

## *Love Plastic - A Love Affair with the Melissa Brand*

### *Love Plastic - Um Caso de Amor à Marca Melissa*

Júlia Bragagnolo<sup>1</sup>, Liliane Antunes Rohde<sup>2</sup>, Frederike Monika Budiner Mette<sup>3</sup>

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#### **Abstract**

This study aimed at analyzing the process of building love for the Melissa brand, from the identification of the image by consumers, analysis of the love development process and measurement of Melissa's brand love construct. The methodological strategy was a qualitative and quantitative approach, with the case study as the research method. Three consumers of the brand, two non-consumers and four market specialists participated in the in-depth interviews. In addition, through a questionnaire, it was possible to reach 274 Melissa consumers. Data analysis was performed using the content analysis technique, using a priori categorization and statistical analysis. In order to deepen the knowledge about the brand love construct, the following variables were evaluated: word of mouth, brand advocacy and loyalty. In relation to these factors, it was confirmed that positive mouth-to-mouth is present for Melissa's consumers. It was also observed that the brand tends to have consumers who are brand advocates and who are loyal to the brand. It is important to highlight, as the main result, that the Melissa brand can be characterized as a Lovemark for the interviewees.

**Keywords:** Brand. Image. Brand Love. Loyalty. Melissa.

#### **Resumo**

Este estudo teve como objetivo analisar o processo de construção do amor à marca Melissa, a partir da identificação da imagem junto aos consumidores, análise do processo de desenvolvimento de amor à marca e mensuração do constructo amor à marca Melissa. A estratégia metodológica utilizada baseou-se em uma vertente qualitativa e quantitativa, tendo como método de pesquisa o estudo de caso. Participaram das entrevistas em profundidade três consumidores da marca, dois não consumidores e quatro especialistas de mercado. Complementarmente com o questionário foi possível alcançar 274 consumidores da Melissa. A análise de dados foi realizada por meio da técnica de análise de conteúdo, usando-se a categorização *a priori* e análises estatísticas. Com o intuito de aprofundar o conhecimento sobre o constructo amor à marca foram avaliadas as variáveis: boca a boca, advocacia de marca e lealdade de marca. Em relação a esses fatores foi confirmado que a boca a boca positiva está presente para os consumidores da Melissa. Também se observou que a marca tende a ter consumidores advogados da marca e leais à marca. Cabe destacar, como principal resultado, que a marca Melissa pode ser caracterizada como uma *Lovemark* pelos entrevistados.

**Palavras-chave:** Marca. Imagem. Amor à marca. Lealdade. Melissa.

<sup>1</sup> Bachelor in Advertising from Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing-ESPM-Sul. Marketing Analyst at Grupo A. Address: Rua Guilherme Schell, 350, Santo Antônio, Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil. E-mail: juliabragagnolo97@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Master in Marketing from Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. Responsible for consumer behavior surveys in Porto Alegre for the joint project between ESPM and Jornal do Comércio. Professor and Researcher at ESPM-Sul. E-mail: lrohde@espm.br

<sup>3</sup> Post-doctorate from PPGA - Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing-ESPM-SP. Doctorate in Administration from UNISINOS/University of Oxford. Associate Professor at PUC-RS Business School, linked to PPGAD. E-mail: frederike.mette@puers.br

## 1 Introduction

Brands play a relevant role in both the strategies of organizations and the lives of individuals. In a social context, consumers incorporate objects, such as brands, into their identities, through purchasing and situations they experience in the continuous search for sensation-based experiences, from which brands are configured as something of a broader meaning in their lives (Ahuvia, Batra, and Bagozzi, 2009).

Thus, the relationship between consumer and brand can reach a level of brand love, depending on the degree of emotional attachment that a satisfied consumer may develop for it. At the moment in which this level is reached, subjects identify more with the goods or services they purchase, leading them to a proximity to the organization. From there, brand loyalty increases and establishes long-term relationships and, as a result, the brand is stronger in front of its competitors (Ahuvia, Bagozzi, and Batra, 2014).

Due to the benefits that brand love provides to companies, this theme has been attracting the attention of marketing professionals. Ahuvia, Bagozzi and Batra (2014) argue that this strategy is associated with positive word-of-mouth communication and brand loyalty. In addition, consumers who love their brands are more willing to pay a premium price and are more open to forgiving possible brand mistakes.

One company that stands out in the use of these strategies is footwear company Grendene, through its Melissa brand. Melissa was created in 1979 and aims to express itself through a shoe and promote the democratization of design. In addition to the design, one of the main features of the product is that it is made of plastic and presents a unique smell of bubblegum, a characteristic that usually delights its consumers. Being made of plastic has become a highlight in the latest campaigns presented by Melissa, in which the brand defends its 100% Real Plastic products and, consequently, vegan.

