ANALYSIS OF THE ATTACHMENT-AVERSION MODEL OF CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIPS IN A DIFFERENT CULTURAL BACKGROUND

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ABSTRACT

Originally the Attachment-Aversion model of consumer-brand relationships, elaborated by Park, Eisingerich & Park in 2013, was analyzed with the help of the sample of English speaking respondents, living in Great Britain and the USA, and focused on two brands: Manchester United Football Club and Apple iPhone. The present study tries to validate the model regarding other type of brand and in conditions of another cultural background. The focal brand for the study was chosen from a high-end beauty category (Chanel).

For the purposes of this research, a questionnaire was designed and spread online within the target population: the current students and alumni of Belarusian universities that are Russian/speaking, fluent in English and had a class in branding. A total of 273 responses was analysed using structural equation modelling. The outcomes of the research have shown that the Attachment-Aversion model of consumer-brand relationships has not proven to be totally versatile, while applied in the conditions of the other cultural background as some of the relationships of the model have shown to be insignificant. The enticing determinant has no effect on brand attachment relationship and the enabling determinant has no effect on the brand prominence. The implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords: Consumer-Brand Relationship, Brand Attachment, Brand Prominence, Structural Equation Modelling.

JEL Classification: M31

1. INTRODUCTION

The consumer-brand relationship, its possible kinds and ways of forming it, is a topic, gaining more and more interest during the recent years. The first study dedicated to the topic was conducted by S. Fournier in 1998. The research was dedicated to differentiation of forms of relationships between the brand and its consumers and also to evolving of those relationships in time. This study gave a solid basis for the development of the brand relationship theory.

One of the most common constructs for analysis of consumer-brand relationship is the brand attachment construct. A great number of scientific works were dedicated to analyzing attachment of a consumer to a brand (Thomson, MacInnis & Park, 2005; Fedorikhin, Park & Thomson, 2008; Park *et al.*, 2010; Vlachos, Theotokis, Pramatari & Vrechopoulos, 2010). There is a number of approaches, explaining the essence of brand attachment relationship, but the approach used within the present study is that brand attachment can be explained

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through brand-self connection and the prominence of thoughts and feeling related to brand (Park, Priester, MacInnis & Wan, 2009). The model, explaining the construct, chosen for the analysis from a quite big number of variants is the Attachment-aversion model of consumer-brand relationship (Park *et al.*, 2013). The chosen model has a big advantage in comparison with the models, mentioned above, as it analyses not just the relationship itself, but also studies the antecedents and possible outcomes of the brand attachment. Moreover, the brand attachment construct in the Attachment-Aversion model captures both sides of the relationship: emotional and cognitive (Park *et al.*, 2013), while in earlier studies brand attachment was analyzed only from emotional side (Thomson *et al.*, 2005).

The Attachment-Aversion model of consumer brand relationship explains the brand attachment through brand-self distance and brand prominence constructs. The model first analyses the determinants, necessary for the attachment to appear. According to the model, the brand should be enticing, enabling and enriching the self of the consumer in order for the consumer later become attached to the brand. Then through the underlying process, represented by motivational strength (approach, maintenance, enhancement of the relationship), brand attachment relationship causes the outcomes, also analyzed within the model through behaviors and behavioral intentions.

The AA-model proposed by Park *et al.* (2013) was analyzed with the help of the sample of English speaking respondents, living in Great Britain and the USA. The model needs a focal brand to be chosen. The analyzed brands were Manchester United Football Club and Apple iPhone.

One of the gaps, remaining after the previous research is analysis of the brand attachment-aversion model within the other cultural background. The previous studies (Park *et al.*, 2009; Park *et al.*, 2013) always were based on samples of native English speakers, so there is a need to check whether the model can be applied to consumers in countries historically and culturally different.

Other interesting direction of the development of the model is testing whether it is reasonable to use it for other, new brand categories. For example, it is interesting to check whether in a case of a luxury brand, the consumer would form brand attachment in the same way and therefore the model can be applied without changes. The choice of a luxury brand was made due to the rising interest in literature to this category of brands. There has been a number of studies, analyzing the differences of the brand strategies and consumer behavior in case of luxury brands (Park *et al.*, 2010; Godey *et al.*, 2012; Ko & Megehee, 2012; Moon & Sprott, 2016; Gentina, Shrum & Lowrey, 2016). The presdent study will make a contribution by testing the brand attachment model.

The aim of the present study is to confirm the Attachment-Aversion model of consumer-brand relationships model using a brand of another category (Chanel perfume, as luxury beauty product) and analyzing the sample with a different language and cultural background (Russian speaking respondents from Belarus).

Chanel was chosen to be a focal brand because, first of all, Chanel is a luxury brand. Also the brand in question is quite well known as all over the world, as within the respondents from the sample of the present study.

This choice of brand and sample allows to test whether the model of the Park *et al.* (2013) is universal solution, giving good results for any brand and any consumer and if the managers can freely apply the approach in their process of brand planning, or it is first required to carry out a study, adapting a model for the cultural background or brand peculiarities.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The concept of brand attachment

The basis of the brand attachment theories was given by similar constructs first developed within developmental psychology. The first work on attachment was carried out by Bowlby (1969). Attachment was studied as dimension of infant-parents relationships and was considered to be a specific bond between people. Also the construct of attachment was extended from only child-parent attachment to also adult stage of life with romantic relationships (Hazan & Zeifman, 1994). The attachment to person or object makes people ready to spend more resources as emotional as cognitive (Holmes, 2000).

But the concept of the attachment in similar way spreads not only on interpersonal interactions but also on specific objects, like, for example, brands. And the theory passing from psychology to marketing has been gaining considerable attention (Ball & Tasaki, 1992; Thomson *et al.*, 2005; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Park *et al.*, 2007).

