Brand Coolness

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ABSTRACT

Marketers strive to create cool brands, but the literature does not offer a blueprint for what brand coolness means or what features characterize cool brands. This research uses a mixed-methods approach to conceptualize brand coolness and identify a set of characteristics typically associated with cool brands. Focus groups, depth interviews, and an essay study indicate that cool brands are perceived to be extraordinary, aesthetically appealing, energetic, high status, rebellious, original, authentic, subcultural, iconic, and popular. Nine quantitative studies (surveys and experiments) develop scale items to reliably measure the component characteristics of brand coolness, show that brand coolness influences important outcome variables, including consumers' attitudes towards, satisfaction with, intentions to talk about, and willingness-to-pay for the brand, and demonstrate how cool brands change over time. At first, most brands become cool to a small niche, at which point they are perceived to be more subcultural, rebellious, authentic, and original. Over time, some cool brands become adopted by the masses, at which point they are perceived to be more popular and iconic.

Keywords: Brands, Coolness, Attitudes, Authenticity, Scale Development, Structural Equation Modeling

Consumers spend an enormous amount of money on cool brands, and brands from Off White and Apple to Instagram and Jay-Z have thrived at least in part because consumers consider them cool. Being cool has helped startup brands (e.g., Facebook) soar past established competitors (e.g., Myspace). Being uncool, conversely, can sink even popular and well-funded brands (e.g., Segway, Zune, Levi's) relegating them to the pages of cautionary case studies.

What makes a brand cool? Despite the practical and theoretical importance of this question, the answer is unclear. Although research has begun to investigate personality traits associated with cool people (Dar Nimrod et al. 2012, 2018; Horton et al. 2012; Warren, Pezzuti, and Koley 2018), cool technologies (Bruun et al. 2016; Fitton et al. 2012; Read et al. 2011), and how specific factors such as autonomy (Warren and Campbell 2014; Warren and Reimann 2019), and novelty (Im, Bhat, and Lee 2015) influence perceptions of coolness, the literature has not systematically identified the characteristics differentiating cool from uncool brands, nor has it identified how these characteristics change as brands move from being cool within a small subculture (i.e., niche cool) to the broader population (i.e., mass cool; Warren 2010).

We contribute to the literature by using grounded theory to identify the characteristics associated with cool brands. Through a series of studies leveraging focus groups, depth interviews, essay writing, surveys, and experiments, we generate and validate a measure of brand coolness that incorporates ten characteristics that distinguish cool brands from uncool brands. We find that cool brands are perceived to be extraordinary, aesthetically appealing, energetic, high status, rebellious, original, authentic, subcultural, iconic, and popular. We develop a multi-item scale that measures the ten components, as well as the higher-order construct, of brand coolness. Additionally, we explore the nomological network related to brand coolness by identifying a set of variables that are related to, yet conceptually distinct from, coolness,

including self-brand connections, brand love, brand familiarity, brand attitude, word-of-mouth about the brand, and willingness-to-pay for the brand.

Moreover, we examine the subjective and dynamic nature of brand coolness (Belk et al. 2010; Gladwell 1997; Southgate2003). Brands initially become cool to a small subculture by being original, authentic, rebellious, exceptional, and aesthetically pleasing. Such brands (e.g., Steady Hands, INSIDE, Mitsky), which we refer to as being *niche cool*, are perceived to be cool to a small group of knowledgeable insiders, although they remain relatively unfamiliar to the broader population. Over time, some niche cool brands cross over and are adopted by a wider audience, at which point they become *mass cool* (e.g,. Nike, Grand Theft Auto, Beyoncé) and are perceived to be relatively more popular and iconic, but less autonomous.

CONCEPTUALIZING COOL

Cool has many synonyms (e.g., hip, awesome, sweet, chill, badass, dope; for more see Urban Dictionary 2017), but is difficult to define. Table A-1 in Web Appendix A, which lists over 70 different ways that coolness has been described and defined, illustrates how the literature has not converged on a definition and highlights the need to establish a firmer, empirically-grounded understanding of brand coolness. Given the number of existing definitions of coolness, we believe that the field would benefit less from another definition than from a stronger understanding of how coolness applies to brands. Thus, as a starting point to investigate the characteristics of cool brands, we use Warren and Campbell's (2014, p. 544) definition of coolness as "a *subjective* and *dynamic*, socially constructed *positive* trait attributed to cultural objects inferred to be appropriately *autonomous*" (emphasis added).

This definition highlights four essential features of coolness (Anik, Miles, and Hauser 2017). One, coolness is subjective. Brands are only cool (or uncool) to the extent that consumers

consider them as such (Connor 1995; Gurrieri 2009; Pountain and Robins 2000). Consequently, uncovering what distinguishes cool from uncool brands requires collecting data about which characteristics consumers associate with the brands that they subjectively perceive to be cool.

Two, coolness has a positive valence (e.g., Dar Nimrod et al. 2012; Mohiuddin et al. 2016). Most dictionaries describe cool as an interjection used to express approval, admiration, and acceptance (Dictionary.com 2019). Studies have found that consumers associate cool products with generally desirable characteristics, including usefulness (Runyan et al. 2013; Sundar et al. 2014), excellence (Mohiuddin et al. 2016) and hedonic value (Im et al. 2015). Similarly, when asked to describe traits that they associate with cool people, survey respondents mostly list positive adjectives (e.g., attractive, friendly, competent; Dar Nimrod et al. 2012). But there is also consensus that cool is not merely a general expression of liking. Cool brands are desirable, but there is something extra that makes an object cool rather than merely being positive (Connor 1995; Pountain and Robins 2000).

A third defining feature helps distinguish cool from desirable: autonomy. Autonomy is defined as being willing and able to follow your own path rather than conform to expectations and desires of others (Warren and Campbell 2014). Autonomy cannot be directly observed, but instead must be inferred based on the extent to which someone (or something) fights conventions and norms (i.e., is rebellious; Bruun et al. 2016; Frank 1997; Pountain and Robins 2000; Read et al. 2011), attempts to be different by moving beyond conventions and norms (i.e., is original; Bruun et al. 2016; Mohiuddin et al. 2016; Read et al. 2011; Sundar et al. 2014; Warren and Reimann 2019), and behaves consistently in the face of pressure to adapt to shifting trends (i.e., is authentic; Nancarrow et al. 2003; Read et al. 2011; Sriramachandramurthy and Hodis 2010).

The fourth defining feature of coolness is that it is dynamic. The brands that are cool

today may not be cool tomorrow (Pountain and Robins 2000; O'Donnell and Wardlow 2000).

Even the characteristics – and people – that consumers associate with cool brands appear to

change over time and across different types of consumers. Most brands initially become cool

within a specific niche or subculture before later being discovered, adopted, and christened as

cool by a broader audience (Belk et al. 2010; Gladwell 1997). Interestingly, consumers tend to

use the same term, *cool*, to describe both (a) brands that their small in-group considers cool but

that have not yet become popular, and (b) brands that the general population is aware of and

considers cool (Warren 2010). Following Warren (2010), we distinguish between *niche cool*[1],

which refers to brands that are perceived to be cool by a particular subculture but that the masses

have not yet adopted, and *mass cool*, which refers to brands that are perceived to be cool by the

general population.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

The literature thus raises a number of questions about brand coolness. First, although we

know that coolness is desirable (Dar Nimrod et al. 2010; Mohiuddin et al. 2016) and autonomous

(Frank 1997; Pountain and Robins 2000), there are many ways to be desirable and autonomous.

For example, signaling high status and offering a low price are both desirable characteristics, and

being unique and being dominant both show autonomy. The literature does not specify which

desirable and autonomous characteristics make brands cool and which do not. It is also unclear

whether other characteristics that are not directly related to desirability and autonomy are

prototypical of cool brands. Researchers have suggested that coolness is related to emotional

concealment, narcissism, hedonism, excitement, sexual permissiveness, and youth (Bird and

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[1] Warren (2010) refers to this as *real cool*. We believe *niche cool* is a more apt label because both relatively obscure subcultural brands and more popular iconic brands are perceived to be cool. These two types of coolness reflect different stages in the lifecycle of a brand; although niche cool precedes mass cool, the former is not necessarily a more real or true form of coolness.

Tapp 2008; Mailer 1957; Nancarrow et al. 2003; Pountain and Robins 2000), but it is unclear if any of these characteristics distinguish cool from uncool brands. Thus, our first research question is: what characteristics are prototypical of cool brands?

Second, although there have been several attempts to measure coolness in specific product categories (Bruun et al. 2016; Sundar et al. 2014; Runyan et al. 2013), there are not established scales designed to measure the characteristics of cool brands. Identifying a measure of the different components of brand coolness is practically valuable because it would allow marketers and scholars to identify if their brand is cool and, if not, examine how and why it lacks coolness. Our second question thus is: can we develop a validated instrument to measure the component characteristics of cool brands?

Third, although both practitioners and scholars suggest that being cool helps explain why some products succeed (Belk et al. 2010, Heath and Potter 2004; Kerner, Pressman, and Essex 2007), the specific consequences of brand coolness remain unclear. Are consumers more likely to talk (i.e., spread word-of-mouth) about cool brands? Are they willing to pay more for cool brands? Importantly, can brand coolness explain substantial variance in these, or other important consequential variables, relative to that explained by previously studied constructs such as brand personality, brand love, and self-brand connections? Our third question thus is: what are the consequences of brand coolness?

Fourth, although we know that coolness is dynamic (Gladwell 1997; Heath and Potter 2004), it is not clear how the characteristics, or the consequences, of cool brands change over time. The literature speculates that brands initially become niche cool to a small subculture before becoming mass cool to a broader audience; but how the characteristics and effects of cool brands change over time is an open empirical question. Our fourth question is thus: how do the

characteristics and consequences of coolness change as brands move from niche cool to mass cool? Answering all of these questions requires data that the literature does not provide.

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

We use a grounded theory approach to identify the characteristics of cool brands, initially conducting three qualitative studies using focus groups, depth interviews, and essays with consumers from North America and Europe. We identified these characteristics by looking for similar patterns of responses across the different methods and cultures (Goulding 2000; Martin and Turner 1986) utilizing the ATLAS.ti software (Friese 2011). First, we used a process of "constant comparison" to organize and reduce the coded units across the different sets of data. Second, we actively sought theoretical relationships between these concepts at a higher level of abstraction ("axial coding"). We then organized these concepts and relationships into ten major themes. Below, we provide a summary description of our three qualitative studies (details are in Web Appendix B), followed by the themes that emerged from the analysis.

Method

We first conducted four focus groups in Western (U.K.), Eastern (Slovakia), and Southern (Portugal) Europe. The average number of participants in each group was eight, and each focus group lasted about 60 minutes. For our second qualitative study, we conducted 30 depth interviews with consumers in Portugal. The interviews followed a methodological procedure similar to that outlined by McCracken (1988; see also Gubrium and Holstein 2001). Informants were asked a series of grand tour questions, including "What are the essential characteristics that you associate with cool brands?" In our third qualitative study, 75 students at a university in the United States wrote two essays, one describing a brand they thought was cool and another describing a brand they liked but did not think was cool.

Themes in the Qualitative Data

Ten themes, or characteristics, related to brand coolness emerged from the focus group, interview, and essay responses. Specifically, respondents perceived cool brands to be useful/extraordinary, aesthetically appealing, energetic, high status, original, authentic, rebellious, subcultural, iconic, and popular. Table 1 defines each characteristic and notes prior research that has suggested a relationship between the characteristic and coolness.

