that highlights the nature and dynamics pertaining to specific consumer-brand relationships (Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004; Fournier, 1998; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). Within this body of work, customer-brand identification, defined as the individual's sense of sameness with a particular brand (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, & Sen, 2012), has been explored by several marketing scholars (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008; Lam, Ahearne, Hu, & Schillewaert, 2010; Wolter, Brach, Cronin Jr, & Bonn, 2016). While brand identification can yield particularly beneficial results to both consumers and firms (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalú, 2008; Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008; Tildesley & Coote, 2009), it can also possess a dark side that presents consumer concerns (Hickman & Ward, 2007; Montgomery, Raju, Desai, & Unnava, 2017).

In fact, consumer-brand connections may become so problematic and unsatisfactory that consumers attempt to distance themselves from the brand (Lee, Motion, & Conroy, 2009; Knittel, Beurer, & Berndt, 2016). For example, consumers have been known to disidentify with brands and brand communities plagued with negative brand events or with brands considered to be unhealthy (e.g., Trump, Connell, & Finkelstein, 2015). Even in instances where no negative event has occurred, some consumers disidentify with brands. One example of this situation was Huib Van Bockel, former CMO of Red Bull Europe, who stated in a recent interview that, notwithstanding his love for Red Bull, he “simply could no longer identify with the product” (Mikuš, 2018, para. 3). The recognition that consumers can disidentify from brands with which they once identified is astonishing and raises several questions concerning what motivates such

disidentification and the consequences that follow. Despite such questions, the academic community has yet to comprehensively explore the concept of customer-brand disidentification (CBD). As a result, insights regarding the theoretical foundation, measurement, and processes of CBD are lacking in the marketing and consumer-based literature.

The idea of disidentification has been prominently studied in the sociological and psychological sciences, particularly as it relates to disidentification from political, marginalized, racial, national, and ideological groups (e.g., Becker & Tausch, 2014; Phelps, 2018; Schaubroeck et al., 2018; Yip, 2016). Irrespective of this body of work, existing research on CBD is minimal. In short, our search identified a few papers in the marketing literature that address consumer disidentification (Berendt, Uhrich, & Thompson, 2018; Josiassen, 2011; Prince & Kwak, 2020; Ruppel & Einwiller, 2019; Wolter et al., 2016). One of these articles (Josiassen 2011) approaches disidentification from an international perspective by studying how consumers disidentify from cultural consumption relative to consumer ethnocentrism. The second article likens CBD to brand repulsion (Wolter et al., 2016), despite evidence suggesting that disidentification is a personal modification to one's social identity (Tajfel, 1978), rather than a negative emotion as in the case of brand repulsion. In fact, some authors (Bryson, Atwal, & Hultén, 2013; Zarantonello, Romani, Grappi, & Fetscherin, 2018) perceive brand repulsion as the equivalent of brand hate. Thus, the misconception of brand repulsion as CBD interferes with researchers' ability to recognize CBD as a self-definitional tool used to address consumer identity issues. Although other scholars have explored constructs capturing negative brand relationships such as brand hate and dissatisfaction (Kefallonitis, 2015; Zarantonello, Romani, Grappi, & Bagozzi, 2016), CBD is less about the negativity between consumers and brands and more about identity separation from a brand (Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001).

In light of the above, substantial knowledge gaps remain in the study of CBD, including: (a) a well-synthesized theoretical basis for CBD, (b) a generally accepted definition of CBD applicable across various industries and product categories, and (c) a reliable and valid CBD scale. In particular, without a valid measure of CBD, crafting a comprehensive empirical inquiry into the antecedents and outcomes of CBD is not possible. As such, our goal is to expand the theoretical foundation of CBD and, in doing so, develop and validate a CBD scale. By grounding this study in balance theory and social identity theory, we develop a useful and reliable measure for future researchers in this field. Through this effort, the authors make the following major contributions. First, we respond directly to calls in the marketing literature for a more nuanced view of CBD with the intention of explaining how consumers' self-perceptions of brands change over time and how they can drive relevant attitudes and behaviors (Einwiller, Fedorikhin, Johnson, & Kamins, 2006; Tuškej, Golob, & Podnar, 2013; Wolter et al., 2016). Second, the systematic development of a CBD scale is expected to offer novel insights to the disidentification literature. Specifically, our contributions include a proposed measurement scale for disidentifying from brands. Third, by developing a CBD conceptualization, this study seeks to provide further insights into the nature, dimensionality, and measurement of disidentification that is thus far limited in the literature. Finally, by exploring disidentification from a balance theory and social identity perspective, we provide an enhanced understanding of how CBD differs from similar concepts.

This paper is organized as follows: First, the theoretical basis for disidentification is presented, followed by a definition of CBD. CBD is then distinguished from related constructs in the literature, after which the scale development and validation process is described. The manuscript ends with a detailed discussion of our contributions.

2. Theoretical Foundation

2.1 Balance Theory

The balance theory of attitude change suggests that a person is motivated to maintain balance in his or her relationship with another individual/object (Heider, 1958). Heider (1958) states that people strive for “a harmonious state, one in which the entities comprising the situation and the feelings about them fit together” (p. 180). In this way, individuals seek to preserve affective, attitudinal, and perceptual consistency with each other. Thus, when an individual comes across a situation where he or she no longer shares the same attitude/belief/identity with another individual/object, the relationship becomes out of balance. In order to reestablish balance, the individual must either change his or her own attitude or change the attitude of the other individual/object (i.e., the brand). When an imbalance occurs because consumers perceive an inconsistent representation between themselves and a brand, the primary resolution is for one or the other entity to make an adjustment (Woodside & Chebat, 2001) in order to reestablish balance. However, when individuals become out of synch with another object/individual due to an attitude change, they begin to map out the basis for not belonging together to the unit (Heider, 1958). This notion of belongingness is seen as one of the foundations of social identity theory. In fact, studies have found that individuals can restore their own psychological sense of balance by distancing from the group in order to disidentify from the social group (e.g., Fink, Parker, Brett, & Higgins, 2009).

2.2 Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory deals with the sociological context of intergroup behavior that is an extension of human social categorization. Social categorization follows the logic that humans cognitively self-categorize themselves into groups, thereby claiming memberships to certain in-

groups over outside groups. The selection of an in-group leads to intergroup discrimination that disavows out-group ideologies in favor of in-group beliefs (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Moreover, the consciousness of socially categorizing individuals based on positive or negative evaluations and/or similar or dissimilar evaluations can incite intergroup conflict and competitive reactions from in-group members. Social grouping in this manner, therefore, enables members to identify themselves from a social perspective. Thus, social identification occurs when individuals perceive aspects of their own self-image as stemming from the social categories to which they belong (Tajfel, 1978).

The general assumption premised by social identity theorists is that individuals typically pursue positive self-concepts so that memberships to any group must contribute to the maintenance and development of a positive social identity. Positive social identity is dependent on satisfactory comparisons between in-group and out-groups, resulting in the in-group being positively discrete from out-group identities. Once social identity becomes unsatisfactory due to an emotional and value detachment from the group's identity, disidentification ensues and people seek to leave such group membership (Tajfel, 1978).

For disidentification to set in, identification must first exist (Vats, 2016). Thus, disidentification is considered a cognitive process whereby an individual's identity is originally and socially defined (constructed) in line with a particular group's identity. However, cognitive dissonance ensues, which creates conflict with one's self-image to a point that the individual disassociates with the group's values and eventually disavows group membership. In fact, Phelps (2018) argues that disidentification manifests because there is an "experience of misrecognition, [and] this uneasy sense of standing under a sign to which one does and does not belong" (p. 316). Psychologically, disidentification occurs because individuals perceive a threat to their self-

concepts and, as a result, self-select to socially decategorize from the group (Becker & Tausch, 2014). In other words, the attributes of the in-group are no longer stereotypical of and compatible with what the person believes himself or herself to be (Hogg, Abrams, Otten, & Hinkle, 2004). For example, Steele and Aronson (1995) found that the presence of a negative stereotype pertaining to an individual's group causes that person to proactively and "protectively disidentify" with the group (p. 797). In this way, the individual redefines or defines his or her self-concept so that the group's identity is no longer grounds for individual self-evaluation or personal identity formulation.

Disidentification is particularly conspicuous when incongruent values between one's self-identity and the group identity are prominent (Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001). In fact, researchers have revealed that in instances where there are obvious incongruities between a person and his or her in-group values, enthusiasm for positive distinctiveness from the out-group will outweigh support for assimilating with the in-group (Brown & Williams, 1984). According to social identity theorists, people maintain identification to a group if the group membership contributes positively to the individual's social identity. However, when social identity begins to diminish personal identity, disidentification is likely to follow (Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001). Thus, when the fundamental premise of identity enhancement and affirmation ceases to exist (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), separation between the self and group is psychologically mapped out by the disidentified member. According to Becker and Tausch (2014), disidentification is "a psychological phenomenon that occurs when individuals belong to groups they do not wish to belong to" (p. 295). On the contrary, given that identification must occur for disidentification to take place, disidentification is better described as a phenomenon that transpires when people identify with groups to which they *no longer* desire (wish) to belong.

