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Brand engagement, future research**Corresponding Author:****Márton Bagyura**Email: mehreenkhurram85@gmail.com**License:**

Abstract: *This study aims to present a comprehensive review of the literature on self-brand connection to gain a deeper understanding of its role in shaping consumer-brand associations. This study is based on 30 peer-reviewed articles published over the last 25 years, synthesizing existing knowledge on the role of self-brand connection in consumer behavior, its boundary conditions, theoretical foundations, and methodological approaches. The analysis highlights both inconsistencies and divergences across studies, offering critical insights into how self-brand connection is formed and how they influence brand-related outcomes. Building on this synthesis, the study identifies significant gaps while proposing a structured agenda for future research to advance theoretical development and empirical investigation in the field of self-brand connection.*

Introduction

In a marketplace saturated with brands, marketers are constantly competing to capture the interest or focus of consumers; therefore, understanding the intricate relationship between individuals and their chosen brands is essential. The last few decades in brand management research have seen brands gone from mere transactional products to relationship partners (Bagozzi et al., 2021). For maintaining edge over competitors, brands are trying to create clutter by using several strategies such as unique branding, advertisement, consumer-brand engagement and emotional connection, where the brand replicates personality like human beings (DelVecchio et al., 2024; Fazli-Salehi et al., 2024b). The emotional bonds with the consumers can be formed when they feel a connection and attachment with the brand. At the core of this relationship lies the concept of self-brand connection (SBC), referring to how deeply a person identifies with a brand as an extension or reflection of their self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2003).

Self-brand connection represents one of the crucial social-psychological motives occupying significant value in the literature for its role in forming or shaping consumer behaviors (Kircova et al., 2015; Moliner et al., 2018; Shen & Sengupta, 2018). It is one of the most used keywords in the last thirty years of brand research. Self-brand connection enables brand managers to establish strong emotional and cognitive ties between the brand and consumers, resulting in positive outcomes for the brand (Fetscherin & Veloutsou, 2024). Since the year 2000, researchers have explored various antecedents, contexts, and outcomes of SBCs. However, despite this growing body of work, a need remains for a systematic synthesis and critical reflection on key themes, inconsistencies, and future directions.

- This paper aims to fill that gap by conducting a comprehensive review of 30 influential studies on self-brand connection by reviewing the following two central research questions:

- (1) Which research articles have SBC as the primary concept and investigated SBC empirically?
- (2) What contexts, antecedents, outcomes, mechanisms and boundary conditions, theoretical and methodological approaches are followed in SBC research and set ground for future research?

The contribution of this review is threefold. First, it offers a systematic and integrative analysis of self-brand connection literature, covering major theoretical perspectives, empirical approaches, and conceptual developments. Second, it highlights critical but underexplored areas, including the consistency and stability of SBCs over time, contextual and consumer-level boundary conditions, alternative mechanisms for SBC formation, and the role of theoretical and methodological diversity. Third, it outlines key future research directions that reflect emerging trends such as cross-cultural variation, digital brand communities, and brand activism.

In doing so, this review not only consolidates the current state of knowledge on self-brand connections but also provides a roadmap for scholars to advance research in ways that are both theoretically rigorous and practically relevant.

Methodology

This literature review adopts an evidence-based approach by formulating specific research questions to guide the identification, selection, extraction, and analysis of relevant data. The review draws upon scholarly articles retrieved from three major academic databases: Scopus, Science Direct, and Web of Science. A comprehensive keyword search strategy was employed, focusing on the term "self-brand connection" and including related constructs such as self-concept, brand relationships, and consumer engagement. No publication date restrictions were applied during the search process to ensure the inclusion of all relevant studies. The initial search yielded a large number of articles, which, after removing duplicate studies, were sorted based on SBC being the central concept and empirically investigated. After a detailed review of the articles, 30 of the most relevant were selected for inclusion in the review.

Synthesis & Findings

Theoretical perspectives

1. Limitations in existing research

The review of the literature reveals that most of the theories used to explain SBC are social-identity theory (16%, 5/30), self-verification theory (13%, 4/30), and self-congruity theory (13%, 4/30) (Bowden & Mirzaei, 2020; Chang, 2012; Fazli-Salehi et al., 2021; Marticotte et al., 2016; Moliner et al., 2018; Moore & Homer, 2008). Social identity theory posits that individuals form a part of their self-concept through group membership, which holds emotional significance for them (Tajfel, 1974). In the branding context, consumers create strong emotional bonds with the brands that reflect their social identity and values. Therefore, brands are considered social symbols that help consumers define their social identity (Fazli-Salehi et al., 2021; Moore & Homer, 2008).