Useful/Extraordinary. A common theme in the focus groups, interviews, and essays was that cool brands are useful, meaning that they are high quality, offer tangible benefits, or help consumers in some way. One respondent wrote that he perceived Vic Firth to be a cool brand "because of their high-quality product." Another stated that Chrome Industries is a cool brand because "their bags are well known for their durability and functionality." The theme that cool brands are useful converges with evidence in the literature that there is a strong association between perceived coolness and traits that are desired or valued (e.g., Dar Nimrod et al. 2012; Im et al. 2016). Some respondents, however, indicated that cool brands are more than just useful, they are extraordinary. Respondents thought that Apple was cool because they offer "previously unheard of capabilities," the brand "pushes the limit in the electronic industry," or simply because, "I think they are awesome." The finding that cool brands are extraordinary fits both with literature that highlights the positive valence of coolness (e.g., Belk et al., 2010; Dar-Nimrod et al. 2012) and with dictionary definitions of cool (e.g., Dictionary.com 2019).

Aesthetically Appealing. Another recurring theme across the focus groups, interviews, and essays was that cool brands are aesthetically appealing. Respondents indicated that Apple is cool in part because their products are "elegantly designed." Respondents similarly noted the aesthetic appeal of other brands that they perceived to be cool across a range of industries from

apparel to magazines: "I am very impressed by the design and layout of the magazine (Wired), and I keep each issue to reference for when I am doing graphic design myself." The theme that cool brands have aesthetic appeal is consistent with prior attempts to measure coolness in clothing and technological products (Bruun et al. 2016; Runyan et al. 2013; Sundar et al. 2014).

Energetic. A third theme that emerged was that cool brands are active, outgoing, youthful, or, more generally, energetic. Respondents indicated that cool brands make them feel good, connect with consumers on an emotional level, and help consumers have remarkable experiences. For example, respondents indicated that brands like Red Bull and GoPro are cool because they are associated with exciting activities, including daring stunts and extreme sports. This notion that cool brands are energetic is consistent with the "Brand Energy" construct used by the Brand Asset Valuator (BAV) system of assessing brand strength (Gerzema, Lebar and Rivers 2009). Although some researchers have suggested that coolness is associated with similar traits, including youth (O'Donnell and Wardlow 2000; Runyan et al. 2013), hedonism (Pountain and Robins 2000), and "sexual permissiveness" (Bird and Tapp 2008), prior research on coolness has rarely discussed being energetic as a characteristic of cool brands. Two exceptions are Aaker (1997) and Sriramachandramurthy and Hodis (2010), who suggest a link between perceived coolness and excitement.

High Status. Many respondents viewed cool brands as having high social status or possessing traits associated with high status, such as being exclusive, upper class, glamorous, and sophisticated. Respondents wrote that Chanel perfume is cool because, "It makes me feel classy, chic, and elegant," and that Louis Vuitton is cool "because of its exclusivity, not everyone owns something from Louis Vuitton." Given the close link between status and coolness in people (Belk et al. 2010; Heath and Potter 2004; Warren 2010), it is not surprising that

respondents similarly viewed cool brands as having high status.

Original. Another theme in the focus groups, interviews, and essays was that cool brands are original. One respondent eloquently articulated this theme, stating "the uncool will be doing tomorrow what the cool have done before." Respondents described cool brands as being original, creative, "one step ahead," and as consistently reinventing themselves. As already noted, the literature similarly notes a close association between coolness and originality (Bruun et al. 2016; Runyan et al. 2013; Warren and Campbell 2014; Warren and Reimann 2019).

Authentic. Another theme in the responses was that cool brands are authentic. "Authentic" was the word most frequently associated with cool brands in the focus group sessions. Authenticity comes in a variety of flavors (Newman and Smith 2016; Becker, Wiegand, and Reinartz 2019), and the flavor that our respondents mentioned – the brand behaving consistently and remaining true to its roots – has been called value authenticity (Biraglia, Brakus, and Newman 2019), moral authenticity (Beverland, Lindgreen, and Vink 2009), sincerity (Napoli et al. 2014), and integrity (Morhart et al. 2014). One respondent stated, "Cool brands don't try to be cool and they are just what they really are." Another wrote that the record label Fueled by Ramen "is a cool brand primarily due to its subject matter and authenticity…. It has deviated very little from the genre with which it started and increases its reputation with each new successful alternative band that it cultivates." Others noted the continuity over time in cool brands, like Jack Daniels, with a traditional or vintage image. The link between coolness and authenticity is consistent with prior research on coolness (Anik et al. 2017; Biraglia et al. 2019; Nancarrow et al. 2003; Read et al. 2011).

Rebellious. A similar theme in the focus groups and interviews was that cool brands are rebellious. One respondent noted, "Something controversial is in many cases the coolest."

Respondents thought that brands like Red Bull, Harley Davidson, Betsey Johnson, and Apple became cool by being "rule breakers," "irreverent," or "revolutionary." As previously discussed, the literature has historically linked coolness to rebellion (Frank 1997; Pountain and Robins 2000), and this association has been at least partially supported by recent data (Biraglia et al. 2019; Dar Nimrod et al. 2012; Warren and Campbell 2014).

Subcultural. Another theme was that cool brands are associated with a particular subculture (Hebdige 1979; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). One respondent noted that using cool brands provides "the satisfaction of being part of a different sub-culture." Respondents associated cool brands with a range of different subcultures, including rock climbers (Black Diamond), biker messengers (Chrome Industries), and alternative music (Converse). Even when they become popular, cool brands (e.g., Nike) usually maintain a link to a subculture (e.g., athletes). Research is consistent with the idea that cool brands are tied to specific subcultures, including those linked with jazz, raves, hip hop, extreme sports, high school cliques, or any other group perceived to be distinct from the mainstream (Danesi 1994; Mailer 1957; Thornton 1995).

Iconic. Another theme emerging from the focus groups, interviews, and essays was that cool brands are *iconic*. By iconic, we mean that the brand holds an especially strong and valued meaning to consumers (Holt 2004). There was a high overlap between the brands that our respondents identified as cool and the brands that Holt (2004; Holt and Cameron 2010) describes as cultural icons (e.g., Apple, Nike, Patagonia, Jack Daniels). Moreover, our respondents highlighted how cool brands can symbolize memories, social relationships, identity traits, and cultural values. For example, one wrote, "Disney is a symbol of childhood and being young and allows people to act young at heart which I think also helps add to the idea that Disney is cool." All strong brands acquire some symbolic meaning (Keller 1993; Levy 1959), but respondents

view cool brands as having especially potent meanings that reflect their shared cultural values and beliefs. For example, European respondents who value social responsibility considered socially conscious and environmentally friendly brands, such the Finnish brand Globe Hope, cool. The literature notes the strong symbolism of cool brands (Belk et al. 2010; Warren and Campbell 2014), although we are not aware of previous work that has attempted to operationalize or measure the extent to which cool brands are iconic.

Popular. A final theme in the focus groups, interviews, and essays is that cool brands are popular, meaning that they seem trendy or widely admired by consumers. For example, one European respondent stated that for a brand to be cool, "It has to be recognized all over the world." Similarly, an American respondent wrote, "I consider Nike cool because it is a brand widely worn among a variety of people." We note here that some of the prior literature suggests that, paradoxically, cool brands are scarce (instead of popular), meaning that they are rare, exclusive, or not accessible to everyone (Nancarrow et al. 2003; Pountain and Robins 2000; Tapp and Bird 2008). However, papers that have used quantitative methods to study coolness have not found a link between scarcity and coolness in either people (Dar Nimrod et al. 2012; Horton et al. 2012) or products (Bruun et al. 2016; Runyan et al. 2013; Sundar et al. 2014). We too did not find adequate empirical support for a general link between scarcity and brand coolness in either our qualitative research and in our quantitative surveys (see Web Appendices B and C) [2]. Study 8, however, can explain why cool brands may be associated with scarcity and subcultures as well as popular trends: brands initially become cool when they are associated with a subculture (i.e., niche cool), but they later become popular and trendy after a wider population discovers the brand (i.e., mass cool; Gladwell 1997; Warren and Campbell 2014). In other

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[2] Our respondents did suggest that cool brands are exclusive, which we interpret as part of the brand having high status rather than as it being scarce or lacking popularity.

words, cool brands typically begin as scarce and subcultural, but later become more popular as they are discovered and transition from niche cool to mass cool (see figure 1b).

Differences Between Cool and Uncool Brands

We subsequently assessed the frequency with which participants noted the aforementioned themes while writing about the cool and uncool brands in qualitative study 3 (essay writing). Specifically, a research assistant indicated whether or not the 75 essays mentioned each of the ten characteristics that appeared in the qualitative responses both in the description of the cool brand and the description of the uncool brand. If the essay noted a high level of the characteristic (e.g., "brand X is original"), the research assistant coded it as a 1; if not, he coded it as a 0 (complete results in Table B-1 in Web Appendix B). The characteristic that essay respondents most strongly associated with cool brands was being iconic. Most (73%) noted that cool brands seem iconic or that they symbolize an important value, belief, or memory (only 8% of uncool brands were described as being iconic; $\chi^2 = 66.34$, $p < .001$). Most respondents similarly reported that cool brands were extraordinary or useful (76%), although this did not distinguish cool from uncool brands, as respondents also considered most uncool brands useful (71%; $\chi^2 = .55$, $p = .46$). Responses suggested several additional characteristics that distinguish cool from uncool brands. Specifically, they were more likely to describe cool brands as being subcultural (44% vs. 7%; $\chi^2 = 27.63$, $p < .001$), original (33% vs. 4%; $\chi^2 = 21.25$, $p < .001$), aesthetically appealing (25% vs. 4%; $\chi^2 = 18.85$, $p < .001$), popular (17% vs. 4%; $\chi^2 = 7.00$, $p = .008$), high status (15% vs. 4%; $\chi^2 = 5.04$, $p = .02$), and energetic (8% vs. 0%; $\chi^2 = 6.25$, $p = .01$) than uncool brands. In contrast to the focus group and depth interview respondents, few essay respondents explicitly mentioned authenticity or rebellion when describing cool brands.

Themes Absent in the Qualitative Data

The focus groups, depth interviews, and essays were insightful not only for the themes in the responses but also from the themes that had been mentioned in the literature but that did not emerge. One conspicuously absent theme was cultural knowledge, which scholars argue helps make people cool (Danesi 1994; Nancarrow et al. 2003; Southgate 2003; Thornton 1995). Other themes that the literature discusses but that did not clearly emerge in the data were emotional concealment, friendliness, and competence (Dar Nimrod et al. 2012; Horton et al. 2012; Pountain and Robins 2000; Warren et al. 2018). One way to reconcile the absence of cultural knowledge, friendliness, and competence in our findings is by recognizing that these traits are desirable in people (Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick 2007), just as being extraordinary, energetic, and aesthetically appealing are desirable in brands. Thus, desirable traits are cool in both people and brands, but the traits that are desired differ for people and brands. Just as the relevant aspects of personality and love differ between people and brands (Aaker 1997; Batra et al. 2012), some of the characteristics of cool people do not apply to cool brands.

