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# **Correlation of brand experience and brand love using the example of FlixBus**

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## Thesis abstract

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Nowadays, companies face more and more difficulties to differentiate themselves from competitors. The strategical usage of brand experience, to evoke feelings of love towards the brand, can make a difference.

The topic of brand experience and brand love has been researched in numerous papers. However, no decisive brand experience items were identified, which have the most impact on brand love and other connected concepts like satisfaction or brand trust. This study examines the theoretical concepts of brand experience and applies them to the mobility brand FlixBus.

The research conducted in this study was of quantitative nature, in form of an online survey. Within 12 days, a survey was shared in social media networks, together with a five-euro FlixBus voucher for completing the survey. The survey was also distributed among FlixBus employees via the intranet for 12 days. Lastly, a FlixBus raffle was started on the companies' Facebook page, where customers could win one out of five free rides. In total,  $n = 2,481$  people participated in the study.

The outcome of the study was, that brand experience directly impacts brand love. Satisfaction and brand trust were identified as connecting links between the two concepts. However, in this study brand loyalty is significantly less influenced by brand experience and brand love than stated in related literature. It was discovered that the quality of integrated processes, the relationship to the individual customer and the support of the relationship among customers had the greatest impact on derived concepts. It was also discovered that the touchpoints marketing, bus stop and the bus ride itself were most impactful for derived concepts.

**Keywords:** brand experience, brand love, satisfaction, brand experience dimensions, brand trust, brand loyalty

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## Terms and Abbreviations

<b>App</b>	Application software
<b>APPB</b>	App booking process
<b>BL</b>	Brand love
<b>BLY</b>	Brand loyalty
<b>BP</b>	Bus processes
<b>BS</b>	Bus stop
<b>BT</b>	Brand trust
<b>BX</b>	Brand experience
<b>BXD</b>	Brand experience dimensions
<b>cf.</b>	confer
<b>comm</b>	communication
<b>e.g.</b>	for example
<b>et al.</b>	et aliae (and others)
<b>HP</b>	Homepage
<b>HPB</b>	Homepage booking process
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>KMO</b>	Kaiser-Mayer Ohlin
<b>MA</b>	Marketing
<b>MFB</b>	MeinFernbus
<b>NPS</b>	Net Promoter Score



<b>RC</b>	Regression coefficient
<b>SF</b>	Satisfaction
<b>SH</b>	Shop
<b>TP</b>	Touchpoint
<b>Uniq</b>	Uniqueness
<b>UX</b>	User experience

## Special Symbols

<b>&amp;</b>	and
<b>α</b>	Cronbach's alpha
<b>€</b>	Euro
<b>β</b>	regression coefficient beta
<b>%</b>	percent
<b>p</b>	significance
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	r-square (variance)

# 1 Introduction

This master thesis deals with the topics brand experience and brand love. In the era of viral marketing it is a challenge for companies to differentiate themselves from others. Satisfying brand experience as well as feelings of love customers have towards a brand can make a difference in competitive markets. Brand experience occurs with every stimulus where the customer gets in touch with the brand (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello 2009). Brand love is a passionate emotional attachment that a satisfied customer feels towards a brand (Carroll & Ahuvia 2006). The existence of the relatively new concept of brand love is presumed for the underlying study. Different researchers have recently analyzed concepts regarding brand experience or brand love, however, no researcher has interrelated the topics previously. This study first analyzes these concepts – respectively items – as connecting links between brand experience and brand love. Additionally, the direct dependency of brand love on brand experience is measured. The results of the research identify specific customer journey touchpoints that can be utilized to generate enhanced customer satisfaction, brand trust, brand loyalty and brand love. This chapter describes the objectives of the study, the pursued research question, the methodology used, as well as the thesis structure.

## 1.1 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study can be separated into theory-related goals and practice-oriented goals. Brand experience and brand love literature provides the theoretical framework. Both concepts are examined in detail to define their basic structure and to identify correlating concepts like satisfaction, brand trust, as well as brand loyalty. Since the coherence between the concepts brand experience and brand love was not established previously, this study looks into which constructs serve as connecting links between these concepts and analyzes if brand experience directly influences brand love. The correlations and dependencies of both concepts are not only useful to theoretically prove a connection between the concepts and determine the degree of influence, but also to identify single factors that are interrelated, like touchpoints along the customer journey. This leads to the more practice-oriented goals of the study. Those are tailored to the object of this research, the mobility brand FlixBus. This study has

been originated to identify aspects on how to enhance their service as well as customer happiness. In this practicable sense, the current customer perception of brand experience and brand love is analyzed to answer questions like: How strong is the brand experience? Which responses are triggered? Where do customers perceive brand experience? Do customers of FlixBus perceive a feeling of love towards the brand and how strong is this feeling? It is also the objective to identify single touchpoints that can be leveraged to improve the FlixBus service. Brand development and improvement recommendations are the ultimate outcomes for the brand.

## 1.2 Research question

This study examines the correlation between the concepts brand experience and brand love. As stated in the objectives of the study, the goal is to analyze whether brand experience has an impact on brand love and if it does, whether directly influence brand love or, whether it just has an impact through other concepts that serve as connecting links. Derived from this, the subsequent research question of the study was:

*“Which brand experience items have the greatest effect on brand love?”*

The following seven hypotheses aim to find answers to the research question. Key of all hypotheses is to identify specific items and starting points in practice that can be used as tools to improve brand love.

Derived hypotheses from the research question:

1. Brand experience influences satisfaction.
2. Satisfaction influences brand love.
3. Brand experience influences brand trust.
4. Brand trust influences brand love.
5. Brand experience influences brand love.
6. Brand experience influences brand loyalty.
7. Brand love influences brand loyalty.

Different types of methodology are applied to find answers to the research question mentioned above, which are explained in the subsequent section.

### **1.3 Methodology**

Regarding the methodology, primary and secondary research are applied. The secondary research is predominantly applied in the theoretical framework. According to the research design, secondary research serves as basis for the hypotheses derivation. The review of literature is divided into the parts brand experience and brand love. The research of Brakus et al. (2009) presents the theoretical paradigm for brand experience. Concerning brand love, the article of Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi (2012) constitutes the origin for the theoretical enquiry. In secondary research, additional literature is consulted to generate a comprehensive theoretical framework. Primary research is applied in the conducted study starting from chapter 4, where a quantitative research method in form of a survey questionnaire is applied. To conclude, the open questions regarding recommendations queried in the survey are qualitatively analyzed to identify improvement areas for FlixBus.

### **1.4 Thesis structure**

To generate an overview of the thesis, the structure of the paper is briefly described. For comprehension as well as introduction to the topic, the subsequent chapter provides an outline of the theoretical background of the subjects brand experience and brand love. The review of literature of the two concepts goes into details about the derivation of the concepts: What do the terms mean? Which researchers build the basis for the concepts? How stable is the coherence within the respective concepts and in distinction to related terms? The passage for brand experience orientates towards the theoretical basis of Brakus et al. (2009). According to the researchers, brand-related stimuli evoke different responses, which trigger brand experience. These responses can be divided in different dimensions, which will be described in detail later. The antecedents of brand experience and the outcomes are theoretically evaluated. Next, the management of brand experience is explained, including an insight into brand experience measurement practices. The academic basis of the concept brand love is described in detail. After the derivation of the concept, the differentiation takes place by naming related theory as well as antecedents and consequences. This is followed by explaining brand love measurements based on past research. The focus is set for

recommendations for the practice. As stated, this theoretical framework serves as basis for the conducted study. In the second part of the paper (from 4 onwards), the study-specific research takes place. The chapter concerning research design gives an overview of the nature of quantitative research and an explanation why it is the most appropriate for this study. Furthermore, the development and theoretical framework of the survey questionnaire is presented as well as the implementation of the audit, involving information about the inquiry period and the participants' social demographics. The analysis methods are described including required terminology. All results derived from the survey are analyzed and described in detail. The conclusion reviews the entire work to generate a common understanding of the study's outcome. To sum up, tailored brand development recommendations are described for FlixBus. Limitation of the study, résumé and future considerations are the elements delivered as closure of the paper.

## **2 FlixBus brand**

The underlying brand experience and brand love study used the company FlixBus for practical application of the theoretical framework. FlixBus is the brand name of the registered German intercity bus company FlixBus GmbH with headquarter in Munich. André Schwämmlein, Daniel Krauss and Jochen Engert founded the company in 2011. The company profited from the train monopoly meltdown in 2013 and took advantage of the new opportunity to offer public transport via intercity busses, which was not doable before 2013. Until today, FlixBus transported over 60 million passengers and offers around 200,000 bus connections per day (FlixBus 2017a). Overall 1,000 sub-contractor busses drive under the FlixBus-flag (Hartmann 2016). The cooperation bus partners are responsible for the professional day-to-day execution, whereas the FlixBus team is responsible for network planning, marketing, pricing, quality management and customer service. The quality of the actual bus transportation service is dependent on the bus partners. This business model took advantage of a high scalability and is responsible for the company's rapid growth (Noah Conference 2017), which is described in 2.1.

### **2.1 Brand history**

The company was initially founded in 2011 under the name GoBus and was renamed in the beginning of 2013 to FlixBus. The liberalization of the intercity bus transport in 2013 led FlixBus to enter the market with four daily routes through the south of Germany. After only one year, FlixBus turned a profit. Still the biggest breakthrough of the company was due to the merger with the bus transportation company MeinFernbus in 2015 (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung GmbH 2017a). In 2016, the company FlixBus GmbH rebranded into FlixBus GmbH, which led to a relaunch of the brand as it exists today. During the same period, FlixBus acquired two competitive bus transportation companies, Megabus (Richters 2016) and Postbus (FlixBus GmbH 2017b). Also, FlixBus bought the company Hellö from the Austrian federal railway. FlixBus has further ambitions to grow (VOL.AT 2017). Details are provided in the subsequent paragraph.

## 2.2 Brand vision

When analyzing a brand from different perspectives, the vision of the underlying business is a primary factor. For 2017 and in the future, the company has set the following goals: growth, profitability, excellence and customer happiness. First, the goal of company's growth aims at expanding into new countries and markets. The major goal is to become the number one bus transportation service for individuals and groups in Europe with revenues of € 500 million per year (internal source). The second goal is to make the company sustainable for the future, the focus is on becoming more profitable. The company grew very fast and did not recognize all the aspects of successful growth. In this sense, the third goal is to tackle basics, compensate deficits and optimize processes. Lastly, the vision of improved customer happiness aims at improving the approval rating of the business. An internal project was born to improve customer satisfaction by testing new tools and features. In this project, the first step was to survey employees, asking for their feedback and ideas on how to improve the customer/brand experience. Mentioned aspects are similar to recommendation proposals of customers as available in 5.5 and **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden..**

## 2.3 Brand positioning

The brand and company activities are grounded in its defined brand promise. The brand promise is only a single statement that captures the essence of the delivered brand experience. This is the internal compass FlixBus uses to guide the development of the brand. The assurance introduces the company's belief in mobility. "Travel is the only thing you buy that makes you richer!" The brand is based on a value system existing of five different pillars. These values serve as a system of rules on how to behave within the company as well as towards customers. The first pillar is to be 'open minded'. FlixBus is a cosmopolitan and dynamic brand with constant growth. Therefore, an open-minded attitude helps to quickly adapt to new circumstances and encourages constant growth. Second, FlixBus should be 'surprising' that is to overachieve customer's needs, which results in a great travel experience for the customer. Due to revolutionary successes in the German bus-market and expansion in Europe and beyond, FlixBus expects to be 'confident'. They can self-reliantly look into the past well as into



the future. Fourth, 'curiosity' is stated as a FlixBus pillar, since the company is constantly aiming to improve performance. Fifth, the brand FlixBus is based on 'human' values. Honesty and professionalism are the best ways to help people. The personality of FlixBus was shaped due to its brand values. Character attributes are: be urban, be human, be emotional, be green and orange, as well as be smart, clean and bold. As with the value pillars, the personality structure enables homogeneity in mind-set and behavior throughout the company. The brand voice is deductive to communicate through every available and present channel in a confident, smart, charming and humorous manner. All brand-related attributes have a core value: "We believe that the world would be a better place if people get the chance to visit their love, ones family and friends more often or just travel and have some great moments". The brand positioning determines the brand direction of FlixBus, which gives an insight into the strategic background of the mobility brand. The source of the brand vision and brand promise are internal data.

## 2.4 Former brand research

After receiving information about the history of FlixBus, the vision of the company and the brand positioning, it is important to get an overview of the conducted brand research of the company. The FlixBus studies regarding brand awareness, brand perception, brand positioning, brand satisfaction and recommendation were conducted between 2014 and 2017. The 'brands', as objects of research are concerned with both, the former brand MeinFernbus as well as the current brand FlixBus. Sources of the studies are internal presentations of the research results.

**Brand awareness.** The investigation of brand awareness was conducted in December 2014 for the previous brand MeinFernbus (MFB), where  $n = 1,413$  persons were surveyed Germany-wide. The study was divided into three different segments: brand development, usage and market potential, as well as promotional perception. The outcomes showed first that the brand MFB was very strong nationwide. Cities with high marketing activities exposed an even greater brand presence than cities with no marketing placements. The brand awareness of MFB was 51 % in Berlin, 55 % in Baden-Württemberg and 44 % in Bavaria. Throughout the country, 44 % were aware of the name MFB and 31 % knew the – to date new brand – FlixBus. The latter claimed 11

million sympathizers for oneself in 2014 already. The analysis on usage and the market potential showed that 72 % of Germans were willing to use an intercity bus. MFB counted 71 % of its customers to be regular customers. FlixBus however gained 66 % of new customers and documented 34 % of repeating customers within the last year (2014). The last study of the promotional perception showed that 13 % of respondents were aware of MFB-slogans. Especially the slogans “Fahr grün” (‘drive green’) and “preisgünstig, direkt und komfortabel” (‘cheap, direct and comfortable’) were recognizable. It can be stated that people were more attentive to the brand name MeinFernbus than to FlixBus. Nevertheless, the name FlixBus was – for its young age – already known. It should be noted that the study was at the end of 2014. Nowadays, the results may look different.

**Brand perception.** The MeinFernbus FlixBus study regarding brand perception was conducted among  $n = 520$  customers, through computer assisted web interviews in September 2015. Results showed that the brand FlixBus was known by 58 % (aided questions) respectively 24 % (unaided questions). MFB, by contrast, only reached 50 % (respectively 16 %). The merged brand name ‘MeinFernbus FlixBus’, which was used temporarily – from January 2015 until Mai 2016 – was not passed into the common language usage. 65 % of respondents just remembered FlixBus out of the double-brand. It was interesting to note that most of the people were not aware of the MFB FlixBus fusion. The study was applied to analyze how the new brand name was perceived.

**Brand positioning.** Regarding the positioning, two studies were conducted in terms of MFB and FlixBus. The first study took place from January until March 2014. In the study  $n = 1,120$  people were surveyed. Among the respondents, 620 were MFB customers, 125 ADAC Postbus, 125 BerlinLinienBus, 125 FlixBus and 125 IC Bus customers. The study focused on analyzing the brand awareness and usage, the target group profile, the satisfaction and recommendation trends, decision criterions for the supplier choice, the positioning of MFB in comparison to the competition, as well as recommendations for action. First, the survey part asking for brand awareness and usage showed that MFB is well known among every second competitive customer. MFB customers used its transportation service on average 4.1 times per year. This figure is similar to those of FlixBus and BerlinLinienBus users. Second, the study clas-

sified young travelers with low-income as MFB's main target group. 60 % of MFB customers are under the age of 30. In comparison, IC Bus serves more customers between the ages of 30 to 49. It is further shown that MFB exhibits an over proportional number of female travelers. Third, in an overall evaluation, IC Bus customers are shown to be the most satisfied, closely followed by MFB customers, who in turn have the highest tendency to recommend the brand. The following decision criteria were named as factors towards the supplier choice: affordable price, direct connections and the good reputation of the bus transportation company. Fourth, MFB is shown to have the highest customer retention. The market positioning was ranked as good to very good. According to the criteria price, line network and departure frequency MFB was classified as the best supplier with an outstanding image and high sympathy. Attributes like 'modern' and 'safe' were allocated to the brand. However, whereas MFB had the best cost effectiveness, all competitors offered more comfort in the busses. Lastly, the several recommendations for action were noted: maintain the low-price level, focus on customer retention, extension of the good image, increase convenience, provide better solutions for luggage storage, drive market penetration, facilitate easier booking possibilities, highlight the safety aspect, as well as monitor and improve staff friendliness.

A similar study in cooperation with the Hochschule Osnabrück took place in December 2016. After interviewing n = 72 participants, the students analyzed the performance of FlixBus in comparison to the Deutsche Bahn. FlixBus was described as a modern, innovative and confident organization, whereas the Deutsche Bahn was seen as strong in dynamic and environment-conscious. The group of students further asked for associations people have with the brand. 71 % stated 'inexpensive', 25 % named 'green' and 19 % mentioned 'long travel time'. The remaining associations were: comfort, WIFI, unpunctuality and flexibility. As a result, the researchers examined five more suitable pillars of FlixBus, which were: friendly, personal, convenient, curious and open minded. According to the shift in brand values, the group recommended adaption and development possibilities to the brand FlixBus.

**Brand satisfaction and recommendation.** In beginning 2017, a study towards the Net Promoter Score (NPS)<sup>1</sup> of FlixBus took place. The goal was to rate the emotional

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<sup>1</sup> NPS is a management tool that is used to measure the customer's loyalty for the brand. It is measured by subtracting detractors of the brand from brand promoters (Satmetrix Systems, Inc. 2017).

customer retention, the brand attractiveness and to discover potential for improvement. In total  $n = 27,000$  FlixBus customers were asked via an online survey (response rate: 6 %). The study revealed a high degree in overall satisfaction with a mean of 3.9 on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is the worst and 5 is the best. It was shown that emotional customer retention exists as a future success factor. 40 % of the customers were less emotionally involved, but satisfied. Additionally, regular customers were more affected than new customers. The relational NPS was scored at 38 %. However, the NPS after the ride was only 13 %. Assumptions for the low score were that there was a higher tendency that unsatisfied customers answered to a greater extent after the ride. Furthermore, after the bus ride the recommendation question is perceived as a satisfaction indicator, although the overall NPS refers to a business valuation. The longer the journey was in the past, the more positively it was evaluated. New customers (17 %) recommended FlixBus less than regular customers (44 %). The most often mentioned deficiencies were related to price, reliability, punctuality, service, friendliness of the bus driver and the duration of the journey. Frequent travelers were more critical concerning information about delays, punctuality and customer service. Concerning the brand attractiveness it was revealed that respondents perceived FlixBus as an attractive brand. Positive attributes were its strong technology, the openness, the curiosity, as well as its positive communication or interaction.

**Summary.** Most inquiries have been concerned with the former MeinFernbus brand and are therefore not 100 % significant for this study. It can be concluded that FlixBus is more recognizable in the market on part of the customer. Customers appear relatively satisfied with the service. However, the satisfaction with the ride as such, seemed to be less satisfying as the brand perception in general. The underlying study evaluated the single touchpoints that have greatest effects on satisfaction, brand trust, brand love, as well as brand loyalty. The theoretical framework for the used terminology is presented in the chapter 3.

### **3 Brand experience and brand love**

Brand experience and brand love are significant tools to distinguish a brand from those of competitors, by creating satisfying experiences for a customer that can lead to brand love. The correlation between brand experience and brand love, by reference to touch-points, has not been evaluated previously. An identification of single drivers that have the greatest direct and indirect effect on brand love, through satisfaction and brand trust is presented in the underlying study. This chapter provides the theoretical basis of the inquiry. First, brand experience gets theoretically analyzed in detail, followed by brand love and before a summary of the review of literature, the specific connecting links between the two concepts are presented.

#### **3.1 Brand experience**

At present, more and more advertisement tools are utilized to approach a wide range of consumers. Maxian et al. (2013, 469) claim that “brands are an inescapable part of everyday life”. Guerilla advertisement and viral marketing spots are part of today’s advertisement. *They* stated, it is key for marketers that “[...] brands must break through the clutter and find a way to compete for consumers’ overwrought attention”. With the importance of the concept of brand experience in mind, the needed terminology as well as distinction of the research field is described in section 3.1.1. Key is to get an overview of the theory as well as to get an insight into practical brand experience tools for marketers.

##### **3.1.1 Brand experience definition**

This subchapter derives the term brand experience, starting with the word brand, followed by the experience, providing a definition of brand experience and finally describing brand experience dimensions. The defined terms are valid for the entire paper and therefore build the starting point for the theoretical background of brand experience.

**Brand definition.** The word brand has its meaning from the Old Norse<sup>2</sup> expression 'brandr', which means 'to burn'. It derived from the traditional procedure of marking livestock, criminals or slaves to differentiate them from those of others (cf. Oxford University Press 2017a). It started with distinguishing property and turned into characterizing services and products to assure competitive advantage. Since the beginning of trade, brands played an important role to allocate offered goods to its producers. The meaning was shaped over time through external social, economic, technical and legal influences. Nowadays, the term brand is integrated in a wide spectrum of touchpoints of everyday life. In the economy, culture, sport and religion. In all areas institutions are known and individually distinguishable from others. Due to a lot of research on this topic, multiple definitions of the term brand exist. Several classification areas of the term are presented, in a reference to Maurya and Mishra (2012). First, brand can be classified as a **logo**. The American Marketing Association (2017) defines brand as a "name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers". They note that "a brand is a customer experience represented by a collection of images and ideas; often it refers to a symbol such as a name, logo, slogan and design scheme. Brand recognition and other reactions are created by the accumulation of experiences with the specific product or service, both directly relating to its use and through the influence of advertising, design and media commentary". In this sense, brand is already assigned to experiences. Second, brand can be classified as a **legal instrument** to mark ownership (cf. Oxford University Press 2017a). This definition refers to the origin of the term as stated before in this paragraph ("marking livestock [...]"). Third, a brand can be a representative for a **company**, arguing that companies are known by their brands (Varadarajan, DeFanti & Busch 2006). The name of a company is part of its branding. When people directly name companies, they can either mean the company as such or its brand. Fourth, brands can be perceived as an **identity system**, which includes a set of physical, relational, reflecting, consumer-mental, cultural and personal attributes (cf. Azoulay & Kapferer 2003). The latter can be seen as a fifth definition by relating brand to a **personality**, "[...] which refers to the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker 1997, 347). If a brand can be seen as a person, then the possibility exists of building a relationship between the brand and the consumer (cf. Blackston 1992).

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<sup>2</sup> Old Norse is a North Germanic language with roots in Scandinavia (McCoy 2017).

Sixth, a brand can be defined as a **relationship**. The brand can be a connecting link in form of a relationship between the customer and the product or service. Seventh, interactions with the brand may evoke **imaginings in consumers' minds**: a “brand image refers to the set of associations linked to the brand that consumers hold in memory” (Keller 1993, 2). Eighth, a brand can be seen as a **value system**, composed of functional, social, emotional, epistemic and conditional values contributing to the perception of a brand (cf. Sheth, Newman & Gross 1991). Brands are perceived as intangible assets that benefit all stakeholders. Fournier (1998) adds that brands are not objectively existent; “it is simply a collection of perceptions held in the mind of the consumer”. The brand lives through marketers' activities. This makes it easy for merchants to enhance customers to assemble visual attributes of a brand, which are formed into an associated image. After that, it is put to the customers' individual set of favored brands (cf. Maxian et al. 2013). The brand itself – as a set of values formed into an identity system – can be perceived as a person and is able to build a relationship to its customers by adding value and fulfilling “[...] interpersonal psychological needs” (Dunn & Hoegg 2014, 152). Brands are used to “[...] engage consumers emotionally and do so at the individual level” (Maxian et al. 2013, 475). In a nutshell, we can look at brands from different perspectives. The variety of definitions exposes the complexity of the topic. The underlying study and its comprised research uses brand in the definition of a company; in this case FlixBus.

