

## Self-Brand Connection: A Literature Review and Directions for Further Research

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### Abstract

Various studies have been conducted to investigate self-brand connections in influencing consumers to form brand associations. The authors organized and synthesized the literature on self-brand connections to analyze 20 published articles in the last 25 years over-identification of similarities, inconsistencies, investigation of different conceptualizations of self-brand connections, boundary conditions of self-brand connections on brand associations, psychological mechanisms of self-brand connections, theoretical foundations of self-brand connections, and methodological approaches of self-brand connections used in prior literature. The objective of this study is to outline avenues for opportunities in future research based on previous research.

## Koneksi Self-Brand: Tinjauan Literatur dan Saran untuk Penelitian Lebih Lanjut

### Abstrak

Berbagai penelitian telah dilakukan untuk menyelidiki koneksi self-brand dalam mempengaruhi konsumen untuk membentuk asosiasi merek. Para penulis mengorganisir dan mensintesis literatur tentang koneksi self-brand dengan menganalisis 20 artikel yang diterbitkan dalam 25 tahun terakhir mengidentifikasi kesamaan, inkonsistensi, investigasi konseptualisasi yang berbeda dari koneksi self-brand, kondisi batas koneksi self-brand pada asosiasi merek, mekanisme psikologis koneksi self-brand, landasan teoritis koneksi self-brand, dan pendekatan metodologis koneksi self-brand yang digunakan dalam literatur. Penelitian ini menguraikan jalan untuk penelitian lebih lanjut berdasarkan penelitian sebelumnya.

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## INTRODUCTION

Branding becomes a crucial activity to develop an emotional bond with customers brand helps consumers ensure their first choice when buying the product (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Nowadays, the competition in the market is harder as the world becomes more borderless and to stay exist in the competition firms need to repair and build sustainable bonds to generate brand-based emotional bonds with consumers. The competition between brands becomes even more vital to induce the everlasting cognitive and emotional bonds between customers and brands (Gronroos, 1995).

The management of branding refers to an approach to change consumers' attitudes toward the brand (Fournier & Alvarez 2013) to a more attached, connected to, or in favorable attitude with the brand (Malar et al., 2011). However, it's not always the implication that marketers are preoccupied to create kinds of relationships that consumers may not want (Connors, 2021).

Relationships of a brand and consumers are formed by a similar background of narratives from experiences, orders, events, points of view, and evaluations (Bruner, 1986, 1990). Narratives are parts of life that gather together that could explain goals, evaluate actions in pursuing the goal, and interpret outcomes (Pennington & Hastie, 1986).

Consumers interpret a based on the narrative he built that incorporates the brand by memories of stories stored in memory called narrative processing maps (Shank & Abelson, 1995). Stories encompass values, actionable thought, and results, and the memory of stories tends to be the connection of self. Marketing use stories in the advertisement may use background stories between brand and customers able to be founded. Consumers have a desire to define and express themselves through the consumption they do. The brand connection is the result of the consumer's self-concept which is linked to the brand (Escalas & Bettman, 2003) resulting in the subjectivity of the personal relationship between consumer and brand.

Self-brand connection is the degree to which consumers incorporate the brand into their self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2003) the variation of degrees might occur between brand and consumer relationships (Fournier, 1998). In general, choosing a product from a particular brand might represent the desired self-image consumers wanted to present to others or even to themselves (Escalas, 2004). Psychological values and symboling meaning of themselves use to satisfy their fundamental psychic needs (Fournier, 1998; Escalas & Bettman, 2003) Psychological needs can be fulfilled by developing a self-concept, nourishing and expressing self-identity, and social needs by connecting themselves with significant others.

Research on self-brand connections has grown over the last 25 years since Escalas (1996) introduced the concept of self-brand connections and became a fundamental review of the literature about self-brand connections also what is still to be discovered. To the best of our knowledge, the development of prior literature on self-brand connections has evolved in the last decades using various antecedents and different contexts. After 25 years—and much-published research on the topic—this paper is a review of prior literature that is timely and necessary this literature review proposes two research questions: (1) What is the conceptualization of self-brand connections? (2) What mechanisms examine the effect of self-brand connection on brand associations? This literature review allows examining the aspects and proposing a beneficial perspective on how future research might best advance each one.

