Check for updates

Received: 30 April 2023 | Revised: 11 January 2024 | Accepted: 14 January 2024

DOI: 10.1111/ijcs.13011

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

International Journal of Consumer Studies WILEY

The influence of self-brand connection on consumer reactions to symbolic incongruency and perceived betrayal

Eda Sayin[1] | Zeynep Gürhan-Canlı[2]

[1]IE Business School—IE University, Madrid, Spain

[2]Koç University, Istanbul, Turkey

Correspondence
Eda Sayin, IE Business School—IE University, Madrid, Spain.
Email: eda.sayin@ie.edu

Abstract

This research provides compelling evidence that consumer reactions toward symbolically incongruent brand behaviors depend on their level of self-brand connection. It challenges the conventional belief that high self-brand connection works as a protecting shield for brands and reveals that consumers with higher (vs. lower) self-brand connection react more negatively toward symbolically incongruent brand behaviors because they feel betrayed by the brand. The results unveil that a sense of betrayal can be incited, when a brand's behavior is symbolically incongruent with its established meaning. This pattern of consumer responses is consistent across four experimental studies, which involved a diverse sample of 563 participants from different countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Spain and used various product categories. The results consistently show that individuals with high self-brand connection display an increased intention to engage in negative word of mouth, along with a decline in their brand attitudes and purchase intentions, driven by feelings of betrayal. This effect is further intensified for consumers with higher self-enhancement need. It is worth noting that prior literature on betrayal has often linked such feelings to more significant transgressions and behaviors with immoral connotations.

KEYWORDS
brand extension, congruency, felt betrayal, self-brand connection, word of mouth

1 | INTRODUCTION

Brands desire to have consumers with high self-brand connection (SBC) because such consumers usually treat their brands more favorably. Consumers with high SBC tend to counter-argue negative brand information, question its validity, and attribute negative incidents (even brand failures) to other factors (e.g., Cheng et al., 2012; Fedorikhin et al., 2008; Japutra et al., 2018; Kang et al., 2023; Robertson et al., 2022). Prior research has explained the mechanisms underlying the favoring tendency of consumers with high SBC, drawing on cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957; Khamitov et al., 2020; Norton et al., 2003; Tan et al., 2019), commitment model (Cheng et al., 2012), and self-concept maintenance need (Baumeister, 2010; Lisjak et al., 2012).

While prior research has extensively explored the positive effects of high SBC, this study addresses a less examined area—*when* and *why* consumers with high SBC may negatively react when their brand acts in a way which may change its meaning. Prior literature documents that consumers build strong relationships and identify themselves with certain brands, which have meanings congruent with their self-concepts (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Sirgy, 1982). These relationships become instrumental for the consumers to reflect a particular image to others (Angelis et al., 2012; Eisingerich et al., 2015; Sedikides & Strube, 1995). Building on the tenets of social-identity theory and

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.
© 2024 The Authors. *International Journal of Consumer Studies* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

self-enhancement need (Baumeister, 2010; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Shrauger, 1975; Tajfel & Turner, 1985; Valenzuela et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2023), this study proposes that individuals seek to establish strong relationships with brands that align with their self-concept and reinforce positive evaluations of themselves. Therefore, brand actions that dilute the brand's meaning may negatively impact consumers' self-concept, especially among those who are highly connected to the brand. This study argues that such a dilution may have self-implications leading to feelings of betrayal and negative reactions. Given that self-enhancement need motivates individuals to select brands that enhance their self-concept, this study contends that individuals with a high need for self-enhancement may exhibit stronger negative reactions in response to brand meaning dilution.

This research contributes to prior literature in multiple ways. First, it adds to the limited research that shows a potential disadvantage of having highly connected consumers and provides an explanation for their negative consumer reactions. There are a few industry examples, for example, the resentment of Porsche consumers following the Cayenne SUV launch. Deighton et al. (2011) argue that consumers with high SBC are a small part of the customer portfolio but tend to be the ones who demonstrate their dissatisfaction stronger and louder. Deighton et al. (2011) provide examples of consumer comments following the Cayenne launch, such as "I am ashamed of Porsche stopping to be a pure sports car company…" or "Now 'soccer moms' can drive their kids around in a Porsche. Look at the level that Porsche has been brought down to." Please note that these comments are written in Rennlist—an international online community of Porsche *enthusiasts*. Despite such industry examples, very limited research demonstrates why high (vs. low) SBC may react more negatively. Gaustad et al. (2018) show, within the context of brand acquisitions and repositioning, that consumers with high (vs. low) SBC negatively adjust their brand attitude and SBC following a brand meaning change. They argue that consumers with high SBC adjust their attitudes because the brand can no longer signal the same meaning. Their findings imply that since consumers with low SBC do not use their brands to signal their identity, a revised brand meaning would not have negative self-implications and cause them to react. Accordingly, once consumers lowered their SBC, there would be no reason for them to react further toward the brand. However, the Porsche Cayenne case clearly shows that some consumers do not just negatively adjust their attitudes and SBC but also demonstrate an active reaction, such as writing negative comments online about the brand. Contributing to the prior literature, we explore why consumers with high SBC would not only revise their SBC and attitudes but also reveal their resentment more actively. We explain consumers' negative reactions through felt betrayal.

Furthermore, this research contributes to the existing literature on sense of betrayal within consumer–brand relationships by demonstrating that consumers may feel betrayed by a brand, even when the brand did not violate any fairness norms or ethical standards. Previous research has shown that people feel betrayed by brands following severe brand transgressions or service failures that violate fairness norms, mislead, or exploit consumers, or behave unethically (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Johnson et al., 2011; Ma, 2018; Parmentier & Fischer, 2015; Sameeni et al., 2022, 2023; Sayin & Gürhan-Canli, 2015; Schmalz & Orth, 2012). In contrast, our study demonstrates that extending to a symbolically incongruent category, such as the Porsche Cayenne case (i.e., a brand associated with sport cars extending to SUV category), can trigger feelings of betrayal which is accompanied by indignation-centered anger among highly connected consumers.

In summary, this research explores the factors that lead highly connected consumers to exhibit more negative reactions toward their brands. By examining this less-explored area, our research intends to shed light on the complexities of consumer-brand relationships and SBC. Additionally, we strive to deepen our understanding of how consumer reactions and emotions evoked by a symbolically incongruent brand behavior are influenced by their levels of SBC and self-enhancement need. The rest of the paper is organized as follows: First, we review the relevant marketing and social psychology literature on interpersonal and consumer-brand relationships, focusing on the impact of strong relationships on consumers' reactions. Next, we explore branding literature that investigates brand behaviors leading to feelings of betrayal. We use symbolically incongruent brand extensions as a context to study how a brand meaning change may affect consumer reactions and test our hypotheses across four experiments. Finally, we discuss future research areas, and the important theoretical and managerial implications of our results.

2 | CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

2.1 | Consumer–brand relationships and restorative versus disengaging consumer responses toward adversities

Consumers may satisfy psychological needs such as portraying and differentiating one's self-concept through establishing strong brand relationships (e.g., Bhanja & Mehta, 2022; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Johnson et al., 2011; Joshi & Garg, 2021; Kleine et al., 1995; Kleine III et al., 1993; Tuškej et al., 2013). SBC denotes the degree to which individuals have incorporated brands into their self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2003, 2005; Kwon & Ha, 2023; Kwon & Mattila, 2015). SBC is nurtured through a robust and meaningful relationship between individuals and brands, which evolves and strengthens over time through personal experiences, memories, and trust (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Ferraro et al., 2013; Japutra et al., 2018). Highly connected consumers regard the brand as an extension of themselves (Belk, 1988). Therefore, any negative information about or discrepant behavior of the brand might be reflected on their self-concepts (Park et al., 2006), creating a vicarious dissonance (Norton et al., 2003). Norton et al. (2003) suggest that witnessing discrepant behavior of a close friend (with whom individuals identify themselves) would lead to vicarious dissonance, prompting the individual to initiate dissonance reduction. The greater the bond with a relationship partner, the higher an individual's need to maintain the relationship and to reduce the dissonance created by the discrepant behavior (Arai et al., 2023; Norton et al., 2003; Tan

14706431, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijcs.13011 by Koc University, Wiley Online Library on [23/07/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

et al., 2019). For example, Arai et al. (2023) found that individuals with a strong connection to a disgraced athlete are more likely to advocate for the athlete after a scandal, driven by their desire to protect their own self-identity and self-worth.

Similarly, consumers with high SBC exhibit strong and positive feelings toward the brand, leading them to devote more social resources to defend the brand, attend selectively to positive brand information, question the validity of negative information, and counter-argue competitive information that derogates the brand (Cheng et al., 2012; Japutra et al., 2018; Kang et al., 2023; Khamitov et al., 2020; Park et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2022). These consumers are loyal and defensive of any brand criticism (Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005). For example, Cheng et al. (2012) showed that consumers with higher SBC defend their brands following a brand failure to sustain their brand relationship and positive self-views. Haberstroh et al. (2017) demonstrated that highly connected consumers would even overlook their brand's unethical behavior to protect their self-concept and cope with vicarious dissonance. Fedorikhin et al. (2008) explored the effect of attachment levels on willingness to forgive a defected brand extension and demonstrated that consumers with high brand attachment showed more forgiveness about the defect when the brand and extended category were highly or moderately congruent. Overall, prior literature implies that when consumers are vested in a brand relationship, they tend to reconcile with discrepant and even unethical brand behaviors and product failures.

The literature provides few exceptions to the reconciliation tendency by consumers with high SBC. Germann et al. (2014) demonstrated that strong brand relationships might augment negative consumer responses in high-severity product recalls (e.g., iPhone being recalled because its users were 207 times more likely to suffer from life-threatening brain hemorrhages) but alleviate them in low-severity product recalls (e.g., 10,000 iPhones being recalled over a battery issue). In other words, highly connected consumers reacted more negatively only when the brand caused severe harm to its consumers. Gaustad et al. (2018) showed that when a brand acted in a way that changed its meaning, consumers with high SBC would lower their brand attitude and SBC. To the best of our knowledge, other than the aforementioned work (Gaustad et al., 2018; Germann et al., 2014), negative reactions of highly connected consumers were studied only within certain contexts, in which consumers felt betrayed by the brand (e.g., Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Grégoire & Fisher, 2008).