**Experience definition.** For more than 30 years, scientists have engaged in research on the topic experience. Over time, the term was influenced by different perspectives and developed in different directions. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) – were one of the first group of researchers to examine the topic. *They* defined experience in form of two different models. The first one describes experience from a rational viewpoint, in the sense of an information-processing phase. The second – irrational model – looks at experience from an experiential viewpoint. In short, experiences can be perceived through the handling of information of a certain situation or through a more emotional perception. Carbone and Haecckel (1994, 18) see experience as “the aggregate and cumulative customer perception created during the process of learning about, acquiring, using, maintaining and (sometimes) disposing of a product or service”. In *their* view, the interaction with the product or service initiates a learning process, which is driven by customer perceptions. Pine and Gilmore (1998, 97) define experience as a

“memorable event” that entails the subsequent acquisition of knowledge and skills. Also Hoch (2002) set experiences in relation with learning. It “[...] affects the way you feel or knowledge or skill from doing, seeing or feeling things” (Same & Larimo 2012, 481). The experience itself can be “[...] good or bad, lasting or fleeting, a random phenomenon or an engineered perception” (Carbone & Haeckel 1994, 9). If an experience happens in an everyday life situation or in a practiced, passively accepted event, it is classified as an ordinary experience. On the other hand, if an experience triggers emotions and transformations in the customer, it is called an extraordinary experience (cf. Carù & Cova 2003). “[...] Experiences occur when consumers search for products, when they shop for them and receive service and when they consume them” (Brakus et al. 2009, 52). The term experience “is both a noun and a verb and it is used variously to convey the process itself, participating in the activity, the affect or way in which an object, thought or emotion is felt through the senses or the mind, and even the outcome of an experience by way of a skill or learning for example” (Tynan & McKenchie 2009, 502–503). The Oxford University Press (2017b) defines experience as a noun and described as “an event or occurrence which leaves an impression on someone” or as the result of knowledge extension through physical contact or observation of the event. The verb experience on the other hand, means to undergo a specific event or to feel an emotion (cf. Oxford University Press 2017b). Interaction with the event is not mandatory, however, it must result into knowledge extension or learning (cf. Tynan & McKenchie 2009). Cambridge dictionary however stresses on the emotional impressions resulting from an event (cf. Cambridge University Press 2014a). Same and Larimo (2012) further differentiate experiential marketing from experience marketing. Experiential marketing is meant to be based on experience and focuses on emotions and feelings. Experience marketing on the other hand is described as a process, initiated by a stimulus and resulting in learning or behavior. The stimulus may arise through interactions in the group or individually. Hence, experience marketing is a triggered process through a certain stimulus – like advertisement – that ends in knowledge extension. Experiential marketing is the emotional reaction on an experience. Another fact of the topic experience is that when translating the word experience into German (or Dutch, Estonian, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, Japanese) two different interpretations exist. First, ‘Erlebnis’ is an immediate and isolated event, which was not already experienced. The second translation is ‘Erfahrung’ and describes an already perceived event and concurrently a continuing process of learning through interaction (cf. Same



& Larimo 2012). In sum, experiences emerge out of remarkable events through interaction or observation of a product or service, which influences emotions and launches an internal learning process.

**Brand experience definition.** After defining brand as a mixture of visual attributes and values used to differentiate a product, service or company by evoking an image in the minds of the customers and characterizing experience as a lived or observed event that has an internal learning and knowledge extension impact; the two terms are now described in interrelation: brand experience. In the words of Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004, 13) “the experience is the brand”. Brands can be described as promises about exclusive and greeted experiences (cf. Coleman, de Chernatony & Christodoulides 2011). “Branding is evolving to a new era where the basis of the brand is the design of a unique interactive brand experience” (Merrilees 2016, 406). The phenomenon of brand experience derived over time and was influenced by different approaches. Co-founders of the term – Holbrook and Hirschman (1982, 132) – defined experiences in relation to the consumption process and thus characterized consumption experience “[...] as a phenomenon directed toward the pursuit of fantasies, feelings, and fun”. Another approach was represented by Pine and Gilmore (1998) who introduced the experience economy study. *They* first put experience in an economical context. In their concept of staged experience, the researchers described an experience as a service that includes a memorable event. Hence, the service itself triggered the remarkable event. After the relationship between experiences and economy was established, the researcher Schmitt (1999) stressed the difference between traditional marketing and experiential marketing. The latter one sees “consumers as rational and emotional human beings who are concerned with achieving pleasurable experiences”. In a later study, the *author* states that customers “[...] are looking for something real and authentic, and not just ad slogans and messages that are supposed to target cognitions in their mind” (Schmitt 2009, 417). As time passed and more and more brands became available on the market, customers started to evaluate and differentiate the brands based on specific experiences (cf. Brakus et al. 2009). When interacting with a brand, customers can directly use a service or product through physical contact or experience it indirectly through brand images and events (cf. Cliffe & Motion 2005; Alloza 2008). Each time a tangible object or intangible action is interrelated with a consumer, if it starts evoking an internal response it is defined as brand experience (cf.

Brakus et al. 2009). The goal is to distribute the brand promise through experiences with the brand (cf. Iglesias, Singh & Batista-Foguet 2011). To sum up, experience marketing can be seen “[...] as a strategic and holistic marketing of relevant (and meaningful) experiences [...]” (Same & Larimo, 2012, 485). The pioneer of brand experience – Brakus et al. (2009, 52) – state that “brand experience is conceptualized as sensations, feelings, cognitions and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communications and environments”. Those responses are defined as brand experience dimensions, which are described as follows.

**Brand experience dimensions.** Brand experience dimensions are different experiential responses, which are “[...] evoked by brand-related stimuli (e.g., colours, shapes, typefaces, designs, slogans, mascots, brand characters)” (Brakus et al. 2009, 54). Different researchers discovered several different dimensions, which can be classified in sensorial, affective, cognitive, behavioral and non-classifiable dimensions. Next, the single respective dimensions are described with references to the scientists, who developed them. For a better understanding of the brand experience dimensions one see the overview in Appendix 1, including a complete list of researchers involved with the topics. First, the **sensorial** dimension, which is evoked through brand-related stimuli has aesthetic and sensorial responses like: seeing, hearing, smelling, sensorial perception and tasting. Different terms are allocated to the sensorial dimension: aesthetic (cf. Pine & Gilmore 1999), sense (cf. Schmitt 1999), sensorial-perception (cf. Fornerino, Helme-Guizon & Gaudemaris 2006) and sensory (cf. Gentile, Spiller & Noci 2007). The second dimension is **affective**. Customers respond with emotions and moods on brand-related stimuli. Some researchers describe this dimension as emotional (cf. Pine & Gilmore 1998); others as affective (cf. Dubé & LeBel 2003, according to Brakus et al. 2009). Feeling is further an internal affective reaction on stimuli. The hedonic consumption of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) is counted as emotional. Hedonism is “the pursuit of pleasure or sensual self-indulgence” (Oxford University Press 2017c). The researchers Olsson et al. (2012) added affective dimensions of positive activation like enthusiasm or boredom as well as positive deactivation like relaxation or stress. Third, the **cognitive** dimension can be described as convergent, analytical and divergent, imaginative thinking (cf. Schmitt 1999). This dimension (cf. Holt 1995) comprises terms like: educational (cf. Pine & Gilmore 1999) and informational (cf.

Tynan & McKenchie 2009). The fourth dimension of **behavioral** responses reflects motoric actions (cf. Schmitt 1999) and physical (cf. Pine & Gilmore 1998), physical-behavioral (cf. Fornerino et al. 2006) or pragmatic (cf. Gentile et al. 2007) reactions. These approaches contribute to the active reaction of a customer on diverse brand-related stimuli. Researchers developed **other** dimensions which are difficult to cluster, due to their unique appearance. The so far named dimensions can be pooled into a subjective (emotional, cognitive, social) and an objective (behavioral, cognitive) reaction (cf. Mascarenhas, Kesavan & Bernacchi 2006). The scientists Pine and Gilmore (1998) as well as Carù and Cova (2003) agreed on a spiritual dimension as a form of reaction. Pine and Gilmore (1999) added the dimension of escapist, which defines the customer as a part of the event in form of a participant or an active player. Another approach came from Tynan and McKenchie (2009, 506) who added to the so far mentioned dimensions, the novelty and utopian dimensions. The former delivers value due to its surprising nature and newness; the latter describes a process that is specifically constructed. These different responses are effects, evoked by different stimuli of the brand in form of, e.g. advertising, the design or packaging of the product as well as interaction with the service. The underlying study focuses on the brand experience dimensions mentioned by Brakus et al. (2009), namely: senses, emotions, behavior and thoughts. In the subsequent chapters, the terminology of brand experience dimensions is equated to brand experience responses. To better identify the concept of brand experience and therefore to distinguish the concept from similar concepts, the subsequent paragraph adds clarity.

### 3.1.2 **Brand experience differentiation**

After defining brand in diverse classifications, differentiating the single perceptions of the term experience and describing the roots of the concept of brand experience, this chapter distinguishes related brand experience concepts. Literature differentiates between experience classification types: customer experience, service experience, product experience, retail experience, user experience and consumption experience.

**Customer experience.** Which is one of the most important concepts of brand experience. The differentiation between both constructs is that brand experience demonstrates the created experience on part of the company. Customer experience in turn,

is the perceived experience on part of the customer. Particular attention was spent on this topic, since it is the same concept as brand experience, just from another perspective. Customer experience is the response or event, a customer has through interaction with the company, brand, product or service.

**Service experience.** Characteristics of service experiences are defined as first, service experiences are unique and individually based on customers' goals, needs and evaluation criteria. They can be described as heterogeneous (cf. Coleman et al. 2011). Second, in service experiences, the production and consumption happens simultaneously (cf. Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry 1985) and customers can get involved in the production process through co-creation<sup>3</sup>. Third, services cannot be physically stored or owned. They are therefore described as perishable (cf. Coleman et al. 2011; Shostack 1984, 134). Service experience can be subdivided in service provider companies and services given by employees in a company. They can be a synonym of brand experiences, if it describes the experience designed for customers of a service provider company. If it relates to the service personnel representative of a company, it demonstrates only a part of the designable brand experience that focuses on the service performance.

**Product experience.** It is described as the experience one has with a certain product. It has an effect on the consumer preference model and sets itself apart from the consumer choice model, which mainly focuses just on qualitative attributes (cf. Chung & Rao 2012). Product experience relates mostly to the quality of the product and the ambiguity of the advertising.

**Retail experience.** Product experience and service experience intermingle in retail, where the proposition of the goods concur with the performance of the service personnel. The concept is comprised of more attributes and defined as "the sum total of cognitive, emotional, sensorial, and behavioral responses produced during the entire buying process, involving an integrated series of interaction with people, objects, processes and environment in retailing" (Shilpa & Rajnish 2013, 792, according to Carbone & Haeckel 1994; Schmitt 1999; Gentile et al. 2007; Verhoef et al. 2009). The retail brand experience dimensions described by Khan and Rahman (2016) entail the

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<sup>3</sup> Co-creation is a business strategy that actively involves customers "[...] to create a value rich experience" (Business dictionary 2017).

retail brand name, packaging of own labels, customer billing, order and application forms, mass media, assistance, recommendation by a salesperson, event marketing and brand stories. Retail experience is a part of brand experience, however, it covers only the purchase phase, whether brand experience exists at every brand-related stimulus.

**Consumption experience.** This concept was originated by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), who developed experience in a symbolic, hedonic and aesthetic nature of consumption. They linked consumption experience to “[...] pursuit of fantasies, feelings and fun” (Holbrook & Hirschman 1982, 132). Calder, Isaac and Malthouse (2016) focused their research on hedonic pleasure, arguing that consumers are attracted to products through hedonic pleasure. The researcher evaluated two different measures of experiences: hedonia – to evaluate the customers’ satisfaction, and eudaimonia – which assessed their engagement. Result of the study was that the level of customer’s engagement is a major part in consumption experience (cf. Calder et al. 2016; Holt 1995). However, the experience is not tied to a process and may happen during or after the actual consumption (Schmitt 1999). Through the interaction of consumer and provider, consumption experience can be seen as a distinct market offering, which is perceived in a positive, engaging, physical, emotional and socially fulfilling way (cf. Mascarenhas et al. 2006). According to Schembri (2009), consumption experience unifies the elements of play, socializing and communal sharing. All in all, consumption experience is one part of brand experience, where the actual service or product is in use. Brand experience in turn encompasses other stimuli of the brand and is not limited to its consumption.

**User experience.** The concept is defined as the pleasant and easy usage of a product like a webpage or computer (cf. Oxford University Press 2017d). It is mostly used relating to information technology. Nowadays, plenty e-businesses exist and a webpage referring to a company is a ‘must-have’. A user experience (UX) consists of three different dimensions: task-oriented qualities, self-oriented qualities and aesthetic qualities. The task-oriented qualities reflect the usability of a webpage including its sub-dimensions of learnability and operability. It is measured in terms of how easy the handling of the webpage is for visitors. Second, the self-oriented qualities are more oriented to human needs. This dimension includes the instruments of product fit and in-

spiration. The focus is on how good the webpage interrelates to an individuals' personality. Lastly, aesthetic qualities refer to how the product looks and feels as well as how appealing a webpage is to the masses (cf. Wildner et al. 2015). User experience can be a part of brand experience concerning the online presence of the brand.

**Summary.** The memorable event of brand experiences may appear at different stages of the purchase process with diverse interaction points. It can be evoked through interaction with a product or service, during the consumption or in interaction with the online appearance of the brand. However, brand experience encompasses every single stimulus one has with a certain brand. Therefore, brand experience includes all mentioned experiences that are manageable on part of a company. Customer experience is the brand experience lived through the customer.

### 3.1.3 Brand experience related concepts

The construct of brand experience does not exist autonomously. It is integrated in a succession of related concepts; some are drivers for brand experience, some are influenced by brand experience and others again seem similar, but are different in their nature. The concepts and aspects that influence brand experience are defined as antecedents, those which are a result of brand experience are called consequences. Antecedents, consequences and other related concepts of brand experience are mentioned in this chapter. In Appendix 2 is an overview of antecedents and consequences of brand experience available according to its researchers.

**Brand experience antecedents.** Many researchers were concerned with the topic brand experience and discovered different aspects and attributes that have an effect on the concept. These discoveries of antecedently scientific areas, which differ from brand and customer experience as well as retail and service experience. Besides the different specific terms used by single researchers, antecedents of brand experience can be framed into internal and external factors (cf. Hwang & Seo 2016). The former includes features according to the customer himself like expectations, past experience, enjoyment or personal interests. The latter comprises external factors like the quality of the product or service, physical characteristics, the environment of the customer or economic factors. In short, the personality, mood, value-system and expectations of

the customer influence the way, how the customer experiences a brand. The functionality and quality of the products' and services' atmosphere, the social environment and the economic situation are important aspects of brand experience antecedents.

**Brand experience consequences.** Brand experience is a concept perceived by senses, emotions, thoughts and behavior. The responses depend on brand-related stimuli in form of internal or external factors as mentioned in brand experience antecedents. The outcome of brand experience on the other hand, defines the relationship a customer has with the brand; whether the customer is satisfied with the brand, whether he trusts the brand and establishes loyalty to the brand. In every case, future behavior of the customer with the brand depends on the way how the brand is experienced. The outcomes of brand experience that are represented as antecedents of brand love are described in 3.3.

**Brand experience related concepts.** Brand experience is a unique concept that differs from motivational and emotional concepts like brand attitudes, brand involvement, brand attachment, customer delight and brand personality (Brakus et al. 2009). First, brand attitudes encompass general feelings and affective reactions towards a brand, without the fact of actually evaluating the experience (cf. Fishbein & Ajzen 1975, according to Brakus et al. 2009). Hence, brand attitude can be a part of brand experience but does not cover the construct in a whole. Second, brand involvement is a motivational concept, which involves a personal connection of the person with the brand. This construct is based on joined needs, values and interests (cf. Zaichowsky 1985). In the case of brand experience, the consumer does not need to be involved with the brand to evoke internal responses. Third, brand attachment comprises emotional bonds between the consumer and the brand, whereas brand experience triggers only short affective responses to a certain stimuli and does not require an emotional relationship (cf. Park & MacInnis 2006; Thomson, MacInnis & Park 2005). Fourth, customer delight happens only after consumption and is a surprise to the consumer (cf. Oliver, Rust & Varki 1997). Brand experience may appear in any kind of encounter with the brand and does not need to happen surprisingly (cf. Aaker 1997). To end, the concept of brand personality projects human characteristics onto a brand without any emotional responses or affective actions involved as opposed to brand experience. It is important to distinguish those concepts from brand experience to avoid confusion. These constructs can appear as antecedents or consequences of brand experience.

### 3.1.4 Brand experience management

The management of brand experience is defined as a process of strategic controlling of all experiences a customer has with a brand at all touchpoints. Customer or brand experience management is a customer oriented construct (cf. Schmitt 2009). The researchers Gronholdt et al. (2015) name important attributes of customer experience management. These are: rational customer and emotional customer experience, recruitment and training of rational and emotional skills, customer touchpoints, using customer insight and top management involvement. Customer experience has influences on other constructs like customer satisfaction, service quality as well as customer relationship and consumer behavior. It is stated that customer experience is more profound and long lasting than other concepts (cf. Bhandari 2016; Klaus & Maklan 2012). Especially for service organizations it is one of the most complex and pressing challenge worldwide (cf. Klaus & Maklan 2012). The key is to identify the perfect “[...] alignment of fantasy and reality” to establish excellent customer experience (Schouten, McAlexander & Koenig 2007, 367). Brand experience management is a process that aims to improve experience and cost reduction in the end-to-end process of the customer journey (cf. Maklan, Antonetti & Whitty 2017). An overview of the process is visible in Figure 1.

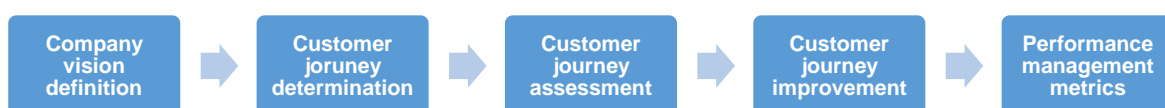


Figure 1. Brand experience management process

The process starts with clarifying the company vision, determining the venture purpose and identifying its set of values (cf. MacGillavry & Wilson 2014). “An understanding of any professional service creation and delivery system begins with a comprehensive description of the client service process” (Koljonen & Reid 2000, 36). Second, the customer journey needs to be evaluated to identify all touchpoints, where brand experience takes place (cf. Paula & Iliuta 2008, 1172; Maklan et al. 2017, 96) The customer journey itself is described as “[...] a systematic approach designed to help organizations understand how prospective and current customers use the various channels and touch points, how they perceive the organization at each touch point and how they would like the customer experience to be” (Nenonen et al. 2008, 6). It illustrates the



cycle of interactions of the customer with the company at possible touchpoints and highlights the occurring experiences. According to FlixBus, the customer journey is divided in six different steps, namely research & planning, shopping, booking, post-booking & pre-travel, travel and post-travel. An overview and description of the FlixBus customer journey is presented in Appendix 3. Third, the customer journey needs to be assessed to analyze how the overall service is actually perceived by the customers. It is important to understand which touchpoints are crucial for them (cf. Maklan et al. 2017). The quality and performance of the single items need to be analyzed and enhanced (Paula & Iliuta 2008). According to Chang and Horng (2010, 2415), quality is detected through different dimensions: physical surroundings that are perceived through senses plus its sub-dimensions of atmosphere, concentration, imagination and surprise. Experience quality is influenced by the personal interaction of the service provider and the customer, the interaction with other customers, the customers' companies and the customers themselves by cognitive learning and having fun. According to *them*, it is "[...] conceptualized as the customers' emotional judgment about the entire experience". Fourth, the customer journey needs constant improvement and development (cf. MacGillavry & Wilson 2014; Paula & Iliuta 2008); partially through customer service training (cf. MacGillavry & Wilson 2014). Finally, *they* state that metrics need to be defined for performance management purposes as well as the provision of sustainable advanced long-term services. It is also important that people are open to experience for assessment reasons as well as involvement of emotions to effectively establish brand experience.

**Brand experience summary.** Brand experience is a strategic marketing tool designed in a way that consumers perceive memorable events evoked by brand-related stimuli that trigger emotions and initiate an internal learning process. As mentioned before, the brand can be a logo, legal instrument, a company, an identity system, a relationship, an image in consumer's mind or a value system, which is distinguishable from others. Brand experience is a company designed concept perceived by customers. Customer experience in turn is the same experience from the viewpoint of the customer. Such experiences can be perceived in interaction with the product (product experience) or a service (service experience); offline (retail experience) or online (user experience). The experience can happen before, after or during consumption (consumption experience), every time the consumer responds to a brand-related stimulus.

The responses or so-called brand experience dimensions can be perceived through senses, emotions, behavior, thoughts or through other responses. Additional desired outcomes of the concept are satisfaction, brand trust and brand loyalty. However, brand experience not only influences concepts, it is also a result of internal (e.g. expectations) or external (e.g. product/service quality; special features) customer reality. It can happen to anyone and is not bound to personal connections to the brand like brand involvement or brand attachment. Brand experience triggers specific responses and is not a general feeling towards the brand like brand attitude. Further, no human characteristics are associated with the brand for brand experience existence like brand personality. To measure brand experience, the brand-related stimuli need to be identified. These are located in the single touchpoints assembled in the customer journey. For brand experience improvement, the touchpoint satisfaction needs to be optimized as well as the quality and functionality of the product or service. Conclusion is that brand experience is a useful tool to distinguish one brand from a competing brand.

### 3.2 Brand love

Since the beginning of time, love is a phenomenon that was addressed by multiple people worldwide. Socrates once stated: “One word frees us. Of all the weight and pain in life. That word is Love.” Love cannot be explained physically. “Gravitation is not responsible for people falling in love” stated Albert Einstein. Martin Luther King Jr. defined love as “the only force capable of transforming an enemy into friend”. All in all, “that love is all there is all we know of love” (Emily Dickinson). However, Langner et al. (2014, 16) mention that the accumulation of “interpersonal circumstances” supports the love aspect. *They* further add that “[...] personal experiences, related to childhood, interpersonal relationships, transitional periods, hobbies, gifts, vacations and living abroad” exist as “many critical incidents that shape brand love trajectories [...]”. *At the same time*, most of those experiences are uncontrollable by marketers since they occur individually, subjective and unpredictable. Experiences are the source of brand love relationships (Langner et al. 2014). However, researcher claim that the word ‘love’ in the context of a brand relationship is used too inflationary. Due to experienced changes regarding consumer-brand relationships, merchants are attentive to the integration of emotions into marketing activities, aiming to become a love brand (cf. Bauer,

Heinrich & Albrecht 2009). “Brand love is an important aspect of modern brands for both consumers and marketers alike” (Bagozzi, Batra & Ahuvia 2016, 12); and an important buzzword to be aware of.

### 3.2.1 Brand love definition

The phenomenon of brand love is still new to customers and marketers. McDonalds exists as paragon for brand love advertising with the slogan ‘I love it’. Is it enough if people say those three words or is there more behind?! The next chapter provides an introduction into the origin of the term, how the word love can be interpreted in the research area of brand as well as how the term brand love correctly can be defined and which attributes need to be given for its existence.