This study tries to contribute in three venues to the field of self-brand connections. The first, is an in-depth and comprehensive review of self-brand connections, by covering 20 selected articles of self-brand connections. Second, we emphasize the consensus on the topic that become more crucial even though so far has been neglected: the notion of consistent self-brand connections, boundary conditions for the effect of self-brand connections, alternative pathways for self-brand connections to form the associa-

tion of brand, a theoretical foundation capable of explaining to consumers' cognitive perceptions of perceived self-brand connections, and additional methodological approaches beyond traditional survey methods. Third, we outline future research directions guided by current global trends such as increased cultural variations across the globe and brand communities.

## METHOD

This literature review uses a review of evidence-based questions that have been composed manually to identify, select, extract the essence and analyze the data obtained from the study included in the literature review.

The resources of relevant studies from three databases: Emerald Insight, Sage Journals, and Elsevier answer our two research questions using a wide variety of published article keywords. Keyword searches included the term self-brand connection include studies related to self-concept, brand relationship, and consumer engagement. While we search the database there is no publication time frame. The search results in 20 relevant articles. Articles and reference lists are read and then identified to minimize studies that may be scattered so that research searches can focus on self-brand connections.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Findings and Directions for Further Research

In this part, there are two proposed research questions will be arranged. Each of the research questions aims to analyze breaches and inconsistencies from the prior literature and formulate appropriate views for future research on a self-brand connection on a thematic map which adorned the identification results based on concrete suggestions from previous studies to the benefit of forthcoming studies.

### How is Self-Brand Connections Conceptualized?

Escalas & Bettman (2000) conceptualize self-brand connections as the extent to which individuals have incorporated brands into their

self-concepts. The presence of products and brands helps to create meaningful self-identity either to represent self-image to oneself and others. Brands become a source of personal achievement that can distinguish themselves through individuals in life transitions (Escalas, 2004). Brand attachment is encouraged when brands overlap consumer traits (Escalas & Bettman, 2005) or similar characteristics (Swaminathan et al., 2007). Consumer personality interacts with brand personality because of the available means of self-expression (Sirgy et al., 1991; Fournier, 1998).

When there is a narrative that is easy to relate to consumers, consumers do not evaluate the brand better still consumers have a higher incentive to create a purchase (Escalas, 2004; Ren et al., 2012). Consumers will commit to a brand that can establish or match similar desired self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Escalas, 2004). The similarity of values and characteristics are more likely associated with themselves (Fournier, 1998) through developing a secure connection between brands that represent similarly, desired, and verified identity (Escalas & Bettman 2005; Ahuvia 2014).

A person can go through the process of selecting a suitable brand before finally finding a brand that fits their self-image (Hankinson, 2004). Huffman et al., (2003) refer to this process as the bridge between the brand and the self. Conceding that consumers who seek to maintain positive opinions and try to behave more consistently concerning brands to try, buy or rent products are show consumers with high self-brand connections Ferraro et al., (2013).

When brands generate strong and beneficial associations by fulfilling psychological needs formed a self-brand to build identity and facilitate individuals to connect with others (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988).

Brands help consumers to understand themselves more to display and express themselves (Swaminathan et al., 2007; Schmitt, 2012) perform as the 'Self' to other individuals (Kirmani, 2009; Schmitt, 2012). Products and brands consumers choose infer to their