STRUCTURAL AND NOMOLOGICAL MODELING: QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

We conducted eight survey studies to identify the higher-order structure of the characteristics of brand coolness that emerged in the qualitative research and to test their nomological relationships with related constructs. Each study asked respondents to evaluate a brand that they consider cool, a brand that they do not consider cool, or both. The first four studies were pretests, in which we developed and refined the measures for the structural and nomological models. Due to length constraints, we describe these studies in Web Appendix C. Study 5 had three purposes. First, it confirmed the structural measurement model for the ten characteristics associated with brand coolness (useful, aesthetically appealing, energetic, high status, rebellious, original, authentic, subcultural, iconic, and popular). Second, the study

confirmed that all ten characteristics were more closely associated with cool brands than uncool brands. Third, the study tested the nomological relationship between brand coolness and related constructs, including brand personality, self-brand connections, brand love, brand attitude, willingness-to-pay for the brand (WTP), and intentions to spread word-of-mouth (WOM) about the brand. The last three studies replicated and extended study 5. Study 6 improved our measure of brand coolness by developing items that better capture the extent to which the brand seems *extraordinary* rather than merely *useful*. Study 7 used a purely confirmatory design to replicate the results of study 6. Finally, study 8 examined the dynamic and subjective nature of brand coolness by testing how the characteristics and consequences differ between niche cool brands, mass cool brands, and uncool brands within a subculture of urban streetwear enthusiasts.

Method

Samples. Studies 5 (N = 315; 50% male; modal age = 42) and 6 (N = 315; 47% male; modal age = 25-30) recruited American consumers from a nationally representative online survey panel. Study 7 recruited participants from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (N = 405; 58% male; modal age 25-30; all in the USA). Study 8 recruited 148 streetwear fashion enthusiasts by offering a Gold Award[3] to readers of the Reddit board r/streetwear who completed the survey. The sample for study 8 was mostly young (average age = 19; range = 13 to 41) and male (93%), but racially diverse (53% white, 27% Asian, 5% Hispanic, 3% Black).

Brand Nominations. In each study, participants nominated and evaluated one or more brands (see Web Appendix D for details). In studies 5 and 6, participants nominated and evaluated a brand that they personally consider cool and a brand that they like but do not personally consider cool. In studies 7 and 8, we manipulated the brand type between-subjects,

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[3] Gold Awards, which can be purchased or gifted to others, grant users access to premium features on Reddit.

such that participants nominated a cool or uncool brand (study 7), or a niche cool, mass cool, or uncool fashion brand (study 8). For example, in study 8, participants in the "uncool" condition read, "Please identify a brand that you consider <u>not cool.</u> Neither you nor the 'mass market' think that this brand has ever been cool, today or in the past." Participants in the "mass cool" condition read, "Please identify a fashion brand that is cool to mainstream consumers. That is, name a brand that is <u>mass cool</u>." And participants in the "niche cool" condition read, "Please identify a fashion brand that is cool to you (but not to the mainstream). That is, name a brand that is <u>niche cool</u>."

Measuring Cool Characteristics. After participants nominated the brand (or brands), we asked them to rate the brand (or brands; order counterbalanced) on a series of five-point agree-disagree scale items. Based on our literature review, qualitative research, and four pretest studies (see Web Appendix C), study 5 used the 36 items listed in table 3 to measure the extent to which each brand was perceived to be useful, aesthetically appealing, energetic, high status, rebellious, original, authentic, subcultural, iconic, and popular. In study 6, we explored whether the extent to which the brand seems extraordinary better captures the construct of coolness than the extent to which it seems useful by adding four new items (e.g., "X is exceptional") as possible replacements for the three useful items. Studies 7 and 8 used the final 37 item scale (see table 3) to measure the extent to which the brand seems extraordinary (instead of useful) along with the other nine characteristics.

Measuring Related Constructs. The studies also measured various constructs that the literature suggests might be related to brand coolness. All four studies measured: (a) brand love (two-item measure from Batra et al. 2012); (b) self-brand connections (five-item measure adapted from Escalas and Bettman 2003); (c) WOM related to the brand (e.g., "In the past few

months, how often have you talked about [brand name] with other people, online or offline?");
and (d) WTP for the brand (e.g., "I am willing to pay a higher price for this brand than other
brands"). Studies 5, 7 and 8 measured brand attitudes. Studies 5 and 7 measured the five
dimensions of brand personality (ruggedness, excitement, sophistication, competence, and
sincerity) using Aaker's (1997) 22-item scale. Studies 7 and 8 measured the extent to which (a)
participants had been exposed to the brand (e.g., "In the past few months, how often have you
heard other people talk about [brand name]?"); (b) the brand is familiar (e.g., "this brand is well-
known"); and (c) the brand commands a price premium (e.g., "this brand costs more than others
in the same product category."). Finally, study 5 measured satisfaction (three items from
Netemeyer et al. 2004), delight (six items adapted from Finn 2005), and pride (five items adapted
from Tracy and Robins 2007) from owning the brand. We provide a complete list of measures in
Web Appendix D.

Manipulation Checks. In addition to measuring the characteristics associated with brand
coolness (e.g., extraordinary, aesthetic, etc.), studies 6-8 asked participants to directly rate the
extent to which they personally consider the brands cool. Studies 7 and 8 also measured the
extent to which participants believe that other people consider the brand cool. Finally, to capture
the dynamic nature of coolness that we were investigating in study 8, participants indicated how
the coolness of the brand has changed in the past and how they expect it to change in the future.

Individual Difference Measures. Study 8 measured participants' need for uniqueness
(short-form; Ruvio, Shoham, and Brenčič 2008), innovativeness (items from Hurt et al. 1977),
subjective expertise in fashion, and experience reading and posting on the r/streetwear forum.
The studies concluded by measuring participants' demographic variables (e.g., age, gender,
native language). None of these individual differences interacted with the results we report

below, so we do not discuss them further. Note that Studies 7 and 8 also included theoretically unrelated "marker variables" for a methods factor test, described below and in appendix I.

Measurement Model of Brand Coolness

We refined and revised the measurement items using exploratory factor analysis (EFA; studies 1 – 4) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA; studies 5 – 8; see table 2). Specifically, we used the pretests to eliminate or replace items that either did not load highly onto the factor they were intended to measure or that cross-loaded onto multiple factors (Hair et al. 2006; Nunnally 1978), keeping in mind the characteristics identified from our literature review and qualitative analyses (details in Web Appendix C). We used studies 5 – 8 to confirm our final model (see figure 1a). We used a reflective instead of a formative model at each level for two reasons. One, the logic underlying reflective models better fits our conceptualization of brand coolness: the ten characteristics derived from the qualitative analyses are more appropriately considered to be manifestations of the latent construct of brand coolness, rather than formative measures that define it. Two, the coefficients in formative models can vary with the number and structure of the measures and factors used (Howell, Breivik, and Wilcox 2007; Bagozzi 2011; Edwards 2011), which makes them less appropriate in our context.[4]

Our data revealed a final model with brand coolness consisting of two higher-order factors, which we call desirability and positive autonomy, along with five first-order factors (see figure 1a). The three characteristics of *useful (later: extraordinary)*, *energetic*, and *aesthetic appeal* load onto the sub-dimension of *desirability*; the two first-order factors of *original* and *authentic* load onto the sub-dimension of *positive autonomy*. Both *desirability* and *positive*

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[4] Although formative models do not fit our context well, they may be appropriate in others (Bagozzi, 2007, 2011; Diamantopoulos, Riefler, and Roth, 2008; Edwards 2011), especially when the MIMIC formulation can be estimated without problems caused by multicollinearity (Bagozzi 2007), which do create problems in our context.

autonomy are dimensions of higher-order brand coolness, along with *high status, rebellious, subcultural, iconic, and popular*, which load as first-order factors onto higher-order brand coolness. Table 3 shows the estimated measurement and structural coefficients from studies 5 – 8. Where available, we report within-group, completely standardized coefficients for the cool and non-cool brand samples separately. Note that study 5 used three items measuring whether the brand is useful, whereas studies 6, 7 and 8 replaced these with the four new items measuring whether the brand is extraordinary.

Table 3 reveals that our factors and model structure were stable across all of the studies and samples, with a few small differences. The factor loadings were high, and the AVE and CCR statistics for all factors were almost always above 0.50^5 and 0.70, respectively. We formally tested for the equivalence of measurement and structural coefficients across the cool and uncool samples in Studies 5, 6 and 7, and almost all were equivalent (see Web Appendix E). In the few cases where the coefficients differed (e.g., iconic and popularity in Study 8), the differences, which were small, were likely because we needed to estimate the CFA model across the niche cool, mass cool, and uncool brand subsamples to get a sufficient sample size.

The goodness-of-fit indices also showed an excellent fit across all of the studies and subsamples. For example, the statistics for the cool brand subsample in study 5 were $\chi^2(582) = 1283.33$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .06, NNFI = .97, CFI = .97, and SRMR = .08. The uncool brand subsample in study 5 showed a similarly excellent fit: $\chi_2(582) = 1226.62$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .06, NNFI = .98, CFI = .98, and SRMR = .07. As illustrated in Table 3, the goodness of fit measures were similar in studies 6 – 8. Thus, our measurement model of brand coolness satisfies conventional tests of adequacy. Across studies 5-7, the measurement factor loadings for the

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[5] The sole exception was close, at 0.45 for Cool/Original, in study 5.

characteristics of cool brands averaged .81: their range was from .62 to .96. For non-cool brands, their average was .86: the range was from .53 to .97. The factor-loadings from the first-order to second-order factors (e.g., originality to positive autonomy) ranged, across all the samples and studies, from .75 to .99, averaging .90. The betas from the second-order factors to higher-order brand coolness (e.g., desirability to higher-order brand coolness) ranged from .38 to 1.0, averaging 0.86. They were highest on average for desirability (.99) and positive autonomy (.92), lowest for rebellious (.59) and iconic (.62), and mid-range for high status (.68), popular (.72), and subcultural (.65).

Comparing Cool to Uncool Brands

In addition to showing sound measurement properties, the characteristics of brand coolness in our model reliably distinguished cool from uncool brands (see Table 4). Paired-sample t-tests comparing the average ratings for the cool vs. uncool brands confirmed that the brands that participants nominated as being cool were perceived to be significantly more useful (study 5) or extraordinary (studies 6 – 8), energetic, aesthetically appealing, original, authentic, rebellious, high status, popular, subcultural, and iconic than the brands nominated as being uncool (p-values < .001; means in Table 4).

Across our studies, the brands that consumers most frequently selected as being cool included Apple (6.5 on a 7-point scale), which seemed especially original, popular, and aesthetically appealing; Nike (6.6 overall), which seemed especially popular; Samsung (6.4), which seemed especially original; UnderArmour (6.6), which seemed especially popular and aesthetically appealing; and Adidas (6.6), which seemed especially popular (see Table 4). Interestingly, different participants nominated many of these same brands (Apple, Nike, Samsung, Adidas) as being uncool, because they perceived the brands to be lower status, less

subcultural, and less rebellious. Other brands that participants frequently nominated as being uncool include Microsoft, Reebok, Old Navy, Walmart, and Crocs. The fact that consumers in studies 5 - 7 differed about which brands were cool and uncool confirms the subjective nature of coolness, especially when looking across a diverse sample of consumers. As we might expect, participants in study 8, who were all part of an urban streetwear subculture, agreed more about which brands were and were not cool compared to participants in studies 5 – 7.

Are Cool Brands Extraordinary or Merely Useful?

