1-1-2015

Brand Advocacy: Conceptualization and Measurement

Kelly Marie Wilder

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/td

Recommended Citation
https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/td/929

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Scholars Junction. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholars Junction. For more information, please contact scholcomm@msstate.libanswers.com.
Brand advocacy: Conceptualization and measurement

By

Kelly Marie Wilder

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of
Mississippi State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Marketing
in the Department of Marketing, Quantitative Analysis, and Business Law

Mississippi State, Mississippi

August 2015
Copyright by

Kelly Marie Wilder

2015
Brand advocacy: Conceptualization and measurement

By

Kelly Marie Wilder

Approved:

____________________________________
Nicole Ponder
(Committee Chairperson/Graduate Coordinator)

____________________________________
Joel E. Collier
(Committee Member)

____________________________________
Jason E. Lueg
(Committee Member)

____________________________________
Kevin J. Shanahan
(Committee Member)

____________________________________
Michael J. Breazeale
(Committee Member)

____________________________________
Sheri Lokken Worthy
(Committee Member)

____________________________________
Sharon L. Oswald
Dean
College of Business
Brand advocacy occurs when consumers who feel very passionately about a brand seek to promote it to others and defend it against its naysayers. These consumers are valuable to brands as information between consumers is more easily and rapidly shared than ever before, and as consumer distrust of brand-sponsored messages is high. As a result, brands are dependent upon their brand advocates to leverage the perceived reliability of peer recommendations to recruit new customers. However, thus far in the marketing literature, an adequate conceptualization of brand advocacy has failed to emerge. Instead, when discussed, brand advocacy is often measured using a proxy variable such as positive word-of-mouth. It is the supposition of the author that these two constructs are not synonymous and using one as a proxy for the other severely limits researchers’ understanding of the brand advocacy and its impact.

The goal of this research is to define brand advocacy and develop a valid scale to measure it. Following Churchill’s (1979) paradigm for scale development, a series of four studies were undertaken to validate the new scale. The first two studies are qualitative in nature and help identify the domains of brand advocacy. Based on the results of the first
study, a series of depth interviews, and the second study, an open-ended questionnaire, the following definition of brand advocacy is put forth: *Brand advocacy is a combination of customer-motivated behaviors, including proactively recommending the brand and defending the brand against detractors, intended to maintain the customer’s relationship with the brand and promote it to others.* The construct was determined to be a higher-order construct comprising two distinct sets of behaviors that address advocates’ need to not only defend the brand to naysayers but also to proactively spread positive brand communications to others. The third and fourth studies use quantitative data to complete the scale development process by proposing and validating a nine-item scale to measure the multi-dimensional construct of brand advocacy as well as provide evidence that it is a distinct construct from PWOM. The results of this research provide a definition and valid scale of brand advocacy.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .............................................................................................................................................. v

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................................................ vi

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................................. 1
   Statement of Purpose ............................................................................................................................. 2
   Significance of Study ............................................................................................................................. 4
   Organization ........................................................................................................................................ 5

II. LITERATURE REVIEW ...................................................................................................................... 8
   Brand Advocacy .................................................................................................................................... 8
   Previous Definitions and Measurements of Advocacy ........................................................................... 9
   Origins of Advocacy Behaviors in Relationship Marketing ............................................................... 13
   Advocacy Behaviors as Outcomes of Brand Love ............................................................................. 14

III. SCALE DEVELOPMENT ................................................................................................................... 17
   Study One ............................................................................................................................................. 17
      Data Collection and Sample ............................................................................................................. 18
      Emergent Themes ............................................................................................................................. 20
         History of brand interactions and/or purchases ........................................................................... 20
         Referral Behaviors ........................................................................................................................ 23
         Defend the brand against naysayers ......................................................................................... 25
         Rationalization of brand failures ............................................................................................... 27
      Summary of Emergent Themes ...................................................................................................... 29
   Study Two ............................................................................................................................................ 30
      Data Collection and Sample ............................................................................................................. 30
      Category Development .................................................................................................................... 32
      Reliability ........................................................................................................................................ 33
      Findings ........................................................................................................................................... 36
         Category 1: Response to negative information ........................................................................... 38
            Subcategory 1A: Refusal to accept the information as valid ................................................... 39
            Subcategory 1B: Defend the brand ......................................................................................... 40
         Category 2: Referral behaviors ....................................................................................................... 41
            Subcategory 2A: Verbal communication (PWOM) ................................................................. 42
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Table Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Summary of Studies Contained in Dissertation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brand Advocacy Defined in Marketing Literature</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Informant Descriptions</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Selective Coding Guidelines for Study 2</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Classification Results of Behaviors</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Study 3 Component Structure for Brand Advocacy Scale</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Confirmatory Factor and Reliability Analysis (Pretest)</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Study 4 Factor Structure for Brand Advocacy Scale</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Constructs</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Confirmatory Factor and Reliability Analysis</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Constructs</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Structural Model Test Results for Brand Advocacy</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Study 4 Factor Structure for Brand Advocacy and PWOM</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Structural Model Test Results for Brand Advocacy and PWOM</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Antecedents of Brand Advocacy</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Standardized Path Estimates for Antecedent Model of Brand Advocacy</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Structural Model with PWOM included</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Consider some of your favorite brands. Can you recall the first time you purchased or experienced the brand? Do you remember what prompted that initial experience? Chances are good you were introduced to the brand by another consumer rather than by a television, magazine, or newspaper advertisement. Indeed, brand managers are finding that because current technology allows consumers to easily screen traditional advertising messages, peer recommendation has become one of the most effective forms of new customer acquisition (Edelman 2010), accounting for anywhere between 20 and 50 percent of all purchasing decisions (Bughin et al. 2010). Brand advocates, or consumers who are fiercely loyal to a brand and actively support and recommend it to others, often initiate these peer-to-peer recommendations. Extant marketing research has attempted to determine why some consumers advocate (Badrinarayanan and Laverie 2011), how brand managers can encourage advocacy behaviors (Bendapudi and Berry 1997), and how effective advocates are in recruiting new customers (Keller and Fay 2013). Unfortunately, little consensus has been achieved regarding what specific actions and behaviors the term brand advocacy actually encompasses. The three purposes of the dissertation are to provide a deeper understanding of the behaviors involved with brand advocacy, to arrive at a conceptual
definition of brand advocacy, and to operationalize it by developing a valid scale to measure the construct.

The influence of advocacy on a company’s long-term success is not a novel concept. In 1967 Professor John Arndt of the Columbia School of Business claimed that peer-to-peer brand communication is potentially the most important brand information that consumers receive (Arndt 1967). Since that time, marketing researchers have become increasingly more convinced of the importance of this type of information exchange on firm performance, particularly in light of consumers’ declining reliance on firm-initiated communications for brand information (Keller and Berry 2003). Indeed, for firms utilizing market-oriented strategies, the creation of a healthy cadre of brand advocates is a necessary goal for sustained market performance (Bendapudi and Berry 1997; Burke et al. 2005; Wuring 2008). Brand advocates display fierce loyalty to the brand, which not only creates a devoted fan base that will ensure the firms’ long-term stability (Vargo and Lusch 2004), but also encourages and entices a new customer base to experience the brand. The development of advocacy behaviors in a brand’s customer base is the result of effective customer relationship management and is often touted as the ultimate test of a firm’s customer relationships (Bendapudi and Berry 1997; Jillapalli and Wilcox 2010). Thus, the potential impact of brand advocacy on a firm’s long-term sustainability necessitates a call for further study of the phenomenon (Bendapudi and Berry 1997). This dissertation represents an attempt to answer that call.

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this dissertation is to establish brand advocacy as a unique construct and develop a valid scale to measure it. While some research has addressed the
concept of brand advocacy indirectly (Keller and Fay 2013; Keller 2007), much of the
discussion of the importance of brand advocates (also referred to as ambassadors or
evangelists) has primarily remained within the domain of practitioners. This is not to say
that there is a dearth of research on brand advocacy in the marketing literature, but much
of the academic discussion of advocacy is done under the umbrella of positive word-of-
mouth (PWOM). This is unfortunate, because PWOM is too vague a term to accurately
describe the phenomenon of brand advocacy. When Simon Sinek, in his TED talk and
companion book *Start With Why*, suggests that much of Apple’s success, including the
market’s forgiveness of the odd misstep, is very much a result of the company’s ability to
gain fervently loyal brand followers, he is essentially touting the importance of brand
advocates. He posits that because Apple has historically founded all firm activities and
marketing messages on a core set of beliefs, consumers who share that belief system will
not only form strong loyalties to the brand but will also freely engage in self-motivated
marketing in an attempt to seek validation for those beliefs (Sinek 2009). The loyalty and
referral behaviors Sinek is describing certainly include PWOM activities, but are much
more personal and relationship-based than what the term PWOM captures. For example,
a consumer’s positive review online of her first experience with a popular restaurant
would be considered PWOM, but would not likely be indicative of brand advocacy.

As a result, the common practice in the academic literature of using PWOM as a
proxy for brand advocacy is misguided and misleading. In order to begin to understand
the real impact of brand advocacy on a firm’s longevity and success in the market, the
construct must first be accurately described and its domains defined. With brand
advocacy remaining undefined in the literature, significant research into the benefits,
implications, and complications of brand advocacy as a strategic goal cannot be undertaken.

**Significance of Study**

From a theoretical perspective, failing to delineate brand advocacy from PWOM limits marketing researchers’ ability to investigate potentially important strategic marketing decisions. Practitioners understand that the difference between those consumers who say nice things about a brand and those consumers who, in essence, are volunteer, unpaid ambassadors for the brand can be the difference between long-term failure and success (Sinek 2009). Thus, it is important for researchers to understand more fully the extent of the influence of advocacy behaviors on firm performance and to determine if brand advocates are significantly more valuable to a firm’s success than consumers who share mere PWOM.

Simon Sinek posits that advocacy-type behaviors are the natural result of a firm’s ability to connect with those consumers who share the firm’s core values. In the current global market where information and competition are vast and easily accessible, firms struggle to differentiate themselves from competitors and increase the lifespan of the company. If, as Sinek puts forth, advocacy is an indicator of a firm’s successful campaign to accomplish both tasks, the failure of the marketing literature to distinguish advocacy from PWOM prevents researchers from understanding a potentially vital strategic perspective. In essence, research should exist that examines the impact of brand advocates on firm performance and whether it is significantly different from the impact of PWOM. If advocacy is a by-product of a firm’s ability to connect with consumers in important and authentic ways, then the nature of that connection and how it is fostered
also needs to be examined. Furthermore, if advocacy is born from shared beliefs, which are enduring, the assumption is that advocacy should have a lasting impact and could potentially extend the lifespan of the firm. However, none of these postulations can be investigated until brand advocacy is wholly understood as a separate and distinct construct from its nearest neighbors.

**Organization**

The aim of this dissertation is to develop a definition of brand advocacy that clearly delineates the construct from similar others and to validate a scale to measure it. To accomplish this, Churchill’s (1979) paradigm for developing construct measures is followed and the dissertation is organized according to that recommended procedure. Following a review of relevant literature related to brand advocacy, the concept and domain of brand advocacy is investigated through two qualitative studies. The first comprises ten depth interviews with individuals who reported engaging in brand advocacy behaviors. The purpose of the first study is to better understand the dynamics of current brand advocacy behaviors, including variables that may encourage consumers to engage in these behaviors. In an attempt to generalize the findings of Study One to a broader group of consumers, a second qualitative study is conducted. This second study consists of a questionnaire containing four open-ended questions, designed to more fully understand the domains of the construct. Content analysis was performed on the open-ended questions from 188 respondents to provide further support for the dimensions of brand advocacy. The findings from these two studies, along with behaviors suggested in the literature, were used to arrive at a pool of potential items to measure brand advocacy. To construct the scale, a third study, quantitative in nature, was undertaken to
operationalize the dimensions of brand advocacy and to reduce the pool of items to a
more manageable scale. A fourth study, also quantitative, validated the scale and
established its reliability and validity. To complete this dissertation and establish
advocacy’s nomological validity, a set of antecedents, measured in the fourth study, are
proposed and tested using structural equation modeling before conclusions and plans for
future research are presented. The purpose and findings for each study are summarized in
Table 1.
Table 1 Summary of Studies Contained in Dissertation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Qualitative – depth interviews</td>
<td>Grounded theory, uncover common themes across self-described advocates. Scale development step 1 – construct definition and domain.</td>
<td>Common themes were defending the brand, spreading word-of-mouth, and brand commitment / loyalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Qualitative – open-ended questionnaire</td>
<td>Determine the dimensions of brand advocacy by identifying the most common advocacy behaviors; propose a definition for brand advocacy.</td>
<td>The dimensions of brand advocacy, which both meet the criteria of being relationship-based and peer-to-peer communications, are defending against detractors and proactive recruitment of new customers. The definition of brand advocacy is presented: <em>Brand advocacy is a combination of customer-motivated behaviors, including proactively recommending the brand and defending the brand against detractors, intended to maintain the customer’s relationship with the brand and promote it to others.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Scale development step 2 – item generation and refinement and step 3 – scale construction.</td>
<td>An initial 18-item scale is developed to reflect both dimensions of brand advocacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>1) Scale development step 4 – scale reliability and step 5 – scale validation; 2) Confirm brand advocacy as a higher-order construct and assess nomological validity; 3) Determine if brand advocacy discriminates from PWOM.</td>
<td>1) A final, validated 9-item scale is offered; 2) a model of brand advocacy as a formative higher-order construct comprising two dimensions that relates as predicted to three proposed antecedents provides acceptable model fit; 3) there is sufficient evidence that PWOM is not adequate to be used as a proxy for brand advocacy in marketing research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Advocacy

Imagine the following scenario: a young employee named Beverly befriends a new coworker Ben. Beverly grew up spending her summers as a camper and later a counselor at a beloved summer camp. Today, Beverly has a sticker with the camp’s logo affixed to her car’s rear windshield, follows the camp on both Facebook and Twitter, and becomes visibly excited when she runs into old camp buddies at social or sporting events, much to the amusement and sometimes annoyance of other members of her party. Soon after becoming friends with Ben, Beverly discovers that he has a child who will soon be camp age and so she suggests to Ben that his child might enjoy the camp experience. Over time, Beverly occasionally brings up her memorable camp experiences in conversation and describes the positive influence she feels the camp made on her life. Ben’s interest leads her to eventually call the camp director to talk about Ben and his family and request that an information packet be sent to Ben’s family. Once the package arrives, Beverly and Ben review the information together and the next summer, Ben and his wife send their child to the camp.

Beverly’s motivation for sharing her love of the camp with her new friend and suggesting that he send his child there is rooted in her genuine love for the camp and her belief that her friend’s child could benefit from the experience. She has neither a
reasonable expectation nor a desire to receive any compensation from the camp for her efforts. Beverly considers herself to be an advocate for the summer camp and few marketing researchers or brand managers would disagree with her.

In 1997, Bendapudi and Berry asserted that advocacy is the ultimate test of a firm’s customer relationships. The authors posited that as customers rely more heavily on word-of-mouth and personal sources of information rather than firm-sponsored communications, firms in turn rely on their advocates to refer the firm and recruit new customers. As a result of the increasing importance of advocates on long-term firm success, a call for research to more fully understand the concept of brand advocacy was put forth (Bendapudi and Berry 1997). Unfortunately, although consumer-brand relationship researchers continue to express a need for advocacy research (Fournier et al. 2012), little research responding to the call has surfaced in the marketing literature despite the marked increase in the power of word-of-mouth brought on by the rise of social media.

**Previous Definitions and Measurements of Advocacy**

The lack of research on brand advocacy may be explained by a lack of consensus on its definition not only in the academic literature, but across academic and practitioner lines as well. Webster’s defines advocacy as the specific behaviors of pleading for, defending, championing, recommending, and supporting some cause or proposal (Merriam-Webster.com; Smith 2011). In the marketing literature, however, brand advocacy is most commonly associated with PWOM which is the positive, informal communication between consumers regarding their experiences with specific services, products, or providers (Westbrook 1987). While brand advocacy is certainly similar to
PWOM in that both involve positive peer-to-peer communication of a particular brand, consumer behavior researchers indicate that advocacy is founded on consumer-brand relationships (Fournier et al. 2012), a criterion that is not typically applied to PWOM. Thus, as a result of these relationships, brand advocates have a stronger personal stake in their brand than those consumers who merely share PWOM and should thus engage in behaviors that are somewhat more emphatic.

To illuminate this disparity, a summary of some previous definitions of brand advocacy in the marketing literature is shown in Table 2. While these marketing academicians may argue that PWOM in many cases is a sufficient proxy for brand advocacy, others postulate that the use of PWOM as a measure of advocacy insufficiently captures the evangelistic brand communications that are typical of brand advocates (Matzler et al. 2007). Moreover, these definitions ignore other potential behaviors that may fall under the umbrella of brand advocacy.

In support of the Matzler and colleagues’ (2007) claim, the advocacy behaviors described in the opening example of this chapter appear to extend beyond mere PWOM. Moreover, practitioners also recognize that advocacy is more than just the relaying of positive brand experiences (Fuggetta 2012). Advocacy often suggests an ownership or personal investment that PWOM does not imply. Additionally, these existing definitions focus on a “willingness” to share brand information whereas the term advocate suggests more of a desire or impulse to spread the word. Advocates aren’t merely willing to share brand information, they desire to.
### Table 2 Brand Advocacy Defined in Marketing Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct Definition</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A customer's willingness to promote the brand to others and defend it against its detractors</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>Cross and Smith 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;positive word of mouth (WOM) (also referred to in the literature as advocacy)&quot;</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>Ranaweera and Prabhu 2003, p. 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;willingness to recommend (i.e., advocacy)&quot;</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>Jones and Taylor 2007, p. 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The terms WOM, advocacy, and WOM advocacy are used interchangeably</td>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>Keller 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;the extent to which retail salespeople actively recommend or support a specific brand within a product category to the retail customer&quot;</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Badrinarayanan &amp; Laverie 2011, p. 125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;a combination of marketing resources that contribute to a more efficient and effective marketing enterprise, including voluntarily sharing customer-specific information, engaging in firm-sponsored marketing research activities, word-of-mouth referrals, and increasing levels and proportions of current purchasing activities&quot;</td>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>Lacey &amp; Morgan 2009, p. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;an active engagement that involves expending more effort in promoting the brand&quot;</td>
<td>Professor-as-brand</td>
<td>Jillapalli &amp; Wilcox 2010, p. 329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, a Twitter poll conducted by the social media marketing company Zuberance asking their followers to define the term “brand advocate” yielded some interesting results (Fugetta 2010). One social media consultant responded by defining a brand advocate “as someone that’s a ‘fan’ of a brand and takes a sense of ownership in seeing it succeed by evangelizing it to others,” while a social media strategist claims that a brand advocate is “a volunteer marketer; a customer that proactively uses their time and their social capital to promote a company or cause.” One senior analyst at a market
research firm claims that a brand advocate is “a person who not only buys from the brand but will act to protect, promote, and help it.”

In an effort to bridge the gap between practitioners’ and academic researchers’ understanding of brand advocacy, and as a starting point to answer the calls for advocacy research, this dissertation focuses on providing a better understanding of the behaviors of brand advocates. Specifically, two major research questions are addressed:

*RQ1.* What are the specific behaviors in which brand advocates most commonly engage?

*RQ2.* Are these behaviors unique enough to justify brand advocacy as a construct that differentiates from similar constructs, specifically commitment, loyalty, and PWOM?

This research is intended to be a first step in examining the phenomenon of brand advocacy by attempting to uncover its key elements. Due to the discovery-oriented nature of the research, a hermeneutic approach, shown to be successful in similar previous work (Arnold and Fischer 1994; Thompson 1997; Thompson et al. 1994), is employed. Specifically, the first research question is addressed using two initial qualitative studies (the first uses depth interviews, the second employs an open-ended questionnaire) that uncover the particular behaviors performed by brand advocates. From the results of the first two studies, a proposed definition of brand advocacy is presented: *Brand advocacy is a combination of customer-motivated behaviors, including proactively recommending the brand and defending the brand against detractors, intended to maintain the customer’s relationship with the brand and promote it to others.* Two additional studies, both quantitative in nature, are then undertaken to develop a scale to measure brand advocacy.
based on the proposed definition. Furthermore, these studies also address the second research question and find that indeed, brand advocacy should be conceptualized and measured as a separate construct from similar constructs like loyalty and PWOM.

**Origins of Advocacy Behaviors in Relationship Marketing**

Research on relationship marketing suggests that the reason relationship marketing strategies are successful and thus desirable for firms to pursue is that as customers receive benefits from the exchange or relationship partner, they 1) perceive value in the relationship, and 2) feel a sense of duty to “return the favor” by investing in the relationship or referring the brand to other consumers (Palmatier et al. 2006).

Companies can measure the success of their relationship marketing efforts by gauging the presence of the following set of specific relational behaviors in their customers: 1) cooperative behaviors, 2) relational loyalty or favored status, 3) referrals, and 4) empathetic behaviors (Palmatier 2008). *Cooperative behaviors* are those that are undertaken by both the firm and the consumer to achieve some mutual goal. As each party invests in the relationship, the other is trusted to reciprocate (Anderson and Narus 1990). Morgan and Hunt’s (1994) commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing claims that highly committed or loyal customers are particularly motivated to maintain the relationship and are thus more likely to participate in cooperative behaviors.

*Relational loyalty or favored status* is an increased likelihood that the customer will give preference in brand decisions to the seller because of relational ties, or, more simply put, will repurchase without consideration of competing brands (Palmatier 2008). *Referrals* are testimonials (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2002; Verhoef et al. 2002) or word-of-mouth (WOM) behaviors resulting from customer loyalty (Dick and Basu 1994; Reynolds and
Finally, empathetic behaviors are those that are influenced by the customer’s ability to understand the seller’s position in the exchange and are more willing to forgive minor infractions. Increases in the frequency of cooperative customer behaviors, relationship loyalty, referrals, and empathetic behaviors indicate increasingly valuable customer relationships, the most effective of which may result in advocacy (Palmatier 2008).

Because brand advocacy, much like the behaviors identified above, is considered to be the action of particularly loyal and committed customers, the advocacy behaviors identified in this essay should build upon or include those identified above. Thus, cooperative behaviors, relational loyalty or favored status, referrals, and empathetic behaviors are all considered as a priori themes in this essay. However, while Bendapudi and Berry (1997) assert that advocacy is an outcome of relationship marketing efforts, much of the relationship marketing literature, including the research that informs the classification scheme above, is intended for a business-to-business context. Thus, research on consumer-brand relationships is also considered.

**Advocacy Behaviors as Outcomes of Brand Love**

Marketing research suggests that consumers can form affect-laden relationships with brands (Fournier 1998). These relational bonds often form when a consumer finds a brand that somehow adds meaning to his or her life (Merz et al. 2009). As these bonds strengthen over time and through continued interaction, consumers may develop feelings of interconnectedness with the brand (Aron et al. 1992), and thus a sense of responsibility to support the brand. Some research suggests that consumers possessing this level of attachment may invest their own resources into the brand to maintain the relationship.
(Merz et al. 2009), resulting in behavioral outcomes such as defending the brand to others (Johnson and Rusbult 1989), paying price premiums (Thomson et al. 2005), and spending more on the brand than on similar products or brands (Merz et al. 2009).

Research on brand love and brand passion describes how consumers develop feelings of love towards brands similar to those felt in interpersonal relationships (Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Fournier 1998). These feelings can become so strong that they can lead to actions that are intended to maintain the relationship (Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Indeed, these suppositions closely follow Sternberg’s (1986) triangular theory of love that describes how interpersonal love is a combination of three components – intimacy, passion, and commitment. According to the theory, the absolute strength of these three components determines the amount of love one experiences. Recently, some marketing research has used this theory as a foundation for understanding how consumers’ love for certain brands and retailers may develop (Breazeale and Ponder 2013).

A recent study to develop a higher-order measure of brand love proposes the following list of probable actions resulting from consumer-brand love feelings: repurchase intentions, willingness to pay price premiums, PWOM, and resistance to negative information (Batra et al. 2012). Thus, due to the potential similarities between brand love and the affection an advocate has for his/her brand, it is reasonable to assume that the expected behavioral outcomes of brand love may also be included in brand advocacy behaviors.

Taken together, prior research suggests consumers’ enduring relationships with and feelings of love towards their favorite brands will result in myriad brand advocacy
behaviors. This dissertation attempts to uncover those behaviors in which brand advocates most commonly engage and organize them into a logical classification system. To guide this classification attempt, suggested advocacy behaviors from research on brand love (repurchase intentions, willingness to pay price premiums, PWOM, and resistance to negative information) are combined with those from the relationship marketing literature (cooperative behaviors, relational loyalty or favored status, referrals, and empathetic behaviors) and are utilized as a priori categories for potential brand advocacy behaviors. It is important to note, however, that many of the behaviors in these a priori categories have been classified as loyalty behaviors in previous research (i.e., Zeithaml et al. 1996). Research has proposed that advocacy and loyalty are closely related behaviors, thus it is expected that brand advocates will engage in loyalty behaviors. However, since advocacy is proposed to be an extension or result of brand relationships, which are founded on consumer loyalty, it is also expected that advocates will report engaging in behaviors that extend beyond those typically classified as loyalty.
CHAPTER III
SCALE DEVELOPMENT

To develop a parsimonious scale representative of the full range of brand advocacy behaviors, the paradigm for scale development proffered by Churchill (1979) was followed. The first step is to specify the domain of the construct, conceptualizing brand advocacy in such a way as to describe exactly what is and is not encompassed by the construct. To accomplish this, two qualitative studies – the first, an analysis of depth interviews and the second, an open-ended questionnaire – are undertaken. The goal of these two studies is two-fold: first, to determine which behaviors brand advocates typically engage in with regard to their favorite brands and second, to then from these behaviors, parse out only those which are unique to advocates.

**Study One**

Driven by the suggestion that this type of discovery-oriented research is best served by a hermeneutic approach (Arnold and Fischer 1994; Thompson 1997; Thompson et al. 1994), the first of the qualitative studies (Study 1) employs phenomenological interviews. The depth interview approach enables the researcher to uncover how a consumer’s lived experiences influence his or her development of relationships with brands (Fournier 1998), and how those relationships develop into brand advocacy behaviors. The primary researcher conducted all of the interviews face-
to-face in an attempt to provide a holistic perspective (Fournier 1998) and to allow for greatest cross-case comparison (Breazeale 2010). The interview protocol that guided the interviews can be found in Appendix A.

Hermeneutical research typically features a textual data analysis method involving a series of part-to-whole interpretations (Arnold and Fischer 1994; Thompson et al. 1994) which occur in two distinct stages. The first intratext stage involves a reading of a single text (i.e., an interview transcript) in its entirety to gain an impression of the whole (Giorgi 1989) followed by subsequent readings intended to uncover a deeper understanding of the text’s consumption-oriented meanings (Thompson 1997). The second intertext stage involves a search for patterns of similarities or differences across the different texts or interviews. This approach allows the researcher to transition between the intratext and the intertext stages as new insights are uncovered and previous understandings may need to be reinterpreted (Thompson 1997).

Data Collection and Sample

Ten self-proclaimed brand advocates were purposively chosen with the goal of achieving greater insight regarding brand advocacy and the behaviors associated with it. The use of a non-random sample has been justified in previous literature where foundational phenomenological research such as the current study is being undertaken (Erlandson et al. 1993). Table 3 provides information on the ten informants. The informant pool was limited in size to allow for depth of description (Erlandson et al. 1993; Mick and Buhl 1992).

The interviews were semi-structured in format and focused on the informant’s relationship with his/her favorite brand. Informants were told that the interviewer was
interested in gaining a better understanding of why they considered themselves to be advocates of their chosen brands. The informants were purposely not provided a definition of a brand advocate so as not to limit their description. They were told that this understanding could lead to deeper insights into what types of consumers become advocates, what advocacy in practice looks like, how advocacy may help or hurt the brand, and what firms can do to encourage their customers to become advocates.

Interviews lasted from 10 to 40 minutes and were conducted in a place of the informant’s choosing to allow for the greatest sense of comfort and relaxation. During the course of the interview, conversations were digitally recorded and interviewer observations were documented in shorthand. Both sets of notes were transcribed immediately following each meeting. Appendix B contains the transcripts of these ten interviews.

Table 3  Informant Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Family Status</th>
<th>Brand Advocate for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Physician’s Assistant</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>REI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Graduate Student</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Amazon.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gail</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Graduate Student</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Patagonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>VP of a Non-Profit Org.</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Mary Kay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Graduate Student</td>
<td>Married father of 1</td>
<td>Google</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>College Professor</td>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>Heinz Ketchup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Graduate Student</td>
<td>Married father of 1</td>
<td>Apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Jeep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Undergraduate Student</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Keds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Graduate Student</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Ray Bans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each interview was designed to allow for a two-level analysis (Fournier 1998) in the tradition of grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss 1990). The first level of analysis consists of a reading of each individual transcript in its entirety to uncover the
informant’s thoughts and feelings about their relationship with the brand and their behaviors related to advocacy. This first analysis of the text provides insight into the informant’s assessment of his or her own brand advocacy. The second level of analysis is composed of constant comparisons of the contextual details of the transcripts across informants (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Rather than looking at the transcript holistically, as was done in the first stage of analysis, this second level requires the researcher to look for similarities between the transcripts and the conceptual foundations. Through this constant comparison not only across transcripts but also against extant brand advocacy literature, themes begin to emerge. The dual analysis allows for the informants’ own thoughts and feelings about their brand advocacy to be represented in the findings, and also grounds those findings in previous literature.

**Emergent Themes**

Through the use of the dual-stage process of transcript analysis, several themes emerged. Below, each emergent theme along with a brief description and illustrative text excerpts are presented.

*History of brand interactions and/or purchases*

Each of the ten informants reported a long history of interactions with the brand. The shortest brand relationship reported has been ongoing for approximately three years, whereas two informants admitted that they have been consistently purchasing their brands for well over 20 years. While many of the informants could recall their first experience with the brand, this research is focused primarily on identifying specific behaviors. Thus, this first theme centers primarily on the identification of a series of
interactions and, more specifically, purchases of the brand over long periods of time. For example:

“I’ve been using Mary Kay since I was 13. It’s the only thing I’ve ever used on my face. Well, I say “ever” but I have tried other products, but I have very oily skin, so the products that I’ve used outside of Mary Kay have not had a very good effect.” – Monica (30 yo married female)

This informant is commenting specifically on the length of her relationship with Mary Kay skincare products and cosmetics. And while she does not specify how many times she has repurchased the products, her comments indicate that she is a very consistent purchaser.

The informant in this next excerpt goes into more explicit detail as to how her repurchase behaviors have increased over the years.

“I know the first time I bought something from Amazon because it is still in my purchase history. It was a book, France and the Age of Globalization, that I bought in 2001 for a Political Science course. It was a French book and I needed an English translation. Before then I would go to Barnes & Noble and have them order it for me. But I got it for $11 from Amazon. And I just loved it. I looked back at my history of things I purchased. At first it was books and it was one at a time, then it was three at a time. In 2001 I ordered maybe 10 things total. I’ve ordered 10 things in the last week - if you count music. If you look at my history from this year it’s ridiculous.” - Alex (28 yo single female)
While these two informants have relationships with their brands spanning multiple decades, another whose experience with his brand has been shorter-lived still reports a high level of repurchase behaviors.