**Table 1.** Future Research Directions

How is Self-Brand Connections Conceptualized?		Future Research Directions Consistent Conceptualization	
Self-Brand Connections	The degree of how individuals have integrated the brand into their self-concept (e.g., Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Escalas, 2004) Brand is the fulfillment of psychological needs with oneself and to connect with others (e.g., Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988; Escalas, 2004). Individuals can use brands to figure out, present, and declare themselves (e.g., Swaminathan et al., 2007; Schmitt, 2012). Self-brand connections as a cognitive mechanism of behavior (e.g., Harrigan et al., 2017; Lin et al., 2017).	Self-Brand Connections	Continue to use the concept of integrating the relationship of brand and consumer's self-concept. The use of narrative as a connecting tool used by consumers to evaluate brands and choose brands that match the consumer's self-image. Future research can clarify the conceptualization of self-brand connections as involvement in cognitive and affective concepts in a person.
<b>Modelling of Self-Brand Connections Research</b> <b>What are the boundary conditions/mechanism/theoretical foundations in Self-Brand Connections Literature?</b>		<b>Modelling of Self-Brand Connections Research</b> <b>What are the boundary conditions/mechanism/theoretical foundations in Self-Brand Connections Literature?</b>	
Boundary conditions	Self-brand connections only occur when aspects are interconnected relationship of brand and consumers (Escalas, 2004).	Boundary conditions	In addition to being closely related to self-concept, consumers' psychological and psychosocial benefits can be obtained by brand communities. However, the community does not always give positive results on self-brand connections. A more in-depth analysis of the brand community is needed to be able to identify the community.
Main Mechanisms	The main mechanism of self-brand connections, based on the existence of ideal self as the source of brand associations to represent and build consumer's self-concept.	Main mechanisms	Utilizing the existence of social groups, the mechanism in future studies for self-brand connections can be achieved by understanding the cultural concepts behind the group and even the nations' culture (e.g., collectivist and individualist).
Theoretical foundations	Most research relies on cognitive-based theory (e.g., social identity theory, social exchange theory, and self-verification theory).	Theoretical foundations	Further research can consider the use of other more affective-based alternative theories (e.g., attachment theory, possession, and self-esteem motive).
<b>What are the methodological approaches used in self-brand connections studies?</b>		<b>Using experimental and qualitative methods/involving young respondents/carrying out cross-cultural research</b>	
Methodological	As much as 70% of the studies in the literature review were carried out using questionnaires in data collection, while no studies were using qualitative methods. There is still very little diversity in the method of collecting sample data. There is still little research done on various ages and professions. Most use student recruitment. Cross-cultural research requires more attention to accept idea of social relationship in larger base such as community which can vary depending on the cultural background.	Methodological	Future studies would be interesting if using qualitative methods, meta-analysis and other experimental approaches in order to provide further detailed insights into self-brand connections research. In addition, research must include consumers of various ages to beneficial of self-brand connections at each age stratum. Finally, by inputting more cross-cultural context to ensure the generalizability of study findings, especially cultural differences between countries.

self-concept and identity through the process of self-perception, concerning the chosen products with whom they choose to display their identity features (Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007; Schmitt, 2012).

According to Harrigan et al., (2017), this idea relates to the cognitive dimension of consumer brand engagement (CBE). As research conducted by Lin et al., (2017) on green brands, when a green brand goes along with environmentally friendly claims, it provides beneficial ways of how consumers reflect their environmentalist self through purchasing green products. Indicated occurs when consumers have associated themselves with brands that successfully implement value to meet their goals.

A new mechanism in the research of Moliner et al., (2018), by linking self-brand connections as a self-congruity mechanism through the unification of consumer identity and brand image (Aguirre Rodriguez et al., 2012). The combination of the two fulfills the psychological side of consumers through strengthening self-identity, self-confidence, and individuality (Roy & Rabbane, 2015). In addition, stronger self-alignment can lead to positive evaluations (Sirgy, 1982; Grohmann, 2009) – but the construct itself SBC antecedents by the community?

The connections between self-concept and brand are very crucial to increased satis-

faction and result in stronger brand attachment to the brand (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). As already certain it is happening because self-brand connections contributed to the advancement of communal assimilation and belongingness to a community to represent the amalgamation of identities with similar others (Goldstein et al., 2008; Schmitt, 2012; Simon et al., 2016) constructing self-brand connection as a crucial role to fulfill basic social needs (Roy & Rabbane, 2015). After basic needs are fulfilled, consumers are likely to form and maintain loyalty to a specific brand.

Understanding the relationship between brands and consumers is very important to maintain positive relationships which leads to loyalty such as repetition to buy and spreading positive information (WOM positive). Also, consumers are willing to pay a high price when the relationship is stable and positive (Albert et al., 2013). Brands that futile to maintain a long-term relationship with customers tend to lose in the competition of brands.

In the beginning, we have the same thought with the previous argument and suggest a clear conceptualization of self-brand connections as a cognitive and affective concept in a person. In the Emotional Brand Attachment construct (Park et al., 2006), as a conceptual framework of closeness between cognitive and

affective forms rooted in the consumer's mindset self-brand connections are states of a cognitive mechanism that connects brand meaning to consumer concepts Palazon (2018).