2.3 Defining Customer-Brand Disidentification

To adequately understand the meaning of CBD, a historical perspective of the origins of the construct is necessary. Towards this goal, the authors reviewed a total of 205 articles (excluding dissertations and theses) that were identified with keywords (i.e., *brand/-customer identification*, *brand/-customer disidentification*, *disidentification*, *brand/-customer misidentification*, *brand/-customer identify*, *identification*, and *disidentification*) across five major scholarly databases (Abi/Inform, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and Web of Science). The articles were published between January 1960 and December 2018. Most of the early research on disidentification was in the area of psychoanalysis within family and human studies (e.g., Greenson, 1968). However, marketing scholars did recognize early on that consumers developed identifications to various groups (e.g., Allison & Uhl, 1964), of which brand identities were reflective of strong and central representations of consumer behavior and the extended self (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995; Lam et al., 2010; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). In fact, consumers self-categorize with brands as a subset of the company's identity that they believe contribute valuable, satisfactory, and enhancing traits to their self-concepts (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Others have approached consumer-brand identification as a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral construct that captures the consumer's perception, feeling, and valuation of his or her belongingness with a brand (Lam et al., 2010). Consideration of consumer-brand identification as a consumer's cognitive representation of oneness with a brand, therefore, appears to be the generally accepted and prevailing view of marketing scholars (e.g., Stokburger-Sauer et al. 2012).

On an empirical level, researchers have found that consumer-brand identification is crucial in helping foster brand relationships that extend beyond the customer-company exchange. For example, Tuškej et al. (2013) determined that the emotional attachment stemming from brand identification increases social compliance to the extent that these consumers act as vocal brand ambassadors championing the firm. Previous research has also shown that consumer-brand identification is significantly impactful in promoting pertinent consumer behavior, including consumer buying-related decisions (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005), brand preference (Tildesley & Coote, 2009), loyalty (Bhattacharya et al., 1995), brand commitment (Casaló et al., 2008), satisfaction and repurchase (Kuenzel & Vaux Halliday, 2008), positive word of mouth (Kim, Han, & Lee, 2001), and consumers' willingness to pay a price premium (Del Río, Vazquez, & Iglesias, 2001) . While brand affiliations provide positive meanings for consumer identity and thus identification, they can also imbue meanings from which consumers want to distance themselves.

Research shows that brands are critical identity signalers. However, once brand characteristics begin to hinder consumers from maintaining unique and distinctive self-expressions, negative brand evaluations can be formed (Puzakova & Aggarwal, 2018). In fact, disidentification from an organizational standpoint has been represented as a “negative relational categorization of oneself and the organization” (Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001, p. 397). The notion of disidentification has been developed and heavily debated across disciplines in sociology, psychology, management, and political science. Some have described disidentification in terms of an individual disconnection and distancing from a group (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Becker, Tausch, Spears, & Christ, 2011), the rejection of identities due to conflicting ideals (Herrbach & Kosmala, 2005), or a conscious vigorous alienation from the

group (Elsbach, 1999). Others have focused on detachment in an effort to protect and defend self (Costas & Fleming, 2009), which implies that the identity of the individual becomes estranged from the group's identity, thus creating a sense of dissonance. Finally, higher education scholars characterize academic disidentification as either a student's psychological or physical withdrawal from school because the value of identifying as a student is no longer present or plays a less central role in the student's self-definition. In other words, the student sees no value in school and does not believe that he or she belongs in school (Van Laar & Derks, 2003).

Researchers in the marketing discipline such as Wolter et al. (2016) more directly link disidentification to consumer brands by conceiving CBD as a "rejection of a brand wherein a consumer consciously views a brand as misrepresenting his or her self and impeding self-motives" (p. 788). Similarly, Josiassen (2011) describes consumer-to-consumer disidentification as a "consumer's active rejection of and distancing from the perceived typical domestic consumer" (p. 125). Similar to these definitions, we describe CBD as a customer's self-perceived cognitive dissociation from a brand based on incongruent values and identity evaluations of one's self relative to the brand's self. First, this definition implies that CBD exists as a result of self-perceptions formulated in terms of who customers consider themselves to be (who I am) relative to what the brand represents (what the brand stands for; who the brand is). Second, the definition considers disidentification as a form of social decategorization in that the consumer self-selects to decategorize from a group with which they once identified, based on an evaluation of the group's value-based attributes and characteristics. In sum, there is a conscious decision to actively or passively disconnect one's self from the brand's self.

Our definition further highlights the need to distance and disconnect with the brand after cognitive decategorization due to varying value connotations that some researchers have

considered to be negative (Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). For instance, Tajfel (1978) noted that if a group membership fails to satisfy or conflicts with critical self-image values, the identifying member is prone to leaving the group.

Finally, our proposed definition underscores the notion that motivations for disidentification differ from motivations for identification. For example, previous research has shown that disidentification is not just the opposite of identification, but a different cognitive state and a completely separate construct in itself (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Thus, the two concepts are not merely polar opposites of each other. That is, an individual who disidentifies with a specific brand would exhibit signs of a disengaged relationship between the self and the brand (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007; Zou, Morris, & Benet-Martínez, 2008), and not just lower levels of consumer brand identification (CBI).

Conceptually, CBI and CBD are different in that CBI addresses the cognitive overlap of oneness with a brand (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012), while CBD explores consumers' disconnection with a brand (Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001). Researchers contend that "the absence of disidentification does not equal being more identified with the group....similarly the absence of identification does not equal being more disidentified from the group and thus should not predict ingroup-harming behaviors" (Becker & Tausch, 2014, p. 298). This affirmation establishes that the basis and consequences for CBI and CBD are innately different. For example, researchers demonstrate that CBI and CBD can develop based on different characteristics of the brand, but can also manifest because of varying aspects of consumer-brand relationships (e.g., Wolter et al. 2016). Scholars have shown that CBI stems from perceptions that consumers hold concerning brand quality and self-brand congruity (Lam, Ahearne, Mullins, Hayati, & Schillewaert, 2013). In contrast, CBD is explained more by brand disrepute (Wolter et al., 2016),

which is remarkable because brand prestige does not affect CBI (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). This phenomenon may explain why customers can experience both low and high CBI and CBD at the same time because the factors driving CBI differ from those driving CBD. In fact, indicators of CBI are more reflective of organizational identification in that consumers consider praise of the brand as an extension of their own success (see Lam et al., 2010 derived from Mael & Ashforth, 1992), which is not the case with CBD. CBD is not an indication of brand or organizational failure per se; it is more about self-recognition and self-recategorization when consumers fall out of sync (out of balance) with brand values and identities. When consumers fall out of sync with the brand they may eventually be considered a dissociative group (McGowan, Hassan, & Shiu, 2019). This dissociative group will be composed of former disidentified consumers— a type of outgroup membership— that would not want to be misidentified as in-group members, thus further highlighting the difference between identification and disidentification.

2.4 Comparisons With Related Constructs

A critical next step in the scale development process is validating the new scale as different from closely related but dissimilar constructs (Hinkin, 1998). A review of the brand marketing literature revealed that CBD has conceptual overlaps with the following constructs: brand avoidance, brand dissatisfaction, and brand hate.

Brand avoidance: Avoidance describes the widening gap between current states and undesirable end states (Kim, Ratneshwar, Roesler, & Chowdhury, 2016). In the context of brands, brand avoidance is defined as “the incidents in which consumers deliberately choose to reject a brand” (Lee et al., 2009, p. 170). The root cause of brand avoidance can be classified as either consumer societal concerns or personal concerns (Iyer & Muncy, 2009). Consumers may become involved

in boycotting (avoiding) certain brands in response to a societal problem (Strandvik, Rindell, & Wilén, 2013), or may avoid a brand due to personal concerns, such as perceptions of low quality or negative experiences associated with a specific brand (Strandvik et al., 2013). Brand avoidance is often operationalized as a unidimensional scale depicting disapproval of the brand (Kim et al., 2016). Ruppel and Einwiller (2020) notes that avoidance acts more as an outcome of CBD since disidentification can lead to rejection of a brand.

Brand dissatisfaction: Brand dissatisfaction can be explained via the expectation and perception gap (Oliver, 1981). This gap is defined as disconfirmation which can be positive or negative.

Positive disconfirmation occurs when performance exceeds expectation, while negative disconfirmation happens when performance falls short of expectation (Van Ryzin, 2013). Based on expectancy-disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1981), brand dissatisfaction is experienced when the overall evaluation and perception of a brand falls short of the consumer's expectation.

Therefore, brand dissatisfaction occurs because a brand fails to deliver on its brand messages and offerings (see also Kefallonitis, 2015).

Brand hate: Hate has typically been identified as a complicated emotion. Although some scholars (Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'connor, 1987) represent hate as a simple emotion and consider it in the sub-category of 'rage' with other similar emotions, most psychological researchers identify hate as a compound primary and secondary emotion (Zarantonello et al., 2016). For example, Sternberg (2003) proposes repulsion and disgust, anger and fear, and devaluation through contempt as three components of hate. Bryson et al. (2013) instead define brand hate as "an intense negative emotional affect toward the brand" (p. 395). Johnson, Matear, and Thomson (2010) believe that brand hatred is created when consumers oppose a brand strongly and narrow the definition by proposing shame as a potential concept that explains brand

hatred. Zarantonello et al. (2016) group overall brand hate into two second-order factors: active and passive brand hate. They posit that active brand hate contains anger, contempt, and disgust, which correspond to active emotions. In passive brand hate, fear, disappointment, shame, and dehumanization are identified as first-order factors, which represent passive emotions.