**Brand love origin.** When analyzing relationships between consumers and brands, the concept of brand love counts still as one of the newest (cf. Batra et al. 2012). This introductory paragraph gives information about which researcher shaped the term and from which other concepts it has derived. Before the phenomenon of love in relationship to a brand was discovered, researchers already investigated emotional conditioning through advertising like John Watson (1920); or analyzed the concept of attachment as Bowlby (1979) did. In 1986, the researcher Robert J. Sternberg represented his study of the ‘triangular theory of love’. Following his assumptions, he mentioned three components of which love exists: intimacy, passion and commitment. The first one – intimacy – relates to the emotions one feels in a love relationship. Passion is understood to be the driver of a romance. And commitment starts with the decision to fall in love with somebody and continues to a truly commitment to preserve the love. As they correlate in form of a triangular, it is obvious that those three components are constantly interacting with one another (cf. Sternberg 1986). The study of Sternberg builds the basis for the concept of interpersonal love, which is discussed later on. Two years later, Shimp and Madden’s (1988, 170) took the approach of Sternberg’s paradigm of interpersonal love and adapted it to the study of consumer-object relations with “[...] products, brands, stores and other consumption objects”. *Their* approach argues that consumer’ relationships with objects grounds on three psychological processes: motivation, emotion and cognition. Those three are assumed to interact in different combinations. It is stated that Shimp and Madden (1988) firstly introduced love in the

context of marketing. *They* came up with eight different consumer-object relations that “[...] span the gamut from nonliking to loyalty” (Shimp & Madden 1988, 170): nonliking, liking, infatuation, functionalism, inhibited desire, utilitarianism, succumbed desire and loyalty. Ahuvia (1993) succeeded with the first major empirical study regarding love towards objects, in which he analyzed the love, people can experience with products and activities (according to Batra et al. 2012). The *researcher* developed the first ‘love prototype’, which helps to identify love in a relationship with an object. In 1998, Susan Fournier started analyzing the relationship between consumer and their brands. *She* argued that a brand can be perceived “[...] as an active relationship partner [...]” (Fournier 1998, 343). Along these lines, the researcher offered an overview of relationship types that may develop between the consumer and the brand. Furthermore, *she* presented a ‘brand relationship quality’ concept that can be used as a measurement for determining the intensity of a relationship. According to Fournier (1998), the person-to-person approach is closely related to the interpersonal love concept introduced by Sternberg. In 2004, a new brand love related term was introduced by Kevin Roberts: lovemarks. In his book ‘Lovemarks: the future beyond brands’, he states that love is the perfect link between customers and brands to establish long-term relationships and loyalty. Roberts stresses that emotional connection is key for successful customer-brand relations and the surviving of brands. Emotional attachment to brands was further analyzed by Thomson et al. (2005). The *researchers* invented a measurement scale to identify the intensity of ‘consumer’s emotional attachments to brands’. The term brand love first appeared in the study of Carroll and Ahuvia (2006). *They* investigated antecedents and outcomes of brand love, which they defined as “a new marketing construct that helps explain and predict variation in desirable post-consumption behaviors among satisfied consumers” (Carroll & Ahuvia 2006, 79). As a result, more hedonic products better contribute to customers’ satisfaction and love towards brands. *They* further discovered the positive influence of brand love on brand loyalty and positive word-of-mouth of self-expressive brands. Patwardhan and Balasubramanian (2011) found out that customers are more loyal, if they are emotionally attached to brands. By introducing a brand romance construct, Patwardhan and Balasubramanian applied the self-expansion model to brand relationships. The real pioneers of brand love however are Batra et al. (2012) with their study ‘Brand Love’. In this study the researchers analyzed the concept itself as well as its consequences. Objective of the

study was to distribute knowledge about the procedure of experiencing love by consumers. *They* applied the prototype model and revealed seven core elements of brand love: self–brand integration, passion-driven behaviors, positive emotional connection, long-term relationship, positive overall attitude valence, attitude certainty and confidence (strength) and anticipated separation distress. Furthermore, quality beliefs were identified as antecedents. In turn, brand loyalty, word-of-mouth and resistance were defined as possible outcomes (cf. Batra et al. 2012). Since then, increasing research was conducted on the topic brand love worldwide. In Germany, the researcher Silvia Danne (2015) drafted the book ‘Love Brands: communiting – Marketing 4.0 – SSP’. The very practical oriented work introduced managerial guidance on how to create love brands and stressed the importance of a brand community as an important driver for brand love. The previously mentioned researchers and conducted studies serve as a basis for the topic brand love and can be seen as its roots including influences of related work. The mentioned brand love terminology is further discussed in subsequent chapters.

**Love definition.** The term brand love is comprised of the word ‘brand’ and ‘love’. As already known, brand can be a logo, legal instrument, a company, identity system, a relationship, an image in consumer’s mind or a value system. Love on the other hand, is a newly introduced term in the underlying thesis and in current marketing research likewise. The paragraph gives an insight of the role of love in the concept of brand love. In general, love is represented as “[...] a range of human emotions, from simple feelings of pleasure to overwhelming and ineffable attraction towards another person” (Ahmetoglu, Swami & Chamorro-Premuzic 2010, 1181). It is an ongoing process evolving rather than an instant result (cf. Kaufmann, Loureiro & Manarioti 2016). The nature of love is seen as the interpersonal emotional link between two persons, which are associated with love stories (cf. Sternberg 1995). Evolutionary psychologists discovered that women focus more on the objective selection of the partner (cf. Buss & Schmitt 1993), whether men stress the passionate feeling, women may evoke (cf. Ahmetoglu et al. 2010). Psychologists determined variables that distinguish “[...] differences in love and relationship quality” (Ahmetoglu et al. 2010, 1181). Regarding the terminology, Cambridge University Press (2014b) defines love as either “a feeling of great fondness or enthusiasm for a person or a thing”, a “strong attachment with sexual attraction” or “a person or thing that is thought of with (great) fondness (used also as a

term of affection)". The verb love, however, differs referred to the subject that is beloved. Rossiter (2012) argues that statements like 'I love my shoes' or 'I loved the city' refer to strong liking and not to romantic love. Other than the sentence 'I love you', which addresses another person is defined as real romantic love (Rossiter 2012). Kaufmann et al. (2016, 519) discovered in their study that the word 'love' was not used to describe a brand "[...] unless the researcher explicitly asks them to do so". Love is a passionate feeling including physical attractiveness and emotions people may held in mind towards other humans. The term was very loosely used with regard to objects and non-human subjects. The subsequent definition of brand love gives better insights on how the term love is interrelated with the word brand.

**Brand love definition.** To provide more detail about the existing concept of brand love, this chapter focuses on describing what nowadays is determined as brand love and how brand love can be used for the entailed research in the underlying study. Brand love is based on the theoretical concept of human interpersonal love (cf. Shimp & Madden 1988). Studies proved that consumers can love objects like products, pets, places, ideas, activities and also brands (cf. Thomson et al. 2005; Albert, Merunka & Valette-Florence 2008; Batra et al. 2012). In a study of Ahuvia, Batra and Bagozzi (2014), above 70 % of the participants stated that they love at least one thing or another person. However, among different researchers, the topic is disputed (cf. Batra et al. 2012). Carroll and Ahuvia (2006, 81) define brand love "as the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name". Emotional attachment is "a relationship based construct that reflects the emotional bond connecting an individual with a consumption entity (e.g. brand, person, place or object)" (Park & MacInnis 2006, 17). The emotional attachment to brands differentiates individuals' preferences of loved brands (cf. Maxian et al. 2013). Patwardhan and Balasubramanian (2013, 74) claim that "[...] the attachments that arise are also primarily based on trust, dependability and consistency of response". Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) further named five attributes that signalize brand love: passion for the brand, attachment for the brand, positive evaluation of the brand, positive emotions in response to the brand and declaration of love for the brand. The highest level of feelings an individual can have with a brand "[...] range from feelings of antipathy, to slight fondness, all the way up to what would, in person-person relations, amount to love" (Shimp & Madden 1988, 163). Consumer-brand relationships feature "[...] long-lasting, deep affection for the

brand and anticipated separation distress” (Langner et al. 2014, 16). Brand love evolves through repeated satisfying post-consumption behavior (cf. Carroll & Ahuvia 2006). Hence, brand love serves “[...] as both a predictor variable and an outcome variable in a population of satisfied consumers” (Carroll & Ahuvia 2006, 87). The integrated emotions, cognitions and behaviors, people experience with brand love is much more than brand attachment (cf. Thomson et al. 1995). Brand love is perceived on part of the individuals. They keep control over their purchase behavior, attachment to brands and also what brands they fall in love with (cf. Maxian et al. 2013). In single cases it needs to be evaluated whether the brand is: liked, loved, makes one happy and further more emotional assessment (cf. Carroll & Ahuvia 2006). An important part of brand love is the fact that people start to think and perceive objects like brands as great (cf. Ahuvia 2015). At least 89 % of respondents in a survey stated that they “[...] put at least one brand in the ‘love’ (as opposed to ‘sort-of-love’ or ‘not love’) category” (Batra et al. 2012, 3). However, brands cannot be classified simply as good or bad or loved and not loved (cf. Bradley et al. 2007). On this, the term ‘brand hate’ was determined, describing dissatisfaction of a consumer related to a brand (cf. Carroll & Ahuvia 2006). Brand love or hate not only depends on satisfaction though identification with a brand, however it distinguishes normal brands from loved brands (cf. Danne 2015). If a consumer truly identifies him- or herself with the brand, it is hard for competitors to convince the consumer to switch the brand (cf. Bradley et al. 2007). Although the phenomenon exists that people fall in love with brands, this does normally not happen at first sight. It is a lasting process evolving over time. On the other hand, Riel et al. (2010) analyzed ‘experiences of falling in love: investigating culture, ethnicity, gender and speed’. As a result, 56 % of respondents stated that they fall in love “fast or very fast” (Langner et al. 2014, 16). Barker, Peacock and Fetscherin (2015) named five different stages of brand relationships, namely: new, dating, love, boredom and divorce. Hence, it takes time until love feelings arise and it is further important to keep in mind that those feelings can go away, due to certain circumstances or just as time passes. “Brand love is not simply a preference; instead, it is the brand that a consumer chooses without reason” (Maxian et al. 2013, 470). Nowadays, consumer do not just want products or services, they are further looking for orientation and support on part of the brand (cf. Danne 2015). A love brand ensures the fact that it is the only product or service existing in its professional and excellent form. They guarantee that there is no other brand that is as good, satisfying or pleasurable (cf. Danne 2015). To sum up,

brand love is the passionate emotional attachment satisfied customers sense towards a brand, including a high level of feelings and positive emotions. Brand love derives over a series of satisfying consumption phases, through repeated happiness in correlation to a brand. However, brand love is not the only concept existing in the context of consumer-object relations. The next chapter gives information about other brand-related concepts to understand their relationship to the term brand love.

### 3.2.2 Brand love differentiation

While studying brand love literature, one comes across a variety of different brand love related terms; some are antecedents, some are consequences and some exist parallel to brand love. To provide a better insight into the terminology, this chapter goes into detail about brand love related concepts, antecedents as well as consequences of brand love.

**Brand love related concepts.** The topic of brand love evolved over time and brought along different concepts of brand love, namely: interpersonal love, lovemarks, romantic brand love, brand romance, brand passion and brand liking. In the next pages, the single constructs are defined.

The first related concept – known as the pioneer of the brand love concepts – is **interpersonal love**. This construct is unique through its “[...] extremely positive emotional valence and strong physiological arousal, and phenomena such as exclusivity and separation anxiety” (Langer, Schmidt & Fischer 2015, 625). Researchers identified similarities between brand love and interpersonal love (cf. Albert et al. 2008; Sarkar 2011); although, there are important differences between the two constructs. Whereas interpersonal love is defined as bi-directional, brand love appears only in unidirectional form. This means, interpersonal love is a feeling including yearning sexual intimacy in a person-to-person context, whereas the love towards a brand is only on part of a human being. However, a brand fails to love the person back, since a brand is not able to show emotions (cf. Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen 2010; Kaufmann et al. 2016). The two constructs “[...] differ in their emotional nature” (Langer et al. 2015, 631). Interpersonal love is defined as an unconditional and altruistic concept; brand love on the other hand needs to deliver excellence to be loved by consumers (cf. Kaufmann et al. 2016). In



the context of arousal, brand love can be compared with interpersonal liking. Sternberg (1986) defines arousal as the manifestation of passion. However, brand love is perceived as a more emotional relationship (cf. Langer et al. 2015). Batra et al. (2012) differentiates the two concepts through the facts that brand love is not defined as 'real love', no attachment and commitment towards the brand is included. Langer et al. (2015) differentiate interpersonal and brand love by reference to the attributes of arousal and valence. The former is stated to be more intense in interpersonal love than in brand love. Hence, "[...] the emotions generated by a loved brand have an intensity similar to those evoked by a close friend" (Langer et al. 2015, 631).

The next concepts related to brand love are so-called **lovemarks**. Over the last decades, products changed to trademarks, trademarks changed to brands and nowadays, brands turn into lovemarks. Pawle and Cooper (2006, 38) state that "lovemarks [are] the next evolution in branding". The construct of lovemarks takes love, respect and loyalty as a basic principle. They are the connecting link between consumer and brands. Hence, lovemarks "[...] are invariably owned by the people who love them, not by the companies" (Roberts 2004, 8). Through attraction of consumers' hearts and minds, lovemarks are perceived as an intimate and emotional bond between consumers and brands (cf. Pawle & Cooper 2006). This bond supports the fact that consumers stand beyond a brand and even defend it (cf. Belaval Diaz 2014). Saatchi and Saatchi state that "lovemarks actually have a place in people's minds and hearts that make them more than just brands that deliver high quality" (Belaval Diaz 2014, 45). The three key attributes of lovemarks are mystery, sensuality and intimacy. Mystery, because people are curious about new and unfamiliar things; sensuality, because of the five senses through which we experience; and intimacy is delivered through empathy, commitment and passion to achieve loyalty. Today, there is a need for lovemarks. They are 'irresistible' through their charismatic characteristics, people depend on them (cf. Roberts 2004). In consumer behavior, the concept of lovemarks is similarly constructed to the one of brand love. The definition of lovemarks is seen as similar to the brand love construct.

The third related brand love concept is the **romantic brand love**. Romantic love is less comprised of emotions, it is perceived as a motivation system though (cf. Fisher, Aron & Brown 2005). Romantic individuals experience a set of imagination, irrationality and feelings (cf. Campbell 1987). The concept of grounds on Shimp and Madden's (1988)

term of brand desire. “Romantic brand love is defined as an internal and subjective response of an individual towards a brand composed of two interactive components: brand-intimacy and brand-passion” (Sarkar, Ponnampaloor & Murthy 2012, 329). Intimacy relates to the concept of liking. Passion in turn is driven by motivation (cf. Sternberg 1986). According to Sternberg (1986), intimacy and passion are components of interpersonal or ‘complete love’. However, in romantic love, the commitment/decision component is missing. Romantic love is perceived as a “[...] sub-set of complete love, as romantic love does not include decision/commitment” (Sarkar et al. 2012, 329, according to Sternberg 1986). It is driven by the interaction of affect and cognition (cf. Sarkar et al. 2012). The concept is used as a tool to determine marketing outcomes, since it evokes emotions for a brand and is therefore essential in practice. “Brand love is romantic in nature” (Sarkar 2011, 85), which describes the similarity between the two concepts. They further have the same outcomes of positive word-of-mouth and purchase intentions. Batra et al. (2012) identified – beside others – passion-driven behavior and positive emotional connection (intimacy) as brand love dimensions. According to Sternberg (1986), those are related to romantic love. As a result, “[...] romantic brand love is regarded as a facet of overall brand love” (Sarkar et al. 2012, 328).

The fourth concept to present is **brand romance**, which was introduced by Patwardhan and Balasubramanian (2011). It is defined as “[...] a state of emotional attachment (evoked in response to the brand as a stimulus) that is characterized by strong positive affect towards the brand, high arousal caused by the brand and a tendency of the brand to dominate the consumer’s cognition” (Patwardhan & Balasubramanian 2011, 299). According to *them*, brand romance can be perceived at different levels in relation to the subject-specific perception of an individual. However, brand romance distinguishes from brand love. Brand romance is comparable to attraction, which is the driver for love. *They* state, brand romance can be seen as an antecedent of brand love rather than a parallel existing concept.

The fifth construct is **brand passion**. “[...] in a consumption context, brand passion can be defined as a primarily affective, extremely positive attitude towards a specific brand that leads to emotional attachment and influences relevant behavioral factors” (Bauer et al. 2007, 2190). The construct “[...] reflects intense and aroused positive feelings towards a brand” (Thomson et al. 2005, 80). Brand passion evokes enthusiasm and in some cases also obsession desires on part of the consumer (Albert et al.

2010). They “[...] help their consumers define and express a strong personality, serving their psychological well-being and/or their social status” (Hemetsberger 2014, 35). Special individual experiences have significant influence on consumer passion (cf. Hemetsberger 2014). “Passion brands send strong social signals” (Hemetsberger 2014, 35). Moreover, brand passion has – same as brand love – an influence on positive word-of-mouth communication and willingness to pay a price premium (cf. Bauer et al. 2007). Since passion can be classified as a component contributing to romantic brand love, it can be stated that customers who are passionate about a brand have an antecedent feeling of brand love. In addition, brand passion might evolve into brand love.

At last, brand love can be distinguished from the concept of **brand liking**. Wallace, Buil and de Chernatony (2014) emphasize the positive relationship between liked brands and brand love are self-expressive brands. Although both concepts might look similar “[...] brand love is a highly emotional brand relationship that is more arousing and positive in valence than brand liking” (Langer et al. 2015, 631). Brand love is perceived emotionally, whereas brand liking happens merely at a cognitive level (cf. Carroll & Ahuvia 2006). In a study about emotional responses to advertised brands, Maxian, Bradley, Wise and Toulouse (2013) discovered that participants tended to smile more to brands they loved. However, *they* claimed it is hard to reach the love level. Rossiter (2012, 905) state that “[...] about one in four of the brand’s customers will come to love the brand”. As a result of brand love, Rossiter found that the rate of brand purchase and brand recommendation in case of brand love is twice the rate of brand liking (cf. Rossiter 2012). Consumers who like brands are stated to be forgiving in case of wrongdoing, however, they tend to offer less word-of-mouth communication. With loved brands, consumers can identify themselves, they experience brand attachment. Liked brands on the other hand are not internalized in the same way and do not mirror the customer’s personality (cf. Wallace et al. 2014).

**Brand love antecedents and consequences.** Brand love is integrated in an interrelation between several concepts. Some are influencing by brand love, others are effected by brand love. An overview of antecedents and consequences of brand love is findable in Appendix 4. Several circumstances have an effect on brand love. As with brand experience, the quality of the product or service are influencing brand love. In the case of brand love, the focus is not only on functional or mechanical clues but on

the hedonistic nature of the product or service. A self-expressive brand entails good preconditions for brand love. If people let themselves get carried away by the brand, such strong emotional responses are included which may lead to brand love. In some cases those emotional moments are shared among a community where the brand is the certain reason for solidarity. Brand community is another antecedent of brand love. If the customers are satisfied with the brand, if they trust the brand and are able to identify oneself with the brand, then the emergence of the feeling of love towards a brand is close. By implication, brand love brings along a lot of positive consequences. It is stated that beloved brands implicate a positive word-of-mouth. Hence, the brand markets oneself through individual networks. In addition, customers are willing to forgive company failures more easily and quickly. If they once committed to a brand, they are even willing to pay a price premium. The entailed brand loyalty is goal of a lot of companies and can be reached by love brands.

**Brand love related concepts.** Brand love differs from brand involvement, brand commitment as well as brand attitude. First, brand involvement is merely perceived through cognition (cf. Zaichkowsky 1986), whereas brand love is more concerned with affect. Second, brand commitment differs from brand love. Brand love can be related to brand attachment. Brand commitment however is more the result of emotional attachment. Third, brand love is different from brand attitude, since it is the first step of building beliefs about a brand. Brand love on the other hand is more concerned with arousal and desire of a brand. The related brand love conceptions are different in terminology, however in some cases, they are part of brand love measurement scales to query the wide range of emotional involvement a customer includes towards a brand. Further insights into the area of brand love measurement are distributed in chapter 3.2.3.

### 3.2.3 Brand love measurement

In the context of brand love several studies have been previously conducted. They vary in the field of research like brand love, interpersonal love or brand romance as well as in the methods of measurement. Some were carried out with questionnaires, some used structured interviews and some even tested facial expressions as responses to advertisement. All of them discovered different but similar items to test

emotional responses of participants towards a brand. An overview of the most important brand love scales is visible in Appendix 5. The chapter addresses different measurement opportunities for brand love. The items tested to evaluate feelings of love towards a brand differ from researcher to researcher. Shimp and Madden (1988) discovered a list of items similar to those of Sternberg (1986), ranging from nonliking to loyalty to evaluate consumer-object relations. Thomson et al. (2005) wanted to test emotional attachments to brands and used a scale of different relations that may exist between humans and brands like: affectionate, friendly, loved, passionate and more. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) discovered antecedents and outcomes of brand love, how people perceive love brands. Comments like “this is a wonderful brand” or “I love this brand” were evaluated via respondents (Carroll & Ahuvia 2006, 84). Albert et al. conducted several studies to measure the feeling of love towards brands. *Their* study ‘conceptualizing and measuring consumer’s love towards their brand’ from 2008 examined personal responses to brands like the passion someone has for a brand or the memories evoked by the brand. A year later, together with Merunka and Valette-Florence (2009), the relationship between consumer and brand was evaluated through items like uniqueness, idealization or duration as individual results of relationships. In the same year, Albert and Valette-Florence (2009) focused on two responses triggered by brands consumer may have: affection and passion. Those two were asked in depth to analyze the strength of the feeling of love towards a brand. In 2010, the researchers Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen conducted a unidimensional study of brand love antecedents and consequences. With regard to brand love analyses they focused on two questions: “Would you miss the brand if it was no longer available?” and “Do you feel deep affection like ‘love’ for the brand?” Patwardhan and Balasubramanian (2011) examined the stimuli triggered by brands in relation to brand romance. They concentrated on three effects. First, pleasure was examined through comments like “I love this brand” and “I am really happy that this brand is available”. Second, arousal focused on the emotional responses towards a brand and comprised comments like “I desire this brand” or “I look forward to using this brand”. At last, dominance referred to cognitive responses to brands, e.g. “this brand often dominates my thoughts” or “this brand always seems to be on my mind”. The pioneer of brand love (Batra et al. 2012) used the prototype model, through which different items of brand love were analyzed. Those items reach from quality of the product or service, over the positive affect the brands have, until the length of usage of the product or service. The focus is on examining

whether the brand suits the personality of the consumer and defines the relationship that exists between the two parties. Rossiter (2012) used a measure to define the intensity of feelings towards a brand and to emphasize the difference between brand liking and brand love. The scale contained feelings of hate, dislike, neutral, liking and finally love. In this sense, love was put in the position of the final feeling one can have for a brand. The study of Sarker and Possam (2012) tested the two components of romantic brand love: brand passion and brand intimacy. Whereas the former evaluated comments like “this brand delights me” or “I find this brand very attractive” and the latter one evaluated respondents towards “I feel emotionally close to this brand” and “there is something special about my relationship with this brand”. The methods of measurement serve as practical advice for future researchers, how to evaluate the feeling of love towards a brand. More managerial approaches for practical implications are given in the subsequent chapter.

