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Consumer advocacy for luxury brands

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores consumer advocacy for luxury brands in relation to brand satisfaction, brand loyalty and luxury brand attachment. Data were collected from an online consumer panel ($n = 393$) in Australia and were analysed through structural equation modelling. Luxury brand attachment has been found to have a stronger effect on consumer advocacy than that of brand satisfaction and brand loyalty. In addition to the moderating role of brand loyalty, luxury consumers' dilemma with consumer advocacy has been discussed in this paper. These findings provide insight into the consumer advocacy for luxury branding academics and practitioners.

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1. Introduction

Luxury brands have received considerable research interest in marketing literature over the last two decades (Kapferer and Laurent, 2016; Phau and Prendergast, 2000; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). In addition to conceptualising dimensions of luxury brand, studies have emphasised on building and maintaining a long-term consumer–brand relationship (e.g., Kim and Ko, 2012). In this regard, extant studies on luxury branding mostly focus on the traditional company-level communications and strategies (e.g., Baek et al., 2010; Hwang and Kandampully, 2012). Extant research has examined the luxury consumer–brand interaction within the context of brand trust, commitment, satisfaction and loyalty (Shukla et al., 2016; Song et al., 2012). However, the nature of luxury brands as well as the niche market segment requires consumer level interaction and sharing of market information for a strong consumer–brand relationship. In particular, while consumers consider buying expensive, exclusive, and conspicuous brands, they rely more on opinion leaders, reference groups and peer recommendations (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). Such peer recommendations activate over positive word-of-mouth, brand advocacy, brand evangelism, and brand community engagement (e.g., Algesheimer et al., 2005). Academics and industry experts have noted that luxury brands require strong consumer to consumer engagement to be successful in the increasingly competitive and interconnected market (Chiou and Droge, 2006; Gomelsky, 2016)

Theoretically, consumer advocacy differentiates itself from other similar constructs with the notion that it encompasses the con-

sumers' willingness to assist others in having a positive brand experience (Chelminski and Coulter, 2011; Jayasimha and Billore, 2016). Consumer advocacy is more relevant to luxury brands for several reasons. First, luxury consumers seek information about the craftsmanship, artisan, and other consumers' memorable experience while evaluating a luxury brand (Phau and Prendergast, 2000). At this point, consumer advocacy plays an important role in luxury consumers' purchase decision. Second, personal source of information has been considered more reliable than the company generated messages in marketing (e.g., Klein et al., 2016). This conception is expected to be more relevant for luxury consumers. Third, the affluent consumers tend to switch the brands frequently and cannot be attracted with typical loyalty card or cashback opportunities (Schneider, 2017). To address this, luxury brands can initiate consumer advocacy to and generate trust and credibility from consumers by providing organic and reliable information about the brand.

Call for advocacy research has been evident in marketing literature (Fournier et al., 2012), but most of the follow up research in luxury branding have focused on online and offline brand advocacy (Parrott et al., 2015). The limitation with brand advocacy is that it focuses on proactively recruiting new customers and defending the brand against detractors (Wilder, 2015). In line with previous research, this research argues that consumer advocacy is relevant to consumers' altruistic tendency to 'promote positive marketplace experiences' (Chelminski and Coulter, 2011). An investigation into relevant literature suggests that consumer's emotional bond to the brand is a key pre-requisite for advocacy (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Wilder, 2015). Furthermore, brand satisfaction is essential to develop the emotional bond (i.e., luxury brand attachment) which in turn results brand loyalty (Chiou and Droge, 2006). Therefore,

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this study aims to examine the effects of brand satisfaction, luxury brand attachment and brand loyalty on consumer advocacy within a luxury branding context.

The following sections of this paper consist of relevant literature and hypothesis development, the research method, result, discussion, implications and future research directions.