Melissa is also known for its partnerships with famous designers and architects such as Jean-Paul Gaultier, the Campana Brothers, Jeremy Scott and Karl Lagerfeld. In so doing, it conveys even more the importance of design to the brand, approaching consumers who have this interest. This way, Melissa clearly presents to consumers its intentions as a brand and in what the brand believes.

Based on the ideas of brand love, how this affects marketing and how Melissa uses this strategy, this study seeks to answer the following question: **what is the process of building brand love, based on Melissa's case study?** So, the general objective of this study is to analyze how the process of building a Lovemark occurs, having as specific objectives: to identify the brand image among consumers, analyzing the process of love development and measuring Melissa's brand love construct. To carry out this proposition, the triangulation of methods is used, using a qualitative and quantitative approach.

This research is justified by seeking to understand the relationship between consumers and brands in order to discover how the love between them is built. This is because brand love transcends the boundaries usually present between companies and their consumers, transforming a formal relationship into a personal relationship. This way, consumers and brands live together in a much more integrated manner.

## 2 Literature Review

In this topic, the main theoretical items relevant to the discussion carried out in this study, the brand concepts, its construction and the brand love construct were reviewed. It started with the aspects that involve brand building.

## 2.1 Brand image construction

Brand image is a process of interaction between the brand and its target audience, resulting in a consumer perception that generates greater or lesser predisposition to assign the brand a market value. The brand image is an impression created or stimulated by a set of signs resulting from all forms of communication between the company and its public (Ruao, 2004).

In addition to the interrelationships provided by brand communities, Lannon (1993) believes in the possibility of a consumer establishing an emotional and interactive relationship with the brand by seeing his/her own interests satisfied by a particular brand. Thus, the consumer can contemplate the brand as a person, a partner that he can trust. And for companies, the bet on brand personality works as an asset, because they can master a source of value that helps them differentiate the brand.

Because the development of this mental construction goes through interaction with other people, the concept of brand communities becomes increasingly relevant. According to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), a brand community is a community without geographical boundaries, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a given brand.

These communities are organized around rituals, rules, hierarchies based on cultural capital. In addition, brand communities have powerful cultures, full of rituals, traditions and behavioral expectations, as stated by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001). McAlexander, Kim and Roberts (2002) argue that communities are composed of their members and their existing relationships, and it is increasingly evident that their existence is essential for human well-being. As a factor capable of strengthening the brand community, there is positive word of mouth, a concept that is increasingly relevant when reflecting on virtual environments.

Another factor that intervenes and, at the same time, is a consequence of brand communities are their advocates. Nowadays, and it is growing, before making a purchase decision, the consumer seeks for other types of information, in various sources, whether through social networks, blogs or other platforms. Thus, the brand advocate plays a relevant part, considering that the positive opinions about the brand are distributed, which can have an effective influence on the undecided public (Mendes, 2016).

Mendes (2016) also points out that the brand advocate can initiate and maintain discussions in different media, in order to minimize attacks and maximize the strengths of the brand, sometimes more consistently than the managers of the company itself. Neilpatel (2017) points out that 92% of consumers place greater trust on a brand advocate than on an influencer, and the reason is that the influencer may be being paid to communicate this information. In this context, a brand advocate becomes an important subject with regard to the construction of esteem for a brand.

## 2.2 Brand Love

Carrol and Ahuvia (2006) define brand love as the degree of emotional passionate attachment that a satisfied consumer has in relation to a particular brand, and consider it a theory formed by five dimensions: passion for the brand, attachment to the brand, positive evaluation of the brand, positive emotions in relation to the brand and declarations of love for the brand. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that after the empirical test of the scale, the authors came to the conclusion that brand love is a one-dimensional construct.

However, Carrol and Ahuvia (2006) recognize that consumers tend to refer to products in several ways when asked about the fact of loving a particular brand, a fact that leads to the proposition that brand love – in certain situations – is not entirely analogous to the more intense forms of interpersonal relationships (Carrol and Ahuvia, 2006).

In line with the theories of brand love of Ahuvia and Carrol (2006), Kevin Roberts (2005), world CEO of the Saatchi and Saatchi agency, published his study on Lovemarks. Carrol and Ahuvia (2006) also highlight the following properties of brand love: it increases the understanding and stipulation of consumer post-consumption behavior; it is a powerful emotional experience full of affection; helps build and maintain an individual's identity; and its opposite is not hatred of the brand, but the absence of emotional response to the brand.

