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How does the consumers' perception of their body image influence their relationship with brands that promote body dissatisfaction?

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Master in Marketing

Supervisor:
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July, 2023

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**BUSINESS
SCHOOL**

Department of Marketing, Strategy and Operations

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Acknowledgements

After two years, the conclusion of my dissertation represents the end of my Master's degree at ISCTE Business School. They were the two most memorable years of my academic path, in which I had the opportunity to expand my knowledge in Marketing, a field in which I have developed a passion for and aim to succeed professionally.

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Lisbon, July 2023

Marta Augusto

Abstract

Markets such as the fashion industry are increasingly competitive, so it is necessary for companies to strengthen relationships with their customers to survive the competition. Consumers, however, generally only develop strong connections with brands with which they identify, which can be an obstacle for fashion brands that promote unrealistic beauty ideals and contribute to body dissatisfaction, since most people end up feeling excluded by the industry. However, no research has been done to determine whether brands' promotion of body dissatisfaction has any effect on the development of customer relationships. Thus, this dissertation aims to fill this gap by examining the effects of fashion brands' promotion of body dissatisfaction, by accessing whether the resulting customers' perceptions of their own body image have an impact on the quality of the developed customers' relationships, and in turn, how that quality affects brand hate and brand love.

Data collection and analysis were carried out using a quantitative methodology, through an online survey based on articles by different authors. The findings indicate that the better the customer's perception of their body image, the higher their level of trust, commitment, and satisfaction with brands. This in turn, except for commitment, which favorably influences brand hate, has a positive influence on brand love and a negative influence on brand hate. Based on the outcomes of this study, managers must see the need to cease encouraging body dissatisfaction because stronger consumer-brand relationships are created when customers are more satisfied with their bodies.

Keywords: fashion brands, body image, relationship quality, brand hate, brand love
JEL: M31, M39

Resumo

Mercados como o da moda estão cada vez mais competitivos, pelo que é necessário que as empresas reforcem as relações com clientes para sobreviverem. No entanto, os consumidores geralmente só desenvolvem ligações com marcas com as quais se identificam, o que pode ser desafiante para as marcas de moda que promovem ideais de beleza irrealistas e contribuem para a insatisfação corporal, uma vez que a maioria das pessoas acaba por se sentir excluída pela indústria. No entanto, por ainda não existir qualquer investigação que valide se este comportamento das marcas tem algum efeito no desenvolvimento de relações, esta dissertação pretende colmatar esta lacuna, examinando o impacto da promoção da insatisfação corporal, através das resultantes perceções que os clientes têm da sua própria imagem corporal, na qualidade das relações desenvolvidas e, por sua vez, como é que essa qualidade afecta o ódio e amor à marca.

Recorreu-se à metodologia quantitativa para a recolha e análise de dados, usado um inquérito online baseado em artigos de diferentes autores. Os resultados indicam que quanto melhor for a perceção que o cliente tem da sua imagem corporal, maior será a confiança, compromisso e satisfação pelas marcas que, por sua vez, têm uma influência positiva no amor à marca e negativa no ódio à marca, com exceção de compromisso, que influencia favoravelmente o ódio à marca. Assim, os gestores devem reconhecer a necessidade de parar de incentivar a insatisfação corporal, pois desenvolvem-se relações mais fortes entre os clientes e as marcas quando mais satisfeitos os clientes estão com o seu corpo.

Palavras-chaves: marcas de moda, imagem corporal, qualidade da relação, ódio à marca, amor à marca
JEL: M31, M39

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1. Introduction

Concerns about appearance start earlier, persist longer, and influence more individuals than ever before due to the growing use of social media, more exposure to advertising and a food culture that is increasingly focused on health and weight control. People today are becoming more and more concerned about their body image and frequently strive to meet unrealistic and unreachable standards of beauty (Karazsia et al., 2017; Stein et al., 2021). In a comprehensive assessment on each person's view of their body image done by the Mental Health Foundation in 2019, it was discovered that 20% of respondents reported feeling ashamed about their image, 34% reported feeling sad or depressed, and 19% reported feeling disgusted about their body image in the year before the survey was conducted. In Portugal, where the questionnaire for this dissertation will be conducted, a similar pattern was found in a study done in 2022, in which 57% of Portuguese respondents said they were not satisfied with their body image, most due to being overweight (Zequinão et al., 2022).

Although there are many reasons that contribute to this expanding body image concern, one of the main ones is the fashion industry. (Craddock, 2019). Diversity is not well reflected in fashion. In communication, they frequently turn to exceptionally attractive persons and occasionally they even use digital editing to make them even more perfect (McBride et al., 2019; Tanyildizi & Yolcu, 2020). In addition, few brands provide a large range of sizes, so not everyone can purchase clothing from any brand (Brownbridge et al., 2018). This leads to the promotion of unrealistic notions of beauty, leaving individuals feeling excluded from this industry.

Parallel to this, building solid and successful relationships with clients is becoming increasingly important for businesses. Markets are increasingly competitive due to growing globalization, with more and more market entries, but also because the internet has brought customers the ability to make more powerful and informed decisions, making it more difficult for companies to stand out from other competitors (Hasaballah et al., 2019). Thus, it becomes essential to use this strategic approach to retain current clients and, through them, bring in new ones. Increased sales, a larger market share, and resistance to price pressure are all benefits of developing customer-brand relationships (Ahmmed et al., 2019). Customers, however, typically only form bonds with brands that they personally identify with and which they consider to be representative of their inner self (Mustafa et al., 2022). But because a huge portion of the population won't feel that the fashion industry is representing them, it might be challenging to build consumer-brand relationships (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). In a study conducted in 2021 to determine how consumers felt about fashion brands, nearly 90% of respondents claimed that the industry's representations did not encompass a range of different bodies and identities, and 87,5% claimed that advertising campaigns, fashion photo shoots, and runway did not make them feel represented. In this study, it was also possible to see that 68% of respondents had either experienced

or testified discrimination in the industry based on appearance or beliefs, with the largest group saying it was based on body image (73,4%), followed by ethnicity, age, disability, gender, and religious expression (Fashion Roundtable, 2021).

Therefore, since the establishment of relationships between the consumer and the brand is central to the success of companies in competitive markets, as is the case of the fashion industry, it will be relevant for these companies to understand the impact of the promotion of body dissatisfaction to ackowledge if it will be necessary to adapt their marketing strategies, in order to achieve a greater number of brand love relationships with their customers, which is the relationship with a higher degree of intensity, and avoid the establishment of brand-hate relationships as a consequence of this behavior, since it may be considered as unethical and immoral. However, there is not much research to help understand this subject because most studies are from a psychological perspective, focusing only on the effects of these brands' behavior on people's perceptions of their bodies and not on how they might affect the relationships between customers and brands. This way, this paper seeks to address this gap in the marketing literature, in which the objectives mentioned bellow must be met to provide a complete research.

1. Analyze whether consumers form any kind of bond with fashion companies that promote body dissatisfaction such as brand love or brand hate.
2. Determine whether people' perception of their body image influence the relationships formed with fashion brands that promote body dissatisfaction.
3. Provide theoretical and managerial contributions for fashion companies for improving their relationship with consumers.

There are a lot of unanswered questions and unresolved research problems given the novelty of this topic. First, in order to attempting to understand how the promotion of body dissatisfaction affects the relationship between customers and brands, it is necessary to access the resulting customers' perceptions of their body image. Then, because the customer-brand relationships are typically impacted by the trust, commitment, and satisfaction that customers feel towards brands (Mustafa et al., 2019), it will be important to investigate the impact of those perceptions on the relationships' quality, and in turn, how that quality affects the development of brand hate and brand love. Therefore, the following research questions need to be covered in this thesis in order to successfully arrive at those conclusions.

1. To what extend do consumer' perception about their body image impact the development of brand hate for brands that promote body dissatisfaction?
2. To what extend do consumer' perception about their body image impact the development of brand love for brands that promote body dissatisfaction?

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This dissertation is organized into six main sections, which are shown in Figure 1, in order to accomplish its objectives and address the research problematics. The purpose of the first one (Introduction) is to introduce the subject to be examined, its importance, the goals, and the research questions. The literature review, in the second section, provides the foundation for identifying the main concepts of consumer's perception of body image, relational marketing, relationship quality and costumer-brand relationship. The research hypotheses that result from the literature and were used to build the conceptual model are introduced in the third part, "Research Hypotheses and Conceptual Model". After that, in the methodology section, the questionnaire's design and data collection strategy are explained, along with how the data was treated and the characteristics of the respondents. The findings of the online survey are then evaluated and discussed in the fifth part, the "results". Finally, the conclusions are made in the last section, summarizing the managerial and theoretical contributions, and highlighting the limitations that serve as the basis for suggestions for additional research.

Figure 1: Structure of the Dissertation

INTRODUCTION

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer's perception of body image	Body Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction
Relationship Marketing	Relationship Quality
Trust	Commitment	Satisfaction
Customer-brand Relationship	Brand Hate and Brand Love

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL

METHODOLOGY

RESULTS

CONCLUSIONS
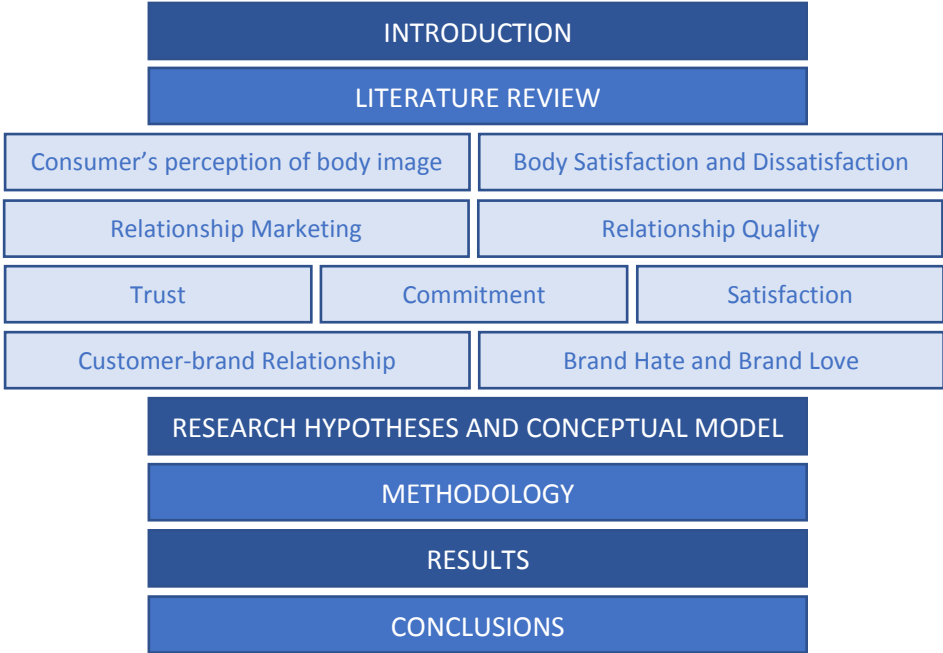
Source: Own Elaboration

2. Literature review

2.1. Consumer's perception of body image

Lately, there has been a notorious increase in the number of research done on body image (Tylka et al., 2020). However, it can be challenging to integrate these disparate notions and comprehend what body image actually entails, as a result of the enormous number of studies that have been conducted (Andersen & Swami, 2021).

The interest in studying body image from a psychological and sociological perspective emerged in the 1920s through the work of Paul Schilder. Before that, research was only focused on how mental illness (Hosseini & Padhy, 2022), such as body dysmorphic disorder, anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa, influenced people's perception of their own bodies (Grogan, 2021). In 1950, Schilder claimed in *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* that a person's behaviors and interactions with other individuals also affect how he/she perceives his/her own body and defined Body Image as "the picture of our own body which we form in our mind, that is to say, the way in which the body appears to ourselves" (Schilder, 1950, p. 11). Body image is later defined by Cash (2004) as a multidimensional construct with perceptual and attitudinal components. The perceptions a person has of their own body are referred to as the perceptual dimension of body image. The attitude dimension, on the other hand, is much more complexed as it is broken down into three sub-dimensions: cognition, which refers to the beliefs people have about their bodies, affections or feelings related to body image, and behavior, which describes the actions that result from these perceptions, beliefs, and feelings (Yamamotova et al., 2017)

Cash (2002) also proposes the ABC sequence theory to explain how the consumer's perception of body image works. This theory involves identifying the activators of the body image state, which are the events that lead to a significant change in body image, the beliefs, which corresponds to the affective and evaluative cognitions about one's body in that situation, and the consequences, which are the emotional and behavioral responses to the immediate body image experience. Events typically allude to circumstances in which appearance can be enhanced, such as after eating, after exercise, when getting dressed, when being subjected to sexualization or objectification, or in other social contexts (Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, 2019). Therefore, it is conceivable to draw the conclusion that body image is subjective and greatly impacted by the social context in which each individual finds himself. As a result, even people in identical circumstances may or may not express similar perceptions about their appearance (Reas & Grilo, 2004). Therefore, all of the aforementioned elements will play a role in the development of one's opinion of their own bodies, which may be positive or negative, leading to the concepts of body satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

2.1.1. Body Satisfaction

When the image we have about ourselves is positive, body satisfaction is considered to exist. As a result, the concept of body satisfaction is described as people's appreciation, affection, and acceptance of their overall bodies or of particular body parts, despite apparent imperfections (da Silva et al., 2021; Webb et al., 2015). Franzoi (1995) first suggested dividing this concept into two categories: functionality and appearance. While appearance relates to shape, weight, facial characteristics, body parts, and potentially visible body marks, functionality refers to biological functions like physical activity, mobility, health, and bodily senses (Weaver & Mulgrew, 2021). In the similar way, Fredrickson and Roberts' (1997) objectification theory also suggests that the body can be seen as a product of desire to be used and judged by others or by what it is capable of doing in functional terms. Both theories argue that a greater focus by the individual on what their body is capable of doing, rather than their physical appearance, is strongly associated with improved connection with their own body, contributing to greater well-being and greater love and respect for it.