2. Relevant literature and hypothesis development

2.1. Consumer advocacy

Consumer advocacy refers to exchanging market information and counselling other consumers so that they have a positive brand experience (Chelminski and Coulter, 2011). Jayasimha and Billore (2016) conceptually differentiate consumer advocacy from customer advocacy with the notion that customer advocacy is a firm-level construct whereas consumer advocacy is the sharing of market information amongst consumers. To some extent, consumer advocacy is similar to the helping behaviour (market mavenism and altruistic helping behaviour) that benefits others in their purchases and consumption (Price et al., 1995; Price et al., 1995). Past empirical studies on consumer advocacy have mostly focused within the context of dissatisfactory service, service failure, and complaining behaviour (Chelminski and Coulter, 2011; Jayasimha and Srivastava, 2017). However, this study expects consumer advocacy to be related to brand satisfaction, luxury brand attachment and brand loyalty as Anderson et al. (1994) show that when a consumer becomes connected to a brand, this connection can lead to advocacy for the brand. In other field of study, advocacy has been found to be an outcome of consumers' brand commitment (Harrison-Walker, 2001).

2.2. Brand satisfaction

Brand satisfaction results from the consumers' post-purchase emotional response through which the expected and actual performance of a brand is compared (Oliver, 1980). The disconfirmation paradigm of brand satisfaction highlights that the consumers must have the ability and motivation to evaluate the brand and predetermined reference point (Bloemer and Kasper, 1995). Such cognitive appraisal of disconfirmation also refers to the subjective evaluation that a particular brand meets or exceeds consumers' expectations (Yüksel and Yüksel, 2001). Studies suggest that consumers' knowledge on and experience with the brand are essential to generate expectations and assess the actual performance (Kamins and Asael, 1987). Extant literature largely supports that consumers' satisfaction with a particular brand strengthen the consumer–brand relationship. Consumers' desire to prolong the relationship with the satisfactory brand generates behavioural intentions including brand loyalty, positive word-of-mouth and consumer advocacy (Bloemer and Kasper, 1995; Cronin et al., 2000). Moreover, the satisfied consumers develop a strong cognitive and affective bond with the brand through which they consider the brand to be an integral part of their life (Belaid and Behi, 2011).

2.3. Luxury brand attachment

Luxury brand attachment is “the emotional bond that connects a consumer to the luxury brand and develops deep feelings within the consumer towards the luxury brand” (Shimul et al., 2016, p. 517). Based on Bowlby's (1979) attachment theory, brand attachment has been conceptualised as the tie between a brand and the consumer. Marketing scholars utilise Sirgy's (1982) self-congruence theory to explain the matching between the personality of a brand and that of the consumers. Early research on brand attachment identify brand-self connection and brand prominence as the two

key drivers of brand attachment (Park et al., 2006; Thomson et al., 2005). Later studies on the area have argued that consumers' perceived self-congruence results emotional attachment to the brand (e.g. Malär et al., 2011). The emotional aspect of attachment has been emphasised in more recent studies on consumers' luxury brand attachment (Jung Choo et al., 2012; Shimul et al., 2016). Luxury consumers need for exclusivity, exquisiteness as well as the joy and pleasure derived from the luxury brands reinforce a strong emotional tie between the consumer and a brand (Kim and Joung, 2016).

2.4. Brand loyalty

Psychological theories consider loyalty an important driver of strengthening interpersonal relationship (Rusbult, 1987). Numerous marketing studies have identified brand loyalty as a key outcome of strong consumer–brand relationship (Aksoy et al., 2015; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Dick and Basu, 1994). The widely accepted conceptualisation of brand loyalty primarily focuses on the repeat purchase of a particular brand and the consumers' resistance to accept any other alternative of the brand (Oliver, 1980). A stream of research has identified the cognitive, affective and conative components of brand loyalty that lead to consumers' positive attitude and repeat patronage intention (For a review, see – Dick and Basu, 1994). The emotional state of being satisfied and attached to a brand elicits ‘happiness’, as a result the consumers aspire to maintain the relationship for a longer period of time and become loyal to the brand (Amine, 1998; Ben-Shahar, 2010). Furthermore, brand loyal consumers spread positive word-of-mouth and are willing to pay more for the brand (e.g. Reichheld, 2003).

