Brand Love – Moving Beyond Loyalty
An Empirical Investigation of Perceived Brand Love of Indian Consumer

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ABSTRACT

Each passing day brings new brands to India each vying for a share of wallet in the prospering market. By 2020, the median age of Indian population will be 29 years and owing to the absolute population of India, the presence in Indian market will be rewarding for the multinationals. But the twenty-something targets, because of their 'variety seeking' disposition, are a challenge, even for the most experienced marketers. The marketers create brands with a vision to create sustained loyalty, which however gets diluted by consumers coveting for 'something new' and 'something different'. As a defensive, the marketers are now attempting to create an emotional bond with the customers. This phenomenon is termed as brand love and it is likely to influence desirable marketing outcomes such as commitment, positive word of mouth by customers, etc. This research attempts to explore the perceived 'brand love' of young Indians. A structured, non-disguised questionnaire was used, data was collected through personal interviews and a total of 160 complete questionnaires were obtained. The findings describe the comparative status of brands loved by the Indian consumers and will help marketers to understand their perceived brand image, customer engagement and attitude of customers towards their brands.

1. Introduction

"A brand is the personification of a product, service or even entire company. Also, like a person, a brand has a name, a personality, character and a reputation. Like a person, you can respect, like and even love a brand. You can think of it as a deep personal friend, or merely an acquaintance. You can view it as dependable or undependable; principled or opportunistic; caring or capricious. Just as you like to be around certain people and not others, so also do you like to be with certain brands and not others...."

(Robert T. Blanchard, Procter & Gamble)

The involvement that consumers express towards brands is best described in the quote above by one of the most successful marketers (Blanchard in 'Parting Essay', 1999). The consumers' emotional attachment with brands has eternally magnetized the interest of the marketers who create brands with a vision to create persistent loyalty. This proposition is challenged by consumers coveting for 'something new' and 'something different' and the presence of numerous products and abundant brands. The complexity deepens as the consumers are assisted by technology educating them about comparable

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products with absolute ease. Nevertheless, businesses endeavour to develop and maintain a loyal customer base, even though loyalty seems to be declining among the customers and consumers alike. The marketers resolutely probe the dynamic 'consumer choice' behaviour and thus a significant proportion of research on consumer behaviour is focused towards analyzing how consumers emotionally bond with the consumption objects.

As a defensive strategy, the marketers are now 'proactively' attempting to create an emotional bond with the customers, so that they get attached to the brand. One such concept is 'Brand Love' which may be described as the degree of emotional attachment a satisfied customer has for a particular brand. Theoretically, it is defined as the level of passionate, emotional attachment a satisfied consumer may have for a particular trade name and its associated dimensions. It is one of the most recent paradigms being studied by marketers. Consumers' love towards specific brands influences desirable marketing outcomes such as passion and attachment with the brand, positive word of mouth about the brand and true love for the brand (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). The relationship between the customers and products brands has been explored using concepts such as satisfaction and loyalty to the brand as well as brand love, the various types being distinguished basis the intensities of relationships. Love is a typical consumer-related emotion and often has a strong connection to the individual's self-concept and identity (Richins, 1997). Brand Love is a response, a feeling experienced by only few very satisfied customers. Though customer satisfaction is usually transaction specific outcome, brand love is the effect of customer's long term relationship with the brand. Customers who tend to love particular brands often quote 'I just don't buy other brands', 'this is truly delightful brand', etc. The customers' attachments are based on familiarity, trust, dependability and consistency of response, the primary motive for attachment being security and safety (Patwardhan and Balasubramanian, 2011). Another type of attachment is based on the 'need for stimulation' where consumers seek brands that provide novelty, excitement and arousal.

The brands vie for a loyal customer base and the customers would want a significant reason as to why they should confine themselves to one particular brand. Each brand can boast of a few customers that love it, but not all satisfied customers tend to love a brand. What specific reasons lead to the establishment of brand love as well as the specific outcomes due to customers love for a brand? These are the areas which marketers and researchers alike should examine. The present research is an attempt to understand the impact of brand love i.e. the resulting outcomes.

1.1. The importance of investigating brand love in India

The Indian retail market is estimated to be Rs. 47 trillion (US$ 738.71 billion) by 2016-17 as it is expanding at CAGR (Compounded Annual Growth Rate) of 15 per cent (Yes Bank-Assocham study, 2014). This will be supported by growth in online retail market, which is projected to grow at a CAGR of 40-45 per cent during 2014-18 (IBEF, 2014). The main drivers fuelling this growth are - favourable demographics, increasing urbanization, nuclearization of families, rising affluence amid consumers, growing preference for branded products and higher aspirations, etc. (IBEF, 2014). These growth opportunities are attracting multiple brands – both domestic and of foreign origin – to be present in the Indian market and charm Indian customers. Furthermore, among all different customer segments in India 'millennials' is an important one. Millennials is also one of the most important segments being studied by the marketers across the world as it includes people belonging to the age group of 18 to 29 years. With India's median age expected to be 29 years by 2020, this will be a crucial fragment for marketers interested in the Indian market. The millennials are the most important targets for the technological firms and fashion industry. The extensive use of technology by this segment makes them distinctive than others. The millennials are liberal, open minded, highly dynamic individuals and constantly change their habit of buying products and do the same with their product preferences (Pew Research Center, 2010). However, the capricious nature of millennials creates a challenge for the firms across the world. The present research focuses on analyzing the behaviour of millennials. It is important to understand the buying behaviour of these young consumers and cater them with the products suited to satisfy them.