“I had a roommate who had a pair [of Keds] and he gave them to me because he bought some more and said that they were cheap. And I just really got them to wear around the house, but then I thought “these are pretty comfy.” And then, you know, I began wearing them to Wal-Mart and places like that. And then it just became my individual shoe; my go-to shoe. Those [first pair] became really worn out. So, I ended up getting some new ones and saw the prices then. So I ended up buying four pair the first time I bought them.” – Daniel (24 yo single male)

When the informant was prompted for the amount of time that passed between the first encounter with the shoes when his roommate gave him his old pair and the time when the informant purchased those initial four pair, the informant reported, “it may have been two months. It was over a summer.”

This emergent theme indicates that consumer-brand relationships strong enough to elicit brand advocacy behaviors are likely not created overnight. Several of the informants reported that the brand relationship marks a very special part of their identity and in some ways has become part of who they are. This incorporation of a brand into a consumer’s sense of self requires time and continued interactions. This theme is consistent with the literature on relationship marketing which suggests that partners in strong relationships engage in cooperative and loyalty-based behaviors built on a foundation of commitment (Morgan and Hunt 1994; Palmatier 2008).
Referral behaviors were evident in all informants. However, their approach to sharing positive information about their favored brand with others was not always similar. While all informants reported consistent efforts to refer their favored brands to others, six of the informants indicated that their referrals came only when prompted or requested, a description consistent with PWOM conceptualizations. These informants suggested that they might be uncomfortable approaching a stranger with brand recommendations. Instead, they preferred to wait for an opportunity for referral to arise or for their opinion to be solicited. For example:

“It’s not that I don’t want to convert other people, it’s just that my relationship with Ray Ban is very personal and it’s not about them [the other consumers]. It’s just me and Ray Ban. But if someone asked me for a recommendation, I would talk to them about Ray Ban as long as they wanted to talk.” – Arthur (23 yo single male)

“It just depends on if the opportunity presents itself. If someone asks about it, I’ll tell them but I’m not out there every day stomping the grounds about Mary Kay. If I were I’d be selling it myself. But if someone asks me what I’m wearing or comments on it, I tell them about it. So, I share but it is not like I’m talking about it unprompted.” – Monica (30 yo married female)

In contrast to these informants, four of the informants used a more proactive approach to brand referrals. These advocates were much more willing to provide unsolicited advice to consumers, perhaps even strangers, about a brand purchase. For example:
“Whenever people are talking to me about certain things – ‘I am spending so much money on cell phones and I don’t even care for it’ – I say ‘you should use Google voice.’ Anytime people are talking about things where there is a Google solution, I tend to recommend it.” – Joseph (26 yo married father of 1)

“I bring everybody there [REI]. There is an REI in Houston and we were there playing rugby and I needed to replace my sunglasses. I made an entire car of four people go to REI so I could replace my sunglasses and I told them that ‘you need to come in so you can see how awesome this is.’ And they came in and all agreed that it was cool.” – Ashley (31 yo single female)

“You could be in Wal-Mart or you could say that you are going to get more of those cereal bars and I would tell you to check Amazon. The big thing now is those Keurig coffee machines and I’ll hear people complain that they can only find a few flavors and I will suggest that they check Amazon.” – Alex (28 yo single female)

The four informants do not wait for other consumers to ask for their opinion on brand choices. As soon as an opportunity to recommend the brand or recruit new customers arises, these informants jump at the chance to spread their affinity for their favorite brand.

Both the relationship marketing and the brand love literatures use PWOM and referral behaviors as a common outcome variable, so the emergence of a referral behaviors category here is not unexpected. However, neither of these literatures discusses differences between milder, more reactive referrals and more salesman-like, proactive recruitment. The ten informants in this study were clearly delineated by the
aggressiveness of their referral behaviors, a distinction that has not yet been studied in the brand advocacy literature. Moving forward, it will be interesting to track and understand the prevalence of this delineation amongst brand advocates.

**Defend the brand against naysayers**

Cross and Smith (1995) suggested that defending the brand against detractors is a key facet of the brand advocacy construct. Not surprisingly, several of the self-reported brand advocates in this study have defended their brand to others in the past. For instance, these informants conveyed:

“I have defended Heinz ketchup in a classroom setting. A student claimed that another brand was better than Heinz and I responded with ‘you, sir, are sadly misinformed.’” – Frank (46 yo partnered male)

“When I’m using Mary Kay, I know that I’m not putting something cheap on my face. As a woman, you need to put quality stuff on your skin and take care of your face. And stuff that’s not going to dwindle. If you buy a blush you don’t want it to be gone in a month. With Mary Kay, the blush can last six months to a year depending on how much makeup you wear. It really looks good, it’s not cakey or gritty.” – Monica (30 yo married female)

Three of the informants in this study defended their favored brand specifically by contrasting it against a competing brand. They reported spreading negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) against competitors as part of their attempt to recruit new customers to the favored brand. For example:

“[If someone wanted to shop at Dick’s Sporting Goods rather than REI], I would say ‘you can get a sleeping bag from wherever you want, but I just want you to
know…’ We have two outdoor stores in Baton Rouge and I would not want to buy something from them, even if it is the exact stinking product because of the quality of the store. And also at Dick’s I don’t think you would get the best selection. You’re going to get Columbia, which is a great brand. However, if you’re getting Columbia or North Face or Mountain Hardwear, you’re getting an outdoor brand that is made for the masses. At Dick’s, you are not going to find those brand that are made specifically for the outdoors. The stuff that not everybody knows about but they are the best products. REI will carry these products where Dick’s is more for the masses.”

– Ashley (31 yo single female)

“A lot of times with PC software it seems once you have installed it you have to go install it in other places. In the 90s when you installed PC software you also had to jump on your initiation file and put it in there too in addition to installing it elsewhere. And the initiation file basically gives you the ability to foul up your entire machine. And so you’re dealing with Apple and when it’s installed, it’s installed. If a program does crash on [Apple machines], it doesn’t take your entire laptop down with it. It doesn’t crash nearly as often as other machines, although it does occasionally crash; it can. But, it’s just basically that you have got something that is designed to work. And the visualness of the interface is much better too, even though Windows is close. It’s like the difference between an OREO and a Hydrox. Yeah, technically, somehow the formulas are similar but taste them and you know the difference.” – Steve (38 yo married father of 1)
Interestingly, all ten informants are not merely defending their brand against detractors or competitors. That could certainly be done in fewer words. The informants are demonstrating a depth of knowledge about their brand against which it might be difficult to argue. These informants are experts on their brands, making them the ultimate defenders of the brand.

*Rationalization of brand failures*

Literature on brand failures often focuses on the recovery efforts of the firm and their impact on customer satisfaction (Boshoff and Allen 2000; Boshoff and Leong 1998; De Jong and De Ruyter 2004). The informants in this study report recovery assumptions, which are in line with prior literature. However, it appears that because the advocate’s relationship with the brand has been positive for some substantial period of time, the advocate has a certain level of expectation that a satisfactory recovery effort will inevitably occur should a failure ever take place. The informants did not report having the same level of confidence in recovery efforts for other brands for which they do not advocate. For example:

“Actually, Mary Kay has a no-questions refund policy. So if you are uncomfortable or unhappy with a product you can return it and get your money back immediately with no questions asked. You can even return it for a full refund if it’s half-gone. Your consultant will either try to find the product that will make you happy or they will give you your money back. And Mary Kay returned the entire cost to the consultant, so Mary Kay (corporate) eats the cost. So you don’t have to feel guilty about hurting your consultant’s business.” – Monica (30 yo married female)
“[If a product I purchased from Amazon arrived damaged], I’d send it back. I would not be upset, I would expect that they would fix it.” – Alex (28 yo single female)

Other informants gave their preferred brands a bit of leeway on brand failures not because they necessarily expected the firm to remedy the situation, but because all of the positive past experiences more than outweighed a single unsatisfactory experience. Often, the informants suggested that an occasional failure is simply part of doing business.

“I follow products, and I am a beta tester. I didn’t like Google Chrome at first, but I tried it again later and liked it. My reaction is that technology is continually advancing and that functionality, unless they want to lose market share, will be built in eventually. Sure I won’t adopt or use it right now, but in the future, sure.”
- Joseph (26 yo married father of 1)

In other cases, the informant suggests that a brand failure is actually his or her own fault, rather than the fault of the firm. One informant prefers to purchase Jeep Cherokees or Wranglers in the model years 1995 to 2002. Since he is not able to buy them new, he prefers to purchase certified pre-owned Jeeps. He reports that:

“[If I bought a faulty Jeep], I would be mad at myself for not realizing the deficiencies in the Jeep because I pretty much know what to look for. So, if I didn’t catch it, it’s probably bad on me.” - Walter (33 yo single male)

Another informant who chooses to purchase his vintage Ray Ban sunglasses from pawnshops or antique stores has similar feelings. He finds that people often discard authentic Ray Bans without knowing it, so his search for the glasses amongst the knock-offs appeals to him because it requires an expertise few possess.
“[If my Ray Bans did not live up to their usual standards], I would assume that I had gotten a knock-off pair of sunglasses. There is a small possibility that they had lemons, but those (vintage glasses) would not have survived this long. So, rather than assuming I got a bad pair, I would assume I got duped into a knock-off pair.”

– Arthur (23 yo single male)

These forgiving behaviors with regard to brand failures have been somewhat established in the literature as relationship marketing research suggests that a prominent category of relational behaviors relate to the buyer maintaining high levels of empathy for the seller’s position in the exchange (Palmatier 2008). However, the informants’ reasoning that the failure must be either part of doing business or the fault of someone other than the brand, perhaps even the informants themselves, suggest a commitment to the maintenance of the brand relationship which was not predicted in the literature.

**Summary of Emergent Themes**

Among the emerging themes, two important issues arise. First, the behaviors described by the informants include those suggested by Cross and Smith’s (1995) definition: willingness to promote the brand and defend it against naysayers. This finding provides initial support for the inclusion of these facets in a conceptualization of brand advocacy. The second issue, however, is that behaviors more commonly included in the commitment (history of purchase/use) and loyalty (rationalization of brand failures) constructs also emerged. Marketing research indicates that loyalty and commitment are central to the formation of consumer-brand relationships (Fournier 1998) Moving
forward, it will be important to determine whether and how brand advocacy behaviors discriminate from commitment and loyalty behaviors.

**Study Two**

To follow up the depth interviews and begin to compile an initial list of behaviors that brand advocates engage in, a second study (Study 2) was undertaken. Study 2 utilizes an open-ended questionnaire format (Schuman and Presser 1979), and follows the grounded theory style of analysis. Grounded theory analysis is an inductive approach that attempts to uncover deep knowledge of social phenomena though the use of coding paradigms and constant comparisons of responses (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Coding of text is completed in three stages: open, axial, and selective. Open coding procedure consists of the constant comparison of responses to develop basic categories. Axial coding combines those low-level categories and puts them in context as they are judged against new data. And finally, selective coding builds a theoretical framework around those most dominant categories (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Coding efforts in this research were primarily based on relationship marketing literature and proposed brand love outcomes.

**Data Collection and Sample**

188 consumers self-identifying as brand advocates were recruited to complete a survey aimed at identifying the behaviors they commonly engage in with regard to their favorite brands. These respondents were recruited via two means: 41 were undergraduate students in an upper level marketing class and 147 were paid participants recruited through *Amazon Mechanical Turk’s* (MTurk) online subject pool. MTurk is becoming a
more popular means of recruiting adult participants (e.g., Amar et al. 2011; Leonhardt et al. 2011; Parker and Lehmann 2011) and has been validated by Paolacci, Chandler, and Ipeirotis (2010).

Participants were provided the following explanation of brand advocacy:

Many consumers have a particular brand of which they are very big fans. Often, these fans will recommend their brand to others, purchase the brand frequently, exhibit consistent loyalty to the brand, and defend their brand when others question its value. Some common examples of brands that consumers exhibit these behaviors towards are Apple, Disney, and Harley Davidson.

For the student portion of the sample (who completed paper-based surveys in class), respondents were then asked to consider, based on this explanation, whether he or she was an advocate for some particular brand. Forty of the 41 respondents did claim to be brand advocates and were then asked to provide the name of their favorite brand and answer the remaining questions with that brand in mind. Appendix C contains the open-ended questions asked of the respondents. One student claimed not to be an advocate for any brand and opted out of the survey. For the MTurk sample, respondents were specifically recruited for being either self-proclaimed Disney or Apple brand advocates. These two brands are known for having large, cult-like consumer followings and as such were chosen to ensure respondents were indeed advocates rather than loyalists or mere fans. Furthermore, these brands were chosen because they represent broad types of consumers (e.g., consumers with families for Disney, technology-oriented consumers for Apple). Aside from the brand identification question included in the student sample survey, the two surveys were identical.
Initially, 197 responses were collected, 188 of which were deemed usable by the criteria set forth above. Of the respondents, 67 percent were female; 72 percent were between the ages of 18 and 29, 20 percent were between the ages of 30 and 59, and 8 percent were 60 or older.

**Category Development**

Consistent with grounded theory, data analysis employed a three-stage constant-comparison process (Strauss and Corbin 1998). During the first stage, open coding of the data by the primary investigator (Judge A) allowed for two key discoveries. First, by initially considering each respondent’s cumulative responses to the survey items, the primary researcher was able to filter the non-advocates from further analysis. Secondly, open coding revealed that in many responses more than one behavior was reported. Thus, responses were not classified by their entirety, but rather specific behaviors from each response were identified and separately classified. This particular classification method has been effectively used in previous research (Bendapudi and Leone 2002; Keaveney 1995) as it allows for a more appropriate unit of analysis as well as the preservation of the data’s specificity (Gremler and Gwinner 2008).

In the second stage, axial coding classified the discrete behaviors into a classification scheme consisting of two broad categories. Finally, in the third stage, selective coding further delineated the central categories into the identification of 14 specific subcategories of behaviors. The analysis also led to the creation of specific descriptions of the subcategories and instructions to aid other judges in recognizing and classifying behaviors. Appendix D provides the coding instructions given to the
independent judges and Table 4 provides the criteria that guided the classification of responses into the various brand advocacy behavior categories.

Following the selective coding stage, marketing doctoral students (Judges B and C) read through all of the responses, identified the behavior(s) in each, and coded each behavior using the selective coding guidelines. For those behaviors about which Judges B and C did not agree, the primary researcher (Judge A) resolved any disagreements to determine a final categorization of each behavior.

Reliability

To assess the reliability of the classification scheme, two statistics were used: percentage of agreement and Perreault and Leigh’s (1989) $I_r$ statistic. Across the 556 behaviors, Judges A, B, and C independently agree on 492 behaviors for an overall agreement percentage of 0.885. Perreault and Leigh’s $I_r$ which accounts the number of categories included in the classification scheme, is 0.878 across the three judges, above the average of 0.85 that is common in similar research (cf. Gremler 2004). These statistics suggest a high level of reliability for the identification of brand advocacy behaviors according to the classification scheme across the three judges.
Table 4  Selective Coding Guidelines for Study 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1 Category</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refuse to accept the information</td>
<td>The consumer dismisses the negative information shared by some conversation partner as invalid regardless of the actual validity of the statement(s). (S)he does this because to accept the information as accurate would disrupt or weaken the consumer’s perception of and relationship with the brand. Indicative phrases include: &quot;that simply cannot be true,&quot; &quot;they don't know what they are talking about&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>against detractors</td>
<td>The consumer counter-argues the information with some statement(s) in defense of the brand. This behavior goes beyond simply refusing to accept the information as valid and instead includes initiative to convince the conversation partner of the inaccuracies in their information regarding the brand. Indicative phrases include: &quot;I would tell them why my brand is better,&quot; &quot;I would explain the benefits of my brand over competitors&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q2 &amp; Q4 Category</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal communication</td>
<td>The consumer engages in typical positive word-of-mouth communications. Typically, these communications take place in a face-to-face setting and involve the consumer reporting a positive experience(s) with a verbal communication partner. Indicative phrases include: &quot;I tell everyone I know about this brand,&quot; &quot;I always talk to my friends about it&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal communication</td>
<td>The consumer shares his/her positive brand message via mediums that are non-verbal in nature. Most often, these include wearing brand symbols on clothing, displaying brand symbols on cars or personal accessories, and/or simply using the preferred brand in public settings. Indicative phrases include: &quot;others always see me using it,&quot; &quot;I wear it all the time&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Proactive recruitment behaviors</strong></th>
<th>The consumer describes situations in which s/he has actively attempted to convince another to try the preferred brand. Most commonly, these recruitment behaviors include allowing another to try the respondent’s personal product (e.g., using the respondent’s mp3 player or laptop), purchasing the brand for another as a gift, bringing another along to experience the brand (e.g., taking a friend to a preferred retailer), or simply talking another into purchasing the brand.</th>
<th>Indicative phrases include: &quot;I made them try mine,&quot; &quot;I purchased one for them,&quot; &quot;I took them to the store with me&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NWOM about competing brands</strong></td>
<td>The consumer shares negative information about their favored brands competitors. For a comment to be classified in this category, the information about the competing brand has to be explicitly negative and not merely a statement that the favored brand is superior on a specific attribute or benefit.</td>
<td>Indicative phrases include: &quot;that brand's products never perform well,&quot; &quot;that brand's customer service is terrible&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q3 Category</strong></td>
<td><strong>Criteria</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give the company the benefit of the doubt</td>
<td>The consumer does not express a desire to have the situation remedied, but simply accepts that the occasional failure is part of the consumption process. These consumers either do not blame the brand for the failure or if they do, they do not indicate plans to hold the failure against the brand in the future. Indicative phrases include: &quot;It's okay because usually the products/services are great,&quot; &quot;sometimes that is just the cost of doing business,&quot; &quot;it just happened once, so it's fine&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactively seek remedy</td>
<td>The consumer reports a desire to contact the brand’s customer service department to report the incident in hopes that the company will right the perceived wrong. Typically, the consumer indicates an expectation that the brand will reimburse them somehow for the failure, but in some cases the respondent simply expresses a desire to alert the brand to the failure so that similar failures can be avoided in the future. Indicative phrases include: &quot;I know they will fix it for me,&quot; &quot;all I have to do is ask and they will take care of it for me&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

An analysis of the responses from the open-ended questions revealed three categories of responses: response to negative information, referral behaviors, and forgiveness of brand failures. However, a review of the literature suggests that perhaps not all of the responses are representative of actual brand advocacy behaviors.

For example, the first category includes respondents’ responses to negative information about their favored brand. Within this category, responses fell into either a category best described as respondents’ unwillingness to accept the negative information as valid or into one best described as defending the brand against detractors. Those responses representing defense against brand detractors were overt verbalizations of the respondents’ disagreement with the information being shared by the conversation partner and are thus representative of the construct of brand advocacy. However, those respondents who refused to accept the information as valid reported mainly internal responses to the information such as a simple dismissal of the information as either failing to be pertinent to the discussion or patently inaccurate, or by dismissing the conversation partner as being mis- or uninformed about the brand. As such, the responses in this category are not actually behaviors at all, and certainly not those engaged in by brand advocates. Indeed, these responses are more in line with cognitive or affective brand loyalty (Oliver 1999).

Furthermore, the responses classified in the third category of forgiveness of brand failures are not adequate representations of brand advocacy behaviors. When asked how they would respond if their brand failed to meet expectations, respondents replied that they would either give the brand some benefit of the doubt or would seek some sort of
compensation or remuneration from the company. These responses fail to fall under the umbrella of advocacy behaviors for several reasons. First, similar to the respondent’s refusal to accept negative information as valid, when respondents give the brand the benefit of the doubt for the failure, they are not necessarily engaging in any type of external behavior. However, in both instances, responses are indicative of some internal commitment-building processes that may eventually lead to brand advocacy behaviors. Responses include comments such as:

“[the failure] was probably not Disney as a whole and [instead] just an incident beyond their control. Things happen, and I don’t hold grudges! I can’t imagine anything that would take away my love of Disney!”

and:

“I would think that it was not the Apple product that was bad, but the service of where I got the product, be it Best Buy or somewhere else. I would be shocked to have it happen.”

Perhaps more importantly, the behaviors identified in this third category do not involve any peer-to-peer communication, a necessary component of brand advocacy. Therefore, these loyalty behaviors, while clearly related to brand advocacy, do not adequately fulfill the criteria to be classified as brand advocacy behaviors and are therefore not included in further investigation.
Table 5  Classification Results of Behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior Category</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category 1 (Q1): Response to Negative Information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A: Refuse to accept the information as valid</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>8.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B: Defend against detractor</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 1 total</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 2 (Q2 &amp; Q4): Referral Behaviors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A: Verbal communication (PWOM)</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2B: Non-verbal communication</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2C: Proactive recruitment behaviors</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2D: NWOM about competing brands</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 2 total</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 3 (Q3): Forgiveness of Brand Failures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3A: Benefit of the doubt</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3B: Proactively seek remedy</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 3 total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column total</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Category 1: Response to negative information*

The behaviors in this category occur in instances when the consumer encounters negative information about their preferred brand from a conversation partner. Consumer attitudes toward brands typically vary in strength. Stronger attitudes, like the ones for which brand advocates are known, are acknowledged to be more resistant to negative information about the brand than weaker attitudes (Petty and Krosnick 1995). Such resistance involves effort on the consumer’s part to process or react to the information in such a way as to preserve the positive opinions of the brand. By maintaining positive perceptions in the face of negative information rather than downwardly revising brand opinions to reflect the negative information, the customer attempts to protect the brand
relationship. The cognitive processing necessary to maintain a positive brand perception in the face of negative information coupled with the implied interaction with another individual suggests that the behaviors in this category are the most aggressive of the advocacy behaviors. A total of 187 behaviors, or more than 33% overall, fall within this category. The subcategories of behavioral responses to negative information are refusal to accept the negative information as valid and defense of the brand.

**Subcategory 1A: Refusal to accept the information as valid**

The 49 (8.8%) behaviors in this subcategory are focused on invalidating the negative information shared by a conversation partner(s). Consumers’ refusal to accept negative brand information and/or opinions from conversation partners largely consists of a dismissal of the information because either it is not deemed to be pertinent or the conversation partner is considered to be mis- or uninformed. For example, when asked to relay an incident when a conversation partner shared negative information about his preferred brand, one respondent reported, “[they are] crazy. There are millions of loyal Oreo fans who disagree.” Yet another reported:

“NO WAY! Disney is by far the best of the best! Disney brings families together with [its] happy characters, beautiful clean theme parks, and great entertainment. If you have never been to a Disney you have no idea what you are missing.”

(female, 40-49)

This biased processing of negative information regarding a preferred brand is referred to as counter arguing the negative information (Chaiken et al. 1989). Counter argumentation of negative information involves arguing against the negative information by questioning its validity (Ahluwalia et al. 2000). Research has found brand
commitment to be a key moderator of consumer response to negative information. Specifically, studies show that for consumers who are highly committed to a particular brand (e.g., brand advocates), counter argumentation is instinctual and effective at mitigating the effects of negative information on attitude maintenance (Ahluwalia et al. 2000). Thus, the demonstration of advocates’ counter argumentation of negative brand information appears to be consistent with extant literature.

Negative brand information has been found to be more influential to consumers’ attitudes when the consumer attributes the information to the brand’s characteristics rather than outside influences, like social norms or the sender’s brand preferences. Essentially, if the consumer perceives credibility, expertise, or manipulative intent on the part of the sender, the negative information will not likely be attributed to the product’s characteristics. As a result, the unfavorable information will not be attributed as a true evaluation of the product (Mizerski 1982) but rather just the opinion of the sender. Because these behaviors are essentially an assumption that the negative information is simply opinion and not fact, they represent this literature.

**Subcategory 1B: Defend the brand**

Behaviors in which consumers defend the merits of their favored brand against negative comments made by conversation partners constitute this subcategory and were found 138 times (24.8%) in the data. Behaviors in this subcategory differ from those in the previous subcategory in one key way: the focus of the argument against the information. Advocates who choose to defend their brand focus on disputing the diagnosticity of the negative information contrasted with those in the previous subcategory who elected to invalidate the information for being irrelevant or from a
questionable source. Here, in this most aggressive form of advocacy, consumers defend their brand by counter arguing claims made against their favored brand like this respondent who reported that:

“I would say nothing is better than Apple products. With Apple you can download Apps in seconds, use Google maps to get around, order online, use Siri to voice text and get information, there is nothing that compares.” (female, 18-20)

Defending the brand against detractors is deemed the most aggressive of the advocacy behaviors because it requires a high level of knowledge about the brand in order to dispute the claims as well as a willingness to confront the detractor.

Category 2: Referral behaviors

The behaviors in this category are related to advocates’ attempts to encourage or recruit new customers to the favored brand. Often, the term PWOM is used interchangeably with referral behaviors, but data in this study indicate clear demarcation between positive verbal communications, physical shows of brand fandom, and more proactive recruitment behaviors. For example, offering to purchase a brand’s product for another or offering to let another use your branded product on a trial basis is certainly a referral, but these behaviors are not adequately described by PWOM. Brand devotion literature hints that consumers who experience high levels of passion often engage in behaviors more extreme than just PWOM. Indeed, in addition to spreading PWOM, truly devoted brand fans engage in active recruitment to convince others of the beloved brand’s merits (Pimentel and Reynolds 2004). In total, referral behaviors constituted 257 (46.2%) behaviors in the sample.
Subcategory 2A: Verbal communication (PWOM)

For the purposes of this data analysis, PWOM was limited to general positive communications about the preferred brand and thus did not include proactive or particularly overt attempts to convince another consumer to try or purchase the preferred brand. One respondent reports that “[she] has told the story many times of how getting an iPad has changed the way we access technology both at home and on the road.”

An early definition of word-of-mouth (WOM) is the “oral, person to person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, a product, or a service” (Arndt 1967, p. 3). Research on consumers’ tendency for WOM suggests that higher tendencies for WOM, and particularly PWOM, are observed when customers are very satisfied (Anderson 1998) and describe themselves as very loyal (Bowman and Narayandas 2001). As consumers tend to be very satisfied with and loyal to their favored brands, PWOM behaviors were anticipated. However, it was surprising that PWOM behaviors only composed 82 (14.7%) of the advocacy behaviors uncovered.

Subcategory 2B: Non-verbal communication

One issue with the concept of PWOM as a catchall for brand referral behaviors is the notion that the communication, by definition, must be oral (Arndt 1967). However, the use of product placements in films and television shows as well as the display of large brand logos on clothing and consumer products reveals that brand fandom can be communicated visually. Behaviors are considered to be representative of this category when the respondent indicates the display of his or her favored brand by either wearing it or its logo or by publicly using the product. These non-verbal brand communications
accounted for 95 (17.1%) behaviors in our sample. One respondent indicated that others are aware of his brand fandom because:

“my friends and I only buy Budweiser, so people that see us with nothing but Bud on our table take notice. Just the other day, the bartender asked us why we always ordered Bud. [I told him] how American and patriotic it is. Also, it tastes really good.” (male, 21-29)

Another respondent claims “other people know I’m an Apple fan by my iPhone, my Mac Book Pro, and my Apple stickers on my car.” Because this type of brand communication does not require a verbal exchange, it has the potential to reach every individual the advocate encounters rather than only those with which the advocate converses. Dozens or even hundreds of strangers may receive the advocate’s brand communication throughout the day perhaps exponentially increasing the number of potential receivers of brand messages. Thus, non-verbal communications should be included as potential advocacy behaviors.

Consumers often use brands to shape and share their self-concepts to others (Aaker 1999; Swaminathan et al. 2007). Indeed, as a society we find this type of self-expression intuitively appealing and generally accepted (Escalas 2004). When expressions of self- or social-identity take a public form, these displays are known as enunciative productivity. Enunciative productivity can be displayed verbally, as in word-of-mouth communications, but it can also take the form of non-verbal communications, like the styling of hair, makeup, or clothing to resemble a favorite celebrity or the wearing of a favorite athletic team’s colors or jersey (Fiske 1992). The potential impact
of consumers’ non-verbal use of brands to express their identity or their fandom publicly has not yet been fully explored in the literature.

Subcategory 2C: Proactive recruitment behaviors

Proactive recruitment behaviors go beyond just the communication of positive information about the brand to the receiver. In this category, some sort of concerted effort is made to convince the receiver to try the brand. For example, some respondents reported a sales-pitch type of communication in which the receiver was given a list of reasons why the brand was a necessary purchase like this respondent who claims:

“I have an iPhone that I love. I try to talk to all my other pharmacy friends that they need an iPhone in order to have the applications on their phone to use in the pharmacy that tell all about the drugs and information they need for patient counseling.” (female, age category 21-29)

In other cases, the respondent indicates a willingness to put forth his or her own money in order to give the receiver an opportunity to experience the brand like the consumer who suggested that he “would pay for you to go to Disney just to show you how much better it is!” Still other respondents reported that they either purchased the brand for another (e.g., gift), let another try their brand (e.g., lent their mp3 player), or discovered the brand themselves after someone bought them their first one. Regardless of the particular form they take, these behaviors go beyond the referral behaviors that are generally equated with PWOM to active recruitment of new consumers. This type of recruitment behavior was reported 44 (7.9%) times in the sample.

Brand devotion literature suggests that consumers with high levels of brand passion often display their devotion by surpassing typical PWOM behaviors and engage...
in active recruitment of new customers (Pimentel and Reynolds 2004). Additionally, Rozanski and colleagues (1999) find that extreme brand loyalty results in brand zealots’ attempts to convert others. Not only does the emergence of proactive recruitment behaviors in this study support the notion that PWOM is merely one dimension of brand advocacy, it gives further credence to the notion that advocacy behaviors can vary in terms of aggressiveness.

**Subcategory 2D: NWOM about competing brands**

Brand advocates can sometimes contrast their favored brand against the negative attributes of competing brands as a referral tool. These NWOM behaviors (36, 6.5%) about competing brands are an attempt to define the favored brand by what it is not as a means to show the favored brand in the most flattering light. These behaviors differ from typical referral behaviors in which the communication focuses primarily on the positive aspects of the favored brand by instead contrasting a competing brand and its flaws and against the superiority of the favored brand.

“I would say that [claims that technology brand is inferior] are simply not true. I have used Microsoft all of my life and Apple is better by a wide margin. Apple makes their computers and software. This makes integration perfect. Microsoft lets anyone make a computer and this results in major bugs.” (male, age category 18-20)

“Apple computers are not virus magnets like Microsoft Windows computers and you won’t encounter the problems of activating the Windows in 30 days. I can tell you it’s a pain to activate the Windows when [Microsoft] says your copy may not be authentic. They will ask you a bunch of questions in order
to verify that you bought it for real. Besides, their customer service is not as good as Apple.” (female, category 21-29)

Research suggests that negative brand information is often perceived as more diagnostic than positive information (Fiske 1980). The increased diagnosticity of NWOM has been attributed to its rarity (Feldman and Lynch 1988) and to the consumer perception that brands will perform satisfactorily, so any claims to the contrary draw particular attention and an assumed validity (East et al. 2008). It would appear that brand advocates leverage the diagnostic advantage of NWOM about competing brands to strengthen their argument for their favored brands.

Category 3: Forgiveness of brand failures

The behaviors classified into this category were deemed to be non-representative of the crucial peer-to-peer communication component of brand advocacy. Therefore, they are not included further in the development of scale items to measure brand advocacy. The descriptions of the behaviors in this category can be found in Appendix E.