Although the aforementioned researchers recommend that people should put their attention on their body's functions, physical appearance has been gaining more and more relevance. People, especially women, invest increasingly more money to achieve the appearance they aspire to (Quittkat et al., 2019). This is how the concept of appearance management emerges, which is the process in which individuals strive to enhance their appearance in order to express themselves and fulfill their social obligations (Kaiser & Schekman, 1990). This improvement is often associated with the use of makeup, clothing, accessories, and/or props (Maynard, 1991). People are more susceptible to social comparisons when they have a great care about their physical appearance, which is frequently the product of cultural imposition or influence (Stein et al., 2021; Trekels & Eggermont, 2017). In order to reject unrealistic body ideals and stop the process of social comparison that leads to body dissatisfaction, it is crucial for people to develop satisfaction with their body (Andrew et al., 2015; Franchina & Coco, 2018; Helliwell, 2013). Therefore, it will be crucial to examine dissatisfaction and its effects in order to fully comprehend the importance of body satisfaction.

2.1.2. Body dissatisfaction

Body dissatisfaction results from the people's vulnerability to feel unsatisfied with their shape and/or weight (Dondzilo et al., 2022), which changes with age, attitude, and social influences, all of which change with time (Hosseini & Padhy, 2022). Beside the dissatisfaction with body weight and shape, it is also possible to measure body dissatisfaction through body appreciation, appearance evaluation, desire for muscularity and the difference between one's actual and ideal body size (Allen & Walter, 2016; Carrotte & Anderson, 2018; Sutin & Terracciano, 2019).

The number of people dissatisfied with their bodies has been increasing year by year. This is possible to see when we analyze the considerable increase in the demand for plastic surgery. In 2019, approximately eleven million plastic surgeries and thirteen million non-surgical plastic procedures were performed globally, of which 87% were on women. Besides, there has been also a serious increase in unhealthy eating habits and drug use to lose weight, and an increase in the use of drugs to boost muscle development (Grogan, 2021). Body dissatisfaction is impacting society as a whole, but with women experiencing it at a higher rate than men (Fiske et al., 2014; Karazsia et al., 2017; Sala et al., 2021).

As a public health issue that may have very negative impacts on people's mental health (Baker et al., 2019; Jalali-Farahani et al., 2022) and, as a result on their quality of life (Griffiths et al., 2016), this subject has been gaining a huge relevance. Body dissatisfaction is a risk factor that can lead to health risk behaviors and eating disorders (Chen et al., 2020), depression and anxiety disorders (Sharpe et al., 2018) as well as poor sexual function (Woertman & Van den Brink, 2012).

2.1.2.1. Causes

2.1.2.1.1. Tripartite influence model

The T*ripartite Influence Model*, developed in the late 90s, claims that body dissatisfaction results from social pressure from family, peers, and the media, through thin-ideal internalization and social comparisons (Thompson et al., 1999). Particularly at earlier ages, parents have a significant impact on the influence of body dissatisfaction, as it is frequently sparked by remarks and expectations from family members regarding weight, shape or other physical features (Rogers et al., 2017). However, the risk that they will feel dissatisfied with their own bodies reduces as the need to feel socially accepted does and, according to studies, if interactions between parents and sons are solid and these kinds of pressures are avoided (de Vries et al., 2019; Hosseini & Padhy, 2022).

As indicated by the model, another important factor affecting body dissatisfaction is having peers who disapprove their appearance. Body dissatisfaction is dependent on how much people think their body image meets the expectations of those near them (Flynn et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2015). Women appear to be the ones who are most affected by this validation, but it has an even higher impact when the opinions are given by someone of the gender that the person is physically attracted to (Valois et al., 2019).

Finally, the media also has a strong influence on body dissatisfaction since it contributes to the propagation of unrealistic ideas of beauty (Uchôa et al., 2019). People are constantly exposed to pictures of exceedingly skinny women or highly muscularly defined males through magazines,

television, advertising and even toys (Dittmar, 2009; Dittmar et al., 2006). This plays a huge role in the thin-ideal internalization, the expansion of body image anxiety, and the adoption of weight loss techniques (Rodgers et al., 2021, 2022).

Although social media is part of the mass media, it is important to look at it separately due to its rising importance and distinction. Social media are platforms with visual stimuli and interactions, such as likes and comments, often used as indicators of other people's acceptance (Anixiadis et al., 2019; Stein et al., 2021). As a consequence, people find themselves seeking this approval more and more often, sometimes by digitally altering pictures to conform to aesthetic standards (Shah et al., 2019). This also results in a constant propagation of unrealistic beauty ideals, which leads to body dissatisfaction caused by unmatched expectations (Fardouly & Holland, 2018; Tamplin et al., 2018). As mentioned before, this issue is becoming increasingly relevant as the use of social media has been growing year after year around the world, reaching 4,59 billion users in 2022, a number that is expected to increase to almost 6 billion by 2027 (Dixon, 2022).

2.1.2.1.2. Fashion industry

There are a number of sectors that promote unrealistic beauty standards, which results in body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem. Porn (Paslakis et al., 2022), cosmetic surgery (Widdows, 2018), weight loss pills (Austin et al., 2017), fashion, cosmetics and general advertising are some of these industries. The fashion industry will be the subject of this study due to its significant contributions to creating and sustaining international beauty standards (Craddock, 2019) and its significant impact on the world economy, which was valued at US$1,53 trillion in 2022 (Statista, 2023).

The attractiveness of the advertisement is one of the marketing strategies often used by the fashion businesses. To accomplish this, brands frequently use exceptionally attractive people, as well as digital retouching, to catch consumers' attention, which boosts the effectiveness of their advertising (McBride et al., 2019; Tanyildizi & Yolcu, 2020). Victoria's Secret, which features increasingly stunning models over time with lower and smaller body sizes, is an example of a company that employs this strategy in fashion shows (Maymone et al., 2022).

The lack of variation in body shapes and the digital retouching to constantly improve one's appearance, encourage the spread of unrealistic and unreachable conceptions of beauty, which have a negative impact on public health (Triggemann et al., 2019). Because common people's actual appearance does not match this idealized unreality, people end up comparing themselves to unrealistic images, inevitably feeling unsatisfied with their bodies and consequently, with lower levels of self-esteem (Drutschinin et al., 2018; Fuller-Tyszkiewicz et al., 2019).

The sizes of clothing that are sold in stores are another way that fashion affects how people feel about their bodies. Only a small selection of sizes is offered and not all body types are covered by this

selection. In this way, fashion industry promotes favored and idealized forms at the expense of the others and dictating who may and who may not wear particular brands (Brownbridge et al., 2018; Christel, 2018; Volonté, 2017).

2.2. Relationship Marketing

The rapid technological advancement, the implementation of quality programs, the expansion of the service industry and the competitive intensity have changed completely the market (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). Customers today are much more empowered and have access to a variety of offers and information that allows them to make more informed and planned decisions. They are much more critical and difficult to please, so brands must focus on developing a strategic approach to this new market paradigm. In this sense, it is becoming increasingly common for brands to seek to establish and maintain long-term relationships with their customers, as this improves the company's economic performance by promoting customer satisfaction, increased retention, joint value creation, increased market share, and enhances the overall brand image (Ahmmed et al., 2019; Hasaballah et al., 2019).

Relationship marketing arose from the desire to demonstrate how effective relationship management leads to marketing success. In 1983, Berry (p. 25) defines relationship marketing as "attracting, maintaining and—in multi-service organizations—enhancing customer relationships". Later, Grönroos (1990, p. 5) states that relationship marketing is used to "identify and establish, maintain and enhance relationships with customers and other stakeholders, at a profit, so that the objectives of all parties involved are met". However, there is no widely accepted definition of this concept because it encompasses a variety of activities that vary depending on the context of the company (Sarmiento-Guede, 2016).

To establish these deep relationships, businesses must meet customer expectations through constant dedication and connectivity, promoting positive attitudes and behaviors on their part (Patterson, 1995). It is critical that the companies' decisions are aligned with the needs of their clients and the needs of their target market, culminating in more effective and efficient responses than those of their competitors (Rosa & Rua, 2020). When customers seek a relationship with a brand, they are voluntarily connecting with the brand rather than simply performing purchasing actions. Therefore, to maintain a relationship with a brand, high costs, competitive prices, and intense marketing techniques are not required (Garbarino & Johnson 1999).

2.3. Relationship Quality

Relationship quality emerges as a general assessment of the depth and intensity of the bond between a business and its clients, while helping them to fulfill their expectations, ambitions, and desires (Lu &

Wang, 2017). The major goal of relationship quality is to create a thorough process to maintain and improve long-term customer relationships, which leads to better perceptions of the firm, stronger competitive advantage, and greater corporate performance (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Nguyen & Waring, 2013). According to Doaei et al. (2011), a higher level of relationship quality makes customers to easily trust the integrity of the companies, hence strengthening the customer-brand relationship. This claim is reinforced by Agariya and Singh (2011), who note that relationship quality is a multidimensional concept, with trust, commitment, and satisfaction being the most commonly reported components between 1982 and 2010.

2.3.1. Trust

The concept of trust comes from customers' feelings of confidence in the promises made by businesses (van Tonder, 2016), believing that they act with integrity, goodwill, truthfulness, and reduced opportunistic behavior (Chen et al, 2017; Ndubisi et al., 2011). The relationship between the business and the client is seen to be more intense the higher this level of trust is, as it promotes productive conversation and cooperative resolution of problems that may arise (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; van Tonder & de Beer, 2017).

Thus, establishing trust with the customers is crucial and important in order to develop long-lasting customer-brand relationships, since it is a positive and substantial indicator of the relationship's quality (Iyiola & Rjoub, 2020).

2.3.2. Commitment

Commitment emerges from the customers' desire to value their relationship with a brand and/or company (Mpinganjira et al., 2017), believing that it is significant enough to warrant making ongoing efforts to preserve it (Bojei & Alwie, 2010). Thus, commitment can be seen as the pinnacle of a connection and is a reliable predictor of a relationship's duration (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Customers who show a greater level of commitment to their relationships with companies are more willing to invest, make sacrifices, work cooperatively, and share reliable information. As a result, businesses are able to charge more for their products and encourage the purchase of complementary goods, which increases profits and sales (Chen et al., 2017; Theron & Terblanche, 2010).

2.3.3. Satisfaction

The emotional reaction of delight, fulfillment, or pleasure that the customer feels based on the overall buying experience with the brand is referred to as satisfaction (Kim et al., 2016; Thaichon & Quach,

2016; Rivera et al., 2016). It is a deciding element in the decision of the customer to continue buying and working to preserve their relationship with the brand (Ndubisi et al., 2011).

Businesses become more competitive when they can increase customer satisfaction levels, as it results in more positive behavioral intentions, such as repurchases, positive word of mouth and increased market share (Ndubisi, 2012; Uslu, 2020).

2.4. Costumer-brand relationship

One of the biggest challenges for companies is creating and managing the relationships between brands and consumers. The attempt to establish deep, meaningful and long-lasting relationships with customers is a strategy frequently adopted by brands (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Liu et al, 2020; Malär et al, 2011)

The concept of the costumer-brand relationship (CBR) has been studied for several years, but it was only at the end of the 20th century that it started to be researched in the field of marketing (Loureiro, 2013). Initially, it was once perceived as a unilateral relationship, with the brand being nothing more than an object about which each consumer had his or her own perception (Zainol et al., 2016). In 1998, Fournier proposed a new approach to CBR in which the brand is seen as a living entity that actively participates in the relationship with the client. Brands encompasses more than just the social categorization of branded goods. Therefore, the perception of CBR changes to two-way relationship between the customer and the brand, as they are able to influence one another and form an emotional connection.

Later, Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) expanded the research of the consumer-brand relationship by emphasizing consumer-company identification as the primary psychological foundation for developing long-lasting devoted relationships with brands. This point of view contends that consumers form bonds with brands they identify with, which is an intentional, deliberate, and voluntary process that cannot be unilaterally imposed by businesses. According to these authors, the corporate identification and the consequent consumer-brand relationship depend not only on typically utilitarian values such as price, consistency, and convenience, but also on superior value sources such as the brand's industry, its customer base, its competitive positioning, and its global strategy.

In a deeper study of CBR, it is possible to identify three main dimensions: customer engagement, emotion attachment, and brand love. Those are dependent on both the connection and the strength of the relationship between the customer and the brand. However, it is crucial to cognitively distinguish between these several concepts, which might either have antecedents or outcomes (Gómez-Suárez, 2019).