2. Literature review and hypotheses

The attachment of the consumers with the brands they use can be described as satisfaction, loyalty or love depending on the degree of affection exhibited towards the brands. A consumer can get emotionally connected with a brand in the same manner in which he/ she can get emotionally involved with another person (Shimp and Madden, 1988; Thomson et al., 2005; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Keh et al., 2007; Albert et al., 2008; Whang et al., 2004). Love relationship existing between two individuals has a lot of similarities with the emotional relationship existing between a consumer and consumption object or brand (Shimp and Madden, 1988; Keh et al., 2007; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Whang et al., 2004; Albert et al., 2008).

Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) label brand love as the level of passionate, emotional attachment a satisfied consumer may have for a particular trade name and its associated dimensions. Brand love may be evident in many forms i.e. brand passion, attachment, positive evaluation and emotion in response to brands and declarations to validate brand love. Brand love differs from the satisfaction because it is more affective. Brand love is not transaction-specific but the outcome of a nurtured consumer-brand relationship. Rubin (1970) and Sternberg (1986) define 'love' as a superior status of friendship. Sternberg (1986, 1997) proposed a triangular theory of love, with three main constructs - intimacy, passion and decision/commitment.

Thomson et. al. (2005) also studied the brand love phenomenon and proposed three dimensions - passion, affection, and connection. Recently, Albert et al. (2008a, 2008b) proposed two main components of brand love that are also to be found in interpersonal love literature - six first order dimensions (idealization, intimacy, pleasure, dream, memories, and uniqueness) and two second order dimensions (passion and affection). On the other hand, Roy et al. (2012) suggest that the concept of brand love predominantly distinguishes itself through the notion of emotion/ passion and lack of commitment, when weighted against brand loyalty. Though consumer commitment is fundamental for loyalty to sustain, brand love may or may not lead to loyalty (Oliver, 1999).

Brand love of the consumer is majorly divided into three segments affection, connection and passion (Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi, 2012). They collectively contribute to the emotional attachment of the consumer with the brand. Marketers constantly try to evoke the feeling of brand love in the customers to generate the feeling of word of mouth as it is the most important component of marketing and possess the high potential to penetrate the brand in the minds of the customer base. Lastovicka and Sirianni (2011), in their study stated that they do not deny that brand love exists; rather, they focus on consumers' love for specific, concrete, and tangible possessions, as opposed to brand love representing a love for more freely replaceable objects and abstractions within a brand designation. Their study emphasizes on the elements that constitutes brand love including attitude, love and interpersonal deficit as an antecedent. Sarkar (2014) in a qualitative study attempted to explore the nature of brand love, the antecedents and consequences of brand love and the obstacles to brand love in the context of Asian market. It was suggested that though brand love is an emerging concept in the domain of consumer psychology, yet little qualitative exploration has been done to understand brand love especially in the context of emerging Asian market (Sarkar, 2014). A conceptual framework showing the antecedents and consequences of brand love was suggested by the author.

The review of the previous research suggests that the concept of brand love is an emerging term which connects the customer towards the brand emotionally and interpersonally to establish a strong feeling of bonding between them and as a result the brand escalates itself to the higher level. The concept of brand love and various attributes contributing to this phenomenon create a favourable situation for the company or brand to attain the new customers at very less cost and retain maximum of them. The empirical research examining antecedents of brand love as well as the outcomes is at best limited to a few research studies conducted in foreign markets. To the best of our understanding the brands are not compared w.r.t. the expressed love by the customers. The present study was undertaken to empirically investigate this concept in the Indian context and the main objectives were:

- To study the factors (brand image and brand functionality) that lead to the creation of brand love
- To examine the outcomes that are a result of consumers love towards specific brands viz. – engagement, loyalty, positive communication, resist competitive offers, etc.
- To compare the competing brands w.r.t. the customer based affection (love)
- To study whether customer based brand love generates positive outcomes for the brand

2.1. Conceptual framework and hypotheses

Based on the discussion in the sections above a conceptual framework to study brand love is developed. The hypothesized relationships between brand image, brand engagement, brand loyalty and brand love are presented in Figure 1.
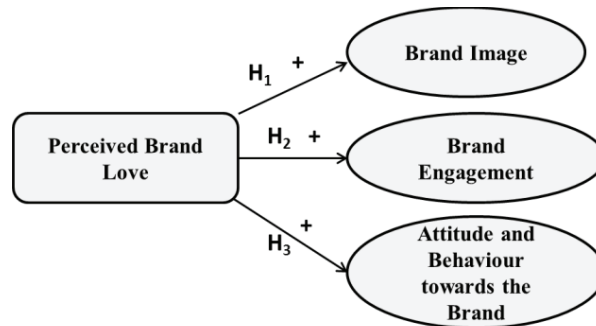

Fig. 1- Conceptual Framework.