Summary of Categories

The results from Study 2 illustrate a variety of behaviors that self-proclaimed brand advocates claim to engage in. The most commonly cited behaviors were defending the brand against detractors, refusing to accept negative brand information, PWOM, proactive recruitment of new customers, non-verbal brand communications, and spreading negative WOM about competing brands. However, since one of the primary goals of this dissertation is to develop a measure of brand advocacy, it is important that the dimensions of brand advocacy are clearly delineated. Thus, for each of the behaviors
uncovered in this study, the degree to which the behavior was unique to brand advocates had to be considered. Two key criteria for brand advocacy behaviors emerged from the literature: the behaviors are expected to be a result of a significant consumer-brand relationship (Aron et al. 1992; Johnson and Rusbult 1989; Merz et al. 2009), and advocacy is centered on peer-to-peer communication (Cross and Smith 1995; Keller 2007). While some of the behaviors meet the first criteria (i.e., refuse to accept negative information, non-verbal communication) and others meet the second (i.e., PWOM, spreading NWOM against competing brands), only two sets of behaviors meet both criteria. Thus, the dimensions of brand advocacy are determined as defending the brand against detractors and proactive recruitment of new customers. Based on these dimensions, the following definition of brand advocacy is offered: *Brand advocacy is a combination of customer-motivated behaviors, including proactively recommending the brand and defending the brand against detractors, intended to maintain the customer’s relationship with the brand and promote it to others.*

**Study Three**

In order to generate a pool of potential items to measure brand advocacy, the first task was to compile a list of behaviors uncovered in Study 2 that met the two primary criteria for brand advocacy: relationship-based behaviors and those that represented peer-to-peer communication. Additionally, to ensure that the pool was comprehensive (Churchill 1979), items reflecting similar or adjacent behaviors identified in the literature were also included. This resulted in a list of 70 items representing a wide spectrum of brand advocacy behaviors. Following the recommendations of Hardesty and Bearden (2004), face validity of the items was evaluated using a panel of three expert judges.
(upper-level marketing doctoral students) who were asked to assess the items based on their representativeness of the construct. Based on the feedback of judges, several potential items were reworded while some were dropped. Suggestions from the judges led to the creation of similar items assessing peer-to-peer communication using slightly altered wording to reflect situations in which the advocate was communicating with strangers as well as those in which the advocate was communicating with family or friends. After the judges’ input, a total of 57 items were included in the initial pool of potential brand advocacy items.

Next, the items were examined for theoretical linkages to ensure that the items generated reflected the range of advocacy behaviors identified in Studies 1 and 2. A number of items reflected consumers’ attempts to defend their favored brand from negative communication from others. A second large group of items assessed advocates’ referral behaviors, some of which were verbal and some of which were non-verbal. Additionally, some of the items assessed the traditional PWOM component while others reflected loyalty behaviors. Although these items reflect behaviors deemed as being non-representative of the key criteria of advocacy (relationship-based peer-to-peer communication), they were included in the pool as an assurance that advocacy does indeed discriminate from these behaviors. It was not expected that all of them items would apply to all brand advocates. However, at this early stage in the scale development process, it was deemed important to choose as broad a pool of potential items as possible.
Sample and Data Collection

A survey was created using the pool of 57 items and was administered to a sample of 263 consumers who were recruited to complete the survey online. Recruiters were twenty-two undergraduate students in an upper-level Marketing Research class who were asked to send a link to an online survey to potential respondents over the age of 18 in exchange for course credit. Initially, 323 responses were received, but 60 of those were eliminated due either to incompleteness or failure to pass the acquiescence bias check. Tsikriktsis (2005) suggests that in cases when the amount of missing data exceeds 30-40%, any technique that is used to account for the missing data can bias results. To address this issue, responses with 20% or more missing data were eliminated.

Acquiescence bias was assessed with a single item: If you are reading this question, please select “Strongly Disagree,” and 52 responses were eliminated for failure to mark the appropriate response.

Participants were first provided definitions of brand loyalty and brand advocacy and were asked to indicate if they considered themselves to be either for a particular brand (which they were then asked to list). Next, they were asked to indicate the extent to which they engaged in each of the 57 behaviors (measured using a 7-point Likert-type scale with endpoints “strongly agree/strongly disagree”) for the brand they had previously listed (ex. “I have tried to change someone’s opinion about my brand when they did not think it was very good”).

The items were analyzed using a principal components analysis (PCA) with direct oblimin rotation. The initial solution yielded 13 components with eigenvalues greater than one, suggesting that several of the items were not loading on the dimensions as
expected. Items with loadings of 0.40 or greater on more than one dimension, or less than 0.40 on all of the dimensions, were removed from further consideration. This resulted in the removal of several items, including all the items identifying specific behaviors identified in Study 2 (ex. “I retweet my brand often,” and “If I really wanted a friend to try my favorite brand, I might offer to buy them one”). A second PCA was conducted on the remaining eighteen items, which revealed two dimensions with eigenvalues greater than one explaining 65.99% of the variance. The two dimensions reflected in the principal components were representative of the range of behaviors that had been identified in the first study and both met the criteria of being relationship-based, peer-to-peer communications. The dimensions were found to have acceptable reliabilities ($\alpha > 0.70$), and the complete set of 18 items had a coefficient alpha of 0.96. This newly purified scale is further refined and validated in the next study. The component loadings for the 18-item brand advocacy scale are shown in Table 6.
Table 6  Study 3 Component Structure for Brand Advocacy Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Component Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Component 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Component 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. When others say negative things about my brand, I usually step in and say something to defend it.</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If others think a competing brand is better than my brand, I am comfortable telling them why my brand is a better choice.</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. When someone bad-mouths my brand to me, I am quick to set them straight.</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I have tried to change someone's opinion about my brand when they did not think it was very good.</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I will give the reasons why I like my brand when someone is putting it down.</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. If a friend or acquaintance said something negative about my brand, I would speak up to defend it.</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. If a friend or acquaintance said that a competing brand was superior to my brand, I would tell them why I disagree.</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. If a friend or acquaintance made fun of my brand, I would stick up for it.</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. If a friend or acquaintance questioned the quality of my brand, I would try to set them straight.</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. If a friend or acquaintance said they disliked my brand, I would try to prove to them why it is a good brand.</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I would make a perfect salesperson for my brand.</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Sometimes when I talk about my favorite brand, I can sound like a salesperson.</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. If I need to, I will rattle off a list of reasons why someone needs to try my favorite brand.</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I have tried to convert others to my brand.</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. If I think you should be using my brand, I will actively work to get you to try it.</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I have convinced others to try my favorite brand.</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I would be an excellent salesperson for my favorite brand.</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I have actively worked to get someone to try my favorite brand.</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Study 3 Findings

The purpose of Study 3 was to reduce an initial pool of items to measure brand advocacy to a manageable number and determine if the scale items reflected the two dimensions of the construct presented in its proposed definition. Through multiple PCAs, the original pool of 57 items was reduced to 18 items loading on two components with eigenvalues greater than one. Initial consideration of the items and their component loadings suggest that the emerging dimensions are defending the brand and recruiting others to try the brand. The items that loaded together on component one all, in some way, address the respondents’ desire to support their brand in the face of detracting comments from others. Items loading together on the second component all address the respondents’ referral behaviors. However, it is important to note that many of these items reflect behaviors that go beyond mere referral to a more proactive recruitment. These consumers are not merely sharing positive communications about their favorite brands, but rather they are actively attempting to convince others of the brand’s value perhaps regardless of whether their opinion was solicited. In addition to the items loading on the two dimensions of brand advocacy, it should also be noted that all items have a fundamental basis in PWOM. Indeed, each item illustrates the sharing of positive brand communication from person to person which is the essential nature of PWOM. Thus, it is understandable that some might use PWOM as a proxy for brand advocacy. However, the items emerging in the scale reduction process go beyond mere positive communication. Whereas merely sharing a positive experience with the brand or offering the brand as a solution when the consumer’s opinion is solicited would fall under the term PWOM, the items emerging in Study 3 extend beyond those behaviors. Thus, initial evidence exists
that PWOM is perhaps only part of the brand advocacy construct rather than sufficient to
be its proxy. Further data analysis is required to support this idea and is conducted in a
fourth study. Study 4 also addresses the next steps in the scale development process -
assessing the reliability and validity of the scale (Churchill 1979), and assessing the
construct’s nomological validity by measuring its relationship to several proposed
antecedents, and empirically distinguishing brand advocacy from PWOM.

Study Four

A fourth study was undertaken with the intention of accomplishing several tasks.
First, in order to confirm brand advocacy as a multi-dimensional construct and to further
reduce the length of the scale if necessary, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was
required. Next, to establish the construct’s nomological validity, brand advocacy was
modeled using several hypothesized antecedents of brand advocacy. Finally, to provide
evidence that PWOM is indeed a distinct construct from brand advocacy and should not
be used as its proxy in future marketing research, an alternative model was tested which
paired brand advocacy and PWOM as outcomes of the three proposed antecedents and
the relationships compared across constructs. Prior to addressing tasks 1 and 2 of the
fourth study, however, a theoretical justification for the antecedents included in the study
is needed.

Theoretical Development

The test for the nomological validity of a newly developed scale is critical to the
construct validation process. Simply creating items that reflect a single construct does not
provide sufficient evidence that those items are reflecting the construct that motivated the
research (Churchill 1979). Indeed, if the scale is to accurately capture the behaviors in which brand advocates engage, then its measures should behave as expected in relation to other constructs, and in this case to several proposed antecedents of advocacy. Not only will such relationships further validate the developed scale as an acceptable measure of brand advocacy, but they should also provide evidence that the construct is distinct from similar constructs such as PWOM. The antecedents measured and tested in Study 4 reflect three constructs that were not only common among many of the responses in Studies 1 and 2, but are also posited as differentiating brand advocacy from PWOM: loyalty, self-concept connection, and shared values.

Regarding loyalty as an antecedent, one argument against using PWOM as a proxy for brand advocacy is that PWOM does not necessarily suggest an ongoing relationship between the consumer and the brand for which (s)he is sharing positive communications. However, in both the interviews and open-ended questionnaires, self-described advocates reported varying levels of loyalty and evidence of commitment to the brand. In an attempt to illustrate how integral consumer-brand relationships are to the development of brand advocacy behaviors, the first antecedent tested is loyalty. The next two antecedents measured - self-concept connection and shared values - also illustrate how advocacy differentiates from PWOM. In *Start With Why*, author Simon Sinek suggests that consumers who believe what a brand believes or who feel that the brand represents some important part of themselves will not only become loyal customers but will also take personal ownership in the success of the brand (Sinek 2009). To measure the extent to which this postulation does indeed differentiate brand advocates, measures
of self-concept connection and shared values were assessed as potential antecedents. For details regarding the hypotheses and full model, see Figure 1.

Figure 1  Antecedents of Brand Advocacy

**Hypotheses Development**

*Loyalty as antecedent*

The seminal research on consumer-brand relationships suggests that some consumers form affect-laden relationships with certain brands, particularly those which match their personality and are meaningful to them (Merz et al. 2009). As the similarities become more apparent to the consumer, the consumer’s feelings of connection to the brand become stronger and the consumer begins to view the brand’s resources as his or her own (Aron et al. 1992). As these relationships grow, expectations that the brand will
play a positive and proactive part in consumers’ lives (Merz et al. 2009) and that the consumer will reciprocate by actively supporting and advocating for the brand (Johnson and Rusbult 1989) develop.

Like with any relationship, the one between consumer and brand does not develop overnight but instead over extended periods of time. Each time the brand fulfills its role in the relationship, the consumer becomes more confident in and thus more loyal to the brand (Aron et al. 1992, 2005). And as with any reciprocal relationship, as the consumer’s loyalty to the brand grows, so does the consumer’s willingness to engage in behaviors that support the brand (Badrinarayanan and Laverie 2011). Based on the integral role that loyalty plays in consumer-brand relationship development and subsequent expenditure of consumer resources to maintain the relationship and socially support the brand via advocacy, justification exists for the following hypotheses:

**H1a:** Consumers’ loyalty to a brand has a direct, positive influence on the defending against detractors dimension of brand advocacy.

**H1b:** Consumers’ loyalty to a brand has a direct, positive influence on the proactively recruit dimension of brand advocacy.

*Self-Concept Connection as antecedent*

Self-concept has been defined as the “totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object” (Rosenberg 1979, p. 7). In the literature, much attention has been paid to the extent to which an individual views his or her self-concept as congruous to a product or brand’s concept and the influence of such identification on myriad consumer behavior outcomes (Sirgy 1982). In essence, consumer are attracted to those brands they view as being similar to their own self-
conceptualization (Kressmann et al. 2006) and often use such identification to form opinions of the products they consume (Sirgy 1982). In some cases, the identification is strong that consumers will use these brands as a way to express their identities (Aaker 1999; Badrinarayanan and Laverie 2011). Indeed, research has shown that such identification is believed to be most likely to occur when the association is positive and assists the consumer in defining his- or herself through self-categorization, self-distinctiveness, and self-enhancement (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Scott and Lane 2000). Furthermore, self-concept connection has been shown to yield positive outcomes such as loyalty (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003), commitment (Bergami and Bagozzi 2000), and word-of-mouth (Kim et al. 2001).

Studies have demonstrated that connection encourages consumers to behave in ways that are both positive and cooperative toward the brand in an attempt to contribute to the overall success of the brand (Ericksen and Sirgy 1989, 1992; Malhotra 1981; Sirgy and Samli 1985). The rationale for such behavior is that as consumers identify more closely with a brand, the brand’s successes and failures are internalized as the consumer’s own (Ashforth and Mael 1989) which leads the consumer to expend significant effort to support the brand and work for its success (Dutton et al. 1994). Based on the impact of self-concept connection on consumer behaviors aimed at supporting and furthering the success of the brand with which the consumer identifies, justification exists for the following hypotheses:

\[ H2a: \text{Consumers’ self-concept connection with a brand has a direct, positive influence on the defending against detractors dimension of brand advocacy.} \]

\[ H2b: \text{Consumers’ self-concept connection to a brand has a direct, positive influence on the proactively recruit dimension of brand advocacy.} \]
Shared Values as antecedent

The concept of shared values is typically discussed in a B2B context and as such has been defined as “the congruence of general core or dominant values between employees and their organization” (Maxham and Netemeyer 2003, p. 48). However, since in the case of brand advocacy, the consumer is essentially a volunteer employee, willingly engaging in marketing activities for the brand, the concept of shared values applies here as well. Values are an individual’s basic beliefs that specific modes of conduct are personally or socially preferable (Rokeach 1973). Consumers’ perception that their personal values are congruent with the values of the brand has been shown to be associated with increased helping behavior toward the brand (O’Reilly and Chatman 1986), firm-directed citizenship behaviors (Netemeyer et al. 1997), and altruistic and conscientiousness employee behaviors (in a B2B context) (Goodman and Syvantek 1999).

Similar to self-concept connection, a consumer’s perception that he or she shares a core and enduring belief with a particular brand only serves to increase the consumer’s commitment to the brand and its success. Indeed, congruence of core values between individual and firm helps to diminish the possibility of opportunitic behaviors on the part of the individual (Ouchi 1980), and rather increase the likelihood of supportive behaviors (Maxham and Netemeyer 2003) like those associated with brand advocacy. Based on the influence of shared values on consumers’ altruistic and supportive brand behaviors, justification exists for the following hypotheses:

\[ H3a: \text{Consumers’ shared values with a brand have a direct, positive influence on the defending against detractors dimension of brand advocacy.} \]
H3b: Consumers’ shared values to a brand have a direct, positive influence on the proactively recruit dimension of brand advocacy.
Measures

To test the hypothesized model, an online survey was developed to measure not only the reduced 18-item brand advocacy scale but the proposed antecedents of the construct as well. While the advocacy scale items were developed as part of this dissertation, the remaining construct items were adapted from existing scales used in previous research. In order to measure loyalty, three items were adapted from previous studies (Homburg and Furst 2005; Zeithaml et al. 1996). Established scales were adapted to measure self-concept connection (Breivik and Thorbjornsen 2008) and shared values (Maxham and Netemeyer 2003). In order to establish brand advocacy as distinct from PWOM, the survey needed to include items to measure PWOM, and those items were adapted from Badrinarayan and Laverie (2011). All scales are Likert-type scales measured from 1-7 (1 – Strongly Disagree, 7 – Strongly Agree). Items used in Study 4 are shown in Table 7.

A total of 238 participants were recruited through Amazon’s MTurk for the pretest, but 23 responses were excluded due to incompleteness, leaving a usable sample of 215. First, an EFA was conducted using SPSS 21. All items measuring the proposed antecedents loaded on their respective construct with no substantial cross-loadings. The coefficient for all antecedent construct measures was calculated and all scales exhibited
an acceptable level of reliability ($\alpha > .70$, Nunnally 1978). In addition to pretesting the antecedent construct items, the EFA was utilized to not only confirm the dimensions of brand advocacy suggested in the PCA, but also to determine if further revisions could be made to the scale to reduce its length. In its current, 18-item format, the scale’s length could potentially limit its usefulness in future research. First, the results of the EFA (principal axis factoring with varimax rotation) confirm that the items measuring brand advocacy still fall along two separate dimensions, as two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 emerged explaining 68.61% of the variance. Further, items with weak loadings or those that cross-loaded on both dimensions were removed from the scale. After these revisions, a more streamlined, 9-item scale was developed. The factor loadings for the brand advocacy construct are shown in Table 8.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Standardized Factor Loadings</th>
<th>t-values</th>
<th>Squared Multiple Correlations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Defend Against Detractors (α = 0.93) (original)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. If a friend or acquaintance said something negative about my brand, I would speak up to defend it.</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If a friend or acquaintance said that a competing brand was superior to my brand, I would tell them why I disagree.</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>13.93</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If a friend or acquaintance made fun of my brand, I would stick up for it.</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>16.79</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. If a friend or acquaintance questioned the quality of my brand, I would try to set them straight.</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>17.59</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If a friend or acquaintance said they disliked my brand, I would try to prove to them why it is a good brand.</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>16.98</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proactively Recruit (α = 0.90) (original)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. If I think you should be using my brand, I will actively work to get you to try it.</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I have convinced others to try my favorite brand.</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>14.55</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I would be an excellent salesperson for my favorite brand.</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>13.51</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 (continued)

4. I have actively worked to get someone to try my favorite brand. 0.89 18.27 0.79

**Loyalty (α = 0.84)** *(adapted from Zeithaml et al. 1996; Homburg and Furst 2005)*
1. I will do more business with my brand in the next few years. 0.71 * 0.50
2. It is very likely that I will purchase my brand again. 0.81 10.87 0.65
3. I intend to remain loyal to my brand in the future. 0.91 11.44 0.78

**Self-Concept Connection (α = 0.94)** *(Breivik and Thorbjornsen 2008)*
1. My brand says a lot about the kind of person I am. 0.89 * 0.79
2. My brand’s image is consistent with how I’d like to see myself. 0.90 19.20 0.81
3. My brand helps me make a statement about why is important to me in life. 0.91 19.69 0.82
4. My brand and I have a lot in common. 0.84 16.91 0.71

**Shared Values (α = 0.96)** *(Maxham and Netemeyer 2003)*
1. My brand has the same values I do. 0.92 * 0.85
2. In general, my values and the values held by my brand are very similar. 0.99 29.85 0.97
3. I believe in the same values held and promoted by my brand. 0.90 22.63 0.81

**Positive Word of Mouth (α = 0.86)** *(Badrinarayan & Laverie 2011)*
1. When others approach me for advice, I suggest my brand. 0.88 * 0.78
2. My brand is the first I recommend to others. 0.86 15.39 0.73
3. I often recommend my brand to others. 0.74 12.56 0.55

**Note** - * denotes a relationship constrained to 1.00 for model identification

**Model Fit Statistics**: $\chi^2 = 351.51$ (194); $\chi^2 / df = 1.81$; $p < 0.01$; CFI = 0.96; IFI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.06
Table 8  Study 4 Factor Structure for Brand Advocacy Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Defending Against Detractors</th>
<th>Proactively Recruit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>If a friend or acquaintance said something negative about my brand, I would speak up to defend it.</td>
<td>If I think you should be using my brand, I will actively work to get you to try it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>If a friend or acquaintance said that a competing brand was superior to my brand, I would tell them why I disagree.</td>
<td>I have convinced others to try my favorite brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>If a friend or acquaintance made fun of my brand, I would stick up for it.</td>
<td>I would be an excellent salesperson for my favorite brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>If a friend or acquaintance questioned the quality of my brand, I would try to set them straight.</td>
<td>I have actively worked to get someone to try my favorite brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>If a friend or acquaintance said they disliked my brand, I would try to prove to them why it is a good brand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using the newly revised scale, the convergent and discriminant validity of all scale items was then assessed using a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in AMOS 20. The analysis of the measurement model suggested an acceptable fit of the model to the data ($\chi^2 = 351.51$ (194); $\chi^2 / df = 1.81; p < 0.01$ CFI = 0.96; IFI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.06). Complete CFA results are presented in Table 7. Convergent and discriminant validity was assessed according to Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) recommendation of comparing the average variance extracted for each construct to the shared variance between each pair of constructs. Evidence of convergent validity exists if the average variance extracted for a single construct exceeds 0.50 and evidence of discriminant validity exists if the shared variance for each pair of constructs does not exceed the average variance.
extracted for each construct in the pair. For the constructs in the pretest, all had an
average variance extracted in excess of 0.50 providing evidence of convergent validity.
Additionally, no shared variance between constructs exceeded the average variance
extracted for an individual construct providing evidence of discriminant validity. The
correlations between constructs and average variance extracted can be found in Table 9.
The items included in the measurements were retained and used in the primary data
collection.
Table 9  Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Constructs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Defend Against Detractors</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Proactively Recruit</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Loyalty</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Self-Concept Connection</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Shared Values</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. PWOM</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Items were on a 7-point scale from 1 – Strongly Disagree to 7 – Strongly Agree*
*Values on the diagonal are the Average Variance Extracted for each Construct*
Primary Data Collection

The newly refined brand advocacy scale along with the antecedent scales was administered to a different group of 748 consumers who responded to a survey request on Amazon’s MTurk. A copy of the survey used in this study is presented in Appendix G. Participants were recruited to complete an online survey about their attitudes and behaviors regarding a favorite brand. Those who chose to take the survey were first provided with a definition of brand advocacy developed in this dissertation and asked if they considered themselves to be a brand advocate. Those who responded in the affirmative were asked to provide the name of that brand. Respondents were asked to keep that brand in mind as they moved through the survey. Additionally, the survey was designed to populate the brand name that was entered as the one they advocated for (or were loyal to, in cases where respondents claimed not to be an advocate) into each item rather than using the phrase “my brand.”

Of the 748 responses, 198 were removed due to more than 20% incomplete data or failure of the respondent to respond as instructed to the acquiescence bias check item (“If you are reading this item, please mark ‘neutral’”). Of the remaining 550 responses, 241 respondents did not respond in the affirmative to the brand advocacy self-identification question, leaving a usable sample of 309 self-identified brand advocates. The sample was 50.5% female with an average age of 33.39 years.

The reliability of the scale items for each of the constructs was assessed and each scale showed an acceptable level of reliability ($\alpha > 0.70$, Nunnally 1978). The dimensionality of the scale items was assessed using CFA conducted using AMOS 20. The analysis revealed acceptable fit of the model to the data ($\chi^2 = 421.57$ (194); $\chi^2 / df =$
$2.17; p < 0.01; \text{CFI} = 0.96; \text{IFI} = 0.96; \text{RMSEA} = 0.06$). Complete results from the CFA are shown in Table 10. The convergent and discriminant validity of the scales was examined by calculating the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct as well as the shared variance between each pair of constructs as recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Evidence of convergent validity exists if the AVE for an individual construct exceeds 0.50. Evidence of discriminant validity exists if the shared variance between each pair of constructs does not exceed the AVE for each construct in the pair. For this sample, all construct AVEs exceeded 0.50, which provides evidence of convergent validity. Furthermore, the shared variance between any pair of constructs did not exceed the AVE for each of the constructs in the pair. The AVEs, correlations, and means are provided in Table 11.
### Table 10  Confirmatory Factor and Reliability Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Standardized Factor Loadings</th>
<th>t-values</th>
<th>Squared Multiple Correlations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Defend Against Detractors (α = 0.91) (original)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. If a friend or acquaintance said something negative about my brand, I would speak up to defend it.</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If a friend or acquaintance said that a competing brand was superior to my brand, I would tell them why I disagree.</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If a friend or acquaintance made fun of my brand, I would stick up for it.</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>17.01</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. If a friend or acquaintance questioned the quality of my brand, I would try to set them straight.</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>17.33</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If a friend or acquaintance said they disliked my brand, I would try to prove to them why it is a good brand.</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proactively Recruit (α = 0.90) (original)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. If I think you should be using my brand, I will actively work to get you to try it.</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I have convinced others to try my favorite brand.</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>15.41</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I would be an excellent salesperson for my favorite brand.</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>14.93</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I have actively worked to get someone to try my favorite brand.</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>18.71</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loyalty (α = 0.79) (adapted from Zeithaml et al. 1996; Homburg and Furst 2005)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I will do more business with my brand in the next few years.</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It is very likely that I will purchase my brand again.</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>11.35</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I intend to remain loyal to my brand in the future.</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>10.96</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Concept Connection (α = 0.93) (Breivik and Thorbjornsen 2008)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. My brand says a lot about the kind of person I am.</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My brand’s image is consistent with how I’d like to see myself.</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>20.14</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My brand helps me make a statement about why is important to me in life.</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>20.89</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My brand and I have a lot in common.</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>19.55</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Items</td>
<td>Standardized Factor Loadings</td>
<td>t-values</td>
<td>Squared Multiple Correlations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shared Values (α = 0.97)</strong> <em>(Maxham and Netemeyer 2003)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. My brand has the same values I do.</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In general, my values and the values held by my brand are very similar.</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>34.53</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I believe in the same values held and promoted by my brand.</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>31.83</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Word of Mouth (α = 0.81)</strong> <em>(Badrinarayan &amp; Laverie 2011)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. When others approach me for advice, I suggest my brand.</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My brand is the first I recommend to others.</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>14.07</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I often recommend my brand to others.</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>12.88</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note - * denotes a relationship constrained to 1.00 for model identification

Model Fit Statistics: $\chi^2 = 421.574$ (194); $\chi^2 / df = 2.17; p < 0.01; CFI = 0.96; IFI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.06$
Table 11: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Constructs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intercorrelation of Constructs</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Defend Against Detractors</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>(0.68)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Proactively Recruit</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>(0.65)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Loyalty</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>(0.55)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Self-Concept Connection</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>(0.75)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Shared Values</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>(0.89)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. PWOM</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>(0.60)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Items were on a 7-point scale from 1 – Strongly Disagree to 7 – Strongly Agree.
Values on the diagonal are the Average Variance Extracted for each construct.
Finally, because the measures of both the independent and dependent latent constructs were taken simultaneously, the data ran the risk of being affected by common method bias. Thus, before moving on to the structural model, it was deemed necessary to assess the presence of common method bias following Podsakoff and colleagues’ recommendation to use a latent common factor (Podsakoff et al. 2003). A latent common factor was created and relationships were formed between it and each indicator of both the independent and dependent constructs. In the course of the analysis, any variance attributed to the construct should theoretically be the result of factors related only to the construct and not the result of any bias related to using a common method across constructs. To determine if evidence of common method bias exists in the model, the CFA including a latent common factor was compared to the CFA model excluding a latent common factor using a chi-square test. The chi-square value of the model including the latent common factor ($\chi^2 = 390.71 \ (193); \ \chi^2 / df = 2.02; \ p < 0.01; \ CFI = 0.96; \ IFI = 0.96; \ RMSEA = 0.06$) was significantly less than the chi-square value of the model omitting the latent factor ($\chi^2 = 421.57 \ (194); \ \chi^2 / df = 2.17; \ p < 0.01; \ CFI = 0.96; \ IFI = 0.96; \ RMSEA = 0.06$). ($\chi^2$ difference = 30.86 (1)). Thus, common method bias is present in the data. To control for the potential bias of common method in the test of the structural model, the model will include a latent common factor.

**Nomological Validity**

After evaluating the measurement model, the full structural model presented in Figure 1 was then analyzed using AMOS 20. The purpose of the structural model analysis was two-fold. First, the structural model was used to confirm that brand advocacy can be modeled as a higher-order construct and to evaluate the structural
relationships between the antecedents and dimensions of brand advocacy. Second, the analysis focused on determining if relationships between the antecedents and brand advocacy were stronger or weaker than those between the antecedents and PWOM in attempt to provide further evidence that PWOM is not an appropriate proxy for brand advocacy in marketing research.

To address the first aim of the analysis, the proposed structural model (including the latent common factor) was run with brand advocacy modeled as a higher-order construct comprising two dimensions or sets of behaviors: defending against detractors and proactively recruiting new customers. Furthermore, the construct was modeled in such a way that the first order constructs are traditional latent constructs measured with reflective indicators, but the second order construct (brand advocacy) is more of an index of the two sets of behaviors and as such is modeled as formative. Indeed, when the two sets of advocacy behaviors are compared to the initial minimum criteria for advocacy behaviors - relationship-based, peer-to-peer communication – it appears likely that the dimensions will address these criteria to different extents. For example, although proactively recruiting might accurately address the peer-to-peer component of advocacy, it may not be truly reflective of the relationship-based component. Instead, the behaviors associated with defending the brand against detractors may more effectively tap the relationship component of advocacy. Thus, omitting one of the dimensions in brand advocacy’s measurement would likely alter the meaning of the construct, a key consideration in modeling a construct as formative (Jarvis et al. 2004). As a result, recommendations for modeling a formative construct from Jarvis and colleagues (2004) were followed, including the recommendation to include a minimum of two items to
reflect the formative brand advocacy construct for model identification purposes. These items were created specifically for this study and can be seen in Appendix G. The antecedent model of brand advocacy as a higher-order, formative construct is shown in Figure 1.

To address the primary concern of the analysis, the structural relationships depicted in Figure 1 were examined. The results suggest an acceptable fit of the model to the data ($\chi^2 = 467.43 \ (177); \ \chi^2 / df = 2.64; \ p < 0.01; \ CFI = 0.96; \ IFI = 0.96; \ RMSEA = 0.06$). With acceptable model fit present, the next task was to examine the structural relationships between constructs. The standardized path estimates and t-values for each hypothesized relationship are shown in Table 12 and the standardized path estimates are included in the conceptual model in Figure 2.

Table 12  Structural Model Test Results for Brand Advocacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesized Relationship</th>
<th>Standardized Estimate</th>
<th>t-values</th>
<th>Hypothesis Supported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1a Loyalty → Defend Against Detractors</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1b Loyalty → Proactively Recruit</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2a SCC → Defend Against Detractors**</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2b SCC → Proactively Recruit**</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3a Shared Values → Defend Against Detractors*</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3b Shared Values → Proactively Recruit</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p = 0.12; **p < 0.05; all other paths p < 0.005

Model Fit Statistics
$\chi^2 = 467.43; \ df = 177; \ \chi^2 / df = 2.64; \ p < 0.01$
CFI = 0.94; IFI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.07

Squared Multiple Correlations
Defend Against Detractors 0.36
Proactively Recruit 0.35
Advocacy 0.70
Results

The analysis of the proposed structural relationships between the antecedents and dimensions of brand advocacy yielded primarily positive results as all but one hypothesis was supported by the data. These results provide sufficient evidence that brand advocacy does possess nomological validity. Loyalty and self-concept connection both had significant and positive relationships to both dimensions of brand advocacy, supporting those four hypotheses. Shared values had a significant and positive relationship to proactively recruiting, but had a non-significant relationship with defending against detractors. Thus, only one of the hypothesized relationships between shared values and the brand advocacy dimensions is supported. The hypothesized relationships and the results of the hypothesis testing are shown in Table 12.
The strongest predictor of defending against detractors was loyalty ($\gamma_{11} = 0.44$, $t = 6.40$). Self-concept connection had the next strongest relationship ($\gamma_{12} = 0.21$, $t = 2.76$) while the relationship between shared values and defending against detractors was shown to be non-significant ($\gamma_{13} = 0.12$, $t = 1.57$). Interestingly, while shared values did not have a significant relationship with defending against detractors, it was the strongest predictor of proactive recruitment ($\gamma_{23} = 0.33$, $t = 4.30$) followed by loyalty ($\gamma_{21} = 0.27$, $t = 4.21$). Self-concept connection was the weakest predictor of proactive recruitment ($\gamma_{22} = 0.15$, $t = 2.05$), but the relationship was still significant and positive. These results suggest that loyal consumers are more likely to defend their brand against naysaying but are also, to perhaps a lesser extent, likely to proactively recruit new customers to the brand.