Although the connection between customer engagement and the consumer-brand relationship has been previously established, this concept only becomes apparent later as one of its dimensions. It

is viewed as a continual relationship between the brand and the customer and can be researched from both psychological and behavioral points of view (Romero, 2017). From a psychology standpoint, customer engagement is viewed as a multidimensional notion with cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components that is essential to the development and maintaining of relationships (Brodie et al. 2011). The behavioral viewpoint, on the other hand, concentrates on consumer connections and interactions with the brand, such word-of-mouth and co-creation (Vivek et al., 2014).

In contrast to customer engagement, emotional attachment is firmly linked to the notion of ownership of things or products (Vivek and Shiri, 2009). An emotional attachment is a connection resulting from emotions that develops between a person and a brand and can take on different degrees of intensity. Stronger attachments lead to more passionate connections, affection, and love (Thomson et al. 2005).

Finally, brand love is the representation of the emotional experience of extremely positive feelings toward a brand. According to Carrol and Ahuvia (2006), brand love is a platonic emotion that often concentrates on desirable brands that reflect a lifestyle. However, Batra et al. (2012) described it as a long-term relationship involving a variety of affective, cognitive, and behavioral experiences rather than as an emotion. For the purpose of this dissertation, I will focus my study on this last-mentioned CBR's dimension.

2.4.1. Brand love

In the Marketing literature, brand love was initially defined as an intense feeling of attachment that a customer feels for his possessions or consumption activities as a result of the consumer's relationship with a brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Usually, those brands tend to be high quality, unique, innovative, credible, symbolic, hedonic and identity expressive (Bairrada et al., 2018; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Bıçakcıoğlu-Peynirci et al., 2016).

For many years, brand love has been studied through the theories of interpersonal love. Several authors (Albert & Valette-Florence, 2010; Sarkar, 2011; Thomson et al., 2005) believe that brand love is strongly related to interpersonal love, as it is perceived as a complex concept that encompasses multiple cognitions, emotions, and behaviors which customers structure into a mental prototype. However, it is unclear whether the emotional nature of both of these concepts is comparable. This is because, even if a relationship between the brand and the consumer is established, it is not guaranteed that the emotions felt in a relationship with another person have the same characteristics as the emotions felt in a brand love relationship (Langner et al, 2015).

According to Yoon et al. (2006), emotions about humans and brands are processed in different parts of the brain. Brands activate the left inferior prefrontal cortex, which is the area responsible for object evaluation, whereas person activate the medial prefrontal cortex. In 2012, Batra et al.

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reinforced the need to distinguish these two concepts, arguing that brand love is a love relationship rather than a feeling of love. Respondents in this study stated that, while they genuinely love some brands, this love is distinct from interpersonal love. There is a selfless concern for the person loved in an interpersonal relationship, which they believe does not exist in relationships with brands. Rather, there is a strong concern about what brands can do for the consumer and not the other way around. Furthermore, unlike in an interpersonal love relationship, brands are unable to reciprocate consumers' love as they do not feel emotions.

Even though brand love is not considered to have the same intensity and meaning as interpersonal love, Bagozzi et al. (2017) claim that it is the most intense level of the brand-consumer relationship. It therefore results in several very positive consequences for companies. Consumers who develop a brand-love relationship are more likely to spread positive word-of-mouth about the brand (Marcos & da Silva, 2020) and become more involved with it, being willing to invest time, money, energy, and other resources beyond what is expected at the time of purchase and consumption, such as helping to develop products and services through co-creation (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Kang, 2015; Kaufmann et al., 2016). Consumers become loyal to the brand, trusting and willing to forgive the brand's less positive attitudes (Kaufmann et al., 2016; Khamitov et al., 2019; Wallace et al., 2014). Companies that can establish this type of relationship with consumers benefit from long-term increases in profitability as repeat purchase intention rises and consumers are willing to pay a premium price (Garg et al., 2019; Nguyen & Fend, 2021).

According to Nguyen and Fend (2021), these effects are magnified for hedonic brands or brands operating in highly competitive markets. As hedonic brands are strongly associated with emotional aspects, brand love leads to purchase actions more quickly. On the other hand, in competitive markets, as the purchase option becomes more complexed, consumers tend to rely on their feelings or emotional connections at the time of the purchase decision. As a result, in these two cases, profitability is sometimes short-term as well, because they can monetize brand love more quickly and easily.

2.4.2. Brand hate

Brands are increasingly vulnerable to consumer criticism as a result of their growing digital presence, which can have major negative impacts on companies. Thus, it is crucial to understand how the brand's image might be negatively affected by the consumer's negative feeling or attitudes, in other words, understand the concept of Brand Hate (Kucuk, 2018).

Brand hate appears as the opposite of brand love, being described as a strong emotional reaction of resistance to companies in the context of the brand-consumer relationship (Johnson et al., 2011). According to Kucuk (2016, p. 20) it is "a psychological state whereby a consumer forms intense negative emotions and detachment toward brands that perform poorly and give consumers bad and painful

experiences on both individual and social levels". Typically, these feelings include rage, hatred, disgust, melancholy and fear (Fetscherin, 2019; Zhang & Laroche, 2020).

Recent studies have identified three key triggers of brand hate, these being: bad past experiences with the brand, corporate misconduct connected to immoral, unethical, antisocial, or unlawful aspects, and inconsistency between the brand's behaviors and its identity (Gois et al., 2022; Zarantonello et al, 2018). The most frequent targets of brand hatred are companies that behave in an unacceptable manner, fall short of social expectations, or fail to take consumers' and society's concerns into account (Anaza et al., 2021; Christodoulides et al., 2021). This is due to the fact that consumers are actually more focused on the symbolic rather than the functional image of a brand (Islam et al., 2019).

Stenberg came to the conclusion in 2003 that customers who have negative feelings about a brand either choose to distance themselves from it or actively attack it. A new study was later conducted in 2016 that connected behavioral attitudes including whining, cussing, protesting, or foregoing purchases to brand hate (Zarantonello et al., 2016). Finally, in 2017, along with the findings already mentioned above, Hegner et al. came to the conclusion that behaviors resulting from brand hatred fall into three categories: brand avoidance, negative word of mouth or brand retaliation**.**

2.4.2.1. Brand avoidance

When customers feel less connected to a brand (Veloutsou et al., 2020), they typically hate it passively, choosing to avoid it rather than rebel against it (Bayarassou et al., 2022).

Brand avoidance is the sensory response of the consumer (Honarmand et al., 2020) to consciously and purposefully reject the brand (Knittel et al., 2016), choosing to abstain from buying and using the brand's products although he or she is financially able to do so (Abid & Khattak, 2017; Cherrier et al., 2011). When this brand avoidance behavior becomes widespread among consumers, it can have very detrimental effects on the company's reputation and, most importantly, its revenues, which will ineluctably fall (Berndt et al., 2019).

To better understand this concept one can look at Logical Harmony, a blog that advocates against using and buying a variety of brands, because they test on animals or claim not to check whether their suppliers or affiliates do the same. As a result, it encourages brand avoidance among customers who are concerned about this problem (Combs, 2022).

2.4.2.2. Negative word-of mouth

Word-of-mouth is defined as an interpersonal communication, independent of any company, concerning products, services or brands, without any commercial content (Harrison-Walker, 2001; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2009). This is referred to as negative word-of-mouth when it is associated with

dissatisfaction with particular goods, services or purchasing process, or by opposition to particular values and/or brand's attitudes. It implies that customers pass along their negative impressions and unsatisfactory experiences to others, advising them not to purchase or to use goods (Balaji et al., 2016). According to a research done in 2021, the majority of participants, roughly 71%, claim they would tell their friends and colleagues not to purchase anything from a company, and 18% would approach the media with the issue (ReviewTrackers, 2021).

Negative word-of-mouth is often the result of anger or regret, so consumers feel the need to express their frustration to others. However, people rarely express their unhappiness directly to the corporation. Instead, they usually confide in their friends and family (Wen-Hai et al., 2019).

With the growth of the Internet, word-of-mouth has become increasingly relevant because of the ease of spreading the word, and because it can be done instantly, anonymously and without regard to place or time (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). This can be very damaging to companies, negatively impacting product promotion, as well as corporate image (Wen-Hai et al., 2019). Additionally, it has a significant impact on purchase choices (Thomas et al., 2019). According to 94% of consumers, they avoid companies with bad evaluations (ReviewTrackers, 2021).

2.4.2.3. Brand retaliation

Retaliation is distinguished by being an active response to brand hate, with the goal of punishing and giving a lesson to the brand as a result of its wrong behaviors and attitudes (Grégoire and Fisher, 2008; Hegner et al., 2017; Porath et al., 2010). The customer's action goes beyond simply bringing up a complaint, it develops into aggressive behavior that involves making an effort to punish and hurt the target organization (Filho & Barcelos, 2021).

Consumer retaliation includes attempts to deter other potential consumers from purchasing the company's goods or using its services, as well as actions like verbal aggression on business partners, the use of offensive language and unfavorable product or service reviews (Filho & Barcelos, 2021). Thus, it differs from brand avoidance and negative word-of-mouth as it motivated by a desire to punish the company.

Therefore, retribution is the outcome of a feeling of deception and/or disappointment, which causes frustration, anger and annoyance. In consequence, the customer seeks revenge on the brand in question and takes steps to cause problems (Jabeen et al., 2022). When brand hate reaches this point of wanting vengeance, it becomes extremely problematic since it can seriously harm the company's reputation, financial resources and brand equity (Sakulsinlapakorn and Zhang, 2019).

3. Research Hypotheses and Conceptual Model

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the study of people's perception of their body image (Tylka et al., 2020). This trend arises as a consequence of the increase from year to year of the number of people dissatisfied with their body, as it brings detrimental effects for society, such as eating disorders and depression and anxiety disorders (Chen et al., 2020; Grogan, 2021; Sharpe et al., 2018). Several authors have focused their research on trying to understand what influences this body perception, having reach a general agreement that it is strongly influenced by the environment that surrounds each person, which results in constant social comparisons with what is expected by family and friends and / or with the ideals of beauty propagated by the media (Flynn et al., 2020; Uchôa et al., 2019). The fashion industry emerges as one of the major contributors to the establishment of these ideals and consequent promotion of body dissatisfaction, by constantly choosing to use the attractiveness of the ad strategy, which involves using extremely attractive people and, often using digital retouching to further enhance their appearance (Craddock, 2019; Tanyildizi & Yolcu, 2020). Additionally, many brands choose to only offer a limited selection of sizes, defining who may or may not wear specific brands, which also contribute to the rising body dissatisfaction (Brownbridge et al., 2018). However, so far all studies regarding the promotion of body dissatisfaction by fashion brands study only the impact for each individual and not the consequences it may have for those brands, namely in developing relationships with customers. Thus, this dissertation aims to understand the consequences of the promotion of body dissatisfaction by brands, analyzing whether it has any impact on the development of customer-brand relationships. However, since it is not possible to measure the action of promoting body dissatisfaction by brands, it will be necessary to measure the resulting perception that customers have about their body image and thus measure its impact on the development of brand-hate and brand-love relationships.

Furthermore, the concept of relationship quality will also be taken into account in this dissertation as a moderating variable between the perception that each consumer has about their body image and the resulting relationship that each customer forms with fashion brands in order to provide a more thorough investigation. This is because the measurement of relationship quality is fundamental as it allows us to assess the depth and intensity of the relationship between customers and brands (Lu & Wang, 2017). Nevertheless, as relationship quality is a multidimensional term that can be broken down into the concepts of trust, commitment, and satisfaction (Agariya & Singh, 2011), these concepts will be used to create the research hypotheses.

Therefore, the following hypotheses were established, which will be further examined to see if they are confirmed or rejected by the data analysis from the questionnaire. The first three hypothesis will test how the consumers' perception of their own body image will influence the trust, commitment

and satisfaction they feel towards those brands. To do so, it will be used the construct of Consumer's Perception of Body Image which will allow to validate the level of satisfaction that each person has with his or her body image (Bardi et al, 2021).

H1a: Consumer's Perception of Body Image influences Trust on brands.

H1b: Consumer's Perception of Body Image influences Commitment to brands.

H1c: Consumer's Perception of Body Image influences Satisfaction with brands.

Consumers' level of trust in brands influences the growth of emotional bonds. Therefore, it is an important notion to consider while studying brand love since it is critical to the establishment of long-term connections (Iyiola & Rjoub, 2020; Song et al., 2019). A lack of trust that brands will behave in an ethical and moral manner, on the other hand, may result in the development of a brand hate relationship (Gois et al., 2022). As a result, the following hypotheses emerged:

H2a: Trust on brands affects Brand Hate.

H2b: Trust on brands affects Brand Love.

Several studies (Fournier, 1998; Šerić et al., 2020) have found that the person's degree of commitment to a brand determines the depth of the relationship they form with it. Batra et al (2021), even argues that long-standing commitment is one of the dimensions of brand love. With this in mind, the following hypotheses were considered:

H3a: Commitment to brands affects Brand Hate.