3. Scale Development and Validation Process

This section describes the process used in developing and testing a reliable and valid scale to measure CBD. Approaches by Churchill (1979) and Hinkin (1998) were combined to develop measures for a multiple-item marketing construct. The development process included six phases. The initial phase was the identification of items, first via a thorough review of the management, sociology, psychology, and marketing literature. This process enabled the researchers to deductively generate items based on the conceptualization of disidentification. Hinkin (1998) recommends generating items also inductively, such as through qualitative interviews with consumers, which we completed. Following these two steps, three scale purification stages were undertaken. Robustness of the scale was established via tests of psychometric properties, including convergent and discriminant validity, plus nomological and criterion-related validation. Table 1 shows the scale development process and summarizes the purpose of each phase.

 Insert Table 1 around here

3.1 Phase 1: Literature review for item generation and selection

Item generation: Following Churchill's (1979) and Hinkin's (1998) recommendations, a deductive approach was initially utilized in generating scale items based on our operational definition of CBD. This process was based on the 205 articles that were reviewed. Given the key premises of CDB (e.g., self-distancing and self-disconnection), 53 items meeting the criteria of

simplicity, shortness, clarity, and focus were generated (See Table 2). Items were then eliminated based on redundancies and non-representative characteristics, which is consistent with prior scale development procedures in this area (e.g., Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009; Richins & Dawson, 1992; Thomson et al., 2005). For instance, “None of my friends use this brand” and “I don’t know who could use this brand” were removed since they did not apply to the self-perceived cognitive evaluative process required for disidentification. A total of nine items were removed using this screening process, resulting in 44 potential scale items.

Insert Table 2 around here

3.2 Phase 2: Qualitative assessment of items

Interviews with knowledgeable consumers were conducted. The objective of this phase was four-fold: (a) to align our theoretical interpretation of CBD with consumers’ understanding of disidentification, (b) to identify items that resemble the concepts identified in Phase 1, (c) to uncover additional items not generated in Phase 1, and (d) to clarify critical incidences of CBD from consumers.

3.2.1 Participants and procedure

Business and education graduate students from a U.S. research university in the Midwest were recruited for the interviews (sample #1: N = 28; 57% female; mean age = 29.78, SD = 5.69). Participants were asked open-ended questions about brands and their relationship with the brands to ascertain a clear distinction between brands and products. For instance, respondents were asked to respond to the following: “How would you describe a brand?,” “What are the brands that you identify with?,” and “Please name the brands and describe why you identify with these brands.”

Before any identification questions were asked, the interviewer defined the following two terms: identify and identification. Identify was defined based on social identity and categorization theory as meaning to associate oneself with a brand. The interviewer then introduced specific questions about brand disidentification, such as: “Over the years have there been brands that you once identified with, that you no longer identify with?,” “Why do you not identify with them anymore?,” “How do you relate with these brands today?,” and “What can these brands do to change your mind?”. Participants were encouraged to describe their responses in detail by asking probing and follow-up questions such as “What do you mean by that?,” or “Could you elaborate more on this topic?”. To avoid potential bias, the terms “disidentification” or “brand disidentification” were not used during the personal interview. Interviews lasted an average of 17.21 minutes ($SD = 2.44$ minutes).

3.2.2 Results

Given the deductive approach to the interviews, each transcript was reviewed by two members of the research team not directly involved in conducting the personal interviews. All responses were examined to identify any comments consistent with the study’s definition of CBD. The transcripts were read and statements about former brand connections, rationalizations for such relationships, and outcomes from the disconnections were noted. Participant responses that did not include information about brand disidentification were omitted from further assessment. The deletion of items conceptually inconsistent with CBD is a form of content validation (Hinkin, 1998) and was important in identifying items referencing ideas other than CBD to be removed. Information about disidentification that arose multiple times within and between responses was identified as recurring ideas and was used to create items reflecting brand disidentification. Keywords from the interviews were specifically identified to isolate terms that

matched other keywords, as well as terms from our initial literature review of disidentification in Phase 1. These recurring keywords in Phases 1 and 2 were identified as key marker terms. These included words such as *separate*, *represent*, and *gap*. This approach is commonly used when developing a coding system as a mockup lexicon created to “demarcate each theme by identifying [marker] words” (Weston et al., 2001, p. 386). The researchers examined participants’ marker words or expressions and converted them into statements that were easy to grasp, unambiguous, and coherent in terms of the described phenomena. A total of 42 items resulted from this process (See Table 2).

3.2.3 Item reduction

The 86 items generated in the literature review and qualitative study were assessed by the entire research team. Items generated during the interviews were directly compared with those generated from the literature review. Ten identical items were identified across both lists of questions. To reduce redundancies and response biases, these items were cross-listed as the same questions (Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001; Hinkin, 1998), thus resulting in 76 items. Further assessment of content validity involved corroborating the relevance of the items to the fundamental premises of CBD. There were two premises involved in this process: first, disidentification as a phenomenon is not the opposite of identification and, second, predictors and outcomes of disidentification do not qualify as CBD. These criteria were used to analyze the remaining 76 items. In this process, 15 items were eliminated because many of them were considered antecedents (e.g., “This brand does not perform according to the way it is priced”) and outcomes (e.g., “I doubt that I will use this brand much longer”) of CBD rather than indicators of CBD. In total, 61 potential scale items remained.

3.3 Phase 3: Item-sort task for items validation and reduction

Item-sort tasks are suggested during the initial phases of scale development as an efficient way to eliminate items inconsistent with the construct's conceptualization (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011), thus enabling researchers to further validate the content measured by the construct items (Anderson & Gerbing, 1991). The objective of this phase, therefore, was two-fold: (a) to validate the list of 61 potential scale items using external experts, and (b) to reduce the number of scale items. To do so, we used two different groups of judges: external marketing experts and marketing Ph.D. students.

3.3.1 Group 1: Participants, procedure, and results

The first item-sort task was performed by four Ph.D. students from a research university in the midwestern United States based on the Carnegie Foundation classification (sample #2: three males and one female, mean age 31.5 years old, $SD = 2.08$). The use of doctoral students as judges for the item-sort task is consistent with past literature (e.g., Anderson & Gerbing, 1991) and previous marketing research studies (e.g., Hibbard, Brunel, Dant, & Iacobucci, 2001). The doctoral student judges were familiar with the branding literature, but unaware of the explicit goals of this research project. We followed the procedure described by Hinkin and Tracey (1999): (a) We provided a definition of CBD to the judges; (b) Judges were asked to "think of any brand (in any product or service category) that you previously used, but no longer use because it misrepresents who you are today"; and (c) After identifying a brand, they were asked to rate the extent to which they considered that each of the statements was relevant to understanding CBD. The 61 items were examined in a written and randomized sequence format. Two versions of the list of statements with a different order sequence were used to control for order effects response bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Responses were coded in a dichotomous format (Yes or No).

A member of the research team compared the responses and calculated interrater reliability (82.9%). Statements with discrepancies were identified and 34 items were eliminated because they were insufficiently related to the disidentification process (Gammoh, Voss, & Chakraborty, 2006; Sung, Choi, Ahn, & Song, 2015). A total of 27 items were retained from the 61 items initially evaluated.

3.3.2 Group 2: Participants, procedure, and results

A second item-sort task was performed by five marketing experts (sample #3: three males; four were located in United States and three were associate or full professors in the marketing field). The use of external experts as raters of a scale's domain has been widely used in marketing (e.g., Baldus, Voorhees, & Calantone, 2015; Malhotra, Kim, & Agarwal, 2004; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). These expert judges evaluated the remaining list of 27 items regarding the extent to which they were representative of the scale's domain. This process was similar to the previous one, with a definition of CBD being provided, as well as two versions of the survey with a different item order sequence (Rossiter, 2002; Podsakoff et al., 2003). In addition, marketing experts were assigned randomly to one of the two versions of the survey.

If three or more of the five judges classified a particular question as representative of CBD, the item was retained. The interrater reliability of the judges was 94.3% (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). At this point, the judges' comments and recommendations were evaluated for wording, redundancy, and discrepancy between the items. A total of 11 items were eliminated with this process so that the scale included 16 items.

3.4 Phase 4: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was executed as the next phase of the scale development process (Churchill, 1979). The objective was two-fold: (a) to identify common

dimensions of the items and further reduce the 16 scale items, and (b) to clearly identify brand disidentification dimensions (Hair et al., 2019).