One other theory that is used in several research articles to explain SBC is the self-verification theory, which suggests that consumers opt for brands that they feel reflect their self-views (Swann Jr, 2012; Talaifar & Swann, 2017). Other than self-enhancement, the motive of the consumers to engage with the brands is to reinforce their established identity; therefore, consumers are more interested in brands that they feel will help them in reassuring their self-image (Gaustad et al., 2018; Moliner et al., 2018). Self-congruity theory posits that when there is congruence between the image of the brand and the self of the consumers, they identify more with the brand, and hence it is highly likely for consumers to develop positive brand attitudes (Sirgy, 2018).

2. Future Research Directions

It is essential that future research in SBC expand its scope by incorporating other psychological and consumer behavior theories. Introducing self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) to explain SBC, explaining the role that attachment to brands will play in achieving consumer goals. Social comparison theory (Suls & Wheeler, 2000), will be an interesting theoretical perspective in understanding SBC with the groups and how it impacts their behaviors towards the brand. Furthermore, theories like signaling theory (Karasek III & Bryant, 2012), can help better understand how consumers use brands to communicate their image to others in society. As humans evolve and their relationships change, SBC

must be studied through different theoretical perspectives to understand the evolving nature of these relationships. Additionally, it will be interesting to develop multi-theoretical frameworks and empirically differentiate SBC from other similar constructs, such as brand attachment and brand love.

Table 1: Overview of Empirical Studies on Self-brand Connection

Study	Antecedent(s)	Consequence(s)	Mediator(s)/ Moderator(s)	Guiding Theories	Method/ Industry	Country investigated
Escalas (2004) JCP	Narrative processing	Brand attitude, Behavioral intentions	Self-brand connection (med)	Narrative transportation theory	Experiment/ Photography & Financial services	USA
Moore & Homer (2008) JBR	Self-brand connection	Brand attitude, Attitude strength	Gender (mod) Autobiographical memories (mod)	Social identity theory	Leisure sports facilities	USA
Chang (2012) IJA	Website-self congruency, Product involvement	Website attitudes, Purchase intentions	Self-referencing (med), Self-brand connections (med), Positive emotion (med), Browsing enjoyment (med)	Self-congruency theory, Affect regulation theory	Experiment / Websites	Taiwan
Kemp et al. (2012) JPBM	Attitude toward brand, Perceived quality, Brand uniqueness	Brand advocacy	Self-brand connection (med)	-	Survey/ Music	USA
Randhawa et al. (2015) JBR	Self-brand connection	Willingness to buy LBC	Value consciousness (mod) Impulsive buying (mod) Openness to experience (mod)	-	Survey/ Watches, belts, handbags	USA
Marticotte et al. (2016) JPBM	Desire to harm, Self-brand connection, Brand-community identification Brand loyalty	Desire to harm, Trash talking	-	Social-identification theory	Survey/ HD video console industry	-
Hemsley-Brown & Alnawas (2016) IJCHM	Staff behavior, Quality of physical environment	Brand loyalty	Brand passion (med) Brand affection (med) Self-brand connection (med)	Attachment theory	Survey/ Hotels	UK
Moliner et al. (2018) JSM	Customer engagement, Customer self-brand connection	Customer self-brand connection, Financial performance,	-	Self-congruity theory, Self-verification	Interview/ Banking	Spain