2.5. Brand satisfaction and luxury brand attachment

The positive post-consumption evaluation of a brand generates a strong emotion which in turn leads the consumers toward an affectionate bond with the brand (Belaid and Behi, 2011). A consistent and ongoing satisfactory performance of the brand motivates the consumers to stick to the relationship (Esch et al., 2006). As the relationship matures and the intimacy becomes enduring, the consumers develop a strong attachment to the brand. Satisfaction has been found to be a key factor for the luxury customer relationship quality (e.g. Stuart-Menteth et al., 2006). Therefore, in line with the theoretical connection and previous findings, the following is hypothesised:

H₁: Brand satisfaction has significant positive effect on luxury brand attachment.

2.6. Brand satisfaction and brand loyalty

The positive relationship between brand satisfaction and brand loyalty has widely been tested in the marketing literature. Past studies suggest that consumers become loyal to if they are satisfied with that particular brand (Christodoulides and Michaelidou, 2011; Reichheld, 2003). Although, the positive relationship between brand satisfaction and brand loyalty does not hold in every cases (Mittal, 2016), this study considers the conspicuous nature of the luxury brands and the consumers' high level of financial and psychological investment for attaining the brand. Moreover, the perceived symbolic value and social status through luxury consumption motivate the satisfied consumers to patronage the brand (Kim and Joung, 2016). Thus, the following is hypothesised:

H₂: Brand satisfaction has significant positive effect on brand loyalty.

2.7. Brand satisfaction and consumer advocacy

In addition to being attached and loyal to a brand, satisfied consumers tend to share their positive brand experience with other consumers (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). The justification of sharing such market information has been attributed to the personal enjoyment, altruistic tendency, and social welfare (e.g., Feick et al., 1986; Kiecker and Hartman, 1993). There are scant empirical studies that examine the relationship between brand satisfaction and consumer advocacy. In line with the relational outcomes postulated in H₁ and H₂, this study further expects that consumers will advocate the satisfactory luxury brands to others. Thus, the following is hypothesised:

H₃: Brand satisfaction has significant positive effect on consumer advocacy.

2.8. Luxury brand attachment and brand loyalty

Brand loyalty has been identified as one of the key outcomes of brand attachment in numerous studies (e.g., Fournier, 1998; Park et al., 2013, 2006). From a luxury branding context, consumers' strong emotional connection, perceived sense of joy and anticipated separation distress reinforce the luxury consumers' desire to repurchase the brand and prolong the relationship (Japutra et al., 2014). In addition, consumers' perceived self-brand congruence, which is the key antecedent of emotional brand attachment (Malär et al., 2011), has been found to be positively associated with luxury brand loyalty (Liu et al., 2012). In line with the findings of previous research, the following is hypothesised:

H₄: Luxury brand attachment has significant positive effect on brand loyalty.

2.9. Luxury brand attachment and consumer advocacy

Consumers with strong brand attachment ignore the downside of the brand, show resilience to negative information about the brand and defend the brand in social network (Japutra et al., 2014). As anticipated in the H₃ and H₄, consumers with high luxury brand attachment are expected to involve in behavioural intentions such as spreading positive word of mouth, promoting the brand, and engaging in brand community which are considered affective reflection of consumer advocacy (Chelminski and Coulter, 2011). Thus, the following is hypothesised:

H₅: Luxury brand attachment has significant positive effect on consumer advocacy.

2.10. Brand loyalty and consumer advocacy

The positive link amongst consumer's affection, loyalty and positive word-of-mouth are well established in the extant literature (e.g., Choi and Choi, 2014). Loyal consumers develop affective commitment toward the luxury brands and in turn they are inclined to advocate the brand to others (Shukla et al., 2016). From a service context, de Matos and Rossi (2008) find that loyal consumers positively recommend the brand to reference group member. Based on these findings, the following is hypothesised:

H₆: Brand loyalty has significant positive effect on consumer advocacy.