As previously mentioned, Study 6 tested whether our model and scale would be conceptually and empirically stronger if the first characteristic measured how *extraordinary* (four items: exceptional, superb, fantastic and extraordinary) the brand was as opposed to measuring the extent to which the brand seemed (merely) *useful* (three items: useful, helpful, and valuable). Study 6 therefore measured all 7 of these items and compared the coefficients and fit statistics of models that used either the new *extraordinary* items or the old *useful* items. The models were not nested, which makes chi-square difference tests inappropriate; however, the model fit statistics (NNFI, CFI, RMSEA, SRMR) for the new 4-item models were superior or equal to those for the old 3-item models. The completely standardized lambda coefficients for the *extraordinary* items were all very high (.89-.97) in both the cool and uncool subsamples. Most important, the structural coefficients from the first-order *useful/extraordinary* factor, to the second-order *desirability* factor, were higher with the new 4 items than with the old 3 items, increasing from .77 to .83 (for cool brands) and from .85 to .93 (for uncool brands). The structural coefficients from the desirability second-order factor to the overall brand coolness factor were also slightly higher in both cases, increasing from .99 to 1.0. Based on this empirical evidence, and given the strong conceptual argument favoring this change (e.g. Belk et al. 2010;

Pountain and Robins 2000), we replaced the earlier 3 *useful* items with these 4 *extraordinary* items in studies 6-8 and in the final recommended items for our brand coolness scale.

Discriminant Validity of Brand Coolness from Conceptually Related Constructs

Theoretical Distinctions. Brand coolness should be related to, but conceptually distinct from, the related constructs of brand love, self-brand connections, particular dimensions of brand personality, and brand attitudes. Brand coolness is a perceived *attribute of* a brand, whereas both brand love and self-brand connections should be *responses to* – thus *consequences of* – brand coolness. Although there is likely some overlap between specific characteristics of coolness (in particular, high status, energetic, and useful/extraordinary) and specific dimensions of brand personality (sophistication, excitement, and competence, respectively), our latent construct of higher-order brand coolness, which includes many other constituent characteristics (see Figure 1a), should display discriminant validity from these brand personality dimensions. Brand coolness should also be discriminable from brand attitudes, since there is something extra that makes an object cool rather than merely being positive (Warren and Campbell 2014).

Empirical Discrimination. We tested discriminant validity in Studies 5-8 by estimating the disattenuated, latent, psi correlations between multiple pairs of variables to test if the 95% confidence intervals of these fell significantly below 1.0 (Bagozzi and Yi 2012). As reported in Web Appendix F, the analyses confirmed the discriminant validity between constructs. For instance, in study 7, the phi's (s.e.'s) of brand coolness with brand love for cool and non-cool brands are .59(.06) and .42(.07), and with self-brand connections .59(.05) and .50(.06). The correlations between brand coolness and brand attitudes were also below 1.0, 0.56 (.06) and 0.40 (.07), respectively. Between the five brand personality dimensions and brand coolness, each pair of disattenuated correlations was statistically significantly below 1.0 (ranging from 0.32 to .87).

Correlates, Consequences, and Mediation

Theoretical Correlates: Brand Personality. Brand personality is the set of human characteristics associated with a brand (Aaker 1997). Brand personality serves a symbolic or self-expressive function for consumers, and consists of five core dimensions: sophistication, competence, ruggedness, excitement, and sincerity (Aaker 1997). It could be argued that these brand personality perceptions should likely make that brand seem more, or less, cool, and thus serve as antecedents of overall perceived brand coolness. On the other hand, it could also be argued that the multiple marketing and socio-cultural elements (e.g., communications content and choice of endorsers, to name just two) that shape these brand personality perceptions should also simultaneously shape the perceived coolness of the brand. Therefore, it is difficult (especially in cross-sectional survey data) to empirically determine which perceptual changes came first. Since some of a brand's personality dimensions (especially excitement and sophistication) are conceptually similar to some of our brand coolness components (energetic and status, respectively), and since it is unreasonable in our data to expect a strong empirical signal about which comes first, we chose to be cautious in our analyses and modeled the 5 brand personality dimensions as correlates, rather than antecedents, of higher-order brand coolness. This has the benefit of yielding model estimates of the effects of brand coolness on mediating (e.g., brand love, self-brand connections) and dependent variables (brand attitude, WOM, WTP) that are "net of" (i.e. they control for and partial out) the effects of these independently measured brand personality dimensions, and are thus more conservative.[6]

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[6] Moreover, in study 5, the data appear to fit slightly better with a model that included the brand personality dimensions as correlates rather than antecedents of brand coolness. For both the cool and not-cool brand samples, the models in which these brand personality dimensions were modeled as correlates, rather than antecedents, fit better (cool: NNFI 0.96 vs. 0.95; CFI 0.97 vs. 0.96; SRMS 0.084 vs. 0.091; RMSEA 0.068 vs. 0.084; Not-Cool, NNFI 0.98 vs. 0.97; CFI 0.98 vs. 0.97; SRMR 0.069 vs. 0.084; RMSEA 0.064 vs. 0.095).

Theoretical Consequences. To examine the consequences of brand coolness, our nomological model also estimated the effects of overall brand coolness on several different dependent variables: self-brand connections (studies 5-8), brand love (studies 5-8), WTP (studies 5-8), willingness to spread WOM (studies 5-8), brand attitudes (studies 5, 7, & 8), brand familiarity (studies 7-8), brand exposure (studies 7-8), if the brand commands a price premium (studies 7-8), satisfaction (study 5), delight (study 5), and pride (study 5) in owning the brand.

Consumers view coolness as a desirable trait (Dar Nimrod et al. 2012; Mohiuddin et al. 2016; Pountain and Robins 2000). Moreover, we find that brand coolness includes multiple characteristics (e.g., being extraordinary and aesthetically pleasing) that consumers consider desirable. Consequently, we hypothesize that brand coolness should predict consumers overall attitude towards the brand, and we include brand attitude valence as a consequence of brand coolness. Beyond increasing overall desirability and liking, brand coolness should also increase several other types of distinct positive feelings towards the brand. Because cool brands are considered desirable, coolness should create a feeling of high overall satisfaction with the brand (Oliver 1980). The satisfaction literature also talks of feelings of delight, in which high-arousal feelings of joy and surprise augment the more cognitively-based satisfaction assessment (Bartl, Gouthier, and Lenker 2013); coolness should increase delight as well, especially since coolness is partially determined by the extent to which a brand is energetic and aesthetically appealing, both of which have strong affective components.

Brand coolness also has components that are value-expressive in nature, including positive autonomy, rebellion, high status, subcultural appeal, and iconic symbolism (Berger and Heath 2007; Holt 2004). We therefore hypothesize brand coolness will strengthen self-brand connections (Escalas and Bettman 2003), since self-brand connections increase as a brand's

symbolic aspects become more consistent with a consumer's aspirational reference groups. Consumers' relationships with a cool brand might also extend beyond self-brand connections to increase *brand love*, a broad brand relationship construct that includes current and desired self-identity (Batra et al. 2012). Because of the desirable and identity-relevant characteristics associated with cool brands, it is similarly likely that consumers will also feel greater pride from owning brands that they perceive to be cool (Tracy and Robbins 2007).

Both self-brand connections and brand love tend to increase consumers' willingness to pay (WTP) for and likelihood of discussing (word-of-mouth; WOM) a brand (Batra et al. 2012; Escalas and Bettman 2003). Thus, if brand coolness increases self-brand connections and brand love, as we hypothesize, then consumers should be WTP more for the brand and want to tell others how great it is (i.e., WOM). Finally, because cool brands are high status, popular, and iconic, we also expect that they will command a higher price premium, be familiar to more consumers, and gain more exposure compared to brands that are not cool.

Results of Nomological Models. We tested these predictions by modeling overall (higher-order) brand coolness as being correlated with the five dimensions of brand personality (in studies 5 and 7) and as leading to a set of consequences (which varied slightly depending on which consequence variables we measured in the studies; see table G-1 in the appendix), including brand attitudes, self-brand connections, brand love, WTP, WOM, brand familiarity, brand exposure, price premium, satisfaction, delight, and pride. In order to obtain a reasonable ratio of sample size to the number of estimated parameters in the predictive model (e.g., Bagozzi and Heatherton 1994; Bagozzi and Edwards 1998), we averaged the items for each predicted variable. For each study, we then created structural equation models (SEM) in which the CFA model of higher-order brand coolness (see figure 1a) served as an independent variable, the

consequences (e.g., self-brand connections, brand love, etc.) served as endogenous dependent variables, and the dimensions of brand personality served as correlates (studies 5 and 7 only).

Across studies, the model fit was satisfactory. For example, the fit for the nomological SEM in study 5 was: $\chi^2(1077) = 2694.88$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .075, NNFI = .94, CFI = .96, and SRMR = .085. The SEM with the not-cool brand subsample also fit well: $\chi^2(1077) = 2442.91$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .069, NNFI = .98, CFI = .98, and SRMR = .069. Brand coolness was significantly correlated, but also showed discriminant validity (see the previous section), with all five dimensions of brand personality. Brand coolness was most closely related to the sophisticated, competent, and exciting dimensions of brand personality; this pattern makes sense, given that three of the characteristics of higher-order brand coolness include being high status, useful (study 5)/extraordinary (studies 6-8), and energetic.

Additionally, in all of the studies, higher-order brand coolness significantly predicted the measured consequence variables, including brand love (studies 5-8), self-brand connections (studies 5-8), brand attitude (studies 5-8), WTP (studies 5-8), WOM (studies 5-8), brand familiarity (studies 7-8), brand exposure (studies 7-8), brand price premium (studies 7-8), delight (study 5), satisfaction (study 5), and pride (study 5).

Variance Explained by Brand Coolness. In order to test whether brand coolness can help marketers predict outcomes that they care about, such as the extent to which consumers hold a positive attitude towards and are willing to pay for the brand, we examined how much variance higher-order brand coolness explained in the outcome variables (brand attitude, WTP, and WOM) relative to more established constructs in the literature, including brand love and self-brand connections (SBC). Across all our studies, brand coolness explained between 32 and 70% of the variance in brand attitudes, an amount that was similar to the variation explained by brand

love (26-85%) and SBC (19-67%). Brand coolness similarly explained a comparable amount of variance in WOM (32-57%) and WTP (32-79%) as brand love (WOM: 25-74%; WTP: 29-86%) and SBC (WOM: 26-79%; WTP: 29-84%). As detailed in Web Appendix G, the amount of variance that brand coolness explained varied by outcome, study, and brand sample. For example, in Study 7, in the cool (non-cool) brands data, the variance explained in brand attitude by brand coolness alone was 54% (32%), vs. 48% (85%) by brand love alone and 22% (64%) by SBC alone. The variance explained in WOM by brand coolness alone by was 32% (57%), vs. 35% (25%) by brand love alone and 32% (26%) by SBC alone. For WTP, the variance explained by brand coolness alone was 38% (67%), vs. 45% (47%) by brand love alone and 33% (47%) by SBC alone. These results show that brand coolness has a lot of explanatory power and is thus worth studying as a construct in its own right. Table 4 also shows how the mean levels of brands on these outcome variables become higher when the brand is seen as cool, versus less cool.