The following hypotheses are developed for the study on the basis of research framework

H_1: Brand Love positively impacts Brand Image

H_2: Brand Love positively impacts Brand Engagement

H_3: Brand Love positively impacts Attitude and Behaviour towards the brand

H_4: Competing Brands attract different outcomes based on customer based affection (brand love) towards them

3. Research methodology

3.1. Why Smartphones and about the product

The millennials constitute the largest share of users of smartphones in India (Nielsen Informate Mobile Insights, 2014) and hence this product category was selected. Smartphones, as defined by the Smartphone Incidence Study 2013, compiled by Nielsen Informate Mobile Insights, are those with operating systems (OS) that allow installation of applications. The Simon Personal Communicator, often touted as the first smartphone, was introduced in 1994 by IBM and BellSouth. With the launch of BlackBerry in 2002 this category became popular, amassing huge audience over the years. With the overall mobile phone market at 72.5 million units in Q3 2014, the share of smartphones in the overall mobile phone market at 32% and a quarter-on-

quarter growth of 27% in Q3 2014 (July – September), India was the fastest growing Smartphone market in Asia Pacific (International Data Corporation, IDC, 2014). Also, with 24% market share Samsung is the market leader in the Smartphone segment. For the present research consumers were asked to identify the brand of smartphone that they love and subsequently they were asked questions about the same.

3.2. Sampling method

The questionnaire was administered to undergraduate/ postgraduate students enrolled in a private university in Delhi/ NCR region. The sampling technique used was stratified random sampling. The reasons for obtaining feedback from the undergraduate and postgraduate students of this university were easy accessibility, budget constraints and quality responses. Furthermore, this university was selected as it was possible to obtain detailed lists of target audience (millennials). These detailed lists were required to conduct stratified random sampling to select the sample and collect the data. The strata's were based on gender (to ensure equal participation of men and women) as well as 'brand loved'. It was ensured that there were at-least 40 respondents expressing brand love for three leading brands i.e. Samsung, BlackBerry and Apple. If consumers mentioned other brands they were grouped in 'others' category. These strata's were created to ensure that comparison is possible. A total of 160 complete questionnaires (complete in all respects) were obtained.

3.3. Instrument design and data collection

A structured non-disguised questionnaire was prepared. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part of the questionnaire contained questions relating to ownership of smartphones, preference for specific brands etc. and the second part of the questionnaire contained questions regarding brand image (17 items), brand engagement (3 items), brand love and brand loyalty (18 items). These items were collated from brand love related scales suggested by Batra et. al. (2012). These items were measured using different scales due to the variety of variables used in this research. The 17 items related to brand image and 18 items related to brand love and loyalty were measured on a 5-point scale varying from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The 3 items describing brand engagement were measured on a five-point scale with scale points as never, seldom, sometimes, usually and always. The final part of the questionnaire contained questions related to demographic characteristics. Data was collected during September/ October 2013.

4. Results and discussion

The respondents were in the age group of 18 to 29 years and the majority of them were undergraduates. To ensure equal representation of views of both, the genders stratified random sampling and the strata's were based on gender. The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1. The respondents were the owners of smartphones. Figure 2 presents the brands mentioned as 'brands loved' by the respondents. The respondents were asked to identify the brand of smartphones loved by them and strata's were also based on the brand mentioned. Three leading smartphone brands i.e. Apple, Samsung and BlackBerry have an equal proportion of respondents in the sample suggesting that they love the brand. This helped in comparing the attachment expressed towards these brands. If any other brand was mentioned, it was grouped into a fourth category called 'others' and noteworthy brands include Sony (9%), Nokia (5%), Micromax (4%) and Google Nexus (3%).

The smartphone brands owned by the respondents are presented in Figure 3. The ownership of Samsung is the highest (28%) followed by BlackBerry (19%) and Nokia (17%). Micromax and Sony are owned by 10 % (each) of the respondents. Only a meager 7 % possessed Apple and the other brands owned are Google Nexus, HTC and LG.
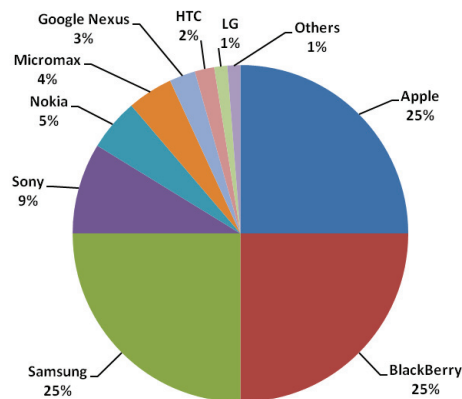