As expected above in H₅ and H₆, highly attached and loyal consumers are anticipated to get involved in consumer advocacy. Next, question arises whether brand loyalty positively impacts the highly attached luxury consumers' willingness to advocate the brand. Past

studies indicate that brand loyal consumers share their positive post-consumption experiences with others (Dick and Basu, 1994). In line with this argument, this study intuitively predicts the positive moderating impact of brand loyalty on the postulated relationship between luxury brand attachment and consumer advocacy. Thus, the following is hypothesised:

H₇: Brand loyalty will enhance the positive relationship between luxury brand attachment and consumer advocacy.

The hypothesised relationships are presented in Fig. 1.

3. Method

A pre-test ($n = 63$) was conducted and Giorgio Armani Sunglasses was selected as an affordable and appropriate luxury brand to be used as the stimulus of this study. The functional and symbolic values of sunglasses have also been considered in the past studies on luxury consumer-brand relationship (e.g. Liu et al., 2012). A self-administered online survey questionnaire was developed. The first section of the questionnaire contained the screening question whether the respondent used Giorgio Armani Sunglasses at least once in life. The next sections consisted of scale items measuring brand satisfaction (Şahin et al., 2011), brand loyalty (Delgado-Ballester, 2003), luxury brand attachment (Shimul et al., 2016), and consumer advocacy (Chelminski and Coulter, 2011). Measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agree"), the measurement items showed satisfactory reliability and validity. The final section of the survey questionnaire included the demographic information of the respondents.

An examination on the collinearity statistics did not show any multicollinearity as the variance inflation factors (VIF) were below 3.0 (Hair et al., 2010). Furthermore, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with a single factor solution resulted poor fit and therefore common method variance was not a legitimate threat to the validity of this study. The proposed research framework was examined using structural equation modelling (SEM) with AMOS 24. Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two step procedure was followed whereby (1) the measurement model assessed the factor structure, and (2) the structural model tested the hypothesised relationships and assessed the model fit as well.

4. Results

Data were collected from an online consumer panel in Australia. Of the collected 450 responses, 57 were disregarded due to little variance, outlier and incomplete in nature. Thus, 393 valid responses were considered for further analysis. The sample consisted of 64% female, 53% had an undergraduate degree, and 59% of the respondents earn less than USD 20,800 annually. The predominant (79%) age group, 18 and 30 years old, reflects the most emerging luxury market segment (Sarkar, 2017).

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was run on the measurement constructs using Principle Component Analysis and Varimax rotation. The sample adequacy (KMO = 0.955) and reliability (Cronbach alpha of 0.93 and above) of the constructs were satisfied, and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) for all the constructs.

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to validate each measurement scale separately. One item from luxury brand attachment and two items from brand satisfaction scale were removed due to either low loading or high modification indices. Thereafter, a measurement model was run with the combination of all the scales. The measurement model provided strong fit with $\chi^2 = 394.91$, $df = 180$, $\chi^2/df = 2.19$, PClose = 0.12, RMSEA = 0.05,