Ren et al., (2012) stated that self-brand connections are strongly connected with consumer involvement in brands because of cognitive processes, as well as their effect on higher purchase intentions. Bowden, 2020 uses the SBC as an antecedent of cognitive, affective, behavioral, and social engagement. Cognitive engagement occurs because consumers can more easily remember the central part of the brand narrative and relate them to cognitive schemas through brand-related thinking, clarification, and amplification (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Naumann et al., 2020). Meanwhile, brand self-connections as an antecedent of affective engagement are shown through effective engagement reflecting consumers' levels of positive brand-related relationships, emotions (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Bowden et al., 2017) such as enthusiasms dedication, passion, and positive affective engagement has been closely associated with favorable evaluation (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Naumann et al., 2020).

In Oliver's (1999), framework on the brand loyalty framework, the attitudes are shown by consumers starting from cognitive, affective, to conative meanings. At the cognitive stage, loyalty is based on liking a brand over other alternatives on the level of product attribute performance. This process is through processing information by forming the material of patterns from conscious thought and rational information. It will have a close effect on the second stage component, namely affection, in this stage cognitive will be involved with affection such as brand love. The combination of the cognitive and affective stage will create a more relevant decision component because if consumers only use the context of brand love to decide on product purchases, it will lead to unconscious decisions (Batra et al., 2012).

Therefore, future research that chooses to study self-brand connections needs to clarify and strengthen the construct of self-brand con-

nections as a cognitive and affective mechanism that accurately and explicitly measures aspects of consumer and brand linkage. It is possible to do with adapting the research conducted by Bowden et al., (2020).

### **Disentangling SBC from Related Constructs**

The literature on studies on self-brand connections uses self-concept, Customer Brand Relationship (CBR), Customer Brand Engagement (CBE), and Brand Engagement Self-Concept (BESC). An overview of the similarities or differences terms is required. Studies of self-brand connections build on the classic work of Escalas & Bettman (2003) on how brands help consumers construct self-identity to comprehend themselves and affirm their self-concept (Ball & Tasaki, 1992; Belk, 1988; Fournier, 1998; Richins, 1998).

Escalas & Bettman (2003) explain how a person can be stimulated to form a good and long-term self-identity. The idea of what he wants and the fear of the opposite both are motivations for someone to realize his goals (Markus, 1977). The steps that can be taken are to avert behaviors and situations which produce a contrary to the self-concept that they have or want to achieve. Similar to someone who considers himself and has a self-concept as an environmentalist, he will choose a brand that he believed to maintain his self-concept as an environmentalist.

However, Escalas & Bettman (2003) focus on developing a relationship between one's self and the brand with an existence of a reference group or community. A reference group is an important social group for a person to assess himself. When someone is a Where a member, the group is the reference group, but a person can have the reference group he aspires to which is called the aspiration group. The environment and strong social ties among the reference group with consumer's self-concept will build a scene in which consumers try to adjust the user's image and association of psychological benefits provided by the brand to contingently on the type of referential group in constructing and presenting their identity.

The level of connectivity of brand self-connections as the degree of how a brand is a symbol of the user will be fundamentally different from the concept of Brand Engagement with Self-Concept (BESC), this is because BESC focuses more on the tendency that consumers have in using a favorite brand in building self-concept. The connectivity of relationships that consumers build with brands. In the same study by Westhuizen (2016), it was found that self-congruity is similar with the alignment among consumer's self-concept and brand image (Sirgy, 1982) or alignment relevant identity of the brand (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Brand self-connections as the connection of self-concept that certain consumers have with certain brands.

Connors et al. (2021) use proof of brand-consumer relationship as a core concept of Customer Brand Relationship (CBR) by reflecting on the degree to which a brand overlaps with consumers, namely the degree of phrasing 'brand are me and I am the brand' (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017). CBR is a testament to the brand-consumer relationship through brand identification, commitment, brand attachment, and brand love. CBR also uses the psychological distance between an object and a person. However, CBR has not demonstrated how brands and consumers are connected in contrast to the concept of self-brand connections which focuses on how consumers are connected to brands.