Furthermore, when consumers perceive that their core values are similar to the values a brand holds, they are likely to feel compelled to spread the word about their favorite brand and encourage their social networks to experience the brand. Finally, these results suggest that, as expected, when consumers feel as though their self-concept is reflected in a brand, they are likely to engage in brand advocacy behaviors.

Loyalty was shown to have a significant and strong positive relationship to both dimensions of brand advocacy. The particularly strong relationship between loyalty and defending against detractors suggests that, as predicted, an enduring relationship with a brand is critical to a consumer’s willingness to refute negative information about the brand. While it is understandable that as consumers become more loyal to a brand, they also become more willing to defend the brand to others, it is interesting to consider the relationship between the loyalty and proactively recruiting. Different from referring a brand after another seeks a recommendation, proactively recruiting new customers
requires more risk on the part of the advocate, as they are recommending a product they are very attached to. Furthermore, it requires the advocate to know enough about the brand to be able to recommend it to the appropriate friend or acquaintance. And loyal customers should, by matter of their loyalty, know a good deal about their favored brand, making recruitment of potential new customers less risky and thus more likely.

Self-concept connection revealed significant and positive relationships to both dimensions of brand advocacy. And although shared values had a significant and strong, positive relationship with proactively recruiting new customers, it was not found to be predictive of defending the brand against detractors. These results suggest that as consumers feel more connected to a brand and its ability to represent the consumers’ self-concept, the more likely consumers are to engage in brand advocacy behaviors.

These results support author Simon Sinek’s claim that consumers who feel connected to a brand and share its core beliefs will not only support it with their own business, but will also altruistically help market the brand to others. However, they also provide evidence that some antecedents of brand advocacy are more predictive of defending the brand while others are more predictive of proactively recruiting new customers. Thus, this analysis supports the supposition that brand advocacy is indeed best represented by two distinct sets of behaviors, and that each is vitally important to the conceptualization of the dimension. Additionally, the findings support the position that brand advocacy is a result of a relationship between consumer and brand, a claim that cannot be made for PWOM. However, to provide more definite evidence that brand advocacy cannot be accurately represented by PWOM, a final analysis was undertaken.
Using data collected in Study 4, additional analyses were undertaken to assess the ability of the PWOM items to distinguish from those measuring brand advocacy. First, an EFA (principal axis factoring with varimax rotation) was conducted to determine the dimensionality of the three scales (PWOM, defend against detractors, and proactively recruit). The results confirm that three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 emerged explaining 66.19% of the variance. The PWOM items load on a separate factor than the advocacy items, providing evidence that PWOM is indeed distinct from advocacy. The fact that one PWOM item wants to weakly load on the proactively recruit dimension of brand advocacy makes sense as brand advocacy has been conceptualized as being a stronger form of PWOM. The factor loadings are shown in Table 13.

Next, as a final assessment of the appropriateness of using PWOM as a proxy for brand advocacy in marketing research, a structural model in which both PWOM and brand advocacy are modeled as outcomes of the three antecedents was tested using AMOS 20. The relationships between the antecedents and PWOM were compared with those between the antecedents and brand advocacy. Any differences in the standardized path estimates across advocacy and PWOM constructs will provide evidence that PWOM is distinct enough from advocacy to prevent the construct’s use as an effective proxy for brand advocacy in future advocacy research.
Table 13  Study 4 Factor Structure for Brand Advocacy and PWOM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Factor 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Defending Against Detractors</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. If a friend or acquaintance</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>said something negative about</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my brand, I would speak up to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defend it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If a friend or acquaintance</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>said that a competing brand was</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>superior to my brand, I would</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tell them why I disagree.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If a friend or acquaintance</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>made fun of my brand, I would</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stick up for it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. If a friend or acquaintance</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>questioned the quality of my</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brand, I would try to set them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>straight.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If a friend or acquaintance</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>said they disliked my brand, I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would try to prove to them why</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is a good brand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proactively Recruit</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. If I think you should be using</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my brand, I will actively work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get you to try it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I have convinced others to try</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my favorite brand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I would be an excellent</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salesperson for my favorite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I have actively worked to get</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>someone to try my favorite brand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Word of Mouth</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. When others approach me for</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advice, I suggest my brand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My brand is the first I</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recommend to others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I often recommend my brand to</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conduct the analysis, the antecedent model used for brand advocacy was created using PWOM as the outcome variable rather than brand advocacy. The model used, along with the standardized path loadings, is shown in Figure 3. Table 14 shows the standardized estimates for the relationships for both models combined into a single table for comparison.
Figure 3  Structural Model with PWOM included

*p = 0.21; **p < 0.05; all other paths p < 0.001

Table 14  Structural Model Test Results for Brand Advocacy and PWOM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesized Relationship</th>
<th>Standardized Estimate</th>
<th>t-values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty → Advocacy</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty → PWOM</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>6.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept Connection → Advocacy</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept Connection → PWOM*</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Values → Advocacy</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Values → PWOM**</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p = 0.21; **p < 0.05; all other paths p < 0.001

Once the model had been run using AMOS 20, the results offered evidence of acceptable model fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 175.93$ (80); $\chi^2 / df = 2.20; p < 0.01; CFI = 0.97; IFI = 0.97; RMSEA = 0.06$). Loyalty was the strongest predictor of both brand advocacy and PWOM, but its relationship to PWOM was much stronger than its relationship to brand advocacy. This result is surprising since little research on PWOM suggests that the behavior(s) are predicated on loyal, enduring customer relationships. However, for the
purposes of this analysis, the important finding is merely that the relationships between
loyalty and the two constructs are dissimilar in strength. The relationships between
shared values and the two outcome variables were the most similar of any of the three
pair, suggesting that the construct of shared values has a relationship to brand advocacy
that is only slightly stronger (and statistically slightly more significant) than its
relationship to PWOM. Shared values is a construct that represents a type of potentially
deep personal connection that a consumer has to a brand. The construct taps the
consumer’s perception that the brand shares, in some way, some of the consumer’s core
values or beliefs. If a consumer believes that a brand supports the values that (s)he finds
important, the consumer will become more likely to feel some ownership of the brand
and want to support it by speaking positively of it to others.

Where PWOM differs most significantly from brand advocacy in this analysis is
in its relationship to self-concept connection. Whereas self-concept connection is the
second strongest predictor of brand advocacy, its relationship to PWOM is non-
significant \( (p = 0.21) \). This result is not wholly unexpected as consumers who feel
connected to a brand and perceive that the brand helps them identify themselves and
present their self-concept to the world are more likely to fight to defend the brand and
will proactively seek validation from others that their brand is a worthy brand than those
consumers who do not feel that connection. Such behavior is likely related to the fact that
consumers with high self-concept connection to a brand see themselves in the brand, so
that when they defend the brand to others, they are in essence defending themselves.
Likewise when they are able to convince an acquaintance of the value of their brand, they
are in some ways attempting to convince said acquaintance of their own personal value.
The influence of such a personal brand connection was not shown to exist in predicting PWOM behaviors.

Based on these results, PWOM is certainly related to brand advocacy and shares some of its predictors. However, this alternative model shows that self-concept connection is not a significant predictor of PWOM, adding evidence that PWOM is perhaps part of the brand advocacy set of behaviors, but advocacy extends beyond the domain of PWOM. The findings here provide support for the notion that PWOM should not be used as a proxy for brand advocacy and that instead, perhaps the scale developed and validated in these studies would be more appropriate.
As consumers have more and more access to information, their role in the co-creation of brand value continues to increase. No longer the stewards of brand information, companies cannot afford to be dishonest or manipulative with consumers. Even the most minor of negative brand interactions is posted online for all to see and comment on. Whether it is through blog postings, Twitter feeds, YouTube video uploads, or negative reviews on Yelp or Amazon, negative brand experiences are shared and shape consumer perceptions of brands. Consumers no longer rely on companies for brand information but rather on the opinions of others be they anonymous online product reviewers or the consumers’ own offline social circles.

Brand managers have come to learn that the best way to minimize the impact of negative information is to create long-term, committed, fruitful relationships with customers. Once in a relationship with a brand, customers will likely be reluctant to accept negative information as fact to maintain their positive impression of the brand. Many companies attempt to forge these relationships by employing loyalty programs, frequent email and social media touch points, and personalized marketing promotions. However, anecdotal evidence from practitioners like Simon Sinek (2009) suggests that consumer-brand relationships that grow more organically and are based on similar beliefs and values are not only much stronger, but also much more advantageous for the firm
than those relationships built primarily on extrinsic incentives like savings and discounts. Sinek posits that brands which center all strategic goals and activities on the company’s passion or its intrinsic motivations for being in business will ultimately attract customers who share those same enthusiasms and beliefs. He goes on to say that when a customer sees a reflection of his or her own core values in a brand that a different type of consumer-brand relationship can and will be formed. Consumers will begin to look at such companies for inspiration and leadership and will start to feel connected to the brand as the relationship begins to build naturally and without incentive from the brand. Sinek (2009) claims that these are the types of customer relationships brands should strive for because they not only build a core of loyal customers that provide the brand a solid foundation on which to build and grow the brand, but they can also aid in marketing efforts at virtually no cost to the brand.

In the information age where opinions on all subjects are passed from person to person around the globe at lightening speeds, brands cannot afford for the information being shared about them to be negative. This is precisely why those loyal, connected customers are so vital to long-term brand success. Just like with any individual who feels strongly about some issue, brand advocates feel compelled to share with others their love for the brand and the reasons why it is so valuable. And they will do this without any incentive from the brand. An extrinsic incentive is unnecessary, because the relationship between consumer and brand is not built on the superficial. It is based on intrinsic factors like shared values and self-concept connection, thus the motivation to spread the word about the brand is likewise intrinsic and hedonic in nature. It is a chance for a consumer to share with another something meaningful and about which they are passionate. In an
age when negative brand information is readily available, easily shareable, and on a permanent, digital record, managers should focus on getting strong, positive, and consumer-driven brand messages into the conversation to combat the attacks. Which is why an understanding of the ways brand advocates operate, how they become advocates, and what impact their behaviors have on brand performance is more vital than ever.

To fully understand the formation and impact of such relationships from both the consumer and the brand perspective, both qualitative and quantitative research is needed. However, the latter endeavor is currently limited for marketing academicians by a lack of an adequate definition and means of measuring brand advocacy and its related variables. The goal of this dissertation was to conceptualize and develop a valid scale to measure brand advocacy as a distinct construct that cannot be adequately measured by the commonly used PWOM proxy.

Through a series of four studies, the goal of the dissertation was met and the two research questions addressed. First, a general understanding about the behaviors in which self-described advocates engaged was gained through a series of ten depth interviews. These interviews asked customers to describe their relationship with their favorite brand including when it began, how it grew over time, and how that relationship manifests in routine consumption behaviors. Participants were also asked to describe the specific ways in which they support their brand and promote it to others. Results from this study revealed that all participants were engaged in long-term and trusted relationships with their favorite brand. This discovery gave initial credence to the claim that PWOM is perhaps an insufficient measure of brand advocacy in academic studies because no definition of PWOM states or even suggests the consumer need have a relationship with a
brand in order to spread positive information about it. Indeed, consumers can share PWOM about brands they have only tried once if at all. For example, a soon-to-be first-time mother may pass along a coworker’s recommendation for disposable diapers to a friend. Despite the fact that the new mother has had no or limited experience with diapers previously, she is still able to spread PWOM about the coworker’s favored diaper brand. These initial results uncover what it perhaps a key distinction between advocacy and PWOM: the presence and strength of a consumer’s relationship with a brand may determine whether the consumer engages in advocacy behaviors or PWOM. This supposition is further explored in later studies.

Based on the results of the first study, a second qualitative study was undertaken to determine if the findings across the ten depth interviews were representative of a larger group of consumers. Respondents across the United States were asked to respond to open-ended questions about their relationships with a beloved brand, how that relationship began, and any ways that they share with others their love for the brand. This qualitative research uncovered a list of behaviors in which brand advocates claim to engage. Using a three-stage constant-comparison process, analysis of the data uncovered the behaviors self-described advocates most commonly engage in, allowing a definition of the construct to be presented and the domain of the construct to be defined. Defining the domain of brand advocacy was of particular importance because while brand advocacy is oft discussed both in academic and practitioner literatures, its measurement in the academic literature is typically limited to PWOM. This practice is not only problematic because it does not accurately capture the fervor of brand advocacy, but also because it incorrectly equates the two concepts. While behaviors such as “liking” on
social media, retweeting brand messages, completing comment cards, posting online reviews, and making passive comments to acquaintances would all be considered PWOM, those behaviors would not be considered advocacy. The use of PWOM as a proxy for brand advocacy severely limits the ability of researchers to learn more about brand advocacy as a phenomenon and a strategic marketing goal. As brand managers continue to focus more on discovering ways to encourage advocacy behaviors in their consumers, the academic marketing literature is lagging in this fruitful stream of research without an adequate definition and measure of advocacy. Based on the results of Study 2, the following definition of brand advocacy was developed: *Brand advocacy is a combination of customer-motivated behaviors, including proactively recommending the brand and defending the brand against detractors, intended to maintain the customer’s relationship with the brand and promote it to others.*

According to Churchill’s (1979) paradigm for scale development, once the construct’s domain has been established, the next step in the process is to develop a pool of potential items to reflect the latent construct. The third study of the dissertation sought not only to create a pool of measurement items but also to begin establishing the dimensionality of brand advocacy. The findings from the first two studies indicate that brand advocacy is a higher-order construct comprising two distinct dimensions, defending the brand against detractors and proactively recruiting new customers. Thus, as the pool of potential brand advocacy items was developed in Study 3, it was imperative to include items that would reflect both proposed dimensions. The items were created primarily from the more common behaviors uncovered in the previous two studies as well as from the consumer-brand relationship literature. The pool was initially subjected
to an expert judges’ review for face validity after which several items were reworded and a few items were eliminated as others were added. The final list of 57 items was then submitted to a PCA which revealed two dimensions with eigenvalues greater than 1.0. Additionally, it was discovered that item component loadings were in line with the proposed dimensions of brand advocacy suggesting that brand advocacy is a multi-dimensional construct. This analysis also allowed for the next step in the scale development process, item pool reduction. Based on the results of the PCA, the initial pool of items was effectively reduced to an 18-item scale (10 items to reflect defending against detractors and 8 items to reflect proactively recruit). The appropriateness of this scale was further validated in Study 4 with a new data collection.

Using the newly revised brand advocacy scale, Study 4 aimed to complete the scale validation process put forth by Churchill (1979) and followed in this dissertation. The brand advocacy scale items, as well as items to measure three proposed antecedents of the construct - loyalty, self-concept congruity, and shared values, were included in an online survey that was completed by utilizing the online consumer panel Amazon’s MTurk. Items to measure brand advocacy’s common proxy PWOM were also included in the instrument for comparison. During the pretest of the scale items, a final factor analysis was conducted to not only confirm the dimensions of brand advocacy with new data, but also to determine if the 18-item scale could potentially be further reduced to a length researchers would find more useful. The results of the factor analysis confirmed advocacy’s dimensions (2 eigenvalues greater than 1.0) as well as suggested a 9-item scale that would appropriately capture brand advocacy. However, as part of the scale development process, simply developing a scale to measure the proposed construct is
insufficient for establishing the scale as valid and useful. The measurement scale must also be able to connect the construct to related variables in theoretically predictable ways to ensure that the construct and its dimensions have been accurately defined. To accomplish this task Churchill (1979) recommends assessing the nomological validity of the scale with a model including related variables like antecedents or outcomes of the construct in question. The assessment of brand advocacy’s nomological validity was investigated with the primary data collection portion of Study 4.

The model to assess advocacy’s nomological validity proposed the influence of three key antecedents of the construct. First, as respondents from Studies 1 and 2 described enduring relationships with the brands for which they claimed to advocate, it was deemed necessary to include a variable that taps the relationship aspect of brand advocacy. Thus, the first variable included in the model was brand loyalty. This proposed relationship between loyalty and advocacy was essential in discriminating advocacy from PWOM, a behavior(s) that does not require the consumer to have ever even used the brand. Furthermore, advocacy was proposed as comprising two sets of behaviors that are decidedly stronger than mere PWOM; thus an appropriate motivation for this stronger behavior needs to be established. As individuals in any context are typically more willing to engage in stronger behaviors for those things they to which they feel loyal and committed than those to which they have merely a passing acquaintance, including loyalty in the antecedent model was deemed appropriate and necessary.

Based on findings from Studies 1 and 2, it was also clear that advocates felt connected on a deep level to their favored brand. Going beyond superficial influences like price and convenience, advocates felt that their brands represented something that
was personally meaningful to them. Research in consumer-brand relationships has long established that consumers who feel as though a brand is similar to their own self concepts are likely to forge lasting relationships with these brands (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003) and engage in behaviors that communicate the brand’s value to others (Kim and Park 2001). Thus, self-concept connection was proposed to be an antecedent of brand advocacy as that construct addresses the extent to which an individual feels as though their concept of themselves is represented by their perception of the brand’s concept. As consumers perceive that a brand is similar to their view of themselves, they should be more willing to both defend and recommend the brand as they are essentially defending and recommending a valuable part of themselves to others.

Finally, respondents in the qualitative studies also reported the importance of the brands for which they advocate to stand for something that is in line with their own core values. For example, in Study 1, Monica describes how important it is to her that Mary Kay is founded on the principals of Christianity and empowering women, two things that are central to her own worldview. This sharing of core values is also key to Simon Sinek’s (2009) proposition that firms which base all strategic decisions on their central beliefs are more likely to substantively connect with likeminded consumers who will sustain the company in the long-term. Thus, the construct of shared values was included as an antecedent of brand advocacy, as it helps to explain why advocates are so keen to promote their brand to others. By evangelizing about their brand, they are essentially evangelizing about their own core beliefs.

The analysis of brand advocacy’s antecedent model revealed that all three proposed antecedents are significant predictors of at least one set of brand advocacy
behaviors. Self-concept connection was shown to be similarly predictive of both dimensions of brand advocacy, while loyalty was the strongest predictor of defending against detractors and shared values was the strongest predictor of proactively recruiting new customers. These results suggest that a consumer’s ability to see his or her own personality reflected in a brand will influence the consumer to not only actively recommend the brand to others but also defend it against naysaying. On the other hand, since shared values is perhaps a deeper connection than one based on mere personality similarities, those consumers whose core values are reflected in a brand’s overall strategy and daily activities may feel more compelled to proactively recruit customers than they do to defend the brand when it is questioned by others. This supposition is supported by the fact that while shared values was the strongest predictor of proactive recruitment, its relationship to defending against detractors was found to be non-significant. This finding is not wholly unsurprising as it matches with the general idea of evangelizing, a term that has been used to describe brand advocacy in some instances (Albert et al. 2013; Matzler et al. 2007, 2009). Evangelists essentially want to recruit new believers, and for advocates, the thing they believe in is the benefit of using their favored brand. Finally, loyalty was shown to have a stronger relationship to the defending the brand dimension of advocacy than to the proactive recruitment dimensions although both were shown to be significant and positive. This difference might be explained by the lack of personal connection in loyalty. For consumers who are more behaviorally loyal to their brand rather than attitudinally loyal, they may be less motivated to proselytize about the brand than with other types of brand connections. As a result, loyal consumers may be less comfortable proactively referring the brand than they are defending it against negative
information. A long-term consumer-brand relationship may provide numerous examples of positive brand interactions the advocate can call upon as evidence in a debate about their brand.

The acceptable fit of the antecedent model to the data provided evidence that brand advocacy does possess nomological validity. Additionally, the findings also show evidence that brand advocacy can be accurately modeled as a formative construct comprising defending against detractors and proactively recruiting new customers, both of which are typical reflective latent constructs.

With the successful assessment of the construct’s nomological validity, the development of a scale to accurately measure brand advocacy as a construct was completed. However, to ensure a final time that PWOM does not adequately measure brand advocacy, a final analysis was conducted. In this analysis, the antecedent model used in Study 4 was recreated using both PWOM and brand advocacy as outcome variables. The relationships between the three predictor variables and the two outcome variables were then compared to assess whether those relationships were similar enough to allow for PWOM and brand advocacy measures to be used interchangeably in research studies. Results indicate that PWOM and brand advocacy were similarly predicted by self-concept connection, but that loyalty is a stronger predictor of PWOM than it is brand advocacy, although it significantly predicts both. The strongest evidence that PWOM is not a sufficient proxy for brand advocacy in academic studies comes from the fact that the relationship between shared values and brand advocacy was positive and significant while the relationship between shared values and PWOM was not found to be statistically significant. As was suggested by Simon Sinek (2009), shared core values is the
foundation of a brand advocacy relationship, so PWOM’s lack of relationship to the construct is indicative of a significant difference in meaning between PWOM and brand advocacy. This suggests that PWOM is not a sufficient representative of brand advocacy and should thus not be used as one. More importantly, since PWOM is not as comprehensive a reflection of a consumer’s personal relationship with a brand as is brand advocacy, its use in important research like the impact of consumer-brand relationships and advocacy behaviors’ effect on long-term brand performance would be particularly problematic. The development of brand advocacy as a construct with a valid measurement scale should allow more precise research on the phenomenon of brand advocacy and its potential for the firm.

**Theoretical Implications**

Though the notion that consumer-driven brand recommendations are important for overall brand performance has long been accepted, academic research on the topic has been somewhat stunted by the lack of a construct that appropriately captures brand advocacy. The research included in this dissertation followed Churchill’s (1979) paradigm for scale development to define and describe the construct. The results of four studies reveal that brand advocacy is a multi-dimensional set of behaviors that centers on defending the brand against detractors and proactively recruiting new customers. Moreover, a 9-item scale that captures both dimensions of brand advocacy and is distinguishable from PWOM has been developed and validated for use in future research projects. Because the construct is conceptualized as comprising two sets of distinct behaviors, the higher-order construct of brand advocacy was modeled as being formative. Elimination of either of the sets of behaviors of advocacy would be detrimental to the
understanding of the construct, so a reflective second-order would be inappropriate. However, the first-order constructs of defending against detractors and proactively recruiting new customers were measured with reflective items.

This research also reveals the complexity of brand advocacy and its related behaviors. Additionally, it distinguishes the differences between brand advocacy and PWOM, a common proxy used in brand research. The primary difference between these two constructs lies in the fact that a relationship between the consumer and the brand is unnecessary for the consumer to share PWOM, but is vital to the development of a brand advocate. In a time when marketing researchers and strategists focus on the importance of relationships marketing, it is difficult to defend the use of a construct with few relational underpinnings to be used to assess the impact of relationship marketing initiatives on firm performance. If a consumer can share PWOM on Instagram about a product (s)he bought five minutes ago, then that construct is perhaps not the best measure of the effectiveness of a brand’s efforts to establish relationships with customers. Thus, this research conceptualizes brand advocacy as distinct from PWOM and then sets about developing and validating a scale to measure the construct for use in future research.

In addition to the definition and measurement of brand advocacy, other insights arose in the research. For example, respondents in Study 2 express viewpoints about their favorite brands that range from somewhat neutral to extremely enthusiastic. It is these differences in strength of attitude, reflected in differing levels of aggressiveness and frequency of brand advocacy behaviors, which provide a useful tool for examining the behaviors that are most commonly performed by brand advocates. Specifically, the variation suggests that perhaps a continuum of advocacy behaviors ranging from fairly
mild to progressively more aggressive exists. Perhaps this variation is a result of the extent to which advocates connect with the brand or the strength and/or length of the advocates’ relationship with the brand. Both of these considerations will be important for practitioners and academics alike.

**Managerial Implications**

Practitioners have already begun to embrace advocacy as an important marketing tool. For example, the national grocery chain Kroger recently unveiled plans to partner with BzzAgent to strengthen its online social word-of-mouth program for Kroger’s store-brand products. The grocery store chain is using loyalty data to identify “the best store-brand advocates” and enlist them to link their BzzAgent accounts to their personal blogs, Facebook, and Twitter pages. Kroger will reward advocates with coupons for the store-brand products based on the advocate’s ability to generate a positive response via their online social networks (Gallagher 2012). A similar project is underway with Eagles Nest Outfitters, an outdoor company looking to gain a foothold in collegiate markets by recruiting students who are fond of the brand to its Brand Ambassador Program. The program allows the student ambassadors to come up with creative ways to increase brand recognition on campus and rewards their efforts with both brand and non-brand incentives (Gresham 2012).

Some marketing researchers suggest that advocacy which develops organically is substantially more effective than advocacy that is firm motivated. This disparity is likely due to the fact that targeted prospects often see little difference between traditional firm-sponsored messages (e.g., advertisements, price promotions, coupons) and firm-sponsored advocacy (Van Den Bulte 2010; Trusov et al. 2009). Additionally, the
effectiveness of peer referrals centers on the fact that customers view one another as more trustworthy than firms, but in situations of firm-sponsored advocacy, because the advocate is receiving rewards from the firm, that trustworthiness is diminished (Schmitt et al. 2011).

In the data collected in the first two studies of this dissertation, not one respondent indicated a motivation to share his or her positive experiences with others in hopes of any sort of compensation from the brand. Indeed, many respondents indicated a desire to tell others about their favorite brand for altruistic reasons such as wanting others to create lasting memories similar to their own, or wanting others to benefit from the brand’s performance in the same ways they did. Feelings of obligation to the brand or hope of earning rewards were not revealed to be factors that influenced a consumer’s likelihood of advocating for their brand. This particular finding supports academic research that questions the effectiveness of firm-sponsored advocacy programs. Furthermore, this insight is in line with the antecedents of brand advocacy that illustrate how the concept is a result of an enduring relationship and perceived connection between consumer and brand. By viewing advocacy in this way rather than a marketing tool, it becomes clear that true advocates are motivated to engage in advocacy behaviors not because they seek reward, but because doing so reinforces their view of themselves. In essence, advocating for the brand is advocating for themselves, or a core part of themselves. Advocates do not require compensation to defend the brand and recruit new customers; they likely do it because it helps them maintain cognitive consistency about themselves.

Another interesting insight uncovered in these studies was that consumers were not able to effectively determine whether they were advocates for a brand or if they were
merely loyal. Results of comparing models from those respondents who self-identify as advocates to those from respondents who self-identified as merely loyal revealed no significant differences across models. For practitioners, this may be welcome news. If advocates can engage in advocacy behavior without realizing that what they are doing would be considered advocacy, brand managers may have an easier time growing their based of advocates. Those consumers who might shy away from being called an advocate can still engage in advocacy behaviors, giving brand managers a larger base of potential – even if not self-identified – brand advocates to develop.

**Limitations and Avenues for Future Research**

As with all research, certain limitations apply to this dissertation. With regard to the qualitative studies, the sample was purposive and not truly random, and the sample does not necessarily represent a cross-section of U.S. consumers which somewhat limits generalizability. Another limitation lies in the survey instrument itself in Study 2. For this type of research, face-to-face interviewing would have allowed for more probing investigation. However, in order to obtain a larger sample size, the personal interview was forgone in place of online surveys. The benefit of the larger sample size seemed to offset the value of the potential depth of the interviews; particularly since depth interviews were employed in Study 1.

One issue with the instrument in Study 2 was that it might have been difficult for the respondents to determine if they were actual brand advocates from only a written description. Self-selection into such a category perhaps relied too much on respondents’ ability to accurately self-identify as an advocate. Perhaps self-identification is ineffective for predicting advocacy behaviors, but has significant impact on brand performance.
Might those who identify as advocates engage in advocacy behaviors to a greater extent than those who do not, influencing the impact of advocacy on firm performance outcomes? The development of a scale to measure brand advocacy behaviors will alleviate this issue in future research studies as the respondent’s report of engaging in brand advocacy behaviors will be evidence enough of brand advocacy. Furthermore, as the advocacy items are presented in a Likert-style format, outcomes related to varying levels of consumers’ advocacy activities can be investigated. Specifically, it will be important to attempt to measure just how valuable to the firm an advocate might be. In short, is there empirical evidence to support the claim that brand advocates do actually have a positive impact on the brand’s overall financial performance?

Another limitation in this dissertation is that for all studies, a diverse set of brands was captured. In order to fully understand the nature of advocacy, it was decided that the broader the scope of the brands respondents claimed to advocate for was necessary. However, it is likely that the pervasiveness and depth of advocacy behaviors varies across industries. Relevant questions for future research would include an investigation of these potential differences.

For future research projects, it will be important to ensure that all potential antecedents of advocacy are uncovered. During the process of scale validation a list of proposed antecedents was created in order to establish the nomological validity of brand advocacy. But developing an exhaustive list of antecedents was not the primary motivation of this exercise. Rather, the attempt was to assess whether advocacy had predictably reasonable relationships to related constructs. Thus, in order to fully investigate how advocates develop, the potential of other possible antecedents should also
be considered. While this research was able to establish that brand loyalty, self-concept connection, and shared values all significantly predicted the likelihood that a consumer who engage in brand advocacy behaviors, but additional research will be required to identify any other useful antecedents. This will be of particular importance to practitioners hoping to understand more fully how they can encourage and manage the creation and maintenance of a cadre of strong brand advocates.

In investigating how advocacy develops over time, in addition to uncovering additional antecedents, research should consider whether certain personality types are more likely to engage in advocacy. If this is the case, this could have implications for target segmentation initiatives. If research can identify the types of people that are most likely to advocate and overlay that with those consumers most likely to respond positively to a specific brand’s marketing messages, brands might be able to parlay that such information into a sustainable competitive advantage.

Another avenue for fruitful research lies in understanding more fully the genesis of the consumer-brand relationship that led to advocacy behaviors. In Study 2, respondents were asked to describe one of their earliest, it not their first, experience with the brand. Many of these respondents were able to easily identify their first brand encounter, but others were not. Instead, they described how the relationship with the brand built over time and through numerous positive brand interactions. For marketing strategists, this distinction could be vital. Does advocacy grow from a primary, memorable brand experience or does it develop slowly over time through a series of smaller, less impactful interactions? Research in this area could help brand managers plan their advocacy strategies by suggesting that they either create an impressive first
encounter or are better off spreading goodwill more evenly across all brand interactions. Or if perhaps, a more effective strategy would be to utilize both types of customer interactions. Additional research as to whether the way in which the relationship between brand and advocate develops impacts the strength of the customer’s advocacy behaviors would be of importance to both researchers and practitioners.

It will also be interesting for research to uncover just how advocacy begins. Not simply the how the relationships that leads to advocacy begins, but when and how the advocate begins to engage in advocacy behaviors, or how they may the transition from customer to advocate. More specifically, it is not yet clear how a consumer grows from a mere fan of a brand to an advocate. The growth of a relationship over time is certainly part of it, but if advocates feel connected to both a brand’s personality and values, the question becomes how consumers learn about a brand’s personality or core beliefs in the first place. And perhaps more importantly, how the firm can participate in the dissemination of that information or help foster consumers’ realization of such connections. While from a consumer behavior standpoint understanding just how consumers become advocates is interesting, from a practical standpoint, understanding how the firm can participate in that process will be important for marketing strategy.