Mediation Tests. The nomological models above estimated only the direct effects of higher-order brand coolness on the many outcome variables; they did not test for mediation. Although cross-sectional data do not allow us to unambiguously establish causal sequences, it is nonetheless interesting to test whether the data were consistent with the hypothesis that brand love and self-brand connections mediate the effects of brand coolness on brand attitude, WTP, and WOM. We therefore estimated structural equation models to test these hypothesized mediating paths in studies 5, 6, and 7. We provide the details for these analyses in Web Appendix H. To summarize results, the effect of higher-order brand coolness on each of the dependent variables – brand attitude, word-of-mouth, and WTP – was partially or fully mediated by self-brand connections and brand love in each study and subsample. As a specific example, in Study 7, the cool brands data, brand coolness significantly influenced brand love (standardized

coefficient .77) and SBC (.67); brand love significantly influenced brand attitudes (1.86), WTP (1.34), and WOM (0.55); SBC significantly influenced brand attitude (-1.01) but did not significantly influence WOM or WTP. Brand coolness also directly and significantly influenced brand attitude (0.61) and WTP (.65) but not WOM. In sum, brand love fully mediated the effects of brand coolness on WOM, but partially mediated the effects on brand attitude and WTP. This pattern of mediation supports the conceptual argument that brand coolness, which a consumer perceives *in* a brand, is an antecedent to constructs such as brand love and self-brand connections, which are a consumer's evaluative *responses to* a brand resulting from the properties perceived in the brand.

The Study 7 results illustrate both the large amounts of variance explained in the outcome constructs by higher-order brand coolness, and the mediation pathways for these effects. In the cool (non-cool) brand sample, brand coolness explained 35% (57%) of the variance in SBC, 42% (52%) in brand love, 52% (77%) in brand attitudes, 43% (56%) in WTP, and 31% (25%) in WOM. For the cool (non-cool) brands, the standardized direct path coefficients from brand coolness to the outcome constructs (all $p<.01$) were: SBC .59 (.76), brand love .65 (.72), brand attitude .53 (.27), WTP .51 (.52), and WOM .18 (.20). For cool brands, the standardized indirect path coefficients from SBC to brand attitude (-.28) and WOM (.24) were both significant, as was the path from brand love to brand attitudes (.46). For the non-cool brands, the standardized indirect path coefficients from SBC to WTP (.34) and WOM (.33) were significant, as was the path from brand love to brand attitude (.55). Thus, the effects of higher-order brand coolness on each of the dependent variables – brand attitude, word-of-mouth, and willingness-to-pay – was partially or fully mediated by self-brand connections and brand love in each study.

Methods Factor Tests

We tested the degree to which common method bias affected our structural and measurement models in Studies 7 and 8 using the well-accepted "marker variables" technique presented in Williams, Hartman and Cavazotte (2010). In both studies 7 and 8, as marker variables, we asked respondents about their experience with and expectations of service quality in restaurants (4 items), which are not related meaningfully, in either a theoretical or empirical sense, to the constructs of interest in this paper. Details of these methods factor tests appear in Web Appendix I. These tests showed that the marker variable approach to test for method bias did not indicate problems in these two studies.

How Do Brands Change as They Move from Niche Cool to Mass Cool?

Cool brands change over time. Born as relatively obscure brands in outsider subcultures, cool brands often spread beyond their niche roots to become cool to the masses (Belk et al. 2010; Gladwell 1997; Warren and Campbell 2014). How do the characteristics associated with cool brands change as they mature from niche cool to mass cool? Moreover, do consumers respond differently to mass cool brands than niche cool brands?

Study 8 attempted to answer these questions by investigating how consumers in the urban streetwear subculture perceive both brands that they themselves think are cool but have not yet caught on outside of the streetwear apparel subculture (i.e., niche cool brands) and brands that have become cool to a broader audience (i.e., mass cool brands). We expected that the data from the streetwear subculture would replicate the previous studies by showing that both mass cool and niche cool brands would score higher on all ten characteristics of cool brands compared to uncool brands. Additionally, we expected that the characteristics would differ between niche cool and mass cool, such that mass cool brands would seem more popular and iconic but niche cool brands would seem more subcultural, original, authentic, and rebellious.

To analyze the data, we examined the differences between the three experimental conditions (niche cool, mass cool, and uncool) using two planned, orthogonal contrasts. The first contrast examined the difference between cool and uncool brands by comparing the ratings of the uncool brand with the average of the ratings for the mass cool and niche cool brands. The second contrast examined the difference between the mass cool and niche cool brands.

Manipulation Checks. The brand manipulation successfully elicited different types of brands from the participants (see Table 4 for the most frequently nominated brands in each condition). Participants perceived the uncool brands to be less cool than mass cool and niche cool brands, both to themselves personally ($t = 14.32$, $p < .001$) and in the eyes of others ($t = 9.77$, $p < .001$). Interestingly, however, the correlations between the measures of self-rating of the brand's coolness with how cool they think others perceive the brand to be was only 0.50, which offers additional evidence that perceptions of brand coolness are subjective.

The niche and mass cool brands also differed as intended. Compared to the mass cool brands, participants perceived the niche cool brands to be more cool to themselves personally ($t = 4.41$, $p < .001$) but less cool to others ($t = -4.68$, $p < .001$). Moreover, participants also predicted a different future trajectory for the brands. Consistent with theory predicting that niche cool brands become cooler to a broader population over time, participants expected the niche cool brands to become cooler in the future, compared to the scale midpoint ($t = 4.63$, $p < .001$), the mass cool brand ($t = 4.15$, $p < .001$), and the uncool brand ($t = 5.69$, $p < .001$). On average, participants expected the uncool brand to become even less cool over time ($t = -4.15$, $p < .001$), whereas they did not expect the coolness of the mass cool brand to change for better or worse ($t = -1.48$, $p = .15$; see Table 4 for the descriptive statistics).

Differences Between Cool (Mass & Niche) and Uncool Brands. Replicating the previous

studies, both the mass cool brands and the niche cool brands were perceived to have higher

levels of all ten characteristics compared to the uncool brands (all p-values < .001). Also,

replicating the previous studies, participants reported stronger self-brand connections ($t = 11.10$,

$p < .001$), more brand love ($t = 12.28$, $p < .001$), higher levels of WOM ($t = 8.96$, $p < .001$),

higher price premiums ($t = 7.86$, $p < .001$), higher WTP for ($t = 11.71$, $p < .001$), and more

favorable attitudes towards ($t = 9.94$, $p < .001$) the cool than the uncool brands.

Differences Between Mass and Niche Cool Brands. Consistent with our prediction that

the characteristics of cool brands change over time, participants perceived a number of

differences between the mass cool and niche cool brands. Compared to niche cool brands, mass

cool brands were perceived to be less subcultural ($t = -2.10$, $p = .037$), original ($t = -3.15$, $p =$

.002), authentic ($t = -5.08$, $p < .001$), rebellious ($t = -2.20$, $p = .029$), extraordinary ($t = -3.56$, $p <$

.001), and aesthetically appealing ($t = -3.50$, $p < .001$), yet more popular ($t = 8.49$, $p < .001$) and

iconic ($t = 7.34$, $p < .001$). The consequences associated with coolness also shifted as brands

moved from niche cool to mass cool. Consistent with mass cool brands being more popular and

ubiquitous cultural symbols, participants indicated that they had been more exposed to ($t = 7.88$,

$p < .001$) and had shared, and intended to share, more WOM about ($t = 2.02$, $p = .045$) mass cool

brands compared to niche cool brands. They similarly reported that mass cool brands are more

familiar in the marketplace ($t = 14.30$, $p < .001$) and command higher prices ($t = 3.93$, $p < .001$)

than niche cool brands. On the other hand, consistent with niche cool brands being more closely

associated with a consumers' subculture and personal in-group, participants reported weaker

self-brand connections ($t = -5.04$, $p < .001$), less love ($t = -4.25$, $p < .001$), a lower WTP for ($t = -$

3.72, $p < .001$), and less favorable attitudes towards ($t = -2.85$, $p = .005$) mass cool compared to

niche cool brands. Figure 1a summarizes the dynamic nature of coolness as brands move from

uncool to niche cool to mass cool and (sometimes) back to uncool.

EXPERIMENT: MANIPULATING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF COOL BRANDS

We have seen that cool brands have different characteristics than uncool brands, but we have not yet examined whether we can increase the extent to which a brand seems cool by experimentally manipulating the characteristics of brand coolness. Thus, in our final study, we manipulated the description of a watch brand to orthogonally vary the desirability (i.e., extraordinariness, aesthetic appeal, and excitement), positive autonomy (i.e., originality and authenticity), rebellion, popularity, and status of the brand. To keep the number of factors in the experiment manageable, we did not manipulate the extent to which the brand seemed iconic or subcultural[7], and we contrasted cool with uncool brands rather than distinguish between mass and niche cool brands. Consumers form their actual perceptions of brand coolness over multiple exposures to various brand marketing and social signals, and over a long period of time; thus, our single-exposure experiment provides a conservative test of whether the characteristics influence perceptions of brand coolness. Nevertheless, we predicted that the brand would seem more cool when participants read that it was more (rather than less) desirable, autonomous, rebellious, popular, and high status. We also predicted that coolness would in turn influence participants' attitudes, WTP for, and likelihood of spreading WOM about the brand.

Method

Participants ($N = 368$; 34% female; mean age = 36.0; all in the USA) from Mechanical Turk completed the study for a small payment. The study included a reading check at the beginning, which filtered out 11 respondents before assigning them to a condition.

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[7] We did not manipulate the brand's iconic or subcultural associations for two reasons. One, including these factors would have increased the number of conditions from 32 to 128. Two, being iconic and subcultural are both relatively abstract characteristics – cool brands can symbolize many different things or be associated with many different subcultures. Thus, neither factor lends itself to a simple experimental manipulation.

Participants completed the study, titled "Online Review Survey," in which they were randomly assigned to a condition in a 2 (desirability: high, low) x 2 (autonomy: high, low) x 2 (rebellion: high, low) x 2 (status: high, low) x 2 (popularity: high, low) between-subjects experiment. Participants read a description of a wrist watch brand named Voss, a fictional brand. Participants read that "the description of the brand summarizes hundreds of ratings and reviews written by customers and industry experts who are already familiar with the brand." Participants next read about five brief characteristics of the brand. We manipulated whether or not consumers described Voss as being desirable, autonomous, rebellious, high status, and popular at two levels by describing the brand as either possessing or lacking the characteristic. The descriptions used words taken directly from the scale items that we identified in prior studies (see Table D-4 in the web appendix D). For example, the status manipulation described the brand as being "glamorous" and "sophisticated," or as lacking these traits. The survey presented the characteristics one at a time, in random order, and did not allow participants to advance to read the next characteristic until at least three seconds had passed.

Participants subsequently completed a series of measures, including brand coolness, brand attitude, WTP, and WOM (see Table D-2 in the Web Appendix). The final part of the survey measured the effectiveness of the manipulations using the full brand coolness scale from studies 6-8. Finally, participants reported their age, gender, and native language.

Results

Brand Coolness. We assessed the effects of the five manipulated brand characteristics on perceptions of brand coolness using a 2 (desirability: high, low) x 2 (autonomy: high, low) x 2 (rebellion: high, low) x 2 (status: high, low) x 2 (popularity: high, low) ANOVA. The analysis revealed main effects of desirability ($F(1,336) = 35.73$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .096$), autonomy ($F(1,336) = 59.90$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .151$), status ($F(1,336) = 10.85$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .031$), popularity ($F(1,336)$

= 33.69, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .091$), and rebellion ($F(1,336) = 7.51$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2 = .022$). As predicted, participants perceived the brand to be more cool when it was described as being desirable (M = 4.26 vs. 3.27), autonomous (M = 4.41 vs. 3.15), high status (M = 4.01 vs. 3.54), popular (M = 4.25 vs. 3.29) and rebellious (M = 3.98 vs. 3.56). None of the interactions were significant, which suggests that each characteristic additively influences perceived coolness.