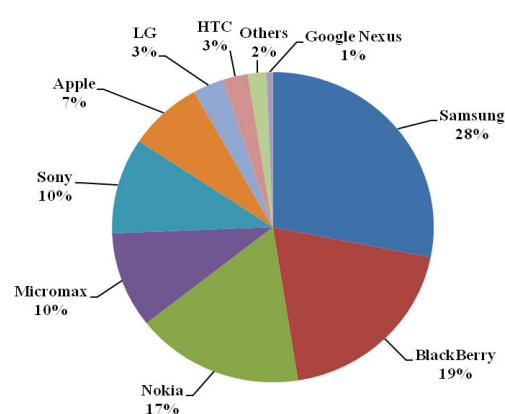**Fig. 2- Brands Loved by Smartphone Users.**   **Fig. 3- Brands Owned by Smartphone Users.**

The consumers seek information about smartphone brands primarily from advertisements on TV, websites online and from their friends (refer to Figure 4). However, when asked about the reasons for preferring one brand over the other, they suggested that quality, product features and brand image is what they consider (refer to Figure 5). Very few mentioned that advertisements influence buying decision. The customers seek information through TV advertisements but rarely do these advertisements influence buying decisions.

Table 1- Demographic Profile of the Respondents.

Demographic Variables	Catergories	Frequency	Percentages
	18 Years	17	10.63%
	19 Years	35	21.88%
	20 Years	37	23.13%
Age (Years)	21 Years	14	8.75%
	22 Years	12	7.50%
	23-29 Years	32	20.00%
	30 Years	13	8.13%
Gender	Male	81	51%
	Female	79	49%
	B.E./ B.Tech.	68	42.50%
	BBA	22	13.75%
	B.Com/ B.Ed./ B.A.	18	11.25%
Educational Qualification	Graduation + Law (Integrated Course	12	7.50%
	Masters (Various Courses)	12	7.50%
	B.Ed./ B.A.	10	6.25%
	BCA	10	6.25%
	B.Sc. + Allied Sciences	8	5.00%

The perceptions of the smartphone users about the brands they loved were captured through brand image related statements. The interaction of the smartphone users with the brands loved was measured by their engagement with the brand through certain activities they do. Finally, the extent of attachment of the smartphone users towards brand loved was measured through statements related to relative attitude and likely behaviour towards the brand. The reliability and equivalence of the scales used was analyzed by Cronbach's alpha coefficient and Hotelling's T-squared test respectively. The results are presented in Table 2. Results show high value of Cronbach's alpha co-efficient, suggesting a high reliability (greater than 0.6 recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994) and internal consistency. Hotelling's T-squared test results confirmed that the mean of different items in each of the three scales was significantly different from each other at 0.5 per cent level. For scrutinizing the dimensionality of the constructs related to brand image, brand engagement and attitude and likely behaviour of customers towards brands loved, the constructs measured through 17, 3 and 18 items respectively were reduced using exploratory factor analysis. The results have been obtained using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) as the extraction method and Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization as the rotation method. The results for the three are presented in sections that follow.
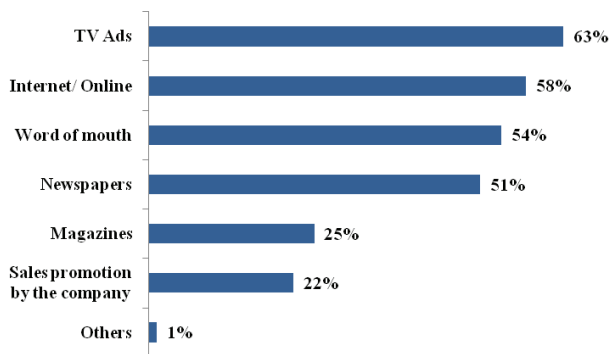

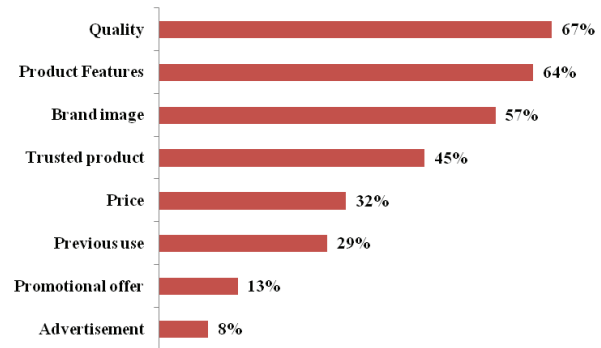**Fig. 4- Sources of Information.**

Fig. 5- Reasons for Buying Specific Smartphone Brands.

Table 2- Reliability and Equivalence of Various Items in Different Scales.