In marketing, research has been paid a lot of attention to studying attachment, its importance and its consequences. For example, researchers claimed that attachment is closely connected to such important marketing constructs as satisfaction, involvement, brand loyalty (Thomson *et al.*, 2005) or evaluations of possible brand extensions (Fedorikhin *et al.*, 2008).

There are various approaches to understanding the essence of the brand attachment. The research of Whang, Allen, Sahoury & Zhang (2004) was one of the first in this sphere. The study was dedicated to verification of the assumption that passionate love with time turns into brand attachment. Brand attachment and love were claimed to have four indicators. Firstly, consumer feels "physical chemistry" towards the brand. Secondly, brand seems to be destined for the consumer. Thirdly, brand matches with the ideal image of the self of the consumer. And finally, consumer feels bad when the brand he needs is not accessible.

The next meaningful study of the question in topic was conducted by Thomson *et al.* (2005). In the beginning, brand attachment was spread only on emotional aspects. Thomson *et al.* (2005) suggested the concept of emotional attachment, which was defined as experiencing feelings of passion, connection and affection towards the brand. In the study was revealed that consumers can be emotionally attached to some brands and this bonding can predict future loyalty of a consumer. Also authors revealed certain emotional items that are considered to be indicators of brand attachment. The first order factors are claimed to be affection, passion and connection, each of these items include second order constructs. Thus affection includes such items as loved, affectionate, friendly and peaceful. Passion consists of passionate, delighted and captivated; and connection – passionate, captivated and delighted (Thomson *et al.*, 2005).

These findings were later tested and confirmed by other authors. For example, Fedorikhin *et al.* (2008) verified the reliability and validity of the model. Besides, the view on the brand attachment was expanded also on cognitive aspects, for example related to brand-self connections. Brand-self connections show to which extent a brand expresses the self-concept of the consumer (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Also the topic of influence of brand attachment on brand extensions was observed in the study. The results claim that the higher level of attachment a consumer has, the easier he accepts the new extension of the brand, he is more ready to forgive mistakes to a brand and even recommend to other consumers (Fedorikhin *et al.*, 2008).

In order to understand more fully the concept of brand attachment in recent works brand-self connection is no longer the only construct, explaining brand attachment. The attachment of the consumer to the brand started to be evaluated based on two elements: brand-self connection and brand prominence. Brand prominence construct measured how

easy and frequently thoughts about the brand appear in consumers' minds (Park *et al.*, 2010).

Park *et al.* (2009: 328) gave another definition of the concept of brand attachment: "the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self". This bond is illustrated by consumer's memory network, connected to the brand and relationship with it. Also the bond can be reflected by mental representation of a consumer (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2005). And the strength of the bond between the brand and consumer can be explained through two fundamental indicators - brand-self connectedness and the prominence of brand-relevant thoughts and feelings about the brand (Park *et al.*, 2009).

The concept of brand-self connection that was already mentioned above is a combination of emotional and cognitive ties between the self of the consumer and the brand. Cognitive connection appears as a consumer feels unity with the brand and thinks of it as part himself (Park *et al.*, 2010). From the other side, brand-self connectedness is an emotional concept (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2005; Thomson *et al.*, 2005). Brand evokes in consumer numerous feeling, which can be rather complex, for example such as feelings of the consumer towards brand proximity or brand separation or feeling consumer experience while displaying brand-self connection (Park *et al.*, 2010).

Connection between the brand and the self can occur on two bases – identity bases and instrumentality basis. Identity basis expresses who the consumer is. Instrumentality basis reveals the reason of importance for a customer to use the brand. This basis is closely connected to aims, concerns and projects for the life of the consumer (Mittal, 2006).

The concept of brand-self connections is not concentrated on the quantity of brands important to consumer with which he has personal connectedness. This concept overviews the strength of the connection. The higher is the degree of integration of a brand into the sense of self of the consumer, the stronger is the connectedness between the consumer and the brand and, as a result, the higher is a level of brand attachment (Park *et al.*, 2009). Park *et al.* (2009) revealed two signals of brand-self connectedness: "Being part of oneself and reflecting who one is" (identity basis of brand-self connectedness) and "Being personally connected" (instrumentality basis of brand-self connectedness reflected in personal meaningfulness).

The second major indicator of brand attachment according to Park *et al.* (2009) is the prominence of brand-relevant thoughts and feelings or brand prominence. This indicator evaluates how easy brand-related thoughts and feelings come to the consumer and also how frequently this happens. Brand prominence reveals the saliences of ties, both affective and cognitive, between brand and the self. (Park, 2010).

The research, conducted earlier by other authors, working on attachment theory, confirmed the significance of prominence in explaining attachment. There is a relationship found between the attachment phenomenon and the process of memory activation connected to object, to which a person feels attached (Collins & Read, 1994).

All in all, two brands with the same level of brand-self connection may have different levels of attachment, if one of them is more prominent for the consumer than the other. That is why not only the strength of connectedness between the brand and the self explains the concept of brand attachment, but also the degree of prominence of brand-relevant thoughts and feelings (Park *et al.*, 2009).

With later research of brand attachment and components that explain it, the concept of brand-self connection was changed to the concept of brand-self distance (Park *et al.*, 2013). Brand-self distance assesses the subjective perception of the distance between the self of the consumer and a brand. Close relationship with the brand is considered to be positive, distant relationship – negative. Brand-self distance like brand prominence is also closely connected to brand memory. To have a close brand-self relationship, a consumer needs to have highly meaningful to him affective and cognitive memories, connected to brand. The

absence of such memories causes indifference of a consumer to a brand. In case a consumer possesses such memories and they are very relevant to the self of the consumer, his feelings will be closer or father from the level of indifference.