		Customer's advocacy		theory		
Van der Westhuizen (2018) JPBM	Self-brand connection	Loyalty	Brand experience (med)	Self-verification theory	Survey/ Any favorite brand	South Africa
Gaustad et al. (2019) IJRM	Actual self-brand connection, Ideal self-brand connection	Customer response	Self-enhancement efficacy (med), Self-verification efficacy (med)	Self-verification theory	Survey/ Multiple brands involved in acquisitions	USA
Helme-Guizon & Magnoni (2019) JMM	Self-brand connection, Social brand engagement, Customer brand engagement	Customer brand engagement, Brand loyalty intention	-	-	Survey/ Preferred brands among Facebook liked pages	USA & France
Chand & Fei (2020) JCB	Consumer Self-brand Connection	Intentions to purchase counterfeit luxury brands	Perceived counterfeit detection (med), Emotional attachment (med), Conspicuous consumption (med), Economic benefit (mod)	Reference group theory	Survey / Luxury Handbags and Watches	China
Panigyrakis et al., (2020) IJA	Social media marketing activities	Brand attachment	Self-brand connections (med), Brand engagement in self-concept (mod)	Theory of rhetoric	Survey/ Any brand followed on Facebook	-
Song & Kim (2020) IJA	Brand-celebrity image congruence, Self-brand image congruence, Self-celebrity image congruence	Engagement intentions, Purchase intentions	Ad attitudes (med), Self-brand connections (med), Brand attitudes (med), Consumer type (mod)	Self-congruity theory	Survey/ Luxury brands	U.S
Bowden & Mirzaei (2021) EJM	Self-brand connection	Loyalty	Cognitive (med), Affective (med), Behavioral (med), Social (med), Online brand communities (mod), Digital marketing content (mod)	Self-verification theory, Self-schema theory, Social-exchange theory, Engagement theory	Survey/ Australian children's retail brand	-
Fazli-Salehi et	Self-concept clarity	Purchase Intention	Materialism (med), self-brand	Self expansion	Survey/ Shoe	U.S

al., (2021) JBR			connection (med), Communal- brand connection (med)	theory, Social identity theory	industry	
Kim et al., (2021) IJMR	In-group orientation, Self-brand connection	Psychological distance, Purchase intention	Self-brand connection (med), Message type (mod)	Social identity theory, Contrual level theory	Survey and experiment / Athletic shoe industry	South Korea
Sarkar et al., (2021) P&M	Self-brand connection	Willingness to pay premium, Brand love	Intransigent brand attitude (med), Flexible brand attitude (med), Consumer cynicism (mod), Other customer perception (mod)	Consumer- brand relation theory, Psychologica l meaning- making process theory	Survey, Experiment / Branded apparel retail store	India
Kermani et al., (2024) JCP	Expression of outrage, Expression of disapproval without outrage	Self-brand connection	Social threat (med), Value alignment (mod), Value-based outgroup (mod), Viral social- support (mod)	Value- protection theory, Social impact theory	Survey, Experiments / Political parties	US
DelVecchi o et al., (2024) P&M	Processing fluency of brand name, Processing fluency of brand logo	Self-brand connection, Activation of recollection processing	Perceived brand familiarity (med), Peron- brand narrative construction (med), Activation of autobiographical memory (med),	-	Experiment	-
Ibrahim & Aljarah (2024) EJIM	Social Media Marketing Activities	Self-brand connection	User engagement (med), Gender (mod), Trust (mod)	Self-concept theory	Survey / Restaurant Instagram pages	North Cyprus
Kim & Im (2024) JCB	Usage of AR	Revisit intention	Imagery (med), Malleability of the self (med), Self-brand Connection (med), Virtual self- discrepancy (mod)	Self- perception theory, Self- discrepancy theory	Experiment / Shoes (seakers)	US
Lu & Ahn, (20204) THR	Financial value, Functional value, Individual value,	Behavioral intentions	Self-brand connection (med)	Congruence theory	Survey/ Hotel industry	U.S

	Social value,					
Rodriguez-Torrico et al., (2024) JPBM	Perceived benefits of brand channel mix	Brand channel mix use intention, Brand WOM intention	Self-brand connection (med), Product involvement (mod)	-	Survey/ Clothing	-
Sayin & Gurhan-Canli (2024) IJCS	Brand extension type	Negative consumer reaction	Felt betrayal (med), Indignation-centered anger (med), Self-brand connection (mod), Self-enhancement (mod)	Social identity theory	Experiment/ Automobiles & clothing	U.S, UK, Spain
Chowdhery et al., (2025) EJM	Multisensory prime	Brand attitude, Purchase intention	Sensory brand associations (med), Self-brand connection (med), Brand advertisement (mod)	Regulatory focus theory	Experiment/ Food snacks, Electronics, Detergents	-
Jang et al., (2025) JPBM	Corporate ability, Corporate responsibility	Consumer regret	Inferred goodwill (med), Self-brand connection (mod)	Expectancy violations theory	Survey, Experiment/ Beauty brands	US
Leak et al., (2025) JPBM	Investment, Perceiver's race	Brand attitude, Self-esteem	Perceives sincerity (med), Self-brand connection (med), Perceiver's race (mod), Ownership racial mix (mod), Self-esteem (mod)	-	Experiment	US
Luarn et al. (2025) JSTM	Source credibility, Advertising attitude, Self-brand connection	Advertising attitude, Self-brand connection, Product interest, Purchase intention	-	Stimulus-organism-response theory	Survey/ Fashion influencers	-
Shukla et al. (2025) JIM	Brand activism	Brand Evaluation, Consumer purchase intentions	Self-brand connection (med), Brand origin (mod), Consumer-brand stance alignment	Schema change theory	Survey/ Fashion & Sports brands	UK