### 3.2.4 Brand love managerial implications

Since brand love is difficult topic to establish in practice, this chapter presents a short introduction into what attributes are important to keep in mind when starting targeting becoming a love brand.

**Recommendations.** Initially, the **quality** of the products and services and essentially the brand itself is key. Findings of the study of Langner et al. (2014, 24) “[...] suggest that the achievement of brand love is rather serendipitous but that brand managers can increase its likelihood by offering a worthwhile, distinctly branded and advantageously performing product or service”. Second, the **experience** with the brand is of great importance. Managers are coerced to create extraordinary, surprising and love-stimulating brand experiences for their consumers. “Re-enchant your brand with magic” (Hemetsberger 2014, 38–39). One can bring the consumer to experience the brand or one can bring the brand to situations where the consumer enjoys memorable experiences, e.g. at special places, in transitional life phases or in the childhood. The latter is a good example because if children grow up with memorable experiences of a certain brand, the possibility that they fall in love with the brand over time is higher (cf. Langner et al. 2014). Nowadays, marketers struggle with making their brands sticky enough for consumers (Patwardhan & Balasubramanian 2011, 304). The desired glue

between individuals and brands is the emotional driven love aspect. According to Maxian et al. (2013, 476), “[...] making a meaningful connection should happen at the personal level”. To achieve this, marketers should focus on integrating emotions in all available marketing instruments. Third, shaped **emotional advertisement** together with a hedonic brand – that induces pleasant sensations – should emphasize the uniqueness of the single brand (cf. Bauer et al. 2007). Adding romantic content to advertisement leads to romantic feelings an individual can have for a brand (cf. Sarkar 2011). By the medium of leveraging brand love antecedents, marketing communication channels can be structured in a way that forces customers to focus on the focal brand as well as brand-related stimuli (cf. Sarkar et al. 2012). The importance of social media platforms as marketing channels is a common phenomenon. However, their successful usage shifted from delivering brand messages to allocate community and co-creation platforms (cf. Kaufmann et al. 2016). Fourth, marketers should focus on **co-creation**, keen customer segments to “[...] motivate them to engage more with the community” (Kaufmann et al. 2016, 523). Fifth, in the case of occurring problems, offering the **community** a virtual space enhances the opportunity that customers can exchange advices and opinions (cf. Wallace et al. 2014). “Support consumers’ interactions with the brand” (Hemetsberger 2014, 38–39). Sixth, **passion** is essential for creating brand love. Danne (2015) suggests to kindle the passion for the brand inside the company that is carried further by the employees and reflected on the customers. Passion not only drives brand love but also motivation on part of the staff. Seventh, **innovations** are important to drive brand love. Innovations help to reinvent the brand continuously for both, customers and employees. Eighth, sparkling **stories**, which are listened and re-told with passion help boosting brand love. In this sense, storylistening may be second to storytelling. Ninth, **values** that are attached to the brand and lived throughout the company make it easier for customers to identify themselves with the belief system and it further distributes a good feeling. According to feelings, emotions that are evoked on part of the customer over and over again may lead to repeated satisfaction, which in turn positively impacts brand love. Another recommendation for marketers is to strive to be the **number one**. This overall goal enables employees throughout the whole organization to boost their motivation, which emanates strengths that is perceived by customers. But how to get there? The key is learning. Marketers need to learn more about consumer preferences and how their intimate world looks like (cf. Ahuvia et al. 2014). As soon as marketers learned that, they need to “address desired lifestyles”

(Hemetsberger 2014, 38–39). However, not only the lifestyle of the consumer is important, but also brand-related attributes like “[...] prestige of the brand, self-expressive brands, brand uniqueness and hedonic brands as target factors to be taken into account when designing appropriate passionate brands” (Bauer et al. 2007, 2194). The satisfaction feeling needs to be prolonged as long as possible to generate brand love (cf. Sarkar 2011). Once brand love is established, the sustaining degree of satisfaction is important to build up a loyal group of customers. The higher the brand romance, the higher the loyalty. If brand romance is at a low level, loyalty programs and conditions conducive to brand romance should be taken into account (cf. Patwardhan & Balasubramanian 2011).

**Critics.** Beside all positive attributes of brand love, the researcher Romaniuk (2013) stated some critics about the construct. According to his research, the majority of customers are infrequent re-buyer of brands. It is further stated that consumers do not make a difference between the brands they use, since in some cases, people are not aware of using a specific brand and hence the range of substitutes is large. With regard to social media studies, ‘liked’ brands on Facebook are more often bought than others. However, only one percent of those who liked the brand are actively posting on company Facebook pages, which indicates that even those who publicly show their interest on a brand are not willing to engage on the brands’ Facebook pages. At last, the researcher doubts that people may experience feelings like love in a consumer-object relationship. Only a minority of consumers experience the feeling of brand love. Moreover, in most of the cases brand love is perceived through experiential goods and services. However, in cases where brand love exists, the emotional attachment to the brand can be observed in sales figures and the propensity of recommendations. In this sense, each brand attracts its own customer profiles (cf. Rossiter 2012). Brand love is still differentiated by “[...] passion for the brand, attachment to the brand, positive evaluation of the brand, and declarations of love for the brand” (Carroll & Ahuvia 2006, 81).

**Summary.** Brand love reflects passionate emotional attachment of satisfied consumers towards a brand. As post-consumption behavior it includes a variety of repeated positive emotions like enthusiasm and happiness. The effects of satisfaction and brand trust aim to generate loyal customers through the existence of brand love. Different measurement scales have been developed to evaluate the concept in practice. The consumer-object relationship is still fairly new and needs to be assessed with respect



to the right wording. In the next chapter, more details about connecting links between the concepts brand experience and brand love are given to identify the correlations of the two approaches.

### 3.3 Brand experience and brand love interrelating concepts

The underlying study not only strives to identify clues in practice which can be improved to enhance customer experience as well as brand love. It furthermore analyses different concepts that may function as connecting links between brand experience and brand love. These are both, outcomes of brand experience and antecedents of brand love. In this case, satisfaction and brand trust. The ultimate goal of brand experience and brand love activities is to establish a loyal customer group. Brand loyalty is in this chapter more closely determined as existing outcome of both, brand experience and brand love. These paragraphs give insights into the topics of brand satisfaction, brand trust and brand loyalty. Their correlations with brand experience and brand love are further analyzed in the entailed research of the study.

**Brand satisfaction.** Brakus et al. (2009) stated that brand experience positively affects brand satisfaction directly. The accumulation of positive experiences is stated to lead into customer satisfaction (cf. Meyer & Schwager 2007). “The happier employees are, the more likely they are to stay and the better their productivity and [...] satisfaction to the customers” (Sharma & Chaubey 2014, 26). The hereinafter mentioned researchers identified satisfaction as direct consequence of brand experience, e.g. Grace & O’Cass 2004; Hong-You & Perks 2005; Brakus et al. 2009; Rose et al. 2011; Ishida & Taylor 2012; Klaus & Maklan 2013; Kim, Lee & Suh 2015; Kim et al. 2015; and Khan et al. 2016. Nevertheless, satisfaction is not only a possible consequence of brand experience, but also a pre-requisite of brand love. Brand love is “experienced by some, but not all, satisfied consumers” (Carroll & Ahuvia 2006, 81). (Affective) brand experiences – as an antecedent of satisfaction – have a positive impact on brand love (Sarkar 2011; Sarkar et al. 2012). Both, brand experience and brand satisfaction need to sustain for a longer period of time to positively affect brand love (Sarkar 2011, 85) and to establish a “long-term satisfactory relationship with the brand” (Albert et al. 2007; Thomson et al. 2005; Batra et al. 2012; Huber et al. 2015; Langner et al. 2016). Thom-

son et al. (2005) claimed that emotional attachment to a brand is driven by post-consumption satisfaction, which evolves through multiple interactions in the course of time. In detail, Thomson et al. (2005) as well as Sarkar (2011) identified a direct influence of satisfaction on brand love related concepts.

**Brand trust.** Trust is defined as “acceptance of the truth of a statement without evidence or investigation” (Oxford University Press 2017e). Hong-You and Perks (2005) state that brand trust is a positive result of brand experience. Hence, brand experience has a positive direct influence on brand or consumer trust (cf. Huaman-Ramirez 2015; Cintamür & Arslan 2015). Singh, Iglesias and Batista-Foguet (2012, 541) established a connection “[...] between perceived ethicality of a brand and both, brand trust and brand affect”. They state that further both are positively linked to brand loyalty. Other researchers like Singh et al. (2012) comment that brand experience positively influences brand trust. Besides Hong-You and Perks (2005), Huaman-Ramirez (2015) Rohra and Sharma (2016), who identified the direct effect of brand experiences on brand trust, also brand experience dimensions like affective and behavioral experiences are named as preconditions of brand trust (cf. Hee Jung & Myung Soo 2012). Brand trust in turn is stated to have an effect on brand loyalty (cf. Hee Jung & Myung Soo 2012). On the other hand, brand love is not only affected by brand trust but it is based on it (cf. Patwardhan & Balasubramanian 2011). In general, Albert et al. (2010), Albert and Merunka (2013) as well as Karjaluoto, Munnukka and Kiuru (2016) specified brand trust as antecedent of brand love. Brand trust is most often seen as connecting link between the concepts brand experience and brand loyalty or satisfaction and brand loyalty. Since a loyal customer group is the ultimate outcome of related concepts, the next paragraph will describe this phenomenon in detail.

**Brand loyalty.** Brand loyalty is a “deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior” (Oliver 1999, 34). Brakus et al. (2009) state that brand experiences support a pleasurable outcome and have a significant impact on loyalty intentions. Therefore, through accumulation of individual customer experiences with a certain brand, brand loyalty increases over time (cf. Park et al. 2010; Thomson et al. 2005). Brand experience is directly influencing brand loyalty through the constructs of satisfaction and brand trust (cf. Hee Jung & Myung Soo 2012;

Singh & Iglesias 2012). The direct effect of brand experience on customer satisfaction and brand trust is described as far stronger than the direct impact of brand experience on brand loyalty (cf. Baser, Cintamür & Arslan 2015). On the other hand, Thomson et al. (2005) stated that the connection between a consumer and a brand may lead to emotional brand attachment. The development of brand attachment evolves over time and causes a strong relationship between the customer and the brand (cf. Park et al. 2010). If loyalty is not perceived by customers, they may easily switch between providers. Hence, the management of customer loyalty is an important fact to consider in the long run (cf. Dick & Basu 1994). A table in Appendix 6 lists the authors that identified brand experience and brand love as antecedent of brand loyalty.

**Summary.** According to mentioned literature, satisfaction and brand trust were named as both, consequences of brand experience as well as antecedents of brand love. Brand loyalty was stated to be a joint outcome of the two concepts in some cases directly, in others indirectly through satisfaction or brand trust. Nevertheless, also a direct influence of brand experience on brand love was identified in literature. Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin (2014) as well as Sarkar (2011) found that (brand) experience directly influences brand love. Other researchers named brand experience dimensions like affective (cf. Sarkar et al. 2012), sensory and intellectual (cf. Rohra & Sharma 2016) as well as surrealistic and nostalgic brand experiences (cf. Sarkar 2014) as antecedents of brand love. Still, brand love related concepts were named as consequences of brand experience like aroused feelings (cf. Grace & O’Cass 2004), affective commitment (cf. Iglesias et al. 2011), hedonic emotions (cf. Ding & Tseng 2015), brand attachment (cf. Huaman-Ramirez 2015), emotional outcomes (cf. Hwang & Seo 2016) as well as brand passion (cf. Rohra & Sharma 2016). The dependencies according to the practical example of FlixBus will be analyzed in the underlying study. The subsequent paragraph delivers a review of the above mentioned theoretical framework for this study.

### 3.4 Summary of the theoretical framework

The underlying study evaluates the correlation between the two concepts of brand experience and brand love. Brand experience is a strategical marketing technique to trigger emotions on part of the customer through interaction with the product or service

and to initiate a learning process that internally handles the memorable event. The experience with the brand may happen before, during or after consumption. Brand experience happens at every single brand-related stimulus that triggers internal responses on part of the consumer. To evaluate brand experience, touchpoints need to be defined along the customer journey, according to where the satisfaction level can be rated. The improvement of touchpoints may enhance more emotional brand experience dimensions, more satisfied consumers, a better trust level towards the brand and increased loyalty. Those attributes in turn may enhance a passionate emotional attachment towards the brand like brand love. The concept evolved from personal attachment and interpersonal love to love towards objects, emotional attachment to brands and finally brand love. It is a concept where individuals repeatedly experience happiness and satisfaction towards a brand including a high level of feelings and positive emotions. Whereas brand experience happens at the first go, brand love can only happen after consumption through series of different single brand experiences. The goal of both concepts is to generate a loyal customer group. Different brand love researchers developed different brand love scales including the assessment of emotional items that should be rated with regard to the brand. Marketers may involve strategical elements to generate a love brand community like innovations, values, high quality standards, shaped emotional advertisement and co-creation. The research of this study tests the concepts of satisfaction and brand trust as connecting links between brand experience and brand love. They were identified as both, outcomes of brand experience and antecedents of brand love as visible in Figure 2. Brand experience is measured according to brand experience quality items and customer journey touchpoints. Whereas brand love is measured by reference to emotions and feelings towards a brand.

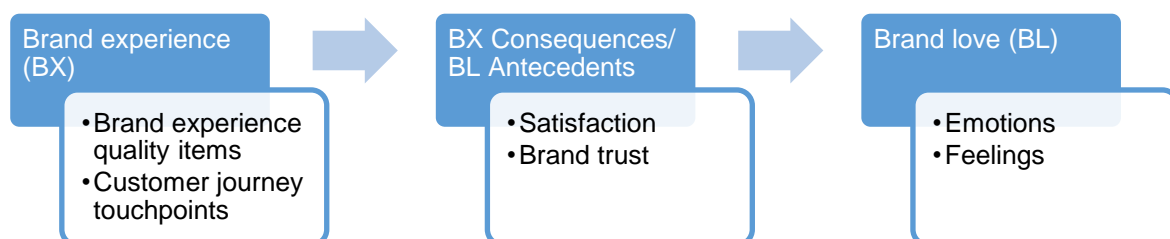


Figure 2. Brand experience and brand love theory correlation

Further, the two concepts are assessed against each other, meaning how brand experience is influencing brand love. Lastly, the concept of brand loyalty as joint outcome of both concepts is evaluated because of its dependency on brand experience and brand love. The detailed insight into the theoretical background of the used terminology serves as distinction of the concepts from other related concepts and gives an insight into upstream and downstream concepts. In the second part of the study (starting from chapter 4), the reviewed literature is applied on seven hypotheses that aim to test the correlation between brand experience and brand love. At first, an overview of the conducted research is outlined, followed by the presentation of discovered results and finally, an overall conclusion of this study is provided.

## 4 Research design

This research tries to find an answer to the question: “*Which brand experience items have the greatest effect on brand love?*” This study took place in form of an online survey or e-questionnaire and was evaluated using quantitative methods. With the help of seven hypotheses, the direct correlation between brand experience and brand love, as well as the indirect correlation through the concepts of satisfaction and brand trust is assessed. Since brand loyalty was stated to be an outcome of brand experience and likewise brand love, those correlations were also analyzed. As stated, goal of the study is to reveal the different brand experience items that have significant influence on satisfaction, brand trust, brand loyalty and especially on brand love. This research design chapter first defines the conceptualization of quantitative research, as well as the theory of a survey as the applied method. Additionally, the development of the survey is described according to the derived hypotheses. To generate an overview of the implemented survey, data about the framework of the conducted inquiry are presented. At last, the applied analysis methods to evaluate the empirical results are described briefly to deliver an introduction to the respective terminology.

### 4.1 Quantitative research

Quantitative research is described as “[...] a framework for data collection and analysis that enables researchers to reduce, analyze, and report the collected data numerically and statistically” (Kempf-Leonard 2005b, 212). It is associated with hypotheses testing to identify causal relationships. The research is objectively held with the researcher taking an outsider position. Aim of this research methodology is to “[...] determine whether the empirical data support or do not support those hypotheses” (Kempf-Leonard 2005b, 216). The evaluation of the data takes place through the usage of mathematical and statistical methods. The reportage voice of the third person as well as passive voice is applied. The quantitative research methodology was used in the study because of the following reasons. First, the study aims to analyze the causal relationship between defined hypotheses to deliver explanations to the research question.

Second, overall 2,48 people were queried within the framework of the quantitative research to create an objective assessment. Quantitative research method is in this study a survey, which is described in the next subchapter.

## 4.2 Survey as a method

This study used a survey as a method to evaluate the correlation between brand experience and brand love using the example of FlixBus. The specific research method was applied for data collection. It can be conducted orally or written in form of questionnaires. The study included an e-questionnaire, which is administered in an electronic way via e-mail or websites. The advantages of e-questionnaires are the low costs involved, as well as the possibility of a wide geographical distribution. The downsides are the often-low response rates combined with concerns about confidentiality (Kempf-Leonard 2005b, 222). E-questionnaires are used to objectively analyze the causal relationship between defined hypotheses. This inquiry was shared in electronic form via posts on the social media platform Facebook. The goal was to reach a number of customers who are not regionally centered.

## 4.3 Developing the survey

The survey questionnaire has been developed according to hypotheses, which were based on the theoretical framework described in chapter 3. Additional questions were asked, which were not associated to any hypothesis, but evaluated to generate an impression of the FlixBus customers' relation to the brand. Questions related to love brands were asked to get an insight into the interpretation of this relatively new topic of emotional brands. The derivation of the questions is described in detail in the current chapter, starting with the hypotheses related questions and ending with the description of the 'other questions'.

**Hypotheses related questions.** All hypotheses are conceived to answer the following research question: "*Which brand experience items have the greatest effect on brand love?*" Seven hypotheses (H#) were derived from the research question as visible in Table 1.

Table 1. Hypotheses of the underlying study

H1: Brand experience influences satisfaction.
H2: Satisfaction influences brand love.
H3: Brand experience influences brand trust.
H4: Brand trust influences brand love.
H5: Brand experience influences brand love.
H6: Brand experience influences brand loyalty.
H7: Brand love influences brand loyalty.

The usage of the theoretical framework as basis for the hypothesis as well as the derivation of the questions are described subsequently. Since the survey was mainly conducted among German social media groups, an insight into the English-German translations is findable in Appendix 7.

The first hypothesis establishes the dependency of the customer journey touchpoint satisfaction with the perceived brand experience.

H1: Brand experience influences satisfaction.
---

As theoretical basis for the hypothesis serve several studies that identified satisfaction as consequence of brand experience, like Grace and O’Cass 2004; Hong-You and Perks 2005; Brakus et al. 2009; Rose, Hair and Clark 2011; Ishida and Taylor 2012; Klaus and Maklan 2013; Kim, Lee and Suh 2015; Kim et al. 2015; as well as Baser et al. 2015. The question in the survey for evaluating brand experience derived from the study of Lemke, Clark and Wilson’s (2011). *Their* study about customer experience quality presented a list of 17 brand experience quality items, which were shortlisted to six items for time reasons of the survey evaluation. The shortlisting took place in cooperation with the author and FlixBus, considering the most relevant aspects for the company. The related survey question is visible in Appendix 8. The queried questions are classified to items (see Table 2), which’s terminology is applied in the research.

Table 2. Definition of brand experience quality items

Item	Related question
Processes	FlixBus processes are organized in a clear and structured way.
Communication	FlixBus applies a clear, open and effective communication style.
Customer	FlixBus values and maintains relationships with customers over time and over a series of transactions.
Other customers	The relationships among FlixBus customers is supported.



Price	The FlixBus service offers value for money.
Time	FlixBus is time efficient throughout the customer journey.

“Customer experience is conceptualized as the customer’s subjective response to the holistic direct and indirect encounter with the firm, and customer experience quality as its perceived excellence or superiority” (Lemke et al. 2011, 846). In the underlying study, brand experience is exemplified by the evaluation of the perceived brand experience quality. The goal of this study is to detect correlations between brand experience and brand love using the example of FlixBus. Brand experience should be the medium for enhancing changes towards the emotional relationship FlixBus customers have towards the brand. The evaluation of brand experience quality serves as predominant brand experience items in the analyses.

The questions in the survey concerning satisfaction derived from a defined list agreed between the author and the company FlixBus. Eleven most relevant touchpoints in the customer journey were defined (marketing, homepage, homepage booking process, app, app booking process, mailings, bus stop, bus, bus processes). The touchpoint satisfaction question is viewable in Appendix 9. The relation of the hypothesis to the research question is to identify possible items that links brand experience and brand love. Satisfaction was mentioned as consequence of brand experience as well as antecedent of brand love by Sarkar (2011). This introduces the next hypothesis that analyzes the dependency of brand love on satisfaction.

H2: Satisfaction influences brand love.
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The derivation of the brand love evaluation of this study is described through a brand love factor, consisting of emotional attachment items and feelings of love items towards a brand. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006, 81) were the ones who defined brand love “[...] as the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name”. The scale regarding emotional attachment to brands derived from Thomson et al. (2005) and is composed of six emotional attachment attributes; three items are related to affection (affectionate, friendly and loved) and three are related to passion (passionate, delighted and fascinated). The associated question to emotional attachment is findable in Appendix 10. Albert et al. (2009) used a scale of seven factors on their brand love scale studied the feelings of love towards a brand, which are also applied in this study. The related question of the items querying feelings of love towards

a brand is accessible in Appendix 11. The item definition of the sentences used in the question are findable in Table 3.

Table 3. Definition of brand love feeling items

Item	Related question
Uniqueness	FlixBus is a special brand.
Pleasure	I am happy to use FlixBus.
Intimacy	I feel emotionally close to FlixBus.
Idealization	There is something almost 'magical' about my relationship with FlixBus.
Duration	I have been using FlixBus for a long time.
Memories	I associate FlixBus with some important events of my life.
Dream	FlixBus corresponds to an ideal for me.

Through factor analysis, a new factor should be extracted of the two mentioned brand love scales. The new component will serve as 'brand love' in the upcoming analyses. As next, the connecting link of brand trust, between brand experience and brand love, is assessed.

H3: Brand experience influences brand trust.

The theoretical framework on which the hypothesis is based on, is built by the studies of Hong-You and Perks (2005); Hee Jung and Myung Soo (2012); Huaman-Ramirez (2015); Baser et al. (2015); as well as Rohra and Sharma (2016), who all identified brand trust as possible consequence of brand experience. The related question in the survey was conducted by the author, asking for the degree of trust customers have towards the brand FlixBus on a scale of 0 to 4 as visible in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Brand trust question

Returning to the evaluation of the correlation between brand experience and brand love, the concept of brand trust is not only a consequence of brand experience, but also an antecedent of brand love. This leads to the next hypothesis.

H4: Brand trust influences brand love.

Theoretical basis of this question are studies of Albert et al. (2010); Albert and Merunka (2013); as well as Karjaluo et al. (2016), who recognized brand trust as precondition

for brand love. According to literature, not only an indirect connection between brand experience and brand love through the existence satisfaction and brand trust exists, but also a direct connection was identified. This leads to the subsequent hypothesis.

H5: Brand experience influences brand love.

The correlation between brand experience (dimensions) and brand love related concepts, was identified on both sides: brand experience as antecedent of brand love and brand love as brand experience outcome. Table 4 shows brand love related concepts as outcomes of brand experience.