It is important to call attention to the difference between brand love and other terms used in marketing such as affection, delight, materialism, attachment, satisfaction, attitude, involvement and loyalty. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) say that liking is different from loving a brand. The authors used the studies by Seligman, Fazio and Zanna (1980) and Sternberg (1987) as a basis, where they discuss interpersonal love and liking.

The fact that love adds the brand to the individual's sense of identity can create discussions about the overlap of the theory of brand love and brand identification (Ahuvia, 2005). Also, it can be noted that Lovemarks are formed by stories based on relationships, passionately creative and witty. On the other hand, traditional brands may be easily recognized, but not loved. They carry common, generic characteristics, with definition of attributes and promises of quality (Roberts, 2005). However, according to Roberts (2005), every brand can become a Lovemark, despite this differentiation. Therefore, when this happens, the link with the consumer will be so strong that when the brand makes a mistake, it is very likely to be forgiven. This is because consumers come to see brands as their property, their "brands of the heart", present in stories, metaphors and iconic characters that give texture to a relationship (Roberts, 2005).

To develop the emotional resonance of the brand, captivate consumers, and reach the level of a Lovemark it is necessary to use mystery, sensuality and intimacy. Mystery is a fundamental element of Lovemarks. According to Roberts (2005), the mystery provokes emotion, complementing the relationship and experiences. As for its composition, the mystery is formed by five foundations: great stories; past, present, future; exploration of dreams; myths and icons; and inspiration (Roberts, 2005). Another key point of building a Lovemark is its sensuality. This element is responsible for the use of the five senses (vision, touch, smell, taste and hearing) in the brand communication. According to Roberts (2004), the senses are the expressway for human emotions:

Direct, provocative, immediate. Hard to fool. Harder yet to suppress. The senses speak with the mind in the language of emotions, without words. (Roberts, 2005, p. 105).

After sensuality, it is necessary to analyze the Intimacy element. According to Roberts (2005), this principle is supported by three elements: commitment, empathy and passion. Commitment suggests a lasting relationship between the brand and the consumer, empathy is responsible for understanding people's feelings to respond to them properly, and passion indicates the spark that keeps the relationship alive. In addition to this context, Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) proposed a model relating to brand love with hedonic products, self-expressive brand, brand loyalty and positive word of mouth.

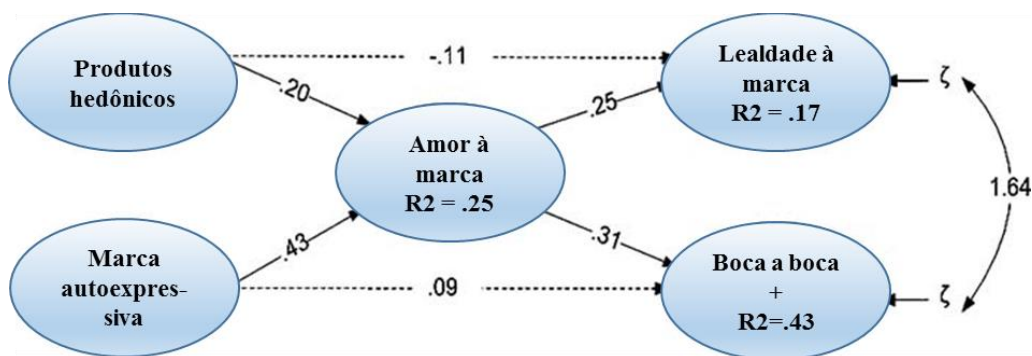
Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), Batra and Athola (1990) state that emotional and cognitive factors motivate consumption and present themselves in different situations in each consumption activity. Furthermore, the authors state that these factors are related to consumers' perception of the role of hedonic benefits in relation to the utilitarian benefits related to the product. For these authors, hedonism contributes to the achievement of consumer loyalty more than rational aspects.

Another factor that the authors point out as fundamental for brand love is self-expression. Thus, consumers tend to have more feelings about a brand when it has a strong

function in formatting their identity. In this sense, self-expressive brands are characterized as "the consumer's perception of the degree to which a specific brand reinforces its social side and/or reflects itself" (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006, p. 82).

The word-of-mouth concept is defined by Arndt (1967, p. 68) as "an oral communication, person to person, between the receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, a product or a service". Sheth, Mittal and Newman (2001) complement this idea by stating that the best way for a company to grow and gain new customers is through word-of-mouth communication. This is because when consumers are satisfied, they tend to invest their time in telling others about their experience with the product or service. The authors also state that word of mouth occurs in two moments: in the process of searching for information and after the purchase, during post-purchase evaluation or post-purchase experience (Sheth, Mittal, and Newman, 2001).