Scales	No.of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Hotelling's T-squared	F-value	d.f.	P-value
Brand Image	17	0.854	670.27	37.94	16, 144	0.000
Brand Engagement	3	0.636	177.27	88.08	2, 158	0.000
Attitude and Likely Behaviour	18	0.871	396.88	20.98	17, 142	0.000

4.1. Brand Image

The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.844 (which is greater than 0.5 recommended by Kaiser, 1974) suggesting acceptability of the results. The results of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity suggest that the items in the scale are inter-related. The 17 brand image related items were reduced to 5 factors for which the Eigen values were greater than the recommended level of 1 and they together explained 69.72 per cent variance of the data. The results of rotated component matrix were used to interpret the factors and items with factors loadings above 0.5 were grouped under the specific factor (Refer Table 3). The items having factor loading less than 0.5, were dropped from the further analysis. The item 'the brand offers very distinct products' was dropped from further analysis.

Table 3- Rotated Component Matrix for Brand Image Specific Scale.

	Component				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
I have no particular feelings about this brand.	-0.192	-0.063	0.080	-0.097	**-0.848**
The brand caters to needs of one and all	0.170	0.163	0.280	**0.704**	-0.005
The brand offers 'very' distinct products	0.370	0.420	0.326	0.261	0.054
The brand offers best product features	**0.547**	0.503	0.383	0.182	0.024
The brand offers best smartphones	0.258	**0.788**	0.109	0.086	0.088
The brand offers colorful products	-0.017	0.429	-0.137	**0.687**	0.097
The brand offers futuristic products	0.140	**0.863**	-0.056	0.141	0.059
The brand offers ground breaking technology	0.062	**0.579**	0.451	-0.092	0.329
The brand offers innovative products	0.145	**0.628**	0.447	0.035	-0.076
The brand offers products for business use	0.189	0.037	**0.803**	0.067	0.117
The brand offers products for young people	0.238	0.205	**0.690**	0.199	-0.012
The brand often surprises me	0.142	0.116	0.477	0.071	**0.684**
The products offered by this brand are affordable	0.222	-0.144	0.124	**0.777**	0.094
This brand is a pure delight.	**0.731**	0.183	0.005	0.356	-0.019
This brand is a wonderful brand.	**0.825**	0.170	0.325	0.089	0.045
This brand is totally awesome.	**0.786**	0.086	0.080	0.005	0.314
This brand makes me feel good.	**0.798**	0.180	0.226	0.100	0.161

Note: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Table 4 lists the five factors and the items included in each. Based on the nature of the items grouping under a factor, it is suggested that the dimensions of the perceived brand image of smartphones loved by the users can be described as - 'Ideal Brand'; 'Innovative Brand'; 'Distinct Brand'; 'Reasonable Brand' and 'Incredible Brand'. The reliability of each of these dimensions/ factors is satisfactory (more than 0.6) except Dimension 5 which has negative value of Cronbach's Alpha. The value is negative due to a negative average covariance among items because the item 'I have no particular feelings about this brand' has a negative loading (as it was reverse coded). After recoding the variable, the reliability was checked once again and the value of Cronbach's Alpha was then 0.570.

Table 4- Dimensions Explaining Brand Image of Smartphones.

Dimensions	Items Included	Number of Items	% Variance Explained	Suggested Name	Cronbach's Alpha
Dimension 1	The brand offers best product features.	5	19.08	Ideal Brand	0.87
	This brand is a pure delight.				
	This brand is a wonderful brand.				
	This brand is totally awesome.				
	This brand makes me feel good.				
Dimension 2	The brand offers best smartphones.	4	17.17	Innovative Brand	0.801
	The brand offers futuristic products.				
	The brand offers ground breaking technology.				
	The brand offers innovative products.				
Dimension 3	The brand offers products for business use	2	13.54	Distinct Brand	0.651
	The brand offers products for young people				
Dimension 4	The brand caters to needs of one and all	3	11.25	Reasonable Brand	0.646
	The brand offers colorful products				
	The products offered by this brand are affordable				
Dimension 5	I have no particular feelings about this brand. (-ve loading) The brand often surprises me	2	8.68	Incredible Brand	0.57

Table 5- Rotated Component Matrix.