Another interesting avenue for future research is investigating advocates’ motivation for engaging in advocacy behaviors. For instance, one of the informants in Study 1 reported that she advocates her skin care brand to other women when they request the information for an interesting reason:

If someone asks me what I’m wearing or comments on it, I tell them about Mary Kay because I think as women we’re supposed to do that. If you find something
you really like or works for you and someone wants to know about it, you need to tell them. It’s kind of your responsibility to do that. So, I share but it is not like I’m talking about it unprompted.” – Monica

Monica suggests that, as a woman, she owes it to other women to share her beauty secrets when her looks are complimented. This altruistic motivation arose in several other interviews as well. Although motivation is outside the scope of the current study, this theme is important for future studies on brand advocacy because it suggests that true brand advocates share their insight with others not for any perceived compensation, but because they owe it to one another as consumers. Because the antecedents uncovered in this dissertation are all related to how the brand connects to the individual consumer, it would be easy to assume advocates’ motivations are centered exclusively on maintaining their own self-perceptions. However, as Monica’s response suggests, perhaps there are other motivations at work as well. As practitioners continue to search for ways to encourage their customers’ brand advocacy behaviors, it will be important to understand the impact of all motivations for advocacy, including altruistic vs. firm-sponsored motivations.

Based on results from Study 2, it appears that advocacy behaviors are not an either/or consideration but instead may exist on a sliding scale of strength or aggressiveness. This finding suggests that advocacy behaviors may exist on some sort of continuum or that perhaps, advocacy behaviors are part of a larger continuum of consumer-brand relationship behaviors. For example, if PWOM behaviors exist for those consumers who have weaker or perhaps a lack of relationships with brands, the PWOM may be to the left of advocacy on the continuum. And behaviors that are the result of
deeper consumer-brand relationships may exist that are perhaps even more severe than advocacy, perhaps even destructive. For example, as in interpersonal relationships, while some relationships are very casual, others can be so deep that they are destructive. This may also be the case with some consumer-brand relationships in that these relationships may lead to compulsive or dangerous behaviors that would fall to the right of brand advocacy behaviors on the consumer-brand relationship continuum. Research of this sort would be beneficial not only to consumer behaviorists and well as strategists, both academic and practical. If the firm can play a role in encouraging consumer-brand relationships and subsequently advocacy behaviors, it will be important to understand the impact of those actions on the consumers’ resulting behaviors in order to keep those behaviors from becoming destructive.

The studies in this dissertation utilized respondents responding to items on myriad brands and industries. Assuredly, some brands are more conducive to the development of consumer-brand relationships than others. Differences in the strength of relationships and connections between consumers and their brands likely exist across brand and industries. As a result, a firm’s ability to develop advocates and the effectiveness of advocacy behaviors on firm performance are likely influenced by the type of industry in which the brand exists. Other potential influencers of the development of brand advocates are also likely, such as the conspicuousness of the consumption, the length of the relationship, and other social and individual factors.

Summary

In this information age, as brand managers have less and less control over the brand information being exchanged amongst consumers, it is more important than ever
for both researchers and managers to understand the impact of consumer-brand relationships on the proliferation and impact of such information. Brands with strong cadres of loyal customers offer some support and cushion when the brand experiences difficult times, poor reception of new products, or negative changes from environmental forces. Taking it a step further, however, is where firms can really leverage their relationship marketing skills by creating and encouraging consumer brand advocates who will do some of the brand’s marketing altruistically and with little to no cost to the firm. These customers are not just loyal to the firm, they also feel connected to and represented by the brand and often reward the brand by actively sharing their positive experiences with the firm to others and in many cases will make strides to ignore or combat any negative brand information they encounter. If a firm can create a large cohort of these types of customers, known as brand advocates, not only will it enjoy the protective benefits of customer loyalty, but it will also enjoy customer-driven marketing that is of little to no cost to the firm. Theses advocates in essence will do some of the brand’s marketing themselves, and they will do it altruistically without need for or expectation of incentive or compensation. The simple act of convincing others of the brand’s value will be hedonically rewarding. And as consumers become savvier at negotiating firm-sponsored brand information and more distrustful of its oft-manipulative nature, they will continue to rely more heavily on one another for unbiased brand information.

This is why understanding more fully the concept of brand advocacy is so vital in the currently marketing climate. Theoretically brand managers understand the concept of brand advocacy and can certainly identify it when they see it, no academic study this far has defined the term or explored its dimensions. And without this core understanding,
research as to the genesis of advocacy, the way it develops, how managers can have an impact on both the beginnings and development of it, and its potential impact on firm performance cannot be assessed. This is unfortunate because the importance of understanding brand advocacy has never been greater.

The aim of this dissertation was simply to establish brand advocacy as a distinct construct that cannot effectively be studied using current constructs and measures. To accomplish this, a scale to measure advocacy was developed following Churchill’s (1979) scale development paradigm. Through the course of the first two studies, brand advocacy as a construct was studied and the following operational definition of it was developed: *Brand advocacy is a combination of customer-motivated behaviors, including proactively recommending the brand and defending the brand against detractors, intended to maintain the customer’s relationship with the brand and promote it to others.*

Brand advocacy was discovered to be a multi-dimensional construct comprising two sets of behaviors, one focused on defending the brand’s reputation in the face of negative information and the other on spreading the word about the brand and recruiting new customers. This definition should make clear the distinction of brand advocacy from similar constructs typically used in its place like PWOM or in some cases loyalty. Throughout the remaining two studies in this dissertation, those related constructs were found to not only be insufficient to describe advocacy but also merely a part of the larger set of advocacy behaviors.

In the final two studies, the definition developed in Study 2 was used to further develop and validate a scale to quantitatively assess brand advocacy. The behaviors uncovered in Study 2 were used to develop a pool of 57 potential scale items. Through
the use of expert judges and multiple principal component analyses, that list was pared down to 18 items across two distinct dimensions: defending against detractors and proactively recruiting new customers. A fourth study further validated these dimensions and also allowed the lengthy 18-item scale to be further reduced to a more manageable and user-friendly 9-item scale.

Additional analyses in Study 4 revealed that brand advocacy has sufficient nomological validity as it was able to be statistically predicted by three related constructs: loyalty, self-concept connection, and shared values. These antecedents each tapped the two dimensions of brand advocacy differently although all but one relationship were significant. Loyalty was a stronger predictor of defending against detractors than it was a predictor of proactively recruiting new customers. The opposite was true for shared values which was a strong predictor of proactively recruiting but was not significantly related to defending the brand against naysayers. Interestingly, self-concept connection had similarly strong relationships to both dimensions. These results suggest that the dimensions of brand advocacy are indeed distinct and are of differing yet equal value to the conceptualization of the construct. Thus, brand advocacy was effectively modeled as a formative higher-order construct with the dimensions in the first-order modeled as typical, reflective latent constructs. To establish that brand advocacy is distinct from PWOM, an assessment of the discriminant validity between the two constructs was first conducted in a CFA. However, to ensure that the two were indeed separate, an alternative antecedent model using both PWOM and brand advocacy as outcomes variables was tested and the path estimates from both models were compared. Interestingly, while the relationships between self-concept connection and both outcome variables were
somewhat similar, it is the relationships between the other two antecedents and the outcome variables that are the more informative. Loyalty was shown to have significant, positive relationships both with brand advocacy and PWOM, but the relationship between loyalty and PWOM was much stronger than that between loyalty and brand advocacy. Based on literature reviews, this finding was somewhat surprising. However, the mere fact that the relationships to loyalty were so dissimilar provides evidence that PWOM is not sufficient proxy for advocacy. This position is further evidenced by the fact that shared values was the strongest predictor of brand advocacy but did not even have a significant relationship to PWOM. Based not only on the marketing literature but on the results of the studies included here, sufficient evidence has been obtained to support the claim that it is inappropriate to use the PWOM construct as a proxy for brand advocacy in brand research.

In summary, this research defines and establishes a measure of the unique construct of brand advocacy. This first step was necessary in order to begin to fully research the origins, influences upon, and outcomes of brand advocacy behaviors. As the need for such information has never been more profound, this conceptualization of brand advocacy was vital. It is the hope of the author that this research results in increased attention on brand advocacy and allows other researchers to begin creating a stream of empirical research in this important and timely area.
REFERENCES


113


APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE
Welcome!

You have been invited to participate in a research project regarding consumer brand advocacy. The research will take the form of an interview in which you will be asked to talk about your favorite brand and answer some questions about your experiences with it.

You are free to answer or not answer any questions at no penalty. There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts that might occur as a result of your participation in the research. To participate in this survey you must be 18 years old or older.

The time needed to participate in the entire study is approximately 30-120 minutes. Thank you for your participation and if you have any questions please contact:

Dr. Nicole Ponder
Mississippi State University
E-mail: nponder@coblal.msstate.edu

or

Institutional Review Board
Mississippi State University
irb@research.msstate.edu
Depth Interview Guide

Have you ever been in a situation in which you recommended or attempted to persuade someone to try your favorite brand? If so, would you consider yourself to be an advocate for that brand?

1) Qualifying Question: Is there a brand that comes to mind when I ask you to finish the sentence, “I would consider myself an advocate of ________brand.” (If yes, proceed.)

2) Pretend I’ve never heard of __________. How would you describe it to me? (Would you want me to try it so that I could experience the same thing you do? Do you ever recommend __________ to people or introduce them to __________?)

3) What is it about __________ that you enjoy? (Prompt for attributes, image characteristics, identification, the service.)

4) Try to remember the first time you tried __________. Can you tell me about the experience? (How you felt, were you with anyone, what caused you to try it in the first place?)

5) How long was it before you purchased another __________ after the first time? Do you remember feeling as strongly about it right away or did your feelings take time to grow?

6) What feelings come to mind when you think about __________?

7) Do other people know how you feel about __________? (Prompt for discussion of WOM behavior, or asking others to go there, too.)

8) Do you have a relationship with any of the people who sell _____ (can be at any type of retail outlet)? Tell me about that.

9) Would you say that you have a relationship with __________? Talk to me about it. (What do you get out of the relationship? Do you feel that __________ returns your feelings?)

10) Tell me about one of your favorite products within the brand ______.

11) Do you think you ever shop for __________ just to make yourself feel better? (Tell me about it. Talk to me about the kinds of things that make you buy ______.)
12) What is it about ___________ that makes you feel THE WAY THE RESPONDENT STATED?

13) If you bought a __________ and got a bad product or bought something that wasn’t up to their usual standards, how would you react? (Is that different from the way you would react if the same thing happened with a brand that you don’t feel the same way about?)

14) If something like that did happen, how would it affect the way you feel about __________? Has that ever happened?

15) Have you ever heard anyone else complain about a failure of ______? What did you think about their story?

16) If you saw someone that was using a competing brand for the purpose you think ____ is most applicable, would you “correct” that person? In what situations might that be different?

17) When you see other people sporting __________, do you feel like you have something in common with them? Does that make you feel any closer to them? Why do you think that is? Does it matter if the rest of their appearance looks like it jives with the brand in question?

18) Talk to me about the kind of person that you think buys ___________. Is that the kind of person you think you are? Is that the kind of person you would like to be? What is it about that type of person that makes you want to be like that?

19) What do you think it says about you that you have such strong feelings about __________?

20) How much do you know about the [type of products] that __________ carries? (Do you feel pretty confident that you know what’s really good and what’s not? Would you say that you know more than most of the people who shop there?)

21) Does it make you proud to talk to people about the way you feel about ____________? (Or do you think you would ever be embarrassed for people to know how you felt?) Talk to me about that.

22) Brand managers try to convey a personality to their customers. How would you describe the personality of ____________? How is that similar to your personality? How is it different?

23) In what ways does the personality that you described make you feel comfortable shopping for ____________?
24) Most of us have an image of ourselves the way we think we really are and another image of the way we would like to be (or like other people to think we are). Do you think that’s true for you? What are the differences between the way you are and the way you would like to be? (personality, appearance, state in life, location)

25) Which version of your self-image do you think is most like ____________, the actual or the ideal?

26) Do you think you like ____________ because it feels like “you”? Tell me about that?

27) What could ____________ do to be even more like you? Do you think that would make you like them more? Tell me why.
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS
Interview #1
Pseudonym: Ashley
Age: 31
Gender: F
Interview Time: 30:47
Brand: REI

I: Pretend I’ve never heard of REI. How would you describe it to me?
R: REI is an outdoor store, it sells outdoor brands – you get kayaking, camping, skiing, snowboarding, biking, all that kind of outdoor stuff. Not so much the fishing or hunting stuff you would see with Bass Pro, more of the sporting stuff, not sportsman.
I: Would you want me to try it so that I could experience the same thing you do?
R: Yeah, I want to bring everybody there.
I: So you do recommend it to people?
R: Oh, yes, all the time. I’ve lived in a place that had 3 within half an hour of each other.
I: Did you ever take someone to the store?
R: Definitely. There is an REI in Houston actually. We were playing rugby in Houston and I needed to replace my sunglasses and I made an entire car of four people go to REI so I could replace my sunglasses and “yall need to come in so you can see how awesome this is”. And they came in and all agreed that it was cool.
I: Do you know if any of them ever went back?
R: Not that I know of. It’s a little bit trickier with those guys because they closest one is in Houston and we all lived in Baton Rouge. My friends in RI that I have discussed it with go frequently.
I: What is it about REI that you enjoy?
R: There are a lot of things. Re: actually shopping, the environment. I walk into the store and I sigh. It has a great smell. And I like their amazing return policy. That has always been my biggest seller. They are a co-op so you become a member for a one-time $15 fee and once you have your card you can return things forever. I have a pair of boots that I bought 6 years ago that I don’t want anymore and I returned them no questions asked. They keep a record of your purchases, so you don’t even have to keep receipts. They pull up your membership and find the purchase and then you give you the amount you paid for it back in store credit.
I: Even if you’ve used them for 6 years?
R: Oh yeah, it doesn’t matter. I’ve stepped on sunglasses and I’ve exchanged them for new sunglasses. I think they do store credit but who cares because you’re going to want to spend it there anyway once you’re in the store. It’s no questions asked. It’s pretty amazing. That’s the number 1 seller for me. And they have amazing customer service. I never leave there unhappy.
I: Do the people there really seem to know what they’re talking about?
R: Yes, they are like totally into REI, I would totally love to work there even though I don’t have half the experience for half the stuff they sell there, because they really seem
to know their stuff. That’s how I got recommendations about my sunglasses or for a jacket, I would go there to talk to their customer service people.

I: Do the workers there look like people who would use REI’s products?
R: Most of the time, yes. Like most of them I would like to go camping with because they look like they know what they’re doing.

I: Try to remember the first time you tried REI. Can you tell me about the experience?
R: I went there to rent a kayak. It was a birthday surprise. I actually bought a sleeping bag and rented a kayak all in one. I think I went to go check it out and found out that if you were a member you could get 15% off and I knew you could rent kayaks there. I don’t know if somebody told me, I don’t remember. But I was instantly in love. This was in 2003 maybe, so I was 23 then.

I: Was anybody with you when you went?
R: I think I went by myself the first time.

I: But you think someone told you that you could rent a kayak there.
R: I’m pretty positive because I don’t know why I would have assumed that I could rent a kayak there.

I: How long was it before you purchased another product from REI after the first time?
R: Technically, it was that same day – the sleeping bag – when I intended only to rent a kayak. I would go there frequently when I lived really close to them.

I: Do you remember feeling as strongly about it right away or did your feelings take time to grow?
R: I felt strongly about it right away. I’ve always liked gear (camping, biking, etc) even if I don’t use it I really like it. So I always want to go there and I’m convinced I need lots of things.

I: What feelings come to mind when you think about REI?
R: Happy and calm. Calm because I think about camping and all that fun stuff, so it’s a sense of calm. Also very very excited. I forgot to tell you the other coolest part about REI, they have so many. They have members-only garage sales and they take all the crap people have returned (her sunglasses) and overstock and put it out like a garage sales and discount them deeply. I got these shoes brand new, a brand new wet suit for $30, a technical jacket for $30. I got a ridiculous amount of stuff for super cheap and almost all of it was brand new, just overstock. Even kayaks, they put a ton of stuff out. People line up starting the night before sometimes. They camp out overnight to wait.

I: Since you are excited and calm, it sounds like a stress reliever.
R: Oh yes, definitely. When I’m stressed I love to go walk around REI and think about all the things I want but can’t afford to buy. And I think about how someday I’ll be able to buy these things.

I: Do other people know how you feel about REI?
R: Yes, I talk to people about it all the time. Every time I go to RI I have to go and everyone knows it. People ask if I’ve been to REI yet this trip. It’s not if I’m going to REI, it’s when.

I: Do your Baton Rouge friends know?
R: Yes, because you can go online. My mom, for my birthday, got me a replacement pair of sunglasses from REI. They weren’t the ones I wanted, but it was ok, because I took them back and exchanged them at the REI in Chicago when I was there on a trip.
I: So, it sounds like any time you’re in a city that has one, you try to make time to stop in.
R: I do really want to go, yes. Sometimes, I look at my sunglasses, I think “well, there are some chips”, so I talk myself into reasons to go when I’m going to be near one. Every time I go to REI I go, and I will upgrade my sunglasses every time I go because since you can return for the original sale price, you’re not really spending $120 on glasses, you’re only spending $60 to upgrade.
I: Do you have a relationship with any of the people who sell REI?
R: I think when I’ve gone to different stores I’ve really liked talking to individual people. But at almost every store I’m telling one of the salespeople that they’re awesome and wishing we were friends.
I: Would you say that you have a relationship with REI?
R: Yes I do. I feel very strongly that I have a close relationship. It is characterized by dedication. I am very dedicated to them. If, for no other reason than the return policy that I want to sell everyone on. And, becoming a member and the return policy. I’m very very dedicated. I also think that they take care of me, and I’m sure they treat all the customers that way. But, it’s a co-op and I’m a member and I get a dividend every year. All members get a 10% dividend on non-sale items. Every year, as long as I bought something full price, I should get a check in the mail. It’s called dividend dollars and I think you have to use it at the store, but why wouldn’t you? And you also get members-only coupons and they’re good coupons usually.
I: There is a lot of talk in marketing about loyalty cards and how they don’t really work (i.e., grocery stores) because you just get a loyalty card for each store. But it sounds like REI is actually creating loyalty programs that actually work.
R: It does. Especially if you go there more than one. Literally, my friend Kristy returned boots that she’s worn for years and she got $200 back. The ones I’m wearing I can’t return because I bought them at the garage sale. Those items are sold “as is”.
I: Tell me about one of your favorite products within the brand REI.
R: My sunglasses. I’ve had this brand of sunglasses since 2004 maybe (Natives). And, I went there and asked them. I had a dividend and a 20$ off coupon. I wanted a good pair of sunglasses because I was going through pair after pair of $20 glasses because I kept breaking them. I asked them if I should get Smith’s b/c all the cool kids wear Smiths. But the sales guy recommended Natives no matter what. And it’s because the company Native has a great return policy. With Smith’s, you can’t get the lenses replaced, only the frames. But Natives, if you scratch the lenses you can send it back and for $30 get a new pair. And then you can also return them to REI. They’re the best sunglasses I’ve ever had and I’ve only lost one pair. They are the best sunglasses I’ve ever worn. They’re polarized, etc. They fit me and my face. They’re comfortable and they don’t slide.
I: Do you think you ever shop for REI just to make yourself feel better?
R: Absolutely. I like the sunglasses. I always shop their sale because they usually have really good sales. And they also have random jewelry and I really like it because I’m really particular about jewelry.
I: If you bought a REI and got a bad product or bought something that wasn’t up to their usual standards, how would you react?
R: First I would probably be a little bit disappointed but I would also be confident that if I went back to REI and talked to them about it that they would make it right whether I
returned it or something. But I’ve never experienced that, but if I did I would first be surprised but also confident that they would take care of it.

I: How would you react if that happened with another brand?
R: I would react like they weren’t going to help me out at Dick’s (or whatever). If something ripped the first time I wore it I feel like I could take it back to REI and return it no problem but I’m not sure it would be that easy to take it back to Dick’s.

I: If something like that did happen, how would it affect the way you feel about REI?
R: No, not at all. Because again, I don’t think I would ever get in a position where they wouldn’t be helpful. Or if one person wasn’t helpful, then I could easily get someone else to help me.

I: Have you ever heard anyone else complain about a failure of REI?
R: Never.

I: If you saw someone that was using a competing brand for the purpose you think REI is most applicable, would you “correct” that person?
R: Absolutely, if there was an REI and a Dick’s I would say “you can get a sleeping bag from wherever you want, but I just want you to know...” We have 2 outdoor stores in Baton Rouge and I wouldn’t want to buy something from them, even if it’s the exact stinking product because of the quality of the store. And also at Dick’s I don’t think you would get the best selection. You’re going to get Columbia, which is a great brand, however if you’re getting Columbia or North Face or Mountain Hardwear, you’re getting an outdoor brand that’s made for the masses. At Dick’s, you’re not going to find those brands that are made specifically for the outdoors. The stuff that not everybody knows about but they are the best products. REI will carry these products where Dick’s is more for the masses.

I: When you see other people sporting REI, do you feel like you have something in common with them?
R: Absolutely, I was working at the bookstore and one of the customers had an REI credit card. And I asked if they were a member and where they were from. I wanted to know about them. They had the credit card so they were getting even more dividends because then you get them on all purchases, not just stuff you buy at REI. So when I see someone like that I definitely feel like I need to talk to them about it. Or if I see them with an REI shirt I’ll say “I miss REI.”

I: Why do you think that is? Does it matter if the rest of their appearance looks like it jives with the brand in question?
R: Not at all. Because even though that person might not look the part, it’s ok. And that’s because North Face and other brands have gotten so popular among the masses that someone who doesn’t know would wear that brand. And someone who knows good brands will skip the popular brands and wear REI, regardless of what their appearance would be. And I hope it doesn’t happen with Patagonia as much [as it has with North Face].

I: Talk to me about the kind of person that you think buys REI.
R: Smart people. Also, I usually picture two groups: upper-middle class type of person or a grungy hippie type person but you also probably still have money to go there. I typically see those two groups of people in there. And a lot of families in there (generally don’t have lots of kids). But all the people there seem earthy.
I: Is that the kind of person you think you are?
R: Oh yeah, although it’s not really who I am right now, but who I like to think that I am.
I: So, it’s the person you want to be in the future?
R: Probably, it’s a mix of the person who I’ve been and what I want to be more in the future. I went through a long phase of eating only organic free-range chicken and organic fruits and vegetables. Used cloth napkins instead of paper towels and no plastic silverware. But I was making more money, so was my partner. But now that I’m broke, I can’t afford all of that. But if I were making more money, I would want all organic cleaners and free-range chicken and I feel like that goes along with REI [shopping Whole Foods].
I: What do you think it says about you that you have such strong feelings about REI?
R: I think I’m drawn to brands that take care of their customers. And brands that value customers. Like the fact that it’s a co-op, I really like that. Even though I’m a minimal member, I still get a thing in the mail asking me to cast my vote for the board of directors. I like the mutualistic type of relationship where we are going to be very loyal to each other. I like those kinds of relationships with brands and stores and everything. And I’m sure with people I like that as well.
I: How much do you know about the [type of products] that REI carries?
R: I would say I know a fair amount. When I’m there I know enough to talk about the brands and know what’s good quality of whatever. Sleeping bags, sunglasses, jackets, etc. I’ve definitely helped a total random stranger shop at REI.
I: Does it make you proud to talk to people about the way you feel about REI?
R: I love it. It makes me very happy. I was so proud of my sister when she went to REI to purchase geocasting equipment. I thought it was amazing. It’s ridiculous how proud I was.
I: Brand managers try to convey a personality to their customers. How would you describe the personality of REI?
R: They work very hard to create, via the inside and even the outside, to create this facade that you are actually entering the outdoors. They usually have climbing walls so you can try out the equipment and the one in Seattle, the flagship store, has a mountain biking trail around the inside of the store so you can try out the mountain biking equipment. And they usually have, in the shoe section, a little mountain setup so you can try out different surfaces. They create a feel and a personality for sure when you go in there. Even sometimes on the outside it looks like a log cabin.
I: Is that similar to your own personality?
R: REI’s personality is similar to my own personality or at least what I want it to be. And it’s very welcoming and they want everyone to be there. But they’re also not too pushy. They offer to help but it’s not a constant pestering like you experience at like a Dillard’s or something.
I: Do you think you like REI because it feels like “you”?
R: I really do, I go in and feel like I’m home. Like it’s where I’m supposed to be. I’ve actually said that when I went in the store. I would love to live in this area of RI that has an REI, a Whole Foods, and a Chipotle all within a close distance to each other. That would feel like home to me. It’s like “what else do I need in life?” When I go there I feel like I’m supposed to be there.
I: What could REI do to be even more like you?
R: They could come to Louisiana. But it makes sense that they don’t, because people here
don’t camp in the traditional sense of the word. People here go to an air-conditioned
camp where they hunt and fish out of which is not really what REI does. There’s not
really the market here. Ideally, I wish that they would be where I am. That’s the only
thing I could think of that would make it. Everything else is spot-on.
R: ** They also do in-store pick up. You can have things shipped to the store for pick up
for free. It takes longer because they ship it on freight, but it’s free.
Interview #2: Alex

Pseudonym: Alex
Age: 28
Gender: F
Interview Time: 36:38
Brand: Amazon.com

I: Pretend I’ve never heard of Amazon.
R: Well one, I call it “amazin’”. Actually when I type it out that’s how I sound it out in my head. But it’s a website where you can buy anything and everything you need. And if it’s not on there you probably didn’t want it or need it anyhow. They even sell a 55 gallon drum of lube, I mean, what doesn’t Amazon sell? Robert pointed out that it doesn’t come with free shipping so that’s where they get you.
I: Would you want me to try it so that I could experience the same thing you do?
R: I would definitely want you to experience it.
I: Do you recommend Amazon to people or introduce them to it?
R: Recommended or perhaps forced, strong-armed, cajoled, or said “just let me buy it and I’ll have it shipped to you”. I have definitely converted people. People say they are looking for something. Like Nadine said she was looking for a book that she couldn’t find at Barnes and Noble so I told her I would just order it for her from Amazon and it would be here in two days.
I: What is it about Amazon that you enjoy?
R: Well, I’m an Amazon Prime member so I get superfast shipping and most often it is the cheapest. If it is not the cheapest, they don’t, as of right now because we don’t live in a state that has a shipping facility, we don’t have to pay sales tax. For instance, I bought a TV, so it was $15 cheaper at Wal-Mart ($800 TV) so by the time I ordered it from Amazon it was cheaper because I didn’t have to pay sales tax. Plus, they delivered it to my door and I live on the second floor. So I didn’t have to put it in my car and drive it home. Bam, it was at my door. You wait a day, but that’s ok. And I think I might have paid one-day shipping for my TV and my MacBook because for $3.99 I want it here tomorrow. I ordered my MacBook on the 22nd or 23rd of December last year. It was $999 (plus tax) when I went to the apple store by my mom and dad’s house. With the student discount from Amazon it was $969 and I ordered it 2 days before Christmas and paid for 1-day shipping and I got it in like 16 or 18 hours delivered at my mom and dad’s door.
I: Try to remember the first time you tried Amazon. Can you tell me about the experience?
R: I know the first time I bought something from Amazon because it’s still in my purchase history. It was a book France and the Age of Globalization that I bought in 2001 for a political science book. It was a French book and I needed an English translation. I’m not sure it was the first time I discovered it. When I was in college Amazon was still a bookstore. I think I had looked there to buy textbooks but I was still able to find them used and inexpensive in that store. But that was the first time I found the book. Before them I would go to B&N and have them order it for me. But I got it for $11 from
Amazon. And I just loved it. I looked back at my history of things I purchased. At first it was books and it was 1 at a time, then it was 3 at a time. In 2001 I ordered maybe 10 things total. I’ve ordered 10 things in the last week - if you count music. If you look at my history from this year it’s ridiculous, just scrolling. But I buy a lot of digital content now. Mainly eBooks and music but other stuff too. I subscribe to food on Amazon. Protein bars show up on my doorstep every 3 months, protein shakes too.

I: How long was it before you purchased another Amazon after the first time? We’ve already addressed that you ramped up pretty quickly.

R: But it has been 10 years!

R: I don’t know because I got a book that I couldn’t find anywhere else. And also, in 2001 people weren’t buying crap on the Internet - it’s hard to think that was 10 years ago. The first thing I ever bought on the Internet was in 1998. I bought an mp3 player a Samsung 364 mb, it was the size of a small iPod and held about as much as a cd, but no one else had one back then. And my dad was super hesitant about letting me put his credit card info online. Fast forward to 2001 when I had my own credit card and here’s this book where I can get any book in the world. And it started by buying books for school and then I’d order a few books that weren’t for class. Because my parents could still see my credit card statement and would ask me about what I bought and how much I spent. But since it was books they would pay for those too.

I: What feelings come to mind when you think about Amazon?

R: I think they’re competent and speedy and although they’re usually the cheapest price point it’s not always the cheapest. I would rather spend $2 or $3 more on Amazon than some no-name place and know for sure I’m getting the product because Amazon has the easy return policy. So if there is a vendor that has a contract with Amazon I will not go to the vendor’s site but instead will buy through Amazon because I trust them and I trust that they’ll keep my information safe.

I: Do other people know how you feel about Amazon?

R: Yeah, I think so. Because I’ve purchased/shared Prime memberships with a couple of my family members and my former roommate and I’ve converted them. And you can get a student Prime membership free for a year. I think I even told you about. One of my best friends Amy has become addicted to Prime and she’s probably worse than me if that’s possible. And the music thing or Kindle. If anyone says “oh, you have an eReader” I always correct them and say “I have a Kindle. Not a Nook or anything else. You want a Kindle”. And I actually didn’t get the kindle for a while. I had the apps on my phone and computer when they first came out. So I had hundreds of Kindle books before I had the physical Kindle which made it that much better. I sync my apps and my Kindle almost constantly. Sometimes I look like I’m working but really I’m reading a Kindle book on my MacBook.

I: Would you say that you have a relationship with Amazon?

R: Actually, yes I would. Relationship in terms of a customer service relationship. When we were going to New Orleans or somewhere I wanted the song Super Bass so bad and we were in the car. So she has a Droid so I told her to download the song. And then I went to my office to download it on my computer the other day and it wasn’t on my cloud player. So I emailed Amazon and within 15 minutes they responded that they would put it back on there. And I have accidentally ordered (kindle) books I didn’t mean
to buy and I’ve had them for like a week before I realized I had it. And I didn’t know why I ordered this. And I’ve contacted Amazon told them that I had it for a week and didn’t mean to buy it and I’ve contacted them and they had no problem taking it off.

I: I guess they can tell if you’ve read it.

R: Yes, but I’ve opened the book to see what it was and even still they let me return it. I have never had a problem with a return be it digital content or a pair of shoes. Only once have I ever had bad packaging and it was from a third-party and I complained to Amazon and they offered to send me another. But the product was fine but the box was ripped up. And they said that they would take care of it and they offered to replace it if it ever stopped working. So even though it’s not with one person, I do feel like I have good relationship with them. You never feel like smashing your head against the wall working with them.

I: Do they appreciate you as well?

R: Actually, yeah. When they launched their cloud player (like 2 years ago), I had thousands of songs I’ve downloaded. The player offered to store anything you downloaded on the cloud player for free, unlimited space. No limit to what we’ll store if you’ve bought from us. But I had already bought so much stuff. So I contacted them and asked how I could upload stuff I’ve already bought. And they said it only stored stuff you bought from the introduction of the cloud player forward. And I thought that was crap and I sent another email saying so. Well, they must have received lots of those emails and about 6 months later they sent out an email saying that you could upload old stuff and it doesn’t count against you. So, they’re very responsive. And they were very nice the whole exchange and I wasn’t trying to be a jerk. Any time I have questions they always have a really good response.

I: Tell me about one of your favorite products within the brand Amazon.

