

## Executive Summary

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### The Origins of Brand Love: A Typology of Starting Points

By *Daniel Bruns, Tobias Langner, and Alexander Fischer*

This paper analyses the origins of brand love and provides a typology of brand love starting points. Due to its positive outcomes for loyalty, word of mouth, and willingness to pay, understanding how brand love starts in the first place is critical and can help marketing practitioners stimulate the formation of strong brand relationships. Consumers' love for brands comprises two essential components: intensive affection and separation distress if they cannot buy or own it anymore. Brand love is formed by emotional experiences that can be either endogenous or exogenous. Endogenous experiences result from the product and the brand itself, like product aesthetics, usually created by the company, but exogenous experiences like childhood experiences or vacations occur outside the company's control. In two qualitative studies, we explicate the origins of brand love and offer managerial recommendations for establishing strong brand love relationships. Our studies reveal five starting points, associated with consumers' unique brand experiences: *First love* is based on a vivid recollection of the first experience with a particular product category. *Grown love* begins with neutral feelings or liking of the branded product, then grows into love as a result of a series of favourable encounters. *Arranged love* begins with an actively externally influenced adoption of the brand. Third persons provide the impulse for brand usage, through recommendations or gifts. *Inherited love* describes the passive transmission of love for the brand from other people like parents, siblings, or close friends. *Love at first sight* arises instantly in single moments through intense emotional experiences.

The resulting recommendations for marketing practice suggest ways to foster the effective development of these different starting points. *First love* likely occurs during childhood; in age-stage transitions, such as reaching the teen years or adulthood; or in life stage transitions such as moving away from the parental home. Marketers could monitor these stage transitions, for example, to gauge the best timing of trial offers. *Inherited love*, which often models parental uses of the brand, is amenable to life cycle database marketing when it is company practice and consumers grant their permission. The encouragement of family experiences (e. g., brand lands, vacations) and the promotion of agents of socialization might foster such inheritance of a brand. *Arranged love* often involves older siblings and peers. Database marketing might be applicable in the family situation; word-of-mouth or social media marketing might work in a peer situation. *Love at first sight* is very much up to the brand manager, who can position and advertise the brand as unique in the product category. A comparative advertising strategy could be an effect communicative strategy. Furthermore, love at first sight depends on intense emotional experiences and may be susceptible to event marketing, flagship stores, or trade fairs focused on memorable, extraordinary experiences. *Grown love*, begins with neutral feelings or brand liking and grows over time. Brand managers should try to increase the frequency with which consumers encounter or buy their brand. Loyalty or bonus programs might be a promising opportunity for growing brand love. Finally, falling in love with a brand is not fully under the control of any brand manager. Exogenous experiences that turn brand liking into brand love usually vary across different customers. However, brand managers can take care to ensure that their products are of superior quality and provide unique

customer experiences. Then, they can make sure that their brand is present any time consumers undergo potentially brand love–stimulating experiences.