The overview of the studies, mentioned above, and their central constructs is demonstrated on the table 1.

Table 1. Overview of central constucts of the studies, dedicated to brand attachment

Central construct	Study
Emotional brand attachment, explained through love	Whang *et al.*, 2004
Emotional brand attachment, explained through passion, connection, affection	Thomson *et al.*, 2005
Brand attachment influence on brand extensions	Fedorikhin *et al.*, 2008
Brand-self connection	Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2005; Mittal, 2006
Brand attachment, explained through brand-self connections and brand prominence	Park *et al.*, 2009, 2010
Brand attachment, explained through brand-self distance and brand prominence	Park *et al.*, 2013

Source: Own Elaboration

2.2 Brand attachment models

In marketing literature a lot of attention has been paid to the construct of brand attachment and developing models, enabling to measure it and analyzing its antecedents and outcomes.

The elements of brand attachment have been investigated by Tsai (2011). In terms of this study the construct of brand attachment is composed of five main components: attractiveness for a consumer of the design of the product and of the ambience of the service; quality of the consumer-brand relationship; delight, brought by the contact with the brand; integrity of the brand and, finally, congruity of the image of the brand, perceived by the customer (Tsai, 2011).

Grisaffe and Nguyen (2011) have singled out the antecedents needed to form a brand attachment in the consumer: superior marketing characteristics, traditional customer outcome, unique user-derived benefits, socialization forces, sentimentality or emotional memory or experience.

The study of Japutra, Ekinci & Simkin (2014) was not only dedicated to the antecedents of the brand attachment, but also to the possible outcomes of it. There have been singled out six drivers, important to the process of the development of brand attachment: self-congruity, experience that is determined by brand familiarity, responsiveness, perceived quality and trust. The outcomes of the brand attachment, revealed by the study, are the following: willingness to recommend the brand, which can be also considered as positive word of mouth, intention to rebuy the brand, disregarding the negative information about the brand and performing the acts of defending the brand (Japutra *et al.*, 2014).

Jimenez and Voss (2014) proposed another scale, enabling to assess emotional attachment. Emotional attachment is revealed by the fact that the consumer feels an emotional bond, feels emotionally connected, linked by feelings and experiences feeling of attachment.

One of the most significant studies on the topic of the models of evaluation of brand attachment was conducted by Thomson *et al.* (2005). The study was dedicated to the measurement of the strength of emotional attachments of consumers to brands. The final

version of the scale has ten items combined into three interrelated factors that are affection, connection and passion.

One of the most detailed studies about brand attachment is the Attachment-Aversion model of consumer-brand relationship (Park *et al.*, 2013). The brand attachment is explained through the combination of two constructs: brand-self distance and brand prominence. The model also analyses the antecedents of the brand attachment, its outcomes and motivation of the consumers.

The Attachment-Aversion model has been chosen for the present analysis over the models mentioned above for a number of reasons.

First reason relates to the understanding of the brand attachment construct within the model. The brand attachment based on brand-self distance and brand prominence differs from many other models, for example from the construct of emotional attachment, developed by Thomson *et al.* (2005), which includes ten items. The main difference between the constructs is that the attachment of Thomson *et al.* (2005) is dedicated purely to the affective side, while the brand attachment, suggested by Park *et al.* (2010), captures both sides: affective or emotional and cognitive. Secondly, the construct, created by Park *et al.* (2010), in the opposite to emotional attachment, developed by Thomson *et al.* (2005), does not include in its measurement any specific emotions and feelings, as they can be various in type and range from consumer to consumer, as emotions can also be connected with some really personal experience of the consumer.

The study, conducted by Park *et al.* (2009) have proved that their construct is distinct from the construct, suggested by Thomson *et al.* (2005) and that measure of brand attachment, based on two items, better predicts commitment to the brand than the construct of emotional attachment, based on ten items (Park *et al.*, 2009).

Second reason for the choice of model is that the addition of the construct of brand aversion enabled the AA-model to analyze all the possible range of salience and valence of the relationship between the brand and the consumer. If compare the AA-model to the previous models of the same researchers, the main difference would be that brand attachment as a single construct, suggested by Park *et al.* (2009a), does not capture brand-self distance. It just measures the connection and only ranging from neutral to high, while the AA-model is able to measure the full range.

Thirdly, the AA-model pays attention not only to elaborating the best measure for consumer-brand relationships, but also the model has determined and tested the antecedents of the AA relationship and the outcomes of it (intentional and actual behaviors).

2.3 The attachment-aversion model

The present study is based on another model of measuring the brand attachment and its antecedents and outcomes, where brand attachment is understood as an integration of the brand-self connections with the brand and the prominent thoughts about it (Park *et al.*, 2009).

This model have been developing in time. The first model, elaborated by the authors was CAAM – the connection-automaticity attachment model (Park *et al.*, 2007). Then few years later, on the basis of CAAM, appeared the second model - CPAM – the connection prominence attachment model (Park *et al.*, 2009). In 2013, Park *et al.* come out with the final expanded version **of the model – Attachment-aversion model** (AA-model). This model is much more expanded in comparison to the previous ones, as it concerns not only the components of brand attachment, but also its determinants and at the same time analyses consumer's behaviors and motivational strength of it.

In the AA-model the relationships between the brand and the consumer are measured with the help of two factors, which differ in their degree for each case: brand-self distance and brand prominence. The brand-self distance is a new construct as previously the authors were using the construct of brand-self connections. In AA-model Park *et al.* (2013: 231) defines the construct of brand-self distance as "the perceived distance between a brand and the self". In other words, this construct shows how the brand mirrors the self-concept of the consumer. The construct of brand prominence was used in the CPAM model also. In AA-model brand prominence is the memory accessibility of the brand, perceived by the consumer. This construct is closely related to the brand-self distance construct, as when memories about the brand are easily accessible, the brand-self distance, perceived by the consumer is more salient. But at the same time these two constructs are proved to be conceptually distinct and can develop independently.