**H3b: Commitment to brands affects Brand Love.**

Because the satisfaction construct corresponds to the pleasure and fulfillment that consumers feel based on their consumer experience with brands, it has a great influence on the emotions that individuals form (Kim et al., 2016). As a result, if the experience is unfavorable, it may lead to brand hate (Kucuk, 2016). If, on the other hand, the experience is constantly good and fulfilling, it may contribute to the creation of brand love, forming a strong emotional link, and repeatedly choosing that brand over others (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Nguyen & Fend 2021). Therefore, the hypotheses listed below will be tested.

H4a: Satisfaction with brands affects Brand Hate.

H4b: Satisfaction with brands affects Brand Love.

The conceptual model for this dissertation (Figure 2) was built based on the hypotheses given above. It seeks to capture the essence of the study problem and systematize the elements that influence the establishment of relationships with brands. Other studies' conceptual models on the relationship between brands and customers served as inspiration and were modified according to the context of the study, resulting in the development of a new conceptual model.

Figure 2: Conceptual Model with Hypotheses
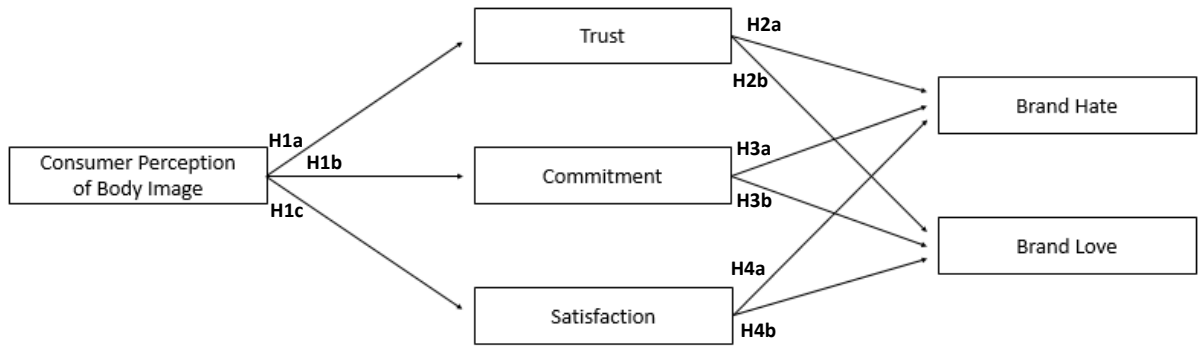
Source: Own Elaboration

4. Methodology

4.1. Questionnaire design & data collection

To conduct this study, an online questionnaire was developed on the Qualtrics platform with 48 questions, 3 about demographic data, 1 asking about which brands respondents believe are contributing to the promotion of unrealistic ideals and, as a result, promoting body dissatisfaction, and 44 adapted questions (Table 1) about the variables under study, which respondents had to answer using 7-point Likert Scales to ensure greater data comparability. Furthermore, the questionnaire was written in both English and Portuguese in order to reach a broader target audience.

Consumer Perception of Body Image was measured using the 6 items proposed by Bardi et al. (2021), Trust was measured using 9 items proposed by Alsaad et al. (2017), Commitment using the 7 items proposed by Dagger et al. (2011) and Satisfaction using the 3 items created by Akrout and Nagy (2018). All of those were assessed based on a Likert Scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree or Disagree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree and 7 = Strongly Agree. The measurement of Brand Love, which was done using the scale proposed by Bagozzi et al. (2017) was divided into two groups, where the first 12 items were rated on a Likert Scale with 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree or Disagree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree and 7 = Strongly Agree and the last item was rated on a Likert Scale with 1 = Negative and 7 = Positive. Finally, Brand Hate was assessed using a 6-items scale developed by Hegner et al. (2017) also using a Likert Scale, where 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = Sometimes, 5 = Frequently, 6 = Usually and 7 = Always.

The questionnaire ends with a final set of questions designed to collect the demographic data from respondents such as age, gender, and educational level.

Table 1: Literature of Constructs

Construct	Source
Consumer Perception of Body Image	(Bardi et al., 2021)
Trust	(Alsaad et al., 2017)
Commitment	(Dagger et al., 2011)
Satisfaction	(Akrout & Nagy, 2018)
Brand Love	(Bagozzi et al., 2017)
Brand Hate	(Hegner et al., 2017)

Source: Own Elaboration

The questionnaire was initially distributed to 15 people to obtain feedback on its structure and comprehensiveness. Some changes were required, mostly to correct minor spelling errors and to allow the user to go back on the answers, as some participants felt the need to do so.

Following the implementation of the feedback, the questionnaire was distributed via internet through the use of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Linkedin, and Reddit. It took between 10 and 15 minutes to respond, and all responses were collected anonymously from February 28 to March 31, 2023.

4.2. Data treatment

To analyze the questionnaire results, the data had to be exported to an Excel file. Then, in order to consider only what was valid, 5 of the 310 responses obtained were eliminated, two of which were incomplete and three of which had short response times, making it impossible to answer the entire questionnaire correctly. This results in 305 valid responses.

The data was then imported into the IBM SPSS Statistics 28 software, which was used to perform the necessary analyses – descriptive statistics, reliability and validity analysis and single and multiple regression. However, before beginning the analyses, it was essential to identify the correct type of each variable under consideration. Gender, age, and education were designated as nominal variables, while the remaining variables where a 7-Point Likert Scale was used were designated as scale variables.

4.3. Respondent profile

The age question was divided into four possible answers - female, male, non-binary or other, and "I prefer not to answer" - so that everyone could respond, as some people may not identify with either the female or male gender or may not want to answer. When we look at the distribution of the different answers, we can see that women represent a greater proportion of the respondents, accounting for 76,4% of the total, while men make up only 22,6% of the total (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Pie Chart for Gender
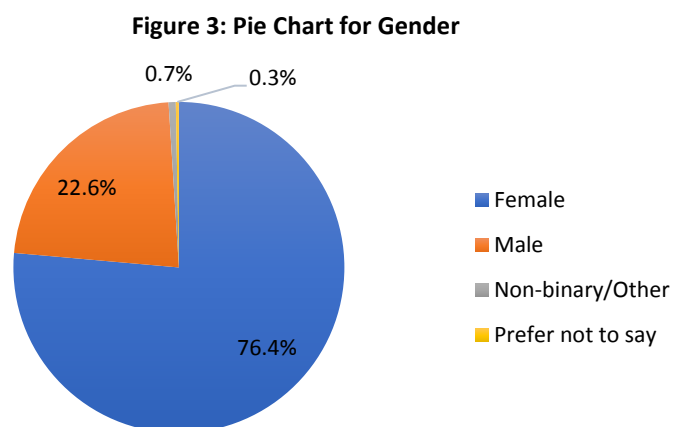
Source: SPSS Data

To ease data analysis, the age data was gathered using a multiple-choice question with seven different age groups. When analyzing the data (Figure 4), it is evident that most respondents are between the ages of 18 and 25, accounting for 47,2% of all responses. There are also three other relevant age groups, between 26 and 35 years old, 36 and 45 years old, and 46 and 55 years old, with a representation of 19,7%, 13,8%, 12,8% respectively.

Figure 4: Pie Chart for Age

Source: SPSS Data
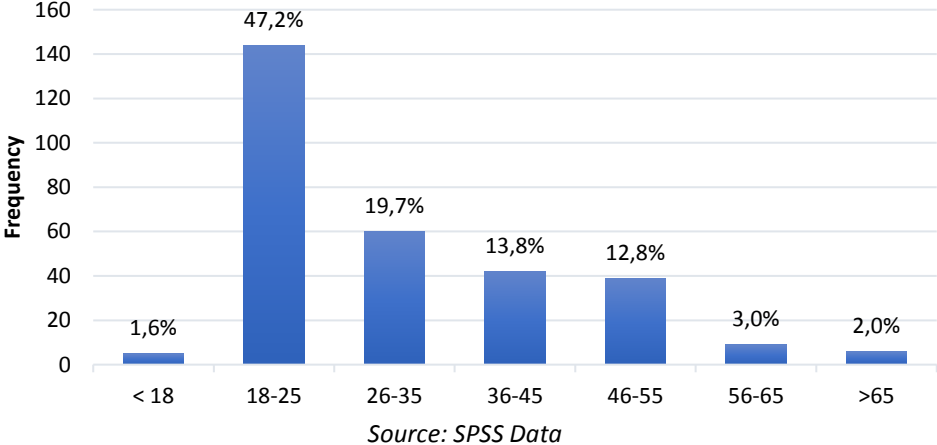
Finally, when analyzing the level of education of the respondents most have only a completed bachelor's degree, which corresponds to 49,5% over the total weight of the respondents (Figure 5). The second and third major groups are the respondents who have a master's degree and those who have only completed high school, with a weight of 27,9% and 17,4%, respectively. It is thus possible to conclude that a large majority of respondents have an advanced level of education (79,4%), that is, with a level of education above secondary school.

Figure 5: Pie Chart for Education Level

Source: SPSS Data
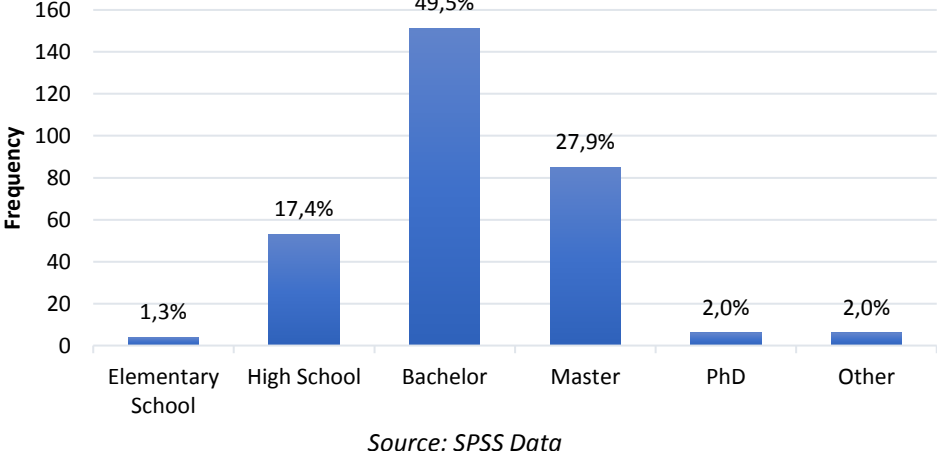
5. Results

5.1. Fashion brands that promote body dissatisfaction

It is possible to determine which brands respondents believe are more frequently linked to the promotion of unrealistic beauty ideals and, as a result, body dissatisfaction, by looking at their responses to the survey's question "Please name two fashion brands you know that fit the profile described above.". The most often stated brand was Zara, which was mentioned in 93 out of 305 answers i.e., in almost one-third of all responses. This is followed by Victoria's Secret which was mentioned in 43 answers, which is equivalent to 14% of the opted answers. Finally, Brandy Melville (x = 9%), Stradivarius (x = 8%), Bershka (x = 7%), and Gucci (x = 7%) are further companies that stand out with percentages between 7 to 9 compared to the overall responses.

5.2. Descriptive statistics

Consumer Perception of Body Image (CPBI)

The construct Consumer Perception of Body Image was composed by 6 items – CPBI1, CPBI2, CPBI3, CPBI4, CPBI5 and CPBI6. Table 2 shows the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation for each item.

Consumer Perception of Body Image has a mean of 3,9475, which is lower than the 7-Likert Scale's middle value of 4, and a standard deviation of 1,49358. As a result, it is possible to conclude that although the majority of respondents appreciate and have positive opinions about their bodies, they are not completely satisfied with them. However, the items CPBI1 and CPBI2 – *Right now, I feel extremely satisfied with my physical appearance* and *Right now, I feel extremely satisfied with my body size and shape* – had Means of 4,16 and 4,03, respectively.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for CPBI

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
CPBI1	1	7	4,16	1,694
CPBI2	1	7	4,08	1,768
CPBI3	1	7	3,05	1,827
CPBI4	1	7	3,98	1,702
CPBI5	1	7	3,87	1,647
CPBI6	1	7	3,66	1,619
CPBI			3,9475	1,49358

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

Trust (T)

Trust was constituted by 9 variables – T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8 and T9. The Table 3 displays the values for each item's minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation.

When analyzing the results obtained, it is possible to conclude that respondents have low levels of Trust in the brands they have identified as contributing to the promotion of body dissatisfaction, as the mean of Trust is lower than the 7-Likert Scale's middle value ($\bar{x}$ = 3,5661), with a standard deviation of 1,22826. The item with the lowest mean, 2,65, was T3 – *These brands are interested in my well-being, not just their own well-being*.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for T

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
T1	1	7	3,10	1,561
T2	1	7	2,89	1,161
T3	1	7	2,65	1,547
T4	1	7	2,99	1,636
T5	1	7	4,08	1,857
T6	1	7	3,95	1,749
T7	1	7	4,18	1,606
T8	1	7	4,05	1,591
T9	1	7	4,21	1,681
T			3,5661	1,22826

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

Commitment (C)

Commitment was investigated using seven variables– C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6 and C7. All the values corresponding to the minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation of each item are displayed in the Table 4.