	Component				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
This is the only brand of smartphones that I will buy.	0.167	**0.694**	0.276	0.011	0.284
When I go shopping, I don't even notice other smartphone brands.	0.172	**0.755**	0.214	0.209	0.268
If the store does not have this brand, I'll postpone buying or go to another store.	0.107	**0.874**	0.104	-0.053	-0.002
I'll 'do without' rather than buy another brand.	-0.043	**0.832**	0.003	0.229	-0.109
If this brand is not available, it irritates me to buy another brand instead.	0.111	0.19	-0.036	**0.811**	0.235
This brand symbolizes the kind of person I really am inside.	**0.641**	0.213	0.243	0.479	-0.016
This brand reflects my personality	**0.631**	0.256	0.223	0.529	0.052
This brand is an extension of my inner self.	**0.817**	0.147	0.167	0.264	-0.09
This brand mirrors the real me.	**0.813**	0.026	0.04	0.311	0.055
This brand contributes to my image.	**0.857**	0.03	-0.019	0.036	-0.092
This brand adds to a social 'role' I play.	**0.835**	-0.013	0.065	0.154	0.098
This brand has a positive impact on what others think of me.	**0.779**	0.069	0.008	-0.321	0.098
This brand improves the way society views me.	**0.735**	0.12	0.007	-0.328	0.245
This brand does not disappoint me ever.	0.099	0.027	0.124	0.248	**0.86**
In the event of failure from the brand, I think I will forgive it because I feel everyone can make mistakes	-0.077	0.176	**0.535**	0.034	0.193
I have never been disappointed by this brand	-0.013	0.238	0.447	-0.044	**0.717**
I have recommended this brand to lots of people.	0.16	0.151	**0.875**	-0.176	0.021
I 'talk up' this brand to my friends.	0.2	0.046	**0.788**	0.272	0.173

Note: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

4.2. Brand Engagement

The result of exploratory factor analysis is acceptable as the KMO measure of sampling adequacy is 0.585 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity value suggests that the items in the scale are inter-related. The result of factor analysis conducted for the 3 brand engagement related items suggests that the data can be reduced to one factor which has Eigen value greater than 1 and explains 60 percent variance in the data. The engagement of the smartphone users with the brands loved is explained by the three items in the scale and the factor is labelled as 'Rendezvous'. The items are - Following Brand News, Visiting Brands Website and buying merchandise with the brand name. The value of Cronbach's Alpha (0.636) suggests that the scale is reliable.

4.3. Attitude and Likely Behaviour

The KMO measure of sampling adequacy is 0.824 which is greater than 0.5 suggesting acceptability of the results of factor analysis. The result of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity suggests that the items in the scale are inter-related. The 18 items regarding attitude and likely behaviour towards brands loved were reduced to 5 factors which had Eigen values greater than 1 and they together explained 74 percent variance in the data. The factor loading of all the 18 items was more than 0.5 for the five factors and hence no items were dropped. Table 5 and Table 6 specify the five factors and the items included in each.

The relative attitude and likely behaviour of smartphone users towards brands loved is best described as 'Self-Brand Congruence'; 'Passionate Buyer; 'Brand Loyalty'; 'Staunch Buyer' and 'Euphoric Buyer'. The reliability of each of these dimensions/ factors is suitable (more than 0.6). The dimension 4 labelled as 'Staunch Buyer' has only one item and hence reliability could not be calculated for the same. Based on the assessment of the likely outcomes of brand love, the conceptual model is revised to accommodate the dimensions of brand image, brand engagement and attitude and likely behaviour of smartphone customers. The brand image is described by five dimensions, brand engagement by one dimension and attitude and likely behaviour by five dimensions based on the results of exploratory factor analysis.

Table 6- Dimensions Explaining Relative Attitude and Likely Behaviour towards Brands Loved.

Dimensions	Items Included	Number of Items	Percentage Variance Explained	Suggested Name	Cronbach's Alpha
Dimension 1	This brand symbolizes the kind of person I really am inside.	8	27.11	Self-Brand Congruence	0.915
	This brand reflects my personality				
	This brand is an extension of my inner self.				
	This brand mirrors the real me.				
	This brand contributes to my image.				
	This brand adds to a social 'role' I play.				
	This brand has a positive impact on what others think of me.				
	This brand improves the way society views me.				
Dimension 2	This is the only brand of smartphones that I will buy.	4	15.62	Passionate Buyer	0.843
	When I go shopping, I don't even notice other smartphone brands.				
	If the store does not have this brand, I'll postpone buying or go to another store.				
	I'll 'do without' rather than buy another brand.				
Dimension 3	In the event of failure from the brand, I think I will forgive it because I feel everyone can make mistakes.	3	12.04	Brand Loyalty	0.653
	I 'talk up' this brand to my friends.				
	I have recommended this brand to lots of people.				
Dimension 4	If this brand is not available, it irritates me to buy another brand instead.	1	10.20	Staunch Buyer	NA
Dimension 5	This brand does not disappoint me ever.	2	9.12	Delighted Buyer	0.717
	I have never been disappointed by this brand				

The revised conceptual model is presented in Figure 6. The same can be tested using techniques like Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). However, it was not possible to undertake the required analysis in the present work because data was not captured accordingly. This presents scope for future research in this domain.

4.4. Comparison of Smartphone Brands

Table 7 compares the smartphone brands loved vis-à-vis smartphone brands owned by the respondents. Of the total respondents expressing their love for Apple, the majority owned Samsung and BlackBerry. This may be attributed to the price of the product because the respondents are students who may be unable to buy high priced products. One-third of those who loved BlackBerry also owned the brand followed by ownership of Samsung, Nokia and Sony. The brand ownership and expressed brand love for Samsung is the highest with almost half of those expressing love the brand also owning it. This is aligned with Samsung being the market leader in the smartphone category in India. Perhaps the right price of the product for the targeted group is the reason for the success of the brand in the Indian market.