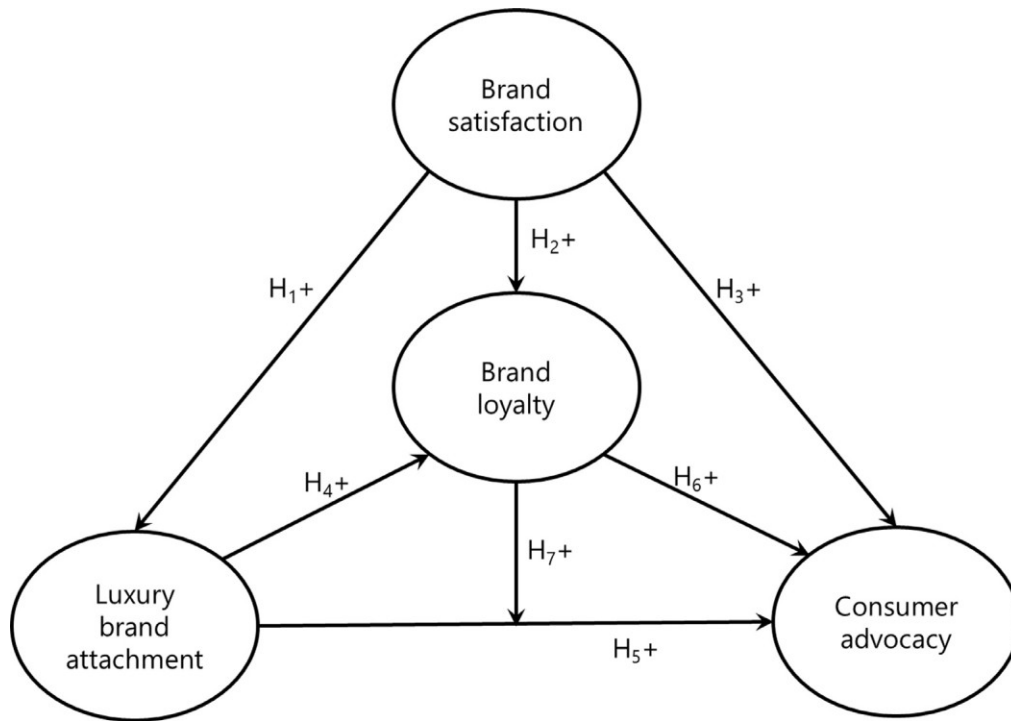


Fig. 1. Research framework and hypotheses.

Table 1
Reliability and validity measures.

	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4
1. Brand loyalty	0.889	0.667	0.817			
2. Luxury brand attachment	0.935	0.708	0.610	0.841		
3. Consumer advocacy	0.891	0.623	0.728	0.663	0.789	
4. Brand satisfaction	0.923	0.668	0.681	0.735	0.714	0.817

Note: Figures in the diagonal (values given in bold) are the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE); those below the diagonal are the correlations between the constructs. CR = Composite Reliability.

CFI = 0.97, and TLI = 0.96 (Hu and Bentler, 1999). Besides, the convergent validity was assessed with average variance extracted (AVE) higher than 0.50 and the composite reliabilities (CR) were higher than 0.70 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981). In addition, the discriminant validity was achieved as all the pairwise inter-construct correlations were lower than the square root of the AVE values (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). A summary of the convergent and discriminant validity as well as the composite reliability is shown in Table 1.

The hypothesised structural model provided strong fit without further modification. The fit indices are: $\chi^2 = 394.36$, $df = 180$, $\chi^2/df = 2.19$, PClose = 0.12, RMSEA = 0.05, CFI = 0.97, and TLI = 0.96. The specified model explains 62% variance of the consumer advocacy and 64% variance of the brand loyalty. An examination of the solution's reliability showed satisfactory Cronbach's alpha figure of 0.89–0.94 that represents strong internal consistency (Table 2).

For the postulated relationships, the effect of brand satisfaction on luxury brand attachment is positive ($\beta = 0.61$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H₁. The result for H₂ shows that brand satisfaction has a significant positive impact on brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$). Moreover, the postulated relationship between brand satisfaction and consumer advocacy (H₃) is supported ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$). In addition, luxury brand attachment has a significant positive im-

act on brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$) and consumer advocacy ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, H₄ and H₅ are supported. In addition, brand loyalty has a significant positive impact on consumer advocacy ($\beta = 0.15$, $p = 0.036$), accepting H₆.