2.2 | Strong consumer–brand relationships and felt betrayal

Consumers feel betrayed when brands *intentionally* breach the relationship norms, violate fairness norms, and exploit their consumers (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Leonidou et al., 2018; MacInnis & Folkes, 2017; Parmentier & Fischer, 2015; Sameeni et al., 2023; Schmalz & Orth, 2012). Reimann et al. (2018) found that 80% of people listed morality-related reasons when asked about occasions in which they felt betrayed by a brand. Montgomery et al. (2018) suggested that consumers with high SBC would adjust their brand attitudes negatively only when the brand breached consumers' trust (e.g., unjustified price increase or elimination of given benefits). Tripathi (2017) also demonstrated that prior trust might lead to a sense of betrayal after unjustified price changes within the retailing context. Grégoire and Fisher (2008) proposed the "love-becomes-hate" concept and demonstrated that if brands violated the "fairness" norms, consumers with high SBC would feel betrayed. As such, an important component of felt betrayal lies in the moral connotations of the brand behavior (Baghi & Gabrielli, 2021).

Felt betrayal causes strong reactions because betrayal evokes consumer anger, assumes psychological loss over the brand relationship and negative implications on self-concept through associations with the deceptive brand partner (Baghi & Gabrielli, 2021; Cheng et al., 2012; Ferraro et al., 2011; Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Khatoon & Rehman, 2021; Lee et al., 2021; Ma, 2018; Reimann et al., 2018; Yadav & Chakrabarti, 2022). Reimann et al. (2018) differentiated felt betrayal from dissatisfaction. Felt betrayal may be accompanied by indignation-centered anger (shocked, outraged) due to moral violations (Finkel et al., 2002; Rachman, 2010; Reimann et al., 2018). Dissatisfaction, on the other hand, is impersonal and has performance-related connotations and therefore does not lead to indignation-centered anger (Oliver, 2015; Reimann et al., 2018). For example, Cheng et al. (2012) showed that consumers with high SBC lowered their own self-evaluation following a negative brand performance to maintain their brand relationship. Their research revealed that dissatisfaction caused by the performance failure did not provoke any active negative reactions. On the other hand, within the context of strong consumer-brand relationships, Johnson et al. (2011) showed that consumers reacted more negatively following an unjustified dissolution of their relationship by the brand.

Adding to the prior literature on perceived betrayal, this research argues that if a brand dilutes its established meaning, consumers with high SBC may feel betrayed and indignation-centered anger and react negatively. This is because a change in the symbolic brand meaning may have potential negative implications on the self-concepts of highly connected consumers. This research focuses on the intersection of self-brand connection, brand meaning, and felt betrayal literatures. It borrows from them to conclude that consumers build strong relationships and identify themselves with certain brands, which have meanings congruent with their self-concepts. Consumers expect the brands to continue conveying the same meaning to support their self-concepts, and these relationships become instrumental for them to reflect a particular image to others. Accordingly, the potential dilution of such meaning through any brand behavior may negatively affect consumers' self-concepts and therefore cause feelings of felt betrayal and indignation-centered anger.

We specify our context as symbolically incongruent brand extensions. Consumers evaluate brand extensions based on the perceived congruency between extension and brand (Bhanja & Mehta, 2022; Bian & Yan, 2022; Chowdhury, 2007; Völckner & Sattler, 2006) because the congruency encourages categorization of the extension with its parent brand, helps transfer attitudes and affect from the

14706431, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijcs.13011 by Koc University, Wiley Online Library on [23/07/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

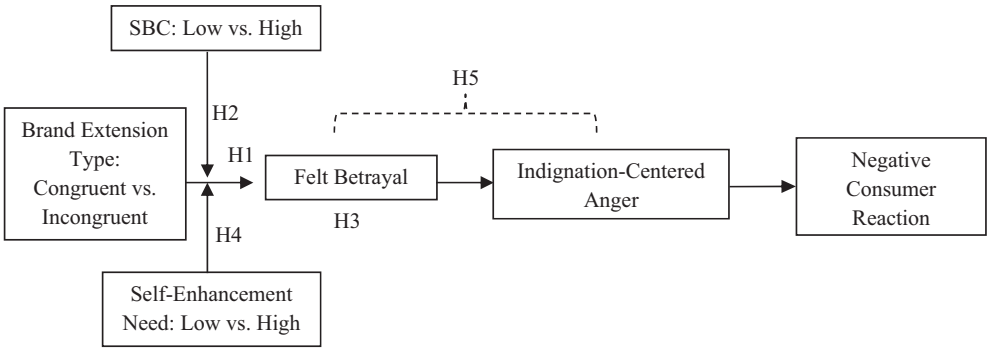


FIGURE 1 Conceptual framework.

brand to the extension (Deng & Messinger, 2021). There are two types of congruencies—category-level congruency (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Boush & Loken, 1991) and brand-level (symbolic) congruency (Bhat & Reddy, 2001; Bian & Yan, 2022; Park et al., 1991). Category-level congruency is assessed by the similarities between brand and extension based on product category characteristics. For example, Virgin Records' extension to airline travel is incongruent at the category level because no categorical or functional similarity exists. Brand-level congruency occurs when a brand and its extension share a common meaning (i.e., similar symbolic associations) (Bhat & Reddy, 2001). Virgin Records and Virgin Airlines are congruent at the brand level (both associated with innovation, quality, and a sense of fun; Business Case Studies, LLP). Similarly, Levi Strauss' extension to Levi Tailored Classics is congruent at the category level (clothing), but Levi's brand meaning, which is associated with casual living and rugged material, is not congruent with the associations of the tailored suit category.

We argue that when a brand extends to a symbolically incongruent category, its established brand meaning would be diluted, and the brand may no longer convey the same meaning to the self-concepts of its highly connected consumers. This potential self-implication would cause the highly connected consumers to feel betrayed, even in the absence of severe misconduct, unfair behavior, or performance failure. In other words, when consumers feel highly connected to a brand, its failure to convey the same meaning might be especially disconcerting for them. Moreover, this effect is expected to be amplified among consumers with a high self-enhancement need. Self-enhancement need refers to the intrinsic motivation of individuals to cultivate and maintain a positive perception of themselves (Baumeister, 2010; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Valenzuela et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2023). These individuals attach heightened importance to the impression they present to others (Eisingerich et al., 2015; Sedikides & Strube, 1995), and thus, they are more likely to remain vigilant and react more negatively toward a brand's behavior if they perceive it as potentially damaging to their self-image. The amplifying effect of high SBC on felt betrayal would consequently cause a decline in consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (predictor of actual purchasing behavior; Morrison, 1979), and lead consumers to engage in negative word of mouth (WOM) (Sharma et al., 2022; Wangenheim, 2005). Negative WOM is an active consumer reaction which influences other people's attitudes (e.g., Bone, 1995; Weitzl et al., 2018), decisions (Wangenheim & Bayón, 2004), and purchase intentions (Herr et al., 1991). Consumers would cope with the felt betrayal by revising their attitudes and transmitting their negative experience to others to justify why a brand should be avoided (Alexandrov et al., 2013) (See Figure 1 for the Conceptual Model). Formally, we hypothesize that:

H1. Consumers with higher (vs. lower) SBC would feel more betrayed following a symbolically incongruent (vs. congruent) brand extension.

H2. Following a symbolically incongruent (vs. congruent) brand extension, consumers with higher (vs. lower) SBC would respond more negatively toward the brand. They are anticipated to demonstrate (a) a more significant decline in brand attitudes, (b) decreased purchase intentions, and (c) a stronger intention to engage in negative word of mouth.

H3. (Moderated mediation): Felt betrayal would mediate the effect of a symbolically incongruent (vs. congruent) brand extension on negative consumer reactions more for consumers with higher (vs. lower) SBC.

H4. (Moderated moderation): Higher (vs. lower) need for self-enhancement would intensify the interaction effect of consumers' SBC levels (lower vs. higher) and extension's symbolic incongruency (congruent vs. incongruent) on felt betrayal and negative consumer reactions.

H5. (Serial mediation): Following a symbolically incongruent brand extension, consumers with higher (vs. lower) SBC would feel more betrayed and indignation-centered anger leading to negative word of mouth.

3 | RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The hypotheses were examined through four experimental studies, which incorporated a mix of real and fictitious brands, product

14706431, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijcs.13011 by Koc University, Wiley Online Library on [23/07/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

categories such as automobiles and clothing, and diverse samples including students and online participants from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Spain. The results consistently demonstrate that consumers with higher (vs. lower) SBC feel more betrayed and react more negatively following a symbolically incongruent brand extension. Our deliberate choice to involve participants from diverse demographic backgrounds, brand and product contexts is aimed at enhancing the overall generalizability of our findings (Field, 2015; Plucker & Makel, 2021).

Study 1 examined the effect of SBC and symbolic incongruency of an extension (both measured) on attitude decline toward a real brand (Mini Cooper) through felt betrayal. Study 2 used a fictitious brand to avoid any potential brand-induced confounds and demonstrated the interaction effect of SBC and symbolic incongruency (over the effect of category incongruency) (both manipulated) on attitude decline toward the brand through felt betrayal. Study 2 additionally ruled mood out as a potential process explanation. Study 3 measured the decline in purchase intentions (predictor of actual purchasing behavior) and found the interaction effect of SBC and symbolic incongruency on the decline in purchase intention via serial mediation through felt betrayal and attitude decline. This study measured the participants' need for self-enhancement and showed that a higher (vs. lower) need for self-enhancement would intensify the negative reactions of the highly connected consumers toward a symbolically incongruent brand extension. Finally, Study 4 explored the effect of SBC on the intention to engage in negative WOM through felt betrayal after a symbolically incongruent extension. Study 4 also measured indignation-centered anger and revealed that felt betrayal and indignation-centered anger serially mediated the effect of SBC on negative WOM. This finding provided further insights into the mechanism through felt betrayal. We utilized SPSS to analyze the data, employing *t*-tests, analysis of variance tests, and the PROCESS macro developed by Hayes (2012). A detailed description of each study is presented below.

3.1 | Study 1

Study 1 investigated the effect of SBC and symbolic incongruency (both measured; Cheng et al., 2012) on felt betrayal and attitude decline toward a brand (Mini Cooper) following a symbolically incongruent extension. One hundred and twenty three participants (59% females, $M_{Age} = 35.88$) from the United States attended the study via an online platform (Mechanical Turk).

3.1.1 | Pretests

In the process of brand and product category selection, we followed the approach by Fedorikhin et al. (2008), requiring the identification of a brand and product category familiar to our participants. To achieve this, we conducted an exploratory test ($N = 50$), in which participants were instructed to list brands that come to their mind easily and have strong meanings and to identify congruent/incongruent extension categories for these brands. We prioritized a brand capable of fostering varying levels of self-brand connections. Recognizing the capacity of car brands to evoke strong self-brand connections (Hung & Lu, 2018), we opted for Mini Cooper and the station wagon category for our main experiment from the list provided by the participants.