R: My TV and my MacBook. And for their TVs they have white-glove delivery. They’ll take it out of the box and make sure the screen isn’t cracked or anything. And they’ll set it up for you.

I: This is an Amazon delivery guy??

R: No, it’s in their contract with DHL. I didn’t opt for that with my TV. He opened it and looked for it but I put it together. But I know someone who had them set it up for them. But I wanted to do it myself because that’s the gratification of getting a new TV.

R: I also use Amazon to research stuff. I agonize over stuff. And I really loved my MacBook too.

I: Do you think you ever shop at Amazon just to make yourself feel better?

R: That’s what I was talking about doing product reviews. I look at product reviews even if it’s something I’m going to buy in town. It helps with dissonance. So I do a lot of dissonance relief through Amazon. Also, they have Amazon deal of the day for music and every day they have a cd that’s $3.99 or $1.99. It’s funny that I still call it a cd it’s now an album I guess. I would compulsively check. If I hadn’t checked it I would wonder about it all day. When they first started doing it they did a lot of old stuff from the 90s - music from my high school - so I downloaded tons of stuff for cheap that way. And when they went through their old stuff they moved on to newer stuff. I keep on top of it and check it early in the morning. Although I’m not as compulsive as I used to be.

I: Do you ever check [Amazon] if you’re having a bad day?
R: Oh yeah, I check it every day. Like last night I was just looking up funny products. I can easily waste a couple of hours on Amazon. It’s funny to look at my viewing history. It’s not anything I would ever buy sometimes, I’m just curious about a product. Like a 55 gallon drum of lube.

I: If you bought something from Amazon and got a bad product or bought something that wasn’t up to their usual standards, how would you react?

R: I’d send it back. I wouldn’t be upset, I would expect that they would fix it. I would be bummed because it’s kind of like Xmas every time you get a package so when you have to send it back, I’m a little bummed. When I bought my touchpad it didn’t work right away and I was a little bummed because I wanted to play with my new toy. But I didn’t buy it through Amazon because they didn’t offer it and I wasn’t sure about the return policy of this place. Had I bought it through Amazon I wouldn’t have been concerned because I know they would have sent me another.

I: Were you irritated with the people who sent you the touchpad.

R: Not really, because it was packaged well. I bought a pair of shoes from a company once because Amazon didn’t have them. And when I got them I didn’t love them but it wasn’t worth the effort to send them back. If I had purchased them through Amazon I would have sent them back without a second thought.

I: If something like that did happen, how would it affect the way you feel about Amazon?

R: No, because I know they’d fix it. I wouldn’t think they’re less trustworthy. I would make the implicit assumption that it was a random error and not due to negligence or lack of caring.

I: Have you ever heard anyone else complain about a failure of Amazon?

R: Honestly, no. I guess the one thing Robert and I will sometimes commiserate that there are books you can buy that are self-published and they are sometimes crappy. But that’s not Amazon’s fault, the author wrote a crappy book.

I: Doesn’t Amazon have a publishing wing?

R: Yeah, you can pay them to publish your book and they skim off the top. I bought this book from there that looked promising. I usually don’t buy anything from there that doesn’t have good reviews (at least 3 stars) and this book didn’t have any reviews. But I was so intrigued that I bought it. And it was crap. I showed it to Robert and we decided we could do better so we’re going to try.

R: The average rating has to be greater than 3 stars.

I: Do you read all of the reviews or just the good ones?

R: I read all of them, especially the one stars. And I’ll look at the comments the company makes in response to reviews. Timbuktu - a bag brand that I buy from Amazon. I read those. I think it’s an interesting forum for that to happen. So when someone has a negative comment about Timbuktu, I’ll read the company’s response to the bad review.

I: When the negative review mentions a competing product that’s better, have you ever gone to check out the competitor?

R: Oh yeah, but I think Amazon manages those links. And I’ll usually only search for the competing product on Amazon rather than Googling it.

I: If you saw someone that was using a competing brand for the purpose you think Amazon is most applicable, would you “correct” that person?
R: Absolutely. People could be in Wal-Mart or you could say that you’re going to get more of those cereal bars and I would tell you to check Amazon. The big thing now is those Keurig coffee machines and I’ll hear people complain that they can only find a few flavors and I will suggest that they check Amazon.

R: For this HP touchpad, I would go to the HP website for the accessories first. Just because I want to ensure compatibility. I could have bought my watch from Amazon but I bought it from the company because I wanted the company’s customer service specifically. But I still read all the reviews on Amazon before I picked out what I was going to buy.

I: When you see other people utilizing Amazon do you feel like you have something in common with them?

R: Um, no because I just assume that everybody uses Amazon because why wouldn’t they? Everybody uses it and if they don’t then they just haven’t heard of it before. It doesn’t make me feel closer to them. But if they say they have an Amazon Prime membership, then I think they’re in the club. They’re willing to pay that $80 a year to be the cool kid. If you order more than 3 things pretty much you’ve made your money back. Because on some things I used to pay $25 for shipping. Plus with Prime you get streaming videos.

I: Do they have different ones than Netflix?

R: They do. I was showing the Enron movie in class and the website I was using wouldn’t load the video. So I went to Netflix and they didn’t have the license to show it but Amazon had it. So Amazon saved the day.

I: So that was like a big advertisement to your class because they saw you go through the process of not finding what you wanted on Netflix and then finding on Amazon.

R: Exactly, and that was like the day after the hullabaloo with Netflix changing their pricing package. And so my students were super interested. So I’m guess there were a couple of subscribers after that. I would never go to blockbuster and pay $4.99 to watch Harold and Kumar go to White Castle. But if it’s Friday night and I’m really in the mood for Harold and Kumar, I might be willing to pay $4.99 to have it for 24 hours on my computer. That’s just a hypothetical. :)

I: What do you think it says about you that you have such strong feelings about Amazon?

R: That I’m a rational person who sees quality in cheap prices. I behave rational economics or whatever the word is.

I: How much do you know about the [type of products] that Amazon carries?

R: Well, I think that I know that they carry everything. But I’m also familiar with certain things - Kindle content, music, Prime - that kind of stuff. And they have this new service (myHabit) and a warehouse site where you can buy returned goods. So, there’s more to Amazon than just what you see when you go to the main page.

R: The review system takes care of that (knowing what’s good).

I: Does it make you proud to talk to people about the way you feel about Amazon?

R: Again, I just think it’s economically rational behavior.

I: Do you wouldn’t be embarrassed for people to know you’re this big of a fan? No.

I: Brand managers try to convey a personality to their customers. How would you describe the personality of Amazon?
R: With Kindle they’re trying to be a little bit trendy. They’re this weird mix of “we have everything under the sun but we’re not chaos”. They have the size of Wal-Mart but still have high quality goods and hot name brands that want to work with them. I get frustrated with them because they have variable pricing because they have logarithms accounting for how many views and such and tell them what the pricing should be. Or what they can price something at and get away with them. And I was aggravated with them but I realize that I just should have bought it when the price was low.

I: Then do you compare them to Wal-Mart?
R: No, maybe Target. They’re a little hipper than Wal-Mart. Some of the products require very specific search terms to find them. So in that way they operate like a very niche store. You have to know about the products to find them (in some cases).

I: In what ways does the personality that you described make you feel comfortable shopping for Amazon?
R: [They’re] trustworthy and hip.

I: What could Amazon do to be even more like you?
R: There is this website called thinkgeek that sells super nerdy cool stuff. And I wish Amazon would sell those things because I would buy more stuff from them but I don’t want to pay the shipping, especially if it’s a small item. I’m not going to pay $7 shipping for a $3 thing. So I wish they would have some nerdier stuff.

I: Which would make sense since they started out a bookstore. Do you think that Amazon alienated their original customer base when they expanded past books?
R: I don’t think so because I think Kindle helps their case. Although the Kindle fire (more of a tablet) might be tricky. They need to tread lightly there. They’ve gone from being a books-a-million to being more of a Hastings. It’s a precarious place to be just a bookstore so you need to diversify, and I think people see them as more than a bookstore. But I think the bookish types tend to be the type that may not want to go out shopping for things anyway, so I think Amazon tapped a market of people who prefer to stay home and shop online.
Interview #3: Gail

Interview #3
Pseudonym: Gail
Age: 27
Gender: F
Interview Time: 20:47
Brand: Patagonia

I: Pretend I’ve never heard of Patagonia. How would you describe it to me?
R: Patagonia makes high-quality clothing for outdoors activities. They are very genuine. Almost like Patagonia is a friend. They share the same activities and values [as me]. For example, like me, Patagonia is more function than form, but it’s a balanced combination. They have high quality products that last and they are focused on sustainability. Everything they make has a purpose and travels really well.
I: Do you ever recommend Patagonia to people or introduce them to it?
R: I don’t like to shove the brand down anyone’s throat if you don’t give me an opening. I follow some outdoor message boards like Boatertalk and would comment about Patagonia if the opportunity arose, but I would wait for an opening. My mission as an advocate is the same as Patagonia’s, I just want to make sure that people get the best quality, but I’m not going to be rude about it.
I: What is it about Patagonia that you enjoy?
R: I love everything I’ve ever gotten from them. And I love that they have a recycling program. You can turn in your old clothes to be recycled, but their clothes don’t wear out quickly.
I: Try to remember the first time you tried Patagonia. Can you tell me about the experience? (How you felt, were you with anyone, what caused you to try it in the first place?)
R: The first thing I bought from Patagonia was long underwear which is one of the things they’re really known for. I was going on a camping trip and needed thermal underwear. I worked in an outdoor store at the time, and experts in the field recommended Patagonia to me. So I guess I trusted that more than information I would have gotten directly from the company. After using Patagonia for a while now, I feel like I can trust what they say.
I: Do other people know how you feel about Patagonia?
R: Yes. But I don’t bring up Patagonia unless the situation is appropriate and there is an opening. But people who know me well know I love Patagonia.
I: Do you think you ever shop for Patagonia just to make yourself feel better?
R: Well, I’m a grad student and Patagonia is pretty expensive, so I have to be judicious. But I love receiving the catalog and “window shopping.” I look forward to receiving it. And Patagonia has good sales and I save up and buy stuff when they have a sale. And I get very excited about that.
I: If you bought something from Patagonia and got a bad product or bought something that wasn’t up to their usual standards, how would you react?
R: They have never let me down on function. On occasion, they have let me down on form. However, since I’m more interested in function, I didn’t mind and certainly didn’t blame Patagonia. I just assumed the product didn’t work for my body. So even if the
product wasn’t what I wanted, I never blamed the company and I didn’t return it. I either repurposed it, regifted it, or saved it until it fit.
I: Is that different from how you would react if something similar happened with a different brand?
R: Absolutely. I give Patagonia the benefit of the doubt because I like what they stand for and their products are so high-quality that a bad product (if there ever was one) would be a one-off. But if I got a bad product from a company like Mountain Hardware, I would know that’s just how their products are made. They are cheaper and their materials aren’t as good, so I wouldn’t expect them to last long.
I: Have you ever heard anyone else complain about a failure of Patagonia? What did you think about their story?
R: I can’t think of a time when I heard someone complain about Patagonia gear not working. If someone did complain though, I would rationalize it.
I: If you saw someone who was using a competing brand for the purpose you think Patagonia is most applicable, would you “correct” that person?
R: When I see someone who is clearly an outdoorsy person but they’re wearing another brand like Northface, I would assume they don’t really know about outdoor culture.
R: But if a friend bought something for a trip that wasn’t Patagonia and it was still prior to the trip, I would explain why they should exchange what they bought for the Patagonia version. But if we were already on the trip and they couldn’t exchange it, I would look for an opening to promote Patagonia without being rude. But without an opening I would keep my mouth closed to avoid being rude.
I: When you see other people using or wearing Patagonia do you feel like you have something in common with them?
R: I perceive them as in-group members and assume that I will like them. But only as long as they appear to be in-group members. If it’s clear that they aren’t in-group members, I still love Patagonia, but I don’t like the poser.
I: Brand managers try to convey a personality to their customers. How would you describe the personality of Patagonia?
R: Patagonia is more than just their clothes. They have stayed true to their core belief of sustainability. For example, they use a lot of organic materials and they were the first company to make pullovers out of recycled coke bottles and they were the first to make organic t-shirts.
I: How is that similar to your personality? How is it different?
R: Sustainability is very important to me. And Patagonia does it on so many levels. 1% of their sales go to environmental causes. They focus on making products that people need and want. Nothing frivolous. The products have multiple purposes and you can use them forever. I think I’m a lot like that. I don’t care for frivolous, I prefer functional and long-lasting.
Interview #4: Monica

Interview #4
Pseudonym: Monica
Age: 30
Gender: F
Interview Time: 29:42
Brand: Mary Kay

I: Pretend I’ve never heard of Mary Kay. How would you describe it to me?
R: It is a cosmetics company that is a personal business situation (like Tupperware or Scentsy). It’s a personal business and they have consultants so customers have personal consultants so it’s a one-on-one situation. They have cosmetics, skin care, makeup, perfume, lotions, you name it.

I: Do you ever recommend Mary Kay to people or introduce them to it?
R: Yes. All the time.

I: What is it about Mary Kay that you enjoy?
R: I’ve been using Mary Kay since I was 13. It’s the only thing I’ve ever used on my face. Well, I say “ever” but I have tried other products, but I have very oily skin, so the products that I’ve used outside of Mary Kay have not had a very good effect. I tend to break out [when I use those products] and have not had a good experience with those products. So, for people who have oily skin, I highly recommend it because I’ve had really good success with it over the years. And I’ve been able to keep acne at bay over the years, so yes, I recommend it all the time.

I: Try to remember the first time you tried Mary Kay. Can you tell me about the experience? (How you felt, were you with anyone, what caused you to try it in the first place?)
R: I do, actually. It was a rite of passage in my family. When I turned 13, my mom let me have my own powder, clear lip-gloss, and then, of course, the face wash and skin care stuff. Because that was kind of when puberty started happening and I wanted to not have acne and I was very oily just like my mom. So, she introduced me to it. She had been using it for years and our aunt sold it. And I remember the day, it was this big ordeal, and we went to [my aunt’s] house and she made me feel really special and I was able to pick out what I wanted as far as my lip gloss and she matched my powder to skin and then we got the skin care line and she did this big ordeal and made it so exciting and so fun. And it was this one day that was really special. So yes, I remember very clearly the first time I got my own Mary Kay products.

I: So it’s like a passing of the torch, a family tradition thing? I mean, does [your sister] use it too?
R: Yes. And my mom now sells it.

I: And very well, I might add. I called her because I wanted advice choosing between two eye creams and I ended up getting both. She didn’t push it on me, she just told me the benefits of each and then gave me a specific example of clients who had used each and told me their outcomes and satisfaction with it.

R: She doesn’t need to, it sells itself. I think if it’s in the catalog, I probably have it.

I: How long was it before you purchased another Mary Kay product after the first time?
R: Um, a month.
I: Do you remember feeling as strongly about it right away or did your feelings take time to grow?
R: It did. I mean, I was 13, so I didn’t really understand the importance of the products. Like quality products versus just I was 13 and just wanted to wear makeup. There was no differential. I couldn’t tell between Clinique or Mary Kay or whatever. I didn’t have this brand recognition at this point because I was so young. But my mom insisted on it because it was quality and she had been wearing it and had really good results and had the same type of skin I have. And my aunt, at the time we were buying from her, was in her 60s and she probably looked 40. And, she was a great representation of what good products do for your skin. So, my mom was a big advocate for that.
I: What feelings come to mind when you think about Mary Kay?
R: Loyalty. Love, I love it. I can’t imagine using anything else. I’m religious about it. My skincare is the most important thing. I wash my face religiously at night, I put on the different types of things and over the years it’s multiplied. I put all the layers on every night and I will not go to bed without doing that. It’s really super important because I want to look like my mom does, look like my great aunt does, I want to look like these women because they have incredible skin, so I’m really passionate about it. And, it’s something I believe in. So when I talk about it, I love it, I believe it’s an easy product to sell, because it sells itself. When you wear it, it’s a noticeable difference and people want to know what you’re wearing or what you’re doing. It sells itself.
I: Do other people know how you feel about Mary Kay?
R: Yeah, I mean, it just depends on if the opportunity presents itself. If someone asks about it, I’ll tell them but I’m not out there every day stomping the grounds about MARY KAY, otherwise I’d be selling it myself. But if someone asks me what I’m wearing or comments on it, I tell them about it because I think as women we’re supposed to do that. If you find something you really like or works for you and someone wants to know about it, you need to tell them. It’s kind of your responsibility to do that. So, I share but it’s not like I’m talking about it unprompted.
I: Do you have a relationship with any of the people who sell Mary Kay? Tell me about that.
R: Yeah. But I think that’s what Mary Kay is about. For a long time my great aunt sold it and she quit selling it as she got older because she just couldn’t keep up with her clientele. So we swapped to a different consultant who is the person recruited my mother (Beth) and Beth was great and she actually…when I got married, she was the one who sat down with me and helped me pick out and map out what I wanted my makeup for my wedding day. So on my wedding day I did my own makeup because she taught me how to do it, so I didn’t have to pay some stranger to do my makeup on the most important day of my life. I could do it myself and not only save money, but have that same palette of makeup for a year later. Any time I needed to dress up I felt really confident [because I had that makeup and knowledge of how to apply it for big occasions]. And then, slowly, she actually started trying to recruit me and I was just starting out and just wasn’t interested in at the time. But it’s something I keep in the back of my mind, because if we were ever in a situation where we needed to make extra money, I could totally sell Mary Kay because it does sell itself and I really believe in the products so I think when you
believe in something you can sell it. But she’s the one who recruited my mom and she’s [my mom] doing great.

I: Tell me about one of your favorite products within the brand of Mary Kay.
R: I like the makeup, but the most important thing is skin care. And I have 2 things. The first is the Timewise 3-in-1 face wash because it literally is a cleanser, a moisturizer, and an exfoliant all in one so you get 3 steps in 1 which I think is super important. The other is a new product they have which is called restore and replenish I believe. It’s the collagen boosting cream you put on at night. It’s awesome. I’ve seen such a change in my skin and wrinkles and fine lines [have diminished]. It’s really doing something, I can feel a difference when I put it on my face. I think those 2 products are the most important. But then, the makeup is of course, super important, because you want to look pretty. But if your skin isn’t looking so hot, then your makeup isn’t looking so hot, so I think skin care is the most important.

R: It’s amazing (the restore and replenish). I have these lines on my forehead from when I got really sunburn and using this has already made them better. And I’ve only been using it a month. I’m already completely addicted.

I: Do you think you ever shop for Mary Kay just to make yourself feel better?
R: Yeah. But that’s mainly makeup. When I’m feeling bad or don’t feel so good about myself, I like to buy the stuff that makes me feel pretty. That’s when I go to the eyeshadows and lipsticks. I get excited for the stuff that makes me feel pretty.

I: What is it about Mary Kay that makes you feel good?
R: Um, I think it’s the quality of the product. I know that I’m not putting something cheap on my face. Your face is the most important thing. As a woman, you need to put quality stuff on your skin and take care of your face. What you put on your face everyday, you need to be using the best quality products you can. And stuff that’s not going to dwindle. If you buy a blush you don’t want it to be gone in a month. With Mary Kay, the blush can last six months to a year depending on how much makeup you wear. It’s just really high quality and it looks flawless on your face. It really looks good, it’s not cakey or gritty. It’s pretty on your face, and it makes you feel the best that you can possibly feel when you put it on.

I: If you bought a Mary Kay product and got a bad product or bought something that wasn’t up to their usual standards, how would you react?
R: Actually, Mary Kay has a no-questions refund policy. So if you are uncomfortable or unhappy with a product you can return and get your money back immediately with no questions asked. If you are unsatisfied with a product you can return it for a full refund even if it’s half-gone. You can really try anything and feel confident that if you don’t like it there’s no risk.

I: Is that different from how you would react if something similar happened with a different brand?
R: Well, yeah, because they don’t have those guarantees. If you buy something at the Clinique counter you can’t do that. You can’t take a used product to the counter at Dillard’s and get your money back. With Mary Kay if you are unhappy, you can take the product back and your consultant will either try to find the product that will make you happy or they’ll give you your money back. And Mary Kay returns the entire cost to the
consultant, so Mary Kay eats the cost. So you don’t have to feel guilty about hurting their consultant’s business.

I: I guess that keeps you from damaging your relationship with your consultant…

R: And it keeps it honest.

I: If something like that did happen, would it affect how you feel about Mary Kay?

R: No, in fact, I bought a makeup rolling case. It’s one that you can hang and it has 4 compartments and you can take all your stuff in it. And the zipper on 2 of the compartments broke and I was just going to not worry about it, I’d had it for a year. And my mom said no, you need to send that back. She gave me a new one and she was going to send the old one back. I think that in itself makes me more apt to purchase from Mary Kay again even though it broke within a year, they can correct the issue even if it’s a newer model. I’m more inclined to buy from them again because I know if something goes wrong they’ll fix it at no cost to me.

I: So you might say it strengthens your relationship with Mary Kay?

R: Absolutely.

I: Have you ever heard anyone else complain about a failure of Mary Kay? What did you think about their story?

R: Yes. I often hear about (the only complaint I’ve ever heard) is that it breaks my skin out. But if you have a good consultant they can explain that when you change cosmetic lines, especially skin care lines, oftentimes you have a buildup of crap on your face. Especially if it’s low quality. It’s not making your face break out, it’s pulling all the crap and impurities out of your face. So I tell them to give it time. The first time I started using the oil-control mask (to be used once a week) it pulls the blackheads and other stuff from your pores. The first couple of times I used it my face broke out really bad. My aunt [consultant at the time] told me that it was pulling the impurities out of my face and I needed to give it time. But I was frustrated because at the time I was 16 and I didn’t want a big acne breakout on my face. But now I understand the importance of it. Literally the third time I did it [the mask] dried all that up and I haven’t had a major break out since. So, even though there are downfalls to changing cosmetic or skin care lines, over time you’re going to get good results but you have to stick with it.

I: If you saw someone that was using a competing brand for the purpose you think Mary Kay is most applicable, would you “correct” that person?

R: No, I mean, to each their own. I’m not one to do that. But if someone asks what I use or why I use it, I will gladly share that with them. But I’m not going to go in someone’s bathroom and ask them why they’re using such crap. But if someone asks I will tell them because it’s good quality and it helps my mom. But I don’t go pushing it around or taking about it all the time.

I: When you see other people using or wearing Mary Kay do you feel like you have something in common with them?

R: Absolutely. If I see someone who has a Mary Kay compact or lip gloss I always say “don’t you love that.” I think it’s a common denominator and I love it. Especially people our age it’s kind of rare to see them with the products unless they live in the same community. So, when you run into people who use it it’s fun to talk about and it’s totally girly and it’s what we do.
I: Does it matter if the rest of their appearance looks like it jives with the brand in question?
R: No, I’m sure if you sell it it’s one thing. But to each their own. Some people just use skin care and they don’t wear makeup. And others the most important thing is their makeup. Or what if you only use the pedicure line, who cares. It doesn’t matter.
I: What do you think it says about you that you have such strong feelings about Mary Kay?
R: I’ve never thought of myself as a brand loyal person, but I think I am more than I realize. I’ve been using this since I was 13 and I will never use anything else. I will not negotiate on it. I don’t use Mary Kay mascara, I don’t really think it’s that big of a difference. Other people might argue it is, but to me it’s not. But that’s about the only thing I use that’s not Mary Kay (on my face). They have body wash and stuff, but I don’t use that. I think those things are nice gifts. I have the pedicure set and it’s nice, but I got it as a gift, but I wouldn’t go purchase it because it’s sort of frivolous. But when it comes to my face, I won’t negotiate. As a woman, the most important thing you can do for yourself is take care of your skin. The rest of the stuff, soaps and stuff, I’ll try different stuff, I don’t care so much about that. I’m very brand loyal when it comes to my skin care.
I: How much do you know about the [type of products] that Mary Kay carries? Do you feel pretty confident you know what’s good and what isn’t?
R: I can probably sell you anything in the catalog and not even look at the catalog, it’s ridiculous. But it’s because I’ve been using these same products since I was 13 and so that’s 17 years. I’m going to know about the products because I’ve used them for so long and also I get excited when new products come out because I want to try it. And, my mom sells it. So I know a lot more than probably most people who use Mary Kay do.
I: Does it make you proud to talk to people about the way you feel about Mary Kay?
R: Yeah, absolutely. I’m not embarrassed at all. Because, again, women are very brand loyal when it comes to their skin care and their makeup. I think that’s kind of a common thing for women. They love what they love and they’re excited about makeup. I think more skin care than makeup though. I think skin care is the thing that women don’t negotiate on. Makeup you can probably pick and choose and a lot of it’s probably very similar. But skin care is a big deal.
I: Brand managers try to convey a personality to their customers. How would you describe the personality of Mary Kay?
R: It’s all about women empowerment. It’s about godly values and godly women. It’s about supporting one another and being the best person you can be. I had the opportunity to go with my mom to a conference in Atlanta. It was a dinner thing. And I was so impressed by the women that worked for that company and they’re really on fire for that brand and they truly love what they’re doing. They also hold very true to the values they were taught. They’re very godly women and that’s really important to them. I think that speaks volumes about the company itself.
I: How is that similar to your personality? How is it different?
R: Um, I don’t know. I think they’re loyal. The fact that their Christianity is important to them, I don’t think that’s important necessarily to the consumer. I think it’s nice to have someone who is nice and sweet to you and is excited about what they’re doing. But I
don’t think the religion stuff is the end-all be-all, but I think for them it keeps them going and keeps them grounded. I mean, I identify with that, but it’s not why I use their products. It’s nice that they’re nice women.

I: In what ways does the personality that you described make you feel comfortable shopping for Mary Kay?

R: They’re nice, easy to talk to, easy to deal with, excited about what they’re doing and excited about what you’re buying. They are super sweet and enthusiastic. So it makes it a more pleasant experience. When you walk into a retail store, you don’t always have the best customer service. You’re going to get impeccable customer service with Mary Kay for the most part. I can’t speak for the entire country, but the people I know, that’s the case. The customers are the most important thing to them. They make sure to maintain those relationships. I think it makes it easier and a likeable experience. It’s not hard or irritating.

I: Most of us have an image of ourselves the way we think we really are and another image of the way we would like to be (or like other people to think we are). Do you think that’s true for you?

R: Other than my weight, no. I am who I am. The person I am and the person I’d like to be, the only difference is she’s 15 pounds lighter or so. I try to be a good person, I try to be a good friend, a good role model. I’m conscious of these things. I like who I am. I don’t think I have a different person I’m trying to be. I am who I am. Everyone can improve on themselves, but there’s not a two-sided coin in there. If anything, it’s minor adjustments.

I: Do you think you like Mary Kay because it feels like “you”? Tell me about that?

R: Yeah, again, that’s easy to say because I’ve been using it for so long that I don’t know anything difference. I’ve never put anything else on my face and I wouldn’t want to because I’m so happy with how Mary Kay works for me. And oftentimes I’ve wondered if there is something way better out there and I just don’t know it because this is all I’ve ever used. But then I think “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”, and I just leave it alone. So, it’s like why change it when my skin is really manageable and I am happy with it. Why try something crazy when I’m happy with what I’m doing. And they keep up with the times. When the Bare Minerals phase happened, they did a mineral foundation. So they really are aware of the innovations and changes in technologies for makeup, and they keep up with what everyone else is doing. So I don’t think there’s anything that much more new and improved out there that’s better.

What could Mary Kay do to be even more like you? Do you think that would make you like them more? Tell me why?

R: Not really. Occasionally, I feel the colors they choose are a little behind trends. Like they could pay more attention to trends. But it’s not like they’re totally behind, but they’re about six months behind. But I’m not that super trendy anyway, so it’s fine.
Interview #5: Joseph

I: Pretend I’ve never heard of Google. How would you describe it to me?
R: First of all Google started with being able to pull from the web and search many different web sites. It’s a way to pull in information and they use the information to offer free products to their customers. So by being willing to sacrifice some of your privacy you are able to use their products for free. They range from storing photos to communicating with others to collaborating over the Internet like with documents. Many different products out there.

I: Do you ever recommend Google to people or introduce them to it?
R: [I recommend] all the time when the chance comes up. Like with Chrome. Because it’s a better browser and it’s taking over market share. I only recommend things that I feel have a slicker interface or are fast or are cleaner that just work the first time and don’t crash all the time. Those are the things that I look for and that’s why I recommend the products.

I: What is it about Google that you enjoy?
R: [Aside from the things above], for example, when a tab in Chrome crashes, it doesn’t crash the whole browser and you can still use the other tabs. Those things could apply to almost any product they have.

I: Try to remember the first time you tried Google. Can you tell me about the experience?
R: It was the search engine when I was in high school. So, just finding information on the web. I think Google was my first real exposure to the Internet. I knew of Yahoo, I knew of others, but it was the first way that I interacted with the Internet, the way that I found information for myself. It wasn’t like I spent hours looking for information unlike now when I just search for anything. It was used when I needed to find something specific. Usually when I was using the Internet it was, I want to say, at the school with my friends like for class or something like that. Because the Internet wasn’t cheap or fast back then. It was still tied up through the phone line, so I used it mainly at school.

I: How long was it before you utilized another Google app after the first time?
R: I think it was about probably 2004 when I really became more of a power user, power computer user where I actually sought out the best products for myself. Up until then it was just using it for convenience. At that point [2004] I stayed up to date with top-notch technology. Like, even though I don’t use all the apple products, I can still talk about it. Like one of the students just got a 4S and I can talk about the specs. So just being on top of the information; that was about the change. I didn’t like Google Chrome at first, but then I, after a while, tried it again and I found that it was better. So that’s what I do, I follow products, and I’m a beta tester. Any time there’s new products, I beta test it and either reject it like with the initial Google Chrome or I accept it like with Google Voice. And I’m also willing to give things a second try and I either hear about it through WOM
of others or just doing research online, reading about things and seeing what people have
to say.
I: Do you read stuff from established sources/blogs?
R: I read lifehacker.com because they’re always talking about the newest technology. A
lot of DIY, it’s a manual for how you can build your own laser, etc. as well as “here’s
what Google just recently pushed out” or “here’s the new iPhone 4s” so they’re just
posting about all the new technology as well as DIY stuff.
I: Reviews?
R: Most of it is just “here’s how it is”. They do kind of a “High 5” review type thing
where they’ll say “here’s 5 technologies that relate to, for example, browsers. Here’s 5
different browsers and poll the readers. Then they show the results along with the pros
and cons. And sometimes they discuss the runners up as well.
I: How long did it take to become a superfan?
R: Some things were immediate – Google search, but other products (Google docs) I’m
not a superfan just yet. Because there are a lot of compatibility [issues] and lots of
features missing so Microsoft still has the better products. Google Voice, search were
both instantaneous. Whereas Chrome wasn’t. I like having all my info with one company,
but with Chrome, I didn’t want this product immediately, but later down the road it got
better and then I adopted it.
I: What feelings come to mind when you think about Google?
R: Pretty. 😊 It fits my lifestyle. It’s online. It’s just good to know that I can have all my
information in one place. It’s something that I like to debate with people about, because I
just think it’s better than a lot of things out there. When I think Google, or when I hear
that they’re coming out with a new product, I just get excited. When I heard about
GooglePlus, I just thought “this is going to be awesome”. Especially when I saw the
hangout function, I just thought that “this is going to kill Skype”. It’s conference video
calls and it’s WAY better than Skype.
I: If you like having all your info in one place, you obviously trust Google. Is that true?
R: To some extent. Everything I have on the web that’s with them, I could lose it and be
okay. They don’t really have a repository for storing photos and stuff. I do back up my
photos to Google+ and I uploaded all our videos to Google+ because they’re all shorter
than 10 minutes. And Google+ does let me set my privacy settings on those photos and
videos.
I: Do other people know how you feel about Google?
R: I afraid they do. Jim and I see eye-to-eye with Google. We talk about it a lot. Phil,
Leigh, my wife for sure, I mean whenever people are talking to me about certain things –
“I am spending so much money on cell phones and I don’t even care for it” – I say “you
should use Google voice”. Anytime people are talking about things there is a Google
solution, I tend to recommend it. Anytime people talk about it I chime in with Google.
I: Tell me about one of your favorite products within the Google brand.
R: Google+, not for the social networking but more for the hangout portion because I
have family all over the United States and Google Voice and Chrome. Those 3 things are
probably hard to beat, y’know?
I: Do you think you ever shop for Google apps just to make yourself feel better?
R: I check out lifehacker.com. They talk about new products coming out and compare side-by-side with other products. Even though it’s free, I’m still shopping for features. I’m still shopping for functionality for what I need to fill that emptiness. Even though things are free, like with Google Voice, it still costs cents per minute to talk internationally.