3.4.1 Participants and procedure

Data were collected via an online survey from undergraduate students (sample #4) at a research university in the midwestern United States ($N = 270$; 52.3% male; mean age = 22.66, $SD = 2.25$; mean income = \$30,000). Participants were invited to participate via e-mail and received extra credit. They were asked to identify a previously used brand (in any product or service category) and rate the extent to which each of the 16 items could describe their experiences with the brand using a 7-point scale (ranging from completely disagree to completely agree). Brands were coded using the NAICS classification system and represented the following industries: Clothing & Accessories (52.7%), Food & Beverages (7.8%), Electronic shopping (16.4%), Cosmetic & Beauty (7.8%), Retail store (1.6%), Entertainment (1.2%), Manufacturing (10.9%), and Services (1.6%). Examples of companies represented in the clothing and accessories industries included Aeropostale, Zara, and Tommy Hilfiger, and for food and beverages, Coca-Cola, Budweiser, and Keystone.

Fourteen responses were eliminated for missing data (4.8%), resulting in a final sample size of 256. The EFA produced a two-factor solution with two items cross-loaded across both factors. Two items (“I will not use this brand again,” and “I feel no connection with the brand”) were eliminated due to cross loadings. Two other items (“I do not identify with this brand,” and “I am completely different from other consumers of this brand”) that exhibited low factor loadings were equally eliminated (see Table 3). A second EFA was then run (Nunnally, 1978) with the remaining 12 CBD items. The final structure was a single-solution model representing 60% of the total variance. The alpha coefficient for the 12 item CBD scale was 0.937 (see Table

4). In addition, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to assess the measurement model. CBD was tested as a single latent variable. Results indicate that the measurement model has an acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 121.357$, $df = 43$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 2.822$, $CFI = 0.961$, $GFI = 0.924$, $TLI = 0.940$, $RMSEA = 0.085$) (Hair et al., 2019).

Insert Table 3 around here

Insert Table 4 around here

3.5 Phase 5: Evaluating the Psychometric Properties of the CBD Scale

In Phase 5, the psychometric properties for CBD relative to three related constructs (brand avoidance, brand dissatisfaction, and brand hate) were examined. Specifically, the factor structure, reliability, and validity of the scale were explored by executing a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

3.5.1 Participants and procedures

Another survey was performed. A total of 301 United States participants completed the survey using the Mechanical Turk platform. Fifteen responses were deleted for not following survey instructions and three data elimination screeners were embedded in the questionnaire: one screener for not following survey instructions, another for failing the two attention checks, and a third for participants who provided unknown or fictitious brands. Similar to Becker and Tausch (2014), participants were asked to recall a brand that they once or currently purchased and utilized. According to Becker and Tausch (2014), remaining in a group (i.e., using a brand) does not prevent disidentification, meaning that a consumer can still use a brand with which they

disidentify. Represented brands included Nike, Gucci, and Timberland as consumer product examples in the clothing and accessories industry (43.3%), while Samsung, LG, and Apple were examples of brands in the electronic industry (16.5%). The order of the questionnaire randomized the sequence of the construct questions: brand disidentification, brand avoidance, brand dissatisfaction, and brand hatred. The average age of respondents was 37.5, 51.7% were male, and 52.1 % had full-time jobs.

3.5.2 Measures

A 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) was used to measure CBD, brand avoidance, and brand hatred, while a semantic differential scale was used to measure brand dissatisfaction. CBD was measured with the 12 items developed in the earlier phases. Brand avoidance was measured using three items adopted from Kim et al. (2016); brand dissatisfaction was measured with a five-item semantic differential scale, while brand avoidance was assessed with four items from Spreng, MacKenzie, and Olshavsky (1996) and one item from Zeelenberg and Pieters (2004). Finally, brand hatred was assessed with a four-item scale from Zarantonello et al. (2016).

3.5.3 Factor structure metrics

EFA was conducted to examine the dimensionality of the CBD scale relative to brand avoidance, brand dissatisfaction, and brand hate. A four-factor solution emerged that met all recommended guidelines (Hair et al., 2019), thus providing additional evidence supporting the discrimination among the four related constructs (see Table 5). Further confirmation was assessed with a CFA using AMOS 26.0. Results show that the measurement model has an acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 722.124$, $df = 246$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 2.935$, CFI = 0.925, GFI = .821, TLI = 0.916, RMSEA = 0.082) (Hair et al., 2019) (See Table 5 for factor loadings).

Reliabilities for all four constructs exceeded the recommended .70 level (Cronbach alpha coefficients for the related constructs are .86, .96, and .95 for brand avoidance, brand dissatisfaction, and brand hate, respectively). Factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) confirmed convergent validity. Further support for convergent validity was demonstrated when each indicator's estimated coefficient loaded significantly on the CBD construct factor (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Moreover, discriminant validity was evaluated for the constructs by comparing the AVE to squared correlation estimates between paired constructs. As demonstrated in Table 6, the AVE for each construct was greater than the squared correlation estimates between paired constructs, thus supporting discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

 Insert Table 5 and Table 6 around here

3.6 Phase 6: Nomological network and criterion validity

To examine the nomological network for CBD, predictors and outcomes of CBD must be estimated. To do so, psychological contract breach in a brand relationship leading to customers feeling violated by the brand and developing negative affect should be evident. Psychological contract breach is defined as the failure of a brand to maintain and uphold the perceived agreement between a customer and a brand in performing its obligation, which then results in the brand defaulting on promises made to its consumers (Montgomery et al., 2017).

As further background on psychological contract breach, researchers have argued that brand breaches induce immediate negative responses from once dedicated consumers when they concern aspects of the consumer's psychological contract, irrespective of the severity of the breach from the brand's perspective (Montgomery et al., 2017). For example, Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux (2009) showed that consumers with close brand bonds were not as forgiving when

the brand made mistakes, but were more willing to cease future brand purchases after a service failure. Similarly, Fedorikhin, Park, and Thomson (2008) found that consumers with stronger brand attachment respond negatively to low fit brand extensions. These studies suggest that there are limits to the protection provided by brand commitment. In other words, there is a possible dark side to having strong brand relationships in the sense that a breached brand promise for customers with a close brand relationship indicates a severe violation of the brand agreement. Accordingly, the following is proposed:

H1: Psychological (brand) contract breach increases customers' feelings of brand violation

Past research has shown that when the actions of a brand violate the norms and agreement of the relationship, consumers are likely to react negatively. However, if the actions of the brand conform to the promises in the contract, consumers will formulate positive evaluations (Aggarwal, 2004). Customers' feelings of brand violation should not be confused with brand failure. The two concepts are different in that brand failure can be seen as the inability of a brand to realize its projected life cycle as prescribed by an organization, with the brand eventually being divested or becoming obsolete in the minds of consumers (Haig, 2003). It can also be seen as brand mishaps or negative brand performances that trigger in customers feelings of unfairness (Wei, Ang, & Anaza, 2019). Focusing on the latter of the two conceptualizations of brand failure, it can then be said that brand failures are missteps of a brand that occur irrespective of a customer's relationship with the brand. In fact, brand failures are often transactional in nature, whereas brand violations happen because customers and brands are members of a culture that binds them to group norms: When the brand's actions are contrary to the norms of the relationships, this is seen as violating the norms surrounding their affiliation (Aggarwal, 2004). Previous studies have also found that consumers with a strong brand

relationship experience magnified effects of fairness violation in the face of brand misconduct (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008), and this intensifies feelings of negative affect, including hateful feelings (Romani, Grappi, Zarantonello, & Bagozzi, 2015). Consequently, customers' feelings of violation tend to ignite greater negative customer affect in the face of a stronger customer-brand relationship. Accordingly, the following is proposed:

H2: Customers' feelings of brand violation increase customers' negative emotions

Research has shown that disidentification is positively correlated to negative human emotions. For example, in instances where a particular group violates a member's personal values, the violated individual will likely experience negative ingroup-directed emotions, such as anger, disgust and contempt, and those negative in-group emotions will be associated with disidentifying from the group (Becker & Tausch, 2014). Similarly, the negative affect that people experience helps them to rationalize further distancing themselves from associating with the organization (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Thus, people not only see the worst in their organizations, they also view the violation as a worst-case scenario. In a brand disidentification context, therefore, the following is proposed:

H3: Customers' negative emotions increase customer-brand disidentification

Previous research across various disciplines has concluded that disidentification encourages people to engage in activities and behaviors that are reflective of self-protecting oneself from self-identifying with a group (Becker & Tausch, 2014; Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001; Josiassen, 2011; Ruppel & Einwiller, 2020). This self-protection stirs up actions that are likely to be harmful to the group in the form of direct opposition to the brand (Wolter et al., 2016). For example, Ruppel and Einwiller (2020) found that consumers who disidentify with a brand will show greater tendency to avoid the brand. Similarly, Josiassen (2011) found that

consumer disidentification directly impedes consumers' willingness to buy, but did not find actual patronage reduction from disidentification. Because consumer intentions to purchase products from a firm are reduced as a result of consumer disidentification, we can expect that disidentifying from a brand will result in brand patronage reduction. Accordingly, the following is proposed:

H4: Customer-brand disidentification increases brand patronage reduction.