We ran another pretest ($N = 42$) to examine whether Mini Cooper brand and station wagon category were perceived as symbolically incongruent. Participants reported perceived congruency of the station-wagon and hatchback category (original—congruent category) to Mini Cooper brand on a 100-point slider scale, anchored at "not congruent at all" and "extremely congruent" (adopted from Barone et al., 2000; Boush & Loken, 1991; Dimitriu et al., 2017). An ANOVA test on perceived congruency of the category revealed a significant effect of the extension type ($M_{StationWagon} = 44.58$, $M_{Hatchback} = 65.89$, $F(1, 41) = 6.59$, $p < .05$). Notably, even though Mini Cooper has "Countryman"—a station wagon car in its product portfolio, station wagon category was perceived to be less congruent with the brand when compared to the hatchback category.

In a third pretest ($N = 30$), participants indicated whether extending to the station wagon or hatchback category would change the meaning of the Mini Cooper brand. An ANOVA test on meaning change revealed a significant main effect of the extension category ($M_{StationWagon} = 5.54$, $M_{Hatchback} = 3.71$, $F(1, 28) = 15.48$, $p < .01$). Taken together, the pretests established that participants perceived station wagon as a symbolically incongruent extension which has the potential to change the meaning of the Mini Cooper brand.

3.1.2 | Procedure

At the beginning of the experiment, the participants were told that they were attending a consumer preference survey. First, participants reported their attitudes and SBC levels toward the Mini Cooper brand. Next, participants were asked to imagine that they owned a Mini Cooper car and learned that Mini Cooper extended to the station wagon category. Following this information, they reported their attitude toward the brand and felt betrayal. Finally, participants indicated which car they used, their demographics and the purpose of the experiment. Only two people indicated owning a Mini Cooper. None of the participants was suspicious about the purpose of the study in any of the studies.

3.1.3 | Measures

Attitude toward the brand was measured before and after the introduction of the extension, with a three-item scale with 7-point semantic differential questions "unfavorable/favorable," "bad/good," and "negative/positive" (Cronbach's alpha = .98) (Mitchell & Olson, 1981). Attitude decline was operationalized by subtracting the attitude after the introduction of the incongruent extension from the baseline

14706431, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijcs.13011 by Koc University, Wiley Online Library on [23/07/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

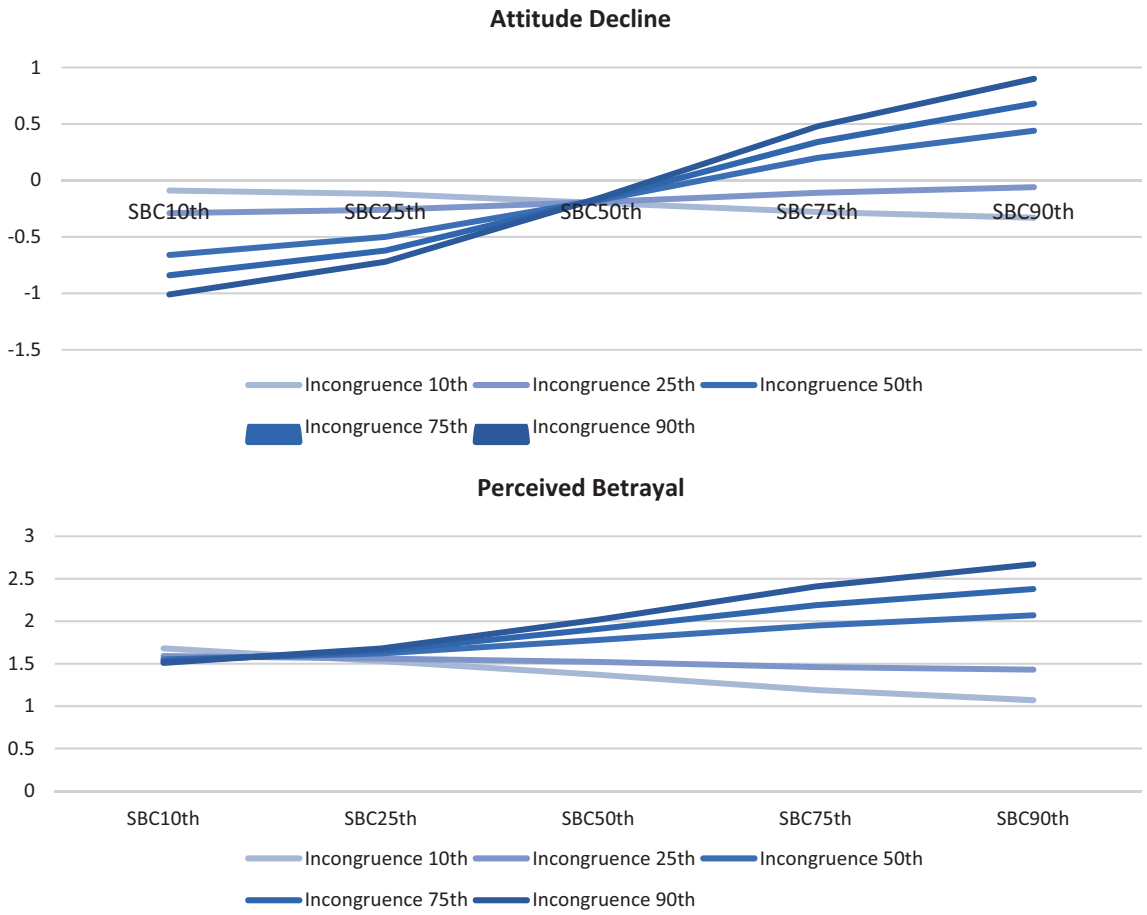


FIGURE 2 Interaction of SBC and symbolic incongruency on attitude decline and perceived betrayal.

attitude (Gaustad et al., 2018). SBC was measured with a 7-item 7-point scale (Escalas & Bettman, 2003), in which participants reported how much they agreed with the following statements; (1) "The Mini Cooper brand would reflect who I am," (2) "I would identify myself with this brand," (3) "I would feel a personal connection to the Mini Cooper brand," (4) "I would use this brand to communicate who I am to other people," (5) "I think this brand will help me become the type of person I want to be," (6) "I would consider the Mini Cooper brand to be 'me'," (7) "The Mini Cooper brand suits me well" (Cronbach's alpha = .96). Felt betrayal was measured with a one-item scale (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008), where respondents rated how "betrayed" they felt after the brand's extension. The participants reported perceived congruency of the extension category as in the pretest. This item was reverse-coded so that higher scores would indicate higher symbolic incongruency.

3.1.4 | Results

A moderation analysis using PROCESS macro (Model 1) in SPSS (Hayes, 2012) was conducted to examine the impact of symbolic incongruency and SBC on attitude decline. The results revealed a significant main effect of SBC ($\beta = .22$, $t(119) = 2.78$, $p < .01$) and an interaction effect of SBC and symbolic incongruency ($\beta = .01$, $t(119) = 2.25$, $p < .05$) (H2). Symbolic incongruency did not have a significant main effect (p's > .6). A further analysis to test the effect of symbolic incongruency on attitude decline for consumers with different levels of SBC (Spiller et al., 2013) revealed a significant effect of incongruency only for higher levels of SBC (10th percentile: $\beta = -.01$, $t(119) = -1.38$, $p = .17$; 25th percentile: $\beta = -.01$, $t(119) = -1.05$, $p = .29$; 50th percentile: $\beta = .001$, $t(119) = .17$, $p = .86$; 75th percentile: $\beta = .01$, $t(119) = 1.74$, $p = .08$; 90th percentile: $\beta = .02$, $t(119) = 2.05$, $p < .05$) (Please see Figure 2). This study reveals that as individuals' self-brand connection strengthens and their perception of symbolic incongruency grows, their attitude toward the brand declines more.

Another moderation analysis to measure the same effect on felt betrayal revealed a significant main effects of symbolic incongruency ($\beta = .01$, $t(119) = 3.10$, $p < .05$) and SBC ($\beta = .14$, $t(119) = 2.11$, $p < .05$) and an interaction effect of SBC and symbolic incongruency ($\beta = .01$, $t(119) = 2.18$, $p < .05$) (H1). The effect of symbolic incongruency on felt betrayal was significant also for higher levels of SBC (10th percentile: $\beta = .002$, $t(119) = .36$, $p = .72$; 25th percentile: $\beta = .005$, $t(119) = .99$, $p = .32$; 50th percentile: $\beta = .01$, $t(119) = 2.77$, $p < .01$; 75th percentile: $\beta = .02$, $t(119) = 3.86$, $p < .01$; 90th percentile: $\beta = .02$, $t(119) = 3.75$, $p < .01$). These findings suggest that

14706431, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijcs.13011 by Koc University, Wiley Online Library on [23/07/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

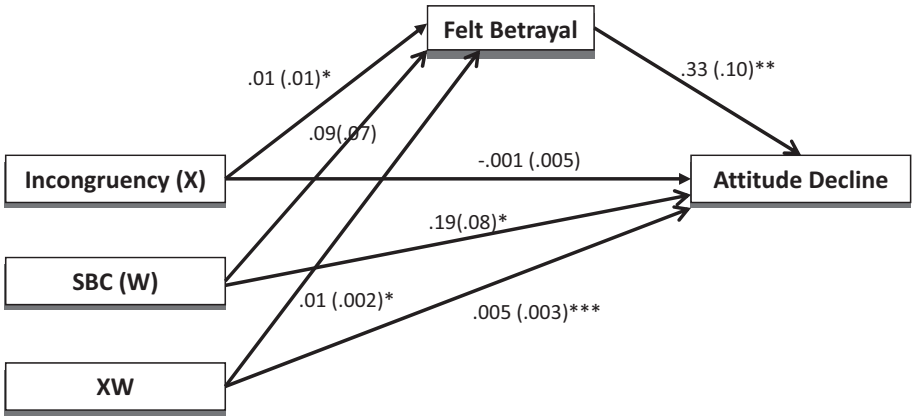


FIGURE 3 Moderated mediation path coefficients. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .10.

when the perceived symbolic congruency between the Mini Cooper brand and the station wagon category was lower, participants felt more betrayed as a function of their SBC levels.

Moderated mediation analysis

Our conceptualization predicts that SBC will influence the effect of symbolic incongruency on both perceived betrayal and attitude decline. Therefore, we used PROCESS computational macro (Model 8) for SPSS (with 10,000 bootstrapped samples) from Hayes (2012) for the analysis. The findings demonstrated that the interaction effect of symbolic incongruency and SBC on attitude decline was mediated by betrayal (effect = 0.0018, CI: [0.0001, 0.0045]) (H3). A further analysis demonstrated that the mediation occurred for higher levels of SBC, but not for lower levels of SBC (10th percentile: effect = 0.0002, CI: [−0.0062, 0.0045]; 25th percentile: effect = 0.0012, CI: [−0.0039, 0.0051]; 50th percentile: effect = 0.0033, CI:[−0.0001, 0.0069]; 75th percentile: effect = 0.0058, CI: [0.0009, 0.0108]; 90th percentile: effect = 0.0071, CI: [0.0011, 0.0135]) (see Figure 3 for the path coefficients). Therefore, we conclude that when SBC is higher, symbolic incongruency leads to an increase in felt betrayal, which in turn contributes to a decline in the attitudes toward the brand.

