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Antecedents of brand hate in the fast food industry

Antecedentes del odio a la marca en la industria de comida rápida

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the concept of brand hate in detail which is the extreme negative emotion toward brands, by giving a comprehensive explanation concerning how brand hate evolves in consumers. More specifically, antecedents of brand hate are empirically assessed in this study.

Design/methodology/approach – This study used primary data from 250 fast food brand consumers in Pakistan. Multiple regression analysis in SPSS was used to test the hypotheses related to the antecedents of brand hate.

Findings – Results indicate that brand hate is instigated by five antecedents, which are negative past experience, symbolic incongruity, poor relationship quality, ideological incompatibility and rumor, with rumor being the biggest instigator.

Originality/value – Antecedents of brand hate are assessed theoretically and empirically in this study which helps in understanding the true form of brand hate. More specifically, poor relationship quality and rumor are presented as the antecedents of brand hate according to the recommendations of the theory of hate.

Keywords Brand management, Brand hate, Customer brand relationship

Paper type Research paper

Resumen

Propósito – El objetivo de este trabajo es explorar en detalle el concepto de odio a la marca, que es la emoción negativa extrema hacia las marcas, dando una explicación completa sobre cómo evoluciona el odio a la marca en los consumidores. Más específicamente, en este estudio se evalúan empíricamente los antecedentes de odio a la marca.

Diseño/metodología/enfoque – Este estudio utilizó datos primarios de 250 consumidores de marcas de comida rápida en Pakistán. El análisis de regresión múltiple en SPSS se utiliza para probar las hipótesis relacionadas con los antecedentes del odio a la marca.

Hallazgos – Los resultados indican que el odio a la marca viene motivado por cinco antecedentes que son una experiencia pasada negativa, la incongruencia simbólica, la mala calidad de la relación, la incompatibilidad ideológica y el rumor negativo, siendo el rumor el mayor antecedente.

Originalidad/valor – En este estudio se evalúan teórica y empíricamente los antecedentes del odio a la marca, lo que ayuda a comprender la verdadera forma de odio a la marca. Más específicamente, la mala calidad de la relación y el rumor se presentan como los antecedentes del odio a la marca de acuerdo con las recomendaciones de la teoría del odio.

Palabras clave – Odio a la marca, gestión de marca, relación con el cliente

Tipo de artículo – Trabajo de investigación

1. Introduction

In today's world, companies have started to realize the importance of their brands and consider them as their high-end assets (Keller, 2013). As the traditional marketing methods have changed, so has the relationship between brands and their consumers, which is more of a relationship-based interaction rather than transaction-based (Aaker *et al.*, 2004; Fournier, 1998; Fournier *et al.*, 2012). This relationship-based interaction with brands differs significantly in different consumers (Fournier, 1998; Alvarez and Fournier, 2016). Some consumers may have feelings of love for their brands while others might have feelings of hate for specific brands (Khan and Lee, 2014). The research related to negative emotions toward brands is insubstantial as stated by Romani *et al.* (2012) that "brand research has provided scant information on the negative emotional states that consumers experience in relation to brands." Fetscherin and Heinrich (2015) also expressed the same views and stated that "specifically extreme negative emotions or the "dark-side" of consumer brand relationships need further investigations."

It is quite a revelation that research related to negative relationships between brands and consumers is scant, as previous research in psychology (Briscoe *et al.*, 1967; Ito *et al.*, 1998) and consumer behavior (Banister and Hogg, 2004) shows that instead of remembering positive events people recall negative events more quickly and more often. Moreover, Baumeister *et al.* (2001) explained that if people encounter both positive and negative experiences of the same strength then it is more likely that people share the negative experience first or give negative reviews about the brand and may forget the positive experience. Looking from a business point of view, this negativity in consumer–brand relations can cause troubles for companies and their brands (Fournier and Alvarez, 2013; Kucuk, 2008; Krishnamurthy and Kucuk, 2009).

While recent studies related to negative relationships between brands and consumers have discussed various aspects, they have not used quantitative data in doing so, except Hegner *et al.* (2017) and Zarantonello *et al.* (2016), who discussed the extreme negative emotion known as brand hate. Kucuk (2016) also gave an in-depth conceptual explanation regarding brand hate and its determinants. Hegner *et al.* (2017), Kucuk (2016) and Zarantonello *et al.* (2016) are among the first researchers who investigated the concept of brand hate in detail and found certain factors that can instigate the feelings of hatred among consumers. But there is still a gap in the theory regarding the factors that can generate feeling of hatred and also the previous studies have put great emphasis on further investigation into this extreme negative emotion (cf. Fetscherin and Heinrich, 2014; Fournier and Alvarez, 2013; Park *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, from a business perspective, previous research on anti-brand websites reveals that there is a huge negative impact of brand haters on companies, resulting in heavy loss (Kucuk, 2008; Kucuk, 2014; Krishnamurthy and Kucuk, 2009).

This study follows the footsteps of Hegner *et al.* (2017) and Zarantonello *et al.* (2016) and contributes in explaining the concept of brand hate by empirically assessing the antecedents of brand hate. This study covers the limitations of the previous studies on brand hate where only three factors were discussed while there can be more factors that triggers brand hate. To deal effectively with brand hate, first, one must know each of the factors that influence brand hate and, therefore, this study explains and discusses the antecedents of brand hate in more depth. Antecedents of brand hate are discussed under the umbrella of a well-known theory, i.

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e. theory of hate (Sternberg, 2003). First we reviewed the existing literature in this regard and further, to accomplish our goals, we collected primary data from Pakistani consumers of fast food brands. In the end theoretical along with managerial implications are discussed.