Criticizing and speaking negatively about the actions of an organization has been identified as an outcome of disidentification in organizations (Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001), but not in the brand literature. Elsbach and Bhattacharya (2001) noted that such criticism or negative word of mouth was more convenient for members because it resulted in an immediate self-affirmation, which in turn showed that they were no longer on the side of the organization. Similarly, Zarantonello et al. (2018) found that when consumers form strong negative feelings towards a brand, the result is moral denouncement of the brand that prevents the possibility of any positive future reconnection or reconciliation. Negative messaging about a brand by customers, therefore, is a strong indication of rejecting the brand or any form of brand affiliation. Accordingly, the following is proposed:

H5: Customer-brand disidentification increases customer negative word of mouth about a brand

Consistent with other disidentification studies, the following factors were controlled for in the analysis: age, length of brand relationship, brand price, and brand quality. As showcased in Figure 1, length of brand relationship and age are controls on patronage reduction, while brand price and quality are controls of CBD.

3.6.1 Final analysis participants and measures

Data collection was completed by Qualtrics, a leading survey solutions provider. With more than 20 online sample partners, Qualtrics has wide access to quality respondents worldwide. Data collection checks were implemented to improve data quality. Only United States participants completed the questionnaire. IP addresses were checked to avoid duplication and digital fingerprinting technology was used to ensure respondent validity. Three initial screening questions were placed in the survey to eliminate unqualified participants and reduce the potential of response errors. As anticipated, a number of participants were eliminated for various reasons, including 358 that did not provide a brand or accurate brand name, 180 that failed the attention checks, and 11 speeders. The result was 305 qualified respondents.

Sample demographics were the following: average age 44; 76% Caucasian, and 54% female; almost all had a college degree (92%) and 45% earn over \$50,000 in annual income. Brands represented in the clothing and accessories industry included Coach, Guess, and Old Navy, while in the services industry they were Wells Fargo, PCS Mobile, and Uber.

All constructs except CBD were adapted from established scales. CBD was measured by the 12 items developed in this study. Psychological brand contract breach was adapted from Robinson and Wolfe Morrison (2000), and reliability was 0.93. Feelings of violation was based on a two-item scale also from Robinson and Wolfe Morrison (2000). An example item is "I feel betrayed by this brand." Negative emotions were measured with a six-item scale by Becker and Tausch (2014). "I'm annoyed with this brand" is an example question; reliability was 0.94. Three-items from Grégoire and Fisher (2006) were used to measure patronage reduction. An example question is: "I will spend less money on this brand," and reliability was 0.87. Negative word of mouth was measured with three items from Grégoire, Laufer, and Tripp (2010). An example item is "I will spread negative word of mouth about this brand," and reliability was

0.93. Brand price was adapted from Srivastava and Lurie (2004) and perceived quality from Taylor and Bearden (2002). Age and the length of brand relationship were included as control variables.

3.6.2 Common Method Variance (CMV)

The CFA marker variable method was used to determine the presence of CMV and if the relationships in the nomological network are affected (Phase 6). The marker variables were two items from the Fear of One's Death scale (Wittkowski, Ho, & Chan, 2011). The items were "The idea that my body will disappear after my death disturbs me" and "The thought that I will be dead someday makes me apprehensive." These items were identified as theoretically unrelated to the substantive variables. Williams, Hartman, and Cavazotte (2010) suggest using five models including a CFA with the marker variable, Baseline, Method-C (constrained), Method-U (unconstrained), and Method-R (restricted) to evaluate the presence of CMV. The Chi-square difference test was applied to compare the models. The results show that Method-C was statistically better than the baseline ($\Delta\chi^2 = 142.667$, $p = .000$) and also identified the Method-U model fit as better than Method-C ($\Delta\chi^2 = 227.521$, $p = .000$). Finally, Method-R was not statistically different than Method-U ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1.727$, $p = .999$), indicating that CMV is not a problem as it does not skew the relationships between the substantive variable in the nomological network (Williams et al., 2010).¹

3.6.3 Assessment of Measurement Model

¹ Baseline Model: Two correlations between the method and substantive latent variables are set to 0. In addition, the measurement parameters of the marker variable are set at values obtained from the initial CFA model. Other method factor loadings are forced to 0.
 Method-C Model: All factor loadings are constrained to have equal values.
 Method-U Model: Factor loadings are allowed to have different values (not necessarily equal).
 Method-R Model: The parameters are restricted to test for bias.

The measurement model was assessed by executing a CFA. Results indicate that the measurement model has an acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 1191.870$, $df = 566$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 2.106$, $CFI = 0.944$, $GFI = .818$, $TLI = 0.938$, $RMSEA = 0.060$) (Hair et al., 2019). All factor loadings were greater than 0.50 (Table 7), average variance extracted (AVE) ranged from .690 to .847, and all constructs displayed composite reliability greater than 0.70 (ranging from .869 to .968), thus confirming the convergent validity. Finally, the AVE for each construct was higher than the squared correlation estimates between constructs, so discriminant validity was established (see Table 8) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

 Insert Table 7 and Table 8 around here

3.6.4 Hypotheses Testing

Structural equation modeling was performed to examine the relationship between CBD and the antecedents and outcomes. We controlled for the effect of brand price and perceived quality on CBD, and age and brand relationship on patronage reduction and negative word of mouth. The model showed acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 1674.522$, $df = 652$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 2.568$, $CFI = 0.910$, $GFI = .777$, $TLI = 0.902$, $RMSEA = 0.072$) (Hair et al., 2019). Psychological brand contract breach has a significant positive effect on feelings of violation ($\beta = .790$, $t\text{-value} = 11.401$, $p < .001$), supporting H1. Customers' feelings of brand violation are significantly and positively related to negative emotions ($\beta = .956$, $t\text{-value} = 19.913$, $p < .001$), thus supporting H2. Results also show that participants reporting a higher level of negative emotions were more inclined to disidentify with the brand ($\beta = .196$, $t\text{-value} = 5.296$, $p < .001$), hence supporting H3. Finally, results for H4 and H5 indicate that CBD increases customer patronage reduction ($\beta =$

.695, t -value = 12.133, $p < .001$) and negative word of mouth about the brand ($\beta = .431$, t -value = 4.920, $p < .001$) (See Table 9).

A posthoc analysis was performed to examine the direct effect of psychological brand contract breach and feelings of brand violation on CBD, while controlling for relationships tested in the nomological model. Results showed that while psychological brand contract breach positively affected CBD ($\beta = .505$, t -value = 6.769, $p < .001$), customers' feelings of violation did not impact CBD ($p > .005$). Instead, feelings of brand violation mediated the impact of psychological contract breach on customers' negative emotions ($\beta = .757$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.632, .868]), which then explained CBD.

 Insert Table 9 around here

General Discussion

Previous studies (e.g., Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Montgomery et al., 2017), including the present one, have identified a dark side to customer-brand relationships such as disidentification. To date, no studies have developed a psychometrically sound scale to measure CBD as an emerging concept in the literature. Notably, this study extends social identity and balance theory to the expanding field of customer-brand relationships with a focus on the CBD construct. Above all, the research extends knowledge about customer-brand relationships that have implications for customer purchase behavior.

Theoretical Implications

Several theoretical implications emerge from this work. First, this study directly responds to the call for the development of a more nuanced conceptualization of CBD in the marketing and business literature (Josiassen, 2011; Wolter et al., 2016). To do so, it was important to provide a precise description of CBD that goes beyond comparing it to brand repulsion (Wolter

et al., 2016). A starting point was that CBD should be viewed *as a customer's self-perceived cognitive dissociation from a brand based on incongruent value and identity evaluations of one's self relative to the brand's self*. This idea implies that, generally, customers in certain situations make conscious decisions to disconnect themselves from a brand based on their brand perceptions. This goes to show that CBD is conceptually and empirically different from negative brand constructs such as brand dissatisfaction, avoidance, and hate.

For example, the results show that CBD allows consumers to consciously and subconsciously disconnect from a brand. In contrast, existing research has found that brand dissatisfaction emanates from unsuccessful consumption experiences with a brand, which leave consumers unhappy rather than disidentified with the brand (Lee et al., 2009). This finding means that an individual can disidentify with a brand, but still have a satisfied experience with the same brand because disidentification is not episodic. Like dissatisfaction, evidence reported from our findings equally demonstrates the inherent differences between CBD and brand avoidance. For instance, some scholars argue that avoidance strategies can motivate disidentification, but such rejection is not synonymous to disidentification itself (Matschke & Sassenberg, 2010). Our results validate these claims by illustrating the low association between CBD and brand avoidance ($r = .174$), which highlights the negligible shared variance between both constructs. This study also put forth a model that delineates conditions upon which CBD occurs, which are different from existing empirical studies on brand hatred. On the one hand, customer dissatisfaction with the product (Bryson et al., 2013), negative stereotypes of users of a brand (Bryson et al., 2013), symbolic incongruity, brand inauthenticity, and ideological incompatibility lead to brand hatred (Rodrigues, Brandao, & Rodrigues, 2020). On the other hand, the current findings show that the psychological contract breach, which acts as the basis

for brand violation, increases CBD. Outcomes of both constructs should not be overlooked. Studies have found that desire for revenge and avoidance are consequences of brand hatred (e.g., Grégoire et al., 2009), while patronage reduction emanates from CBD. This is especially important because it underscores that both concepts operate differently.