Finally, with regard to loyalty, in the conception of Jacoby and Kyner (1973) the consumer must believe that the preferred brand is superior to competing brands. This behavior must be related to an affective preference for the brand, along with the consumer's intention to buy that brand over the others. According to these authors, it is necessary to be a cross-behavioral response, that is, for this to occur, it is necessary that the purchase is repeated, not by mere chance, and that it is expressed over time. In view of this theoretical panorama, authors Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) developed a scale of brand love, shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** - Model of relationship between brand love and hedonic factors, word of mouth and brand loyalty

Source: Adapted from "Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love", by B. A. Carroll, & A. C. Ahuvia, 2006.

After presenting the theoretical model developed by Carrol and Ahuvia (2006), the methodological procedures of the present study are shown and detailed.

### 3 Methodology

This study is based on a triangulation of methods, defined by Denzin (1989) as the use of various methods to elucidate a problem under investigation. Furthermore, according to this author, this method presupposes confronting two approaches in order to maximize validity, therefore the qualitative and quantitative aspects are used in the present study.

The qualitative stage of this study had a sample of 12 individuals, two of them managers of the Melissa brand, five specialists in branding from both academia and the market and five consumers of the brand aged between 18 and 30 years. Duarte and Barros (2009) describe that the in-depth interview technique explores, from the search for information, perceptions and experiences of subjects in order to analyze them and present them in a more structured way.

In the quantitative stage, the sample had as a filter for research young and adult women from 18 to 30 years of age, who bought any Melissa product in the first or second semester of 2018. This way, 200 respondents were reached, representing, according to Malhotra (2001), a margin of error of 7% more or less, considering a 95% confidence interval. This data collection took place in September, 2018 and the questionnaire was made available on the Google platform.

For the analysis of qualitative data, content analysis was chosen, and univariate and multivariate statistics were used in the quantitative stage. The content analysis, according to Franco (2005), aims to divide the discourse into meaning nuclei, called categories. For the quantitative stage, exploratory factor analysis and multiple linear regression were used, and in order to reduce the number of variables, an exploratory factor analysis was developed. However, it initially became necessary to know the size of the final sample collected. Damásio (2012) and Pestana and Gageiro (2000) make clear the need to carry out two statistical procedures to verify the quality of correlations between the variables: the KMO test (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) and the Bartlett sphericity test.

On the other hand, Meirelles (2014) reports that multiple regression refers to determining how much the independent variables interfere with the dependent variable that is intended to be explained, in this study, the brand love construct. For this collection, the objective was to analyze the effect of the constructs word of mouth, loyalty and brand advocates in building love for the Melissa brand. To measure brand love, the measure of Carol and Ahuvia (2006), adapted by Peres (2015), was used, and based on ten variables. With regard to the scales of word of mouth, loyalty and brand advocates, the scale brought by Peres (2015) was also applied, with adaptations made after the pre-test.

The profile of the interviewees in the quantitative stage of this study is characterized by: women, between 18 and 30 years of age, 42% of them buy shoes monthly, 34% buy every two months and 24% buy these products with a higher frequency. In addition, 76% spend from R\$100 to R\$300 on each shoe purchase, 20% spend more than R\$300 and 16% spend less than R\$100.

Therefore, after the presentation of the methodological paths used, in the following item the discussion and analysis of the results are presented, based on the two collections described above. It is worth mentioning that it was sought to cross the two stages of research in order to reinforce this analysis.

#### **4 Discussion and Analysis of Results**

A brand is able to create bonds with its consumers from its relationship with them. This relationship is studied from the theory of brand love, which seeks to understand these feelings between the brand and its public. Brand love is defined by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) as the degree of emotional passionate attachment that a satisfied consumer has towards a particular brand. And, according to Ahuvia, Batra and Bagozzi (2009), love is a powerful psychological process that brings and holds people together and, therefore, combined with market practices, this feeling is capable of attracting and influencing the loyalty of consumers to a brand. Table 1 shows the results of the brand love scale.

Table 1  
**Brand love scale results**

Statements	Total	
	Average	Deviation Error
Melissa is a wonderful brand	<b>6.38</b>	1.150
Melissa makes me feel good	6.20	1.425
I love Melissa	6.21	1.515
Melissa is sensational	6.18	1.398
I have neutral feelings about Melissa	3.37	2.376
Melissa makes me feel happy	6.11	1.545
Melissa is indifferent to me	2.49	2.184
Melissa enchants/surprises me	<b>6.24</b>	1.317
I'm in love with Melissa	6.15	1.508
I'm faithful to Melissa	5.29	2.082

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Analyzing Table 1, it was observed that the two variables that measure neutral feelings obtained the lowest scores. And the highest agreement score (6.38) was with the statement that the brand is wonderful.