3.1.5 | Discussion

Study 1 revealed that individuals with higher levels of SBC felt more betrayed when the brand extended to a symbolically incongruent category. Furthermore, as the felt betrayal increased, consumers' attitudes toward the brand were more negatively affected. Remarkably, these findings are contrary to the SBC literature that suggests that strong SBC can insulate the brand from the repercussions of discrepancies and brand failures (e.g., Cheng et al., 2012; Fedorikhin et al., 2008; Japutra et al., 2018). Study 1 used a real brand to investigate the effect of SBC and symbolic incongruency on felt betrayal and attitude decline toward the brand. We acknowledge that consumers' prior relationships with real brands might affect the findings, as a real brand name might generate different perceptions of brand strength and familiarity (Meyvis & Janiszewski, 2004). To address these concerns and enhance the internal validity of the subsequent studies, we utilized fictitious brands and scenario-based manipulations of SBC and incongruency. This approach aimed to mitigate the potential impact of pre-existing attitudes or the strength of consumer-brand relationships associated with real brands on our outcomes, thereby minimizing confounding variables (Davvetas et al., 2015), and allowing us to accurately isolate the impacts of SBC and symbolic incongruency.

3.2 | Study 2

Study 2 explored the effect of SBC (low vs. high) and symbolic incongruency (congruent vs. incongruent), both manipulated, on attitude decline and felt betrayal toward a fictitious brand. We used another product category—clothing, with which participants are familiar and had prior experience (Fedorikhin et al., 2008). To disentangle the effect of symbolic incongruency over the categorical incongruency, the extension category was selected to be incongruent at the category level in both high and low symbolic incongruency conditions. Barone et al. (2000) showed that positive mood might enhance perceived congruency between an extension and a brand. Therefore, in order to exclude mood as a potential alternative explanation, Study 2 explored whether SBC conditions influenced participants' mood and consequently their reactions toward the symbolically incongruent extension.

3.2.1 | Design and procedure

One hundred and four undergraduate students (44% female, M_{Age} = 22) from a Spanish university participated in the study for partial course credit. Study 2 had a 2 × 2 between-subjects design with symbolic incongruency (congruent vs. incongruent) and SBC (low vs. high) as the between-subject factors. To establish baseline quality perceptions, participants read the following information about a fictitious clothing brand—FUMI: "We are conducting research for a well-known clothing brand, widely available around the world. For confidentiality purposes, we disguise the name of this brand – referred to as FUMI. According to consumer surveys, the products of the FUMI brand are high-quality, durable, and functional."

14706431, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijcs.13011 by Koc University, Wiley Online Library on [23/07/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

Then, participants were randomly assigned to the scenarios crafted to manipulate SBC levels (adapted from Fedorikhin et al., 2008): "You frequently/occasionally use this brand, and you are/not willing to invest time, energy, and money for this brand. You believe that the FUMI brand; (1) shows/does not show commitment to your values because the company supports the same/different values, (2) reflects/does not reflect your values and helps/does not help you tell the world who you are and what you believe in." After measuring the attitude toward the brand and SBC levels, participants were randomly assigned to the extension scenario to minimize discrepancies regarding extraneous variables (such as individual differences) (Kardes & Herr, 2019; Stoner et al., 2023): "Now, consider that the FUMI brand decides to launch table lamps (a category pretested to be incongruent for a clothing brand,[1] $N = 70$, UK participants from Prolific). A consumer survey about the new product suggests that; (1) Consumers have positive attitudes towards and are satisfied with the table lamps of the FUMI brand, (2) The values of the extended category are/not aligned with the values of the FUMI brand, and hence strengthen/weaken the established meaning of the FUMI brand." Please note that this scenario manipulated symbolic incongruency above category incongruency and additionally revealed that the extension was positively evaluated. This information was given to prevent participants from making different product performance inferences based on the SBC and incongruency manipulations. In both conditions, the participants were told that they had used the brand's products before to avoid different inferences about prior product usage depending on the SBC manipulation. This is important because prior product usage (vs. no usage) might affect consumer reactions toward a brand (Kirmani et al., 1999). Next, participants' attitudes, felt betrayal, perceived congruency and mood were measured. Finally, participants indicated the demographics and purpose of the study.

Attitude (Cronbach's alpha = .95), SBC (Cronbach's alpha = .98), and perceived congruency were measured as in Study 1. Felt betrayal was measured with a more established 3-item 7-point scale in which participants indicated their agreement (anchored at "1-strongly disagree," "7- strongly agree") with the following statements: (1) "I felt betrayed by the FUMI brand," (2) "I felt like the FUMI brand broke a fundamental promise to me," (3) "I felt like the FUMI brand let me down" (adopted from Reimann et al., 2018) (Cronbach's alpha = .95). Mood was measured with a 4-item 7-point scale; (1) "Currently I am in a good mood," (2) "As I answer these questions, I feel very cheerful," (3) "For some reason, I am not very comfortable right now,"—reverse coded (4) "At this moment I feel 'edgy' or irritable"—reverse coded (Peterson & Sauber, 1983) (Cronbach's alpha = .82), to explore whether symbolic incongruency and SBC manipulations affect the participants' mood and potentially lead to the findings.

3.2.2 | Results

Manipulation checks

An ANOVA test to explore the effect of SBC and symbolic incongruency on measured SBC found a significant effect of SBC manipulation ($M_{CongruentXLowSBC} = 2.62$, $M_{IncongruentXLowSBC} = 2.58$, $M_{CongruentXHighSBC} = 5.03$, $M_{IncongruentXHighSBC} = 5.52$; $F(1, 100) = 119.57$, $p < .01$), but not of symbolic incongruency nor an interaction effect (p's > .2). Another ANOVA test to examine the effect of SBC and symbolic incongruency on measured extension incongruency demonstrated only a significant main effect of the incongruency manipulation ($M_{CongruentXLowSBC} = 41.6$, $M_{IncongruentXLowSBC} = 74.2$, $M_{CongruentXHighSBC} = 43.2$, $M_{IncongruentXHighSBC} = 70.64$; $F(1, 100) = 37.40$, $p < .01$). These results suggested that the participants' SBC levels and perceived incongruency of the extension were manipulated as intended.

A between subjects ANOVA test to examine the effect of SBC, symbolic incongruency (between-subject factors) on attitude change revealed significant effects of symbolic incongruency ($F(1, 100) = 20.11$, $p < .01$), SBC ($F(1, 100) = 26.54$, $p < .01$), and an interaction effect ($F(1, 100) = 4.47$, $p < .05$) on attitude change (H2). Simple contrast tests showed that symbolic incongruency had a significant effect on the attitude decline only within the high SBC condition ($F(1, 100) = 21.55$, $p < .01$), but not within the low SBC condition ($p = .1$) (see Table 1a for the means).

Another ANOVA test revealed a significant main effect of symbolic incongruency ($F(1, 100) = 33.81$, $p < .01$) and a significant interaction effect ($F(1, 100) = 17.76$, $p < .01$) on felt betrayal, but not significant main effect of SBC ($p > .1$) (H1). Simple contrast tests revealed that symbolic incongruency had a significant effect only within the high SBC condition ($F(1, 100) = 51.21$, $p < .01$), but not within the low SBC condition ($p > .2$) (see Table 1b for the means).

Moderated mediation analysis

The moderated mediation analysis (Model 8 of PROCESS Macro with 5000 bootstrapped samples, Hayes, 2012) showed a significant effect of symbolic incongruency ($\beta = .63$, $SE = 0.11$, $t(100) = 5.82$, $p < .01$), and an interaction effect of symbolic incongruency and SBC on felt betrayal ($\beta = .45$, $SE = 0.11$, $t(100) = 4.21$, $p < .01$), but not a significant main effect of SBC ($p = .18$). Felt betrayal had a significant effect on attitude decline after controlling for the symbolic incongruency and SBC ($\beta = .43$, $SE = 0.11$, $t(100) = 3.81$, $p < .01$). The conditional indirect effect of symbolic incongruency on attitude decline was significant with 95% confidence interval only within high SBC (effect = 0.47, [0.1301, 0.8288]) but not within low SBC (effect = 0.07, [−0.0563, 0.2787]), with a significant indirect effect of highest order interaction (effect = 0.20, [0.0500, 0.3562]) (H3) (see Figure 4 for path coefficients).

Finally, another ANOVA test to examine the effect of symbolic incongruency and SBC on participants' mood revealed no significant main or interaction effects (p's > .3) and ruled out mood as a potential process explanation.

3.2.3 | Discussion

Study 2 replicated the findings from Study 1 by manipulating symbolic incongruency and SBC, rather than solely measuring them, while using a different product category. In Study 3, we expanded our investigation to include another outcome of felt betrayal—the decline in purchase intentions. Additionally, we introduced a moderating variable—

14706431, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijcs.13011 by Koc University, Wiley Online Library on [23/07/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

TABLE 1a Attitude means.

	Extension incongruency			
	High		Low	
Self-brand connection (SBC)	Before	After	Before	After
High	6.32 (0.67)	4.41 (1.21)	6.08 (1.08)	5.88 (1.13)
Low	4.47 (1.11)	4.44 (1.36)	4.59 (1.20)	5.18 (1.08)

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses.

TABLE 1b Felt betrayal means.

	Extension incongruency	
Self-brand connection (SBC)	High	Low
High	4.14 (1.07)	1.99 (0.93)
Low	2.95 (1.35)	2.60 (0.99)

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses.

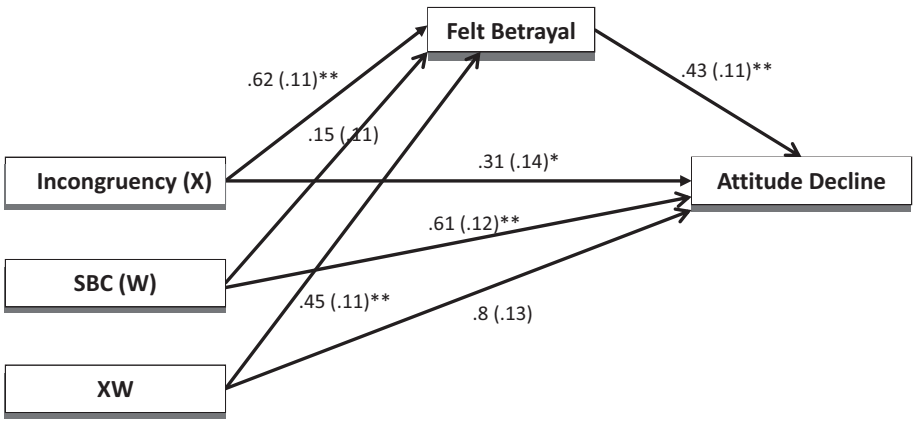


FIGURE 4 Moderated mediation path coefficients. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .10.

self-enhancement need—to analyze its influence on the relationship between SBC, felt betrayal, and the decline in attitudes and purchase intentions.