JCP: Journal of Consumer Psychology; JBR: Journal of Business Research; IJA: International Journal of

Advertising, JPBM: Journal of Product & Brand Management, IJCHM: International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, JSM: Journal of Services Marketing, JRCS: Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, IJRM: International Journal of Research in Marketing; JMM: Journal of Marketing Management; JIM: Journal of International Marketing; JSTM: Journal of Strategic Marketing; JCB: Journal of Consumer Behavior; EJM: European Journal of Marketing; IJMR: International Journal of Market Research; P&M: Psychology & Marketing; EJIM: European Journal of Innovation Management; THR: Tourism & Hospitality Research; IJCS: International Journal of Consumer Studies.

Context

1. Limitations in existing research

Although research on SBC is expanding, it remains limited by context. Most studies conducted are limited to a single country, which reduces their cross-cultural generalizability. The review reveals that the majority of the studies conducted are in Western countries, which limits the understanding of the relationship that consumers build with the brand in Eastern and predominantly Asian cultural contexts. In this digital era, where social media platforms are emerging, the majority of the studies conducted have focused primarily on two platforms, Instagram or Facebook, which limits perspectives for new platforms (Helme-Guizon & Magnoni, 2019; Panigyrakis et al., 2020). Industries such as automotive, sports, clothing, and banking have been the focus, neglecting other sectors that may have distinct SBC dynamics (Moliner et al., 2018; Moore & Homer, 2008). Furthermore, with respect to demographics the focus is on young consumers or reliance on convenience sampling, which restricts the applicability of the results across different age groups (Marticotte et al., 2016). Most research studies have targeted specific brand types, such as luxury or single-brand settings, which limits their broader applicability (Bowden & Mirzaei, 2020; Rodríguez-Torrico et al., 2024).

2. Future Research Directions

Incorporating cultural diversity into research studies will enhance external validity; therefore, future studies must compare SBC in individualistic and collectivistic societies (Hemsley-Brown & Alnawas, 2016; D. H. Kim et al., 2021a; Lu & Ahn, 2024; Panigyrakis et al., 2020). Future research should explore SBCs within the contexts of utilitarian, hedonic, and mass luxury brand environments, including multi-brand retail settings (Bowden & Mirzaei, 2020; Sarkar et al., 2021). Furthermore, sectors such as travel, food services, and public transport should be focused (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2024; Jang et al., 2025). Another interesting context is the public versus private consumption and its impact on SBC (Sayin & Gürhan-Canlı, 2024). Ensuring the diversity of platforms is a future research study that should investigate newer and format-rich platforms such as TikTok, Pinterest, Twitter, or AR-based applications, which may shape distinctive SBC experiences. Furthermore, exploring alternative branding domains, including city branding, co-branding, or personal branding—might challenge the boundaries of current frameworks (Kemp et al., 2012; Marticotte et al., 2016; Shukla, Rosendo-Rios, et al., 2024).

Antecedents

1. Limitations in existing research

Research on SBC has primarily focused on a limited range of psychological antecedents, including narrative processing (Escalas, 2004), autobiographical memory (Moore & Homer, 2008), and self-brand congruency (Chang, 2012). Personal and social identity variables, such as self-concept clarity, brand familiarity, and individual differences (e.g., personality, demographics), are underexplored. Additionally, features of consumer-brand interactions—such as fluency, interactivity, and narrative appeal—receive limited attention (DelVecchio et al., 2024; Fazli-Salehi et al., 2021; Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2024; T. H. Kim & Im, 2024).

2. Future Research Directions

It is pertinent that the development of consumers' connection with the brand can be explained by constructs like brand trust, love, commitment and identification (Kemp et al., 2012; van der Westhuizen, 2018). The role visual and narrative processing variables—e.g., logo complexity, brand fluency, and prior exposure—play in developing SBC should also be explored (DelVecchio et al., 2024). It is also important to understand how ethnicity and culture impact the development of SBC in consumers, therefore constructs like multicultural identity and ethnic background, should be considered (Bowden &

Mirzaei, 2020; Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2024). Furthermore, in the age of digitization, consumers shopping behavior online in augmented reality should be probed to test its impact of consumers relationship with the brand (T. H. Kim & Im, 2024).