In this context, the speech of one of the experts heard is inserted when he says that a feeling is not developed for a brand that one is not proud of: I don't think we love a brand when we're not proud of belonging to that brand's community, or proud to say that we're a consumer of the brand. (Specialist C).

This expert's account meets Roberts' conception (2005), when he says that as traditional brands manage to develop affection, the relationship becomes deeper. The second highest agreement presented in Table 1 concerns Melissa's ability to surprise. This fact also corroborates Roberts' idea (2005) when describing Lovemarks as those capable of surprising their public.

In order to deepen the analysis, it was sought to understand whether the construct of brand love has another factor involved or if it is a one-dimensional concept. Thus, before carrying out factor analysis to determine which concepts are behind the construct under study, the KMO test and Bartlett's sphericity test were performed (Table 2).

Table 2  
**KMO and Bartlett tests on brand love**

KMO and Bartlett Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy		.931
	Aprox. Chi-square	3027.963
Bartlett's test of sphericity	df	45
	Sig.	.000

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2019.

As the KMO was equal to 0.931, higher than 0.9, it can be considered excellent according to Hutcheson and Sofroniou (1999). The Bartlett test result is 0.000, which ensures that the data are adequate for factor analysis (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black, 2005).

Table 3 shows that two factors were achieved and that they explain 82.36% of the total variance. It is worth noting that Peres (2015) also achieved two factors. Thus, in place of a one-dimensional construct, as Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) proclaim, a bi-dimensional model is found. Table 3 shows which variables are parts of each of these factors.

**Table 3**  
**Total variance explained of brand love**

Component	Total variance explained								
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction sums of squared loadings			Rotation sums of squared loadings		
	Total	% variance	% cumulative	Total	% variance	% cumulative	Total	% variance	% cumulative
1	6.816	68.164	68.164	6.816	68.164	68.164	6.590	65.895	65.895
2	1.420	14.202	82.366	1.420	14.202	82.366	1.647	16.471	82.366
3	.500	5.000	87.367						
4	.371	3.706	91.073						
5	.261	2.606	93.679						
6	.204	2.044	95.723						
7	.147	1.474	97.197						
8	.116	1.158	98.355						
9	.093	.935	99.290						
10	.071	.710	100.000						

Note: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Source: Prepared by the authors, 2019.

Factor 1 (component 1, in Table 4) may be called brand love and encompasses most of the variables that make up the brand love scale. Factor 2 may be called brand indifference and includes both variables: I have neutral feelings about Melissa and Melissa is indifferent to me. In order to understand in a more in-depth way the construction of this brand love, the scales that measure word of mouth, brand advocates and loyalty were also used.

**Table 4**  
**Brand love rotated component matrix**

	Component	
	1	2
Melissa is a wonderful brand	<b>.895</b>	-.158
Melissa makes me feel good	<b>.904</b>	-.133
Melissa is sensational	<b>.940</b>	-.138
I have neutral feelings about Melissa	-.105	<b>.862</b>
Melissa makes me feel happy	<b>.925</b>	-.121
I love Melissa	<b>.914</b>	-.204
Melissa is indifferent to me	-.113	<b>.869</b>
Melissa enchants/surprises me	<b>.917</b>	-.078
I'm in love with Melissa	<b>.934</b>	-.161
I'm faithful to Melissa	<b>.813</b>	.021

Note: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization; a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations. Source: Prepared by the authors, 2019.

Word of mouth is also based on the variables used in the scale brought by Peres (2015) with adaptations. Before analyzing the scores, the reliability of these variables in measuring a single concept is tested (Table 5).



Table 5  
**Word-of-mouth reliability scale**

Reliability statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
.883	4

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2018.

In the analysis of Table 6, the level of agreement with each statement is observed. It is noted that the highest agreement rate refers to "I have already recommended Melissa to many people", with an average of 6.46. The lowest agreement rate was obtained in the phrase "I am constantly "advertising" the Melissa brand" with 5.74.

Even though this score is the lowest, it can be considered high because it is higher than 5 on a scale whose maximum value is 7. This result obtains reinforcement in the qualitative stage, in the verbalization of Specialist C who believes that:

A brand will have a hard time sustaining itself as a beloved brand, am I right, if it does not have a strong word of mouth foundation, from people like consumers, or even opinion makers, saying good things about that brand.