3.3 | Study 3

Study 3 examined the effect of SBC (low vs. high) and symbolic incongruency (congruent vs. incongruent) on the decline in purchase intention (PI) through felt betrayal and decline in attitudes, additionally exploring the effect of self-enhancement need. This study included PI because it is an important predictor of actual purchasing behavior (Morrison, 1979) and self-enhancement need because people with high-self enhancement need would find any deviation from the image they intend to others more disconcerting (Eisingerich et al., 2015; Sedikides & Strube, 1995).

3.3.1 | Design and procedure

We recruited 188 participants from the U.K. (48% female, $M_{Age} = 46.4$) through the Prolific Academic Platform. Study 3 had a 2 × 2 between-subjects design with symbolic incongruency (congruent vs. incongruent) and SBC (low vs. high) as the between-subject factors and self-enhancement need as a continuous variable. This study used the same manipulations as in Study 2 and additionally measured PI and self-enhancement need.

PI was measured with a 3-item 7-point scale, in which participants reported their agreement with the following statements; (1) "In the future, I will continue to purchase the products of the FUMI brand," (2) "I would buy products of the FUMI brand the next time," (3) "If I were going to purchase clothing, I would consider buying the FUMI brand" (Cronbach's alpha = .96) (Grewal et al., 1998). PI decline was operationalized by subtracting the PI after the extension from the PI before the extension. Need for self-enhancement was measured using a 5-item 7-point scale in which the participants indicated their agreement with; (1) "It is important that people see me in the best possible way," (2) "I prefer to interact with someone who formed a positive appraisal of me," (3) "I like to interact with people who offers me positive feedback," (4) "I am motivated to increase my feeling of self-worth," (5) "I want to create a good impression to gain social approval" (Escalas & Bettman, 2003) (Cronbach's alpha = .89). SBC (Cronbach's alpha = .98), attitude decline (Cronbach's alpha = .97),

14706431, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijcs.13011 by Koc University, Wiley Online Library on [23/07/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

TABLE 2a PI decline.

	Self-enhancement need					
	Low		Moderate		High	
Self-brand connection (SBC)	Congruent	Incongruent	Congruent	Incongruent	Congruent	Incongruent
High	0.11	0.61	0.01	0.6	−0.08	0.58
Low	0.06	0.25	−0.13	−0.03	−0.32	−0.31

TABLE 2b Attitude decline.

	Self-enhancement need					
	Low		Moderate		High	
Self-brand connection (SBC)	Congruent	Incongruent	Congruent	Incongruent	Congruent	Incongruent
High	0.49	1.26	0.34	1.4	−0.02	1.54
Low	−0.59	0.08	−0.81	−0.33	−1.01	−0.74

TABLE 2c Felt betrayal.

	Self-enhancement need					
	Low		Moderate		High	
Self-brand connection (SBC)	Congruent	Incongruent	Congruent	Incongruent	Congruent	Incongruent
High	2.26	3.15	1.77	3.11	1.29	3.08
Low	2.14	2.52	2.02	2.36	1.89	2.2

felt betrayal (Cronbach's alpha = .96), and perceived incongruency were measured and operationalized as in Study 2.

3.3.2 | Results

An ANOVA test to explore the effect of SBC and symbolic incongruency manipulations on measured SBC demonstrated a significant effect of SBC manipulation ($M_{CongruentXLowSBC} = 2.40$, $M_{IncongruentXLowSBC} = 2.61$, $M_{CongruentXHighSBC} = 5.50$, $M_{IncongruentXHighSBC} = 5.19$; $F(1, 184) = 228.61$, $p < .01$), but did not reveal a significant effect of symbolic incongruency, nor an interaction (p's > .1). Another ANOVA test revealed a significant effect of symbolic incongruency manipulation ($M_{CongruentXLowSBC} = 63.80$, $M_{IncongruentXLowSBC} = 73.56$, $M_{CongruentXHighSBC} = 50.25$, $M_{IncongruentXHighSBC} = 66.08$; $F(1, 184) = 15.61$, $p < .01$), and SBC manipulation ($F(1, 184) = 10.53$, $p < .01$) on measured extension incongruency, but not a significant interaction effect ($p > .3$). As such, the manipulations worked as intended.

An analysis (Model 3 of PROCESS Macro, Hayes, 2012) to test the interaction effect of SBC and symbolic incongruency on purchase decline for different levels of self-enhancement need revealed a significant interaction effect of SBC and symbolic incongruency on PI decline ($\beta = .12$, $SE = 0.06$, $t(180) = 2.18$, $p < .05$), and significant main effects of symbolic incongruency ($\beta = .16$, $SE = 0.06$, $t(180) = 2.93$, $p < .01$), SBC ($\beta = .19$, $SE = 0.06$, $t(180) = 3.44$, $p < .01$), and self-enhancement need ($\beta = -.008$, $SE = 0.003$, $t(180) = -2.60$, $p < .05$). Symbolic incongruency had a significant effect on decline in PI only within the high SBC condition, and this effect was stronger for consumers with higher self-enhancement need ($Low_{Self\text{-}Enhancement\text{-}Need}$: $\beta = .24$, $t(180) = 2.35$, $p < .05$; $Moderate_{Self\text{-}EnhancementNeed}$: $\beta = .29$, $t(180) = 3.60$, $p < .01$; $High_{Self\text{-}EnhancementNeed}$: $\beta = .33$, $t(180) = 2.99$, $p < .01$) (H4) (see Table 2a for the means).

Further analysis to explore the interaction effect of SBC and symbolic incongruency on attitude decline for different self-enhancement need levels (Model 3 of PROCESS Macro, Hayes, 2012) showed a marginally significant interaction effect of SBC and symbolic incongruency on attitude decline ($\beta = .17$, $SE = 0.09$, $t(180) = 1.89$, $p = .06$), and significant main effects of symbolic incongruency ($\beta = .40$, $SE = 0.09$, $t(180) = 4.50$, $p < .01$), SBC ($\beta = .69$, $SE = 0.09$, $t(180) = 7.78$, $p < .01$), and self-enhancement need ($\beta = -.01$, $SE = 0.005$, $t(180) = -2.12$, $p < .05$). Symbolic incongruency had significant effect on attitude decline only within the high SBC condition, and this effect strengthened for consumers with higher self-enhancement need ($Low_{Self\text{-}EnhancementNeed}$: $\beta = .38$, $t(180) = 2.25$, $p < .05$; $Moderate_{Self\text{-}EnhancementNeed}$: $\beta = .58$, $t(180) = 4.47$, $p < .01$; $High_{Self\text{-}EnhancementNeed}$: $\beta = .78$, $t(180) = 4.35$, $p < .01$) (H4) (see Table 2b for the means).

Finally, we explored the interaction effect of symbolic incongruency and SBC on felt betrayal for different levels of self-

14706431, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijcs.13011 by Koc University, Wiley Online Library on [23/07/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

enhancement need (Model 3 of PROCESS Macro, Hayes, 2012). The analysis revealed a significant interaction effect of SBC and symbolic incongruency on felt betrayal ($\beta = .25$, $SE = 0.09$, $t(180) = 2.70$, $p < .01$) and significant main effects of symbolic incongruency ($\beta = .41$, $SE = 0.09$, $t(180) = 4.43$, $p < .01$) and self-enhancement need ($\beta = -.01$, $SE = 0.01$, $t(180) = -2.09$, $p < .05$) (see Table 2c for the means). Symbolic incongruency did not have a significant effect on felt betrayal for consumers with low SBC (p's > .2). However, for consumers with high SBC, the effect of symbolic incongruency on felt betrayal strengthened as self-enhancement levels of the consumers increased ($Low_{Self\text{-}EnhancementNeed}$: $\beta = .45$, $t(180) = 2.56$, $p < .05$; $Moderate_{Self\text{-}EnhancementNeed}$: $\beta = .67$, $t(180) = 5.02$, $p < .01$; $High_{Self\text{-}EnhancementNeed}$: $\beta = .89$, $t(180) = 4.83$, $p < .01$) (H4). Our results consistently demonstrated that symbolic incongruency had a significant effect on consumer responses only for consumers with high SBC and this effect was stronger for the consumers with higher levels of self-enhancement need.

Serial moderated mediation analysis

In serial moderated mediation, mediators have a causal link with each other (Hayes, 2012), and the independent variables (symbolic incongruency and SBC) influence the mediators (felt betrayal and attitude decline) consecutively, which subsequently influences the dependent variable (decline in purchase intention). The serial moderated mediation analysis (Model 85 of PROCESS Macro with 5000 bootstrapped samples, Hayes, 2012) revealed a significant interaction effect of symbolic incongruency and SBC on felt betrayal ($\beta = .97$, $SE = 0.37$, $t(184) = 2.60$, $p < .01$, [0.2336, 1.7033]), a marginally significant effect of SBC ($\beta = -1.16$, $SE = 0.59$, $t(184) = -1.97$, $p = .05$, [−2.3275, 0.0036]), but the effect of symbolic incongruency or SBC was not significant ($p > .2$). Felt betrayal had a significant effect on attitude decline ($\beta = .23$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(183) = 3.27$, $p < .01$, [0.0903, 0.3643]). Felt betrayal ($\beta = .09$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(182) = 2.47$, $p < .05$, [0.0187, 0.1674]) and attitude decline ($\beta = .32$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(182) = 8.34$, $p < .01$, [0.2483, 0.4022]) had significant effects on decline in PI. The serial moderated mediation analysis revealed that the effect of symbolic incongruency on the decline in PI was mediated by felt betrayal within high SBC ($\beta = .12$, [0.0066, 0.2692]), and not within low SBC ($\beta = .03$ [−0.0142, 0.0965]). The effect of symbolic incongruency on the decline in PI was mediated by attitude decline within high SBC ($\beta = .27$, [0.1098, 0.4667]), and not within low SBC ($\beta = .11$, [−0.0482, 0.3083]). And finally, the effect of symbolic incongruency on the decline in PI was serially mediated within high SBC ($\beta = .09$, [0.0303, 0.1878]), and not within low SBC ($\beta = .02$, [−0.0115, 0.0693]).