2. Theoretical background

Theories of consumer resistance and anti-consumption show us the way brands are rejected by consumers for several reasons. Zavestoski (2002) defined anti-consumption as showing hostility, hatred or non-acceptance toward consumption. Anti-consumption can be related to various research topics such as consumer resistance (Fournier, 1998; Sheth, 1981), non-consumption (Stammerjohan and Webster, 2002), brand avoidance (Lee et al., 2009a), consumer cynicism (Odou and de Pechpeyrou, 2011) and consumer boycotts (Klein et al., 2004). In opposition to research on traditional consumer behavior, which focuses on why certain brands are consumed or preferred by the consumers, research on anti-consumption emphasizes on why certain brands are not consumed or rejected by the consumers (Lee et al., 2009b; Lee et al., 2009c).

Anti-consumption can be perceived as a movement against mass consumption of brands to achieve goals that are sometimes personal or sometimes societal (Iyer and Muncy, 2009). Therefore, anti-consumption helps consumers to reveal their emotions, feelings, identities and beliefs (Cherrier and Murray, 2007). Consumers having extreme anger, hostility and hatred are the once that move toward anti-consumption. Sternberg (2003) has explained these extreme negative emotions in detail and form the theory of hate which provides in-depth understanding of hate. Sternberg (2003) presented five declarations regarding the concept of hate: first is that hate and love are interconnected because generally the feelings of love can be converted quickly into feelings of hate and sometimes even the perceptions of one's actions can lead to hate. Second, hate does not mean inverse of love or lack of love. Because of the fact that hate has many sides, it cannot be wrong to say that hate and love can survive at the same time and sometimes only one exists. Third, just like love, hate has a triangular formation; both love and hate have three components which are almost the same with different directions, i.e. love components are intimacy, passion and commitment (Sternberg, 1986, 1988a, 1998b, 2006) while negation of intimacy, passion and commitment are known as hate components (Sternberg, 2003, 2005; Sternberg and Sternberg, 2008). The fourth declaration of the theory of hate explains that just like love, hate can be originated from the stories related to the targeted object. Sternberg (2003) argued that stories can generate feelings of love and hate and those stories then keep spreading. Fifth, hate is a predecessor of massacres, terrorism and genocide. So, the central point is that as love and hate are interrelated, it would be easy to understand one with the help of another.

Based on Sternberg's conceptualization of hate, we consider brand hate as a more negative and intense emotion than brand dislike, as suggested by Sternberg (2003), that hate between people, i.e. interpersonal or social hate, is also a conceptually and empirically distinct construct rather than only an intense form of disliking. According to the existing marketing and psychology literature, there are three determinants of hate, i.e. consumer's dissatisfaction related to the performance of product or service, incongruence between brand image and self-image and finally the unacceptance of organizational behavior related to moral corporate wrongdoings (Bryson et al., 2013; Hegner et al., 2017; Zarantonello et al., 2016). But this study contributes further in this regard and conceptualizes brand hate to be triggered by five antecedents rather than only three.

The two new antecedents, i.e. rumor and poor relationship quality, are added on the basis of strong recommendation of the theory of hate (Sternberg, 2003). The theory of hate claims that besides direct personal experiences, indirect non-personal experiences (e.g. rumors) can

also generate the feelings of hatred, which implies that rumors in marketplace can trigger brand hate among consumers of a brand. Furthermore, theory of hate claims that a poor quality of relationship leads to hatred between two parties. Also, according to the theory of consumer–brand relationship (Fournier, 1998), a good relationship quality leads to love and a bad relationship quality can destroy that love relationship between consumer and brands and further lead to hatred. Besides this theoretical discussion, let us have a look at brand hate in more detail from the perspective of research scholars in the field of psychology and marketing.

2.1 Brand hate

The previous literature in psychology shows that generally hate is considered in interpersonal relationships, while there is another perspective which is hatred toward objects and object hate is not like interpersonal hate. In view of Opotow (2005), majority of students link their hate more with an object instead of a person. There is scarce research on object hate in behavior theories, consumer psychology and general psychology (Kucuk, 2016). According to Fournier (1998) people see brands as humans and connect with them as their companions and show feelings and emotions toward their favorite brands which are characterized as human. By using the conceptualization of Sternberg (2003), Kucuk (2016) defined the concept of brand hate in three constructs, which are cold brand hate, cool brand hate and hot brand hate.

According to Kucuk (2016), cold brand hate is the early notion of brand hate which is not much severe, which is why it is considered the passive form of brand hate and conceptualized as the absence of relationship between brand and the consumer. Consumers just ignore the hated brand and leave it behind by considering it worthless (Kucuk, 2016). Cool brand hate is more than just avoiding the hated brand because the feelings are stronger, resulting in complete dislike, dissatisfaction and unhappiness given by the brand. According to Kucuk (2016), cool brand hate includes feelings of disgust which result in stronger emotions and sharper behaviors. Kucuk (2016) further explained hot brand hate as the severe anger and anxiety feelings toward the target brand. Hot brand hate occurs when one feels frustration and helplessness after experiencing some failure from the brand (Kucuk, 2016). The same happens when there is an utmost service failure (Johnson et al., 2011; Gelbrich, 2010) and occasionally immoral acts by the firms or brands create these negative feelings in consumers who then want to hurt those brands (Sweetin et al., 2013). These are regarded as the antecedents of brand hate, which are explained in more detail in the next section.