*Table 4. Brand experience as antecedent of brand love related concepts*

Study	Brand love related concept
Grace & O’Cass 2004	Aroused feelings
Iglesias et al. 2011	Affective commitment
Ding & Tseng 2015	Hedonic emotions
Huaman-Ramirez 2015	Brand attachment
Hwang & Seo 2016	Emotional outcomes
Rohra & Sharma 2016	Brand passion

Researchers like Sarkar (2011) or Japutra et al. (2014) identified brand love as direct consequence of brand experience. Also, brand experience dimensions exist as antecedents of brand love concepts. The brand experience dimensions (senses, emotions, behavior and thoughts) are further tested as connecting links between brand experience and brand love. The appropriate question is based on the study of Brakus et al. (2009) and presented in Appendix 12. The wording of the single items was modified by the author. An association of the brand experience dimensions to its queried sentences of the questionnaire are findable in Table 5.

*Table 5. Definition of brand experience dimensions*

Item	Related question
Senses	The FlixBus brand makes a strong impression on my senses.
Emotions	The FlixBus brand induces feelings and sentiments (not matter what kind).
Behavior	I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use the FlixBus brand.
Thoughts	I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter the FlixBus brand.

After evaluating linkage chains between the two concepts brand experience and brand love, the next concept is a consequence of both theories.

H6: Brand experience influences brand loyalty.

This hypothesis was proven by several researchers like Brakus et al. (2009) or Bapat and Thanigan (2016). Additionally, Biedenbach and Marell (2009); Iglesias et al. (2011); and Hee Jung and Myung Soo (2012) proved the statement of H6. The question concerning brand love was conducted by FlixBus as visible in Figure 4.

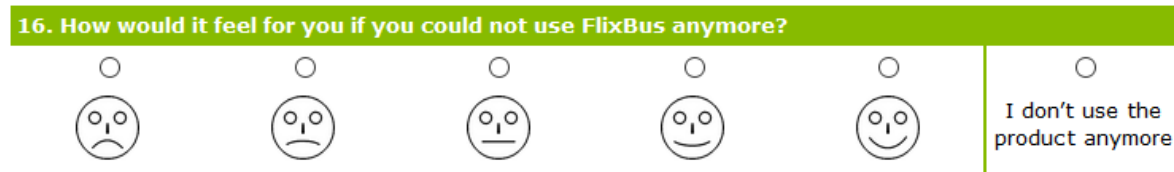


Figure 4. Brand loyalty question

Since the question was asked in passive voice, the results were reversed. Same as in the analysis, where the dependency of brand loyalty on brand love were tested.

H7: Brand love influences brand loyalty.

Multiple researchers proved that brand loyalty is a possible consequence of brand love, like Thomson et al. (2005); Carroll and Ahuvia (2006); Albert et al. (2008, 2009); Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) or Kaufmann et al. (2016). Even brand experience researchers identified brand love related concepts as 'bridge-concepts' between brand experience and brand loyalty. Ding and Tseng (2015) stated that hedonic emotions are a possible consequence of brand experience and may lead to brand loyalty. Rohra and Sharma (2016) examined brand passion as linking chain between brand experience and brand loyalty. The two brand loyalty related hypotheses were chosen, since all the mentioned concepts (brand experience, satisfaction, brand trust and brand love) were identified to lead to a loyal customer group.

**Other questions.** Besides above mentioned hypotheses related questions, additional questions were derived that aim for FlixBus brand development recommendations. The first non-hypothesis related question was derived to analyze whether the FlixBus image is noticeable on all touchpoints of the customer journey as readable in Figure 5.



Figure 5. FlixBus image question

This questions concerning the coherency of the FlixBus image was demanded by FlixBus and rated on a scale of 0 to 4.

The second non-hypothesis related question was concerning brand identification, which is one of the main antecedent concepts of brand love. When evaluating the existence of feelings, like how much love customers feel towards their brand, the existing (or not existing) identification with the brand could be a key factor. The question was drafted to evaluate the dependency of brand love on brand identification. It is accessible in Figure 6.

**11. How strongly do you identify yourself with the brand FlixBus?**



Figure 6. Brand identification question

The query is theoretically based on the studies of Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010); Albert et al. (2010); as well as Albert and Merunka (2013), who developed the precondition of brand identification as mandatory for the existence of brand love.

The next question is related to relationship forms, how consumers interpret their connection to the brand FlixBus. The relationship forms derived from a study of Fournier (1998), who analyzed the connections between consumers and brands. The scale of originally 15 different relationship forms was shortlisted to five items as visible in Figure 7.

**12. Which of the following relationship forms best describes your relationship with the brand FlixBus?**

[Please choose] ▾

[Please choose]

Arranged marriage (brand taken by friends/partner)

Friendship (occasional, casual use)

Enmity (targeted avoidance of the brand)

Dependency (usage due to non-existent alternatives)

Affair (occasional use without official concession)

One-night stand (one-time, spontaneous use)




Figure 7. Relationship forms question

A sixth item was added, namely 'one-night stand', which is interpreted as a one-time spontaneous use of the service out of a useful opportunity. Background of the relationship form question was to see, whether FlixBus customers conceived negative feelings towards the brand (enmity), if they felt dependent on the brand or if they used the brand for other reasons.

For better understanding, how FlixBus customers interpret the term love brand and what characteristics they associate with a love brand, the questions of Figure 8 and Figure 9 were developed.

**14. What brand(s) would you describe as 'Love Brand'?**

*Figure 8. Love brand question*

**15. Which characteristics would you associate with a 'Love Brand'?**


*Figure 9. Love brand characteristics question*

Both questions were drafted in cooperation between the author and FlixBus. As open questions, they are evaluated with the objective to identify new, and so far unknown attributes, to include into the service. In addition, the last question of Figure 10 aimed to receive specific recommendations for the FlixBus service and brand development.

**17. What improvement proposal do you have for the FlixBus service?**

*Figure 10. FlixBus recommendations question*

The last question was conceived in cooperation with FlixBus to obtain open, non-binding improvement proposals. After describing the applied questionnaire of the study, chapter 4.4 delivers information about when the survey was distributed, who participated and how the final target group was defined.

#### 4.4 Implementation of the survey

The survey took place between the 25<sup>th</sup> July 2017 and the 6<sup>th</sup> August 2017. The questionnaire was conceived via an online questionnaire tool named SoSci Survey, which is a software package for supporting the conduction of online surveys. After drafting the questionnaire on the named webpage, it was distributed through different channels. First, it was shared among the private social media network of the researcher. As incentive for the participation in the survey, the 149 respondents received a five-euro FlixBus voucher distributed via personal messages. Second, the survey was shared on the intranet of FlixBus. In total, 79 FlixBus employees participated in the survey. In a third step the survey was posted on the Facebook company page of FlixBus in form of a raffle. 2,258 FlixBus fans took part in the Facebook raffle and it received 539 reactions in form of likes and emoji. Further, it was shared 44 times and commented by 67 people. In total, 2,481 respondents participated in the survey, 62 % were females and 38 % were males.

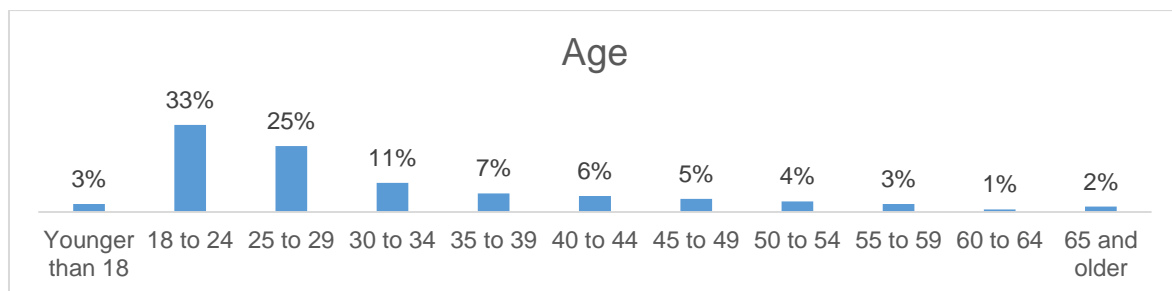


Figure 11. Age structure of survey participants

Figure 11 shows that 3 % of participants were under the age of 18, 69 % between 18 and 34 years, and 28 % above 35 years. The educational levels of the respondents has been queried according to the last graduated educational institution as visible in Figure 12.

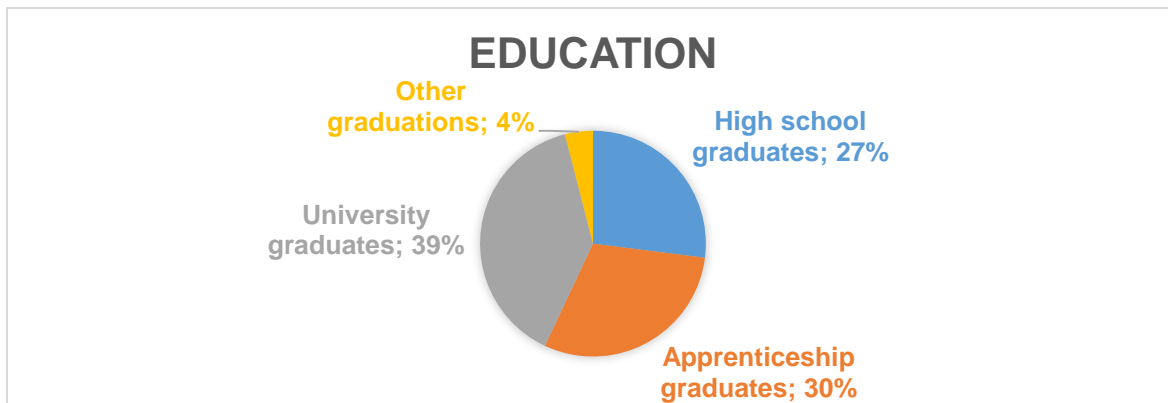


Figure 12. Education level of survey participants

The graph reveals that the majority of the respondents were university graduates, followed by apprentices and high school graduates.

To evaluate repeated customers of FlixBus, the subsequent question was added to the survey: “When was your last ride with FlixBus?” Participants were able to choose between: a) within the last 6 months (January 2017 – today), b) within the last year (August 2016 – today), c) before August 2016 and d) never. It turned out that 1,535 (62 %) chose a), 388 (16 %) chose b), 305 (12 %) chose c) and 253 (10 %) chose d). The target group of this study were FlixBus customers, whose last ride was within the last year ( $n = 1,923$ ). Participants whose last ride was before August 2016 and never were excluded. Reason behind was that brand experiences need to be evaluated subsequent to the excited stimulus. Hence, the perception of the FlixBus service must have happened at least once, and the experience should not be older than one year. Before coming to the empirical results of the study, it is important to describe the used terminology of the analyses as readable in the next chapter.

#### 4.5 Analysis methods

The data of the survey was analyzed via the statistical software IBM SPSS Statistics base edition. This software tool was used to conduct two specific analyses: factor analysis and linear regression analysis. The former is shortly described hereinafter. Factor analysis is part of the multivariate statistic and examines variables as new factors. It aims to classify correlating variables onto factors or so-called latent variables. It is used to determine the matching nature of the factors (Kempf-Leonard 2005b, 1–2). Oxford University Press (2017f) defines factor analysis as “a process in which the values of



observed data are expressed as functions of a number of possible causes in order to find which are the most important". The included factor rotation process is conducted via varimax rotation, in which the variances of the factor loadings are maximized. Variances, in turn, are the square of the standard deviation that constitutes how group members differ from the group mean. In the factor analysis, the Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) test was applied. KMO measures the variance proportion on a scale of 0 to 1. Values above 0.8 reflect an adequate data sampling. The analyses of this study only considered data samplings with a KMO above 0.8. In the course of factor analysis also correlations were observed. A correlation coefficient in a statistical sense is defined as "a number between +1 and -1 calculated so as represent the linear interdependence of two variables or sets of data" (Oxford University Press 2017g). Linear regression, as second analysis method, was used to determine relations of a random (dependent) variable to one or more explanatory (independent) variables (Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Liao 2004, 574). In practice, linear regression analysis helps to forecast changes of the dependent variable, if the independent variable changes. It considers variances or r-squares ( $R^2$ ) on a scale of 0 to 1. In the case of 1, all values fall on the fitted regression line. Hence, the regression line is "a graph of the expected value of a dependent variable plotted against the value of an independent variable" (Oxford University Press 2017h). The regression line is represented in form of a scatterplot. This analysis method helps to identify, how one variable depends on another variable. This is measured by means of the regression coefficient. It indicates the degree, how much the dependent variable changes, when one independent variable changes. To determine valuable results, significances (p-values) were added to the regression coefficients. Significance is "the extent to which a result deviates from that expected to arise simply from random variation or errors in sampling" (Oxford University Press 2017i). This entails that the lower the significance, the more unlikely is it that the results of the tests happened by chance. All figures were rounded up on maximal two decimal places, respectively they are presented in percentages. The reliabilities of the conducted tests were measured according to Cronbach's alphas ( $\alpha$ ). The alpha is indicated as a number between 0 and 1; the higher the value, the more reliable or higher correlated is the test. Furthermore, descriptive statistics were used to evaluate results related to social demographical data. Descriptive or inferential statistics "[...] characterize the distribution of a set of observations on a specific variable or variables" (Kempf-Leonard 2005a,

659). This analysis method made it possible to draw conclusions from given parameters out of the election polls. To conclude, the open questions of the survey were assessed by the help of Microsoft Excel. The frequency of responses was measured with the formula 'countif'. Having all the terminology in mind, the next chapter represents the calculated results of the tested hypotheses, as well as an evaluation of the open questions.

## 5 Empirical results

The six hypotheses related questions regarding brand experience quality, touchpoint satisfaction, brand love emotions, feelings of love towards a brand, brand trust and brand loyalty are evaluated hereafter, regarding their dependencies on each other. The subsequent chapter is segmented into six parts, which are designed to analyze the correlation between brand experience and brand love. Some concepts, like satisfaction and brand trust, were identified as both, consequences of brand experience as well as antecedents of brand love. Furthermore, the direct correlation between brand experience and brand love is considered, with regard to the single brand experience items, how they influence brand love. At last, brand loyalty is evaluated as a consequence of both concepts. Hence, the joint concepts' dependency on brand experience and brand love is analyzed. An overview of the used terminology of the concepts, factors and items is findable in Appendix 13 and serves as repetition assistance for chapter 5 and 6.

### 5.1 Satisfaction as connecting link

Satisfaction was identified as outcome of brand experience, and as precondition for brand love. The following hypothesis analyses those two assumptions, starting with the impact of brand experience on satisfaction.

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*H1: Brand experience influences satisfaction.*

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As stated in 4.4, brand experience is presented brand experience quality items. Satisfaction, in turn, can be measured via responses on touchpoints of the customer journey. Figure 13 shows an overview of the six brand quality items, queried in the survey, according to its mean. The mean is measured on a scale of 0 to 4; 4 is the highest possible score and 0 the lowest. The closer the mean gets to 4, the better the brand experience quality items are rated. A recap of the wording is findable in Appendix 13.

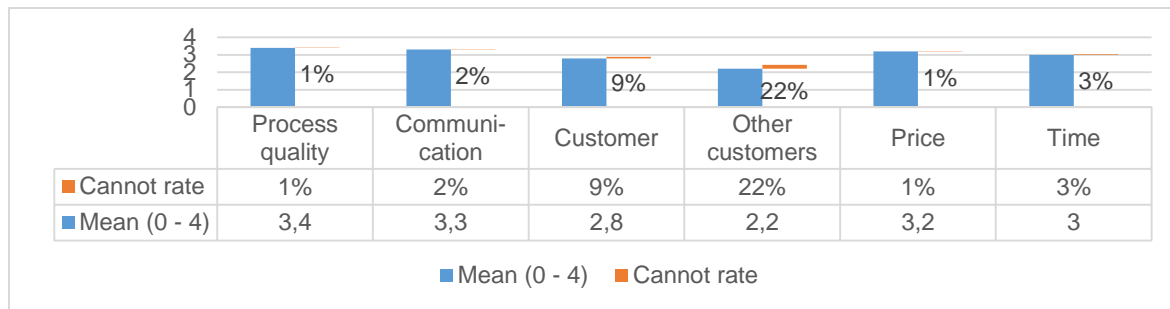


Figure 13. Means and 'cannot rate' percentages of brand experience quality items

It is interesting to note that 22 % of the  $n = 1,923$  relevant participants were not able to rate, how strongly the relationship to other customers was supported by FlixBus. The item 'customer' stands for the relationship the company has to an individual customer; and the item 'other customers' shows the assessment how the relationships among customers are supported, meaning how the brand community comes along. This item had the greatest improvement potential with the lowest mean of 2.2. Also the relationship to the individual customer as well as time management can be enhanced. The same data types (mean and cannot rate) are available for touchpoint satisfaction items (see Figure 14). The related question is findable in Appendix 9.

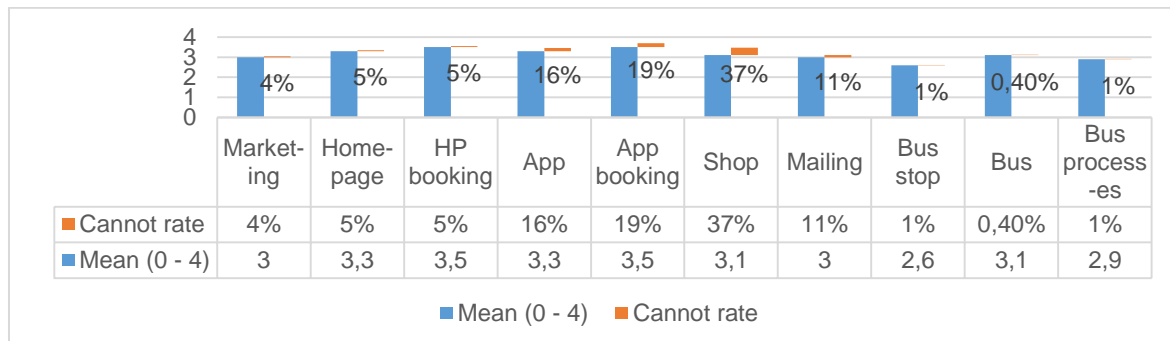


Figure 14. Means and 'cannot rate' percentages of touchpoint satisfaction items

The average mean of the touchpoint satisfaction is 3.1. Ride related items, like the bus stop and bus processes, performed worse than others. The best evaluated items were the two booking processes (of the homepage and the app), with a mean of 3.5. Although, 16 % were not able to rate the app, and 19 % had difficulties with rating the booking process in the app. Only the experiences within one of the 12 existing shops topped these results, as 37 % were not able to rate the brand experience in the shop. In conclusion, the usage of the app and the shop can be enhanced on part of the company, to boost the usage of all available FlixBus booking possibilities. However,

the customers who have already experienced the touchpoints app and shop, seemed to be satisfied with its services.

To identify those brand experience qualities and touchpoint satisfaction items that correlated strongly among each other, factor analysis was applied. Through the previously described varimax rotation (cf. 4.5) two new components derived as applicable in Figure 15. The 16 items (six brand experience qualities and ten touchpoint satisfactions) were bundled into those two factors, according to their correlation degrees.

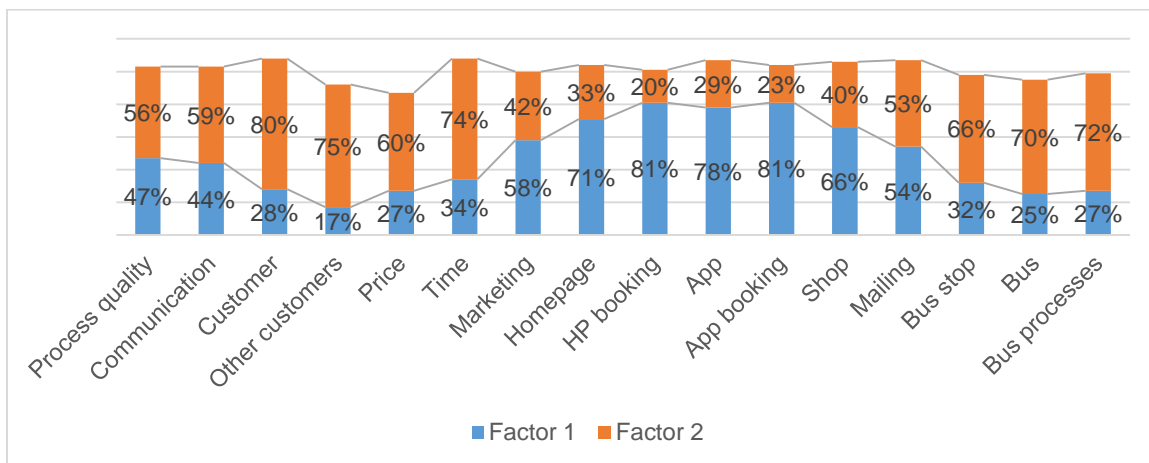


Figure 15. Factor loadings of brand experience quality items and touchpoint satisfaction

The percentages of the figure show the factor loadings, to which degree the items corresponded to factor one and two. When considering loadings above 50 %, two new high correlating factors can be broken down as visible in Table 6.

Table 6. Factor analysis of brand experience quality and touchpoint satisfaction

Factors	Factor 1	Factor 2
New factor label	<i>Pre-travel brand experience</i>	<i>Travel brand experience</i>
Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing touchpoint</li> <li>• Homepage touchpoint</li> <li>• HP booking touchpoint</li> <li>• App touchpoint</li> <li>• App booking touchpoint</li> <li>• Shop touchpoint</li> <li>• Mailing touchpoint</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Brand experience quality items</li> <li>• Mailing touchpoint</li> <li>• Bus stop touchpoint</li> <li>• Bus touchpoint</li> <li>• Bus processes touchpoint</li> </ul>

The factor overview revealed one joint item that strongly correlated with the satisfaction of the touchpoints as well as brand experience quality items: the touchpoint mailing (factor one: 53 %; factor two: 54 %). In the following analyses, calculations were concluded, including those two new factors, namely 'pre-travel brand experience' and 'travel brand experience'. When assessing the reliability of brand experience quality items in comparison with touchpoint satisfaction items, a *Cronbach's alpha* ( $\alpha$ ) of 94 % revealed, which is ranked as excellent. Detailed correlations between brand experience quality and touchpoint satisfaction items are applicable in Appendix 14, which indicate the movements between two variables. A positive correlation between variables exists, if one increases when the other increases too, and vice versa. A perfect positive correlation is given by 1. When considering correlations above 50 %, it became obvious that the items mailing, bus stop, bus and bus process highly correlated with the relationship to the individual customer and time management (above 51 %). Communication strongly correlated with the homepage (51 %) and the item mailing (52 %). The relationships among customers were highest in correlation with the bus stop (51 %). It needs to be stated that only the correlations between different concepts were considered (e.g. brand experience quality items and touchpoint satisfaction items), and not the items among the concepts (e.g. brand experience quality items with brand experience quality items). For analyzing the influence of brand experience on satisfaction, linear regression analysis was used as a method. As result, the average satisfaction on all touchpoints changes by 64 %, for every one change of brand experience quality items. If brand experience quality increases by 1, touchpoint satisfaction improves by 64 %. The related r-square was indicated as 57 % with a significance below 0.05 %. Definitions of used terminology are findable in 4.5.