3.3.3 | Discussion

Study 3 replicated our previous findings and additionally demonstrated that people with higher need for self-enhancement reacted more negatively following a symbolically incongruent extension and that felt betrayal and attitude decline serially mediated the effect of symbolic incongruency and SBC on the decline in PI.

3.4 | Study 4

Study 4 examined the effect of SBC (low vs. high) on another and more active consumer reaction—negative WOM following a symbolically incongruent brand extension. Unlike the previous studies, in which participants shared their attitudes and PIs, in Study 4, we asked participants to infer how another person would react. This indirect approach intends to decrease potential self-presentation concerns because people may be reluctant to reveal their intention to engage in negative WOM (Liu & Baskin, 2021). Additionally, this study measured indignation-centered anger together with felt betrayal to provide deeper insights into the construct.

3.4.1 | Design and procedure

One hundred and forty eight participants from the U.K. (73% female, $M_{Age} = 43.2$) recruited through the Prolific online panel were given the following information about the fictitious clothing brand—FUMI: "We are conducting research for a well-known clothing brand, widely available around the world. For confidentiality purposes, we disguise the name of this brand—referred to as FUMI. According to the consumer surveys, the products of the FUMI brand are good-quality, functional, and have an appealing design. The FUMI brand is associated with being "active, successful, humble, up-to-date, and encouraging." This baseline information intended to establish an overall positive attitude toward the brand. SBC levels were manipulated with scenarios (adapted from Fedorikhin et al., 2008): "We want to share with you information about a consumer of the FUMI brand—Taylor. Taylor frequently/occasionally uses the products of the FUMI brand and has favorable attitude toward it. Taylor is /not willing to invest time, energy, and money in this brand. It is the type of brand, if taken off the market, Taylor would /not feel upset, sad or angry. Taylor believes that the associations of the FUMI brand reflect/do not reflect who Taylor is, and hence Taylor feels/does not feel a personal connection to the brand." Following the SBC manipulation, participants were asked to imagine that Taylor (a name tested to be gender-neutral to avoid any gender effect; Malik et al., 2022) read the following newspaper article that introduced a new product line: "A new direction for the FUMI brand! After weeks of speculation and rumors, FUMI confirms the launch of a new product line "Mystique" to the market. This new product line is expected to strengthen its position as a clothing company. The FUMI brand states that the launch of the new Mystique line will develop the FUMI brand to reach different consumer segments. The Mystique line entails modifications in the visual profile of the brand and the types of products offered. The CEO of FUMI said, "the new Mystique line will deliver upper-class, fancy, and glamorous products, changing the existing FUMI image" (adapted from Gaustad et al., 2018). Next, participants indicated their expectations on whether Taylor would engage in negative WOM with a 7-point scale, in which participants reported their agreement with "Taylor would spread negative word of mouth about the FUMI brand" (adopted from Grégoire & Fisher, 2006). Next, the participants reported their expectations about whether Taylor would feel betrayed (measured as in previous

14706431, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijcs.13011 by Koc University, Wiley Online Library on [23/07/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

TABLE 3 Means.

Self-brand connection (SBC)	Negative WOM	Felt betrayal	Indignation-centered anger
High	3.11 (1.26)	4.30 (1.29)	3.90 (1.56)
Low	2.69 (1.15)	2.68 (.97)	2.95 (1.19)

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses.

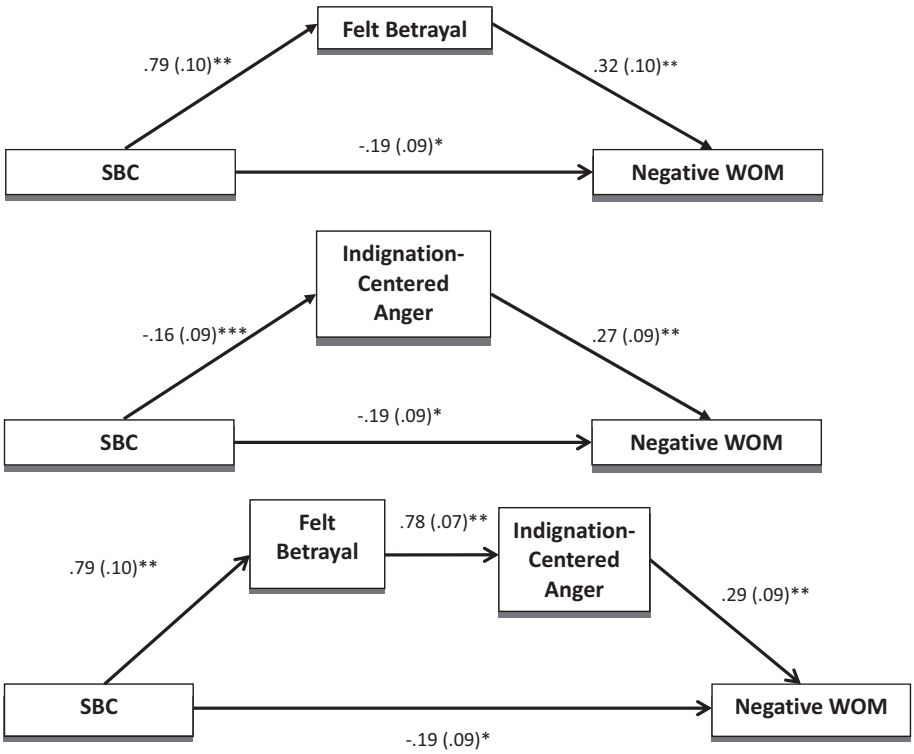


FIGURE 5 Serial mediation path coefficients for symbolically incongruent extension. $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .10$.

studies; Cronbach's alpha = .96), and indignation-centered anger (measured with a 2-item 7-point scale) (Taylor would feel shocked/outraged) ($r = .76$; $p < .01$) (adopted from Reimann et al., 2018). The order of measurement of felt betrayal and indignation-centered anger was randomized. SBC (Cronbach's alpha = .83) and congruency were measured as in the previous studies.

3.4.2 | Results

A series of independent sample *t*-tests to explore the effect of SBC (low vs. high) revealed a significant effect of SBC on negative WOM ($t(146) = -1.97$, $p < .05$), felt betrayal ($t(146) = -8.34$, $p < .01$), and indignation-centered anger ($t(146) = -3.98$, $p < .01$) (means in Table 3) (H1 & H2). To explore whether felt betrayal led to negative WOM through indignation-centered anger, we ran a serial mediation test (PROCESS, Model 6) (see Figure 5 for path coefficients). The serial mediation analysis (Model 6 of PROCESS Macro with 5000 bootstrapped samples, Hayes, 2012) revealed that the effect of SBC on the negative WOM was mediated by felt betrayal ($\beta = .26$, [0.1023, 0.4392]). The effect of SBC on negative WOM was serially mediated by felt betrayal and indignation-centered anger ($\beta = .18$, [0.0698, 0.3044]) (H5). However, the effect of SBC on negative WOM was not mediated by indignation-centered anger alone ($\beta = -.05$, [−0.1224, 0.0002]).

3.4.3 | Discussion

The findings suggested that following a symbolically incongruent extension, participants expected Taylor with higher (vs. lower) SBC to feel more betrayed and indignation-centered anger, which consequently led to negative WOM. The analyses demonstrated that indignation-centered anger would mediate the effect of SBC on negative WOM only when it is accompanied by felt betrayal. However, felt betrayal alone mediated the effect of SBC on negative WOM. These results contribute to the prior research by providing further insights on the mechanism through felt betrayal.

4 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

When consumers are invested in a brand relationship, they often overlook inconsistencies and even unethical brand behaviors and

14706431, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijcs.13011 by Koc University, Wiley Online Library on [23/07/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

product failures (e.g., Arai et al., 2023; Tan et al., 2019). Notably, consumers with high SBC allocate extra social resources to defend their brand and maintain the brand relationship (e.g., Kang et al., 2023; Robertson et al., 2022). In contrast, we demonstrate that extending to a symbolically incongruent category can elicit feelings of betrayal, accompanied by indignation-centered anger among highly connected consumers, resulting in negative consumer reactions. We elucidate why consumers with high SBC not only revise their SBC and attitudes but also exhibit more pronounced expressions of resentment, such as engaging in negative word-of-mouth. Consumers build strong brand relationships to convey a particular image to others (Bhanja & Mehta, 2022; Joshi & Garg, 2021). The dilution of brand meaning through a symbolically incongruent extension could hinder the brand's ability to convey the desired image and affect self-concepts of highly connected consumers, ultimately leading to felt betrayal. Our research introduces an antecedent of felt betrayal alongside the established ones, such as severe misconduct, unfair and unethical brand behavior, or performance failure (e.g., Ma, 2018; Sameeni et al., 2023). While our findings align with prior literature on felt betrayal's consequences, our distinct contribution lies in illustrating that a symbolically incongruent brand extension, without severe brand violations, can evoke feelings of betrayal and reverse the favoring tendency of consumers with high SBC.

4.1 | Theoretical implications

Our conceptualization aims for multiple theoretical contributions. It builds upon the limited research that shows a potential disadvantage of having highly connected consumers (e.g., Deighton et al., 2011; Gaustad et al., 2018) by providing an explanation, rooted in the concept of felt betrayal, for why highly connected consumers tend to more actively and strongly express their resentment when confronted with symbolically incongruent brand behavior. In this way, our research enriches the literature on social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1985) and vicarious dissonance (Norton et al., 2003) theories, along with consumer-brand relationships (e.g., Kang et al., 2023; Robertson et al., 2022).

The phenomenon of felt betrayal toward brands is well-documented in cases involving significant brand transgressions, service failures, and fairness norm violations (e.g., Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Johnson et al., 2011; Leonidou et al., 2018; MacInnis & Folkes, 2017; Parmentier & Fischer, 2015; Sameeni et al., 2023). Expanding on the prior literature, this research shows that extending to a symbolically incongruent category (e.g., Porsche extending to the SUV category) would lead consumers with high (vs. low) SBC to feel strong negative emotions such as indignation-centered anger and felt betrayal—emotions previously studied within the context of severe brand transgressions and unfair actions.

This research also contributes to the brand extension literature, which focuses on the effect of either category-level incongruency (Fedorikhin et al., 2008) or brand-level incongruency (Dimitriu et al., 2017; Gaustad et al., 2018) and reveals the effect of symbolic incongruency over category-level incongruency on consumer reactions. Furthermore, it highlights the role of individual differences, such as the self-enhancement need, in shaping consumer reactions to brand extensions.