3. Theoretical model

Research related to negative relationships between brands and their consumers focused originally on anti-consumption (Hogg, 1998; Iyer and Muncy, 2009; Cromie and Ewing, 2009) and boycott (Yuksel and Mryteza, 2009) while more recently shifting the focus specifically to brands such as brand rejection (Nenycz-Thiel and Romaniuk, 2011; Sandikci and Ekici, 2009), brand avoidance (Lee et al., 2009a), brand dislike (Romani et al., 2009), brand sabotage (Kähr et al., 2016), anti-branding (Romani et al., 2015) and brand hate (Hegner et al., 2017; Kucuk, 2016; Zarantonello et al., 2016; Krishnamurthy and Kucuk, 2009). A detailed overview of the literature regarding antecedents and outcomes of negative emotions and behaviors is presented in Appendix 1. Based on these studies and theoretical discussion, we have identified five antecedents of brand hate, namely, negative past experience, symbolic incongruity, poor relationship quality, ideological incompatibility and rumor. These five factors have been declared as the antecedents of brand hate according to the theory of hate

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(Sternberg, 2003), theory of consumer–brand relationship (Fournier, 1998) and previous studies on brand hate. There could be more antecedents which require further assessment of the theories in the field of marketing and psychology. Let us shed some light on the antecedents of brand hate.

3.1 Negative past experience

Negative past experience (NPE) refers to the bad experiences that consumers face from the products of a brand. Many factors can lead to these negative experiences such as product failures, dissatisfied offerings or other negative associations. Consumers have different reasons for purchasing different brands but mostly the expectations or preferable factor is the performance of the product or service (Lee *et al.*, 2009a). After using the products and services, expectations are compared with the actual performance and at this point consumers come to know their level of expectations being met (Halstead, 1989; Oliver, 1980). If the expectations are met during the consumption process then consumers become satisfied, but if expectations are not met then dissatisfaction prevails, resulting in a bad experience (Oliver, 1980). Negative past experience with a simple product is slightly different from a brand's product because in case of the brand, the consumers' attitudes will affect all other products that come under the same brand that gave them a bad experience, resulting in hateful emotions on a big scale.

Earlier Bryson *et al.* (2013) identified in his study of luxury brands that dissatisfaction is one of the causes from which brand hate develops. More recently Hegner *et al.* (2017) and Zarantonello *et al.* (2016) proved empirically that negative past experience has a positive effect on brand hate. Zarantonello *et al.* (2016) used the term "violation of expectation" while Hegner *et al.* (2017) used it as "negative past experience." In a study of brand avoidance by Lee *et al.* (2009a) respondents were asked about their negative experiences with the brands and results showed that brands that do not meet customer expectations face rejections and avoidance from customers; one respondent narrated his story regarding McDonalds: "I just remember the first time I tried McDonalds. It was probably in '93 when I arrived in New Zealand. I remember I expected more of it because it seemed such a cool thing but then it was really horrible when I tried. I was really surprised at the size of it, for my dad or for any bigger man it's like two bites, you can't really have a proper meal and it was tasteless." So, it is evident that if brands do not meet the desired expectations, then these failed experiences lead to hatred whether in a product context or service context. Hence, it is safe to say that among various factors, negative past experience is one of the motivators of brand hate.

H1. Negative past experience leads to brand hate.

3.2 Symbolic incongruity

When a brand does not truly represent itself in accordance with the consumers' image, the concept is called symbolic incongruity (SI). According to Khan and Lee (2014) customers purchase those brands that are identical with their image or meaningful in their daily lives. Zarantonello *et al.* (2016) in their study of brand hate identified symbolic incongruity as a predictor of brand hate, and they used the term "taste system" rather than "symbolic incongruity" in their study. More recently Hegner *et al.* (2017) also identified symbolic incongruity as an influencer of brand hate. Therefore, this congruence of images is important to build a good consumer–brand relationship; otherwise it can generate negative emotions and lead to brand hate.

The undesired self or the unwanted soul (Ogilvie, 1987) appears to be the most suitable psychological element in self-concept toward brand hate. As argued by Bhattacharya and Elsbach (2002), according to the disidentification theory, to create self-concepts, people try to disidentify themselves from the brand that has an undesired image which is inconsistent with their personality. Consumers also avoid particular products and brands because of the brand's representation of negative and unenthusiastic reference groups (Hogg, 1998; Englis and Solomon, 1995). Lee *et al.* (2009a) identified that symbolic incongruity is one of the causes of brand avoidance. A respondent in the study of Lee *et al.* (2009a) said that "we always laugh about it, but we would never buy cheap toilet paper, because that just says something, you just think if you walk into a bathroom and there's cheap toilet paper. It says something about you, how you portray yourself. I guess it is important because that's how you see yourself. I am not cheap and nasty. I think it's a reflection of my childhood as well, because I had three brothers and one sister so we are quite a big family. I mean having the budget stuff and I want to get away from that, you leave all that behind." On the basis of these points, it is proposed that symbolic incongruity is an antecedent of brand hate.

H2. Symbolic incongruity leads to brand hate.

3.3 Poor relationship quality

Poor relationship quality (PRQ) refers to the negative relationships customers have with their brands for reasons other than past performance, image incongruity and ideological incompatibility. PRQ is linked with the concept of relationship equity which puts all the emphasis on the relationship stickiness. Lemon *et al.* (2001) did a study on customer equity and suggested that relationship equity is a part of customer equity and they further defined relationship equity between brand and its consumers as "the tendency of the customer to stick with the brand, above and beyond the customer's objective and subjective assessments of the brand." According to Lemon *et al.* (2001) a brand cannot make good relationships based on only brand equity or value equity; relationship equity is equally important to make better relationships through loyalty programs, affinity programs, special recognitions and the programs that help in community and knowledge building.

Relationship equity becomes crucial when the actual reward given to a customer in a loyalty program is less in value than the perceived value of reward. Here comes the opportunity for companies to enhance relationship equity by giving big incentives to the customers as a future investment (Lemon *et al.*, 2001). Relationship equity also becomes critical when the particular community of a brand or product is also important and customers want to be members of that community. To get memberships customers begin to increase their purchases of those brands associated with the community; for example, a member from a Harley-Davidson group will never switch to some other brand because of their fierce loyalty (Lemon *et al.*, 2001). Third, need for relationship equity increases when there is an opportunity to make customer relationships based on learning processes. Firms become important to the customers when they take care of the buying patterns and preferences of the customers, which results in increased retentions with almost zero chance of transferability (Lemon *et al.*, 2001).