Second, this research is the first empirical attempt to assess measurement of CBD using rigorous approaches (e.g., Rossiter, 2002). Statistically, the proposed scale satisfies convergent and discriminant validity across diverse sample respondents and can be used by scholars and practitioners to better understand customer-brand relationships. The discovery that CBD is a unidimensional scale consisting of 12 reflective items demonstrates that it is more perspicuous for implementation in future research. In accordance with previous suggestions in brand metrics research, most notably Munoz and Kumar (2004), we can also state that this new scale is not only very reliable and parsimonious, but also actionable as it can be deployed in diverse contexts by academics and practitioners alike. Altogether, a valid and reliable scale for measuring CBD should enable scholars to obtain novel insights into the nature, dimensionality, and measurement of this particularly relevant construct in the growing body of literature on customer-brand relationships (cf. Einwiller et al., 2006; Tuškej et al., 2013). Such knowledge extends existing work that has begun to focus on understanding consumer disidentification (Josiassen, 2011; Wolter et al., 2016). Hence, while early brand research indicates that “disidentification is the foundation for deep, committed, and meaningful opposition of brands” (Wolter et al. 2016, p. 791), we argue that disidentification can be better described as the foundation for deep, committed, and eventually a customer’s decategorization from the brand’s self (Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001; Kreiner & Ashforth. 2004).

Third, we provide empirical evidence regarding the interrelationships among psychological (brand) contract breach, CBD, perceived brand violation, brand patronage reduction, and word of mouth. In particular, by demonstrating the positive relationship between psychological (brand) contract breach and customers' feelings of brand violation, this research contributes to recent discussions in the consumer psychology literature (e.g., Montgomery et al., 2017) about the role of psychological contract breach in committed brand relationships. Results also suggest that, for consumers with close connections to a brand, psychological (brand) contract breach is experienced more often, leading to the development of strong feelings of brand violation. Similarly, this study extends prior suggestions (Aggarwal, 2004; Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Romani et al., 2015) that customers' feelings of brand violation correlates with negative feelings towards the focal brand, and indicates that psychological (brand) contract breach is foundational to customers' display of negative emotions towards brands.

Fourth, this study contributes to the investigation and identification of additional antecedents to CBD. In particular, this is the first study to hypothesize and find evidence that customers' negative affect substantially impacts CBD. Whereas this finding is unique to the marketing literature and the research stream on customer-brand relationships, similar deductions have been implied in the psychology and organization literature (e.g., Becker & Tausch, 2014; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). More importantly, it is the psychological contract breach that is foundational to the occurrence and impact of customers' negative affect on CBD. Thus, this work provides clarity concerning the occurrence of CBD beyond what has been suggested in related research, notably Wolter et al. (2016). At the same time, this study expands on initial research about the potential consequences of CBD. While it is known, for instance, that CBI can substantially influence loyalty intentions and outcomes including willingness to pay premium

price, reduction in brand switching, brand repurchase, and even exclusive brand loyalty (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008; Tuškej et al., 2013; Wolter et al., 2016), no other study, until now, has extended similar logic in discussions about the role of CBD. Nevertheless, the presented evidence that CBD negatively correlates with brand patronage reduction and the spread of negative word of mouth reinforces the arguments that persist in scientific research that CBI (e.g., Tuškej et al., 2013) or more generally customer-company identification (Einwiller et al., 2006) has profound implications for customer behavior. Put differently, just as CBI has positive implications on consumer behavior, CBD has negative implications on consumer behavior, which may even outweigh the positive implications of CBI, considering, for example, that it is much easier nowadays to spread negative information about brands/companies using social media technologies. This suggestion, however, requires further research as it lies outside the study's scope.

Finally, the extension of the social identity theory to the emerging field of CBD enriches the social identity literature. Drawing on the social identity literature allows us to provide a more conceptual grounding of CBD and, by extension, makes this work comparable to the initial work on CBD by Wolter et al. (2016). At the same time, by applying social identity theory to the conceptualization, occurrence, and outcomes of the CBD construct, the study has validated findings from extant research that draws on this perspective in the research stream of customer-company/brand identification (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Einwiller et al., 2006; Elbedweihy, Jayawardhena, Elsharnouby, & Elsharnouby, 2016; Lam et al., 2010; Wolter et al., 2016), as well as the wider literature on consumer-brand relationships (e.g., Tildesley & Coote, 2009; He, Li, & Harris, 2012). Above all, our reliance on the social identity literature allows us to argue constructively that in instances where there is no meaningful self-identification with the brand's

self, customers may choose to decategorize themselves from the brand, which is also consistent with balance theory (Heider, 1985). The explanatory power of CBD enhances balance theory by suggesting that in situations where an individual no longer shares the same attitude with the brand, imbalance can also be recreated by complete disidentification. Interestingly, the social identity ties consumers form with their brands is the reason why they are unable to reconcile with the cognitive imbalance formed after a brand violation that destabilizes the entire relationship.

Managerial Implications

The findings of this study have practical value for managers and organizations. We believe that, by offering research evidence on CBD and its implications, rich insights can be obtained to help improve decision making regarding disidentification and customer-brand relationships. In particular, an important contribution of this research is the development of a valid scale for measuring CBD. This new scale can be used by brand managers to identify underlying CBD factors that have important implications for customer behavior. Managers, particularly those housed within a company's analytics department, can incorporate and administer the CBD scale to customers with diminished brand engagement levels to determine what aspects of disidentification contributes to their behavior. In fact, depending on how consumers respond to each question on the scale, managers may probe further to determine if a rebranding strategy is needed, or whether a change in brand messaging to clarify brand promises should be the route better taken. Because both approaches require costly changes to the brand's strategy, managers must also evaluate if customers themselves have decided to recategorize who they are or have self-selected to detach from the brand. No manager should be making changes to the brand if customers themselves have decided to recategorize who they are, independent of what the brand represents. Because customers who choose to willingly detach will be actively

doing so due to some underlying concerns with the brand, managers should probe deeper with those whose responses are higher on the detachment questions. Realistically, many disidentified consumers may be unwilling to participate in the survey, but instead would be more inclined to vocalize their opinions about their disidentification on social media platforms. As such, companies should be vigilant about such retaliatory tactics especially if a dissociative group or anti-brand community of former members can eventually be formed (Zhang, Zhang, & Sakulsinlapakorn, 2002; Dessart, Veloutsou & Morgan-Thomas, 2020).

Furthermore, companies that are concerned about building strong brand identification against competing brands in their industry can also use the scale for industry benchmarking. In particular, the scale could gauge existing customers' perceptions compared to public perceptions of related brands in the marketplace. It is crucial that managers periodically conduct customer surveys of their brands to evaluate what their customers think of the focal brand. It is important to note that, given this study's use of diverse consumer samples to validate the CBD scale, it is therefore practical enough to serve as a customer feedback tool regarding brand surveys.

This study also facilitates identification of drivers of CBD. Managers can reduce the occurrence of CBD by ensuring that the company and its brand strategy understand the communal expectations of the psychological contract between customers and brands. Feelings of brand violation as an indirect motivator for brand disidentification indicate that there is an asymmetry in how customers and their brands understand the norms of their communal relationship. Rectifying this asymmetry requires greater brand conformity on the part of organizations, particularly in situations where service employees have not kept to the psychological contract with the focal customer, thus resulting in expressions of anger and contempt towards the brand. Resolving this problem will require companies to reevaluate their

communal brand messaging first by embarking and investing in research devoted to understanding what customers who identify with them believe should be acceptable norms in a brand relationship. Second, brand managers should create and communicate to customers what the company believes should be the confines of its own expectations in a customer-brand relationship. By doing so, organizations have a better understanding of what customers expect as norms and contracts of the relationship, but equally present their own specific expectations in return. For example, brand members may expect that an organization disassociate with a celebrity endorser who engages in a behavior contrary to the brand message, but the organization may not do so, thereby increasing the asymmetry between members. A robust customer investigation by the organization will reveal what their members expect in relation to this situation.

Finally, the findings demonstrate that CBD is an important predictor of customers' negative word of mouth behavior and brand patronage reduction. The CBD scale could be used, therefore, as a diagnostic tool to assess the spread of negative word of mouth and the possibility of patronage reduction. Brand managers could use this scale to not only monitor CBD, but also to ensure that adequate attention is devoted to better communicating the meaning and value of the brand to target customers. More importantly, managers must understand the content of CBD so as to adequately be aware of the significant consequences of not just the negative publicity that the company will attract through customers' bad-mouthing, but also the economic loss that they will incur through brand patronage reduction.

Limitations and Additional Research Opportunities

The limitations of our research offer substantial opportunities for future research. One notable limitation from this study is our use of an undergraduate student sample for the EFA.

While the rest of the samples utilized for the scale development and nomological validation were more representative of the general consumer population, future studies on CBD are cautioned against solely using student samples. Another limitation is our confinement within the United States market, which calls for further research to test and validate the scale using samples from different cultures/countries and industries. For instance, it would be interesting to know whether the CBD scale may differ across customers of business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) firms in both advanced markets such as the European Union and post-Brexit United Kingdom, as well as emerging markets like the BRICS nations.

In particular, we encourage studies to reexamine the hypotheses in specific industry, cultural, and economic contexts in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research issues. The length of the CBD scale may limit its usability. However, the scale may perform differently across cultures and cultural groups. As such, the authors are calling for future scale refinement studies using a global sample mix. Moreover, depending on the context of future disidentification research, scholars are encouraged to use specific items that fit the framework of their studies rather than the entire CBD scale.