The AA-model also pays attention to the determinants of the consumer-brand relationship of attachment or aversion. The study claims, that brands possess some assets, which are important to the consumer, as they help in achieving the consumer's goals and by this reduce the distance between the brand and the self of the consumer. These determinants are enticing or annoying the self, enabling or disabling the self and enriching or impoverishing the self.

As for the first determinant of the brand attachment, it is achieved with the help of pleasures (hedonic and aesthetic) that the brand gives to the consumer through experience with it. When the consumer is pleased, because the brand gives him some pleasant sensory experience or he likes the aesthetic features of the brand, the distance between the brand and the self of the consumer gets shorter and brand attachment is developed.

Our study is based on the AA-model. So, the first research hypotheses to be confirmed are:

> *H1a. Enticing determinant of consumer-brand relationships significantly influences the brand-self distance.*
> *H1b. Enticing determinant of consumer-brand relationships significantly influences the brand prominence.*

The second determinant is enabling or disabling the self. This determinant evaluates if the brand gives to the consumer the feeling of efficacy and enabled self, provides the opportunity to control of the self and the environment, be autonomous and this way achieve the goals that the consumer has. Brands can influence this determinant through its performance as a useful product or service. The hypotheses to confirm are:

> *H2a. Enabling determinant of consumer-brand relationships significantly influences the brand-self distance.*
> *H2b. Enabling determinant of consumer-brand relationships significantly influences the brand prominence.*

The last determinants is enriching or impoverishing the self, which can be reached by the brand through encouraging self-expression and self-identity. The brand can represent the self internally just for the consumer and externally. The brand that expresses the consumer's present, desired or past self and represents the values of the consumer, provide the symbolic pleasure and in this way enriches the self of the consumer, that leads to increasing the brand attachment. In the opposite case, if a brand reflects the identity to which the consumer feels opposed to, the brand is impoverishing the consumer that leads to brand aversion. (Park *et al.*, 2013).

H3a. Enriching determinant of consumer-brand relationships significantly influences the brand-self distance.

H3b. Enriching determinant of consumer-brand relationships significantly influences the brand prominence.

The AA-model also pays attention on the motivational strength that is claimed to be a mediator between the relationships of attachment or aversion and behaviors of the consumers intentional or actual. The motivational strength can take three forms: approach or avoidance, maintenance or termination and enhancement or destroying. The present study will check if brand attachment elements influence consumer's motivation:

H4a. Brand-self distance significantly influences Motivation.

H4b. Brand prominence significantly influences Motivation.

The AA-model also analyses the ability of prediction of behavioral intentions of the consumers by brand attachment-aversion relationships. The intentions to perform favorable behavior to the brand or anti-brand behavior are different in difficulty to execute. Within the AA-model was developed a scale for purposes of practical measurement of the behavioral intentions and it was tested and proved efficient. The most difficult intentions are: defending the brand in the situation that other consumers speak poor about it, investing time or money in brand's promotion and always purchasing the new model.

H5. Motivation significantly influences very difficult behaviors to enact.

Moderately difficult intentions are: recommending the brand to other consumers and forgiving to the brand in case of malfunctioning. Intentions, easier to execute, are: waiting to buy the brand, purchasing the brand and visiting the website of the brand. Therefore the research hypotheses are the following:

H6. Motivation significantly influences moderately difficult behaviors to enact.

*H7. Motivation significantly influences easier to enact behaviors.*

The AA-model proposes a scale (table 2) to measure every component of it, which will be also confirmed by the present study. The AA-model and research hypothesis are demonstrated in the Figure 1.

Table 2. The scale of Attachment-aversion model of consumer-brand relationships

Group of constructs	Construct	Questions
Determinants of consumer-brand relationships	Enticing (annoying)	To what extent is [brand name] unappealing or appealing to you?
		To what extent is [brand name] unattractive or attractive to you?
	Enabling (disabling)	To what extent does [brand name] hinder or help how you manage problems in your daily life?
		To what extent is [brand name] functionally unsatisfying or satisfying to you?
	Enriching (impoverishing)	To what extent does [brand name] misspeak or express who you are as a person?
		To what extent does [brand name] misrepresent or represent who you want to be?
		To what extent does [brand name] undermine or reinforce your deepest values?
AA-Relationships	Brand-self distance	To what extent is [brand name] far away or close to you and who you are?
		To what extent are you personally disconnected or connected to [brand name]?
	Brand prominence	To what extent are your thoughts and feelings toward [brand name] often automatic, coming to mind seemingly on their own?"
		To what extent do your thoughts and feelings toward [brand name] come to mind so naturally and instantly that you don't have much control over them?
Motivational strength	Approach (avoidance)	How intensely do you want to approach [brand name]?
	Maintenance (termination)	How much do you want to maintain (terminate) your current relationship with [brand name]?
	Enhancement (destroying)	How much do you want to further strengthen your current relationship with [brand name]?
Behavioral intentions	Easier behaviors to enact	In the future would you be more likely to wait 4-6 weeks to buy [brand name] or to wait 4-6 weeks to buy another brand?
		In the future would you be more likely to buy [brand name] or another brand?
		In the future would you be more likely to visit the web/site of [brand name] or of another brand?
	Moderately difficult behaviors to enact	In the future, which would you be more likely to do, recommend [brand name] to others or recommend another brand?
		In the future, which would you be more likely to do, forgive if [brand name] malfunctions or forgive if malfunctions another brand?
	Very difficult behaviors to enact	In the future would you be more likely to defend [brand name] when others speak negatively about it or another brand?
		In the future, which would you be more likely to do, spend time at [brand name] charity events or spend time at another brand's charity events?
		In the future, which would you be more likely to do, spend money at [brand name] charity events or spend money at another brand's charity events?
		In the future which would you be more likely to do, always buy the new model of [brand name] or always buy the new model of another brand?