Relationship quality is concerned with value exchanges that are perceived as long-terms, but if instead of equity there is inequity perceived by customers or the company in value exchanges then desire for alternatives will increase from either the customer or the supplier (Low and Johnston, 2006). According to Hatfield *et al.* (1979) and Sollner (1999), the more

inequitable the relationship the more dissatisfaction and distress prevail. There are increased levels of anxiety and betrayals among the offended parties and things starts to get worse as this relationship of poor quality prolongs, resulting in the selection of new vendors who treat better (Dorsch *et al.*, 1998). The concept of poor relationship quality till date has not been used as an indicator of extreme negative emotion toward brands despite its importance in triggering harmful effects. Hence, it is proposed that poor relationship quality is an antecedent of brand hate.

H3. Poor relationship quality leads to brand hate.

3.4 Ideological incompatibility

Ideological incompatibility (II) refers to the contextual issues in the society. Companies that are not acting accordingly with the consumer's perceptions regarding moral, legal and social issues are said to be ideologically incompatible with consumers. Deceptive communications, moral misconducts and inconsistent values of companies and brands cause this incompatibility which leads to negative emotions and hatred toward brands. Hegner *et al.* (2017) labeled this term as ideological incompatibility because consumers have certain beliefs which are not compatible with the beliefs of brands committing wrongdoings in a society. Ideological incompatibility is beyond the self-image or mere product performance as these beliefs are for the greater good, focusing on the societal and moral issues (Nenycz-Thiel and Romaniuk, 2011; Lee *et al.*, 2009a). Business practices that are unethical lead to consumer boycotts (Friedman, 1985; Micheletti *et al.*, 2008; Sandikci and Ekici, 2009) and just like that, brands that are disgusting and disrespectful to the environment and the society are disapproved by the consumers.

Based on these concerns of moral, legal and social issues when a company or a brand behaves irresponsibly then it is perceived as ideologically incompatible by the consumers (Hegner *et al.*, 2017; Zarantonello *et al.*, 2016; Romani *et al.*, 2015; Bryson *et al.*, 2013; Lee *et al.*, 2009a). Zarantonello *et al.* (2016) referred ideological incompatibility as corporate wrongdoings in their study on brand hate and found this to be one of the predictors of brand hate, just like Hegner *et al.* (2017). Lee *et al.* (2009a) found that ideological incompatibility also leads to moral avoidance. One respondent in their study (Lee *et al.*, 2009a) talked about labor used by Nike and said: "You can't really say they had a choice. They were basically selected and taken to the Nike factories. As far as the relative payment goes, I can't believe someone is happy or better off working under those conditions and probably still only eating and living in conditions that they had before. I don't think they have really improved their lot. It's just now someone comes along and said 'work in this factory or you can't even have what you had.' I know we do look at it comparatively to the west, the people working in the factories are actually now being made subservient to a capital system, whereas their neighbors are probably still living that village life, it's not easy to compare the two maybe they are eating and living just as well in the village lifestyle than the workers. But again it goes back to the children and choice, and how we should really be educating them." This quote is regarding a typical issue of labor which is studied widely in the literature of consumer resistance (Klein, 2000). From the above discussion, it is evident that ideological incompatibility can lead toward brand hate.

H4. Ideological incompatibility leads to brand hate.

3.5 Rumor
According to Difonzo and Bordia (2007), to influence the opinions of others, the propagandists use rumors deliberately through propaganda campaigns and misinformation. Initially, when a propaganda rumor spreads, people believe it because it is followed by selective information which plays as a support to the rumors, compelling people to believe. Not much emphasis has been laid on this, but the literature of rumor shows that the spreading of rumor is connected with harmful, motivated and murmuring campaigns (Allport and Postman, 1947; Kapferer, 1990; Rosnow, 2001). Allport and Postman (1947) viewed rumor as a tool to discourage the enemies. In earlier times rumors were considered just a "talk factor" or a conversation on daily basis (Wilson, 1994). Definition of rumor is different with respect to different authors. Rosnow and Kimmel (2000) defined rumors as an unproven proposal spread to believe by the people and meet the requirements of the disseminator. Kapferer (1990) referred to rumors as the development and movement of information in a society without confirmation from official authorities. An older version of the definition is by Allport and Postman (1947), which is also the most cited one, that a statement with the absence of evidence "passed along from person to person, usually by word of mouth" is called rumor.

Rumors can be positive and negative depending upon the purpose of the disseminator. Negative rumors are usually disseminated more than positive rumors. It was found in the study of Knapp (1944) that from the overall reported rumors in USA during Second World War, 90 per cent were negative rumors having negative consequences while only 2 per cent had pleasant consequences. Also in the marketplace, negative rumors are the ones that are more prevalent and catch the attention of the masses (Kamins *et al.*, 1997). Moreover, stories related to flaws and failures of the product are easy to remember and are more vivid as compared to the stories related to positive attributes of a product (Herr *et al.*, 1991; Folkes, 1988). It implies that negative rumors catch the attention of the consumers more than the positive rumors, therefore negative rumors are more circulated. There are lot of examples in the business world where rumors have caused so much harm to the brands, and in the result, brands have to face rejections, boycotts and hatred from the consumers.