In addition, Harrigan (2017) in his research uses Consumer Brand Engagement (CBE) to explain how consumers use the social status of the community. CBE involves a social exchange mechanism by using access to information relevant to the interests of consumers (Blau, 1917). Harrigan (2017) used CBE as an extant research component in the work of Hollebeek et al., 2014 by examining the CBE relationship on self-brand connections. Both CBE and self-brand connections focus on cognitive activities, while CBE also focuses on emotional activities and behavioral interactions between consumers and brands. Hollebeek (2014) found that the affective and behavioral aspects of CBE did con-

sistently influence brand loyalty, but the cognitive aspects of CBE created mixed effects on brand loyalty (Shin, 2020).

We propose for future studies, cases like this one show the way engagement especially cognitive engagement may not connect directly to brand loyalty but require boosting other component measures such as cognitive, affective, and conative. The study conducted by Harrigan (2017) requires further understanding and study to use other aspects of self-brand connections such as that conducted by Hemsley-Brown & Alnawas (2016) with the Emotional Brand Attachment (EBA) constructed to understand more deeply how self-brand connections are antecedents to cognitive, affective, behavioral, and social engagement in Bowden's (2020) study. Through the development, approach, and a more comprehensive understanding, it can provide benefits to support the construct of self-brand connections related to the antecedents as well as the effect that self-brand connections have on the study of consumer behavior.

### **Boundary Conditions**

Self-brand connections only occur when there is a related feature among the self and the brand (Escalas, 2004). The self aspect is the most prominent and is allegedly a working self-concept (Markus, 1977). As in perfume selection, for example, Victoria's Secret can be associated with the sensuality aspect of someone, while The Body Shop can be aligned with environmentally-friendly features of a person. If the eco-friendly features are higher than the sensuality aspect, then the connection to The Body Shop will result in a stronger connection. Thus, the focus on a particular brand connection depends on which brand is most dependent on the set of associations captured by the self-construction of consumers (Escalas & Bettman, 2003).

The associations of a brand are represented by three main constructs, namely the attitude that consumers have towards the brand, the quality that consumers feel about the brand, and the uniqueness shown by the brand

(Kemp et al., 2012) both in terms of benefits and psychologically. There are several reports of inconsistent findings relating to consumers' perceived loyalty to brands, such as the findings of several researchers who think loyalty and positive word of mouth are affected directly by how customers perceive value (Chen, 2013), others authors find there are mediators of this relationship such brand satisfaction and trust (Hur et al., 2013). A mediator mediates the indirect connections among usefulness and loyalty by using self-brand connections as a moderator variable. Lin et al., (2017's) research on green perceived value show a significant effect by adding self-brand connections as a mediator.

Perceptions held by consumers will be formed based on related brand marketing activities assorted previous studies focus while examining various actions in developing an image of the brand, one of which is consumer self-concept. Moon et al., (2015) conducted comprehensive research associating CSR with social self-concept in consumers. The result tells how consumers connect themselves with society through self-brand connections are positively and significantly related to favorable actions for the company (Swanimathan et al., 2007; Moon et al., 2015).

In the luxury brand category, self-brand connections are fashioned when consumers are not concerned with price and tend to oppose buying counterfeit goods (Randhawa et al., 2015) nevertheless, consumers who believe in originality will see counterfeited luxury brand purchases not only as an act of disloyalty to the brand but also as a stain that tarnishes their self-concept.

Palazon et al., (2018) showed that self-connections and reference groups are bound to foster brand love, with self-brand connections playing a mediating role among reference groups and brand love. However, the consequence of the group will depend on the brand self-relationship if the values, namely BESC, are every match in a person. In conclusion, if someone's BESC is soaring, the motivation formed is based on his relationship with the brand,

not only based on the community and its members of short as reasons for social integration the limiting factors are someone might have such as social interaction, obtaining hedonic benefits, information, and economic benefits through promotional offers.

We believe in further studies the goals set to determine members of a brand communities/reference group for further analyze how communities improve brand identification (Zhou et al., 2012) and community identification using concepts close to self-brand connections.

### **What Mechanism Explain the Self-Brand Connections Effects on Brand Association**

The self-brand connections literature tends to focus on the consumer. Similar to how the narrative idea proposed by Escalas (2004), which allows one to integrate personal experiences to connect with brand image. However, not all stories create or enhance self-brand connections. Determined by the ability of consumers to process narratives on consumers, so that future research can explore the tendency of consumers in order to create brand self-connections.