4.2 | Practical implications

The insights derived from our research offer valuable guidance for marketing practitioners. Based on our findings, we recommend that brands possessing strong symbolic meanings and highly connected consumers should be extra vigilant in ensuring that their behaviors align with their brand's meaning. While a strong SBC can yield positive outcomes (e.g., Cheng et al., 2012; Dash et al., 2021; Fedorikhin et al., 2008; Japutra et al., 2018), our research unveils a notable vulnerability. This vulnerability revolves around the amplified negative reactions of consumers with high SBC, when confronted with brand behaviors that lack symbolic congruence. This research carries substantial implications for brand managers committed to nurturing SBC, equipping them with important insights to proactively address potential unfavorable consumer reactions.

While our study focused on symbolic incongruency in brand extensions, it is imperative to exercise caution across all consumer touch-points. Marketing professionals are encouraged to diligently ensure that every brand behavior, including corporate social responsibility initiatives, advertising efforts, and social media campaigns, is congruent with the brand meaning. For example, if a person feels connected to a brand due to its adventurous and entrepreneurial meaning, encountering an advertisement campaign that portrays the brand as conventional and traditional might evoke feelings of betrayal. Similarly, the potential consequences of a change in a well-established brand personality should not be underestimated. Brand personalities consist of traits like sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness (Aaker, 1997). Brand managers should recognize their brand's personality and adapt their activities to align with and embody the corresponding traits. To illustrate, consider a trusted bank recognized for its competence or a luxury brand esteemed for its sophistication. Brands possessing such attributes should carefully consider their approach when using marketing tactics like self-deprecating humor, where the brand playfully pokes fun at itself (Kobel & Groeppel-Klein, 2021). While such humor can be entertaining, it may be seen as symbolically incongruent, resulting in unintended negative consequences.

4.3 | Limitations and future directions

While the findings of this research have important implications for both theory and practice, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations that can guide future research. The experimental studies utilized hypothetical scenarios where participants were presented with descriptions of brand, SBC levels, and extended product categories. In real-life situations, consumers often gather additional information

14706431, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijcs.13011 by Koc University, Wiley Online Library on [23/07/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

about the brand, potentially impacting their responses to the brand extension. The scope of this research is limited to examining consumer responses immediately following exposure to symbolically incongruent brand extensions. Future research may explore the long-term consequences of symbolic incongruency and offer potential strategies for brand recovery (Weitzl et al., 2018). Influence of different consumption contexts on consumer reactions might also be explored. Specifically, the negative effects of symbolic incongruency may be augmented within a conspicuous (versus private) consumption context because the potential spill-over effect of the incongruency to the self-concept would be greater. Conversely, a meaning change might not cause felt betrayal for products consumed privately because such a meaning change would have less self-implications. Future research could explore the emotions that may accompany felt betrayal. While this research demonstrated that felt betrayal is accompanied by indignation-centered anger, further investigations may reveal that consumers experience more self-conscious emotions together with betrayal because such emotions require more self-reflection. Another intriguing research area is investigating consumer responses to brands that conflict with their personal values. Marketers, in their efforts to adapt to evolving consumer values and popular social movements, may inadvertently alienate some consumers, leading to negative reactions. Future research may investigate whether such brand initiatives could elicit felt betrayal, influenced by factors such as consumer sensitivity to the topic and the perceived level of contradiction in values.

5 | CONCLUSION

This research focused on *the potential negative effects of having highly connected consumers* and demonstrated how and why consumers with high SBC react negatively to symbolically incongruent brand extensions. The rationale behind this reaction lies in the potential dilution of brand meaning through a symbolically incongruent extension, which may hinder the brand's capacity to convey its intended image and affect the self-concepts of highly connected consumers. Consequently, a meaning change would be more unsettling for consumers with higher (vs. lower) SBC. This research revealed that the amplifying effect of high SBC would lead highly connected consumers to feel betrayed, consequently causing a decline in attitudes, purchase intentions, and an increase in the intention to engage in negative WOM. This effect would be strengthened for consumers with high self-enhancement need. Drawing insights from self-brand connection, brand meaning, and felt betrayal literature, this research underscores the complex interaction between consumer-brand connections, symbolic congruency, and consumer responses.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

FUNDING INFORMATION

No funding was received to assist with the preparation of this manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in OSF at https://osf.io/j5q87/.

ORCID

Eda Sayin https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2433-4497

ENDNOTE

[1] To evaluate the categorical congruency between table lamps and clothing, we conducted a pretest. Participants were provided with a categorical congruency definition and subsequently asked to assess the congruency of categories like sunglasses, sneakers, and table lamps with the clothing category. A repeated measures ANOVA test revealed that table lamp category ($M = 82.9$) was perceived to be significantly more incongruent than sunglasses ($M = 42.5$, $F(1, 69) = 91.43$, $p < .01$) and sneakers ($M = 36.34$, $F(1, 69) = 113.46$, $p < .01$) categories.

REFERENCES

Aaker, D. A., & Keller, K. L. (1990). Consumer evaluations of brand extensions. *Journal of Marketing*, *54*(1), 27–41.

Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *34*(3), 347–356.

Alexandrov, A., Lilly, B., & Babakus, E. (2013). The effects of social-and self-motives on the intentions to share positive and negative word of mouth. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *41*(5), 531–546.

Angelis, M. D., Bonezzi, A., Peluso, A. A., Rucker, D. D., & Costabile, M. (2012). On braggarts and gossips: A self-enhancement account of word-of-mouth generation and transmission. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *49*(4), 551–563.

Arai, A., Ko, Y. J., Asada, A., & Connaughton, D. (2023). The effects of self-brand connection and self-construal on consumers' psychological and behavioral responses to athlete scandals. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, *32*(1), 62–75.

Baghi, I., & Gabrielli, V. (2021). The role of betrayal in the response to value and performance brand crisis. *Marketing Letters*, *32*(2), 203–217.

Barone, M. J., Miniard, P. W., & Romeo, J. B. (2000). The influence of positive mood on brand extension evaluations. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *26*(4), 386–400.

Baumeister, R. F. (2010). *The self*. Oxford University Press.

Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *15*(2), 139–168.

Bhanja, N., & Mehta, R. (2022). It is better with a shade of blue! Consumer evaluation of unisex extension of brands. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, *46*(6), 2239–2253.

Bhat, S., & Reddy, S. K. (2001). The impact of parent brand attribute associations and affect on brand. *Journal of Business Research*, *53*(3), 111–122.

Bhattacharya, C. B., & Sen, S. (2003). Consumer-company identification: A framework for understanding consumers' relationships with companies. *Journal of Marketing*, *67*(2), 76–88.

Bian, W., & Yan, G. (2022). Analyzing intention to purchase brand extension via brand attribute associations: The mediating and moderating

14706431, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijcs.13011 by Koc University, Wiley Online Library on [23/07/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

role of emotional consumer-brand relationship and brand commitment. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 884673.

Bone, P. F. (1995). Word-of-mouth effects on short-term and long-term product judgments. *Journal of Business Research*, *32*(3), 213–223.

Boush, D. M., & Loken, B. (1991). A process tracing study of brand extension evaluation. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *28*(1), 16–28.

Cheng, S. Y., White, T. B., & Chaplin, L. N. (2012). The effects of self-brand connections on responses to brand failure: A new look at the consumer–brand relationship. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *22*(2), 280–288.

Chowdhury, M. H. K. (2007). An investigation of consumer evaluation of brand extensions. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, *31*(4), 377–384.

Dash, G., Kiefer, K., & Paul, J. (2021). Marketing-to-millennials: Marketing 4.0, customer satisfaction and purchase intention. *Journal of Business Research*, *122*, 608–620.

Davvetas, V., Sichtmann, C., & Diamantopoulos, A. (2015). The impact of perceived brand globalness on consumers' willingness to pay. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *32*(4), 431–434.

Deighton, J., Avery, J., & Fear, J. (2011). Porsche: The Cayenne launch. Harvard Business School Marketing Unit Case, (511-068).

Deng, Q. C., & Messinger, P. R. (2021). Dimensions of brand-extension fit. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *39*(3), 764–787.

Dimitriu, R., Warlop, L., & Samuelsen, B. M. (2017). Brand extension similarity can backfire when you look for something specific. *European Journal of Marketing*, *51*, 850–868.

Eisingerich, A. B., Chun, H. H., Liu, Y., Jia, H. M., & Bell, S. J. (2015). Why recommend a brand face-to face but not on facebook? How word-of-mouth on online social sites differs from traditional word-of-mouth. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *25*(1), 120–128.

Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2003). You are what they eat: The influence of reference groups on consumers' connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *13*(3), 339–348.

Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2005). Self-construal, reference groups and brand meaning. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *32*(3), 378–389.

Fedorikhin, A., Park, C. W., & Thomson, M. (2008). Beyond fit and attitude: The effect of emotional attachment on consumer responses to brand extensions. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *18*(4), 281–291.

Ferraro, R., Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2011). Our possessions, our selves: Domains of self-worth and the possession–self link. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *21*(2), 169–177.

Ferraro, R., Kirmani, A., & Matherly, T. (2013). Look at me! Look at me! Conspicuous brand usage, self-brand connection, and dilution. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *50*(4), 477–488.

Festinger, L. A. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance* (p. 88). Row Peterson.

Field, A. (2015). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics*. Sage.

Finkel, E. J., Rusbult, C. E., Kumashiro, M., & Hannon, P. A. (2002). Dealing with betrayal in close relationships: Does commitment promote forgiveness? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *82*(6), 956–974.

Gaustad, T., Samuelsen, B. M., Warlop, L., & Fitzsimons, G. J. (2018). The perils of self-brand connections: Consumer response to changes in brand meaning. *Psychology & Marketing*, *35*(11), 818–829.

Germann, F., Grewal, R., Ross, W. T., & Srivastava, R. K. (2014). Product recalls and the moderating role of brand commitment. *Marketing Letters*, *25*(2), 179–191.

Grégoire, Y., & Fisher, R. J. (2006). The effects of relationship quality on customer retaliation. *Marketing Letters*, *17*(1), 31–46.

Grégoire, Y., & Fisher, R. J. (2008). Customer betrayal and retaliation: When your best customers become your worst enemies. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *36*(2), 247–261.

Grewal, D., Krishnan, R., Baker, J., & Borin, N. (1998). The effect of store name, brand name and price discounts on consumers' evaluations and purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing*, *74*(3), 331–352.

Haberstroh, K., Orth, U. R., Hoffmann, S., & Brunk, B. (2017). Consumer response to unethical corporate behavior: A re-examination and extension of the moral decoupling model. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *140*(1), 161–173.

Hayes, A. F. (2012). PROCESS: A versatile computational tool for observed variable mediation, moderation, and conditional process modeling.