Kimmel (2004) mentioned an example of rumor in the business world and its effects. It is regarding Procter & Gamble (P&G) which is one of the leading manufacturers in consumer goods (p. 4). Rumors against P&G started in 1979 that P&G is controlled secretly by the "Moonies. Moonies were the followers of "Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church." This misconception was developed because of the logo of P&G in which there is a man on the moon. As people were against Moonies and when they heard that P&G was controlled by them, they became relentless and started contacting the company's officials to authenticate the news. First, the company ignored the rumor but they did not know that this matter would catch fire soon. This rumor was so contagious that later on P&G used to receive 12,000 queries per month. Even the rumors regarding an announcement were out that the company's ownership has declared that they are in partnership with the devil church. The results of this rumor were devastating. Consumers started to boycott the products of P&G and further spread negative word of mouth. Finally the company was left with no choice except to justify its position, so the company spread the word through media that these are fake news and the company also e-mailed 45,000 churches claiming their innocence and declaring no connection with the church of devil and explained their logo publically that their logo is simply a man on the moon with 13 stars representing the 13 colonies of America. But still they kept on receiving queries and criticism. After extreme patience the company decided to adopt aggressive strategy by filing lawsuits and attacking the sources of rumors. Serious actions were taken against the people who were spreading rumors until they finally managed to stop the rumors (Kimmel, 2004, p. 9).

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Kimmel and Audrain-Pontevia (2010) explained that rumors in the marketplace are considered as a competitor to information exchange, as there is information from the company side and rumors against it on the other side, so these rumors pose a threat to the marketing managers and decision-makers, and it is a challenge for specialists in the company to make strategies effective enough to respond and give explanations against rumors in a better way. While talking about the frequency of rumors, Kimmel and Audrain-Pontevia (2010) said that brokers and buyers in the marketplace used to hear rumors few times in a week regarding professional relevance and the rise in these rumors is spontaneous. On the other hand Difonzo and Bordia (1998) while investigating organizational rumors among professionals in public relations who serve *Fortune* 500 companies, found the frequency of rumors on a weekly basis which means every week a rumor came up and results in low morale, employee stress and loss of trust among staff, coworkers, management and customers. So it is evident that very limited empirical thought has been given to rumors, their impacts and nature in the marketplace (Kimmel and Audrain-Pontevia, 2010) and according to those limited studies rumors are mostly negative in their setting. According to different case studies and stories, rumors can cause too much trouble to the companies and can be a tool to destroy brand image, consumer loyalties and credibility of the companies, resulting in boycotts from consumers and losses in financial markets (Koenig, 1985; Kapferer, 1990; Kimmel, 2004). Despite the fact that rumor leads to brand destruction, marketing scholars have neglected this issue while measuring the extreme negative emotion, i.e. brand hate among consumers. Therefore, it is proposed that rumors can lead to brand hate.

H5. Rumor leads to brand hate (Figure 1).

4. Methodology
Before conducting the main survey, a pre-test was carried out ($n = 25$) to examine the internal consistency (inter-item reliability) in the questionnaire. To collect data for the main survey, self-administered questionnaires were distributed among fast food consumers in Pakistan. Questionnaires were distributed in different fast food restaurants and respondents were offered free drinks to take part in the survey. But only those respondents were selected for the survey who hate any fast food brand. This selection is made because of the reason that brand haters can give more appropriate response to measure brand hate instead of non-
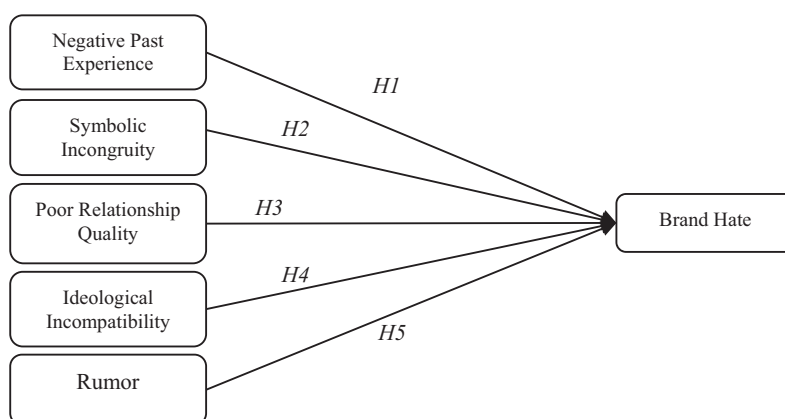

Figure 1.
Theoretical model

haters. Out of 400 questionnaires, 250 were selected (62 per cent completion rate) for the main study as they were complete with no missing values and having no issues of suspicious response patterns (i.e. straight lining). Respondents were 72.4 per cent males (181) and 27.6 per cent females (69). A total of 89 per cent respondents were in the age group of 20-40 years with 40 per cent of respondents having a master's degree. Of the respondents, 32 per cent were earning above Rs 50,000. One question regarding "your hated brand" was asked in the questionnaire. Many fast food brands were rated as the worst, but the most hated one was KFC for reasons unknown to this study.

The items used in the questionnaire were adopted from different studies. Items for negative past experience, symbolic incongruity and ideological incompatibility were adopted from the study of Hegner *et al.* (2017), who also conducted the study on brand hate. Items for poor relationship quality were adapted from the study of Chen and Myagmarsuren (2011). Items for rumor were adopted from Kimmel and Audrain-Pontevia (2010). Items for the endogenous latent variable, i.e. brand hate, were also adopted from Hegner *et al.* (2017). Appendix 2 shows the measurement items of each construct used in this study. Likert scale was used for the items in the questionnaire with five points, i.e. from strongly disagree (SD) to strongly agree (SA).

A total of 250 respondents took part in the survey, which satisfies the 200 sample rule (Kline, 2011) and the ratio from sample to item is 6.25:1, which is above the acceptable criteria of 5:1 (Gorsuch, 1983). This shows that sample size is adequate to conduct this study. Moreover, we calculated two tests for measuring sampling adequacy, i.e. Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity (Hutcheson and Sofroniou, 1999). The KMO showed a value of 0.906 ($>$0.5) while Bartlett's Test of sphericity was significant at 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). Now we can safely say that the data are good for undertaking multiple regression analysis.