In addition, the principal mechanism of brand self-connections, often based on the existence of brand community as a vital source of associations of a brand to represent also build a concept of self Escalas & Bettman (2003). However, not only member groups, but he can also have a reference group that he aspires to, namely an aspiration group.

Although using the concept of self-mechanism of constructed brand self-connections, there is a question that remains whether this mechanism will always result in a positive level of self-brand connections? It will depend on the broad involvement one has with the brand or the role of the brand in the concept of consumers. There is a tendency of the schema associated with the brand (Spratt et al., 2009). In particular, Palazon et al., (2018) referred to it as BESC, affecting the existence of different motivations to join a group will affect the development of consumer relationships with brands. So he suggested that there should be further analy-

sis of the duration of membership in a group/community to see the reasons for participating and the consequences when joining the related community.

In addition, to be seen that there are several antecedents used in the study of self-brand connections, several studies: using physical conditions and the personality of the waitress (Hemsley-Brown & Alnawas, 2016); Consumer Brand Engagement (CBE) (Harrigan et al., 2017); brand behavior, perceived quality, and brand uniqueness (Kemp et al., 2012); green perceived value (Lin et al., 2017); team performance and fandom/sports fan community (Pan & Phua, 2020); marketing communications (Connors et al., 2021); and message construal (Donghoo et al., 2020).

In addition, considering other mechanisms can be used to acknowledge alternative variables in forming self-brand connections. Recent studies have used the cultural component that influences consumers' social relationships. Such as research conducted by Moon et al., (2015) which uses culture because of the association effect on self-brand connections through individual cultural values. The structure of culture might become complex, which describes the main values and possibly shows the attitudes of certain groups of people and provides the mental pattern through which the physical and social world is perceived (Hofstede, 2001; Moller & Eisend, 2010). In addition, several cultural aspects of consumer social relationships such as ethnocentrism (Salehi et al., 2020) and the country's social-cultural background (Donghoo et al., 2020) will provide diverse studies on self-brand connections.

### **The Theoretical Foundations Underlying SBC Studies?**

The first finding there are 20% (6) studies used social identity theory, a theory commonly used in SBC research, while 10% (3) articles each used social exchange theory, self-verification theory, and self-concept, 6, 6% (2) articles using customer engagement, self-expansion theory, and attachment theory. In

particular, social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, Henry & Turner 1986) states that most consumer behavior is elucidated from community influential interaction within individuals.

There are two components attached to social identity theory, individual and community components. Identity in social is a term used in an individual's concept derives from his knowledge in society (or group) along with effective significance which attach to the membership (Zeugner-Roth et al., 2015). Nevertheless, the role of identity is a guide to past behavior and predictions of future behavior (Stryker, 1980). Role identities are shaped by the existence of relational, demographic, and organizational networks. The implementation of specific roles can reflect the individual's relationship with the social structure of everyday life (Burke & Reitzes, 1981).

The theory of social identity shows the process of forming self-concept, individuals will consider social groups and society (Cross & Madson, 1997). Individuals will try to attach themselves to those who considered having similarities in preferences, characteristics, or shared values (Jacobson, 1979). Membership in a group will affect the formation of an identity that is developed by a person (Hogg & Abrams, 1990) through which consumer groups can maintain their identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

The time of attitudes held by in-group membership increase positively, attitudes directed at out-groups will become less favorable (Negy et al., 2003). The aforementioned is because several factors in society such as similar goals, shared values, and shared norms can crystallize into concepts of self in consumers to complete the perceptions and behavior (Triandis, 1989). Attachment to a brand is fostered (Moore et al., 2008) and symbolizes identity as a bridge with user groups, which is what will affect self-brand connection to a particular brand. As in the research conducted by Donghoo et al., (2020), one will consider the in-group as a reference group when building self-brand connec-



tions (Cross & Madson, 1997; Song et al., 2017; Tan et al., 2018). As Escalas & Bettman (2003) found, individuals appear to develop strong relationships with brands whose image is consistent with their social groups.