Further research on the CBD construct will also benefit from the rivalry literature (e.g., Berendt et al., 2018). In particular, we recommend that scholars investigate the influence of inter-firm brand rivalry and inter-consumer brand rivalry on the relationship between customers' negative affect and CBD. The idea that rivalry might mitigate or intensify the consequences of customers' negative affect on CBD depending on several factors such as the intensity of such rivalry and its direct impact on consumer's wellbeing deserves more research investigation. Thus, additional research will benefit from the integration of the social identity literature with the rivalry literature to improve our understanding of the antecedent, consequent, and moderating

factors of CBD. Moreover, future research would benefit from studying more novel consumer behavior outcomes that better explain company-based outcomes. For example, would the impact of negative affect on CBD lead to the formation of anti-brand communities by former members of the brand community? Dessart et al. (2020) suggest that this might be the case since anti-brand communities represent individuals with negative feelings about the brand such like disidentified customers.

Although this study has focused on CBD, future investigations are called to examine the relationship between CBD and CBI. Important pieces of information that need to be addressed include exploring if there are cases where both CBD and CBI are high and low, as well as what factors triggers consumers to experience CBD and CBI concurrently. Future studies should also investigate the predictive discreteness of CBD relative to the related constructs of brand hate, dissatisfaction, and avoidance.

Finally, we call on scholars to examine the conditions under which psychological (brand) contract breach might indirectly contribute to the development of CBD. In particular, it would be intriguing for future research to explore whether consumer traits and/or related constructs such as consumer forgiveness, empathy, perceived value, and perceived brand ethicality will mitigate the contribution of psychological (brand) contract breach on CBD. Similarly, research in other key contexts would be useful. For example, in critical national infrastructure sector and especially in public water works and electricity generation/distribution, which are heavily regulated and limit competition to very few operators for national security reasons, it would be interesting to know how a lack of (credible) alternative offerings and ultimately switching barriers may weaken the implications of CBD on brand patronage reduction, especially among B2B customers. Above all,

while this study extends theoretical and managerial knowledge about customer-brand relationships, especially about CBD, further application and debate on this scale is welcomed.

Table 1. Development Phases of Customer-Brand Disidentification Scale

Phase description	Sample used
Phase 1 - Literature review of item generation and selection Purpose: Generation and selection of items for CBD.	
Phase 2 - Qualitative study of item generation and reduction Purpose: Generation and selection of items for CBD.	1
Phase 3 - Item-Sort Task for items validation and reduction Purpose: Elimination of items inconsistent with the construct's conceptualization	2 & 3
Phase 4 - Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) Purpose: Generate an item pool and then eliminate items based on tests of substantive validity, frequency, and model fit.	4
Phase 5 - Contrasting from Related Constructs and Psychometric Properties Purpose: Verify acceptable factor structure and model fit.	5
Phase 6 - Nomological network and Criterion-related validity Purpose: Test for significant relationships between the CBD scales and other constructs based on theoretical brand predictions. Demonstrate significant relationships with important outcome variables, and incremental validity.	6

Table 2. Items generation and reduction for each stage of the scale development

Items	Phase 1	Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4
	LR	QS	IR	Ph.D. S	ME	EFA
I do not share anything with the consumers of this brand	X		X			
The thought of being associated with this brand makes me feel bad	X		X			
Being a user of this brand makes me feel ashamed	X		X			
I am embarrassed to use this brand	X	X	X			
I do not want to be mistaken as a brand's user	X		X			
I feel unhappy to be a customer of this brand	X		X			
I object to being seen as another consumer of this brand	X		X			
I sometimes feel uncomfortable if people think I buy this brand	X		X			
I want people to know that I disagree with how this brand behaves	X		X			
I'm unhappy about being a consumer of this brand	X		X			
Overall, I feel bad when people associate me with this brand	X		X			
I would prefer not to notice this brand anymore	X		X			
Seeing this brand makes me feel bad	X		X			
I feel bad when I remember the brand	X	X	X			
My mood turns off when I see this brand	X		X			
I feel bad when I use this brand	X		X			
I do not feel comfortable using this brand		X	X	X	***	
This brand is not placed highly in my mind	X		X	X	***	
I feel detached from this brand	X		X	X	X	X
I do not have a relationship with this brand		X	X	X	***	
I no longer belong to this brand		X	***			
I refuse to be recognized as a consumer of this brand	X		***			
I wish I had never used this brand	X	X	X			
I wish I was never associated with this brand	X		X			
I avoid this brand		X	X	X	***	

(*** Items deleted, X Items retained, LR: Literature Review, QS: Qualitative Study, IR: Item Reduction, ME: Marketing Experts, EFA: Exploratory Factor Analysis)

Items	Phase 1	Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4
	LR	QS	IR	Ph.D. S	ME	EFA
I do not have anything in common with other consumers of this brand	X		X			
I am completely different from other consumers of this brand	X	X	X	X	X	***
The brand's identity is no longer compatible with who I am today	X		X	X	X	X
This brand belongs to a different person other than me		X	X	X	X	X
This brand reminds me of the past		X	X	X	***	
I do not want to buy this brand anymore	X		X	X	***	
I will not use this brand again	X		X	X	X	***
I doubt that I will use this brand much longer	X		***			
I am done with this brand		X	X	X	***	
I feel that what this brand stands for is different from who I am	X	X	X	X	X	X
I have moved on from this brand	X		X	X	***	
The identity of this brand does not represent me	X		X	X	X	X
I won't be able to represent myself if I buy this brand	X	X	X			
My identity is not represented by this brand	X		X	X	X	X
Refusing to be a brand's customer is part of my sense of who I am	X		X			
I feel separated from this brand	X	X	X	X	X	X
There is a gap between this brand and myself	X		X	X	X	X
I do not want to be mistaken as a brand's consumer	X	X	X			
I don't feel addressed when they are saying something about this brand	X		***			
I have outgrown this brand	X	X	X	X	***	
I do not identify with this brand		X	X	X	X	***
I feel no connection with this brand		X	X	X	X	***
I do not relate with this brand		X	X	X	X	X
The brand's identity is no longer compatible with what I enjoy consuming		X	X	X	X	X
The brand's identity is no longer compatible with my identity		X	X	X	X	X

(*** Items deleted, X Items retained, LR: Literature Review, QS: Qualitative Study, IR: Item Reduction, ME: Marketing Experts, EFA: Exploratory Factor Analysis)

Items	Phase 1	Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4
	LR	QS	IR	Ph.D. S	ME	EFA
This brand does not match the way I see myself		X	X	X	X	X
I feel good when someone speaks negatively about this brand's consumers	X		X			
I feel good when someone speaks negatively about this brand	X		X			
I feel insulted when someone appreciates this brand	X		X			
I feel rejection for this brand		X	***			
If this brand is the only choice that I have, I would buy nothing	X		X			
I tell myself there are other brands that I can use	X	X	***			
Buying this brand is a waste of money		X	X	X	***	
I found a better brand rather than this brand		X	***			
I have no time to invest in getting into this brand		X	***			
I feel this brand sometimes does disgraceful things	X		X			
I rather not have a relationship with this brand		X	X	X	***	
I feel cheated by this brand		X	X			
I feel disappointed by this brand		X	X			
This brand hurts/harms me		X	***			
This brand lets me down when I need it most		X	***			
This brand lies to me		X	X			
This brand does not bring any changes in itself		X	***			
I feel saturated using this brand		X	X			
This brand does not perform according to the way it is priced		X	***			
This brand changed its product in a way that I don't like		X	***			
This brand does not help me anymore to achieve my goals		X	X			
This brand has limited options		X	X			
This brand has not changed its style in years		X	***			
This brand is not what it was		X	***			
I do not like the quality of this brand		X	X			
<i>Number of Items</i>	44	42	61	27	16	12

(*** Items deleted, X Items retained, LR: Literature Review, QS: Qualitative Study, IR: Item Reduction, ME: Marketing Experts, EFA: Exploratory Factor Analysis)

Table 3. Scale items after EFA

	Component	
	1	2
I do not identify with this brand	.585 ⁺	
I feel detached from this brand	.711	
I am completely different from other consumers of this brand	.556 ⁺	
I will not use this brand again	.653	.326 ⁺⁺
The identity of this brand does not represent me	.751	
I do not relate with this brand	.750	
This brand does not match the way I see myself	.760	
The brand's identity is no longer compatible with what I enjoy consuming	.671	
I feel separate from this brand	.793	
My identity is not represented by this brand	.799	
I feel no connection with this brand	.694	.310 ⁺⁺
The brand's identity is no longer compatible with who I am today	.810	
I feel that what this brand stands for is different from who I am	.680	
There is a gap between this brand and myself	.779	
This brand belongs to a different person other than me	.719	
The brand's identity is no longer compatible with my identity	.765	

+ Items deleted because the factor loading < 0.60.

++ Items deleted because cross-loading in both components.