5. Results

5.1 Reliability and validity tests

After the data were ready we performed multiple regression analysis to examine the ability of the model in predicting the outcome. But first, to check the internal consistency reliability, the traditional approach of Cronbach's alpha was used according to which all the scales were reliable ($>$0.70), i.e. negative past experience (0.83), symbolic incongruity (0.85), poor relationship quality (0.81), ideological incompatibility (0.91), rumor (0.92) and brand hate (0.82). To assess the reliability of indicators' loadings, factor analysis was performed. Factor loadings must be 0.512 or above and the values below 0.512 should be deleted only if the sample size is greater than 100, otherwise they can be retained (Stevens, 2002). Considering this statement two items from poor relationship quality scale and two items from rumor scale were deleted. Variance inflation factor (VIF) was used to assess the issues of multicollinearity. According to Myers (1990), Menard (1995) and Field (2009), while using SPSS if the tolerance value is 0.20 or below and the VIF value is 10 or above, then it indicates potential issues of collinearity. In this study all the values of VIF are below 5, more specifically they ranged from 1.36 to 2.92 which are considered unproblematic.

5.2 Hypothesis testing

Table I shows the correlation matrix which displays the Pearson's correlation values between each pair of variables along with the correlation significance values. As can be seen in Table I, the highest correlation is present between brand hate (BH) and rumor (R), i.e. ($r =$ 0.698, $p < 0.001$), followed by brand hate (BH) and poor relationship quality (PRQ), having a correlation of 0.516 ($p < 0.001$). All the Pearson's correlation values representing the

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		BH	NPE	SI	PRQ	II	R
Pearson's correlation	BH	1.000	0.507	0.433	0.516	0.415	0.698
	NPE	0.507	1.000	0.254	0.247	0.239	0.457
	SI	0.433	0.254	1.000	0.212	0.318	0.384
	PRQ	0.516	0.247	0.212	1.000	0.191	0.392
	II	0.415	0.239	0.318	0.191	1.000	0.275
	R	0.698	0.457	0.384	0.392	0.275	1.000
Sig. (one-tailed)	BH	–	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	NPE	0.000	–	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	SI	0.000	0.000	–	0.000	0.000	0.000
	PRQ	0.000	0.000	0.000	–	0.001	0.000
	II	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	–	0.000
	R	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	–

Table I.
Correlations

hypothesized relationships were above the value of 0, showing a positive relationship between brand hate and its antecedents.

Table II shows the model summary which helps in understanding whether the antecedents successfully predicts brand hate. The value of multiple correlation coefficient between brand hate and its predictors shown in the table is R = 0.799. The value of R^2 tells us that all five antecedents of brand hate account for 63.8 per cent ($R^2 = 0.638$) of the variation in brand hate. Moreover the adjusted R^2 value (Adj. $R^2 = 0.630$) seems to be quite close to the value of R^2 showing a difference of 0.008 which suggests that if the model is to be derived from the whole population then there would be less variation of 0.8 per cent in the resulting outcome. The change statistics are also shown in the table which tells us whether there is a significant change in R^2 (i.e. 0 – 0.638) based on the calculation of F-ratio which seems to be quite significant (i.e. $p < 0.001$). Finally the assumption of Durbin–Watson has also been met which predicts whether independent errors assumption is justifiable. The value of Durbin–Watson statistic shown in the table is 1.934 which is very close to 2 and hence justifiable (Field, 2009). Table III displays the ANOVA which tells us if the model predicts the outcome significantly by using only "mean." The value of F-ratio shown in the table is 85.897 which is significant at $p < 0.001$. It shows that the model's ability in predicting the outcome variable has been improved significantly.

Table IV shows the model parameters. All the b-values depicts a positive relationship between brand hate and each of the antecedents. Moreover b-values depict the degree to which each antecedent affects the resulting outcome if all other antecedents are kept constant. The values of standard errors associated with each b-value indicate the extent to which these values may vary when subjected to different samples. The t and p statistics in the table show that the standard errors successfully determine that the b-values significantly differ from zero. Hence, it is proved that all the five antecedents are significant predictors of brand hate, with rumor being the biggest predictor.

Model	R	R-square	Adjusted R-square	Std. error of the estimate	R-square change	F change	df1	df2	Sig. F change	Durbin–Watson
1	0.799a	0.638	0.630	0.35438	0.638	85.897	5	244	0.000	1.934

The "Change statistics" header spans the columns: R-square change, F change, df1, df2, Sig. F change.

Notes: [a]Predictors: (Constant), R, II, PRQ, SI, NPE [b]Dependent variable: BH

Table II.
Model summary

6. Conclusions and discussion

The present study contributes to the literature of negative relationships between brands and consumers by introducing "direct personal" and "indirect non-personal" antecedents of brand hate. The literature review presented in this research work shows that there are five factors that can trigger brand hate in consumers. Among those five factors or so-called antecedents of brand hate, three antecedents (negative past experience, symbolic incongruity and poor relationship quality) are directly related with the consumers, while the other two antecedents (ideological incompatibility and rumor) are something that consumers do not experience directly. That is why these five antecedents are categorized as direct personal and indirect non-personal antecedents of brand hate. The results of the study demonstrate that the biggest influencer of brand hate is rumor. It is also evident from the examples of McDonalds and P&G mentioned in the study that a single rumor can destroy even the most recognized brands. Kapferer (2004) also concluded that rumors lead to brand destruction and result in poor corporate reputation. Our results further indicated poor relationship quality as the second biggest influencer of brand hate which is kind of obvious because the quality of relationship decides if it is good or poor; if it is poor then it leads to hate (Fournier, 1998).