Table 6  
**Word-of-mouth statistics**

Statements	Total		
	Average	No.	Deviation Error
I have already recommended Melissa to many people	6.46	270	1.245
I talk about the Melissa brand with my friends	6.34	270	1.311
I talk about the Melissa brand in a positive way to people I know	6.44	270	1.088
I am constantly "advertising" the Melissa brand	5.74	270	1.841

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2018.

Sheth et al. (2001) also state that the best way for a company to grow and gain new customers is through word-of-mouth communication. This is because when consumers are satisfied, they tend to invest their time in telling others about their experience with the product or service. The authors also state that word of mouth occurs in two moments: in the process of searching for information and after the purchase, during post-purchase evaluation or post-purchase experience. This behavior is very important to form brand associations for new consumers, due to the perception of the attributes and benefits of the brand experienced by another consumer (Keller, 2006).

The next scale used refers to brand advocates. The internal consistency of the variables responsible for measuring how much the consumers heard are Melissa's advocates is also evaluated (Table 7).

A high Cronbach's alpha is observed 0.911 (greater than 0.9), which indicates that the variables actually tend to measure a single construct. Therefore, they can be analyzed in more depth.

Table 7  
**Brand Advocate Reliability Statistics**

Reliability statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
.911	3

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2018.

Table 8 shows that the brand recommendation has the highest agreement index (5.93) and brand defense with other consumers has the lowest average score (5.64). Thus, it is observed that brand advocates are part of a larger set of consumers, who esteem and relate to the brand, determining a community. Communities, say McAlexander et al. (2002), which include its members and the relationships between them, are increasingly relevant to the subjects.

Table 8  
**Brand advocate statistics**

Statements	Total	
	Average	Deviation Error
I defend the Melissa brand when someone says something negative about it	5.64	1.752
I encourage friends and relatives to buy from the Melissa brand	5.92	1.730
I recommend the Melissa brand when people need advice regarding a good market option	5.93	1.538

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2018.

Given this fact, it can be said that a brand advocate has an important action and can influence the undecided public effectively (Mendes, 2016). Therefore, when the consumers heard presented levels of agreement higher than 5.0 in the variables of the brand advocates scale, it can be inferred that they have a certain level of brand advocacy.

The last scale analyzed here concerns brand loyalty, based on the scale presented by Peres (2015). When analyzing the internal reliability of loyalty, a Cronbach alpha lower than the one in the measurement scale of brand advocates is noted (Table 9).

Table 9  
**Brand loyalty reliability statistics**

Reliability statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
.858	4

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2018.

It is observed that the aspect of loyalty presents even lower average concordance scores than the analysis of brand advocates. In this scenario, only the variable related to the postponement of the purchase obtained an average of more than five.

The variable with the most agreement that appears in Table 10 is the variable related to the postponement of the purchase or the demand for a substitute product that reached an average of 5.01.

Regarding this factor, Aaker (1998) reinforces the importance of brand loyalty for the construction of brand equity. According to the author, this reduces the vulnerability of the company's action, because competitors realize that the consumers they seek to attract are satisfied with a particular brand. Moreover, when they need the brand, loyal consumers always expect to find it, which implies better trade deals, considering that those products have become necessary.

Table 10  
**Brand loyalty total item statistics**

Statements	Total	
	Average	Deviation Error
Melissa is the only brand I buy my shoes from	4.07	2.428
When I go shopping I do not pay attention to competing brands, only to Melissa	4.69	2.387
If Melissa does not have the product I'm looking for, I postpone my purchase or else I will search another store from the chain/e-commerce	5.01	2.272
I'd rather be without Melissa than buying another brand	4.17	2.357

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2018.

From the in-depth interviews with consumers and non-consumers of the Melissa brand, it is noted that brand identification is a consensus when defining the brand love construct. According to the interviewees, for a brand to be loved it is necessary that consumers identify with it and also with its purposes (Consumer A, Consumer B and Consumer D), in addition it is necessary an identification with the personality of the brand (Consumer C).

In order to analyze the relationship proposed by Mendes (2016) between word of mouth, brand advocates and loyalty with brand love, factor 1 obtained in factor analysis is used to represent brand love and a Multiple Regression of the variables of the three scales is developed to try to establish this relationship (Table 11).