Source: Own elaboration based on Park *et al.,* 2013

Figure 1. AA-Model
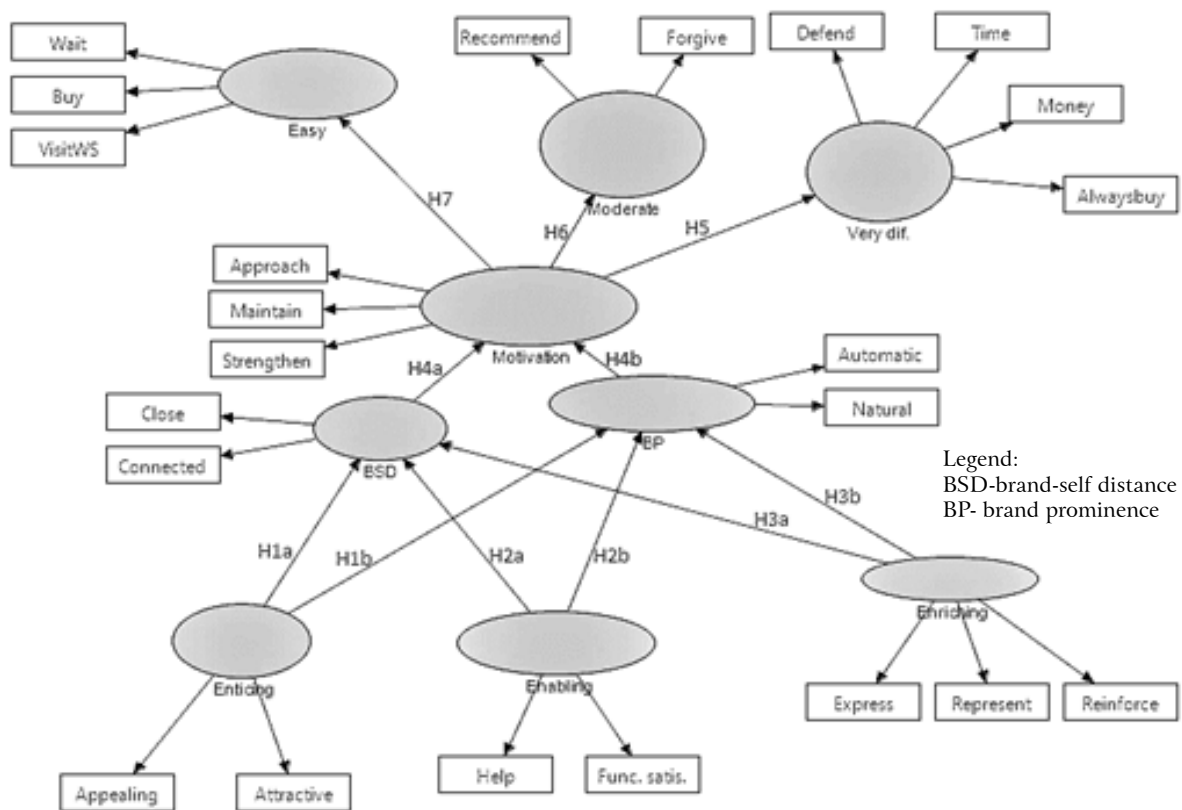
Source: Own elaboration based on the AA-Model

The model to be analysed requires a focal brand. The present study was conducted with the Chanel The model to be analysed requires a focal brand. The present study was conducted with the Chanel brand in focus as it is differs from the brands in the original study of Park *et al.* The brand pertains to another product category- perfumes and it is an high end brand. At the same time the brand is known withing the target population.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data collection and Sample

The target population of the present research consists of students and alumni of Belarusian universities. All of the respondents are Russian-speaking. This allows achieving similar cultural background of the respondents. In this case, they would be exposed to relatively similar brands and promotion companies. At the same time it allows to achieve a different cultural background in comparison with the Park's analysis in 2013.

Next requirement to the target population is that all the respondents should be fluent in English, as good knowledge of English language is obligatory in order to participate in questionnaire that was in English. The questionnaire wasn't translated to Russian language, as during the translation process there can be distortion of the meaning and the questionnaire could lose its reliability.

And finally, in order to reassure that all the respondents understand the questions correctly, was decided to limit the target population to the respondents that have marketing knowledge. So was decided to spread the questionnaire only between the students and alumni of Belarusian universities that had marketing studies and had a class in branding.

This way was reassured that all the respondents are familiar with the terminology needed and clearly understand the concept of brand and will not confuse it with other marketing constructs.

The time for the collection of the filled in questionnaires was a little more than two months (end of June 2015-middle of September 2015).

All in all in Belarus by 2015 year there are four universities that hold classes in branding. These are: Belarusian States University (BSU), Belarusian State Economic University (BSEU), Institute of entrepreneurial activity (IEA) and Minsk Innovation University (MIU). Each of the universities is composed of different departments. So, for the current study were chosen only the departments that had marketing studies and the class in branding in particular. By the year 2015, BSU had 4 departments studying branding, BSEU had 5 departments, IEA – 2 and MIU – 1. So all in all, the target population consists of 12 departments of four Belarusian universities.

In order to calculate the size of the sample needed for the research, first, there is a need to evaluate the size of the target population. For the current study the target population consists of approximately 11000 people. That number can be precisely calculated, taking in to consideration the number of universities that propose a class in branding (4), the number of departments of those universities that have the class (correspondingly 4, 5, 2 and 1), the average number of people in the university group (85). Also should be taken in to consideration that the class was included into the curriculum in 2004. So the number of years of the class being taught is 11. Using the listed numbers is possible to calculate the precise size of the population.