Constructs like self-esteem, authenticity, Finally, long-term identity drivers—like self-esteem, authenticity perception and parasocial bonds which are long term identity drivers should be taken into consideration while exploring SBC (Leak et al., 2025; Luarn et al., 2024). Self-construal, political/social congruence, and symbolic branding are psychological constructs which can enhance our understanding of the SBC and therefore should be integrated in future research (Shukla, Rosendo-Rios, et al., 2024).

Outcomes

1. Limitations in existing research

Most of the research studies on SBC are focused on the positive brand attitudes and behaviors towards the brands such as word of mouth (WOM), brand loyalty and purchase intentions (Helme-Guizon & Magnoni, 2019; van der Westhuizen, 2018). In understanding the effects of SBC on consumers' behavior, most studies have focused on attitudinal constructs and have ignored outcomes like share of wallet, brand evangelism, or oppositional loyalty behaviors (Bowden & Mirzaei, 2020; DelVecchio et al., 2024). In cases where behavioral intentions are measured, the downstream effects are often overlooked. Like Lu and Ahn (2024), their study did not measure long-term consumer-brand dynamics, focusing instead on immediate purchase intentions. The review of the literature reveals that very few studies have focused on adverse outcomes arising from SBC. When there is an inconsistency between the brand's actions and the consumer's values, it may lead to brand betrayal, disillusionment, or disengagement (Gaustad et al., 2018). Furthermore, studies reveal that the initial connection between the brand and the customer, mainly due to cause-based branding, may not always be translated into long-term relationships with the brand (Leak et al., 2025; Shukla, Cakici, et al., 2024).

2. Future Research Directions

The long-term effect of SBC is neglected in research, like Gaustad et al. (2018), pointed out that when consumers are highly attached to the brands, it may lead to negative consequences in the long run. For understanding this phenomena, future research should be longitudinal where comprehensive outcomes such as brand loyalty, customer life-time value, brand evangelism, oppositional reactions and rival brands' envy should be studied (Helme-Guizon & Magnoni, 2019; Marticotte et al., 2016). Moreover, in cases where serious inconveniences like value misalignment or service failure occur, an investigation could lead to fruitful insights. The role of emotions, creative perception and product involvement in SBC-behavior link also seems to shed light into the phenomena of interest (Chowdhury et al., 2025; DelVecchio et al., 2024).

Processing Variables

1. Limitations in existing research

The underlying emotional and psychological processes that play a role in SBC formation remain underexplored in the existing literature. Lesser studies have investigated how processing variables such as emotional arousal, frequency of fluency of brand exposure interact to shape SBC. DelVecchio et al. (2024) note that the cognitive-emotional interplay during consumer-brand interactions, particularly in digital and narrative contexts, is still largely hypothetical. For example, Chowdhury et al. (2025) questioned whether the impact of sensory priming operates through mood induction or perceptual fluency and emphasized the need to distinguish between affective and cognitive ad framing in SBC development.

Similarly, research has not fully mapped the role of emotional expressions in consumer reactions. Sayin and Gürhan-Canlı (2024) found that symbolic incongruity can trigger betrayal and indignation, but neglected broader emotional outcomes, like brand hate. Leak et al. (2025) also emphasized the importance of understanding how positive self-conscious emotions—such as enhanced self-esteem—mediate SBCs, particularly in allyship-driven brand strategies. The processing of emotional cues such as sarcasm, moralized commentary, and typographic signals (e.g., capital letters, exclamations) remains unexamined in relation to brand perception and social threat sensitivity.

2. Future Research Directions

To advance knowledge on the formation of SBCs, future research should investigate narrative and cognitive mechanisms such as memory encoding, personal relevance, and perspective-taking in advertising contexts, which also warrant further exploration (Escalas, 2004).

Studies should assess how self-congruence (actual vs. ideal self) interacts with emotional resilience during brand change or crisis (Gaustad et al., 2018) and how symbolic and sensory elements such as music, rituals, or visual design, enhance fluency and memory vividness (Moore & Homer, 2008). Future work should also disentangle the mediating roles of familiarity, fluency, and positive affect, in shaping SBCs (DeVecchio et al., 2024). Future research studies should map emotional expressions such as envy, outrage, guilt, pride, and sadness, particularly in moral versus non-moral brand contexts (Kermani et al., 2024; Leak et al., 2025). The use of multi-sensory cues and nuanced emotion profiling during brand crises and activism campaigns also offers a promising avenue (Chowdhury et al., 2025; Jang et al., 2025).