I: If you used a Google app and it wasn’t up to their usual standards, how would you react?

R: Well, Google docs falls into that. My reaction is technology is continually advancing and that functionality, unless they want to lose market share, will be built in eventually. Sure I won’t adopt it or use it right now, but in the future, sure. I just like having all my information in one place. If one product doesn’t work I’ll just not use that and find some other solution.

I: Would that be the same for a brand you didn’t like as much?

R: Yeah, because my “relationship” with Google, I’ve found that with newer products, it’s just the one product, if it’s good I’m even struggling to use it sometimes because it’s another thing I have to pull from; another thing I have to use. Even though I’ll use it if it meets that need, like Dropbox. But, if I see that it’s lacking I’ll just ditch it. I don’t give those products the same second chance that I give Google.

I: When you see other people using Google do you feel like you have something in common with them?

R: I do because I feel like they are more of a power user. Maybe I’m just biased, but I think some technologies are superior to others and when I see them using the older ones, I think “what are you thinking?” Whereas, if I see them using Google, I think “you know what’s up, you’re keeping on top of things.”

I: Talk to me about the kind of person that you think uses Google. Is that the kind of person you think you are?

R: Someone who likes to have things all in one place. Someone who likes clouded computing. Someone who likes things for free. Someone who has something in common with other people that use it. If, for example, if my family members use it then I should be using it because then it’s more integrated with them and creates a community of users.

R: That’s the kind of person I think I am.

I: What do you think it says about you that you have such strong feelings about Google?

R: That’s a hard question. I don’t know how to answer that.

I: How much do you know about the [type of products] that Google carries?

R: I’d say I know about at least 90%, the other 10% I don’t care about or want to use. In like Scholar, I use a bunch of things that are part of my life that I use, y’know? If I have a need I see if Google has a product in that area.

I: Do you feel pretty confident that you know what’s really good and what’s not?

R: Yeah, I’m pretty confident (what we’ve discussed already).

I: Does it make you proud to talk to people about the way you feel about Google?

R: Yeah, especially with the Google Voice because I don’t have a cell phone. I love to see how people react. Even with the “how do you survive?” It makes me different, you know?

I: Brand managers try to convey a personality to their customers. How would you describe the personality of Google?
R: They’re clean, that they’re interactive, that they’re smart and on top of technology, that they’re trying to be helpful I guess. And satisfy and help out the general good of the world. They let users decide what is going to be shared. So they’re up front and honest with their policies for the most part. Of course there are always mistakes.

I: Do you think you like Google because it feels like “you”? Tell me about that?

R: Yeah, I would say so because I like to have things organized, clean, and not flashy. Even their ads, you don’t really notice it. I can have a little bit of trash in the trashcan, but I don’t want papers scattered all over my desk. And having things integrated all into one place [on Google].

I: What could Google do to be even more like you? Do you think that would make you like them more? Tell me why.

R: They definitely could ramp up their docs and then I could completely go web-based.
Interview #6: Frank

Pseudonym: Frank
Age: 46
Gender: M
Interview Time: 10:16
Brand: Heinz Ketchup

I: What is it about Heinz that you enjoy?
R: It just tastes better. Everything else tastes like a cheap substitute. An article I read said that Organic Whole Foods 360 was the best. So I bought a bottle to try but I didn’t agree that it was the best. It wasn’t better than Heinz. Heinz is thicker too. And I like the bottle better. The classic black and white label appeals to me. I also put it on non-traditional ketchup food. I will put it on omelets if no one is looking. I only do it when no one is looking because I don’t want people to think I’m obsessed. I don’t want them to think I’m weird.

I: Try to remember the first time you tried Heinz. Can you tell me about the experience?
R: I grew up on it. When my mom would buy Hunts ketchup (wrong, wrong, wrong) I would complain until she bought the right stuff.

I: Do other people know how you feel about Heinz?
R: Yes, anyone who has shared a meal with my in which ketchup was involved knows. And I have defended it in a classroom setting. A student claimed that another brand was better than Heinz and I responded with “you, sir, are sadly misinformed.” Although I don’t get that many opportunities to defend ketchup, I do find myself bringing it up. Mainly in a face-to-face setting. Growing up people would say “oh god, he puts ketchup on everything.” I was sort of known for it.

I: Would you say that you have a relationship with Heinz? Talk to me about it.
R: I am not looking for a community of Heinz fans. It’s “my” brand and I want others to love it but it’s okay if they don’t. It’s more about my personal relationship with the brand. Part of my affinity for the brand it because it’s been around so long. It didn’t start out as being about the name but it’s because of it now.

I: Talk to me about one of your favorite products within the Heinz brand.
R: Ketchup. Period.

I: If you bought a Heinz product and got a bad product or bought something that wasn’t up to their usual standards, how would you react?
R: If they were involved in a scandal I would be on their side. However, the product type would absolutely matter. I might not defend the mustard or relish products like I would defend the ketchup.

I: When you see other people using Heinz products, do you feel like you have something in common with them?
R: I know that my mother doesn’t always still eat Heinz. The last time I visited she had Hunts in her fridge and I thought, “she doesn’t care about her home.”

I: How much do you know about the type of products that Heinz carries?
R: I always note which restaurants serve Heinz. I will eat off-brand only because I can’t take my Heinz with me. Part of the reason I advocate for this brand is because sometimes I don’t have a choice about what ketchup is available and I hate that. R. Hazel at Hazel’s in Gulf Shores (AL) served Hunts. I remember thinking that the burgers weren’t as good as they could be because they didn’t serve Heinz. R: I love and prefer the biggest squeeze bottle so I don’t feel like I’m going to run out. I am currently stocked up with 3 bottles.
Interview #7: Steve

Interview #7
Pseudonym: Steve
Age: 38
Gender: M
Interview Time: 40:40
Brand: Apple

I: Pretend I’ve never heard of Apple. How would you describe it to me?
R: Apple is a company that provides uniquely user-friendly technology in both computers and hand-held devices. Basically, if you’ve never run into a computer before, it’s the best way to make an introduction. And because it is so well designed for that scenario, users of other machines that are used to other machines have a harder time getting used to an Apple than a person who has never had a computer in front of them before. There is all the high-fallutin’ things but I think one of the earliest slogans is “the most powerful computer is the one you can use”. That’s one of the first slogans of Apple.

I: I’ve always been a PC user, so the stuff about Macs is a little confusing.
R: It’s kind of designed for the person who’s never done it before. So if you come to an Apple with PC expectations it is going to be frustrating because it’s not where you think it’s going to be. But if you think about what makes sense if you’ve never sat down at a computer before, it’s going to be where you think it would make the most sense for it to be.

I: If I’ve never heard of Apple?
R: If you’ve never heard of a COMPUTER, I would recommend you buy an Apple. Or if you’ve never had a computer before I would recommend you get an Apple.

I: Have you recommended Apple?
R: Yes.
I: What is it about Apple that you enjoy?
R: What I enjoy is the utility and simplicity. A lot of times with PC software and so on it seems like once you’ve installed it you have to go install it in other places. In the 90s when you installed PC software you also had to jump on your initiation file and put it in there too in addition to installing it elsewhere. And the initiation file basically gives you the ability to foul up your entire machine. And so you’re dealing with Apple and when it’s installed, it’s installed. If a program does crash on it, it doesn’t take your entire laptop down with it. It doesn’t crash nearly as often as other machines, although it does occasionally crash; it can. But, it’s just basically you’ve got something that is designed to work. And the visualness of the interface are much better too, even though Windows is close. It’s like the difference between an OREO and a Hydrox. Yeah, technically somehow the formulas are similar but taste them and you know the difference.

I: So, you don’t really care that Apple is a very popular brand?
R: It’s funny, I feel associated with Apple but I felt more associated with Apple where we were the outlanders. I mean the “think different” campaign kind of is where a lot of us still are. And I was surprised as heck about a few weeks before Jobs resigned there was apparently a 4 or 5 hour period when Apple was worth more than Exxon in trading. I
thought “what the devil? How did that happen?” because that’s not the Apple I know. The Apple I know is always the underdog.

I: Like that slogan “computers for the rest of us?”

R: Yeah, that slogan was for the introduction of the one reason why 1984 won’t be like 1984.

I: That was such an iconic commercial.

R: Yeah, it is.

I: Do you feel that because the brand is so much more mainstream that your attitudes are different?

R: I have to admit I like the utility. I’ve never really seen myself as a rebel without a cause or a rebel without a clue. I love the utility and the ease of use. When I went to a hotel in Nashville recently, when I saw the iPhone/iPod hookups on the top of their standardized clock radios you really realize that this has become more useful and has become the standard. Because no other mp3 player has this hookup.

I: So, the popularity of it adds to its utility?

R: Yes.

I: Try to remember the first time you tried Apple. Can you tell me about the experience?

R: My first Apple product I was about 14 and I had an Apple 2E. And it was a great little machine. Our school had Apples so it was an easy choice to get an Apple. It was a lot closer to the PC interface, but the Apple 2E was a great machine. And I could carry disks from my home to school and print things out. I was born in ’72, so that was I guess 1986.

I: How long was it before you purchased another Apple after the first time?

R: In college I had a thing about wanting to have the machine that was dominant. And in college (1990-1996) I had an IBM and absolutely hated it. But in 1997 I got my next Apple and was so happy to be back in the fold. I tried to milk that IBM as long as I could just because it had cost an arm and a leg and it was PS2. I think it was IBM’s attempt to be like Apple at least marketing-wise. I got my next Apple in maybe 1998. It was an iBook, a tangerine iBook with as much RAM as it could hold. That’s when I next bought one. But when I next started using one was in 1994 at my first job. And I finally was able to get my own Apple again in 1998 (the tangerine iBook). First generation iBook, it did not have the firewire, that was 2nd generation. It was neat, it was really neat. Because I remember it was a little bit of conspicuous consumption, I went to the airport carrying my iBook that I had ordered before they even announced that they were coming out. So they hadn’t even announced that it was coming out at this time. But in the airplane terminal the woman pulled out my iBook and called one of her coworkers over to look at it. I was flying back from California.

I: Did you feel strongly about that iBook right away?

R: Honeymoon periods get shorter. I had that iBook alive and working for about 5 years. And after that I got my PowerBook (15 inch) and then thought I’d save some money and got a 13 inch black MacBook. And that was when I realized I was squinting so much that I bought the bullet and bought a separate monitor. This wasn’t like I had a desktop unit and bought a monitor thing. I had the laptop and then got the monitor because I was squinting so much to see the darn thing. Definitely the honeymoon periods shorten, but still there is always this feeling when you first get it of “damn this is a good machine”.

I: What feelings come to mind when you think about Apple?
R: When I’m dealing with an IBM-based machine or a PC-based machine, I feel like I’m navigating a lite minefield. Because there is the chance that I can do something that would make it not work again. With Apple I don’t feel like that. I feel like I’m navigating a system that’s made to work and so I’m not going to strike a button or do something that is going to get a big X on the screen. I mean, I have seen the little Apple error box, everyone has. But you also know when you see it that it’s recoverable. Especially if you have your time machine working (the name of the backup system).

I: So, you don’t have to have a separate backup system?

R: I do have a separate backup system, but time machine works well in the background. The other thing is just the absence of with so many other PCS and the iPhone than these things (iPads), I’m worried about the virus thing. Back when Apple was only 10% of the computer market nobody bothered writing a virus for us. But I think as popularity increases, more viruses will be written. It’s funny, it reminds me of this Will and Grace episode where Kevin Bacon says that Val Kilmer knew his career was over because he had fewer stalkers. Kevin wants to allow it without overly encouraging it because he knows that if he loses his stalkers his popularity is gone.

I: Do other people know how you feel about Apple?

R: Yeah.

I: Would you say that you have a relationship with Apple? Talk to me about it.

R: The big Achilles heel with Apple is the price point. It is the worst thing about Apple but at the same time I can justify it 1) knowing the utility and 2) Apple has really – especially with their own software – Appleworks, is so much cheaper and in so many ways superior to Microsoft Office. And Appleworks is $80 where Office is $300. And it is bought separate, but when it’s $40-$80 it’s not big deal. So, yeah, I guess I would.

I: What do you get out of the relationship?

R: I get a technology platform that I know will work. That I can make work. There are situations when my wife is trying to figure out something on an IBM-based machine (Dell), but because Dells and other IBM machines are so customizable, I get stumped. But with Apple, because it’s more standardized, I can make it work. Regardless of whose Apple it is. It might take me an hour, but I can get it to work. With an IBM, that’s not the case. My wife was trying to reformat a doc to print at a Kinkos and there was a guy working on an Apple. As soon as he left, I got it to work in 5 minutes. She complained that it costs so much more to rent the Apple, but my argument was that I knew I could do what needed to be done on it.

I: You have a MacBook, iPad, iPhone and several iPods. Which is your favorite?

R: I would say the iPhone and the MacBook are my two favorites. And the more I use the iPhone the more the iPhone edges out.

I: Do you think you ever shop for Apple products just to make yourself feel better?

R: No, but what I have done is borrow someone’s iPad 2 and just played with it. That I have done on 2 occasions.

I: If you bought an Apple and got a bad product or bought something that wasn’t up to their usual standards, how would you react?

R: I did actually have to send my PowerBook back once. And I have to admit, I called and the operator pretty much told me what my problem was and said “don’t worry we’re sending you a box”. Even the return experience to get the PowerBook replaced was
interesting because the box came with the Styrofoam was explicitly made for this machine. If it had been one centimeter narrower, the machine wouldn’t have fit. Everything about the whole return process was so quick and so the way it should be done type thing.

I: Were you angry? Irritated to a certain extent?
R: I was, but it’s strange, the return box was very redeeming. I would be a little disconnected. Like “ok, this doesn’t fit what I know as far as the company.”

I: If something like that did happen, how would it affect the way you feel about Apple?
R: It depends. If it were 3 or more occasions, maybe. But not on my first. I’ve seen people yanking out clumps of hair with viruses and all other sorts of PC-based nightmares and recognize that my freedom from that has been largely a product of my relationship with Apple.

I: When you see other people using Apple products, do you feel like you have something in common with them?
R: iPhone, no. iPad and computers yes. Computers definitely. iPad, somewhat, but iPhone not at all.

I: Why do you think that it?
R: The iPhones are so well proliferated in the market and most of them go home to be hooked up to PCs, so I think that person is just a jump-on-board person. The computer person gets it. They could jump on my machine and I could jump on theirs and make it work. That confidence is there.

I: Talk to me about the kind of person that you think buys Apple products. Is that the kind of person you think you are?
R: Well, I can tell you one thing. They are fully proliferated through the advertising and publishing fields. So, basically, graphic designers, creatives and so on definitely have to have a mac. There is just no other choice. It is the professional standard. Aside from that, the person who has a Mac may well be an educator. They are well proliferated in that field. So I would assume they care about their education and they care about their job. It’s funny, they are not so much of a back-yard mechanic. People who are otherwise very technical don’t like Apple because they like to get in the application files and the nuts and bolts and play around. Apple is not made for that. It’s made for working. It’s funny because part of me almost thinks of it as the dichotomy of Harley riders and rice-burner riders. Rice-burners want a machine that works and will take it to the mechanic. Harley riders want to fix it themselves. Apple users are more like the rice-burner rider.

I: So is that the kind of person you are?
R: Well, I have copywriting background, so that was my field. And I feel a bit creatively focused.

I: How much do you know about the [type of products] that Apple carries?
R: I know enough to be dangerous. I’ve got friends who know a lot more, but I know enough to make it work. And if your machine doesn’t work and you have the disks, I can get it up running again.

I: We sort of covered this second part when I asked you which one I should buy and you had lots of good evidence to support your advice.
I: Does it make you proud to talk to people about the way you feel about Apple?
R: I have a tendency to hang back from a lot of Apple conversations because a lot of them seem to be “you’re just looking for a way to spend money” or they are accusing Apple of being a thief. Because they didn’t make the first mp3, but they made the first one worth having. Like when I worked at Wachovia we had a slogan that we only used internally that said “we’re not the first to do it, we’re the first to do it right.” And that is what I think Apple’s opinion is on that. The iPad wasn’t the first tablet, but show me another one that has proliferated the market and defined the market like the iPad.

I: Brand managers try to convey a personality to their customers. How would you describe the personality of Apple?

R: Remember the “I’m a mac and I’m a PC” commercials? That’s a pretty darn good illustration. They actually put a human face to the personality. That would be a good approximation. Especially the one when the Apple guy shows up in a business suit and the PC guy asks what he’s doing dressed like that and the Mac guy replies that he can do all those office programs too.

I: And the Apple guy sort of looks like a younger Steve Jobs. I wonder if they picked Justin Long on purpose for that reason?

I: Most of us have an image of ourselves the way we think we really are and another image of the way we would like to be (or like other people to think we are). Do you think that’s true for you?

R: My wife said we needed to convert me to an IBM-based machine and I told her she’d have an easier time converting me to Episcopalian. The major difference between me now and me in the future will be that instead of waiting 5 or 6 years between Apples it will be more like 3 or 4.

I: Which version of your self-image do you think is most like Apple, the actual or the ideal?

R: More like the actual.

R: A lot of iPhone cases have the hole for no other reason than to show the logo. That’s cool because the whole idea behind the case is protection. But to compromise it to show the logo is funny. Do you think that Compaq or HP or Dell or Samsung phone would have that? And those are peripherals and complementary products.

I: Mike’s Dell skin totally covered up his logo. The skins don’t have it cut out.

R: And that’s a complementary product. When they recognize that the brand is that strong, that’s saying something.

I: Do you think that the things I would assume about you when I see you with Apple products are core to who you are?

R: I don’t know. It’s more like Apple is just the tool that I know will work. I guess not that I’m a rebel, but it works.

I: And that’s what you most relate to about Apple?

R: It’s functional. Before it started getting cool it was all about the fact that it worked.

I: What could Apple do to be even more like you?

R: For a brief time during the interim where I considered buying a drone (now ACER) when Jobs left. So much of the Apple personality is tied up with Steve Jobs, neither did well when they were apart. So there is a lot of trepidation now that Steve is gone. There was this time when Apple did something not very Apple-ish thing called the Newton (a pre-Palm before Palm pilot). And it didn’t really work very well. And I had Apple stock
and when the iPhone came out I thought it was the Newton all over again and I sold it. I could have made a killing, but it’s just a feeling of trepidation that they won’t be able to continue without Apple. You were asking about who Apple is, Apple is Steve Jobs. There is a dichotomy of Apple personality. The “it’s gotta work” part is Steve Wozniak.
Interview #8: Walter

Interview #8
Pseudonym: Walter
Age: 33
Gender: M
Interview Time: 11:38
Brand: Jeep

I: Pretend I’ve never heard of Jeep. How would you describe it to me? (Would you want me to try it so that I could experience the same thing you do?)
R: It was a very rugged brand that has gone to cater to more of the mass market and has started to create more family-oriented vehicles.
R: If you are going to do a Jeep I would highly recommend the Wrangler. There are different variants of those. But those are the ones that are really good for off-road.
I: Do you ever recommend Jeep to people?
R: I do recommend Jeeps to people. Depending on their price range, I’ll recommend a used Jeep from typically 97-04 which is when they were, in my opinion, using the best equipment coming out of the factory. The newer ones aren’t exactly built for their off-road capabilities as they used to. This applies mainly to Wranglers. They used to carry an SUV that was a good off-road vehicle, but the family-oriented direction they went for caused them to not be as great off-road anymore.
I: What is it about Jeep that you enjoy?
R: The capability to modify them to a point they’re unstoppable off-road. They are tough, versatile, easy to work on (the 97-04 models), they’re fun to have your top off and just kind of enjoy the sun.
I: Try to remember the first time you tried Jeep. Can you tell me about the experience?
R: It was 10 years ago, I was driving a Toyota pickup and I ended up hydro locking it so I had to borrow a buddy’s Jeep to continue to wheel with everyone. That was when I made the switch. I was with a group of people off-roading in my Toyota.
I: And the Toyota couldn’t hack it?
R: I wouldn’t say that. I did something I shouldn’t have.
I: How long was it before you purchased a Jeep after the first time you drove your friend’s?
R: Probably 6 months. It was pretty right away.
I: What feelings come to mind when you think about Jeep?
R: Freedom, outdoors, being able to go places very few other people can.
I: Do other people know how you feel about Jeep?
R: They do. I do talk about it in conversations and when someone has a Jeep we usually Jeep out for a while. And I do invite people to go wheeling. Probably once a month.
I: Do you have a relationship with any of the people who sell Jeeps?
R: No specific dealership, no.
I: Would you say that you have a relationship with Jeep?
R: Considering I’ve owned 4 or 5 of them now, I would say yes. Since I don’t buy them used, I don’t know how strong it is toward corporate. But what I get out of the vehicle is the ability to go outdoors and go to places few other people get to go.
I: Tell me about one of your favorite Jeep products.
R: Actually, it’s not Wrangler. [That’s] what I recommend to people. My favorite is the 95-02 Jeep Cherokee (original, not the Grand Cherokee). It’s preferred over the Wrangler because they’re cheap and easy to modify.
I: Do you think you ever shop for Jeep just to make yourself feel better?
R: I haven’t in a while, but yes, I have.
I: If you bought a Jeep and got a bad product or bought something that wasn’t up to their usual standards, how would you react?
R: Mad at myself for not realizing the deficiencies in the Jeep because I pretty much know what to look for. So, if I didn’t catch it, it’s probably bad on me.
I: If that happened to your Toyota truck (the interviewee currently drives a late model Toyota Tundra) would you react the same way?
R: No, because that a certified pre-owned, so the inspector should have caught whatever.
I: If something like that did happen, how would it affect the way you feel about Jeep?
R: Wouldn’t be mad, that’s on me.
I: When you see other people sporting Jeep, do you feel like you have something in common with them? Does it make you feel any closer to them?
R: I do feel that way. We have a Jeep wave.
I: Does that entail all Jeeps?
R: No, there’s a hierarchy. The only 2 Jeeps involved in this – Wranglers and Cherokees. Wranglers are waved at by stock Cherokees. After that, it depends on modification. The most modification initiates the wave. If you’re the tall one you wave down, because they’re below you. If they’re at about the same height, you wave straight out. You don’t know about the Jeep wave? You could do an entire article about the Jeep wave and I would read it.
I: Is this similar to the motorcycle low wave?
R: It’s very similar. Non-Wrangler, Non-Cherokee vehicles are not included in the wave. On rare occasions you’ll see a Liberty participate, but very rarely.
I: In your Wrangler, would you wave at a Grand Cherokee?
R: I would not. And Grand Cherokee’s don’t wave to each other. Only Wranglers and Cherokees wave to each other and you know where you stand and who should initiate.
I: Talk to me about the kind of person that you think buys Jeep. Is that the kind of person you are?
R: Awesome people like me. Outdoorsy people. Actually, there are two kinds. People that buy Jeeps for the purpose they were made for. And then there are those who want to be like that and they outfit their Jeep but they are “street queens.” But I am a true-wheeler, I break things.
I: What do you think it says about you that you have such strong feelings about Jeep?
R: That I like to be outdoors.
I: How much do you know about the type of products that Jeep carries?
R: I know a lot. Well, a lot about the Wranglers and the old Cherokees. Right, I wouldn’t say that, because my subset is a small subset of the Jeep vehicle lineup.
I: Does it make you proud to talk to people about the way you feel about Jeep? Or do you think you would ever be embarrassed for people to know how you felt?
R: It does make me proud. Not at all embarrassed.
I: Brand managers try to convey a personality to their customers. How would you describe the personality of Jeep?
R: They tried to create this image of ruggedness, outdoors. Things of that nature. That is very similar to my own personality.
I: What could Jeep do to be even more like you?
R: They could go back to their true form for the Wranglers and make them more durable for off-road instead of trying to cater to the family.
I: What about the new 4-door Wranglers?
R: The 4-door Wranglers are fine, it’s actually what’s underneath them. They concept is good, but the metal use for the undercarriage is very thin and there have been plenty of incidents where the branches have been known to puncture the tub.
I: Do you ever defend Jeep to others?
R: So, when you’re out on the trail and you have the guys that are running the old FJs or the Toyota owners like I used to be. You always have to defend your rig against others guys. Even against other Jeep owners. But I have defended Jeep and no one is going to change my mind unless something super awesome comes out that is just as cheap and durable, nothing is going to change my mind.
Interview #9: Daniel

Interview #9
Pseudonym: Daniel
Age: 24
Gender: M
Interview Time: 16:45
Brand: Keds

I: Pretend I’ve never heard of Keds. How would you describe it to me? (Would you want me to try it so that I could experience the same thing you do?)
R: Keds are a low-top conservative shoe that pretty much matches any style you want to wear. If you want shoes that you can match with anything, basically, they’re comfortable and they’re cheap.
I: And they come in just a million different colors?
R: Any color, prints, patterns you would like.
I: Do you ever recommend Keds to people or introduce them to Keds?
R: All the time. I was in fashion club, and that was kinda my thing (Keds). Everybody knew me as the Ked-head. I used to have a saying, “my Keds are softer than your bed”.
I: What is it about Keds that you enjoy?
R: I like the classic style. It’s just so simple and they’re quick. They don’t really require much maintenance, and they’re cheap, they’re only like $30. So if you wear them out? You can get 4 pair of Keds (if you catch a sale) for what you would pay for one pair of $100 shoes.
I: Try to remember the first time you tried Keds. Can you tell me about the experience?
R: Yes, it was sophomore year. I had a roommate who had a pair and he gave them to me because he bought some more and he said that they were cheap [so he didn’t mind giving them away] and I just really got them to wear around the house and I was like, “these are pretty comfy”. And then, you know, it kind of worked out to me wearing them to Wal-Mart and places like that. And then it just became kind of my individual shoe, my go-to shoe. Those became really worn out. They were red, so when you’d wash them, they’d turn pink. So, I ended up getting some new ones and saw the prices then and I ended up buying 4 pair the first time I bought them.
I: How long was the time span between borrowing roommate’s shoes and purchasing his own?
R: It may have been 2 months. It was over a summer.
I: So you borrowed his and 2 months later went and bought 4 pair?
R: Right.
I: What feelings come to mind when you think about Keds?
R: Cool. I’m kind of a hippy. It just brings some feelings of nostalgia. I always wear Keds and BlueBlockers. You know, you watch older movies. And you see the older film they used to use and it’s just that kind of retro, relaxed feel. It’s not an uptight shoe. It’s just a relaxed, cool, hippy feel I guess.
I: Do other people know how you feel about Keds?
R: Yes, yes. I actually have a handle on Twitter kedsaresofterthanyourbed. And #keds. Well, it’s in my twitter description.

I: Would you say that you have a relationship with Keds? Talk to me about it.
R: Yes. I get emails. Actually probably the only email offers that I check out are Keds. Because the sales are just outrageous. They have sales where you can get a pair for $20 with free shipping.

I: So where do you usually buy them from?
R: Online. I buy everything online.

I: From Keds or through a shopping site like Zappos?
R: Straight from Keds. Keds actually has different seasons so different stuff comes out. I missed the pair that I meant to buy last season. They had Keds-shaped saddle shoes. They have different stuff all the time. They have leopard print if you’re into animal print.

I: Tell me about one of your favorite products within the brand Keds.
R: The Reds. The classic champions in red. That is the original (the kind you wore as a kid). My infatuation with Keds came around the time that I started paying attention to the details on things. I got kind of stuck on socks at the same time. Like I’m kind of a sock guy, too. So when you wear business pants, kind of fitted, they’re supposed to hit your leg at a certain point [when you’re seated], so it was important that the socks matched. It’s an attention to detail.

I: So Keds being inexpensive and available in many colors allowed to really match all your outfits?
R: Yes, and because I wear the lows, you can see the socks.

I: Do you think you ever shop for Keds just to make yourself feel better?
R: I try not to because I’m a deal hunter. So I’ll go around all day seeing shoes going for $100, $200 and then I go to Keds[.com] and see buy 3 for $60. And I’ll just make impulse buys whenever I go. So I try not to.

I: So you mainly go when they send you deals?
R: I guess I don’t really have a method as to when I go. But when I tend to go, I end up buying [a lot]. So my shopping is sporadic.

I: So you don’t go to make yourself feel better because it’s like going to the grocery store when you’re hungry?
R: Right. But when anyone brings up shoes I go. Like I’ll get top-of-mind awareness when I start thinking about shoes that aren’t dress shoes.

I: If you bought a Keds and got a bad product or bought something that wasn’t up to their usual standards, how would you react?
R: I would probably try to get another pair. I wouldn’t stop wearing them. There are faults in processes and I understand that. I would probably complain or something and try to tell them to fix it. But I wouldn’t just bad-mouth them.

I: When you see other people sporting Keds, do you feel like you have something in common with them? Does that make you feel any closer to them? Why do you think that is? Does it matter if the rest of their appearance looks like it jives with the brand in question?
R: Kind of. The Keds kind of work their way through our apartment from that initial pair. Well, my roommate was wearing them, then I started wearing them. Then around that time we started seeing them pop up around campus. I guess a small epidemic started a
couple years ago. I’m not sure if kids were wearing them before that, especially guys. But nowadays I see maybe 2 or 3 guys wearing them a day.

R: I guess I do feel I have something in common with those people.

I: Does it depend on other stuff like what the rest of them looks like?

R: Yeah. I don’t want to sound cliché or say “hipster”, but it’s usually the whole ensemble of wearing Keds [that I look for]. A modern-retro look.

I: So you do or do not feel like you share something with those that have the whole hipster look going on?

R: Most of the people (guys) I see wearing Keds are usually wearing the same thing. I don’t see many random people wearing Keds that don’t have the whole hipster thing going on. [He does feel like he has something in common with the hipster kids.]

I: Talk to me about the kind of person that you think buys Keds. Is that the kind of person you think you are? Is that the kind of person you would like to be? What is it about that type of person that makes you want to be like that?

R: Independent thinker. I don’t think Keds come to mind of most people when they think of like nice shoes. I think a lot of people think of Keds as an antiquated brand when really, to me, that’s what draws me and attracts me. I think the people that buy Keds think that they’re being different.

R: Yes. I try to be [that kind of person]. I’m big on quotes. I used to always hear “if you’re in a room full of people and they’re all thinking the same thing, you’re in the wrong room”.

I: What do you think it says about you that you have such strong feelings about Keds?

R: I think it says that I’m loyal to things that I feel work. I feel that Keds are my shoe, so. I’m kind of big on branding. Searching for my certain look, my particular look. And Keds work for me so that’s my shoe, so when I’m older, I’ll probably still be wearing Keds.

I: So would you say that Keds are part of who you are?

R: Yes. Keds are part of who I am.

I: How much do you know about the [type of products] that Keds carries?