Table 11  
**Model Summary**

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>					
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.893 <sup>a</sup>	.798	.786	.46230379	1.936

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant) I'd rather be without Melissa than buying another brand, "Success" is one of the words that defines the Melissa brand (considering 1 = totally disagree and 7 = totally agree); I talk about the Melissa brand with my friends; If Melissa does not have the product I'm looking for, I postpone my purchase or else I will search for another store from the chain/e-commerce; Melissa has a unique and positive image, compared to other competing brands (considering 1 = totally disagree and 7 = totally agree). When it comes to footwear, Melissa's product is (considering 1 = extremely bad and 7 = extremely good); The image you have of Melissa is (considering 1 = extremely negative and 7 = extremely positive); Melissa is the only brand I buy my shoes from; I encourage friends and relatives to buy from the Melissa brand; I have already recommended Melissa to many people; I am constantly "advertising" the Melissa brand; When I go shopping, I do not pay attention to competing brands, only to Melissa; I recommend the Melissa brand when people need advice regarding a good market option; I defend the Melissa brand when someone says something negative about it; I talk about the Melissa brand in a positive way to people I know. b. Dependent Variable: REGR factor score 1 for analysis 1. Source: Prepared by the authors, 2018.

As can be seen, R square being equal to 0.798 means that the independent variables: word of mouth, brand advocates and loyalty explain 79.8% of the variance of brand love. This analysis is reported by Meirelles (2014). Moreover, with a significance level of the 0.000 test, it can be affirmed that the chance of these variables not explaining brand love is zero, according to this author. This result is shown in Table 12.

Table 12  
**Regression-related Anova Test**

		ANOVA <sup>a</sup>				
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Z	Sig.
1	Regression	214.714	15	14.314	66.975	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	54.286	254	.214		
	Total	269.000	269			

Note: a. Dependent Variable: REGR factor score 1 for analysis 1; b. Predictors: (Constant) I'd rather be without Melissa than buying another brand; "Success" is one of the words that defines the Melissa brand (considering 1 = totally disagree and 7 = totally agree); I talk about the Melissa brand with my friends; If Melissa does not have the product I'm looking for, I postpone my purchase or else I will search for another store from the chain/e-commerce; Melissa has a unique and positive image, compared to other competing brands (considering 1 = totally disagree and 7 = totally agree); When it comes to footwear, Melissa's product is (considering 1 = extremely bad and 7 = extremely good); The image you have of Melissa is (considering 1 = extremely negative and 7 = extremely positive); Melissa is the only brand I buy my shoes from; I encourage friends and relatives to buy from the Melissa brand; I have already recommended Melissa to many people; I am constantly "advertising" the Melissa brand; When I go shopping, I do not pay attention to competing brands, only to Melissa; I recommend the Melissa brand when people need advice regarding a good market option; I defend the Melissa brand when someone says something negative about it; I talk about the Melissa brand in a positive way to people I know. Source: Prepared by the authors, 2018.

Although the regression model is adequate, according to Meirelles (2014) it is still not possible to identify which variables have the most influence on brand love. In order to do that, the matrix with the contribution of each variable was constructed. In this sense, it can be inferred that the statement with the greatest contribution refers to Melissa's positive image. There is also the fact that two positive word-of-mouth variables are also the biggest influencers of brand love: "I talk about the Melissa brand in a positive way to people I know" and "I recommend the Melissa brand when people need advice regarding a good market option".

The result related to positive word of mouth finds echo in expert A's statement: "if you hear someone's testimony, if you don't know that brand, sometimes it calls your attention to get information, so you can see what it's like." And Specialist B corroborates this idea: "I think it has always been and always will be the main means of communication for really building a brand, you know". In the same sense, Specialist C believes that: A brand will have a hard time sustaining itself as a beloved brand, am I right, if it does not have a strong word of mouth foundation, from people like consumers, or even opinion makers, saying good things about that brand.

The positive image of the brand is also highlighted by the experts heard during the qualitative stage of this study. This image seems to be constructed from a set of benefits that Melissa adds, as Expert A argues: I especially believe these benefits of self-expression and emotional benefits in which senses: aesthetics, appearance, colors, texture, and benefits of self-expression, of belonging to this world.

Faced with this convergence of opinions between the qualitative and quantitative stages, Ruão (2004) argues that the brand image is an impression developed or stimulated by the signs resulting from the communication between the company and its public.

Thus, for a brand to achieve the love of consumers, it is necessary that its communication reinforces a unique and positive image. These results are presented in Table 13.