Table 7- Comparison between Brands Loved and Brands Owned.

		Apple	Black Berry	Google Nexus	HTC	LG	Micro max	Nokia	Samsung	Sony	Others	Total
					Brand Owned-Smartphones							
Smartphones - Brand Loved	Apple	10	9		1		2	4	12	2		40
	Blackberry		13		2	1	4	6	9	5		40
	Samsung	1	5	1	1	3	3	5	18	1	2	40
	Others	1	4			1	7	12	6	8	1	40
	Total	12	31	1	4	5	16	27	45	16	3	160

The brands were subsequently compared on the different dimensions related to brand image, brand engagement and attitude and likely behaviour of smartphone users towards the brands loved using ANOVA (Analysis of Variance). The results of ANOVA are presented in Table 8. The dimensions which cannot be used to differentiate among the brands are highlighted. There was a significant different between the smartphone brands on the following dimensions - Ideal Brand, Innovative Brand, Incredible Brand (related to Brand Image), Rendezvous (related to Brand engagement) and Passionate Buyer, Brand Loyalty and Delighted Buyer (related to the attitude and likely behaviour towards the brand loved) at the $p<.05$ level. Figure 7 (based on mean scores on each dimension for brands loved) presents the differences in smartphone brands as perceived by the users. These differences are on the dimensions for which the difference among the brands is significant (based on the results of ANOVA, refer to Table 8). Apple is perceived to be better than both BlackBerry and Samsung on all dimensions.

Table 8- Difference between Smartphone Brands.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	ANOVA					
Ideal Brand	Between Groups	5.546	3	1.849	4.900	.003
	Within Groups	58.854	156	.377		
	Total	64.400	159			
Innovative Brand	Between Groups	6.903	3	2.301	6.557	.000
	Within Groups	54.747	156	.351		
	Total	61.650	159			
Distinct Brand	Between Groups	2.931	3	.977	1.636	.183
	Within Groups	93.163	156	.597		
	Total	96.094	159			
Reasonable Brand	Between Groups	.680	3	.227	.385	.764
	Within Groups	91.736	156	.588		
	Total	92.416	159			
Incredible Brand	Between Groups	1.255	3	.418	1.701	.169
	Within Groups	38.356	156	.246		
	Total	39.611	159			
Rendezvous	Between Groups	16.672	3	5.557	11.593	.000
	Within Groups	74.783	156	.479		
	Total	91.456	159			
Self-Brand Congruence	Between Groups	1.893	3	.631	1.767	.156
	Within Groups	55.712	156	.357		
	Total	57.605	159			
Passionate Buyer	Between Groups	17.959	3	5.986	9.662	.000
	Within Groups	96.659	156	.620		
	Total	114.619	159			
Brand Loyalty	Between Groups	7.941	3	2.647	6.039	.001
	Within Groups	68.375	156	.438		
	Total	76.316	159			
Staunch Buyer	Between Groups	3.275	3	1.092	1.123	.342
	Within Groups	151.700	156	.972		
	Total	154.975	159			
Delighted Buyer	Between Groups	8.850	3	2.950	5.227	.002
	Within Groups	88.050	156	.564		
	Total	96.900	159			

When descriptives are analysed, it is observed that Apple scores better than Samsung and BlackBerry on all statements especially the ones related to likely behaviour as expressed by Apple lovers. Among BlackBerry and Samsung, the expressed love and loyalty for Samsung is the least. Though Samsung has been able to garner market share across the globe, they have not been able to develop customer loyalty as well as affection towards the

brand. This is not a very healthy sign for Samsung as Samsung users may change loyalties.