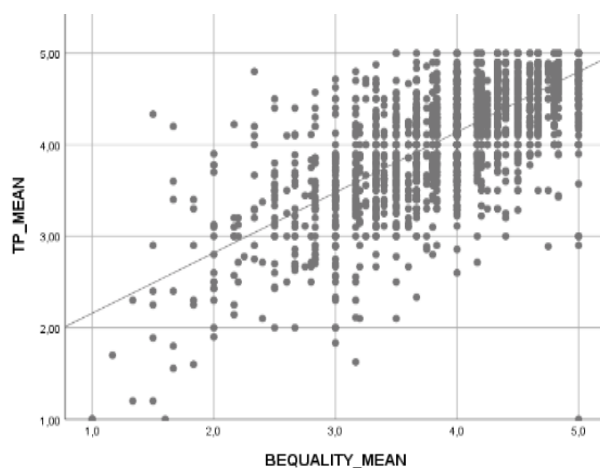


Figure 16. Scatterplot of brand experience quality mean and touchpoint satisfaction mean

The scatterplot in Figure 16 shows the distributed items around the regression line. For better clarification, how brand experience quality items are influencing the touchpoint satisfaction, see Figure 17. The graph gives an impression of related regression

coefficients. Each touchpoint was evaluated as a dependent variable on all brand experience qualities, and not vice versa.

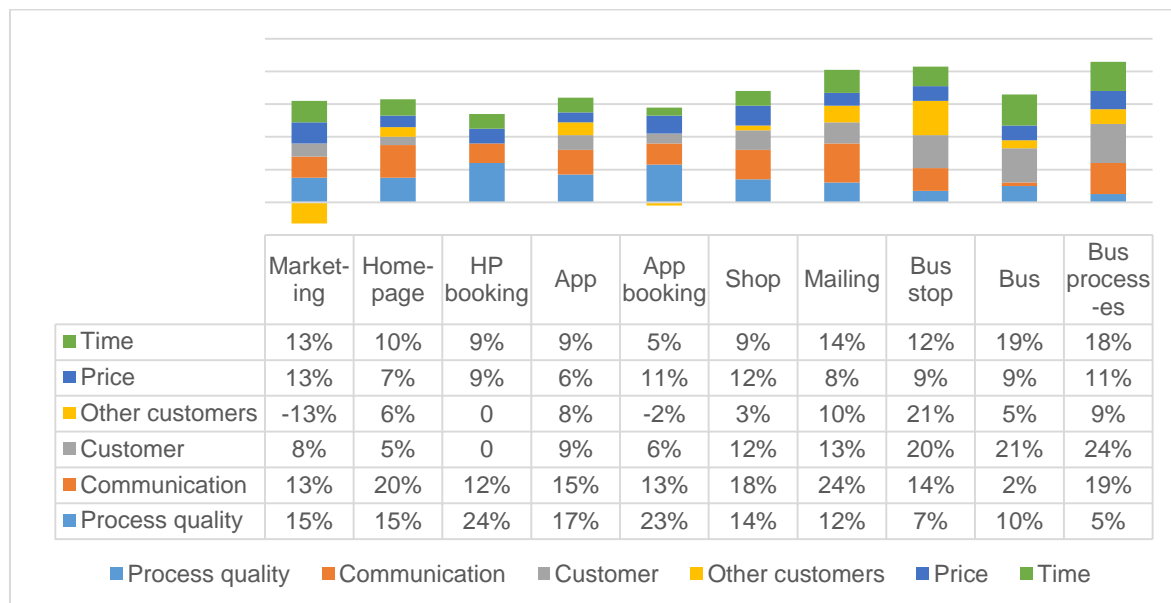


Figure 17. Regression analysis of brand experience quality and touchpoint satisfaction (regression coefficient)

As a result, the quality of the processes (brand experience quality) had its main influence on the booking processes (homepage and app), as well as on the information distributed on the homepage and app. The communication quality had major effects on the satisfaction of the homepage, mailing and bus processes. The relationship with single customers was primarily noticeable on ride related touchpoints, like the bus stop, the bus and bus related processes. If the relationship to individual customers improves, also the satisfaction of the actual service of transportation improves. The brand experience quality item 'other customers' primarily showed negative influences on touchpoint satisfaction items. Most affected was marketing with -13 % and the booking process in the app by -2 %. The more the company supports customer relationships, the less satisfied consumers are with marketing. Hence, the stronger the brand community gets, the less important becomes the factor marketing. In turn, for every one change in relationship among customers, the satisfaction with the bus stops increases by 21 %. The communication of FlixBus customers to other customers, on the way to, at the or on their way from the bus stop, can be enhanced by improving satisfaction at the bus stops. Regarding the quality of the value price, the most affected touchpoint was marketing. Figure 17 shows that marketing satisfaction improves by 13 %, if the quality of the price enhances by one. With 12 %, almost same is true for the touchpoint shop. This entails that the price sensitivity is relevant in the offline business. Lastly, the time

management quality had its main influence on the ride and related processes, like check-in and check-out processes, breaks or luggage related processes. If time management qualities improves, also the satisfaction with the bus and related processes are enhanced. Additionally, marketing was mostly influenced by time management satisfaction. The more efficient the time management is organized, the more open minded are customers for marketing activities. Related significances of the mentioned dependencies are visible in Figure 18.

	Marketing	Homepage	HP booking	App	App booking	Shop	Mailing	Bus stop	Bus	Bus processes
■ Time	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%	9,0%	0,9%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
■ Price	0,0%	0,1%	0,0%	2,3%	0,0%	0,0%	0,1%	0,2%	0,0%	0,0%
■ Other customers	50,1%	0,8%	73,0%	0,1%	45,6%	21,2%	0,0%	0,0%	1,4%	0,0%
■ Customer	0,3%	8,4%	77,9%	0,7%	5,3%	0,1%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
■ Communication	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,1%	46,7%	0,0%
■ Process quality	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,1%	0,1%	10,5%	0,2%	15,7%

■ Process quality ■ Communication ■ Customer ■ Other customers ■ Price ■ Time

Figure 18. Significances of brand experience qualities on touchpoint satisfaction items

According to them, the influences on touchpoints were relatively low in the cases of: process quality (except: bus stop 11 % and bus processes 16 %), communication (except bus 47 %), price (below 2.3 %) and time (except app booking 9 %). As stated in analysis methods (cf. 4.5), the closer the significance is to 0.05 %, the more valid is the test. Looking at Figure 18, one can see that in most of the cases the testing did not occur randomly, but with statistical significance. For the items customer and other customers, the results are different. In these cases, the significances were relatively high, which means that the results were more likely to happen by chance. In conclusion, the hypothesis that brand experience – in form of brand experience quality – influences satisfaction can be verified. Although some regression coefficients were negative (on a low level), it can be stated that the main depending items were positive. Since satisfaction was not only identified as a consequence of brand experience, but also as an antecedent of brand love, the next hypothesis evaluates the dependency of brand love on satisfaction.

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*H2: Satisfaction influences brand love.*

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The factor brand love was related to two variables of the survey: emotions and feelings of love towards a brand (short: feelings). Initially, the descriptive analysis of six emotions was analyzed in Figure 19. Comprehension-wise, the emotion adjectives queried in the survey were paraphrased into nouns, to equate those items with the feeling items. A review of the wording is findable in Appendix 13.

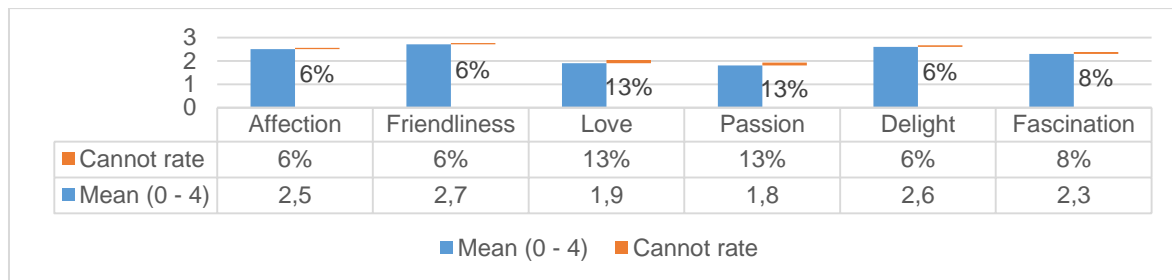


Figure 19. Means and 'cannot rate' percentages of emotion items

It showed that the emotions love and passion reached the lowest mean compared to the other emotions. In addition, around 13 % of the respondents were not able to rate these items. The evaluation of emotions reached an overall mean of around 2, which is classified as satisfying. Facebook comments like: "I canceled the survey when coming to 'affectionate'. Others may win the raffle, but I felt foolish while doing the questionnaire" showed that the association of human sentiments on objects like a brand, hit on problems. Other Facebook commentators felt frustrated due to "ridiculousness" of the questions. As next, the means of the seven feelings of love towards a brand were similarly low as compared to emotions (see Figure 20).

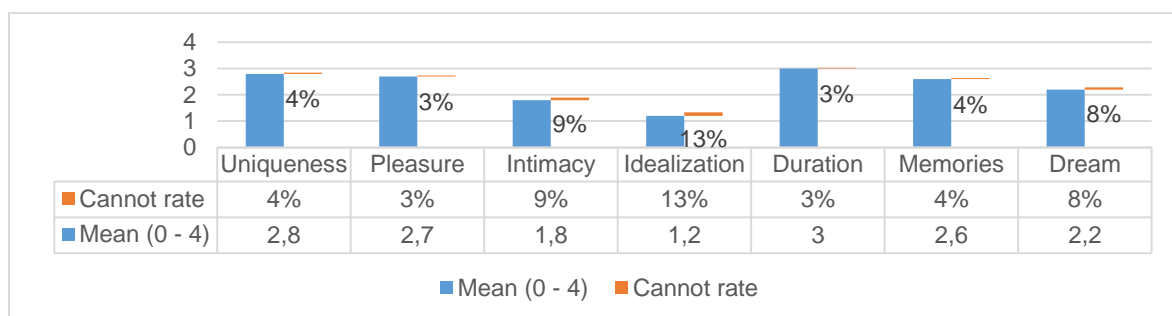


Figure 20. Means and 'cannot rate' percentages of feeling items

The items idealization and intimacy performed worse than the others, according to their means around 1.5, which is below satisfying. Those two items, together with the feeling dream, showed a comparably high 'cannot rate' percentage. One of the Facebook raffle participants criticized the sentence related to the feeling of idealization (there is

something almost ‘magical’ about my relationship with FlixBus) by saying “do you magic do away with the traffic jam”. Overall, the respondents had slightly less difficulties answering their feelings towards the brand, than describing their emotions towards the brand. According to factor analysis, three new components were derived as applicable in Figure 21.

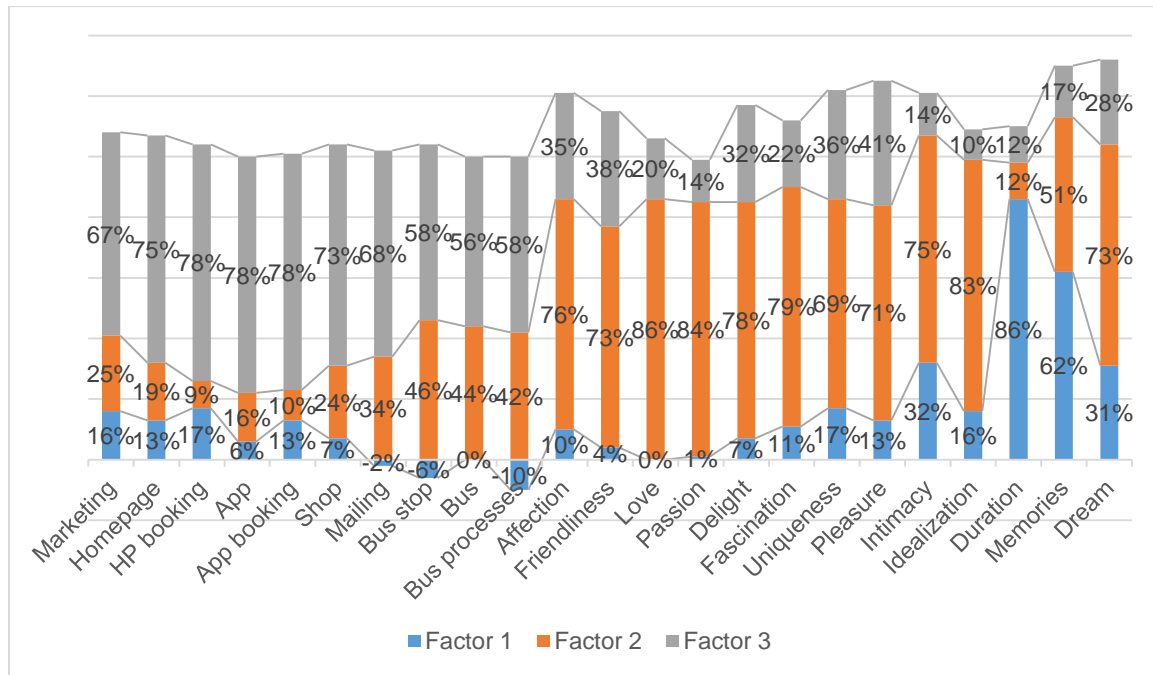


Figure 21. Factor loadings of touchpoint satisfaction and brand love items

When cushioning factor loadings below 50 %, the three main factors evolved as visible in Table 7.

Table 7. Factor analysis of touchpoint satisfaction and brand love items

Components	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
New factor label	<i>Rational brand love</i>	<i>Brand love</i>	<i>Touchpoint satisfaction</i>
Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Duration feeling</li> <li>Memories feeling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All emotion items</li> <li>Uniqueness feeling</li> <li>Pleasure feeling</li> <li>Intimacy feeling</li> <li>Idealization feeling</li> <li>Memories feeling</li> <li>Dream feeling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All touchpoint satisfaction items</li> </ul>

The second factor included all six emotion items, plus four feelings (except duration). This factor is henceforth described as 'brand love' factor ( $\alpha = 94\%$ ). Factor one represents the more rational brand love items of duration and memories. The feeling of duration was evaluated according to the comment "I have been using FlixBus for a long time"; and the feeling of memories related to the comment "I associate FlixBus with some important events of my life". Both evaluations can be rationally comprehended from the outside. The other emotions and feelings, in turn, happen subjectively inside each customer. Factor three is comprised of all satisfaction touchpoints. Those items strongly correlated among each other and poorly with brand love items. The reliability of brand love items compared to touchpoint satisfaction items revealed as excellent with  $\alpha = 95\%$ . An overview of related correlations is visible in Appendix 15. The correlations showed that travel brand experience items had the highest correlations with brand love items. Most affected were the brand love items pleasure, affection, delight and friendliness. To determine the dependency of brand love items on touchpoint satisfaction items, regression analysis was applied. When measuring the influence of touchpoint satisfaction (mean) on the brand love mean – including all subjective and rational brand love items – a regression coefficient of 91% was generated. For every one change of satisfaction, brand love enhances by 91%. R-square was at 36%. The

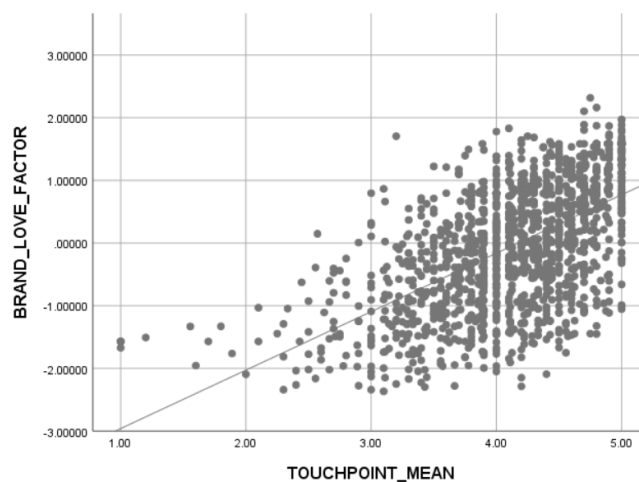


Figure 22. Scatterplot of brand experience quality mean and touchpoint satisfaction mean

regression value of analyzing the dependency of the new brand love factor on touchpoint satisfaction was 93% with an r-square of 35% and significance below 0.05%. As visible in Figure 22, the variables are bundled close to the regression line.

Figure 23 implicates that the touchpoints marketing, mailing, bus stop and the bus had the strongest impacts on brand love. Surprisingly, the booking processes of the homepage and the app, negatively influenced brand love.

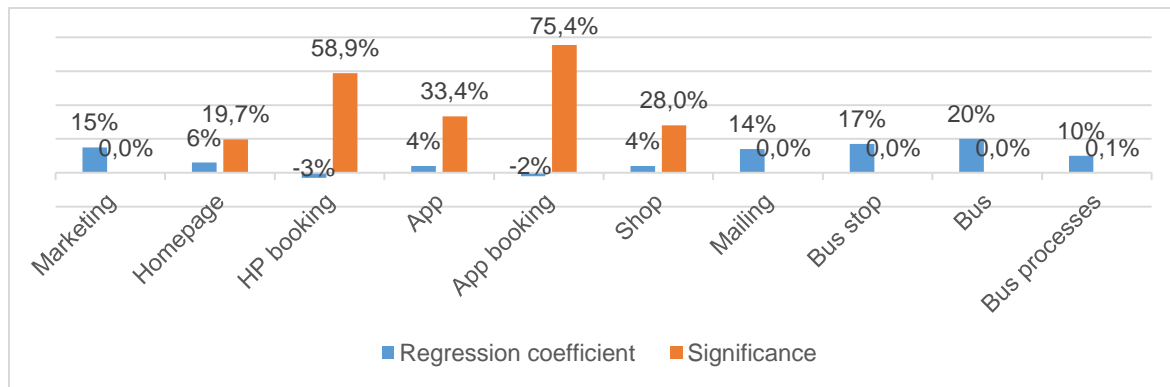


Figure 23. Satisfaction influence on brand love

According to significances, especially the pre-travel touchpoints showed higher values than the travel related items. High significances indicate that the result rather happened by chance. Except for the point of sales items (homepage, app, booking processes and shop), all other significances were acceptable low. Hence, the tests relating to the point of sale items rather happened by luck. Detailed insights into influences of touchpoint satisfaction items on single brand love items, can be found in Appendix 16. Related significances are applicable in Appendix 17.

In summary, it can be stated that satisfaction influenced brand love. Thus, not only brand experience influenced satisfaction, but satisfaction also influenced brand love. The hypothesis that tested the influence of satisfaction on brand love (H2) can be confirmed. Satisfaction was identified and proven as connecting link between brand experience and brand love.

## 5.2 Brand trust as connecting link

Another possible consequence of brand experience, and an antecedent of brand love, is the concept of brand trust. The dependency of brand trust on brand experience is tested according to the subsequent hypothesis.

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*H3: Brand experience influences brand trust.*

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Customers' trust towards the brand FlixBus was measured on a scale of 0 to 4. A mean of 3 derived, which can be interpreted as good. When analyzing the correlations of

brand experience items and brand trust, two components were extracted via factor analysis, visible in Figure 24.

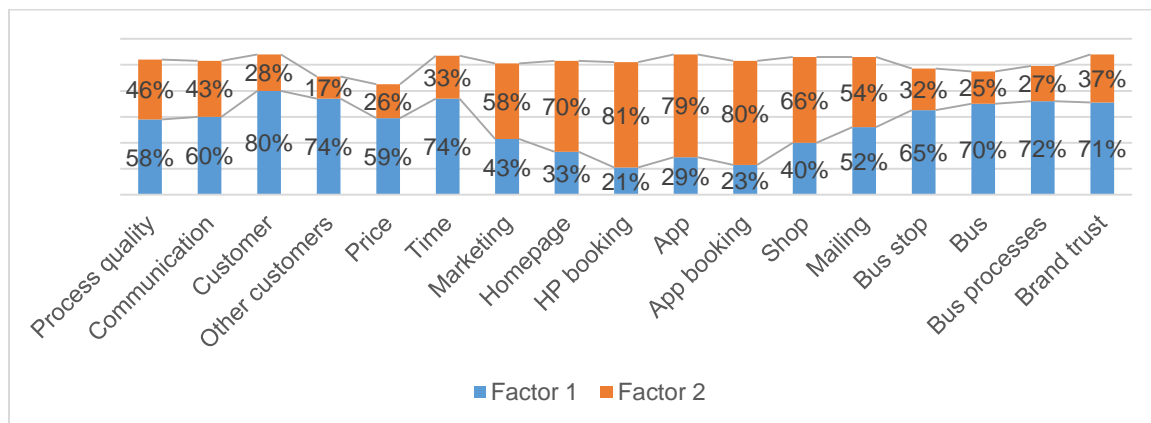


Figure 24. Factor loadings of brand experience items and brand trust

The graph shows that brand trust strongly correlated with travel brand experience items (factor one), as opposed to pre-travel brand experience items (factor two). With a Cronbach's alpha of 94 %, the items are classified as reliable. Brand trust stronger correlated with brand experience quality items than with touchpoint satisfaction items. With correlations above 45 %, the items correlated relatively high. Highest was with the relationship to the individual customer (64 %), time (62 %) and process quality (6 %) with brand trust. For further details about correlations between brand experience items and brand trust see Appendix 18. The single dependencies of brand trust on brand experience quality items are shown in Figure 25.

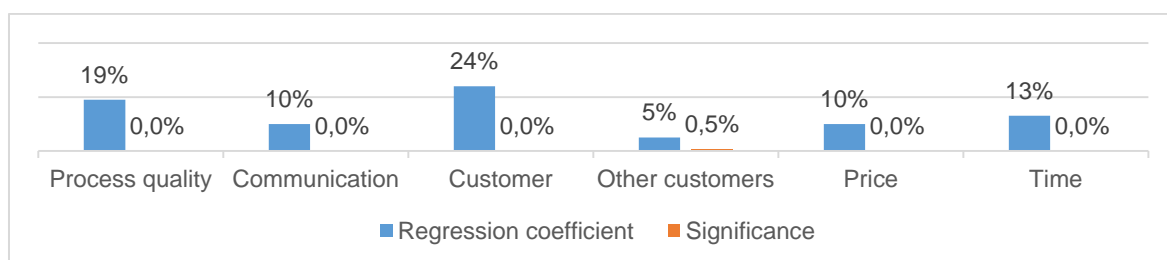


Figure 25. Brand experience quality influence on brand trust

The relationship of the company to the individual customer was identified as the essential driver for trust towards the brand with 24 %. This was followed by the process quality, time management, communication and price management. The item with the lowest effect on brand trust was the relationship among other customers with 5 %. The overall r-square of the brand experience quality influence on brand trust was at 48 %. Referencing to management methods of brand experience (cf. 3.1.4), the construct

can be measured along by means of the satisfaction along customer journey touchpoints. Therefore, not only the effects of brand experience qualities, but also of the satisfaction with brand experience touchpoints are analyzed subsequently. The effects of touchpoints on brand trust were assessed in Figure 26. The graph reveals that brand trust mostly depended on the touchpoints bus (18 %) and marketing (18 %). The only negative impact of touchpoints on brand trust was the touchpoint app (-1 %). This shows that the more consumers are satisfied with the general usage of the app, the less trust they have towards the brand. Although the negative influence with -1 % was very low.