Table 13  
**Coefficients**

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-5.202	.318		16.341	.000
	"Success" is one of the words that defines the Melissa brand	.099	.047	.077	2.122	.035
	Melissa has a unique and positive image, compared to other competing brands	.083	.042	.077	1.994	.047
	When it comes to footwear, Melissa's product is	.000	.042	.000	.007	.995
	The image you have of Melissa is (considering 1 = extremely negative and 7 = extremely positive)	.145	.060	.106	2.419	.016
	I have already recommended Melissa to many people	-.007	.038	-.008	-.177	.859
	I talk about the Melissa brand with my friends	.002	.039	.003	.062	.951
	I talk about the Melissa brand in a positive way to people I know	.116	.055	.126	2.096	.037
	I am constantly "advertising" the Melissa brand	.029	.029	.053	1.006	.316
	I defend the Melissa brand when someone says something negative about it	.052	.032	.091	1.637	.103
	I encourage friends and relatives to buy from the Melissa brand	.073	.033	.126	2.219	.027
	I recommend the Melissa brand when people need advice regarding a good market option	.123	.037	.189	3.316	.001
	Melissa is the only brand I buy my shoes from	-.007	.021	-.016	-.316	.752
	When I go shopping I do not pay attention to competing brands, only to Melissa	.082	.022	.197	3.730	.000
	If Melissa does not have the product I'm looking for, I postpone my purchase or else I will search another store from the chain/e-commerce	.055	.015	.124	3.690	.000
	I'd rather be without Melissa than buying another brand	.019	.020	.045	.943	.347

**Note:** a. Dependent Variable: REGR factor score 1 for analysis 1. Source: Prepared by the authors, 2018.

In this context, it can be said that Melissa's positive image, comments and brand recommendation are the factors that most interfere in the explanation of brand love. However, the variables related to loyalty have a low capacity to explain the brand love construct. In this sense, one can bring the idea of Peiter (2019) that there is the enthusiastic defender of a brand that is not a consumer, but he/she is enchanted by the actions developed by the company, identifies him/herself with its essence and, therefore, promotes it.

Finally, it is noteworthy that this study proves the idea defended by Mendes (2016), that word of mouth, loyalty and brand advocates relate to the construct under study.

## 5 Final Considerations

The main objective is to analyze how the process of building brand love occurs based on Melissa's case study, this study aims at verifying among consumers, non-consumers and market experts how they understand these concepts and perceive the Melissa brand. Therefore, this problem unfolded into three specific objectives: to identify the Melissa brand image with consumers, to analyze the process of developing brand love, and to measure Melissa's brand love construct.

Regarding the first specific objective, it is understood that Melissa's image is composed of positive associations, as stated by the five consumers and non-consumers interviewed. Experts also cite the innovation, success and strength aspects in their speeches. In line with these data, the variables related to the brand image analyzed in the quantitative stage also obtained high scores. In addition, it is worth noting that the positive image of the brand influences the construction of its love construct.

In relation to the second specific objective, it is recognized that, in the qualitative stage, the hedonic factor, word of mouth, satisfaction and self-expression are fundamental for the construction of brand love in the experts' view. According to the experts interviewed, hedonism contributes to the achievement of consumer loyalty more than rational aspects because it is not possible to separate reason from emotion during the buying process. In the quantitative stage it is noticed that brand love is built from word of mouth, brand image, loyalty and from brand advocates.

As for the third objective, it can be concluded that, for the respondents of the quantitative research, Melissa is a beloved brand. This is proven in this study, when respondents positively evaluate with a high average the factors that make up brand love: passion for the brand, attachment to the brand, positive brand evaluation, positive emotions towards the brand, and statements of love for the brand. However, loyalty, a factor that also serves as an indication of brand love, had the lowest average (5.29), which indicates that the brand has a tendency to loyalty, but has not appropriated it yet.

In order to deepen the knowledge about the brand love construct, the following variables were evaluated: word of mouth, brand advocacy and brand loyalty. Thus, it was confirmed that positive word-of-mouth is present for Melissa's consumers and the brand tends to have consumers who are brand advocates, but aspects related to brand loyalty have lower scores.

From these findings, the general objective is met, brand love built from the positive and unique associations that lead to a strong brand image. The presence of positive word-of-mouth, brand advocates and loyalty-related aspects lead consumers to develop an appreciation for the Melissa brand, and it can be characterized as a Lovemark.

Finally, it is important to present the limitation factors of this study. A limitation can be pointed out regarding the little heterogeneity of the interviewees, because the network of relationships used to reach the sample may homogenize the unit of study. However, the target audience of the brand is fundamentally the one that was included in the sample obtained. It is suggested that, in order to expand the knowledge about brand love in Brazil, this scale be used for other iconic brands in the country, in order to prove the results obtained here.

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