Next, the moderating role of brand loyalty on the relationship between luxury brand attachment and consumer advocacy is examined. In this purpose, the sample has been divided into two subsamples: consumers with high and low brand loyalty through a median split test (median = 3.25). Then, a multi-group analysis is conducted in SEM to test the H₇. The chi-square difference test on the path level comparison (luxury brand attachment → consumer advocacy) shows non-significant difference between the two subsamples ($\Delta\beta = 0.091$, $\Delta p = 0.599$). Thus, the postulated H₇ is not accepted. A summary of the hypothesised relationships is presented in Table 3.

Additionally, structural model differs significantly across the high and low brand loyalty subgroups ($\Delta\chi^2 = 17.88$, $\Delta df = 6$, $p = 0.007$). Therefore, the moderating role of brand loyalty is further examined on other path level relationships. The result shows that the positive relationship between brand satisfaction and luxury brand attachment is stronger for the high brand loyalty subsample. The positive relationship between brand satisfaction and brand loyalty has also been found to be stronger for high brand loyalty subsample. In addition, brand loyalty does not

Table 2
Cronbach's α and CFA loadings.

Measurement constructs	Cronbach's α	CFA Loading
Luxury brand attachment	0.94	
I am deeply passionate about this luxury brand		0.81
I am deeply in love with this luxury brand		0.88
When I think of this luxury brand, I feel a sense of joy		0.81
I feel this luxury brand helps me achieve what I want		0.82
I have a deep emotional connection to this luxury brand		0.92
I would feel a sense of loss if this luxury brand is no longer available		0.77
Brand satisfaction	0.93	
I am very satisfied with the service provided by this brand.		0.73
I am very satisfied with this brand.		0.83
This brand does a good job of satisfying my needs.		0.82
I believe that using this brand is usually a very satisfying experience.		0.78
I made the right decision when I decided to use this brand.		0.87
I am very happy with this brand.		0.87
Brand loyalty	0.89	
I consider myself to be loyal to this brand		0.84
I am willing to pay more for this brand than for other brands on the market.		0.85
I recommend buying this brand		0.81
If this brand is not available at the store, I would buy it in another store.		0.77
Consumer advocacy	0.89	
By sharing my experience with this luxury brand, I assist other people towards a similar experience		0.71
It makes me feel good to tell others about this luxury brand		0.86
I have responsibility to society to tell others about my experiences with this luxury brand		0.71
I suggest others about this luxury brand		0.86
I give suggestion to other people about the quality of this luxury brand to help them have a similar experience		0.79

Table 3
Results for structural model.

Relationship	β	t-test	p-Value
H ₁ Brand satisfaction → Luxury brand attachment	0.61	10.65	<0.001
H ₂ Brand satisfaction → Brand loyalty	0.43	7.65	<0.001
H ₃ Brand satisfaction → Consumer advocacy	0.28	4.50	<0.001
H ₄ Luxury brand attachment → Brand loyalty	0.47	8.51	<0.001
H ₅ Luxury brand attachment → Consumer advocacy	0.46	6.86	<0.001
H ₆ Brand loyalty → Consumer advocacy	0.15	2.06	0.039

Table 4
Results of multi-group analysis.

Relationship	Path coefficient (β)		$\Delta\beta$	Δp -Value
	High loyalty	Low loyalty		
Brand satisfaction → Luxury brand attachment	0.637***	0.358***	0.280	0.006
Brand satisfaction → Brand loyalty	0.796***	0.538***	0.258	0.027
Luxury brand attachment → Brand loyalty	0.166*	0.306**	-0.141	0.449
Brand satisfaction → Consumer advocacy	0.272	0.150	0.122	0.773
Luxury brand attachment → Consumer advocacy	0.486***	0.396***	0.091	0.599
Brand loyalty → Consumer advocacy	0.035	0.353*	-0.318	0.123

Significance indicators: * $p < 0.050$, ** $p < 0.010$, *** $p < 0.001$.

moderate the postulated relationships in H₃, H₄, and H₅ (Table 4). Surprisingly, the positive relationship hypothesised in the H₆ is only significant for the low brand loyalty subsample. Therefore, the question arises why the high brand loyalty subsample does not advocate the luxury brand to others. This brings out testing the potential mediation impact of luxury brand attachment in between other constructs. The result of the test showed that luxury brand attachment mediates the positive relationship between brand satisfaction and consumer advocacy ($p = 0.001$).