Boundary Conditions

1. Limitations in existing research

Although the existing literature has provided foundational insights into SBC, there is a notable scarcity of rigorous research addressing the boundary conditions under which these connections are either enhanced, diminished, or fail to develop. Prior studies, such as those by Escalas (2004) and Chang (2012) have recognized potential moderators, including individual differences and contextual variability—yet these elements are rarely subjected to empirical investigation. Factors such as gender, cultural orientation, consumer motivation, and brand category are frequently referenced but remain insufficiently explored as critical contingencies.

Although studies in the recent past have described the moderate influences, they have not examined them in detail as in the studies by, Lu and Ahn (2024) and Rodríguez-Torrice et al. (2024) which identify age, gender, and product involvement as relevant variables, but do not assess their interactive effects on SBC. On a similar note, while suggesting that the difference in the ownership (public versus private) consumption contexts can influence the emotional impact on the consumer (Sayin & Gürhan-Canlı, 2024).

2. Future Research Directions

To enhance the contextual specificity and generalizability, a broader range of moderators must be incorporated into future research. At the consumer level, moderators such as self-construal, need for uniqueness, persuasion knowledge, and value congruence warrant further investigation (Escalas, 2004; Moore & Homer, 2008). The moderation of demographic variables, including age, gender, ethnicity, and education, should be empirically tested for their influence on SBC strength and valence (Fazli-Salehi et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2021).

Many moderators on brand level for instance, brand personality (e.g., excitement vs. sincerity), image strength, and co-branding dynamics deserve more attention (Gaustad et al., 2018; Marticotte et al., 2016). Similarly, message and media level variables such as platform type, rhetorical style, and tone must also be considered (Panigyrakis et al., 2020; Song & Kim, 2020).

Furthermore, cross-cultural comparisons in individualist versus collectivist cultures, or between low-context versus high-context communication environments are likely to provide valuable information (Kim et al., 2021; Lu & Ahn, 2024). Longitudinal studies must be carried out to understand how consumer-brand self-connection evolves over time, especially when there are social changes or conflicting brand experiences (Helme-Guizon & Magnoni, 2019; Van der Westhuizen, 2018). Finally, personality and psychology-based moderators, for instance attachment style or status sensitivity offer promising avenues for future research (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2024; Kim & Im, 2024).

Methodological Approaches

1. Limitations in existing research

Methodological limitations in self-brand connection literature constrain the generalizability and explanatory power of existing findings. Most of the studies focus on cross-sectional survey or experiment which has limitations such as lesser capacity for in-depth consumer-brand relationship exploration and self-bias (Chowdhury et al., 2025; Lu & Ahn, 2024; Rodríguez-Torrice et al., 2024). Many

studies use symbolic of hypothetical brand stimuli in unnatural setting which limits the study findings (Sayin & Gürhan-Canlı, 2024).

Majority of the studies are using self-reported measures, raising concerns such as memory distortion, lack of behavioral confirmation and social desirability bias. This is particularly problematic relevant in investigation on sensitive topics like brand allyship and moral incongruence, where consumer responses are largely shaped by impression management (Leak et al., 2025).

2. Future Research Directions

To add methodological rigor, further research must engage multi-method approaches, combining longitudinal surveys with experimental designs, secondary data analysis and in-depth interviews. This triangulation will help in achieving better internal and external validity, especially in the contexts of morally and emotionally charged brands (Leak et al., 2025).

Experiments should simulate realistic brand interactions and manipulate variables such as symbolic congruence, affective versus cognitive ad framing, and longitudinal methods could gauge SBC evolution, following critical brand events and marketing campaigns.

In this regard, narrative elicitation techniques, for instance storytelling, or projective techniques, or diary methods can uncover deeper psychological processes in many ways that surveys might not be able to capture. Implicit measures such as response latency tests or biometric tracking may also help in capturing unconscious elements of development of SBC. Netnographic and observational methods are especially useful for studying online consumer behavior in naturalistic settings (Luarn et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This article focuses on examining the contexts, antecedents, outcomes, processing & boundary variables, theoretical foundations and methodological aspects available in self-brand connection literature. The review has highlighted the limitations and suggests some future directions that can provide new insights in understanding the consumer-brand relationship perspectives. These future directions are on new avenues for research and will help the marketers and researchers in developing strong bonds with the customers.

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