The mean of all items, as well as the mean of the Commitment construct ($\bar{x}$ = 2,4033), are all significantly lower than 4, the midpoint of the 7-Likert Scale. The standard deviation is equal to 1,39183. As a result, it is safely to assume that respondents are not particularly committed to the brands they indicated at the start of the survey – brands that promote unrealistic beauty ideals and, consequently, promote body dissatisfaction. Items C4 and C5 - *My relationship with these brands deserves my maximum effort to maintain it* and *I believe these brands and I are both committed to our relationship* – stand out as having the lowest means, of 2,19 and 2,23, respectively.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for C

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
C1	1	7	2,83	1,669
C2	1	7	2,47	1,626
C3	1	7	2,30	1,515
C4	1	7	2,19	1,458
C5	1	7	2,23	1,496
C6	1	7	2,33	1,583
C7	1	7	2,48	1,644
C			2,4033	1,39183

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

Satisfaction (S)

Table 5 displays the minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation values for the 3 Satisfaction construct items - S1, S2, and S3.

The mean of Satisfaction ($\bar{x}$ = 4,2240) is greater than 4, and the standard deviation is 1,55047. Thus, despite low levels of trust and commitment to brands that contribute to the spread of body dissatisfaction, respondents are slightly satisfied with their products and with brands in general. The item S1 – *I am satisfied with these brands' products* – has the highest mean, of 4,49.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for S

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
S1	1	7	4,49	1,618
S2	1	7	4,19	1,649
S3	1	7	4,00	1,633
BTA			4,2240	1,55047

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

Brand Hate (BH)

Brand Hate was assessed using six question item variables - BH1, BH2, BH3, BH4, BH5, and BH6. The values for the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation are shown in Table 6.

When the mean value of the construct in the study is examined, it is possible to deduce that the respondents do not form negative emotions and detachment towards the brands they have identified as promoting body dissatisfaction, as the mean is significantly lower than 4, of 2,8317, which, as previously stated, is the middle point of the 7-Likert Scale. BH6 - *I hate these brands* – stands out as being the item with the lowest Mean, of 2,45. The Brand Hate standard deviation is 1,46720.

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
BH1	1	7	3,12	1,890
BH2	1	7	2,96	1,678
BH3	1	7	3,16	1,663
BH4	1	7	2,62	1,628
BH5	1	7	2,68	1,649
BH6	1	7	2,45	1,558
BH			2,8317	1,46720

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

Brand Love (BL)

To study the Brand Love construct it was used 13 items – BL1, BL2, BL3, BL4, BL5, BL6, BL7, BL8, BL9, BL10, BL11, BL12 and BL13. Table 7 displays the values regarding the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation of each item.

The mean of Brand Love, which is 3,3278, is lower than 4 and the standard deviation is 1,25950. As an outcome, it is feasible to deduce that, while respondents do not feel hated by the brands, they also do not have a strong feeling of attachment to them. However, the items BL6, BL7 and BL13 – *I feel myself desiring to wear these brands*, *I have interacted with these brands in the past* and *Please, express your overall feelings and evaluations towards these brands* – have means that are greater than 4, of 4,10, 5,24, and 4,07, respectively.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for BL

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
BL1	1	7	2,88	1,779
BL2	1	7	3,44	1,993
BL3	1	7	2,78	1,759
BL4	1	7	2,64	1,765
BL5	1	7	2,24	1,604
BL6	1	7	4,10	2,022
BL7	1	7	5,24	1,861
BL8	1	7	3,39	1,809
BL9	1	7	2,58	1,792
BL10	1	7	3,99	1,907
BL11	1	7	3,67	1,985
BL12	1	7	2,26	1,684
BL13	1	7	4,07	1,329
BL			3,3278	1,25950

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

5.3. Exploratory Data Analysis

SPSS 28 was used in this section to carry out exploratory data analysis, which includes reliability and validity analysis as well as single and multiple regression analysis. Following that, the output was examined in order to establish statistical ground for conclusions.

5.3.1. Reliability and validity analysis

Before analyzing data, it is important to understand its validity and reliability. With this purpose, the Cronbach's Alpha study was carried out for all constructs, where any value between 0 and 1 is assumed. This method assesses the internal consistency of all collected data by determining whether all items truly refer to the same concept.

The higher the value of Cronbach's Alpha the greater its reliability. Thereby, alpha values below 0,5 are considered unacceptable, alpha values between 0,6 and 0,7 are acceptable, alpha values between 0.7 and 0.8 are good, alpha values between 0.8 and 0.9 are very good, and alpha values above 0.9 are considered excellent.

As Table 8 shows, all the constructs have an alpha greater than 0.9, except for Trust with an alpha value of 0,899, which is extremely close to 0,9. As an outcome, it is possible to conclude that all are reliable and internally consistent, with values ranging from very good to excellent.

Table 8: Reliability Analysis for all Constructs

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha
Consumer Perception of Body Image	0,938
Trust	0,899
Commitment	0,954
Satisfaction	0,945
Brand Hate	0,949
Brand Love	0,913

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

5.3.2. Linear regression analysis

Single and multiple regression analyses were used to understand the links between the different constructs and thus adequately test the hypotheses presented earlier in this study. Single regression was use whenever there was only one independent variable, whereas multiple regression was used to examine the impact of three independent variables.

5.3.2.1. Assumption of multiple regression

Five different analyses were used to investigate the conceptual model, all of which were based on the same assumptions. This is only possible because the independent variables and moderators of the model are the same in all configurations and are valid for all models, so they are present in all configurations. A confidence level of 95,000 was used for all intervals. All assumptions must be valid for regression analysis to be used as a statistical inference. Otherwise, it is only useful as a sample.

Assumption 1: Linearity of the Model

The model's linearity assumption verifies as, by construction, the theoretical model assumes linearity between the dependent and independent variables.

Assumption 2: Random Sample

In order to generalize the results of the sample to the population, it is critical that the sample is randomly selected. We can conclude that the assumption is valid because the data was collected at random.

Assumption 3: Linear independence (no multicollinearity)

It is important to ensure that there is no multicollinearity, which means that there is no linear dependence between the independent variables, as this can cause problems in the research. In order to validate this independence, an investigation of the tolerance and VIF values was performed using the collinearity statistics. Table 9 demonstrates that all tolerance values for all independent variables in this model are greater than 0,1 and all VIF values are lower than 10. As a result, it is possible to conclude that there is no multicollinearity, implying that the assumption is valid.

Table 9: Collinearity Statistics

	Tolerance	VIF
Consumer Perception of Body Image	1,000	1,000
Trust	0,270	3,707
Commitment	0,596	1,679
Satisfaction	0,372	2,692

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

Assumption 4: Exogeneity of the independent variables

The assumption of exogeneity states that the independent variables are unrelated to the residual terms of each dependent variable. Because the theoretical model of the study contains two groups of dependent variables, the correlation had to be validated separately. Tables 10 and 11 show that all

independent constructs have a Pearson Correlation of 0,000 with the residuals, indicating that there is no correlation. As a result, the assumption is true.

Table 10: Correlation between Independent Variable and Residual Terms of T, C and S

	CPBI	Standardized Residual T	Standardized Residual C	Standardized Residual S
CPBI	1	0,000	0,000	0,000

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

Table 11: Correlation between Independent Variables and Residual Terms of BH and BL

	T	C	S	Standardized Residual BH	Standardized Residual BL
T	1	0,614	0,782	0,000	0,000
C	0,614	1	0,376	0,000	0,000
S	0,782	0,376	1	0,000	0,000

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

Assumption 5: Constancy of the residuals variables across predicted values (homoscedasticity)

The assumption that a model should make equally reliable predictions across all values is known as residual homoscedasticity, which means that the variance of the residuals must be constant across all predicted values. By examining all the figures in Appendix C, it is possible to conclude that although the residuals Trust, Commitment and Satisfaction seem to have homoscedasticity, as the points in the scatterplot are evenly distributed across the horizontal axis, the same does not happen with the residuals Brand Hate and Brand Love. Therefore, the assumption doesn't hold.

Assumption 6: Normally distributed error component

According to this assumption, all residuals should be normally distributed. In order to assess this, a histogram for all the standardized residuals was created. Appendix D shows that the residuals in this study do not correspond to the normal distribution curve, meaning they aren't normally distributed.

To complement this analysis, it was also used the Normal P-Plots for each residual variable, which show the expected versus the observed cumulative probability. Data with a perfectly normal distribution falls exactly on the sketched diagonal. As a result, as one moves away from the diagonal, the data becomes less normally distributed. The figures in Appendix E show that the majority of the residuals' data do not fall exactly on the sketched diagonal, with Brand Hate being the only exception because it appears to be nearly perfectly normally distributed. Therefore, looking at all of the figures in Appendix D and E, it is reasonable to conclude that this assumption fails.

Assumption 7: Correlation of the Residuals Terms

It is critical to validate whether there is any correlation between the model's residuals in order to understand whether there are any factors or variables that influence the dependent variables that were not adequately accounted for. We can have more confidence in the statistical inferences and predictions made by the regression model if the residuals are uncorrelated, allowing us to make more accurate interpretations about the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

The Durbin-Watson statistic was then applied to determine the presence of autocorrelation in the regression model's residual terms. This statistical test ranges from 0 to 4, with values close to 2 indicating that there is no significant correlation between the residuals. A value less than 2 indicates that the residuals are positively correlated, while a value greater than 2 indicates that the residuals are negatively correlated. Table 12 shows that there is no correlation between the model's residuals because all correspondent Durbin-Watson values are close to 2, as they can be rounded to 2, implying that this assumption holds.

Table 12: Durbin-Watson Statistic for the Dependent

	Durbin-Watson
Trust	1,749
Commitment	1,853
Satisfaction	1,682
Brand Hate	1,774
Brand Love	1,873

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

Evaluation of the Model

Following the validation of the assumptions, it is necessary to establish whether the model is appropriate for the analysis and whether it can ensure the accuracy with which the model can predict the observed values. According to Table 13, the multiple correlation coefficients of the Brand Hate and Brand Love constructs, 0,625 and 0,812, respectively, indicate that there is a considerable correlation between the predicted and actual values. Moreover, according to Cohen (1988), the Adjusted R^2 values for these two constructs equally indicate a significant level of suitableness particularly for Brand Love.

When the same studies are performed on the constructs Trust, Commitment, and Satisfaction, it is possible to recognize that the correlation between the actual and predicted values is not very significant, with values ranging between 0,21 and 0,30. The same issue happens when we look at the Adjusted R^2 values, which are near to 0, implying a poor level of adequacy.

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Table 13: Model Summary of the Dependent Variables T, C, S, BL and BH

	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Trust	0,296	0,088	0,085
Commitment	0,262	0,069	0,066
Satisfaction	0,210	0,044	0,041
Brand Hate	0,625	0,390	0,384
Brand Love	0,812	0,659	0,656

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

ANOVA was applied as well to see if the predictors, or independent variables, could predict the criterion significantly. Because all of the p-values for all of the constructs are less than 0.05, we may conclude from Table 14 that the predictors of the created model can predict the criterion, that is, the dependent variables.

Table 14: Significance of the Model via ANOVA

		df	F	Sig.
Trust	Regression	1	29,147	<0,001
	Residual	303	-	-
	Total	304	-	-
Commitment	Regression	1	22,421	<0,001
	Residual	303	-	-
	Total	304	-	-
Satisfaction	Regression	1	13,951	<0,001
	Residual	303	-	-
	Total	304	-	-
Brand Hate	Regression	3	64,167	<0,001
	Residual	301	-	-
	Total	304	-	-
Brand Love	Regression	3	194,071	<0,001
	Residual	301	-	-
	Total	304	-	-

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

Because two of the seven assumptions are not met, the single and multiple regression analysis can only be used as a sample characterization, which means the model cannot be generalized to the overall population.

5.3.2.2. Single Regression – T as dependent variable and CPBI as independent variable

Single regression analysis can be used to determine the impact of each variable on the conceptual model developed. The first analysis seeks to examine the hypothesis H1a, which claim that the independent variable Consumer Perception of Body Image have an effect on the dependent variable

Trust. The corrected regression equation can be calculated using the regression coefficients in table 15:

$$\mathbf{T} = 2{,}604 + 0{,}269\ \mathbf{CPBI} + \varepsilon \qquad (1)$$

Consumer Perception of Body Image has a standardized coefficient of 0,269, which indicates that for every rise in Consumer Perception of Body Image, Trust increases by that same value. Furthermore, this independent variable has a p-value lower than 0,05 (sig < 0,001 < 0,05), meaning that it has a linear connection with Trust and hence is well suited for prediction. Consumer Perception of Body Image is statistically significant as a result. Therefore, the hypothesis H1a is accepted, and it can be deduced that consumer trust in companies that encourage body dissatisfaction increases as consumer perception of their body image improves.