In addition, recent research has begun to investigate how brand self-connections are developed established on the community of brand in the studies by Palazon (2018) and Salehi (2020). Given that community is an important factor in shaping social identity, he stated that in addition to social identity theory, there is another root of brand community, namely the expansion of self-theory, (Aron & Aron, 1986). Self-expansion theory is the admiration of a person for a brand community, both between community members and the brand itself (self-brand connections) (Fournier, 1988; Reiman, 2009; Ahuvia, 2014). A brand community can function as a self-development process between community members and the brand itself, such as the love that radiates from the desire to develop (Reimann et al., 2012). Several studies are a crucial extension of the theoretical foundation for the literature. Most of the prior literature draws on theories (e.g., social exchange theory and self-verification theory) to consideration of consumer feedback to self-brand connections. Despite the contributions of existing research, this paradigm has not yet delved deeper into possession (Keller, 1993) in understanding how brands provide psychological benefits for distinguishing themselves and asserting their individual self (Ball & Tasaki, 1992; Richins, 1994; Belk, 1988; Fournier, 1998). In addition, ownership and brands can reflect one's relationship aforesaid as family, culture, and community (Reingen et al., 1984; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988). Brand express not only to oneself but also to build self-identity (McCracken, 1989) by the establishment of a connection to the brand.

For the development of further study able to consider the alternatives of several theories to can explain consumer affective as consumers feel as long as they tend to rely on what consumers think (cognitive) self-brand connections

actions themselves are a cognitive aspect. There are only a few studies that use necessary effective theories, such as attachment theory (Hemslley-Brown & Alnawas, 2016), possession (Escalas & Bettman, 2003), to self-esteem motive (Moliner, 2018). In addition, further research can also use the emotional brand attachment (EBA) construct, which is an approach to closeness for a brand to be vigorous in terms of cognitive and affective perceptions in the mindset of consumers (Park et al., 2006) also love for a brand (Kwon & Mattila, 2015).

### **The Methodological Approaches Used in SBC Literature?**

The literature review showing 70% (14) studies use questionnaires, 15% (3) studies use experiments, 10% (2) studies use mixed methods. Thus limited studies used experimental designs, but no studies used qualitative methods. Excessive reliance by applying survey designs with a cross-sectional approach may not be adequate in determining the causes of associations, and study on the brand may be influenced by self-concepts on brand connections. In addition, almost ten studies use recruitment on students or use students as research samples. In terms of research objectives, three studies use cross-country and cultural studies, such as a research collectivist and individualist societies using South Korea as a representative collectivist culture and the United States as an individualist culture in the research conducted by Donghoo et al., (2020).

Future studies should be trying different methods such as qualitative methods, meta-analyses to provide more oriented detailed insights into self-brand connections research. In particular, the previous literature more focuses on how self-brand connections affect brand associations (i.e., the outcome of self-brand connections), thus neglecting how consumers form self-brand connections. The quantitative method traditionally a standardized measure cannot provide detailed insight into this. On the other hand, using a qualitative approach is very severe to explore and uncover potential factors influencing the

problem (e.g., antecedents of self-brand connections) for example, culture in the consumer's social environment (Bowden et al., 2020).

Studies should also combine experimental methods and cross-sectional methods by survey with authentic brands to give more insight into whether self-concepts play a role in forming brand associations. In addition, research must include consumers of various ages in detail to reflect the benefits of self-brand connections at each age stratum. In the final, further studies should apply cross-cultural research to ensure the generalizability of different countries and cultures.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In this study, we suggest further studies to explicitly clarify the mechanism of self-brand connections and interpret the concept across different market ranges, contexts, and perceived cultural variations. Research on self-brand connections should focus more on perceptions of market reach that vary with the cultural symbolism of the community (i.e., brand community). In addition, research become more substantial because it provides other conditions on the effects of self-brand connections. Relevant variables in this context include the dimensions of national culture, attitudes of consumers' social relations with the brand community, and ethnocentrism. In addition, research may need to re-examine the goal of being a member of a brand community as a boundary condition of the implication of brand connection with consumers while still seeking to clarify mechanisms of brand self-connections concerning cognitive and affective engagement.

Another suggestion, in future study researchers, should investigate other alternative mechanisms that explain the implication of self on brand associations outside of community goals, due to changes in consumer behavior in recent years, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Research on self-brand connections might investigate alternative theories, such as attachment theory, self-esteem motive, and

emotional brand attachment. Decisively, regarding the methodological approach, research might consider using a qualitative approach to investigating the way consumers react to self-brand connection with the association of brands. The future study might apply different approaches such as experimental to provide better causality of self-brand connections on brand associations.

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