Finally, the relative impact of three constructs (i.e., luxury brand attachment, brand satisfaction and brand loyalty) on consumer advocacy is examined. In doing so, the particular path coefficients (e.g., luxury brand attachment → consumer advocacy; brand loyalty → consumer advocacy) are constrained to be equal under a constrained model. Then a chi-square difference test is conducted in between the constrained and unconstrained model. The results reveal that luxury brand attachment has a stronger (than brand

loyalty) impact on consumer advocacy ($\Delta\chi^2 = 5.84$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p = 0.016$). The impact on brand loyalty is also stronger for luxury brand attachment than brand satisfaction ($\Delta\chi^2 = 2.88$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p = 0.09$). Moreover, brand loyalty has a stronger (than brand satisfaction) impact on consumer advocacy ($\Delta\chi^2 = 3.45$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p = 0.06$).

5. Discussion

The objective of this study is to examine the factors that drive consumer advocacy for luxury brands. As shown in Table 2, six out of the seven hypothesised relationships are supported. First, brand satisfaction has a significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment (H₁). This finding indicates that satisfied consumers develop emotional connection to the brand over times (Belaid and Behi, 2011; Japutra et al., 2014) and the relationship becomes inseparable as reflected through the consumers' luxury brand

attachment. Second, satisfied consumers tend to be loyal to the particular luxury brand (H_2). This result validates the assumption of loyalty being a key indicator of strong consumer–brand relationship (Veloutsou, 2015). Third, satisfied consumers have been found to advocate the luxury brand to other (H_3). Next, the consumers with high luxury brand attachment have been found to be loyal to the brand as well (H_4). This reflects the importance of luxury brand attachment on building and maintains a long-term and sustainable consumer base, which has also been reflected in relevant past studies in non-luxury context (Amine, 1998; Huber et al., 2018). In addition, the consumers having high luxury brand attachment tend to advocate the brand to others (H_5). Such altruistic tendency has been echoed in past studies as well (Chang and Chieng, 2006; Roy, 2013). Aligned with the findings in H_3 and H_5 , loyal consumers have been found to get involved with consumer advocacy – supporting H_6 . Against the expectation, brand loyalty does not moderate the positive relationship between luxury brand attachment and consumer advocacy. However, the role of brand loyalty cannot be ignored amongst other relationship within the scope of this research. Brand satisfaction and brand loyalty are interrelated and they together create positive impact on attachment and advocacy for luxury consumers. However, the results have shown that highly loyal consumers do not advocate the luxury brands. There might be multiple arguments behind such counter-intuitive findings. The explanation may attribute to the temporal effect of luxury brand attachment. Although not accounted within the scope of this study, there might be an early and a mature stage of attachment. Perhaps, the consumers in the early stage of luxury brand attachment advocate the brand to others. However, if the consumers are in the mature stage, their brand loyalty becomes stronger and so they do not involve in consumer advocacy. The next question arises, why would these loyal consumers not advocate the brand to others? Is this the luxury consumers' dilemma for advocacy? Literature suggests that luxury brands are primarily conceptualised with some distinctive characteristics such as prestige, exclusivity, rarity etc. Consumers seek uniqueness from luxury brands and many luxury consumers probably do not advocate the brand to others with a fear of losing the exclusivity of their preferred brands. Unfortunately, there is no empirical research on the interactions among luxury brand attachment, brand loyalty, and consumer advocacy. However, one relevant study by Cheema and Kaikati (2010) shows that consumers with high need for uniqueness do not spread positive word-of mouth for their preferred brand. Therefore, one can reasonably argue that if consumers are highly loyal to a particular luxury brand, they would seek to preserve the exclusivity of the brand and so will refrain from consumer advocacy. To deal with this dilemma, building a strong emotional bond is important in engaging more consumers into advocacy.