Herr, P. M., Kardes, F. R., & Kim, J. (1991). Effects of word-of-mouth and product-attribute information on persuasion: An accessibility-diagnosticity perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *17*(4), 454–462.

Hung, H. Y., & Lu, H. T. (2018). The rosy side and the blue side of emotional brand attachment. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, *17*(3), 302–312.

Japutra, A., Ekinci, Y., & Simkin, L. (2018). Positive and negative behaviours resulting from brand attachment: The moderating effects of attachment styles. *European Journal of Marketing*, *52*, 1185–1202.

Johnson, A. R., Matear, M., & Thomson, M. (2011). A coal in the heart: Self-relevance as a post-exit predictor of consumer anti-brand actions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *38*(1), 108–125.

Joshi, R., & Garg, P. (2021). Role of brand experience in shaping brand love. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, *45*(2), 259–272.

Kang, J., Faria, A. A., Lee, J., & Choi, W. J. (2023). Will consumers give us another chance to bounce back? Effects of precrisis commitments to social and product responsibility on brand resilience. *The Journal of Product and Brand Management*, *32*, 927–941.

Kardes, F. R., & Herr, P. M. (2019). Experimental research methods in consumer psychology. *Handbook of Research Methods in Consumer Psychology*, 3–16.

Khamitov, M., Grégoire, Y., & Suri, A. (2020). A systematic review of brand transgression, service failure recovery and product-harm crisis: Integration and guiding insights. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *48*(3), 519–542.

Khatoon, S., & Rehman, V. (2021). Negative emotions in consumer brand relationship: A review and future research agenda. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, *45*, 719–749.

Kirmani, A., Sood, S., & Bridges, S. (1999). The ownership effect in consumer responses to brand line stretches. *Journal of Marketing*, *63*(1), 88–101.

Kleine, R. E., III, Kleine, S. S., & Kernan, J. B. (1993). Mundane consumption and the self: A social-identity perspective. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *2*(3), 209–235.

Kleine, S. S., Kleine, R. E., III, & Allen, C. T. (1995). How is a possession "me" or "not me"? Characterizing types and an antecedent of material possession attachment. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *22*(3), 327–343.

Kobel, S., & Groeppel-Klein, A. (2021). No laughing matter, or a secret weapon? Exploring the effect of humor in service failure situations. *Journal of Business Research*, *132*, 260–269.

Kwon, E., & Mattila, A. S. (2015). The effect of self–brand connection and self-construal on brand lovers' word of mouth (WOM). *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, *56*(4), 427–435.

Kwon, S., & Ha, S. (2023). Examining identity-and bond-based hashtag community identification: The moderating role of self-brand connections. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, *17*(1), 78–93.

Lee, H. M., Chen, T., Chen, Y. S., Lo, W. Y., & Hsu, Y. H. (2021). The effects of consumer ethnocentrism and consumer animosity on perceived betrayal and negative word-of-mouth. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, *33*(3), 712–730.

Leonidou, L. C., Aykol, B., Hadjimarcou, J., & Palihawadana, D. (2018). Betrayal in buyer–seller relationships: Exploring its causes, symptoms, forms, effects, and therapies. *Psychology and Marketing*, *35*(5), 341–356.

Lisjak, M., Lee, A. Y., & Gardner, W. L. (2012). When a threat to the brand is a threat to the self: The importance of brand identification and implicit self-esteem in predicting defensiveness. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *38*(9), 1120–1132.

Liu, P. J., & Baskin, E. (2021). The quality versus quantity trade-off: Why and when choices for self-versus others differ. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *47*(5), 728–740.

14706431, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijcs.13011 by Koc University, Wiley Online Library on [23/07/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

Ma, L. (2018). How to turn your friends into enemies: Causes and outcomes of customers' sense of betrayal in crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, *44*(3), 374–384.

MacInnis, D. J., & Folkes, V. S. (2017). Humanizing brands: When brands seem to be like me, part of me, and in a relationship with me. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *27*(3), 355–374.

Malik, S., Sayin, E., & Jain, K. (2022). The "proximal depiction effect" of indulgent (versus non-indulgent) foods on consumer responses. *European Journal of Marketing*, *56*(11), 2833–2861.

Meyvis, T., & Janiszewski, C. (2004). When are broader brands stronger brands? An accessibility perspective on the success of brand extensions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *31*(2), 346–357.

Mitchell, A. A., & Olson, J. C. (1981). Are product attribute beliefs the only mediator of advertising effects on brand attitude? *Journal of Marketing Research*, *18*(3), 318–332.

Montgomery, N. V., Raju, S., Desai, K. K., & Unnava, H. R. (2018). When good consumers turn bad: Psychological contract breach in committed brand relationships. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *28*(3), 437–449.

Morrison, D. G. (1979). Purchase intentions and purchase behavior. *Journal of Marketing*, *43*(2), 65–74.

Norton, M. I., Monin, B., Cooper, J., & Hogg, M. A. (2003). Vicarious dissonance: Attitude change from the inconsistency of others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *85*(1), 47–62.

Oliver, R. L. (2015). *Satisfaction: A behavioral perspective on the consumer*. Routledge.

Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., & Eisingerich, A. B. (2016). *Brand admiration: Building a business people love*. John Wiley & Sons.

Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., Priester, J., Eisingerich, A. B., & Iacobucci, D. (2010). Brand attachment and brand attitude strength: Conceptual and empirical differentiation of two critical brand equity drivers. *Journal of Marketing*, *74*(6), 1–17.

Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., & Priester, J. R. (2006). Beyond attitudes: Attachment and consumer behavior. *Seoul National Journal*, *12*(2), 3–36.

Park, C. W., Milberg, S., & Lawson, R. (1991). Evaluation of brand extensions: The role of product feature similarity and brand concept consistency. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *18*(2), 185–193.

Parmentier, M. A., & Fischer, E. (2015). Things fall apart: The dynamics of brand audience dissipation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *41*(5), 1228–1251.

Peterson, R. A., & Sauber, M. (1983). A mood scale for survey research. *Handbook of Marketing Scales*, 187–188.

Plucker, J. A., & Makel, M. C. (2021). Replication is important for educational psychology: Recent developments and key issues. *Educational Psychologist*, *56*(2), 90–100.

Rachman, S. (2010). Betrayal: A psychological analysis. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, *48*(4), 304–311.

Reimann, M., MacInnis, D. J., Folkes, V. S., Uhalde, A., & Pol, G. (2018). Insights into the experience of brand betrayal: From what people say and what the brain reveals. *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, *3*(2), 240–254.

Robertson, J., Bocha, E., Ferreira, C., & Pitt, L. (2022). How deep is your love? The brand love-loyalty matrix in consumer-brand relationships. *Journal of Business Research*, *149*, 651–662.

Sameeni, M. S., Ahmad, A., & Filieri, R. (2022). Brand betrayal, post-purchase regret and consumer responses to hedonic versus utilitarian products: The moderating role of betrayal discovery mode. *Journal of Business Research*, *141*, 137–150.

Sameeni, M. S., Qadeer, F., Shahid, S., & Khurram, M. (2023). Differential effects of performance versus value-based brand betrayal on hate and unfavorable consumer behaviors. *Journal of Social Sciences Review*, *3*(2), 775–791.

Sayin, E., & Gürhan-Canli, A. (2015). Feeling attached to symbolic brands within the context of brand transgressions. *Brand Meaning Management: Review of Marketing Research*, *12*, 233–256.

Schmalz, S., & Orth, U. R. (2012). Brand attachment and consumer emotional response to unethical firm behavior. *Psychology and Marketing*, *29*(11), 869–884.

Sedikides, C., & Strube, M. J. (1995). The multiply motivated self. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *21*(12), 1330–1335.

Sharma, I., Jain, K., & Gupta, R. (2022). The power to voice my hate! Exploring the effect of brand hate and perceived social media power on negative eWOM. *Journal of Asia Business Studies*, *16*(4), 652–675.

Shrauger, J. S. (1975). Responses to evaluation as a function of initial self-perceptions. *Psychological Bulletin*, *82*(4), 581–596.

Sirgy, M. J. (1982). Self-concept in consumer behavior: A critical review. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *9*(3), 287–300.

Spiller, S. A., Fitzsimons, G. J., Lynch, J. G., Jr., & McClelland, G. H. (2013). Spotlights, floodlights, and the magic number zero: Simple effects tests in moderated regression. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *50*(2), 277–288.

Stoner, J. L., Felix, R., & Stadler Blank, A. (2023). Best practices for implementing experimental research methods. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, *47*(4), 1579–1595.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1985). The social identity theory of inter-group behavior. *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, 6–24.

Tan, T. M., Salo, J., Juntunen, J., & Kumar, A. (2019). The role of temporal focus and self-congruence on consumer preference and willingness to pay: A new scrutiny in branding strategy. *European Journal of Marketing*, *53*(1), 37–62.

Thomson, M., MacInnis, D. J., & Park, C. W. (2005). The ties that bind: Measuring the strength of consumers' emotional attachment to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *15*(1), 77–91.

Tripathi, S. (2017). Et tu, brute? How unfair! *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *39*, 79–92.

Tuškej, U., Golob, U., & Podnar, K. (2013). The role of consumer–brand identification in building brand relationships. *Journal of Business Research*, *66*(1), 53–59.

Valenzuela, A., Bonezzi, A., & Szabo-Douat, T. (2018). What goes around, comes around: How beliefs in karma influence the use of word of mouth for self-enhancement. *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, *3*(4), 490–502.

Völckner, F., & Sattler, H. (2006). Drivers of brand extension success. *Journal of Marketing*, *70*(2), 18–34.

Wangenheim, F., & Bayón, T. (2004). Satisfaction, loyalty and word of mouth within the customer base of a utility provider: Differences between stayers, switchers and referral switchers. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour: An International Research Review*, *3*(3), 211–220.

Wangenheim, F. V. (2005). Postswitching negative word of mouth. *Journal of Service Research*, *8*(1), 67–78.

Weitzl, W., Hutzinger, C., & Einwiller, S. (2018). An empirical study on how webcare mitigates complainants' failure attributions and negative word-of-mouth. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *89*, 316–327.

Yadav, A., & Chakrabarti, S. (2022). Brand hate: A systematic literature review and future research agenda. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, *46*(5), 1992–2019.

Zhang, S., De Vries, E. L., & Ding, A. (2023). The mere possession effect of shareable digital coupons: The mediating role of anticipated self-enhancement. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, *22*(1), 122–134.

How to cite this article: Sayin, E., & Gürhan-Canlı, Z. (2024). The influence of self-brand connection on consumer reactions to symbolic incongruency and perceived betrayal. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, *48*(2), e13011. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.13011

14706431, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijcs.13011 by Koc University, Wiley Online Library on [23/07/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License