Next step is calculating the sample size. As for the confidence level, it was chosen to be 95%, what is considered to be a traditional choice for the research and guarantees the acceptable amount of uncertainty for the study. As for the confidence interval, also known as margin of error, for the current research was decided to choose it to be 6%. According to the "BOLD Academic Research Resource Center", for the random sample is possible to choose a higher interval – 8% or 9%, whereas for the nonrandom sample is advised to choose 5% or 6%. In this course, 6% confidence level appears to be an acceptable medium value and can be applied to the current study.

In order to calculate the sample size was used the software Raosoft that permits an automatized calculation using the determinated values. In case of the present study, with the target population of 11220, confidence level of 95% and margin of error 6%, the minimum sample size needed is 261. So for the present research 261 respondents is the minimum required amount in order to guarantee the size accuracy (Raosoft Inc., 2004).

Before spreading the questionnaire the piloting research was conducted in order to make sure that all the parts of the questionnaire will be fully understood by the respondents and moreover, there will be no misunderstandings or misleading regarding the questions. For the purpose of piloting the survey tool two weeks before the launching the survey online ten people were contacted in person and asked to fill the questionnaire in. Those ten people pertained to the target population but later they were not included in the list of the people, who received the invitation to participate in the online survey. These people were graduates of Faculty of International Relationships, BSU. All in all, for the purpose of piloting research were contacted 14 people, 4 of them refused to participate. The results of the piloting research didn't reveal major problems of the questionnaire, as the respondents understood all the questions correctly. But at the same time, it was observed that the majority of the respondents were trying to avoid the open questions. That is why those questions were replaced with questions with multiple choices.

The questionnaire was spread with the help of online tool of Google Forms, which is one of the most frequently applied tools for organizing a web survey. The total number of

the responses achieved was 292. Out of that amount of responses 19 were excluded because the respondents didn't have enough education, meaning they didn't finish any university or were not a student of any university at the moment, so they couldn't be included to the target population. The final sample is composed by 273 responses. The response rate of the survey is 16%, whereas taking into consideration only answers that were used for the study, the response rate is 15%. The relatively low response rate in case of the present study can be considered predictable and normal, as the survey was conducted online, there were no incentives to fill it in and the length of the questionnaire needed to study the topic was relatively long.

3.2 Data analysis methods

In order to analyze the Attachment-Aversion model of consumer brand relationships was applied the method of structural equation modelling (SEM). This procedure allows checking the relationships between the variables of the model: elements of brand attachment, its determinants, motivational strength and behavioral intentions.

For the purposes of the present study was chosen the PLS method – Partial least squares path modeling. The software used within the present research is Smart PLS 2.0 (Ringle, Wende & Will, 2005). PLS method is based on the analysis of the variances which differentiates it from the classic covariance based structural equation modelling. At the same time, the PLS has similarity with the covariance-based approaches, as it allows to estimate as measurement (outer) model, as structural (inner) model (Chin, 1998). The PLS was chosen for the present study because it produces better results with non-normal data that the covariance-based approach (Chin, 1998). In fact, the Mardia's coefficient (multivariate kurtosis) for the present study equals to 115.568., the critical value equals to 28.154, which is much more than 1,96 and shows a very significant non-normality of the data.

In order to estimate the measurement model of the AA-model, it is necessary to analyse reliability and validity aspects of the latent constructs. To check reliability were used indicator loading and composite reliability index. Convergent validity was assessed through significance of indicators and average variance extracted. To analyse the discriminant validity, the squared roots of the AVE were compared with the correlations between the latent constructs and the cross-loadings were checked.

In order to test the research hypotheses stated for the present study, the path coefficients and its significance was assessed.

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Sample description

As for the social-demographic characteristics of the sample, with the help of the questionnaire was collected information about the respondents' sex, age, marital and employment status and educational level. Out of 273 respondents of the final sample, 88 are males and 185 are females, which is 32.2% and 67.8% correspondingly. It is important to say, that the majority (92.7%) of sample are young people of age 18-34 years, that means the majority of respondents are studying in the university at the moment of the research or they are rather recent alumni, which completely suits to the goal characteristics, determined for the final sample. 54.6% of the respondents have never been married, which is logical keeping in mind the young age of the absolute majority of the sample. Another important characteristic of the final sample in terms of the target population is educational level of respondents. As in terms of the present research is decided to analyze students and alumni of Belarusian

universities, final sample does not include people without higher education or at least started bachelor's degree. 30% of respondents were still students at the moment of carrying out the research, 41% of respondents have Bachelor's degree, 24% –Master's degree and 5% of respondents have a more advanced degree than Master's. The last analyzed characteristic of the final sample is employment status. 18% of the respondents are students. All in all, 71% of respondents are employed for wages or self-employed.

4.2 Evaluation of the measurement model

The first step in structural equation modelling is to analyze the measurement model in terms of reliability and validity. The most important results are presented in the Tables 3 and 4.

As for the reliability, the model in the analysis meets all the requirements. Individual loadings of indicators are bigger than .7, composite reliability indexes and Cronbach's alphas of all the constructs are bigger than .7 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Gefen & Straub, 2005).