Indirect Effects on Attitude, WTP, and WOM. We next tested whether the significant main effects of desirability, autonomy, status, and popularity on perceived coolness had downstream consequences on participants' attitudes, WTP, and WOM for the brand. Instead of conducting separate mediation tests for each of the five manipulated variables on each of three dependent variables, we estimated one comprehensive SEM path model using LISREL (n=368), which allowed for all direct and indirect effects. The model comparing full to partial mediation yielded a significant chi-square difference of 40.47 with 15 degrees of freedom (p<.001), showing that a model with one or more direct paths was a superior model. Specifically, as with the ANOVA results above, desirability (path coefficient = .28), autonomy (.35), popularity (.26), status (.14) and rebellion (.12) all significantly increased perceived coolness. Brand coolness, in turn, significantly influenced the three dependent variables: brand attitude (.84), willingness-to-pay (.54), and word-of-mouth (.82). Thus, the effect of desirability, autonomy, popularity, status and rebellion on the three DVs was at least partially mediated by brand coolness in each case. However, some significant direct effects of the manipulated brand characteristics on the DVs also emerged, although these direct effects are hard to interpret because of possible multicollinearity, remaining measurement error, or omitted mediators.[8]

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[8] With these caveats in mind, status directly increased willingness-to-pay for the brand (0.11), which could be because not all the effects of high status need to flow through brand coolness. Less intuitively, autonomy also directly increased attitudes (.10), and rebellion directly decreased attitudes (-.07) and WOM (-.08). Note that these direct effect coefficients are smaller in value than the indirect effects.

Discussion

Our experiment confirmed that increasing the extent to which a brand seems desirable, autonomous, rebellious, high status, and popular increases the extent to which it is perceived to be cool. Brand coolness, in turn, influences several consequence variables, including the extent to which consumers hold a favorable attitude towards the brand as well as their willingness to pay for and discuss the brand with others. Finally, the experiment suggests that the effects of the characteristics of brand coolness on overall perceptions of coolness and on its downstream consequences (e.g., brand attitudes) are additive, although future research will need to further explore factors that moderate or interact with the different characteristics of brand coolness.

<div align="center">

GENERAL DISCUSSION

</div>

What features characterize cool brands? Our research (3 qualitative and 9 quantitative studies) reveals that cool brands are extraordinary, aesthetically appealing, energetic, original, authentic, rebellious, high status, subcultural, iconic, and popular. Not all of these characteristics are necessary for every brand and every consumer segment, but, as our experiment revealed, increasing any of these characteristics tends to make a brand seem cooler. Nike is widely seen as cool because its shoes are highly desirable, they *look good*, signal *energy,* and have *extraordinary* quality. Apple shows positive autonomy by being *original* and *authentic*, even as it has grown to become very popular. Harley Davidson became cool when a *subculture* of outlaw bikers, who lent the brand a *rebellious, iconic* image, adopted the brand (Holt 2004). BMW, conversely, is cool in part because it has become a *popular, status* symbol. These ten characteristics correlate with the perception that a brand is cool, distinguish cool brands from uncool brands, and comprise distinct but related components of a higher-order structural model

of brand coolness.

The Lifecycle of Coolness

Our research additionally contributes to theory on the dynamic nature of coolness (e.g., Gladwell 1997) and brands (e.g., Parmentier and Fischer 2015) by exploring how the characteristics of cool brands change as a brand becomes niche cool, transitions from niche to mass cool, and eventually begins to lose its cool (see figure 1b). Brands initially become cool within a particular subculture – e.g., Quicksilver with surfers, Rockawear with hip hop enthusiasts, Supreme with skaters – who perceive the brand to rebellious, autonomous, desirable, and high status and adopt it as a way to distinguish themselves from the masses. Some niche cool brands break free from subcultural obscurity to become cool to the masses. As brands like Quicksilver, Rockawear, and Supreme expand from a fringe group of outsiders to mass-marketed magazines and suburban shopping malls, they start to seem less rebellious, original, authentic, and extraordinary – and less cool – to their original subcultural consumers (surfers, rappers, and skaters, respectively). But, despite losing some of their autonomy, mass cool brands also become more familiar, command a higher price premium, and control a larger market share. Purists may deride them for selling out, but brands perceived to be mass cool (e.g., Nike, Grand Theft Auto, Beyoncé) are more popular, and profitable, than more obscure niche cool counterparts (e.g., Steady Hands, INSIDE, Mitsky). Mass cool brands, however, need to be careful not to lose the characteristics – desirability, autonomy, etc. – that made them cool in the first place, or they will become passé. We saw this in our data: while many consumers continue to think that Apple and Nike are cool, others are beginning to consider these brands uncool because they no longer see them as being rebellious, autonomous, high status, or as having the other characteristics that made them cool in the first place. Because we did not collect longitudinal data, our findings

about the coolness lifecycle remain preliminary. We strongly encourage future research to more closely investigate how brands change as they move from niche cool to mass cool to passé.

Managerial Implications

For many product categories and consumer segments, a brand's perceived coolness is an important factor in driving its success, and managers have long sought to figure out how to give their brands this mysterious quality (Anik et al. 2017; Gladwell 1997; Nancarrow et al. 2003). Yet, the ways to make a brand cool have not thus far been systematically investigated, leaving managers without a clear roadmap.

Our scale provides a valuable tool for helping firms create and manage cool brands. Unlike simple items that only measure overall brand coolness, our structural model allows managers to drill down into (a) which components of coolness are competitive strengths or weaknesses, (b) which components are of greater importance in shaping overall coolness, and (c) how these diagnostic analyses might vary across geographies, consumer segments, and even over time (i.e., as brand-health tracking metrics). Our scale components can also be used for pre-testing and evaluating different marketing and communication programs that are designed to increase or maintain a brand's perceived coolness.

How should managers respond if their brand is not scoring high enough on one or more component characteristics of brand coolness? They will need to reinforce the image of the band on the characteristic or characteristics it is lacking. How, specifically, firms should do this will depend on the brand's history, industry, and target customers, but we can offer a few tentative guidelines. Brands that want to be seen as more extraordinary will likely need to create breakthrough functional specs (e.g., being the first facial-unlocking smartphone) or deliver an unsurpassed customer service (e.g., Amazon), rather than offer incremental improvements (e.g.,

a slightly better smartphone camera) or run-of-the-mall service. To improve their aesthetic appeal, brands will need to create eye-popping designs; Apple and Nike, highly-rated in our data and by pollsters, are known for this. Brands can become more energetic and original by continuously innovating and being one step ahead of the competition, like Google or Samsung Electronics. To be seen as authentic, brands will need to remind consumers of the history and core values of the brand and its founders (as Patagonia uses effectively) while avoiding the appearance of using overt advertisements or other strategies associated with mass marketed brands. Brands can appear more subcultural by using a promotion strategy that links the brand with an admired subculture (e.g., via brand community events, such as Harley-Davidson's annual rallies in Sturgis, SD), as long as the tactics seem authentic. Brands could become more rebellious by hiring spokespeople known to challenge norms, as Nike recently did again via its campaign featuring NFL-outcast Colin Kaepernick. Brands can boost their perceived status through packaging, ad style, spokespeople, high prices, retail co-branding, and media placements that make the brand seem glamorous, sophisticated, and exclusive. Becoming iconic is not easy, but brands might be able to seem more iconic through distinctive packaging (e.g., the Coca-Cola contour bottle), a memorable advertising style (e.g., the early artistic and witty campaigns of Absolut vodka), or telling a brand myth that resonates with consumers (e.g., the nostalgic frontier story of Jack Daniels; Holt and Cameron 2010).

Firms will also need to assess whether their brand is currently niche cool, mass cool, or uncool in order to understand how to best manage the brand's characteristics. An existing uncool brand might need to first become niche cool, by engaging in behaviors (products, promotions, pricing, and distribution strategies) that make the brand seem rebellious, original, and authentic. To become niche cool, brands will also need to cultivate a close relationship to a particular

subculture rather than target the mass market (as Pabst did with hipsters in the early 2000s or as Instagram initially did with photography enthusiasts). After successfully becoming niche cool, brands could try to boost their popularity to transition to mass cool, but the brand will need to maintain its connection to a subculture (e.g., Nike to its top athletes) and its perceived autonomy (e.g., as Apple did by positioning itself as an edgier alternative to Microsoft) so it does not entirely lose its cool.

Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

Many important questions remain for future research. Among them is the question of how brand coolness relates to nomologically related constructs, especially brand personality. Our studies showed that the effects of brand coolness on brand attitudes, WOM, and WTP are partially or completely mediated by brand love and self-brand connections. However, our mediation analysis measured – it did not manipulate – variables and could not test every possible mediation sequence. Thus, future research could use experimental techniques or cross-lagged analysis of time-series data to better test among possible causal sequences.

Second, while our data established discriminant validity between brand coolness and related constructs, we did not have access to multitrait-multimethod data, which are necessary for more definitive conclusions in this regard – as well as for a stronger estimate of common methods bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Our scale development and validation would also benefit from follow-up with other types of data (e.g. using within-brand variance across individuals), as Geuens et al. (2009) point out in the context of brand personality scales.

Third, although we collected data from multiple cultures, we did not formally investigate such cross-cultural differences. Given the cultural differences observed in brand personality (Gueuns et al. 2009), more work is needed to investigate if and how the characteristics or

consequences of brand coolness vary across cultures. Brands that are rebellious, subcultural, and autonomous may be more cool in relatively independent cultures (e.g., United States, Germany) than in interdependent ones (e.g., Korea, Japan; Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier 2002), whereas brands that have high status may be more cool in cultures higher on power distance (e.g., India, China). Within cultures, individual differences in need-for-uniqueness (Tian et al. 2001), counterculturalism (Warren and Campbell (2014), susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Bearden, Netemeyer, and Teel 1989), symbolic capital (Holt 1998), and others may influence which characteristics consumers consider cool and which consumer segments thirst more for cool brands. Given that coolness is subjective, it will be especially important for future research to investigate which social, cultural, individual difference, and category characteristics moderate what consumers perceive to be cool and how they respond to cool brands.

Future research will also need to further examine the relationship between the specific coolness components, overall brand coolness, and downstream consequences such as brand attitudes, WOM and WTP. The structural model coefficients estimated in studies 5-8 (Table 3) and our experiment suggest that the ten characteristics independently contribute to overall brand coolness, but our studies do not offer strong tests of whether these characteristics might interact. In particular, future research should further investigate the relationship between rebellion and coolness. In our data, the "main effects" of rebellion on higher-order brand coolness were almost always the lowest across our ten first-order factors, suggesting that higher perceived rebelliousness does not by itself always raise overall brand coolness as much as other components (such as originality and authenticity) do. In sum, much remains to be understood about the important brand management construct of brand coolness, and we encourage researchers to further investigate why, how, and when coolness contributes to a brand's success.