This study explains the concept of brand hate which is also a sub-topic of anti-consumption. It can be perceived from the discussed examples in this study that the concept of anti-consumption is sometimes useful as it creates awareness against an unethical, immoral and irresponsible brand. But anti-consumption must be differentiated from pro-social consumption which can be said as ethical, conscientious (Shaw *et al.*, 2006), or sustainable (Murphy and Cohen, 2001). In general anti-consumption on a larger scale can be perceived as opposite to consumption while on a small scale certain actions become apparent against consumption (Cherrier *et al.*, 2011). This rejection for consumption is related strongly to consumer's individuality which includes socio-environmental and self-serving interests (Cherrier *et al.*, 2011). Indicating the ongoing circumstances and upcoming outcomes of consumption actions, consumers embrace anti-consumption principle as a lifestyle and a philosophy of existence (Amine and Gicquel, 2011).

Although the research regarding consumers' negative emotions resulting from poor performance and quality of products has been carried out extensively, not much literature is present on extreme negative emotions resulting from other consumer-related and company-related factors, except few studies (Hegner *et al.*, 2017; Kucuk, 2016; Zarantonello *et al.*, 2016). Even these studies do not provide a holistic view on how brand hate evolves, while the present study has managed to demonstrate the factors that were of serious concerns but not discussed previously, to the best of the authors' knowledge. The antecedents of brand hate (negative past experience, symbolic incongruity and ideological incompatibility) that are discussed previously are found to be less effective in influencing brand hate than the antecedents introduced in this study, i.e. rumor and poor relationship quality, which implies the importance of these factors as the tools for spreading hatred. Given that we have discussed five antecedents of brand hate, it must be noted that with the advancement in online spaces related to social media, it is hard for

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	53.937	5	10.787	85.897	0.000b
	Residual	30.643	244	0.126		
	Total	84.580	249			

Notes: [a]Dependent variable: BH; [b]Predictors: (constant), R, II, PRQ, SI, NPE

Table III.
ANOVA

companies to manage brands effectively. Therefore, it is advised to have effective complaint mechanisms and surveillance procedures for social media.

6.1 Managerial implications

To deal with consumers who have become brand haters, it is essential for companies to carefully monitor the interaction of employees and consumers. It will be helpful in dealing with the brand haters who experienced poor quality of relationship which is the first interaction of consumers with the brands. Hatred on social media and other online spaces must be handled by making active and diligent teams which are available anytime for responding to the queries and more importantly observing the experiences, attitudes and behaviors of consumers regarding the brands. Companies must stalk their consumers on social media to know their preferences so that brands can meet consumers' expectations to avoid any uncertainty at the first place.

This study presented five antecedents of brand hate and each of the antecedents has different characteristics and hence different methods to manage them. For example, improving the customer's experience by making a good-quality product does not mean that it will also change the perception of customers regarding employees' rudeness. In the same way, minimizing brand hate by offering compensation against a service failure does not mean that it will minimize the hatred caused by rumors or incompatible ideologies. Therefore, for each of the antecedent there is a different management process which must be selected carefully by the companies after observing what the actual reason for hatred is. Kucuk (2016) suggested few steps for managing brand hate which are listening, engaging and negotiating. Companies must have listening tools to listen to the customers and then engage with them regarding their complaints and in the end negotiate with them on the compensations against the failures. Yet, these steps cannot explain how to manage brand hate caused by ideological incompatibility or rumors.

Another study by Ahmed and Hashim (2018) discussed the factors that could minimize brand hate resulting from negative past experience and found that apology, explanation and compensation act as brand hate recovery process. Companies should also consider these factors while dealing with brand haters developing from negative past experience, symbolic incongruity, poor relationship quality, ideological incompatibility and rumors. Apology and compensation work fine for negative past experience and poor relationship quality, while for managing brand hate caused by symbolic incongruity, ideological incompatibility and rumors, companies need to give explanations on different platforms such as social media, print media, electronic media and also through e-mails. A little ignorance on the company's side can produce more haters; therefore, companies must assemble a team of professionals to answer the frequent queries from the customers. Usually the queries come from the most

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
		B	Std. error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	0.033	0.204		0.160	0.873
	NPE	0.148	0.036	0.180	4.096	0.000
	SI	0.097	0.036	0.117	2.707	0.007
	PRQ	0.245	0.042	0.247	5.838	0.000
	II	0.098	0.024	0.170	4.089	0.000
	R	0.411	0.046	0.427	8.923	0.000

Note: [a]Dependent variable: BH

Table IV.
Coefficients

loyal customers in case of allegations regarding immoral activities or some rumor against the companies. These queries must not go unanswered because sometimes the most loyal customers turns into brand haters (Gregoire and Fisher, 2008).

Moreover, the companies' concerns regarding social, societal and environmental activities, integration of positive reference groups and fair employee treatment can be helpful in reducing the number of brand haters. Having said that, it is not necessarily true that all the target market, including non-consumers and consumers, can be satisfied. Sometimes the problem is with the narcissistic personality of the consumer which forces him/her to remain a brand hater (Kucuk, 2016). But companies must be able to manage brand hate in any case regardless of the consumers' rigidness by using the strategies mentioned above or devise some plan of action according to the severity of the situation.

6.2 Limitation and future research

Research in the field of negative relationships between consumers and brands and consumers' negative emotions is getting the attention of scholars, which indicates that there are still various issues which need to be investigated. Our study discussed only one aspect of the brand hate process, i.e. antecedents of brand hate. Various other aspects such as the outcomes of brand hate and the management process of brand hate need further discussion. The first limitation of this study is that it does not explain the factors that can reduce the impact of brand hate. Ahmed and Hashim (2018) and Kucuk (2016) explained few strategies that are helpful in handling brand hate, but there is room for more research in how to handle brand hate effectively because each of the determinants of brand hate requires a different recovery process.