In order to evaluate convergent validity is necessary to analyze indicator's significance and AVE (Average variance extracted). All the indicators have their bootstrapping t values very high, therefore meet the requirement to be higher than 1.96 ($p < .01$). AVE in all cases exceeds the level of .5. Those results together confirm the convergent validity of the indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

The next step of the analysis is to evaluate the discriminant validity of the indicators. For this purpose, it is necessary to compare the square roots of the AVE's and the interconstruct correlations (Table 4). The square roots of the AVEs are higher in all cases than correlations values, which means the model meets the first requirement of the discriminant validity. Another requirement lies within the cross-loadings analysis (not presented but verified). In that analysis, all the indicator's loadings are higher than loadings in other constructs, which confirms the discriminant validity of the indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 3. Measurement model indicators

Construct	Indicator	Loading	Composite reliability index	Cronbach's alpha	AVE	Indicator's sig. (t)
Enticing	Appealing	.951	.954	.903	.912	54.338
	Attractive	.958				88.353
Enabling	Help	.886	.894	.763	.808	31.983
	Funct. Satisfactory	.911				47.444
Enriching	Express	.914	.935	.895	.827	43.094
	Represent	.915				35.903
	Reinforce	.899				40.363
Brand-self distance	Close	.930	.930	.850	.869	54.348
	Connected	.934				66.571
Brand prominence	Automatic	.933	.920	.827	.852	68.122
	Natural	.914				38.555
Motivation	Approach	.927	.946	.914	.854	52.896
	Maintain	.906				40.451
	Strengthen	.939				69.197

Easy behav.	Wait 4-6 weeks	.855	.909	.849	.768	25.830
	Buy	.911				54.505
	Visit Website	.863				25.143
Moderate behav.	Recommend	.917	.872	.712	.773	61.733
	Forgive	.840				15.561
Very diff. behav.	Defend	.815	.891	.838	.673	20.015
	Spend time	.844				19.659
	Spend money	.833				20.289
	Always buy new model	.787				15.527

Source: Own Elaboration

Table 4. Inter construct correlations

	BP	BSD	Easy	Enabling	Enriching	Enticing	Moderate	Motivation	Very diff.
BP	.923								
BSD	.612	.932							
Easy	.529	.724	.876						
Enabling	.586	.758	.728	.899					
Enriching	.647	.809	.648	.749	.909				
Enticing	.544	.707	.669	.749	.729	.954			
Moderate	.523	.693	.759	.668	.638	.707	.879		
Motivation	.611	.773	.795	.789	.723	.729	.686	.854	
Very dif.	.589	.694	.801	.713	.671	.695	.769	.742	1

Note: The square root of each AVE are shown on the diagonal of the matrix.

Source: Own Elaboration

4.3 Testing the hypotheses

In order to confirm the research hypotheses, it is necessary to evaluate the structural model. It is important to pay attention to the path coefficient and its significance and also to the R^2s. The results of the testing of the structural model are demonstrated on the Figure 2.

As Figure 2 show, the explained variance (R^2) is higher in relation to 'brand-self distance' ($R^2 = 0.713$), 'motivation' ($R^2 = 0.628$) and 'easier behaviours to enact' ($R^2 = 0.632$). In relation to other variables the results are moderate: 'brand prominence' ($R^2 = 0.443$), 'moderately difficult behaviours to enact' ($R^2 = 0.471$) and 'very difficult behaviours to enact' ($R^2 = 0.550$).

The next step was evaluating the path coefficients and its significance. The significance values were achieved through the bootstrap procedure, were 1000 sample were randomly generated. In case of the hypotheses H1a, H1b and H2b the significance levels were lower than the required 1.96 (1.324 for H1a, 0.519 for H1b and 1.554 for H2b). That means that the corresponding hypothesis was not confirmed by the analysis.

As for the all the other hypotheses, the *t* values are rather high that makes it possible to state that the results of the analysis confirmed the research hypotheses H2a, H3a, H3b, H4a, H4b, H5, H6, H7.

The further analysis of the path coefficients, which were proved to be statistically significant, showed that 'enriching' determinant has a slightly stronger impact on 'brand-self distance' than on 'brand prominence'. The 'brand-self distance' has a greater effect

on 'motivation', while 'motivation' affects 'stronger easier behaviours to enact' and 'very difficult ones'.

Figure 2. Results of Model Testing
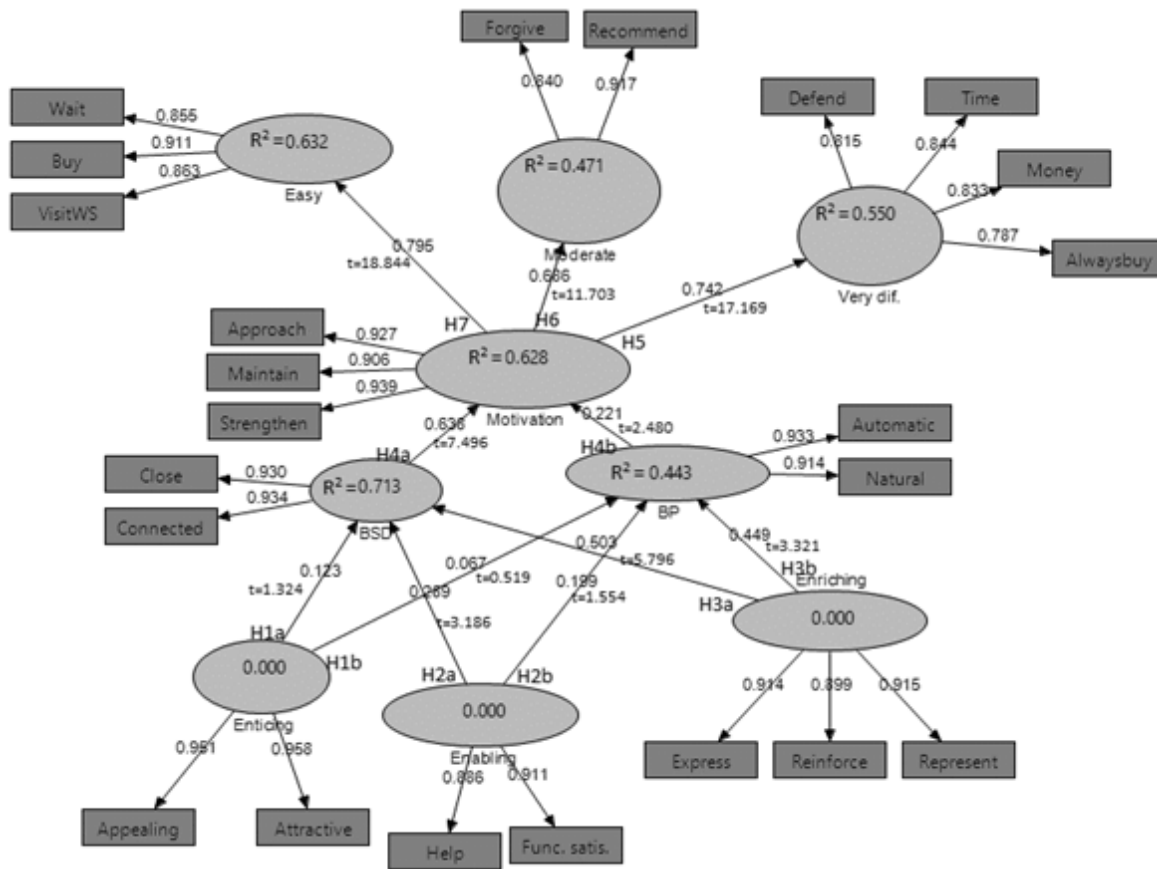
Source: Own Elaboration