− *H1a: Consumer Perception of Body Image influences Trust on brands.*

Table 15: Coefficients of the Single Regression with T as Dependent Variable

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient			95% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	2,602	0,190		13,678	<0,001	2,230	2,979
CPBI	0,244	0,045	0,269	5,399	<0,001	0,155	0,332

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

5.3.2.3. Single Regression – C as dependent variable and CPBI as independent variable

The following analysis aims to assess the effect of the variables Consumer Perception of Body Image on the dependent variable Commitment. Thus, the adjusted regression equation can be calculated using the standardized coefficients in Table 16:

$$\mathbf{C} = 1{,}438 + 0{,}262\ \mathbf{CPBI} + \varepsilon \qquad (2)$$

Consumer Perception of Body Image has a standardized coefficient of 0,262. This indicates that every increase in the Consumer Perception of Body Image increases the level of Commitment by 0,262. When analyzing the coefficient with Commitment as the dependent variable, the independent variable Consumer Perception of Body Image (sig < 0,001 < 0,05) presents a p-value substantially lower than 0,05, indicating that it is well suited for prediction and, as a result, statistically significant. Thus, the hypothesis H1b is validated, and it is possible to conclude that the effect of the consumer perception of his/her own body image on the commitment to fashion brands that promote body dissatisfaction is positive. That is, the better the consumer perception of his/her own body image, the higher is the commitment to those brands.

− *H1b: Consumer Perception of Body Image influences Commitment to brands.*

Table 16: Coefficients of the Single Regression with C as Dependent Variable

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient			95% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	1,438	0,218		6,595	<0,001	1,009	1,867
BIS	0,245	0,052	0,262	4,735	<0,001	0,143	0,346

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

5.3.2.4. Single Regression – S as dependent variable and CPBI as independent variable

The next analysis was performed to assess the influence of the independent variable Consumer Perception of Body Image on the dependent variable Satisfaction. Thus, using the standardized coefficients in Table 17, the adjusted regression equation can be calculated:

$$S = 3,364 + 0,210 \, CPBI + \varepsilon \tag{3}$$

With a standardized coefficient of 0,210, for every increment in the Consumer Perception of Body Image, individuals' Satisfaction with fashion brands increases by 0,210. The p-value of the independent variable Consumer Perception of Body Image is lower than 0,05 (sig. < 0,001 < 0,05), meaning that this finding is statistically significant, that is, it is well suited for prediction. The H1c hypothesis is therefore acknowledged, and it is consistent with assumptions that consumers' perception of their own body image has a favorable influence on how satisfied they are with the fashion companies that support the promotion of body dissatisfaction. In conclusion, consumers are more satisfied with companies when they feel better about their own body images.

− *H1c: Consumer Perception of Body Image influences Satisfaction with brands.*

Table 17: Coefficients of the Single Regression with S as Dependent Variable

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient			95% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	3,364	0,246		13,673	<0,001	2,880	3,849
BIS	0,218	0,058	0,210	3,735	<0,001	0,103	0,333

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

5.3.2.5. Multiple Regression – BH as dependent variable and T, C and S as independent variables

The analysis that follows was carried out to determine the impact of the independent variables Trust, Commitment, and Satisfaction on the dependent variable Brand Hate. Thus, the adjusted regression equation can be derived using the standardized coefficients in Table 18:

$$BH = 4{,}947 - 0{,}253\ \mathbf{T} + 0{,}373\ \mathbf{C} - 0{,}496\ \mathbf{S} + \varepsilon \qquad (4)$$

Trust has a standardized coefficient of -0,253, indicating that as an individual's Trust in fashion brands that promote body dissatisfaction grows, the level of Brand Hate for those same companies decreases by 0,253. A comparable structure can be seen with the variable Satisfaction, which has a coefficient of -0,496 indicating that a rise in individual brand Satisfaction decreases Brand Hate by 0,496. Commitment, with a regression coefficient of 0,373, follows the opposite pattern, where any increase in individuals' Commitment to those same brands increases Brand Hate by 0,373.

All of the independent variables, Trust (sig = 0,004 < 0,05), Commitment (sig < 0,001 < 0,05), and Satisfaction (sig < 0,001 < 0,05), have p-values lower than 0,05, indicating that they are statistically significant and hence well suited for prediction. Thus, the regression analysis confirms all the hypotheses H2a, H3a and H4a.

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that although Trust and Satisfaction negatively impact Brand Hate, Commitment have a positive impact, which is the opposite of what was expected.

- *H2a: Trust on brands affects Brand Hate.*
- *H3a: Commitment to brands affects Brand Hate.*
- *H4a: Satisfactions with brands affects Brand Hate.*

Table 18: Coefficients of the Multiple Regression with BH as Dependent Variable

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient			95% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	4,947	0,208		23,729	<0,001	4,537	5,358
T	-0,302	0,104	-0,253	-2,921	0,004	-0,506	-0,099
C	0,393	0,061	0,373	6,388	<0,001	0,272	0,514
S	-0,469	0,070	-0,496	-6,711	<0,001	-0,607	-0,331

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

5.3.2.6. Multiple Regression – BL as dependent variable and T, C and S as independent variables

The final analysis was done to determine how the independent variables Trust, Commitment, and Satisfaction affect the dependent variable Brand Love. Thus, using the standardized coefficients in Table 19, the adjusted regression equation can be derived:

$$\textbf{BL} = 0{,}551 + 0{,}271\ \textbf{T} + 0{,}448\ \textbf{C} + 0{,}237\ \textbf{S} + \varepsilon \tag{5}$$

Trust has a standardized coefficient of 0,271, suggesting that when an individual's Trust in fashion brands that contribute to body dissatisfaction grows, so does Brand Love for those same companies by 0,271. When Commitment is examined, it exhibits an identical trend, with a coefficient of 0,448 demonstrating that an increase in an individual's commitment increases the growth of Brand Hate by 0,448. Finally, Satisfaction, with a standardized coefficient of 0,237, follows the same pattern as the preceding independent variables, implying that each rise in individuals' Satisfaction with brands enhances Brand Love by 0,237.

Trust (sig < 0,001 < 0,05), Commitment (sig < 0,001 < 0,05), and Satisfaction (sig < 0,001 < 0,05) all have p-values less than 0,05, indicating that they are statistically significant and hence suitable for prediction.

Consequently, by assessing the multiple regression analysis results, is it possible to conclude that all the hypotheses H2b, H3b and H4b are sustained, and all independent variables have a favorable impact on Brand Love.

- *H2b: Trust on brands affects Brand Love.*
- *H3b: Commitment to brands affects Brand Love.*
- *H4b: Satisfaction with brands affects Brand Love.*

Table 19: Coefficients of the Multiple Regression with BL as Dependent Variable

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient			95% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	0,551	0,134		4,117	<0,001	0,287	0,814
T	0,277	0,066	0,271	4,176	<0,001	0,147	0,408
C	0,405	0,039	0,448	10,274	<0,001	0,328	0,483
S	0,193	0,045	0,237	4,297	<0,001	0,104	0,281

Source: Own Elaboration through SPSS Data

The table below outlines the hypotheses under investigation and the extent to which the present study has contributed to their validation.

Table 20: List of hypotheses and validation

Hypothesis	Validated
H1a: Consumer Perception of Body Image influences Trust on brands	Yes
H1b: Consumer Perception of Body Image influences Commitment to brands.	Yes
H1c: Consumer Perception of Body Image influences Satisfaction with brands.	Yes
H2a: Trust on brands affects Brand Hate.	Yes
H3a: Commitment to brands affects Brand Hate.	Yes
H4a: Satisfactions with brands affects Brand Hate.	Yes
H2b: Trust on brands affects Brand Love.	Yes
H3b: Commitment to brands affects Brand Love.	Yes
H4b: Satisfaction with brands affects Brand Love.	Yes

Source: Own Elaboration

6. Conclusion

It is increasingly important for companies to establish strong marketing strategies to succeed in competitive markets such as the fashion industry. One such strategy is the development of solid customer-brand relationships, which help to retain customers and through them acquire new ones (Hasaballah et al.,2019). Customers, however, typically only develop strong ties with businesses that they identify with (Mustafa et al., 2022), which can be an obstacle for fashion brands that advocate for unrealistic beauty ideals as the majority of people end up feeling that they aren't represented by the sector (Christel, 2018; Triggemann et al., 2019). Despite the significance of this strategy, there hasn't been any research to date to examine the impact this may have for fashion brands, in order to validate whether the promotion of unrealistic ideals influence the establishment of customer-brand relationships. Thus, this dissertation seeks to contribute to fill this gap by investigating what is the impact on the development of brand love and brand hate relationships for brands that promote body dissatisfaction, by accessing whether the resulting customers' perceptions of their own body image have an impact on the quality of the developed customers' relationships with those brands, and how that quality impacts brand-love and brand-hate.

In this section the research objectives for the dissertation will be reviewed by summarizing the results from the literature review and the empirical section. These findings will lead to conclusions about the hypotheses and research questions being considered, as well as theoretical and managerial implications provided by the current study. The limits encountered while developing the thesis and potential strategies for expanding the research fields will also be highlighted here.

6.1. Theoretical Conclusions

Taking into account the theoretical contributions provided by this research, it is important to consider the research questions initially presented.

Our first research question is "To what extend do consumer' perception about their body image impact the development of brand hate for brands that promote body dissatisfaction?". According to this thesis results, a consumer's perception of body image is a predictor of trust, commitment, and satisfaction, while trust, commitment and satisfaction predict the development of brand hate.

The findings provided evidence that the consumer' perception of body image is an important predictor of trust, commitment and satisfaction and it indicates that it has a positive influence on those variables. This means that the better is the consumer's perception of their body image the higher is the level of trust, commitment and satisfaction on fashion brands that promote body dissatisfaction. This supports the academic theory that people are less susceptible to social comparison when they have a positive body image about themselves, rejecting the negative effects of the promotion of

unrealistic body ideals. (Andew et al., 2015; Franchina & Coco, 2018; Helliwell, 2013), which means that the quality of their relationship with those brands isn't expected to be negatively impacted by the promotion of body dissatisfaction.

When studying the findings about the predictors of brand hate, it is feasible to conclude that commitment has a favorable effect on brand hate while trust and satisfaction have a negative impact. Therefore, it is conceivable to state that the development of brand hate is higher the more committed a client is to a brand, whereas the probability of brand hate development is lower the higher the level of trust and satisfaction with the brand. Regarding trust as a predictor of brand hate, its proved positive influence is in line with what was discussed on previous literature as a higher level of trust implies a higher customers' confidence that brands will keep up with their promises (van Tonder, 2016), acting always with integrity, goodwill, truthfulness and reduced opportunistic behavior (Chen et al., 2017; Ndubisi et al., 2011), instead of having a misconduct behavior which would result in brand hate (Zarantonello et al., 2018). Moreover, costumers that trust brands are more willing to have productive discussions and work toward amicable solutions whenever something negative occurs, being more willing to forgive, and therefore lowering the possibility of brand hate development (van Tonder & de Beer, 2017). When it comes to satisfaction, its favorable impact on brand hate is consistent with the expected outcome when taking past studies into account. Satisfaction relates to the feeling of delight, fulfillment, and pleasure that the customer feels toward a brand (Kim et al.,2016; Rivera et al., 2016), instead of negative emotions (Kucuk, 2016), which positively influences the decision to keep buying from and working to maintain his/her relationship with the brand (Ndubisi et al., 2011), rather than developing a strong resistance to it, which are the antithesis of the behaviors and thoughts associated with brand hate (Johnson et al., 2011). Regarding commitment, the results show a positive influence on the development of brand hate, which contradicts the conclusions reached by other authors. According to their findings, customers' commitment emerges from their desire to value their relationship with a brand (Mpinganjira et al., 2017), believing that it is significant enough to warrant continual efforts to maintain it (Bojei & Alwie, 2010), which is exactly the opposite behavior of the intense negative emotions and detachment toward the brand, associated with brand hate (Kucuk, 2016).

The second research question is "To what extend do consumer' perception about their body image impact the development of brand love for brands that promote body dissatisfaction?". According to this thesis results, the consumer's perception of body image is a predictor of trust, commitment, and satisfaction, and that trust, commitment, and satisfaction are in turn predictors of the development of brand love for fashion brands. As previously said, it proved that a customer's perception of their body image has a favourable impact on their trust, commitment, and satisfaction on brands that promote body dissatisfaction, which is consistent with the findings of the literature review.

The results also support evidence of a favorable impact of trust, commitment, and satisfaction on brand love with regard to their role as predictors of this variable. Therefore, it is reasonable to draw the conclusion that the growth of brand love relationships is correlated with degrees of trust, commitment, and satisfaction, which is in line with the theory presented at the literature reviewed. Regarding trust, it illustrates how fostering it contributes to the development of highly intense and long-lasting consumer-brand connections (Iyiola & Rjoud, 2020) since trust results from a rise in consumer confidence in the promises made by companies (van Tonder, 2016). The same applies to the concept of commitment, which, according to Morgan & Hunt (1994), is the maximum level of a brand's relationship with its customers and a good indicator of how long that relationship will last. This is because commitment comes from customers' desires to value their relationship with the brand (Mpinganjira et al., 2017). Finally, according to prior studies, consumer satisfaction is also a key factor in whether they decide to keep buying from a particular brand and seek to strengthen and maintain their relationship with it (Ndubisi et al., 2011). Additionally, it represents an emotional response of fulfillment and delight with the brand which is one of the essential elements for the development of brand love (Nguyen & Fend, 2021).

6.2. Managerial Implications

Considering the importance of the development of customer-brand relationships, especially in competitive markets as is the case of the fashion industry, this study has come up with some useful and relevant insights for marketing managers of fashion brands on what barriers the promotion of body dissatisfaction can bring to those brands and how it my influence the development of those same relationships.