Based on the results presented in sections - 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4, it may be concluded that customers love for specific brand leads to positive outcomes for the brand leading to positively perceived image, higher engagement with the brand and also greater loyalty for the brand. Further, perceived brand love of customers for different brands of smartphones leads to differences in customers' responses to the brands actions. These results help in proving hypotheses H_1, H_2, H_3 and H_4.
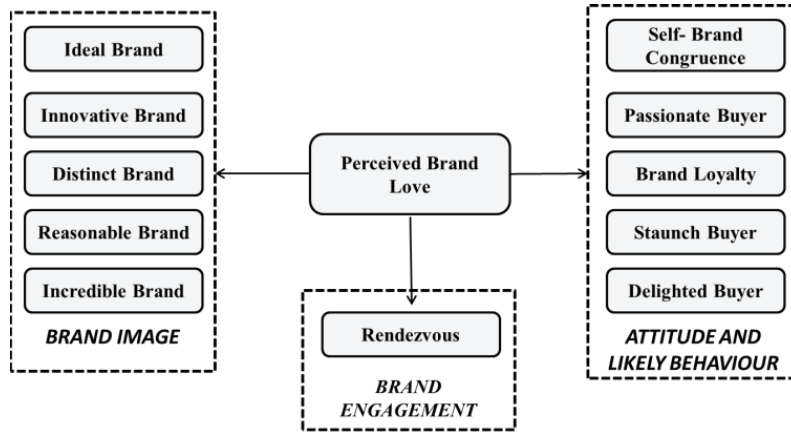
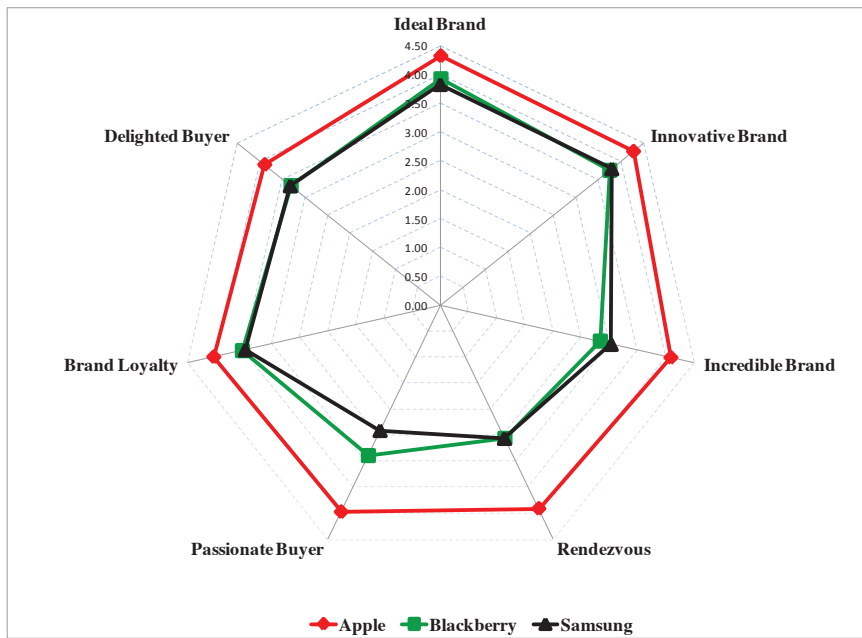

Fig. 6- Outcomes of Brand Love – Revised Model.

Fig. 7- Differences between Smartphone Brands.

5. Managerial implications

India is a potential growth market for smartphone companies as it has the key ingredients including young consumers, the presence of leading brands and huge population coupled with increased disposable income. The people in the age group of 18 to 29 years constitute the millennials and they are predisposed towards using sophisticated technology based products. The results helped us to gauge the perception of smartphone users towards the brands that they loved. The overall brand image of smartphones as perceived by the consumers is described by dimensions named – 'Ideal Brand'; 'Innovative Brand'; 'Distinct Brand'; 'Reasonable Brand' and 'Incredible Brand'. The customers are engaged with the brand if they have regular interaction (rendezvous) with the brand in the form of following news, visiting websites as well as buying merchandise. Finally, based on the image perception and regular interaction, the attitude and likely behaviour of the consumers towards smartphone brands may be categorized as - 'Self-Brand Congruence';

'Passionate Buyer; 'Brand Loyalty'; 'Staunch Buyer' and 'Euphoric Buyer'. When the leading brands of smartphones in Indian market i.e. Apple, Samsung and BlackBerry are compared, it is felt that the smartphone users who expressed love for the brand Apple are most resilient and have stronger affection towards the brand than those who expressed love for BlackBerry as well as Samsung. This is largely because of the brand identity created by the organization has resulted in creating a strong brand image of the brand which also helps the company to position the brand well. Though Samsung has been quick in gaining market share globally as well as in India, it has not been able to become customers' 'sweetheart'. The expressed attitude as well as likely behaviour of consumers who seem to love the brand does not depict long term affinity for the brand. The brand managers at Samsung need to strategize and manage customers' loyalty towards their brand. BlackBerry is still largely perceived as the brand for business use but the customers feel affection towards the brand. The study brings forth strong recommendations for marketers of these brands to manage customers perceived brand image and engagement and in turn impact customers' love towards their brands.

6. Limitations and suggestions for future research

Like other research studies, this research has some limitations, the major one being that the research was conducted in only one part of India, which is a vast and heterogeneous country. As brand love is a relatively new construct, clarity is still needed on scale items that constitute brand love. The target segment selected was millennials, but the perceptions about brand image, engagement as well as customer attitude and behaviour may vary when other customer segments are included. The functional as well as hedonic characteristics that influence consumers attitude towards brand loved may also be included in studies by other researchers. In the present study, the aspect of willingness to buy has been emphasized but the ability to buy aspect has been ignored, which can be taken up by other researchers. Customers' willingness to pay higher price for the brand loved can also be studied. This phenomenon is of utmost relevance these days because of the changing macro-economic scenario. Continuous research in this domain should be done, to understand consumer buying behaviour and preferences. This will help strengthen brand loyalty and affinity among Indian consumers.

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