5. CONCLUSION

The present study has made an attempt to confirm the Attachment-Aversion model of consumer-brand relationships, elaborated by Park *et al.* in 2013, using other type of brand and with the sample within another cultural background. The focal brand for the study was chosen from a high-end beauty category (Chanel). The final sample consisted of the current students and alumni of Belarusian universities that are Russian-speaking, fluent in English and had a class in branding.

The results have shown that the model has a good measurement fit, as all the constructs are proved to have good values, confirming their reliability, convergent and discriminant validity. As for the structural model, the results were not so flawless. Not all the research hypotheses were confirmed during the analysis. In fact, the AA-model claims that attachment-aversion relationships have three determinants. The first determinant is the brand being enticing. The present analysis didn't find a statistically significant effect of this determinant neither on the brand-self distance nor on brand prominence. Moreover, as for the second determinant, the brand being enabling, the analysis have revealed the statistically significant effect only on brand-self distance while no effect on brand prominence.

Within the AA-model of consumer-brand relationships, the attachment to the brand is explained through brand-self distance and brand prominence constructs. The analysis,

conducted within the present research, confirmed that both constructs affect the consumer's motivation towards the brand. Furthermore, the effect that brand-self distance has on motivation is much stronger than the brand prominence has.

The AA-model claims that motivation affects the behavioral intentions that appear in consumer. All the behavioral intentions are divided into easier to enact, moderately difficult and very difficult to enact. The present research confirmed that the Motivation construct influences all the three groups of behavioral intentions. While the strength of the effect doesn't differ much, the results have shown that the effect is the strongest for the easier behaviors to enact, and the weakest for the moderately difficult behaviors to enact.

All in all, the results of the analysis, conducted within the present research partly confirmed the Attachment-Aversion model of consumer-brand relationships, elaborated by Park *et al.* in 2013. While trying to apply the same model to another type of brand and to the sample with another cultural background, some of the elements of the model have shown to be insignificant. The enticing determinant has no effect on AA-relationships and the enabling determinant has no effect on the brand prominence. That shows that the Attachment-Aversion model of consumer-brand relationships has not proven to be completely versatile, while applied in the conditions of the other cultural background.

The main implication of the present study for the managers is that in the conditions of a cultural background, similar to the one, analyzed in the present study, the model can be still applied, but it requires some adjustments. For example, while planning a brand strategy, it is more important to concentrate on the brand characteristics enriching the consumer. While demonstrating that the brand is enticing for the consumer will not lead to the forming of brand attachment relationship. Also in order to stimulate consumer for action towards brand is more important concentrate on the perceived distance with the brand, then trying to achieve high levels of brand prominence.

The model was not fully confirmed while applied in conditions of other country. This finding corresponds to some other studies, performed in the field of branding while comparing cultural differences. Godey *et al.* (2012), while analyzing samples from seven countries and a similar brand category (luxury products), came to the conclusion that consumer behavior towards luxury brands significantly differs between the countries with a stable luxury market and countries, where it is still developing (like Russia, India or China). Matzler *et al.* (2016), while analysing destination brands, also came to conclusion that strategies, developed for a brand for one nations might not be effective for another.

The further analysis required to be conducted, checking the model for consumers from the countries still not analyzed and speaking other languages and also it is necessary to keep working on the model, in order to make it universal and make it possible to use it with no difference for the brand or the cultural background of the respondents.

The limitation of the present study is a relatively small number of the respondents of the final sample (273 responses). Another limitation is low response rate. The main reason for these limitations to appear is that the data was collected via online without any incentives for respondents to fill the questionnaire in, while the number of questions was quite high. So, for the future research, can be useful to verify the results with the help of a larger sample, collecting the data via other sources than Internet. This may add reliability to the findings of the study.

The analysis of the research conducted was based on the AA-model, which requires a focal brand. The choice of certain brands for analysis can be also considered as limitation, as that choice may influence the results. For the future study would be useful to support the results obtained with the help of other focal brands. The choice of the focal brand also means choosing the brand of some particular group of products that also may influence the

results. For the future study would be interesting to confirm the results of the present study on focal brands, pertaining to other group of products.

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