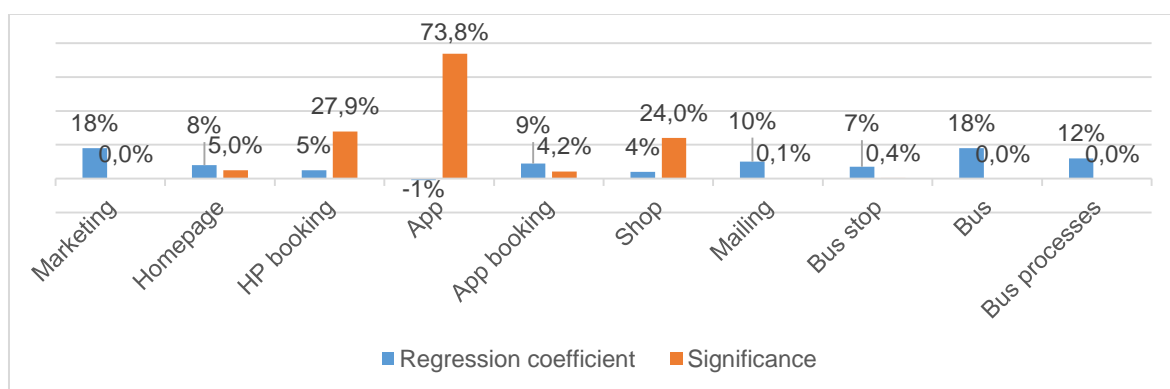


Figure 26. Touchpoint satisfaction influence on brand trust

According to significances, the point of sales related items (homepage, app and shop) exhibited highest values. In general, brand trust improved by 93 %, for every one change in brand experience, with significance below 0.05 %, and r-square of 46 %. The brand experience touchpoints had higher influences on brand trust (87 %), than the brand experience quality items (77 %). In conclusion, the hypothesis that brand experience influences brand trust was verified. The next hypothesis tests the presence of brand trust as antecedent of brand love.

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*H4: Brand trust influences brand love.*

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To analyze the correlation between brand trust and brand love items, factor analysis was applied. Figure 27 shows the two factors, the factor analysis delivered.

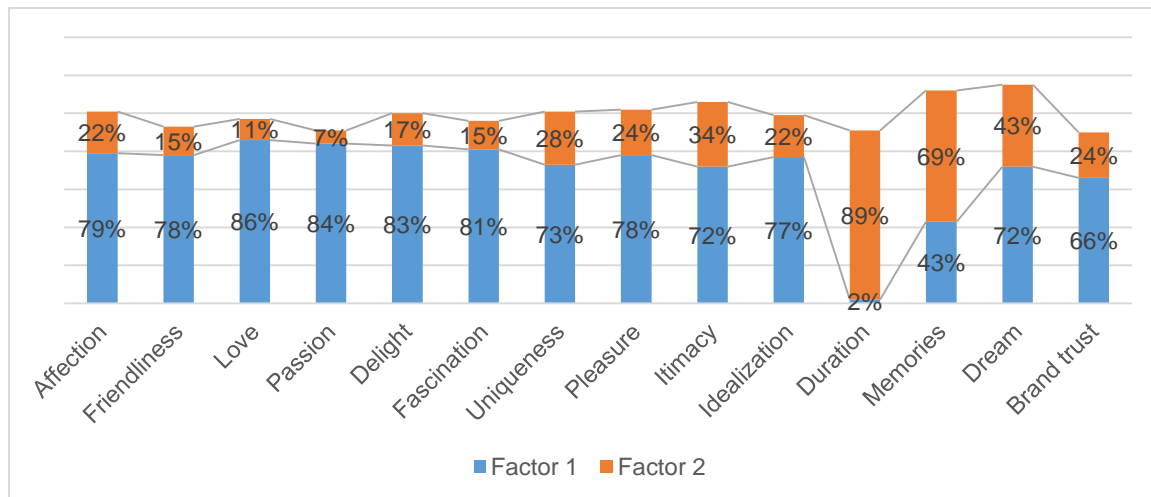


Figure 27. Factor loadings of brand love items and brand trust

Brand trust strongly correlated with all brand love items except the items duration and memories (factor one). Those two stronger correlated among each other (factor two). Further, the items were ranked as reliable with  $\alpha = 94\%$ . Correlations were comparably high with values above 40%, except duration that was at 19%, which is classified as relatively low. Highest correlations were between brand trust and pleasure (67%), friendliness (59%) and dream (59%). More information about correlations of brand love items and brand trust are applicable in Appendix 23. Regression analysis examined the exact dependency of the new brand love factor on brand trust, and calculated a comparably high regression coefficient of 68%. This entails that, if brand trust increases by one, brand love increases by 68% with an r-square of 37%. Similar results were seen when evaluating the effect of brand trust on the brand love mean (regression coefficient of 69%; r-square of 40%; and significance below 0.05%). To sum up, the second brand trust related hypothesis was confirmed. Brand trust had an effect on brand love.

### 5.3 Brand experience and brand love correlation

After identifying the different concepts as connecting links between brand experience and brand love, it is important to analyze also the direct effect of brand experience on brand love, according to the next hypothesis.

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*H5: Brand experience influences brand love.*

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As previously shown, brand experience was presented in form of six brand experience quality items as well as by reference to the satisfaction with ten touchpoints along the customer journey. Brand love items were comprised of six emotion items and seven feelings of love towards a brand. By conducting factor analysis, three new factors were extracted according to Figure 28.

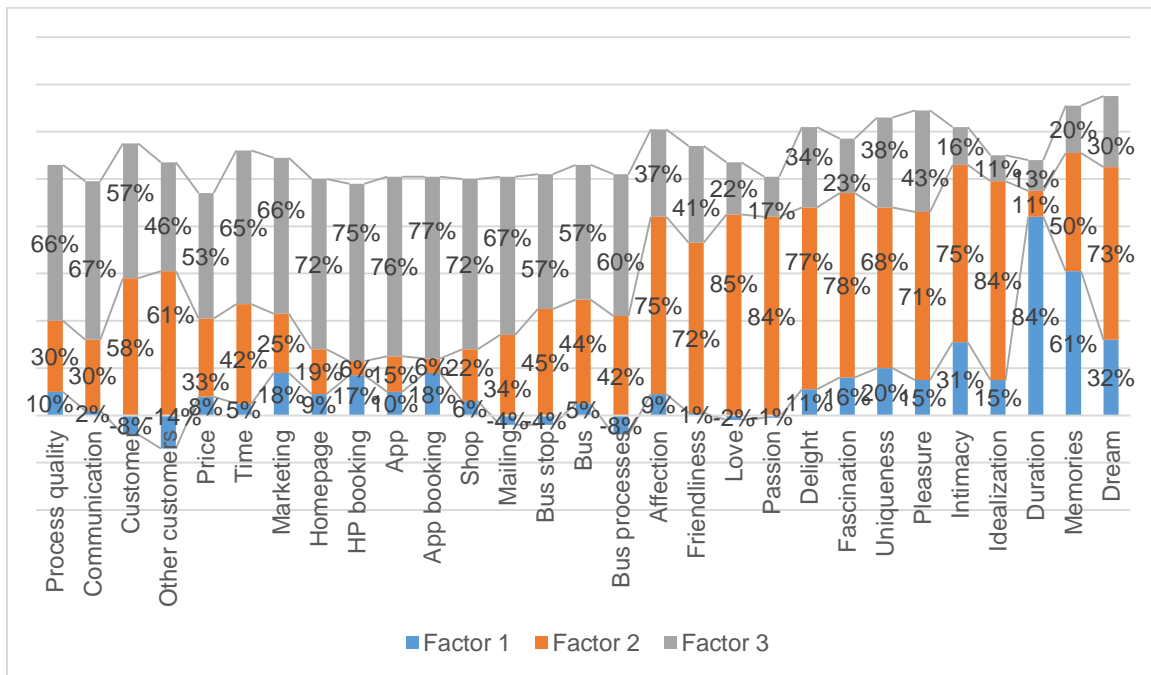


Figure 28. Factor loadings of brand experience items and brand love items

When cushioning factor loadings below 50 %, a clearer picture of the three factors is applicable in Table 8.

Table 8. Factor analysis of brand experience items and brand love items

Components	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Duration feeling</li> <li>Memories feeling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer brand experience quality</li> <li>Other customers brand experience quality</li> <li>Brand love items (except duration)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brand experience quality items (except other customer)</li> <li>All touchpoints</li> </ul>

As already experienced, factor one assembled the feelings of duration and memories. It was interesting to see that factor two included both, the relationship of the company to the single customer as well as the relationship among customers together with all 'brand love' items, except the feeling of duration. This entails that the items customer and other customers were highly related to the emotional brand love items. Factor



three included five brand experience quality items, except the relationship with other customers, plus all touchpoints. The item relationship to the single customer was included in both, factor two and three. Hence, it correlated with brand love items, brand experience qualities as well as touchpoint satisfaction. According to Cronbach's alpha of 94 %, the items reliability was classified as excellent. Comparing correlations of brand experience and brand love items, one saw that the brand experience quality items: customer and other customers, had highest correlations with brand love items, followed by time. The items pleasure and friendliness were the strongest brand love items that correlated with brand experience quality items. Further information about correlations between brand experience quality items on brand love items are visible in Appendix 24. The implications of factor one are better visible when analyzing the direct influences of brand experience quality items on brand love as visible in Figure 29.

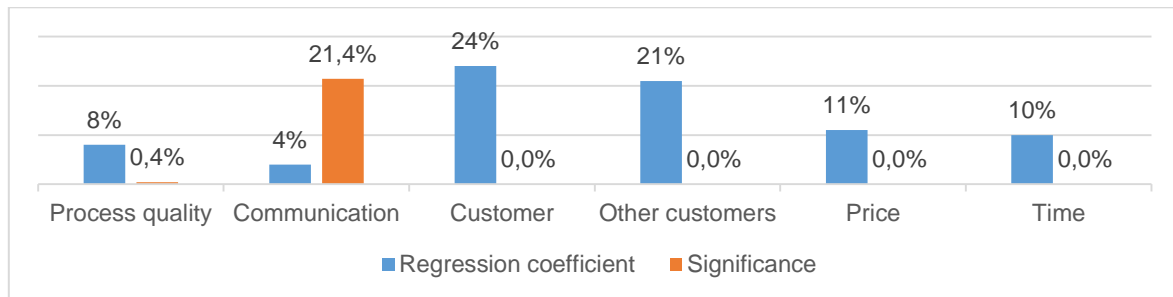


Figure 29. Brand experience quality items influences on brand love

The figure clearly shows that the items customer and other customers had the highest regression coefficients with brand love items. These were followed by price and time management. If price quality improves by one, brand love improves by 11 %. Similar results were seen for time management. As next, process quality influenced brand love by only 8 %, with a significance percentage of 0.4 %. This entailed that the result rather happened by chance. A comparably high significance level was also seen at the item

of communication. Simultaneously, this item displayed the lowest regression coefficient. The influences of brand experience quality items on the single brand love items are findable in Appendix 19, together with related significances in Appendix 20.

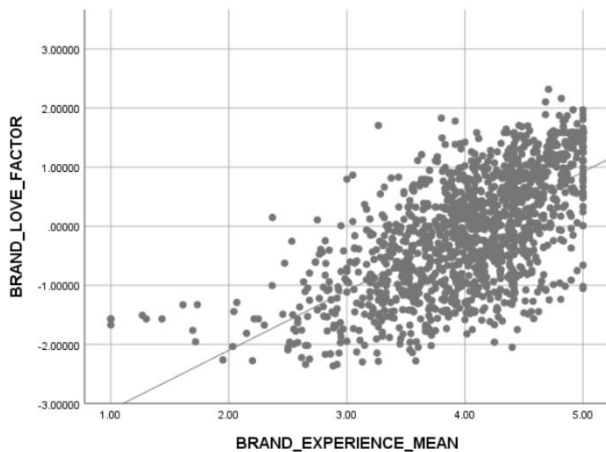


Figure 30. Scatterplot of brand experience mean and brand love factor

Often times, brand experience qualities influenced brand love more than touchpoint satisfaction items did. Brand experience influenced brand love with an overall regression coefficient of 98 %, together with an r-square of 42 %, and a general significance of 0.05 % (see Figure 30).

According to Brakus et al. (2009), four brand experience dimensions (BXD) or responses were identified as consequences of brand experience. It is stated that customers reacted through senses, emotions, behavior or in form of thoughts on brand-related stimuli. Figure 31 shows the average evaluation (mean) of the single brand experience dimensions as well as the number of participants that were not able to rate the questions. The derivation of the related question is findable in 4.3.

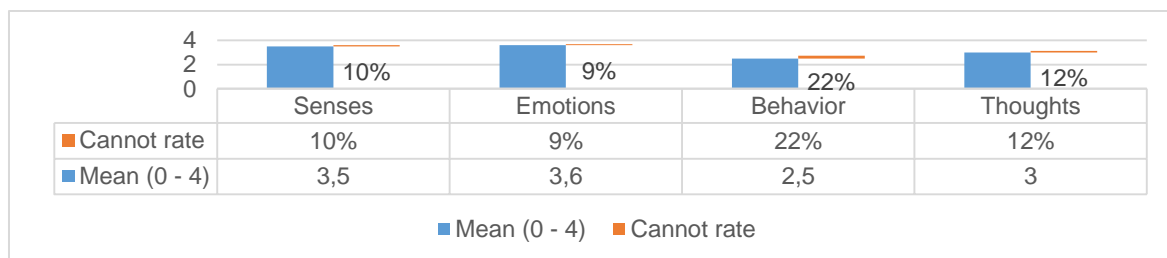


Figure 31. Means and 'cannot rate' percentages of brand experience dimension items

It can be noted that the most experienced responses on the brand were in form of emotions and senses. Actions and behavior were stimulated the lowest. 22 % of the survey participants had difficulties to answer the brand experience dimension question related to behavior. Furthermore, Facebook comments on the survey revealed that people had difficulties observing behavioral reactions to the brand. Other comments like “the brand FlixBus is interesting in a *sensual way* are you serious” (translated from German) underlined that customers had problems, applying brand experience responses in practice. One comment mentioned: “Sensuality – what has this in common

with a mobility brand?” To identify correlating brand experience items together with brand experience dimensions, factor analysis was applied. Figure 32 shows the generated factors of these items.

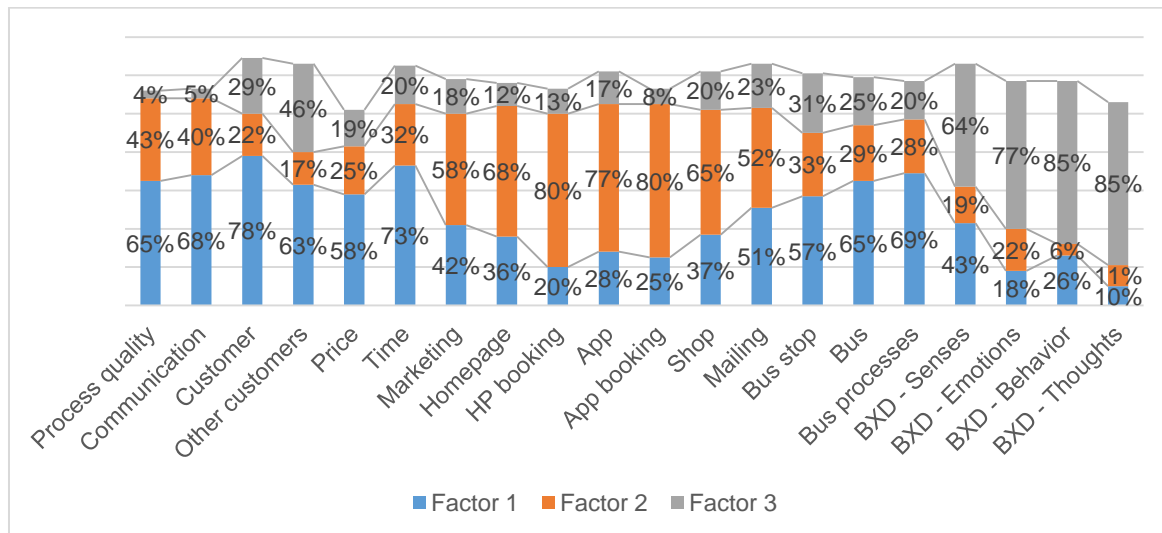


Figure 32. Factor loadings of brand experience items and brand experience dimensions

The results of the analysis exhibited a factor one, which included all pre-travel touchpoints (marketing – mailing). The factor two assembled all brand experience quality items, plus the travel related touchpoints (brand experience qualities, touchpoints mailing and bus processes). These consequence have been extracted while focusing on factor loadings above 50 %. It was interesting to note that all brand experience dimensions were bundled among each other in a separated component (factor three). The brand experience dimensions did not strongly correlate with brand experience items. Nevertheless, the reliability of those items with  $\alpha = 95\%$  was stated to be excellent. Considering correlation coefficients, the highest correlation was with the brand experience dimension senses. Brand experience quality items were stronger correlated with brand experience dimensions than touchpoint satisfaction items. Detailed correlations between brand experience items and brand experience dimensions are visible in Appendix 25. Next, Figure 33 demonstrates the dependencies of brand experience items on the four brand experience dimensions. Again, an overview of the definitions of concepts, factors and items is findable in Appendix 13.

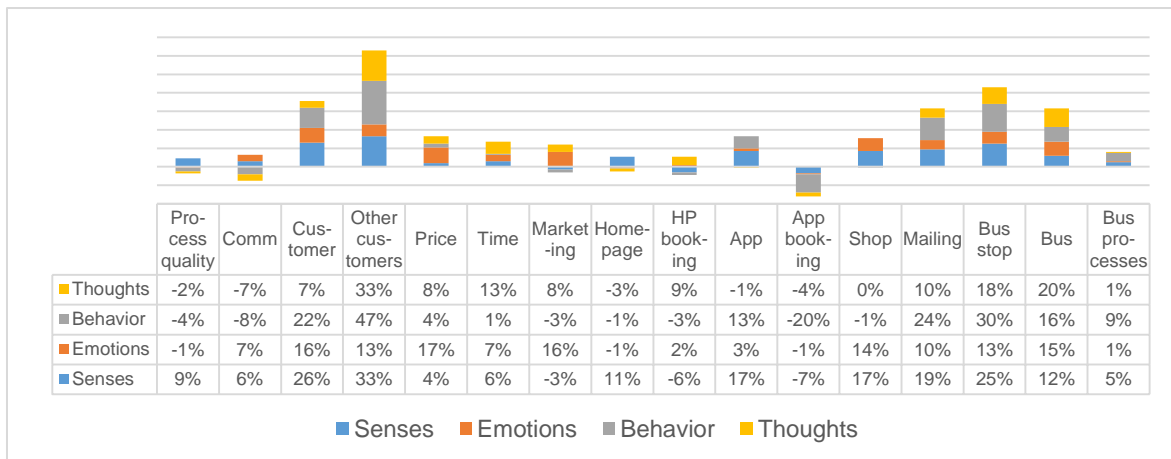


Figure 33. Brand experience influence on brand experience dimensions (regression coefficient)

The figure showed that the influence of brand experience quality items on brand experience dimensions was the highest according to the relationship with other customers. Especially behavioral responses were high in this case, same as at the touchpoints bus stop and bus. The quality of the processes had in most cases a negative influence on brand experience dimensions. The better the process quality, the less emotional, behavioral and intellectual (thoughts) responses were generated. According to the company's communication qualities, the most affected responses were emotions. The communication style of the company triggered emotional responses through, e.g. advertising. In this sense, the marketing touchpoint satisfaction was mainly influencing the emotional brand experience response. It was surprising that the strongest effect of the customer brand experience quality item was on sensual response, and not on emotions. The qualities price and time management were constantly positively low. The quality of the price mostly influenced emotions, like happiness, about the affordability or anger about price changes. Time management, in turn, was more thought provoking. Experiences with the time management of FlixBus led to intellectual processes. Looking at the touchpoints, most pre-travel brand experiences had less influences on brand experience dimensions, than the ride related items. The touchpoint marketing had greatest effects on emotions. Surprisingly, it negatively influenced the brand experience dimension of senses; however, most advertisement is either visual or audible. It can be concluded that FlixBus marketing material was not that appealing for senses, although they were arranged in a conspicuous design. The homepage influenced senses positively. All other brand experience dimensions were negatively impacted. The app was high in sensual attraction as well as behavioral responses. The application of the mobile version primarily led to action. The homepage booking process was

mostly thought provoking, which is easily explainable, since it is a primarily cognitive process. The app booking process on the other hand, was largely negatively influencing brand experience dimension, with greatest negative effect on behavior by  $-20\%$ . The more satisfied consumers were with the app, the less behavioral they responded. Shop, as additional point of sale, mainly influenced the senses, similar to the homepage and mailing. The touchpoint mailing again was with  $24\%$  mostly affecting behavioral reactions. This can be explained by the fact that people may started behavioral actions as response to mailings, e.g. they started boarding the bus after receiving the booking confirmation or they may concluded a booking after reading the newsletter. Mailing was positively correlating with all brand experience dimensions. The same is true for bus stop and the bus. The ride in the bus was merely behaviorally experienced. This means that consumers started actionable behavior evoked through experiences in the bus. Lastly, the bus related processes like check-in and check-out process or luggage loading triggered mostly behavioral responses. Thoughts and emotions almost did not depend on bus processes. The more fluent the processes worked, the less the customers needed to think about complaints. In general, with r-squares of less than  $29\%$ , the items were widely scattered. The related significances to the regression coefficients are named in Figure 34.

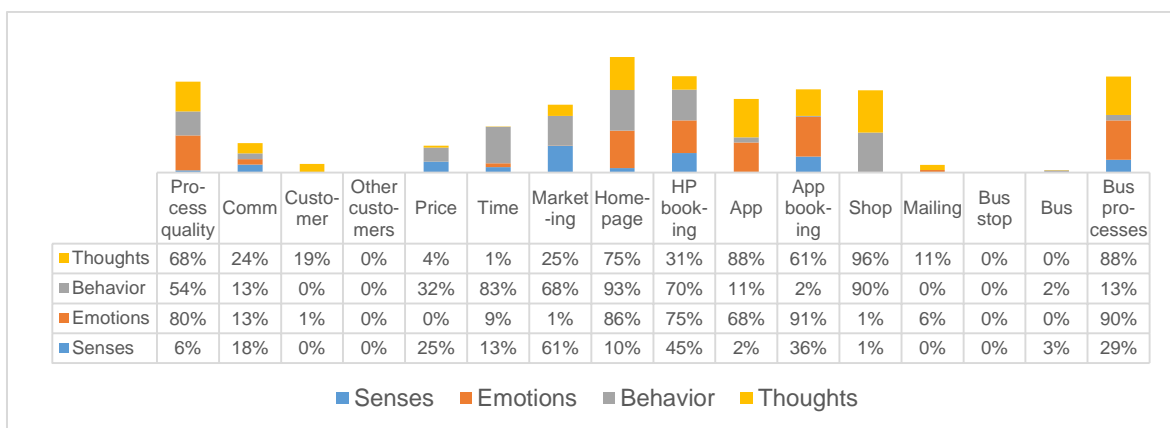


Figure 34. Significances of brand experience qualities on brand experience dimensions

It showed that process quality effects rather happened by chance. As opposed to the relationship among customers influences on brand experience dimensions. These were classified as actual test result. In general it can be stated that the tests with the brand experience dimension senses showed comparably low significances (see blue bar in Figure 34). Looking at touchpoint satisfaction significances, they were again pretty high, with the exception of the items mailing, bus stop and bus. Here, the results

can be stated as facts, while in the other cases the results rather happened by chance. The influence of the brand experience mean on the brand experience dimension mean had an r-square of 22 %. Nevertheless, the regression coefficient was at 81 %. This means, every one change in one of the brand experience items changes brand experience dimension by 81 %. It can be concluded that the influence of brand experience on brand experience dimensions was verified with its strongest influences on senses (19 %), followed by behavior (4 %), emotions (5 %) and finally thoughts (1 %).