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Figure 1.
(a) Final measurement model in studies 6-8 (reflective perspective used at all levels).
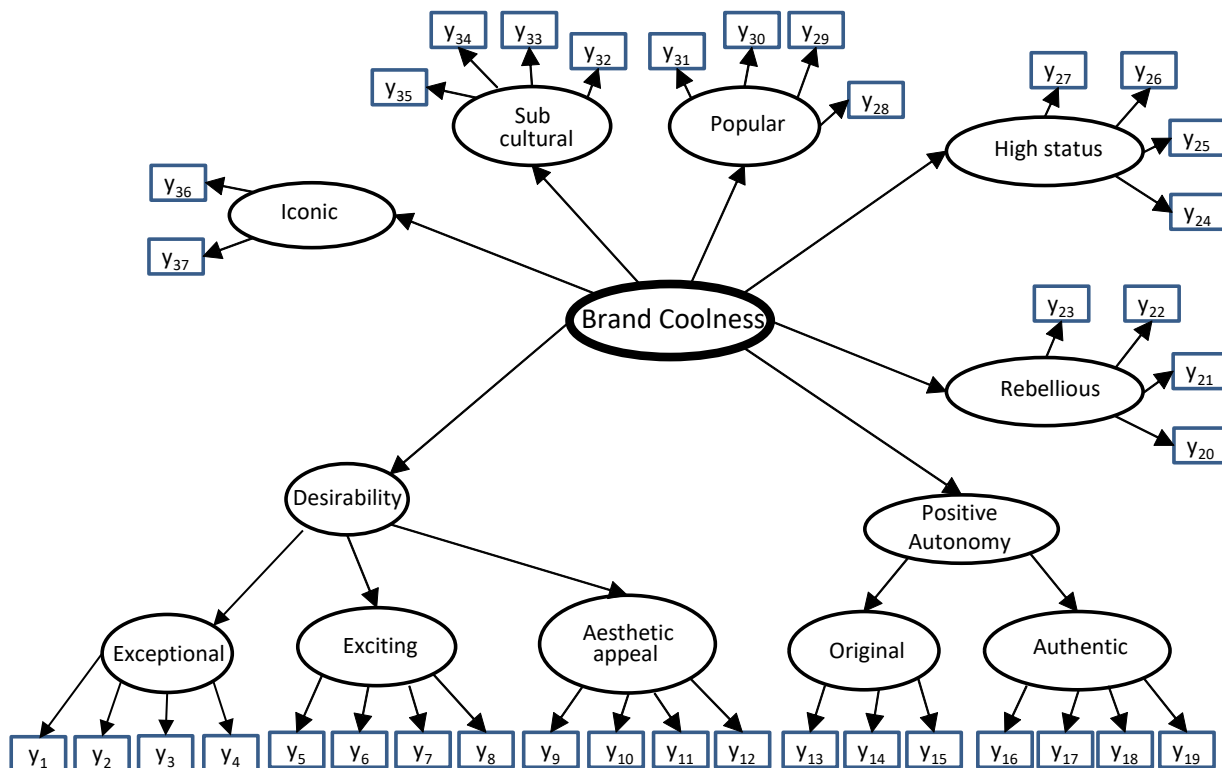
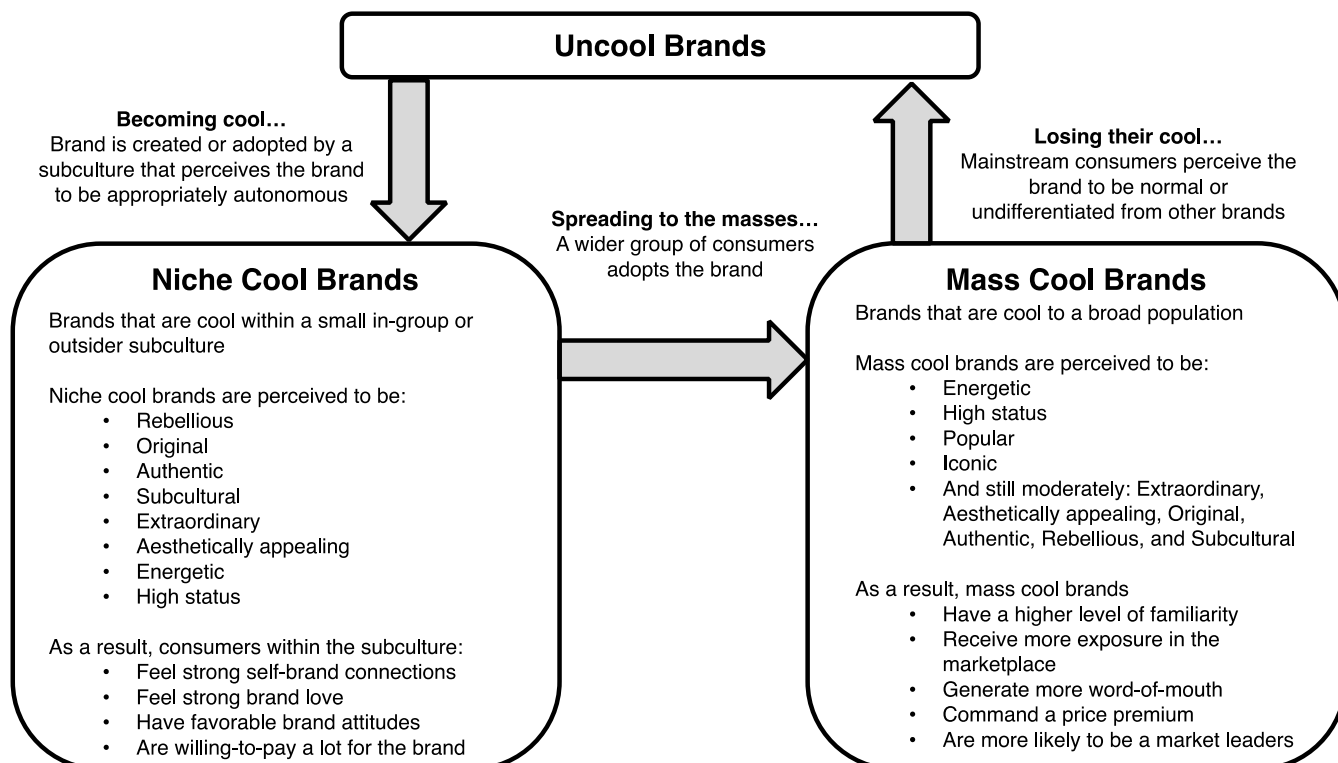**(b)** This figure illustrates the typical lifecycle of brand coolness as well as how the characteristics and consequences of brand coolness change as the brand moves from niche cool to mass cool.

TABLE 1. DEFINITIONS FOR COMPONENT CHARACTERISTICS OF BRAND COOLNESS AND RELEVANT CITATIONS FROM PRIOR RESEARCH

Characteristic	Definition	Supporting Citations
Extraordinary / Useful	A positive quality that sets a brand apart from its competitors / Offering superior functional value	Belk et al. 2010; Dar Nimrod et al. 2012; Im et al. 2015; Mohiuddin et al. 2016; Runyan et al. 2013; Sundar et al. 2014
High status	Associated with social class, prestige, sophistication, and esteem	Belk et al., 2010; Connor 1995; Heath and Potter 2004; Milner 2013; Nancarrow et al. 2003; Warren 2010
Aesthetically appealing	Having an attractive and visually pleasing appearance	Bruun et al. 2016; Dar Nimrod et al. 2012; Runyan et al. 2013; Sundar et al. 2014
Rebellious	A tendency to oppose, fight, subvert, or combat conventions and social norms	Bruun et al. 2016; Frank 1997; Milner 2006; Nancarrow et al. 2003; Pountian and Robins 2000; Read et al. 2011; Warren and Campbell 2014
Original	A tendency to be different, creative, and to do things that have not been done before.	Bruun et al. 2016; Mohiuddin et al. 2016; Read et al. 2011; Runyan et al. 2013; Sundar et al. 2014; Warren and Campbell 2014
Authentic	Behaving in a way that is consistent with or true to its perceived essence or roots	Nancarrow et al. 2003; Read et al. 2011; Sriramachandramurthy and Hodis 2010
Subcultural	Associated with an autonomous group of people who are perceived to operate independent from and outside of mainstream society	Belk et al. 2010; Runyan et al. 2013; Sundar et al. 2014; Thornton 1995
Popular	Fashionable, trendy, and liked by most people	Dar Nimrod et al. 2012; Heath and Potter 2004; Rodkin et al. 2006
Iconic	Widely recognized as a cultural symbol	Holt 2004; Warren and Campbell 2014
Energetic	Possessing strong enthusiasm, energy, and vigor	Aaker 1997; Sriramachandramurthy and Hodis (2010)

TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF QUANTITATIVE SURVEY STUDIES

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4	Study 5	Study 6	Study 7	Study 8
Sample (N) Source	415 Students (Portugal)	582 Students (Portugal)	258 Qualtrics[a] (USA)	206 MTurk[b] (USA)	315 Qualtrics[a] (USA)	315 Qualtrics[a] (USA)	405 MTurk[b] (USA)	148 Reddit streetwear forum[c]
Brand(s) nominated	Cool brand	Cool brand	Cool + Uncool electronics brands	Cool + Uncool brands	Cool + Uncool brands	Cool + Uncool brands	Cool OR Uncool brand	Niche OR Mass Cool OR Uncool fashion brand
Manipulation check measures	None	None	I think it's cool	None	None	I think it's cool	I think it's cool + Others think it's cool	I think it's cool + Others think it's cool + Change in cool
Cool Characteristics	Energetic Original Authentic High Status Subcultural Scarce Responsible	Energetic Original Authentic High Status Subcultural Scarce Responsible	Energetic Aesthetic Useful Original Authentic High Status Subcultural Scarce Responsible Popular Rebellious	Energetic Aesthetic Original Rebellious High status Scarce	Useful Energetic Aesthetic Original Authentic Rebellious Subcultural High status Iconic Popular	Useful Extraordinary Energetic Aesthetic Original Authentic Rebellious Subcultural High status Iconic Popular	Extraordinary Energetic Aesthetic Original Authentic Rebellious Subcultural High status Iconic Popular	Extraordinary Energetic Aesthetic Original Authentic Rebellious Subcultural High status Iconic Popular
Cool Correlates	None	None	None	Brand personality	Brand personality	None	Brand personality	None
Cool Consequences	None	None	SBC Brand attitude	WOM WTP Satisfaction Delight Pride Quality Price Premium	WOM WTP Brand love Brand attitude SBC Pride Satisfaction Delight	WOM WTP Brand love SBC	WOM WTP Brand love Brand attitude SBC Brand exposure Familiarity Price premium	WOM WTP Brand love Brand attitude SBC Brand exposure Familiarity Price premium
Individual differences	Demographics	Demographics	Demographics	Demographics	Demographics	Demographics	Restaurant attitudes[d] Demographics	Need-for uniqueness Innovativeness Subjective expertise Experience on forum Restaurant attitudes[d] Demographics

Key: a = nationally representative panel from USA; b = Amazon's Mechanical Turk; c = r/streetwear Reddit board; d= used as a marker variable