First, there are many fashion brands that use strategies such as the attractiveness of the advertisement, in which they frequently use extremely attractive people and occasionally even turn to digital retouching to enhance even more people's appearance in the belief that it will increase the effectiveness of their advertisements. Another strategy frequently used, which in this cause aims to reduce costs, is the offer of only a small range of sizes, which implies that not all body types are covered. However, those strategies encourage the spread of unrealistic and unreachable conceptions of beauty and because common people won't match this idealized unreality, people end up comparing themselves to those standards, inevitably feeling unsatisfied with their bodies. However, based on the study, this has been proven to be harmful for the development of customer relations with fashion brands that adopt those behaviors.

According to the results, the levels of customer's trust, commitment and satisfaction with a fashion brand are higher the better is the costumer's perception of their body image, which then leads to higher levels of brand love and lower levels of brand hate. However, by contributing to the

propagation of body dissatisfaction companies end up doing exactly the opposite. It is recommended for managers to change their strategies, opting for ways to improve customers' perception of their body image. A good starting point would be the use of a higher range of body types, enhancing the acceptance of any imperfection they may have and rejecting the use of digital retouching made to improve people's appearance. Another important behavior to adopt is the higher availability of larger and very small sizes in order to once again cover all body types, even if in lower quantities as there are less customers with those measures. Those changes would contribute to the end of the spread of unreachable beauty standards and the promotion of body dissatisfaction as customers would start to compare themselves with bodies by which they feel represented, which may help to improve their body image acceptance.

Second, if managers want to opt for more impactful strategies, it is possible to do so by creating campaigns that seek to clearly and transparently promote acceptance of body image. Clearly stating the brand's desire to be more inclusive and contribute to improving how satisfied each individual is with their appearance. That it wants to fight against the propagation of idealistic ideals with which the industry has been associated over the years, because not all people are extremely attractive, thin and tall and some even have some flaws, and this doesn't mean they should be excluded from the industry. The adoption of that strategy would probably have major impacts on improving customer's perception of their body image as the fashion industry is one of the main contributors to the spread of body dissatisfaction.

Finally, however, managers must use caution when fostering customer commitment to brands, through the improvement of consumers' perception of their body image, since research has shown that while it is a big factor in relationships centered around brand love, it can also contribute to the emergence of brand hate.

6.3. Limitations and Future Research

Despite efforts to prevent bias whenever possible, every study has its limitations and weaknesses due to research design, methodology, time, and expense constraints. As a result, the findings must be evaluated while taking into account these limitations.

The first two limitations that came to light were the lack of a wide range of nationalities in the sample, as the majority of respondents to the questionnaire were Portuguese and the fact that the research was only conducted at one point in time, which could have an effect on the variables and results. Future research could therefore examine the effects of brands that encourage body dissatisfaction on the development of brand love and brand hate relationships, taking into account customers' perceptions of their body image, in other countries, to ascertain whether culture plays a role on the results obtained, and in different time periods to observe if the results remain the same.

Still regarding the methodology, it was created solely through quantitative research, which offers few insights into behaviors and thoughts and may lead to a lack of context. Additionally, because the responses to the online survey were not observed, there was no way to monitor the procedure, which might have decreased the respondent's level of accuracy and sincerity. Therefore, in order to evaluate the validity of this study's quantitative research and to attempt to look for alternative conclusions regarding this same research problematic, future research should choose to construct qualitative research in addition to a survey.

A further limitation of the findings was the absence of evidence to support whether body satisfaction promotion initiatives actually benefit businesses. Although it is reasonable to draw the conclusion from this study that customers' relationships with fashion businesses is improved the better is their impression of their bodies, it is unclear whether body-satisfaction techniques actually help to improve this impression. In other words, it is only known how crucial it is for fashion brands to cease causing people to feel dissatisfied with their bodies but not how they can undo the harm they have already done. Thus, future research should seek to understand the impact of adopting strategies to promote body satisfaction, in order to validate if they really help in establishing of costumer-brand relationships.

Finally, no restrictions were placed on the participants' ages or genders for this study in order to obtain more general results because, as of yet, no research has attempted to link the perception of each customer's body image with the relationship they form with fashion brands that encourage body dissatisfaction. However, for future research it will be interesting to see whether the affects vary according to the respondents' ages and genders. This is due to the fact that not all brands have the same target market, hence the techniques to be used to address this issue may alter taking into account each target customer.

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Appendix A: Online survey

Introduction

Hello!

My name is Marta Augusto and I am a Marketing Master's student at ISCTE Business School.

This questionnaire is part of my Master's dissertation, whose main goal is to understand what consequences the promotion of body dissatisfaction by fashion brands can have on the relationship between the brand and the consumer.

For this purpose, I kindly ask for your help to complete this questionnaire, which will only take a few minutes. The answers are anonymous, and I will ensure maximum rigor in data processing, which will be used for academic purposes only.

There are no right or wrong answers. I kindly ask you to read the questions carefully and mark only the option(s) that best correspond to your opinion.

Thank you very much for your cooperation,
Marta Augusto
mcaoo@iscte-iul.pt
Prof. Ricardo Godinho Bilro

I have read and understood the above information and I agree to participate in this study.

◯ Yes
◯ No

The lack of inclusion of various body sizes and shapes is still a problem in many of the fashion brands we see in our daily lives. Several brands only offer a **small selection of sizes**, use only **tall and/or thin people in their communications**, and often resort to **digital retouching** to improve the appearance of the models used.

This behavior strongly contributes to the **promotion of unrealistic and unattainable beauty ideals**, to which people end up comparing themselves, feeling inevitably **dissatisfied with their own bodies**. This issue has gained increasing relevance due to being a risk factor that can result in eating disorders, depression, anxiety, and impaired sexual functions.

Please name two fashion brands you know that fit the profile described above.

```
[                                                              ]
```

Please indicate, on a scale of *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*, your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Right now, I feel extremely satisfied with my physical appearance.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Right now, I feel extremely satisfied with my body size and shape.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Right now, I feel extremely satisfied with my weight.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Right now, I feel extremely physically attractive.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Right now, I feel much more satisfied with my appearance than I normally feel.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Right now, I feel much more beautiful than an average person.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Given the brands you mentioned above and assuming that interactions with the brand include purchasing, using, or even brand exposure, please indicate, on a scale from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*, your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Wearing the clothes of these brands says something "true" and "deep" about who I am as a person.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
These brands are able to make me look like what I want to be.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
These brands are able to do something that makes my life more meaningful.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I often find myself thinking about these brands.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I am willing to spend a lot of money improving and fine-tuning a product of these brands after I buying it.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I feel myself desiring to wear these brands.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I have interacted with these brands in the past.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I feel that there is a natural "fit" between myself and these brands.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I feel emotionally connected to these brands.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I feel that these brands are fun.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I believe that I will be wearing these brands for a long time.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
If these brands were to go out of existence, I would feel anxious.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Given the brands you mentioned above and assuming that interactions with the brand include purchasing, using, or even brand exposure, please indicate, on a scale from *Negative* to *Positive*, what your feelings are.

	1 Negative	2	3	4	5	6	7 Positive
Please, express your overall feelings and evaluations towards these brands.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Given the brands you mentioned above and assuming that interactions with the brand include purchasing, using, or even brand exposure, please indicate, on a scale of *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*, your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I believe these brands would act in the best of my interests.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If I required help, these brands would do their best to help.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
These brands are interested in my well-being, not just their own well-being.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am comfortable in relying on these brands to fulfil my obligations.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel comfortable in doing business on the Internet with these brands.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I always feel confident that I can rely on these brands to do their part when I interact with them.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
These brands are competent at serving me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
These brands do a good job at meeting my needs.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
These brands are good at what I want.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Given the brands you mentioned above and assuming that interactions with the brand include purchasing, using, or even brand exposure, please indicate, on a scale of *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*, your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My relationship with these brands is something that I am committed to.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My relationship with these brands is very important to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My relationship with these brands is something I really care about.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My relationship with these brands deserves my maximum effort to maintain it.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I believe these brands and I are both committed to our relationship.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
These brands are prepared to make a short-term sacrifice to maintain our relationship.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I believe that these brands and I see our relationship as a long-term partnership.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Given the brands you mentioned above and assuming that interactions with the brand include purchasing, using, or even brand exposure, please indicate, on a scale of *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*, your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am satisfied with these brands' products.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am satisfied with these brands.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am pleased with these brands.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Given the brands you mentioned above and assuming that interactions with the brand include purchasing, using, or even brand exposure, please indicate, on a scale of *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*, your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I'm disgusted by these brands.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I don't tolerate these brands or their companies.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The world would be a better place without these brands.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I'm totally angry with these brands.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
These brands are awful.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I hate these brands.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

What is your gender?

○ Female
○ Male
○ Non-binary / Other
○ Prefer not to say

How old are you?

○ Up to 18 years old
○ From 18 to 25 years old
○ From 26 to 35 years old
○ From 36 to 45 years old
○ From 46 to 55 years old
○ From 56 to 65 years old
○ Over 65 years old

What is your level of education (completed)?
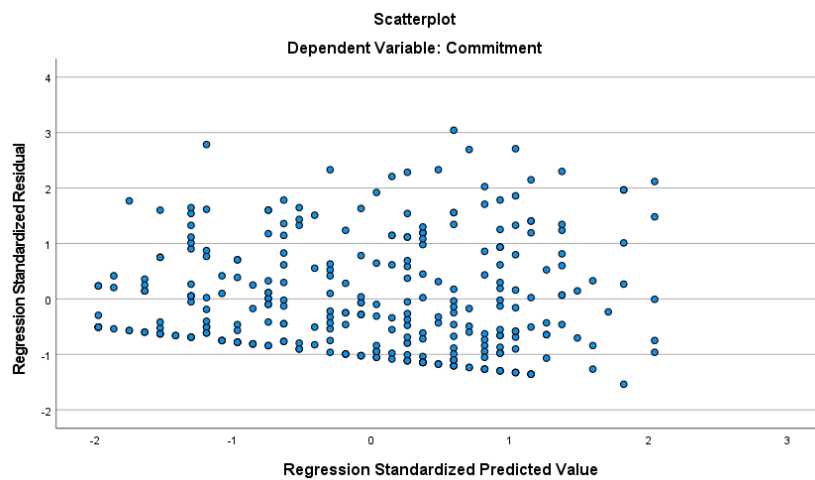
○ Elementary School
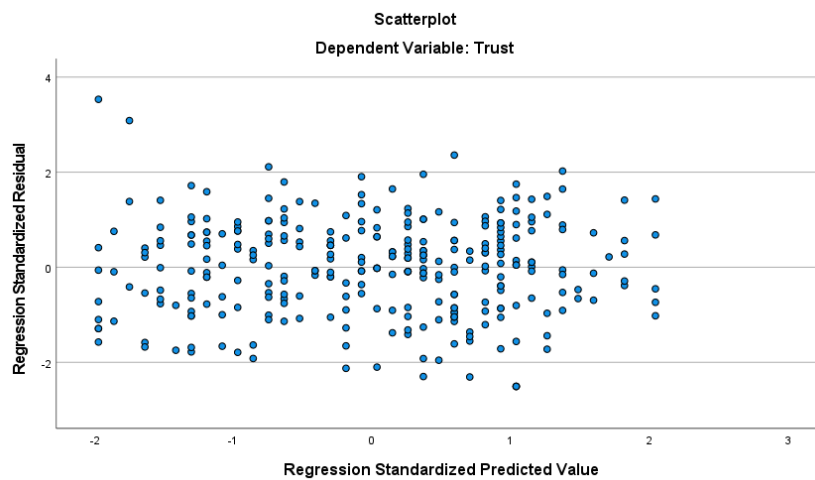○ High School
○ Bachelor
○ Master
○ PhD
○ Other