R: I don’t. I haven’t searched much past the Champions that I usually wear. I have a couple of pair of the Chukkas (they come up a bit higher on the article) because they had the oil canvas [version] which I like. I don’t really know the whole product offering, I haven’t searched.

I: So you know what you like, and you know a lot about that line?

R: Right.

I: Does it make you proud to talk to people about the way you feel about Keds? Talk to me about that.

R: I feel proud, I guess, if anything as a person that prides themselves on being apart from the crowd.

I: Brand managers try to convey a personality to their customers. How would you describe the personality of Keds? How is that similar to your personality? How is it different?

R: Keds’ trait would be independent or fun.
Interview #10: Arthur

Interview #10
Pseudonym: Arthur
Age: 23
Gender: M
Interview Time: 45:12
Brand: Ray Bans

I: Pretend I’ve never heard of Ray Bans. How would you describe it to me? (Would you want me to try it so that I could experience the same thing you do?)
R: To someone who’s never heard of Ray Bans sunglasses, to someone who’s never worn Ray Bans, they’re not the most expensive sunglasses, by far. Arguably, are they the most famous brand? Maybe, I sure recognize them as the most famous brand when I see them, so they’re famous to me. Are they even the highest quality? Again, it depends on your image of quality. For sunglasses that are incredibly imbedded within so many subcultures (motorcycles). You see Ray Bans on motorcyclists all the time because they were the first to make the easy rider style of sunglasses. The Blues Brothers (motorcycle offshoot), the Beatles (aviators). The Blues brothers were wayfarers. Dirty Harry was balarama. Easy Rider were Easy Rider sunglasses.
I: Were Easy Riders featured in the movie? Wait, so which came first, easy rider glasses or the movie?
R: The glasses.
I: So was the movie named after the glasses?
R: Actually, the movie was named after the book. It was happened to come together that the glasses and the movie were both called Easy Rider. The reason the glasses were called Easy Riders was because they were the first pair of sunglasses exclusively marketed to people on motorcycles who have a unique need for sunglasses that other people don’t have for sunglasses. That is you not only need them for the traditional reasons for keeping your eyes protected and when its really bright when you’re riding into the sun, but also if you get wind in your eyes when you’re riding 80 mph, you can’t see very well. So you need to be able to have these little lips underneath to protect from the wind. Easy Riders were also the first sunglasses to be sold without the uber dark lenses. They had smoke lenses for riding and clear lenses for night riding. Now you can get a mixture of lenses from clear to very very dark, depending on your needs. Ray Bans was the first sunglass manufacturer to do that.
I: And they did that for the different needs of motorcycle riders?
R: Well, they did that with the Easy Riders first.
I: Are the clear lenses completely clear or are they that yellow tint?
R: Ray Bans doesn’t make the yellow tint. Some say it comes in handy when it’s hazy out, but for that I have a pair of cheap ones just to try it. Apparently it makes it clearer because the yellow picks up and reflects light faster, but I don’t know. Ray Bans doesn’t make the yellow lenses.
Here he kept calling lenses “frames”. I corrected in my transcription. However, he did say this: I call them frames because they’re what I frame the world out of.

I: If I didn’t ride bikes would you still think I would benefit from wearing Ray Bans?
R: I mean, if you’re into it, yeah. I wear them as daily glasses and in fact most of them today are not built specifically for that. The vast majority of Ray Bans are Aviators and Wayfarers which are certainly not something you would wear on a motorcycle. But they’re still very comfortable, they’re still very well made. There a lot of knock offs too, but there are different ways you can tell. If you want a pair of sunglasses that are high quality and have all the benefits you need, Ray Bans is one of the first names you go to, right?

I: What is it about Ray Bans that you enjoy?
R: See above.

I: Try to remember the first time you tried Ray Bans. Can you tell me about the experience?
R: My first pair of Ray Bans was a black pair of Ray Bans that were a little newer, maybe from the 80s or something. Cause my dad, actually had a lot of old Ray Bans. He didn’t get into them as much as I did so he gave me a pair of those for my Kawasaki and they worked ok, they were nice sunglasses. And I remember very quickly the difference between them and my $5 pair of sunglasses because before then I thought sunglasses were used to protect my eyes from the sun. And when I first saw the Ray Bans they didn’t have the rubber things on the bridge so I thought they were going to pinch my nose, you know it doesn’t have any padding it’s going to be uncomfortable. It looks bulky and heavy but when you put them on everything fits together so well that they just work. They don’t pinch your nose, they don’t fall down. They just work for me. Somehow something to do with the Ray Bans just made an extremely comfortable sunglass [which is important to me b/c] when I’m outside I’m wearing sunglasses. It’s just the way it is, otherwise my eyes hurt. And those are really nice sunglasses that I can wear without them getting uncomfortable. Without getting my nose pinched, without getting the side of my head squeezed and without falling down if I look down.

I: That’s what I look for in sunglasses. I have a $5 pair of wayfarers that I rock, I love them. But they are so light that they do feel cheap.
R: See, these ones aren’t heavy but they know what they’re doing. Wayfarers are now extremely popular, but when you get a good pair it’s very different. It’s very different wearing a good pair of wayfarers.

I: How long was it before you purchased another pair of Ray Bans after the first time?
R: I was about 13 when I got my first pair and I’m 23 now. Maybe 4 years those sunglasses lasted before I broke them. So, about that time I started shopping around and probably got them around them.

I: Were they a new pair or vintage pair?
R: The first vintage pair I had came from my dad. The first pair I bought was a new pair. And, it was different - the way it was made - it was made arguably to a lower standard than previous generations. So I then picked up a pair of Wayfarers from my dad they had a special name for them they had a big stripe across the front - I forget the name. And then I lost them so I went shopping again and it was during this trip that I discovered the tricks on how to find authentic vintage Ray Bans from pawn shops or eBay sometimes
but normally those people know how much they’re worth and I don’t want to pay $120 for sunglasses. So I learned how to spot them in pawn shops and then learned how to do minor repair work - broken hinge, etc. so if I found a good deal I could fix them. And I learned how to spot the knock offs so I went around to pawn shops and I sold some and kept some. And I still do that. It’s the first thing I look for when I go into pawn shops or antique shops I always ask if they have vintage Ray Bans. I don’t really know enough about other brands or the interest in other brands to look for them. I know about Ray Bans and I know what to look for. Even at Octoberfest I met an elderly lady who was wearing a pair of ‘50’s Ray Bans and I started gawking and asked how old her sunglasses were and she said they were very old and I told her I could tell. And we started talking and she said she’d had them for a long time and had taken care of them. And Ray Bans have a lifetime guaranty so if something happens to her glasses Ray Ban will repair them or send her the replacement parts and she said that she had just taken care of them. It was this nice pair of fifties Ray Bans and so we had this chat about vintage Ray Bans because she also likes them. And I showed her Miranda’s ‘62’s and we just chatted about vintage Ray Bans.

R: And it’s interesting when you see someone wearing a pair of old Ray Bans and you automatically can strike up a conversation because you’re not going to go in and pick this out of a barrel if you don’t know what you’re looking for. You won’t go around wearing vintage Ray Bans if you don’t know that that’s what you’re wearing. You’re gonna go in and look for it and know enough to know what you’re looking for and so you’re able to talk about it. And there is a little community of people who love them and generally like to talk about them a little bit. And they’ll know what model number, what year, and what lens type they have. Like I have volcanic glass lenses and they are really difficult to scratch; I don’t even have to protect these, I can just throw them in my pocket because they are so hard to scratch. And the clarity is insane. Even when they’re covered in fingerprints. Like you can’t smudge a diamond, it’s the same thing. I wouldn’t take a razor to it, but these lenses are tough. These are the original lenses - 40 years. And here’s how you can tell - B in Ray Bans doesn’t meet because of the way those lasers etched the brand. The B is a very unique font and is different from the font of the rest of the brand.

I: You mention that the quality of Ray Bans isn’t what it once was. Does that impact how you feel about the brand?

R: I can understand that it is not feasible to manufacture a sunglass that is meant to last a century. They don’t make them like they used to and there’s a reason - they don’t need to. People throw sunglasses away, people lose sunglasses. Sunglasses are not a big deal anymore but they used to be. When you used to get your Ray Bans it was like your watch or your wallet. It was yours and it was what you got and that was what you used everyday. It’s different now. They don’t need to make sunglasses like this anymore because the world is different now. So I’m not disappointed in Ray Ban but maybe in just how the world has changed. Ray Ban is adapting to their institutional environment which is what has kept them in business. Cheap production in China? They need to because people aren’t buying $300 sunglasses anymore. They are meeting consumers needs which are no longer high quality but are more interesting style and retro looking but not actually retro.
R: When you have a good pair of sunglasses (discussion here about plastic vs. glass lenses - the world looks clearer through glass) it becomes the ultimate accessory. It goes beyond your shoes or belt or any other accessory. They become a part of you. You are seeing the world through those sunglasses. When I’m on my bike, I see a lot and the sunglasses are what allow me to see things on my bike. I get so emotionally attached to sunglasses because they are the best sunglasses in the world for me (versus the best ever - if they aren’t your favorite, I don’t care and I won’t try and convert you - but they are the best for me). But if I were to lose or break these I would be very sad and I wouldn’t even consider any other kind, only Ray Bans. I would look for Ray Bans because that it was I know and like and I know that after a few months of wearing them I am going to feel right at home with them on. And they are going to fit right here just like Ray Bans fit me. When I don’t have my Ray Bans I don’t wear sunglasses. I don’t really know why. One is because I don’t really have any other sunglasses and two it’s because I don’t feel like going out to buy other sunglasses.

R: I would not trust another pair of sunglasses to show me that same world that I love so much from my motorcycle than I would trust Ray Bans. So I ride without sunglasses when I don’t have them. It’s a little uncomfortable so I don’t ride for long without sunglasses.

I: You said you wouldn’t try to convert the masses to Ray Bans.

R: Well, it’s a very personal thing, my enjoyment of Ray Bans. Probably it has something to do with the fact that my father liked them, I can see that association, although he definitely doesn’t like them to the extent that I do. A few weeks ago my dad came through town with a pair of British-made sunglasses which were cool. And it’s not like I was mad at him. For me, I love Ray Bans and who knows, maybe that will change. But at this moment, I have trusted Ray Bans for so long and I have learned to live with them that - it’s like Band-Aids or Kleenex - when I say “where are my Ray Bans, I’m saying where are my sunglasses”. Ray Bans ARE Arthur’s sunglasses. It’s not that I don’t want to convert other people, it’s just that my relationship with Ray Bans is very personal and it’s not about them. It’s just me and Ray Bans.

I: But if someone asked you for a recommendation?

R: I would talk to them about Ray Bans as long as they wanted to talk.

I: Do you think you ever shop for Ray Bans just to make yourself feel better?

R: Anytime I’m in an antique shop, pawn shop, garage sale I always look for them. I like going to those things and there are 2 things I look for. The first is Ray Bans and the second is motorcycle stuff/toys.

I: If you bought a pair of Ray Bans and got a bad product or bought something that wasn’t up to their usual standards, how would you react?

R: I would assume that I had gotten a knock off pair of sunglasses. There is a small possibility that they had lemons, but those (vintage) wouldn’t have survived this long. So rather than assuming I got a bad pair, I would assume I got duped into a knockoff pair.

I: When you see other people sporting Ray Bans, do you feel like you have something in common with them?

R: Only old Ray Bans. Tons of people wear new Ray Bans and I’ve never struck up a conversation with any of them. If I see someone wearing old Ray Bans, I’m gonna talk to them.
I: Talk to me about the kind of person that you think buys Ray Bans. Is that the kind of person you think you are?
R: I guess nostalgic folk. But nostalgia isn’t great - you’re thinking about the way things weren’t. But you keep a pair of Ray Bans for 50 years out of respect for the quality and craftsmanship and for the knowledge that 50 years ago there was some dude in Italy with a hunk of plastic and a chisel making a pair of sunglasses just for me. And you gotta respect that. Although I’ve never met that dude nor anyone he knows or is related to and vice versa, we’re connected. He provided me the lens through which I see the world. People who hang on to their Ray Bans all those years and take care of them respect the sunglasses. People who toss them around, don’t. And me, Arthur, at this moment, respects the sunglasses.
I: What do you think it says about you that you have such strong feelings about Ray Bans?
R: It could say that I’m a frugal person in the sense that I only buy things that I can get a good deal on. My family would probably insist that’s the case. Purchase for $15 knowing I could sell them on eBay for $150. So my family would say that type of profit is my motivation. I would say that it goes beyond that. That being said I wouldn’t spend $150 on a new pair, I would take the time to get a good deal. It says that I appreciate quality more than I appreciate style or trends. And that I appreciate knowing that I have a pair of sunglasses and something happens to them the reason wouldn’t be the sunglasses, it would be me 100%. It wouldn’t be anything other than me being careless. I can trust these sunglasses way more than I can trust myself.
I: Brand managers try to convey a personality to their customers. How would you describe the personality of Ray Bans?
R: Ray Bans are laid back sunglasses. They are the relax sunglasses. Think of the classic images - Blues Brothers. In every single one of those references (Dirty Harry, Blues Brothers, Easy Rider, The Beatles). Everything around you is in chaos, but you’re just chilling with your Ray Bans. It is the sunglasses you wear while you’re riding down the street.
I: Most of us have an image of ourselves the way we think we really are and another image of the way we would like to be (or like other people to think we are). Do you think that’s true for you?
R: That is me 100% and that is embodied in my Ray Bans.
APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS FROM STUDY 2
The Principal Investigator will recruit potential subjects by verbally relaying the following statement during a class meeting:

I am asking you to participate in a research project on consumers' behaviors towards their favorite brands. The results of this study will provide researchers with a better understanding of how consumers interact with their favorite brands and with others regarding their favorite brands. If you agree to participate, please complete the forthcoming survey. Please understand that your participation is voluntary and your refusal to participate will involve no penalty to you. You are welcome to withdraw from the survey at any time and you may refuse to answer any of the questions included in the survey. The survey should take about 10-20 minutes to complete.

Please take your time and answer the questions honestly. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Please do not sign your name or give any other indication as to your identity that would compromise the confidentiality of this survey.
Welcome!

You have been invited to participate in an online research project about consumer brand loyalty. The survey is going to ask you to talk about your favorite brand and answer some questions about your experiences with it.

You are free to answer or not answer any questions at no penalty. There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts that might occur as a result of your participation in the study. To participate in this survey you must be 18 years old or older.

The time needed to participate in the entire study is approximately 10-20 minutes. Thank you for your participation and if you have any questions please contact:

Dr. Nicole Ponder
Mississippi State University
E-mail: nponder@coblant.msstate.edu

or
Institutional Review Board
Mississippi State University
irb@research.msstate.edu
Open-Ended Questionnaire

Many consumers have a particular brand of which they are very big fans. Often, these fans will recommend their brand to others, purchase the brand frequently, exhibit consistent loyalty to the brand, and defend their brand when others question its value. Some common examples of brands that consumers exhibit these behaviors towards are Apple, Disney, and Harley Davidson.

Please take a few moments to determine if you have a brand that you might be an advocate for. Please list that brand in the space provided below and answer the following questions with that brand in mind.

Favored brand: ___________
1. Imagine that I suggested your brand wasn’t very good or that everything I had heard about it was terrible. What things would you say to me?

2a. Why would you say those things to me?
2b. Why might it be important to you to contradict what I said?

3a. Imagine that you had an experience with brand X that wasn’t up to its usual standards. How would that make you feel?
3b. And how might you react?

4a. Do others in your life know that you are a fan of brand X?
4b. How do they know that?
APPENDIX D

CODING INSTRUCTIONS FOR STUDY 2
Coding Instructions for Study 2

1. You will be provided with a set of written descriptions of a variety of consumers’ experiences with their favorite brands. Each “story” or “event” is recorded on a standardized questionnaire. Each brand experience questionnaire reflects the events and behaviors associated with a memorable experience with a favorite brand. The focus of this study is on identifying various consumer behaviors related to building or as a result of the consumer’s relationship with their favorite brand. The questionnaire asked consumers to describe how they came to be a fan of the brand, whether or not and how other people have been made aware of their brand fandom, and how the respondent would react if they experienced a brand failure.

2. You will be asked to identify each consumer behavior in a response and whether it was an attempt to establish a relationship with the brand or was a result of the respondent’s relationship with the brand. Sorting rules and definitions of three distinct types (or categories) of such behaviors are detailed below.

3. You should read through the entire incident description before attempting to identify the various relational behaviors. If a response does not appear to have any of the behaviors described below, put it aside. In addition, do not attempt to categorize responses that do not meet the basic criteria. In particular, a response must: (1) include a direct consumer-brand experience (rather than the reporting of someone else’s experience), or (2) in the case of conversation incidents, include a conversation in which the respondent was actually involved (rather than reporting an overheard or third-party-reported conversation), (3) relate to a specific brand, and (4) provide sufficient information to adequately enable analysis. If it does not meet all of these criteria, set it aside.

4. Once you have read the response, identify all of the relational behaviors and record those behaviors on the provided data entry sheet.
APPENDIX E

RESULTS FROM STUDY 2
Analysis of Study 2 Behaviors

Category 3: Forgiveness of brand failures

Behaviors included in Category 3 refer to situations in which the respondent has experienced some sort of brand failure. This could include a faulty product, a disappointing experience, or poor service. The ways in which consumers respond to such failures are typically indicative of the level of brand commitment meaning that advocates should generally respond more favorably to brand failures than non-loyal customers. Balance theory, which describes how individuals seek to maintain psychological balance or consistent attitudes towards objects (Heider 1958), informs these behaviors. According to balance theory, when an individual encounters information that is inconsistent with his attitudes towards an object, either the overall attitude must be changed to become congruent with the new information or the new information must be discounted in some way as to maintain the previous attitude. Either way, consistency of attitude must be achieved (Heider 1958). For consumers with strong brand relationships, discounting negative information or experiences that are inconsistent with past brand experiences is more likely than accepting the new information and downgrading the overall attitude toward the brand (Hess et al. 2003). Thus, brand advocates should be more likely to discount a brand failure than accept it as indicative of brand quality. 112 behaviors, or 20.1% of the overall total of advocacy behaviors, are classified as responses to brand failure. This category, consistent with another set of a priori behaviors suggested by prior literature are further classified as proactively seeking remedy for the failure, allowing the brand a one-off without penalty, and giving the brand the benefit of the doubt.
Subcategory 3A: Give the brand the benefit of the doubt

A salient feature of these 60 behaviors (10.8%) is the consumer’s assumption that the failure was not attributable to any mistake on the part of the brand. That is, the respondent suggests alternative explanations for the failure, whether it be poor service delivery of the brand’s product, a wayward employee, or simply the cost of doing business. For example, one respondent suggests:

“that [the failure] was probably not Disney as a whole and [instead] just an incident beyond their control. Things happen, and I don’t hold grudges! I can’t imagine anything that would take away my love of Disney!”

Yet another reports that were his favored product to malfunction:

“I would think that it was not the Apple product that was bad, but the service of where I got the product, be it Best Buy or somewhere else. I would be shocked to have it happen.”

While the stability dimension of attribution effectively explains advocates’ allowance for isolated failures, the other two dimensions, controllability and locus, provide the understanding for the behaviors in this subcategory. Controllability is the degree to which the firm could influence or prevent the failure from occurring. Locus is the cause of the failure (Weiner 1979). A strong brand relationship results in a higher likelihood that the consumer will perceive that the firm either did not have control over the failure or was not at fault (Hess et al. 2003).

Subcategory 3B: Proactively seek remedy

One way that consumers have to rebalance their attitudes towards the brand following a failure is to seek recourse for the loss from the organization. The 52
behaviors (9.4%) in this subcategory are defined by the respondent’s indication that, in response to a brand failure, they will contact customer service in an attempt to negotiate a remedy for the failure. One respondent reports that in such an event:

“my sister actually did order a pink Solia straightener that didn’t work as well. We were so surprised that we called the company and they sent her a brand new straightener that worked. They take good care of their customers when there is a problem.”

Other consumers can only speculate how they would react to a brand failure as one has yet to happen. Like this respondent who claims that he:

“would feel let down [if my Keds were subpar]. I would probably contact the company to seek remuneration or recourse. I’ve yet to have such an experience.”

Over time, as relationships develop, certain norms develop between partners regarding appropriate behavior (Dwyer et al. 1987; Solomon et al. 1985). Relationships between customers and organizations or brands are not exempt from such norm development. One particular norm that commonly arises is that of reciprocal input from both relationship partners. Equity theory describes how partners in an exchange relationship will expect fair compensation for their participation in the relationship. For consumers, this means that in exchange for continued patronage, the organization is expected to remedy any brand failures (Hess et al. 2003). Brand advocates, through their active referral of new customers and defense of the brand against detractors, are providing particularly high levels of input into the brand relationship and should thus have a fairly high expectation that the organization will remedy any brand failures.
APPENDIX F

SURVEY USED IN STUDY 3
Welcome!

You have been invited to participate in a research project regarding consumer brand loyalty. The survey is going to ask you to identify your favorite brand and answer some questions about your experiences with it.

You are free to answer or not answer any questions at no penalty. There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts that might occur as a result of your participation in the study. To participate in this survey you must be 18 years old or older.

The time needed to participate in the entire study is approximately 10-20 minutes. Thank you for your participation and if you have any questions please contact:

Dr. Nicole Ponder  
Mississippi State University  
E-mail: nponder@cobian.msstate.edu  
or  
Institutional Review Board  
Mississippi State University  
irb@research.msstate.edu

MSU IRB #12-301
approved: 06-27-12
expires: 06-26-15
Thank you for participating in this survey. While some of the questions in this survey may seem very similar to you, each one helps me understand a little bit more about your feelings.

1. Many consumers have a particular brand of which they are very big fans. Often, these fans will recommend their brand to others, purchase the brand frequently, exhibit consistent loyalty to the brand, and defend their brand when others question its value. Some common examples of brands that consumers exhibit these behaviors towards are Apple, Disney, and Harley Davidson.

Please take a few moments and consider the brand for which you might participate in the above behaviors. Do you have a favorite brand for which you might participate in the above behaviors?

☐ Yes
☐ No
2. If you answered "yes" to the previous question, please write the name of that brand in the space below.

The following pages may take a few extra seconds to load. Please be patient.
3. For these next questions, please imagine a situation in which attempt to purchase [Q2] but it is unavailable at that time. Example: the store in which you usually purchase [Q2] is sold out.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If I want to purchase [Q2] and it was not available, it is very likely I would just wait for it to become available.</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would rather not buy anything than settle for something other than [Q2].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I tried to a store that did not have [Q2] available, I would probably go to another store or online to find it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If [Q2] was sold out when I went shopping for it, I would just check back later.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If [Q2] was not available at a certain store, I would rather look for it somewhere else than purchase another brand.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I went shopping specifically for [Q2] and it was not available, I would go home empty-handed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If [Q2] were not available at the store, it would make little difference to me if I had to choose another brand.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If [Q2] was sold out in the store, I would just order it online.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I could not purchase a [Q2] product, I would just go without that product.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be willing to wait for [Q2] to become available if it were not in stock when I went to purchase it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If [Q2] was unavailable in the store, I would just find another store that had it in stock.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Please select the response that best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to spread positive word-of-mouth about [Q2].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend [Q2] to my friends.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If my friends were looking for the kind of products [Q2] sells, I would tell them about it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like telling others about my positive experiences with [Q2].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When others approach me for advice, I suggest [Q2].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Q2] is the first brand I recommend to others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often recommend [Q2] to others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I “talk up” [Q2] to people I know.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I bring up [Q2] in a positive way in conversations I have with friends and acquaintances.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In social situations, I often speak favorably about [Q2].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Please select the response that best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have been loyal to [Q2] for a long time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will do more business with [Q2] in the next few years.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is very likely that I will purchase [Q2] again.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I intend to remain loyal to [Q2] in the future.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have purchased from [Q2] more than once in the past.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect to be buying from [Q2] for a long time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been a customer of [Q2] for a while now.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not expect to purchase [Q2] in the future.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect my relationship with [Q2] to be enduring.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is likely that I will buy [Q2] in the future.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Please select the response that best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When others say negative things about [Q2], I usually step in and say something to defend it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is okay with me if someone does not like [Q2], they have a right to like whatever they choose.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If someone has something bad to say about [Q2], I usually do not listen to what they have to say.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will not stand for someone to say negative things about [Q2].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If others think a competing brand is better than [Q2], I am comfortable telling them why [Q2] is a better choice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand that [Q2] is not everyone's first choice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you are reading this question, please select &quot;Strongly Disagree&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When someone bad-mouths [Q2] to me, I am quick to set them straight.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If someone does not like [Q2], I would just assume they have not tried it before.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have tried to change someone's opinion about [Q2] when they did not think it was very good.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would make a perfect salesperson for [Q2].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When others bad-mouth [Q2] to me, I usually just ignore it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will give the reasons why I like [Q2] when someone is putting it down.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I typically do not pay any attention to negative things people say about [Q2].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If someone does not like [Q2], I do not try to change their minds because everyone is entitled to their own opinion.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If someone says bad things about [Q2], I just assume they do not know what they are talking about.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Not all people talk about their favorite brands. Instead, they communicate their love for certain brands by simply wearing or using those brands. These consumers’ brand love shows in their everyday behaviors. Please indicate the extent to which you believe each of the following behaviors shows your love of the brand you listed earlier.

**7. Others can tell that I am a fan of [Q2] because I:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wear clothes with [Q2]’s brand name.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use [Q2]’s products often.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affix stickers with [Q2]’s logo to my car.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decorate my laptop or other objects with [Q2]’s logo.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>own many products made by [Q2].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>display many of my [Q2] products.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can be seen shopping online for [Q2].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like [Q2]’s Facebook page.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>follow [Q2] on Twitter.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>retweet [Q2] often.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repost [Q2]’s messages on Facebook.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consider a situation in which someone said something negative to you about your favorite brand. For each pair of words, check the button on or between the two extremes that accurately describes how you would feel about the information that person shared.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8. [Q2] is:</th>
<th>unbelievable</th>
<th>believable</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. [Q2] is:</td>
<td>not credible</td>
<td>credible</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. [Q2] is:</td>
<td>not trustworthy</td>
<td>trustworthy</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. [Q2] is:</td>
<td>unreliable</td>
<td>reliable</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. [Q2]:</td>
<td>undependable</td>
<td>dependable</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. [Q2] is:</td>
<td>not rational</td>
<td>rational</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. [Q2] is:</td>
<td>not informative</td>
<td>informative</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. [Q2] is:</td>
<td>does not deal with the facts</td>
<td>deals with facts</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. [Q2] is:</td>
<td>does not touch me emotionally</td>
<td>touches me emotionally</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. [Q2] is:</td>
<td>is not stimulating</td>
<td>is stimulating</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18. [Q2] is:</td>
<td></td>
<td>19. [Q2] is:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>does not reach</td>
<td>out to me</td>
<td>reaches out to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please select the response that best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

22. If an experience with [Q2] did not meet your expectations or was not up to its usual standards:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would likely ask the manager or customer service representative to fix the situation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would assume that it was just an off day.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would rethink purchasing from [Q2] again.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would remain loyal to [Q2] if this was the only time it happened.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would seek compensation for my bad experience.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would not blame [Q2].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would give [Q2] the benefit of the doubt.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would probably stop buying [Q2] if this was a frequent occurrence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would try to figure out a way to get my money back.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my opinion of [Q2] would not change.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would probably think that it was the employee's fault, not [Q2]'s.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would assume that the store that sold [Q2] made a mistake.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would stop buying [Q2].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A little about you

23. Are you male or female?
- Male
- Female
- I would rather not say

24. Which category below includes your age?
- 17 or younger
- 18-20
- 21-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 or older
- I would rather not say

25. What is your ethnicity?
- White/Non-Hispanic
- African American
- Asian
- Hispanic
- Native American
- Pacific Islander
- I would rather not say

Other (please specify)

26. If a Mississippi State student recruited you to complete this survey, please list their name below so they can receive proper class credit.

APPENDIX G

SURVEY USED IN STUDY 4
Study 4 Online Survey Consent

Welcome!

You have been invited to participate in a research project regarding consumer brand loyalty. The survey is going to ask you to identify your favorite brand and answer some questions about your experiences with it.

You are free to answer or not answer any questions at your own discretion. There are no reasonable foreseeable risks or discomforts that might occur as a result of your participation in the study. To participate in this survey, you must be 18 years old or older.

The time needed to participate in the entire study is approximately 10-15 minutes. Thank you for your participation and if you have any questions, please contact:

Dr. Nicole Ponder
Mississippi State University
Email: nponder@coblanc.msstate.edu

or

Institutional Review Board
Mississippi State University
info@research.msstate.edu

Take a moment to consider your favorite brands or the brands you frequently purchase or consume.

Would you consider yourself to be loyal to a particular brand?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If you answered "yes" to the previous question, enter the name of that brand in the space below (please only one brand).

______________________________

Some consumers proactively promote their favorite brand to others and defend the brand when others say negative things about it. These consumers are called brand advocates.

Would you consider yourself to be an advocate of a particular brand?

☐ Yes
☐ No
Study 4 Online Survey Questionnaire

Take a moment to consider your favorite brands or the brands you frequently purchase or consume.

Would you consider yourself to be loyal to a particular brand?
   Yes
   No

If you answered "yes" to the previous question, enter the name of that brand in the space below (please only one brand).

Some consumers proactively promote their favorite brand to others and defend the brand when others say negative things about it. These consumers are called brand advocates.

Would you consider yourself to be an advocate of a particular brand?
   Yes
   No

If you answered "yes" to the previous question, enter the name of the that brand in the space below (please only one brand).

Please select the response that best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.
(7-point Likert-type scale, ‘Strongly Disagree’ to ‘Strongly Agree’).

When others say negative things about [my brand], I usually step in and say something to defend it.
If others think a competing brand is better than [my brand], I am comfortable telling them why my brand is a better choice.
When someone bad-mouths [my brand] to me, I am quick to set them straight.
I have tried to change someone's opinion about [my brand] when they did not think it was very good.
I will give the reasons why I like [my brand] when someone is putting it down.
If a friend or acquaintance said something negative about [my brand], I would speak up to defend it.
If a friend or acquaintance said that a competing brand was superior to [my brand], I would tell them why I disagree.
If a friend or acquaintance made fun of [my brand], I would stick up for it.
If a friend or acquaintance questioned the quality of [my brand], I would try to set them straight.
If a friend or acquaintance said they disliked [my brand], I would try to prove to them why it is a good brand.

I would make a perfect salesperson for [my brand].
Sometimes when I talk about [my brand], I can sound like a salesperson.
If I need to, I will rattle off a list of reasons why someone needs to try [my brand].
I have tried to convert others to [my brand].
If I think you should be using [my brand], I will actively work to get you to try it.
I have convinced others to try [my brand].
I would be an excellent salesperson for [my brand].
I have actively worked to get someone to try [my brand].

I will do more business with my brand in the next few years.
It is very likely that I will purchase my brand again.
I intend to remain loyal to my brand in the future.

When others approach me for advice, I suggest my brand.
My brand is the first I recommend to others.
I often recommend my brand to others.

[My brand] says a lot about the kind of person I am.
[My brand]’s image is consistent with how I'd like to see myself.
[My brand] helps me make a statement about what is important to me in life.
[My brand] and I have a lot in common.

[My brand] has the same values I do.
In general, my values and the values held by [my brand] are very similar.
I believe in the same values held and promoted by [my brand].

I have advocated for [my brand].*
Others would say I am a brand advocate for [my brand].*

What is your gender? ___Male ___Female
What is your age? ____

* These items were used for model identification only and were thus not included in the pretest.