Second limitation is regarding the context of the study, as this study used fast food brand consumers in Pakistan, but in different regions and cultures these results may differ. Therefore it is necessary to conduct more studies on brand hate in different cultures to completely understand the negativity behind brand hate and its consequences. Third limitation of the study is that the data were collected from the respondents who had a bad experience with some brand in the past, instead of collecting the data from all consumers. Future research should also incorporate the point of view of non-haters or loyal customers of the brands.

Fourth limitation of this study is that it does not discuss the issues related to the personality of the consumers, such as narcissism, selfishness and rudeness. Companies make mistakes and face rejections and boycotts, and some companies try their best to resolve the issues of the consumers, but the personality issues of some of the consumers prevent them from reconciling with the companies. Kucuk (2016) discussed the consumer-related antecedents of brand hate, but no other study empirically proved those antecedents to be the influencer of brand hate, including Kucuk (2016). Future research must address this issue to completely understand the factors than can trigger brand hate among consumers.

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Appendix 1

Author(s) and year	Discussed concept	Antecedents	Outcomes
Stammerjohan and Webster (2002)	Non-consumption	Individual trait Product characteristics	Ignoring Delay Self-control
Klein *et al.* (2004)	Consumer boycott	Desire to make a difference Self-enhancement Counterarguments Constrained consumption	n/a
Gregoire and Fisher (2006)	Desire for retaliation	Service failure Brand relationship quality	Patronage reduction Third party complaining Negative word of mouth
Dalli *et al.* (2007)	Brand dislike	Product performance Price/quality Customer Service Negative stereotypes Fake communication Exploitation	n/a
Gregoire and Fisher (2008)	Perceived betrayal	Service failure Interactional, procedural, and distributive fairness	Complaining Negative word of mouth
Hogg *et al.* (2009)	Brand avoidance	Marketing environment Social environment Consumer's individual environment	n/a
Romani *et al.* (2009)	Negative brand emotions	Symbolic cultural object Physical object (functions and attributes)	n/a
Sandikci and Ekici (2009)	Brand rejection	Organizational disidentification Image congruency and undesired self	n/a
Krishnamurthy and Kucuk (2009)	Brand hate	Ideological incompatibility Market-level dissatisfaction Transactional dissatisfaction	n/a
Lee *et al.* (2009a, 2009b, 2009c)	Brand avoidance	Moral avoidance Identity avoidance Experiential avoidance	n/a
Gregoire *et al.* (2010)	Desire for revenge	n/a	Marketplace aggression Negative word of mouth Complaining
Johnson *et al.* (2011)	Self-conscious emotions	Relationship quality Self-relevance	Threatening Stealing Negative word of mouth Complaining

Table AI.
Summary of antecedents and outcomes of consumers' negative emotions and behaviors

Brand hate in
the fast food
industry

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Author(s) and year	Discussed concept	Antecedents	Outcomes
Nenycz-Thiel and Romaniuk (2011)	Brand rejection	Moral rejection Negative past experience	
Romani et al. (2012)	Negative brand emotions	n/a	Complaining Negative word of mouth Switching
Sussan et al. (2012)	Brand divorce	Image incongruence Negative product experience	n/a
Bryson et al. (2013)	Extreme negative emotions	Negative past experience Symbolic differences Moral wrongdoings Country of origin	n/a
Joireman et al. (2013)	Desire for revenge	n/a	Negative word of mouth Complaining
Park et al. (2013)	Brand Attachment–Aversion Model	Inconsistent moral values Negative group associations Failure to meet expectations	n/a
Khan and Lee (2014)	Brand avoidance	Negative social influence Undesired self Perceived animosity	n/a
Harmeling et al. (2015)	Agonistic and retreat emotions	n/a	Negative word of mouth Product avoidance
Kavaliauske and Simanaviciute (2015)	Negative emotions	Unmet expectations Symbolic incongruence Ideological incompatibility	n/a
Kucuk (2016)	Brand hate	Transactional (dissatisfaction related to product failure) Market-industry (related to irresponsible practices) Ideological (related to social change) Consumer personality issues	Negative word of mouth Complaining Consumer boycott
Zarantonello et al. (2016)	Brand hate	Violations of expectations Taste system Corporate wrongdoings	Negative word of mouth Protest Complaining Patronage reduction
Hegner et al. (2017)	Brand hate	Negative past experience Symbolic incongruity Ideological incompatibility	Brand avoidance Negative word of mouth Brand retaliation

Table AI.

Appendix 2

Construct	Cronbach's alpha
Negative past experience The performance of products of brand X is poor The brand products are inconvenient My hate for this brand is linked to the bad performance of this product I am dissatisfied by brand X	0.83
Symbolic incongruity The products of brand X do not reflect who I am The products of brand X do not fit my personality I do not want to be seen with brand X This brand does not represent what I am This brand symbolizes the kind of person I would never want to be	0.85
Poor relationship quality The brand X does not give me a feeling of confidence I have the feeling that the brand X is not trustworthy The brand X has not been courteous and friendly I do not have a commitment toward the brand X I certainly do not like the brand X	0.81
Ideological incompatibility In my opinion, brand X acts irresponsible In my opinion, brand X acts unethical The company violates moral standards The brand doesn't match my values and beliefs	0.91
Rumor Whenever I hear a rumor about a brand, I tend to: Pay attention to the rumor Seek out additional information to confirm or disconfirm the rumor Boycott the brand involved Do not repurchase from the brand Purchase from a competitor Lose trust in the brand Spread counter rumors Wait for a while before repurchasing Try to hurt the company by repeating the rumor Try to hurt the company through physical actions (e.g. graffiti) Encourage people not to purchase from the company Feel anger, guilt or embarrassment regarding my relationship with the company	0.92
Brand hate I am disgusted by brand X I do not tolerate brand X and its company The world would be a better place without brand X I am totally angry about brand X Brand X is awful I hate brand X	0.82

Table AII.
Measurement items
of the constructs