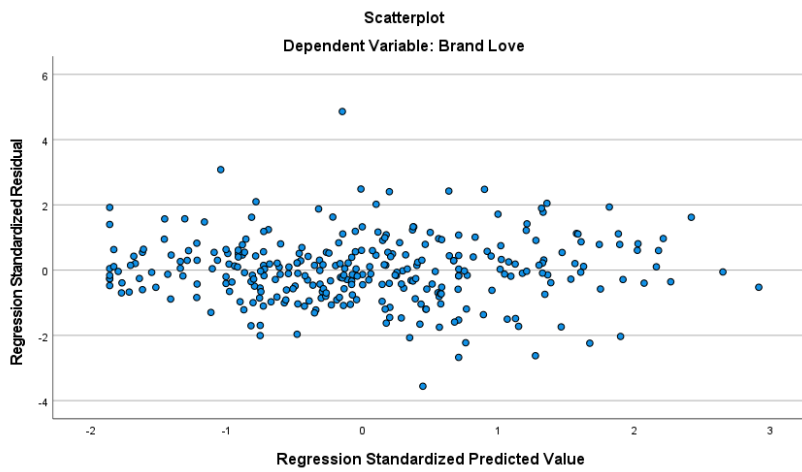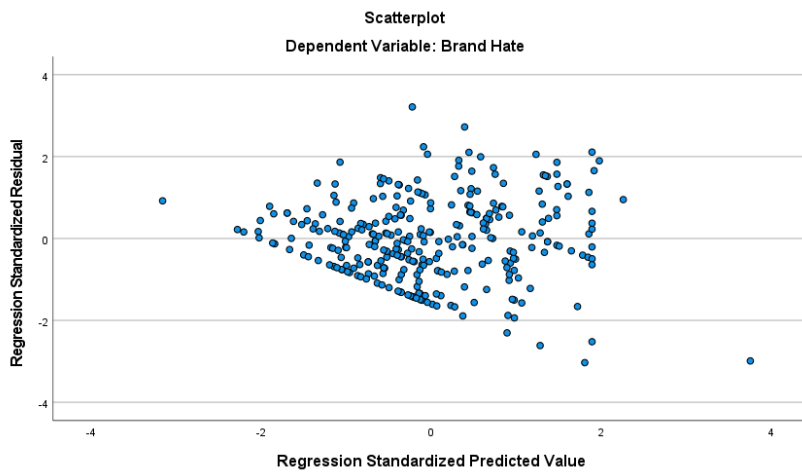## Appendix B: List of scales and sources used
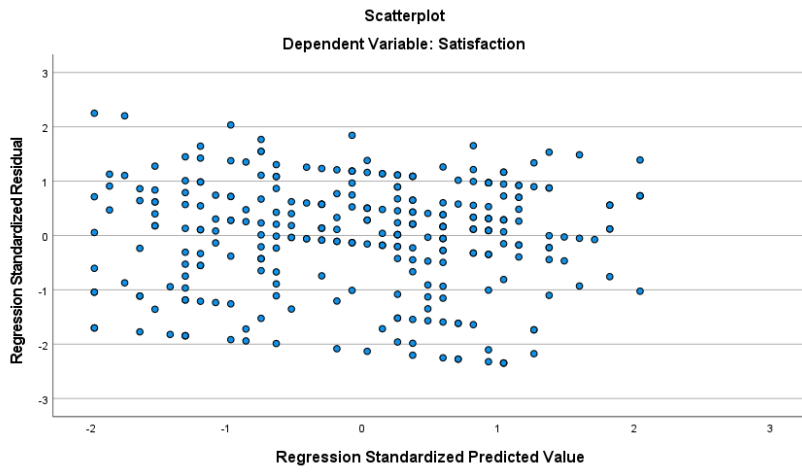
Author	Construct	Code	Scale
Bardi et al., 2021	Consumer Perception of Body Image	CPBI1	Right now, I feel (Extremely dissatisfied to Extremely satisfied) with my physical appearance.
		CPBI2	Right now, I feel (Extremely satisfied to Extremely dissatisfied) with my body size and shape.
		CPBI3	Right now, I feel (Extremely dissatisfied to Extremely satisfied) with my weight.
		CPBI4	Right now, I feel (Extremely physically attractive to Extremely physically unattractive).
		CPBI5	Right now, I feel (A great deal worse to A great deal better) about my looks than I usually feel.
		CPBI6	Right now, I feel (A great deal better to A great deal worse) than the average person looks.

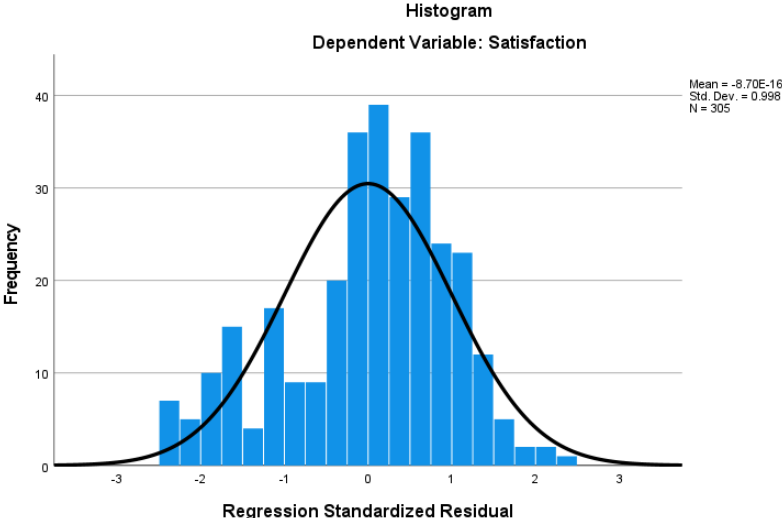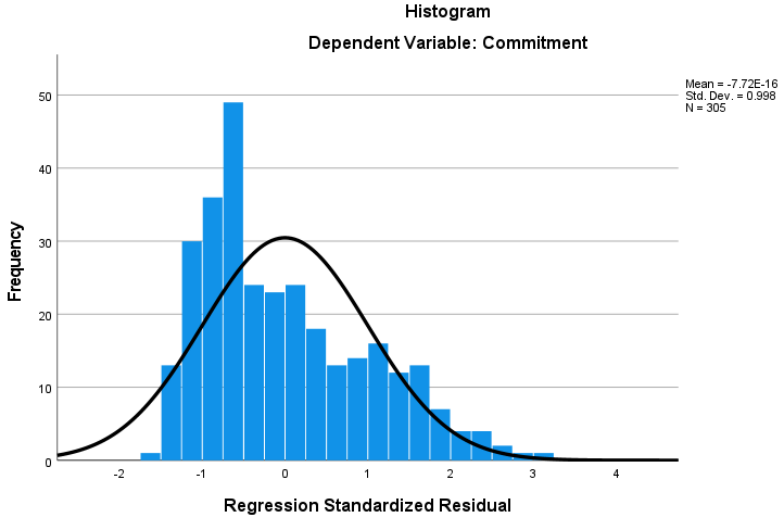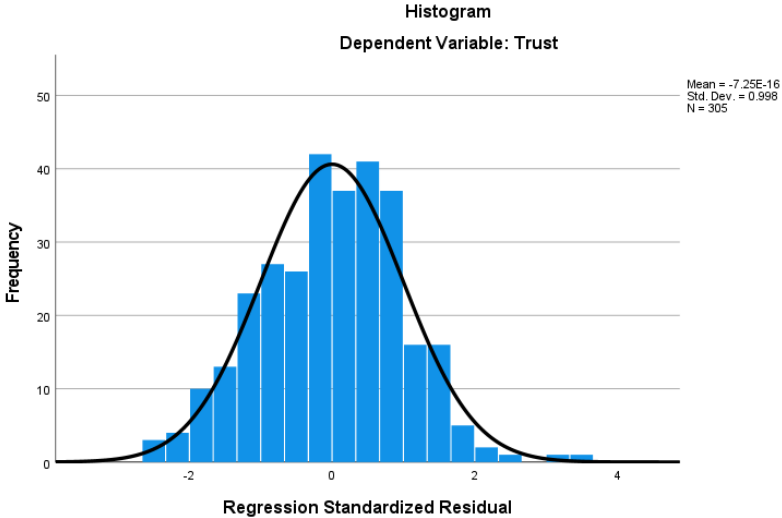|		T1	They would act in the best of our interest.
		T2	If we required help, they would do their best to help.
		T3	They are interested in our well-being, not just their own well-being.
(Alsaad et al., 2017)	Trust	T4	We are comfortable in relying on them to fulfil our obligations.
		T5	We feel comfortable in doing business on the Internet with them.
		T6	We always feel confident that we can rely on them to do their part when we interact with them.
		T7	They are competent at serving us.
		T8	They do a good job at meeting our needs.
		T9	They are good at what we want.
		C1	My relationship with the service provider is something that I am committed to.
		C2	My relationship with the service provider is very important to me.
		C3	My relationship with the service provider is something I really care about.
(Dagger et al., 2011)	Commitment	C4	My relationship with the service provider deserves my maximum effort to maintain.
		C5	I believe the service provider and I are both committed to the relationship.
		C6	This service provider is prepared to make short term sacrifices to maintain our relationship.
		C7	I believe the service provider and I view our relationship as a long-term partnership.
(Akrout & Nagy, 2018)	Satisfaction	S1	I am satisfied with this brand's products.
		S2	I am satisfied with this brand.
		S3	I am pleased with this brand.
		BH1	I'm disgusted by [brand x].
		BH2	I don't tolerate [brand x] and its company.
(Hegner et al., 2017)	Brand Hate	BH3	The world would be a better place without [brand x].
		BH4	I'm totally angry about [brand x].
		BH5	[Brand x] is awful.
		BH6	I hate [brand x].
		BL1	To what extend do you feel that wearing [brand x] says something "true" and "deep" about whom you are as a person?
		BL2	To what extend is [brand x] able to make you look like you want to look?
		BL3	To what extend is [brand x] able to do something that makes your life more meaningful?
		BL4	To what extend you find yourself thinking about [brand x]?
(Bagozzi et al., 2017)	Brand Love	BL5	To what extend are you willing to spend a lot of money improving and fine-tuning a product from [brand x] after you buy it?
		BL6	Using the products: To what extent do you feel yourself desiring to wear [brand x]?
		BL7	To what extent have you interacted with [brand x] in the past?
		BL8	Please express the extent to which you feel there is a natural "fit" between you and [brand x]?

		BL9	Please express the extent to which you feel emotionally connected to [brand x]?
		BL10	To what extent do you feel that [brand x] is fun?
		BL11	Please express the extent to which you believe that you will be wearing [brand x] for a long time.
		BL12	Suppose [brand x] were to go out of existence, to what extent would you feel anxiety?
		BL13	How certain are you of these overall feelings and evaluations you just gave above? How much confidence do you have in these overall feelings and evaluations you just gave above?

Appendix C: Scatterplots of the distribution of the residuals (SPSS outputs)

Scatterplot
Dependent Variable: Trust

Scatterplot
Dependent Variable: Commitment

Scatterplot
Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

Scatterplot
Dependent Variable: Brand Hate

Scatterplot
Dependent Variable: Brand Love

Appendix D: Histograms of the distribution of the residuals (SPSS outputs)

Histogram
Dependent Variable: Trust

Mean = -7.25E-16
Std. Dev. = 0.998
N = 305

Histogram
Dependent Variable: Commitment

Mean = -7.72E-16
Std. Dev. = 0.998
N = 305

Histogram
Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

Mean = -8.70E-16
Std. Dev. = 0.998
N = 305

Histogram
Dependent Variable: Brand Hate

Mean = -6,19E-16
Std. Dev. = 0,995
N = 305

Histogram
Dependent Variable: Brand Love

Mean = -1,80E-15
Std. Dev. = 0,995
N = 305
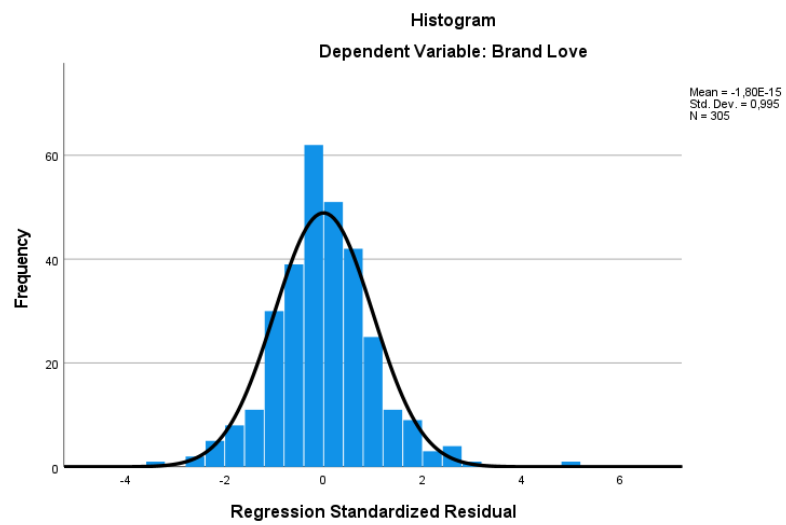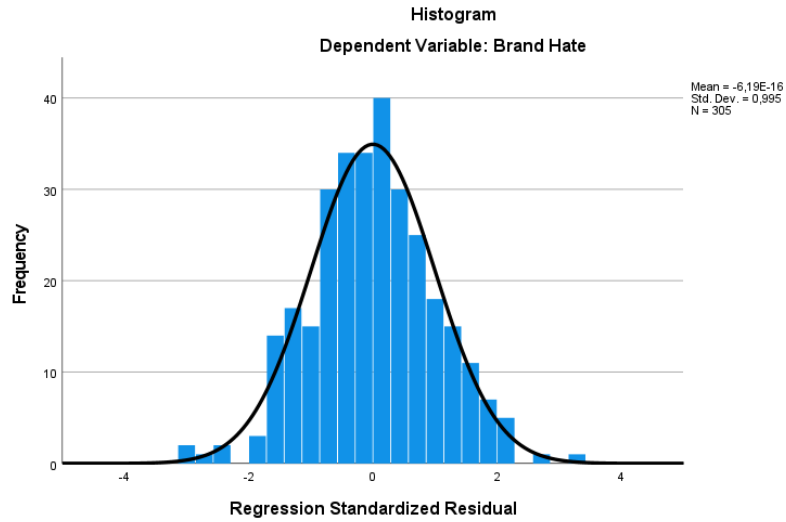
Appendix E: Normal P-Plots of the distribution of the residuals (SPSS outputs)

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual
Dependent Variable: Trust

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual
Dependent Variable: Commitment

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Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual

Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual

Dependent Variable: Brand Hate

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual

Dependent Variable: Brand Love