TABLE 3: CFA MODEL COEFFICIENTS AND FIT STATISTICS BY STUDY AND SAMPLE

MEASUREMENT MODEL: FACTOR LOADINGS (LAMBDAS)		Study 5 Cool n=315	Study 5 Uncool n=315	Study 6 Cool n=305	Study 6 Uncool n=305	Study 7 Cool n=213	Study 7 Uncool n=192	Study 8 Pooled n=148
USEFUL[a]/	is useful[a]/is exceptional[b]	0.74	0.75	0.93	0.97	0.84	0.92	0.92
EXTRAORDINARY[b]	Helps people[a]/is superb[b]	0.75	0.79	0.93	0.97	0.78	0.93	0.90
	is valuable[a]/is fantastic[b]	0.74	0.86	0.94	0.97	0.88	0.95	0.96
	is extraordinary[b]			0.89	0.93	0.88	0.96	0.94
ENERGETIC	is energetic	0.83	0.86	0.85	0.93	0.82	0.88	0.86
	is outgoing	0.86	0.89	0.88	0.93	0.87	0.89	0.87
	is lively	0.84	0.92	0.89	0.96	0.9	0.89	0.88
	is vigorous	0.79	0.87	0.77	0.92	0.83	0.9	0.88
AESTHETICALLY	looks good	0.73	0.85	0.87	0.93	0.87	0.93	0.96
APPEALING	is aesthetically appealing	0.73	0.87	0.86	0.92	0.88	0.96	0.96
	is attractive	0.88	0.93	0.93	0.95	0.84	0.94	0.94
	has a really nice appearance	0.85	0.91	0.91	0.96	0.85	0.95	0.94
ORIGINAL	is innovative	0.73	0.83	0.81	0.84	0.76	0.85	0.9
	is original	0.69	0.74	0.82	0.93	0.76	0.87	0.93
	does its own thing	0.64	0.69	0.85	0.82	0.86	0.83	0.9
AUTHENTIC	is authentic	0.75	0.82	0.85	0.93	0.8	0.92	0.91
	is true to its roots	0.8	0.81	0.79	0.92	0.75	0.88	0.84
	doesn't seem artificial	0.67	0.77	0.80	0.83	0.62	0.82	0.81
	doesn't try to be something it's not	0.62	0.73	0.77	0.85	0.75	0.7	0.78
REBELLIOUS	is rebellious	0.75	0.74	0.66	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.95
	is defiant	0.88	0.85	0.77	0.87	0.91	0.91	0.97
	is not afraid to break rules	0.65	0.69	0.84	0.89	0.76	0.77	0.84
	is non-conformist	0.8	0.73	0.88	0.87	0.71	0.75	0.78
HIGH STATUS	is chic	0.82	0.87	0.75	0.87	0.64	0.77	0.72
	is glamorous	0.93	0.94	0.91	0.93	0.84	0.91	0.85
	is sophisticated	0.81	0.86	0.81	0.91	0.8	0.78	0.86
	is ritzy	0.82	0.84	0.71	0.84	0.77	0.82	0.84
POPULAR	is liked by most people	0.73	0.82	0.77	0.83	0.76	0.78	0.86
	is in-style	0.75	0.87	0.89	0.91	0.81	0.53	0.78
	is popular	0.9	0.87	0.83	0.9	0.81	0.77	0.71
	is widely accepted	0.84	0.82	0.8	0.88	0.77	0.83	0.82
SUBCULTURAL	makes people who use it different from other people	0.85	0.71	0.90	0.86	0.86	0.91	0.87
	if I were to use it, it would make me stand apart from others	0.87	0.87	0.92	0.97	0.96	0.95	0.96
	helps people who use it stand apart from the crowd	0.87	0.96	0.94	0.95	0.95	0.97	0.91
	people who use this brand are unique	0.84	0.79	0.85	0.9	0.82	0.93	0.82
ICONIC	is a cultural symbol	0.66	0.84	0.82	0.9	0.77	0.84	0.76
	is iconic	0.89	0.87	0.85	0.91	0.9	0.86	0.87

Note: The superscript "a" indicates that we used the items in study 5; superscript "b" indicates we used the items in studies 6-8.

STRUCTURAL COEFFICIENTS (BETAS):								
Useful/Exceptional --> Desirability		0.75	0.86	0.83	0.92	0.88	0.89	0.93
Energetic --> Desirability		0.75	0.81	0.83	0.88	0.86	0.78	0.83
Aesthetics --> Desirability		0.82	0.83	0.79	0.87	0.79	0.85	0.92
Originality --> Positive Autonomy		0.91	0.96	0.95	0.99	0.91	0.87	0.91
Authenticity --> Positive Autonomy		0.87	0.83	0.95	0.98	0.97	0.86	0.91
Desirability --> Higher Order Cool		1	0.98	1	1	0.98	0.98	0.99
Positive Autonomy --> Higher Order Cool		0.89	0.9	0.91	0.9	0.94	0.92	0.96
Rebelliousness --> Higher Order Cool		0.45	0.61	0.58	0.75	0.46	0.52	0.73
High Status --> Higher Order Cool		0.55	0.75	0.72	0.89	0.45	0.66	0.72
Popularity --> Higher Order Cool		0.74	0.78	0.76	0.8	0.87	0.58	0.49
SubCulture --> Higher Order Cool		0.53	0.61	0.65	0.84	0.73	0.51	0.69
Iconic --> Higher Order Cool		0.59	0.72	0.7	0.82	0.48	0.62	0.38

MODEL FIT STATISTICS:		Global		Global		Global		
Chi-Square (d.f.)		2565.8 (1164)		3278.62 (1234)		2847 (1234)		1332.82 (617)
NNFI		0.98		0.98		0.96		0.97
CFI		0.98		0.98		0.97		0.97
RMSEA		0.064		0.074		0.082		0.089
SRMR		0.072		0.055		0.11		0.1

TABLE 4: MEANS (STANDARD DEVIATIONS) BY CONDITION IN STUDIES 5-8

	Study 5 Cool	Study 5 Uncool	Study 6 Cool	Study 6 Uncool	Study 7 Cool	Study 7 Uncool	Study 8 Niche Cool	Study 8 Mass Cool	Study 8 Uncool
Cool Characteristics	n=315	n=315	n=305	n=305	n=213	n=192	n=52	n=52	n=44
Useful[a]/Exceptional[b]	4.14 (0.73)[a]	3.51 (0.88)[a]	6.03 (1.20)[b]	4.35 (1.93)[b]	5.47 (1.11)[b]	3.83 (1.65)[b]	5.08 (1.01)[b]	4.20 (1.41)[b]	2.04 (1.31)[b]
Energetic	4.04 (0.78)	3.34 (0.98)	6.06 (1.13)	4.61 (1.72)	5.54 (1.25)	3.92 (1.54)	4.97 (1.42)	4.56 (1.34)	2.57 (1.46)
Aesthetically Appealing	4.36 (0.63)	3.50 (0.94)	6.33 (1.02)	4.85 (1.74)	6.05 (1.04)	4.50 (1.68)	6.17 (0.81)	5.32 (1.36)	2.65 (1.48)
Original	4.39 (0.57)	3.56 (0.86)	6.24 (1.00)	4.96 (1.62)	5.67 (1.10)	4.19 (1.53)	5.26 (1.37)	4.31 (1.66)	2.43 (1.61)
Authentic	4.18 (0.64)	3.50 (0.86)	6.14 (1.05)	4.81 (1.70)	5.59 (1.09)	4.40 (1.61)	6.03 (0.93)	4.78 (1.19)	3.23 (1.60)
Rebellious	3.31 (0.95)	2.80 (0.93)	4.94 (1.69)	4.05 (1.79)	4.19 (1.48)	2.94 (1.45)	4.89 (1.44)	4.22 (1.72)	2.39 (1.50)
High Status	3.36 (1.01)	2.66 (1.08)	5.27 (1.44)	4.15 (1.81)	4.45 (1.38)	2.78 (1.43)	3.70 (1.24)	3.80 (1.67)	1.95 (1.24)
Popular	4.39 (0.59)	3.62 (0.88)	6.30 (0.95)	5.10 (1.60)	5.77 (1.06)	4.24 (1.24)	4.18 (0.88)	5.99 (0.91)	3.28 (1.44)
Subcultural	3.38 (1.00)	2.82 (0.98)	5.29 (1.64)	4.08 (1.90)	4.33 (1.63)	2.88 (1.68)	4.45 (1.60)	3.79 (1.66)	2.19 (1.57)
Iconic	3.94 (0.91)	3.21 (1.11)	5.90 (1.35)	4.64 (1.82)	5.29 (1.49)	3.76 (1.68)	3.38 (1.62)	5.60 (1.13)	3.02 (1.85)
Manipulation Checks									
Perceived Cool Self	Scale from 1 to 7 →		6.52 (0.78)	4.33 (1.99)	6.27 (0.95)	3.06 (1.85)	6.31 (0.73)	5.13 (1.53)	2.23 (1.67)
Perceived Cool Others		Scale from 1 to 7 →			5.89 (1.16)	3.10 (1.67)	4.75 (1.12)	5.92 (1.01)	3.09 (1.68)
Past Change in Cool					Scale from -1 to 1 →		.38 (0.72)	.14 (0.89)	-.40 (0.59)
Future Change in Cool					Scale from -1 to 1 →		.38 (0.6)	-.15 (0.75)	-.39 (0.62)
Outcome Variables									
Brand Attitudes	4.45 (0.62)	3.19 (1.14)	Scale from 1 to 7 →		6.31 (0.88)	4.88 (2.03)	5.94 (1.49)	5.07 (1.58)	2.72 (1.61)
Brand Love	4.3 (0.82)	2.78 (1.25)	4.57 (0.62)	3.01 (1.39)	3.96 (0.91)	2.84 (1.36)	3.89 (0.76)	3.13 (1.08)	1.50 (0.87)
Self-brand connections	3.8 (0.92)	2.62 (1.14)	3.88 (0.97)	2.64 (1.33)	3.65 (0.85)	2.55 (1.17)	3.56 (0.64)	2.78 (0.96)	1.6 (0.71)
WOM future	3.24 (1.17)	2.35 (1.15)	3.47 (1.10)	2.47 (1.30)	4.95 (1.82)	3.30 (2.02)	4.81 (2.01)	5.35 (1.79)	2.14 (1.72)
WOM past			Scale from 1 to 4 →		2.60 (1.02)	1.95 (1.01)	2.73 (1.09)	3.23 (0.96)	1.70 (1.05)
					Scale from 1 to 7↓		Scale from 1 to 7↓		
Willingness-to-Pay	3.82 (0.88)	2.53 (1.16)	3.98 (0.94)	2.75 (1.31)	5.26 (1.45)	3.12 (1.93)	5.28 (1.12)	4.19 (1.80)	1.60 (1.47)
Price Premium					3.77 (0.89)	3.01 (1.02)	3.46 (0.76)	4.11 (0.64)	2.60 (1.09)
Brand Familiarity					4.15 (0.63)	3.74 (0.73)	2.35 (0.81)	4.51 (0.61)	4.03 (0.87)
Brand Exposure			Scale from 1 to 4 →		2.88 (0.94)	2.25 (0.93)	2.20 (0.73)	3.33 (0.63)	2.18 (0.84)
Brand Personality									
Sophisticated	3.14 (1.04)	2.58 (1.09)			2.88 (0.93)	2.11 (0.93)			
Rugged	3.53 (1.07)	2.92 (1.15)			3.28 (1.05)	2.57 (1.13)			
Competent	4.34 (0.71)	3.54 (0.98)			4.06 (0.78)	3.38 (1.10)			
Exciting	4.05 (0.80)	3.21 (1.06)			3.75 (0.88)	2.65 (1.01)			
Sincere	3.93 (0.77)	3.42 (0.91)			3.58 (0.78)	3.21 (1.08)			
Brands Mentioned Frequently or Rated Highly	Apple Nike Samsung Coca-Cola Under Armour Levi's	Apple Pepsi Nike Samsung Adidas Microsoft	Nike Apple Samsung Amazon Adidas	Nike Adidas Samsung Apple Lg Reebok	Nike Apple Samsung Under Armour Adidas Nintendo	Nike Apple Old Navy Walmart Crocs Great Value	Steady Hands Cav Empt Ader Error	Supreme Off-White Nike Gucci	Gap Sketchers Anti-Social Social Club

Notes: The scales were from 1 to 5, unless otherwise noted; a = characteristic measured only in study 5; b = characteristic measured in studies 6-8.