6. Concluding comments

The findings presented in this paper contribute to the existing literature in several ways. First, while past studies have explained consumer advocacy from the viewpoint of the consumers' dissatisfactory experience and complaint behaviour, this study incorporates consumers' positive experience into the construct. Second, current literature provides very little understanding on the role of consumer advocacy within the domain of consumer–brand relationships. In particular, there has been a lack of studies on the drivers of consumer advocacy. This study fulfils the gap by identifying three key constructs that are relevant to consumer advocacy and examines how the constructs interact. Third, the findings contribute to the luxury branding literature with a better understanding of consumer advocacy. Specifically, the strong impact of luxury brand attachment on consumer advocacy has been identified. The

dilemma with consumer advocacy encountered by the highly loyal consumers delivers an intriguing phenomenon. While the conceptual distinction between brand loyalty and consumer advocacy has been established in earlier studies, the interaction between these two constructs requires more attention from luxury branding researchers. The paradox pointed out by this study needs to be re-examined and validated further.

Luxury branding practitioners would benefit from the findings of this study as well. First, the luxury brand managers understand that mere brand satisfaction might not be sufficient to engage the consumers into advocacy. The competitive luxury market should attempt to build strong intimacy with the consumers. Second, this study would help the luxury brand managers in segmenting and targeting the potential and profitable consumer groups. As indicated in the discussion section, strong luxury brand attachment is required for having a group of loyal consumers. Therefore, luxury managers should identify the consumers who have strong satisfaction, attachment and loyalty to the brand. For instance, Rolls Royce invites a special group of customers to the manufacturing facilities for experiencing the production process and operation (Petersen, 2014). This kind of program enhances the consumers' sense of belongingness to the brand which in turn may have positive impact on consumer advocacy. In addition, having a group of loyal and attached consumers, who advocate the brand to others, will reduce the advertising and marketing expenditure. Nevertheless, brand loyalty contributes to the brand equity and enhances the financial performance of the brand. Luxury branding practitioners should take initiatives to strengthen the luxury brand attachment so that the consumers become loyal and advocate the brand. Identifying the motivation behind consumer advocacy is critical as well. In addition, the luxury branding practitioners may identify the market maven who could be the potential group for initiating consumer advocacy. In line with this, the online and offline contexts of consumer advocacy should be assessed by the managers. The recent trend of luxury brands going online could provide new opportunities for enhancing the scope of consumer advocacy. In doing so, luxury brands should maintain the essence of exclusivity and so the operationalisation of consumer advocacy takes within the niche market segment. For example, compared to any non-luxury brand, Hermès customers are expected to develop a stronger sense of belongingness to the brand before being loyal to the brand (Petersen, 2014). In this regard, luxury branding advertisers may incorporate the aspect of advocacy in their marketing communication programs as well.

7. Limitation and future research

There are few limitations of this study that might be addressed in future research. First, the scope of this research was limited to brand satisfaction, brand loyalty, luxury brand attachment. However, there are few other key constructs in consumer–brand relationship such as brand trust, brand commitment, brand engagement that might have important consequence on consumer advocacy as well. Second, this study was conducted within the context of affordable luxury product. Future research may validate the relationships for inaccessible luxury products and services within the online and offline contexts. As noted in the result and discussion section, luxury consumers' dilemma with consumer advocacy requires more attention. The paradox may be addressed in two ways. First, a longitudinal study may test the level of brand loyalty at which consumers stop advocating the brand. Second, if the dilemma is related to the temporal effect of luxury brand attachment, perhaps examining the effects of early versus mature attachment on consumer advocacy could shed light upon the problem.

Supplementary materials

Supplementary material associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at doi:[10.1016/j.ausmj.2018.05.016](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ausmj.2018.05.016).

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