Table 4. Scale items after EFA

	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha
I feel detached from this brand	.695	.937
The identity of this brand does not represent me	.761	
I do not relate with this brand	.791	
This brand does not match the way I see myself	.791	
This brand's identity is no longer compatible with what I enjoy consuming	.715	
I feel separate from this brand	.806	
My identity is not represented by this brand	.791	
This brand is no longer compatible with who I am today	.831	
I feel that what this brand stands for is different from who I am	.717	
There is a gap between this brand and myself	.797	
This brand belongs to a different person other than me	.718	
This brand's identity is no longer compatible with my identity	.788	

Table 5. CFA Factor Loadings and Results for Rotated Component Matrix for Related Constructs in EFA

Item	CFA Factor Loadings	Component			
		1	2	3	4
I feel detached from this brand (CBD1)	.771	.764			
The identity of this brand does not represent me (CBD2)	.837	.836			
I do not relate with this brand (CBD3)	.810	.786			
This brand does not match the way I see myself (CBD4)	.839	.822			
This brand's identity is no longer compatible with what I enjoy consuming (CBD5)	.741	.736			
I feel separate from this brand (CBD6)	.730	.725			
My identity is not represented by this brand (CBD7)	.744	.750			
This brand is no longer compatible with who I am today (CBD8)	.783	.789			
I feel that what this brand stands for is different from who I am (CBD9)	.776	.732			
There is a gap between this brand and myself (CBD10)	.808	.800			
This brand belongs to a different person other than me (CBD11)	.710	.736			
This brand's identity is no longer compatible with my identity (CBD12)	.782	.785			
Overall evaluation of this brand: very dissatisfied - very satisfied (DIS1)	.930		.846		
Overall evaluation of this brand: very displeased - very pleased (DIS2)	.912		.859		
Overall evaluation of this brand: frustrated - contented (DIS3)	.891		.846		
Overall evaluation of this brand: terrible - Delighted (DIS4)	.896		.841		
Overall evaluation of this brand: bad - good (DIS5)	.919		.865		
I hate this brand (BH1)	.928			.862	
I extremely dislike this brand (BH2)	.909			.814	
I really detest this brand (BH3)	.954			.862	
I feel hostile to this brand (BH4)	.872			.861	
I avoid this brand as it might make me feel out of place (BA1)	.705				.759
I stay away from this brand as others might possibly disapprove (BA2)	.948				.907
I avoid using this brand as it might draw criticism from others (BA3)	.828				.889

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics: Means, Standard Deviations, AVEs, Composite Reliabilities, and Correlations.

	1	2	3	4
1. Customer-Brand Disidentification	.606	.030	.262	.137
2. Brand Avoidance	.174	.694	.071	.200
3. Brand Dissatisfaction	.512	.267	.828	.339
4. Brand Hate	.371	.448	.583	.832
Composite Reliability	.949	.870	.960	.937
Mean	5.705	3.419	3.589	3.082
Standard Deviation	.976	1.680	1.550	1.869

Notes: AVEs are provided in diagonal, inter-construct correlations are provided in sub-diagonal, and squared inter-construct correlations are provided in super-diagonal.

Table 7. Measurement Items, Factor Loadings, Composite Reliabilities, AVEs

Constructs and Items	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability	AVE
Customer-Brand Disidentification		.968	.717
I feel detached from this brand.	.630		
The identity of this brand does not represent me.	.816		
I do not relate with this brand.	.875		
This brand does not match the way I see myself.	.853		
This brand ´s identity is no longer compatible with what I enjoy consuming.	.900		
I feel separate from this brand.	.802		
My identity is not represented by this brand.	.814		
This brand is no longer compatible with who I am today.	.887		
I feel that what this brand stands for is different from who I am.	.864		
There is a gap between this brand and myself.	.893		
This brand belongs to a different person other than me.	.875		
This brand ´s identity is no longer compatible with my identity.	.912		
Psychological Contract Breach		.912	.777
Almost all the promises made by this brand have not been kept so far.	.843		
I feel that this brand has not come through in fulfilling the promises made to me when I purchased it.	.909		
So far this brand has not done an excellent job of fulfilling its promises to me.	.871		
I have not received everything promised to me by this brand.	.863		
Feelings of Violation		.917	.847
I feel betrayed by this brand.	.951		
I feel extremely frustrated by how this brand has treated me.	.889		
Negative emotions		.945	.744
I am angry with this brand.	.909		
I am annoyed with this brand.	.900		
I hate this brand.	.884		
I am disgusted by this brand.	.920		

I feel contempt for this brand.	.698		
I detest this brand.	.845		
Patronage Reduction		.869	.690
I will spend less money on this brand.	.741		
I don't want to spend money on this brand.	.894		
I will reduce my frequency of interaction this brand.	.849		
Negative Word-of-Mouth		.935	.828
I will spread negative word-of-mouth about this brand.	.957		
I will bad-mouth this brand to my friends.	.954		
When my friends are looking for products similar to what this brand offers, I will tell them not to buy it.	.812		

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics: Means, Standard Deviations, AVEs, and Squared Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Customer-Brand Disidentification	.717					
2. Psychological Contract Breach	.253	.777				
3. Feelings of Violation	.116	.366	.847			
4. Negative Emotions	.116	.304	.704	.744		
5. Patronage Reduction	.475	.173	.177	.192	.690	
6. Negative Word-of-Mouth	.085	.241	.466	.533	.178	.828
Mean	5.712	4.397	3.562	3.830	5.779	3.629
Standard Deviation	1.303	1.667	2.055	1.870	1.451	1.978

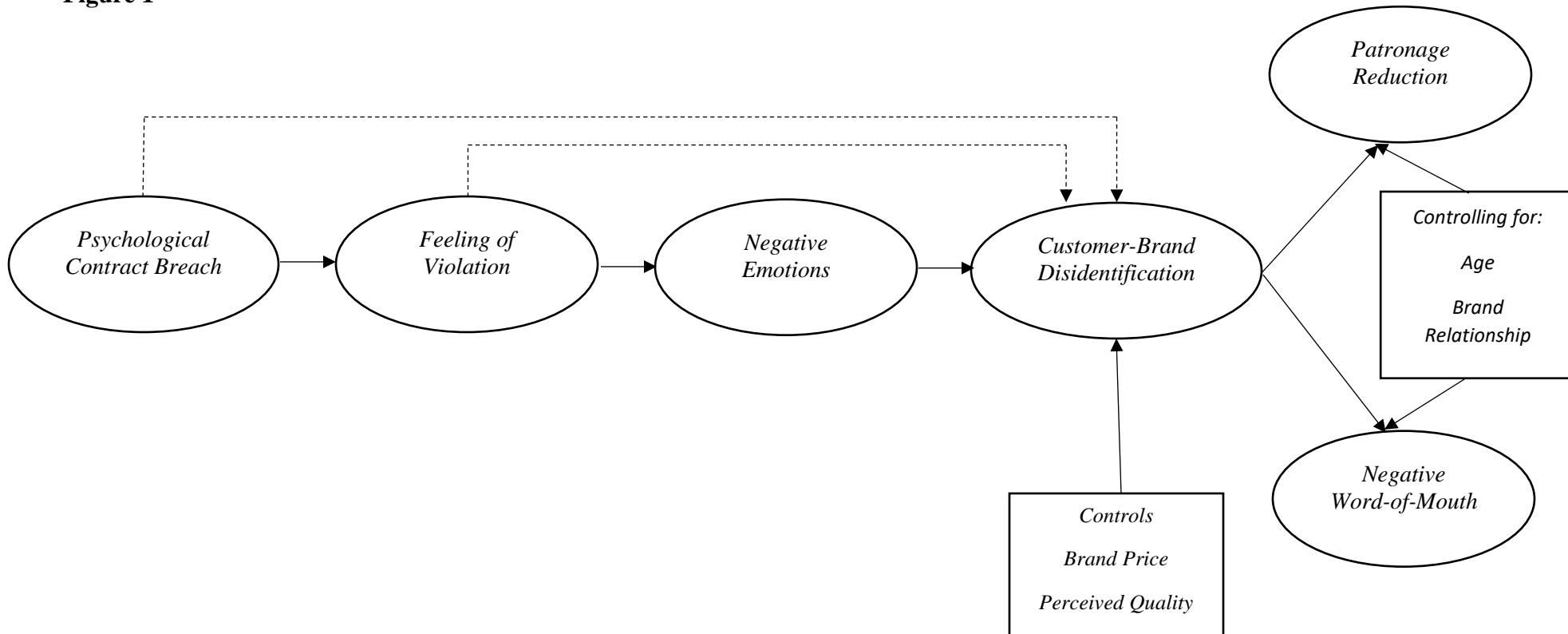
Note: AVEs on Diagonal; Squared Correlations below AVEs

Table 9. Unstandardized Structural Parameter Estimates

Path			Estimate	S.E.	t-Value
Psychological Contract Breach	→	Feelings of Violation	.790	.069	11.401**
Feelings of Violation	→	Negative Emotions	.956	.048	19.913**
Negative Emotions	→	Customer-Brand Disidentification	.196	.037	5.296**
Brand Disidentification	→	Patronage Reduction	.695	.057	12.133**
Brand Disidentification	→	Negative Word-of-Mouth	.431	.088	4.920**

** $p < .001$

Figure 1



Solid lines represent relationships tested for the nomological model

Dashed lines represent relationships added for the post-hoc model

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