According to literature mentioned in 4.3, brand experience dimensions/responses were not only consequences of brand experience, in some cases they also were antecedents of brand love concepts. Especially affective (emotions), sensory (senses) and intellectual (thoughts) responses were mentioned. Concerning factor analysis, the correlations between brand experience dimensions and brand love items can be seen in Figure 35.

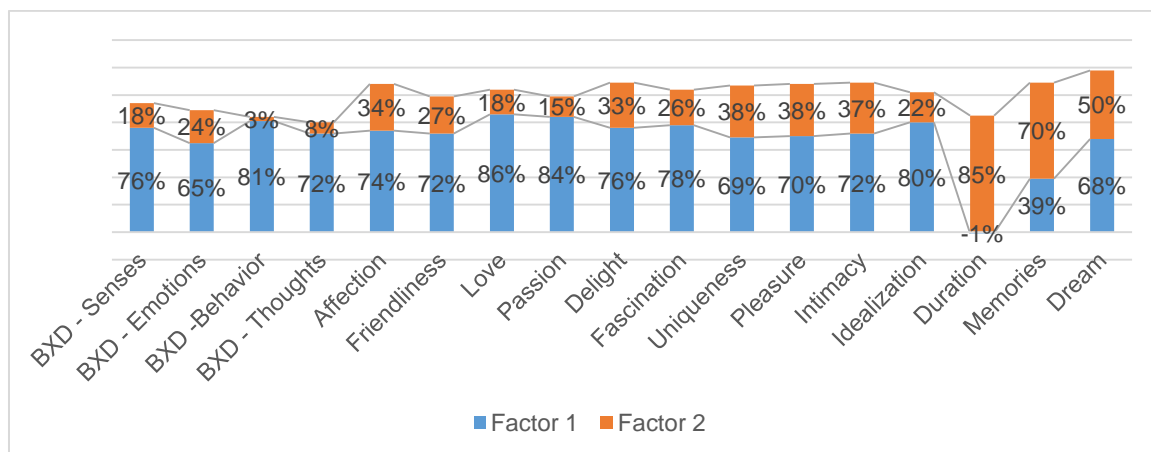


Figure 35. Factor loadings of brand experience dimensions and brand love items

All brand experience dimensions strongly correlated with the brand love items (except duration and memories) as visible in factor one. Factor two included the items of duration and memories. The correlations of senses with brand love items were by far the highest with correlations mainly above 60 %. The brand experience dimension behavior also exhibited values above 60 % in correlation with love (67 %), passion (65 %) and idealization (69 %). The item of duration showed remarkable low values (15 % – 22 %). These results and more information about correlations of brand experience dimensions and brand love items are applicable in Appendix 26. Impacts of brand experience dimensions on brand love are shown in Figure 36. A detailed insight into

brand experience dimension influences on single brand love items is findable in Appendix 21 together with significances in Appendix 22

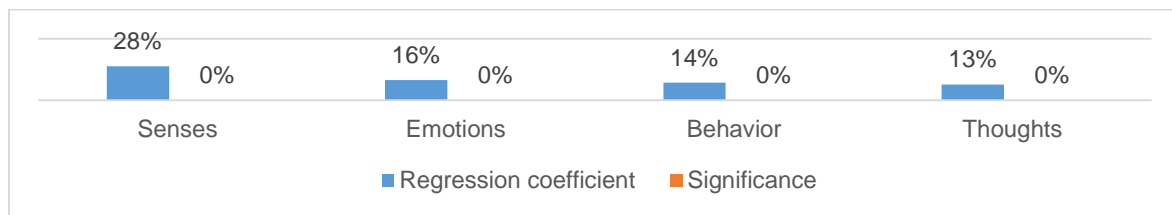


Figure 36. Brand experience dimensions influence on brand love

Senses did have a strong impact on brand love items, closely followed by the dimension emotions. The overall r-square of brand experience dimensions mean and the factor brand love was relatively high with 58 %. The regression coefficient was at 71 %, when analyzing the dependency of the brand love factor on the mean of the brand experience dimensions (significance below 0.05 %). The hypothesis that brand experience influences brand love was verified. Strongest impacting items were the brand experience qualities. Main drivers were the items related to the relationship to the individual customer as well as the relationship among customers. The items mailings, bus stop and bus were, in turn, significant drivers on part of the touchpoints. The more those items are improved, the stronger brand love gets.

#### 5.4 Brand loyalty as joint goal

The next concept brand loyalty is not a link between brand experience and brand love, however, it was identified as a result of brand experience and brand love likewise. Brand experience was presented by the variables brand experience quality and touchpoint satisfaction. The latter serves not only as measurement variable for brand experience, further satisfaction was identified as connecting link between brand experience and brand loyalty. As stated, the question relating to brand loyalty in the survey was: “How would it feel for you if you can’t use FlixBus anymore?” Hence, the question was asked negatively, which means that the worst the people evaluate the question on a scale of 0 to 4, the better is the brand loyalty. For the subsequent evaluation the data was reversed. Thus, a 0 became a 4 and vice versa. Thereby, a 4 refers to a high degree of loyalty. For identifying brand loyalty as joint concept, the next hypothesis tests the dependency of brand loyalty on brand experience.

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*H6: Brand experience influences brand loyalty.*

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The current degree of loyalty FlixBus customers perceived towards the brand, can be ranked at a mean of 2.9. When comparing brand experience items (brand experience quality and touchpoint satisfaction) together with brand loyalty in the factor analysis, three new factors are derived as shown in Figure 37.

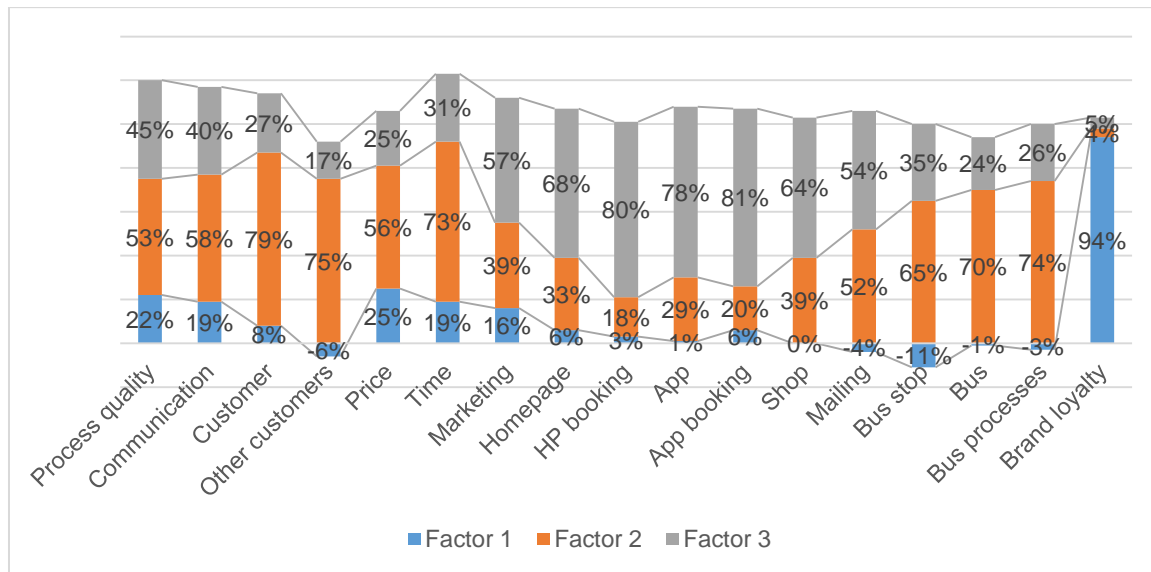


Figure 37. Factor loadings of brand experience items and brand loyalty

Interestingly, brand loyalty did not correlate with both brand experience quality items and touchpoint satisfaction items (see factor 1). Those, in turn were separated into travel brand experience items (factor 2) and pre-travel brand experience items (factor 3). Cronbach's alpha is at 92 % (excellent). Correlations of brand experience items on brand loyalty are visible in Appendix 27. Brand loyalty was very low correlating with brand experience items including correlations below 16 %. Nevertheless, it can be stated that brand experience quality items correlated slightly better with brand loyalty than touchpoint satisfaction items did. Results became more obvious, when analyzing the single influences of brand experience quality items on brand loyalty. The dependency of brand loyalty on brand experience quality along the items was very low and partially negative. Process quality had the highest influence on brand loyalty with 9 %, followed by price (9 %), customer (9 %), time (6 %) and communication (4 %). Moreover, the quality of the relationship with other customers was negatively influencing brand loyalty by -10 %. This means, if the relationships among customers increase by



one, brand loyalty decreases by  $-10\%$ . Figure 38 gives a visual overview of the influences brand experience quality items had on brand loyalty. Nevertheless, the correlating variables were widely scattered by an r-square of only  $3\%$  with a regression coefficient of  $25\%$  (significance below  $0.05\%$ ).

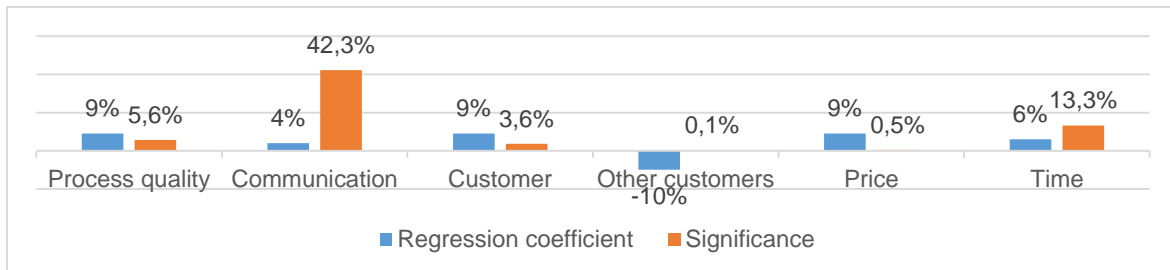


Figure 38. Brand experience quality influence on brand loyalty

According to this graph, communication again exhibited a high significance, same as the item time and process quality. This shows that those results were less valid in comparison to those of the other items (customer, other customers and price). In turn, the results of the touchpoint satisfaction influence on brand loyalty can be seen in Figure 39. Positive influences were marketing, the shop, the app booking process, bus, bus processes, homepage and homepage booking process. App, mailing and bus stop were negatively influencing brand loyalty. The better they get, the worse brand loyalty gets. As a result, marketing and bus related processes were especially driving brand loyalty. Comparing the significances to those of Figure 38 it can be seen that test results in Figure 39 rather happened by chance, due to high significance levels.

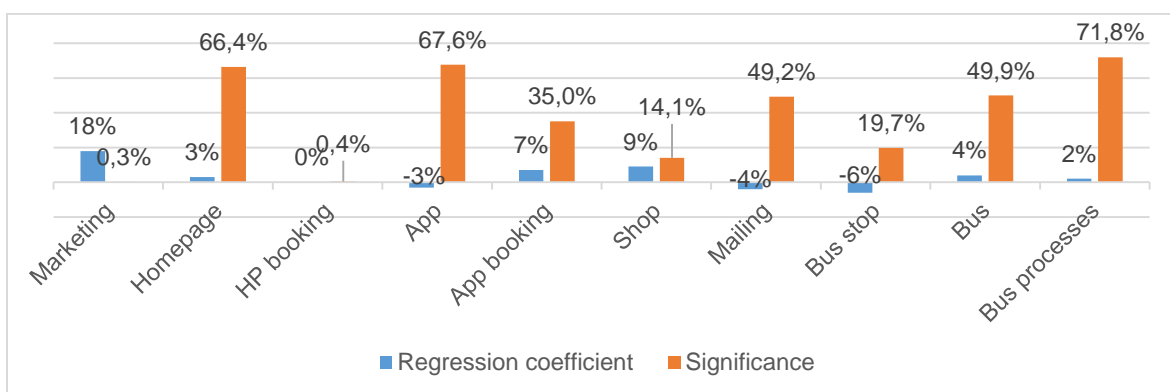


Figure 39. Touchpoint satisfaction influence on brand loyalty

The r-square of touchpoint satisfaction items influence on brand loyalty was only  $2\%$ . The regression coefficient of the touchpoint mean on brand loyalty is  $25\%$  (significance below  $0.05\%$ ). Seeing it in a bigger picture, by measuring the impact of overall brand

experience mean (brand experience qualities and touchpoint satisfaction items) on brand loyalty, it turned out that if brand experience improves by one, brand loyalty improves by 29 % with a r-square of 3 % and significance below 0.05 %, visible in Figure 40.

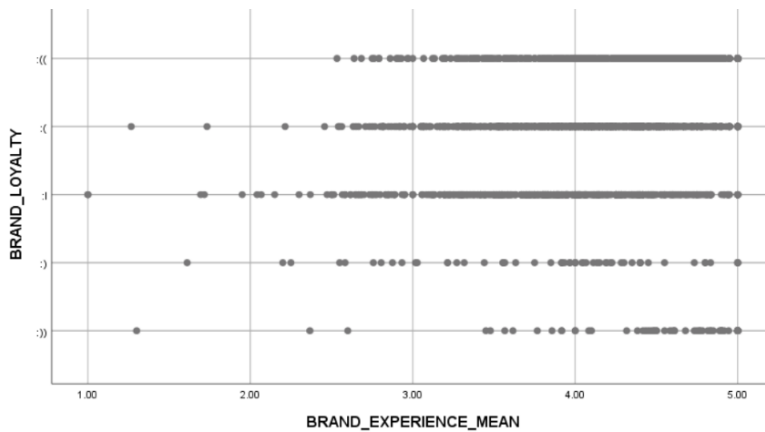


Figure 40. Scatterplot of brand experience mean and brand loyalty

It can be said that brand experience had an influence on brand loyalty. Which was relatively low in comparison to other influences. According to literature (cf. Brakus et al. 2009; Bapat & Thanigan 2016), one could have expected a greater influence of

brand experience on brand loyalty. As stated in 3.3, brand loyalty was mentioned as direct consequence of brand experience. In other cases it was mentioned as indirect consequence through the concepts satisfaction or brand trust. As shown in Figure 39, the influences of satisfaction on brand loyalty along the customer journey is even lower than the impacts of brand experience quality items on brand loyalty. The indirect influence of brand experience on brand loyalty through satisfaction exists, however, in a very low form. On this, brand trust was stated to be a further indirect influence of brand experience on brand loyalty. With a regression coefficient of 27 % (r-square: 5 %; significance below 0.05 %), this statement can be verified, however, on a lower level than expected from literature. Nevertheless, literature further mentions an influence of brand love on brand loyalty, which is tested with the next hypothesis.

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*H7: Brand love influences brand loyalty.*

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First, when comparing correlations of brand love items and brand loyalty in factor analysis, an interesting result can be seen in Figure 41.

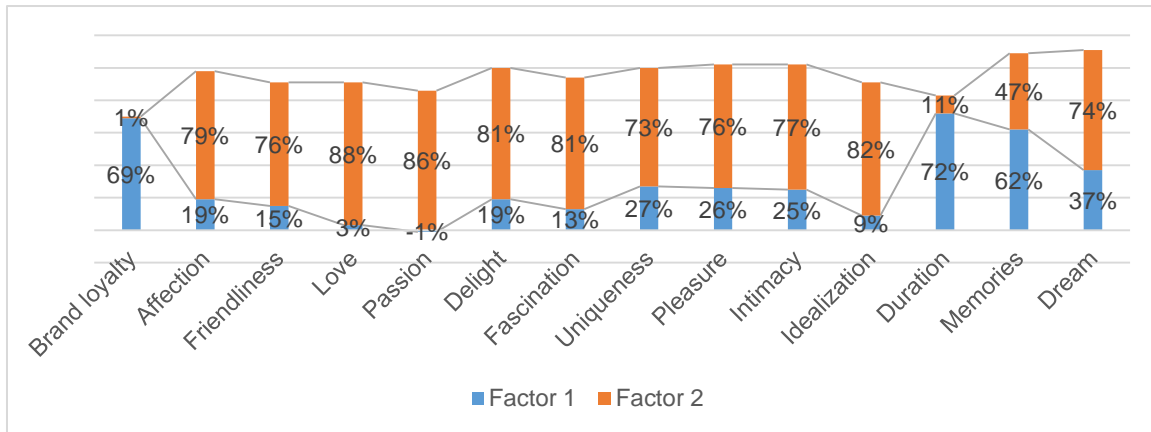


Figure 41. Factor loadings of brand loyalty and brand love items

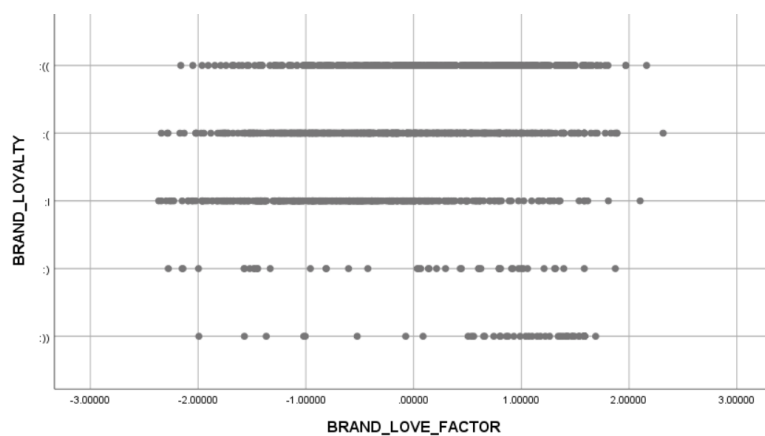


Figure 42. Scatterplot of brand love factor and brand loyalty

Factor 1 showed that brand loyalty strongly correlated with the items duration and memories. However, factor 2 showed that the remaining brand love items highly correlated except duration and memories. Reliability of comparing items is given with a

Cronbach's alpha of 93 %. Correlations of brand love items and brand loyalty are applicable in Appendix 28. Those were comparably low with an average of 15 %. The highest correlations were in combination with the brand love items memories (25 %) and pleasure (22 %). The regression analysis showed that in total, if brand love improves by one, brand loyalty increases by 12 %. The r-square of 1 % indicated a rather random scattering of items around the regression line with a significance of 0.05 %. As stated before, according to literature, greater influence was expected. Figure 42 shows the wide distribution of items, identifying no regression line. The single influences of brand love items on brand loyalty are visible in Figure 43. Looking at the single influences of brand love items on brand loyalty it was interesting to see that idealization, passion, love and affection were evenly negatively influenced by brand loyalty. Memories, pleasure and delight were influenced most. Brand loyalty was influenced less by all other emotions. Furthermore, significances were relatively high in most cases, which showed that the results happened rather by chance.

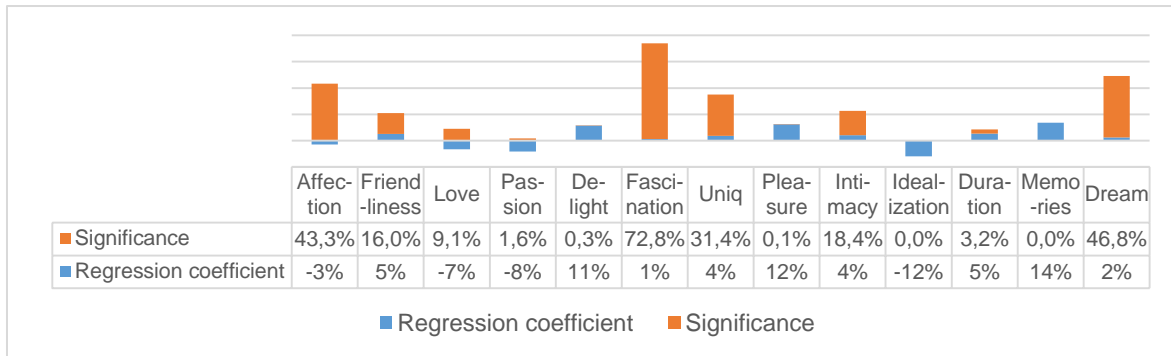


Figure 43. Brand love influence on brand loyalty

In general, it can be stated that the dependency of brand loyalty on brand love existed, however in a low form (regression coefficient of 12 %) with a significance of 0.05 %. Although the influence level was not significantly high, the hypothesis was verified. The lowered influence level of these results, compared to literature, can be based on the alternative usage of measurement techniques in this work like linear regression analysis. The next chapter continues with the result evaluation of non-hypotheses related results.

## 5.5 Non-hypotheses related results

As stated in ‘developing the survey’, not only hypotheses related questions existed in the survey. This chapter represents the evaluation of additional questions that are important to generate an overall brand picture of FlixBus. They provide a clearer picture of possible areas of improvement. Those extra questions were related with the clear perception of the FlixBus image, the identification with the brand, the relationship forms FlixBus customers held in mind towards the brand, questions concerning love brands and their characteristics, recommendations survey participants had for FlixBus in general and lastly a social demographical assessment overview.

**FlixBus image coherency.** The question regarding the perceived FlixBus image coherency was: “Are you of the opinion that the FlixBus image is identifiable/coherent at all brand touchpoints?” The average mean for answers to this question was 3.1 on a scale of 0 to 4. This means that most customers were of the opinion that along all touchpoints the FlixBus brand is noticeable. Furthermore, it was analyzed that the satisfaction with the touchpoints was influencing the perceived coherency of the image.

The more satisfied consumers are with the touchpoints, the more coherent is the FlixBus image perceived along the customer journey (by 80 %). As visible in Figure 44, the influences exist on a very low level.

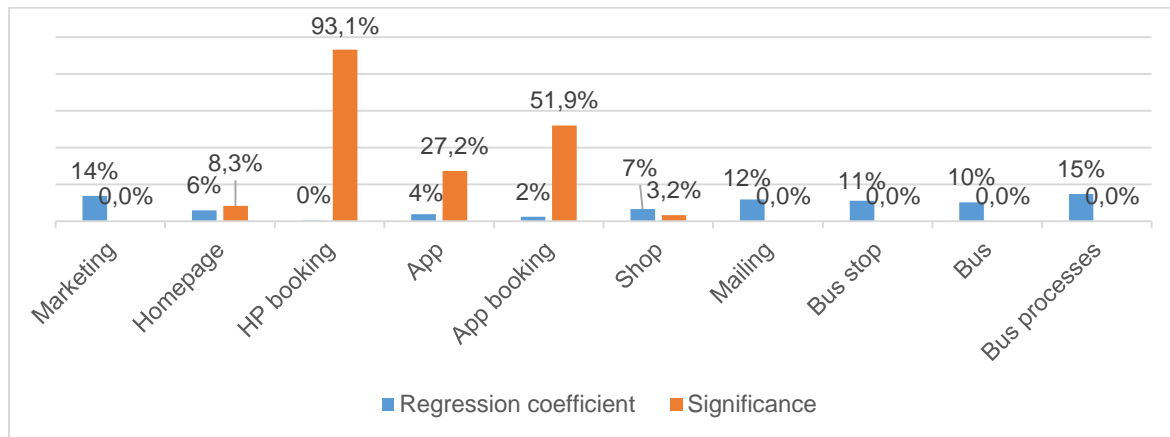


Figure 44. FlixBus image coherency on touchpoint satisfaction

The items bus processes, bus stop, marketing, mailing and bus had the greatest influence on the image perception. Hence, if those items improve, the distinguished perception regarding competitors increases. The more satisfied consumers were during the ride, the more they recognize they were riding in a FlixBus. The significance of the point of sale items were exceptionally higher than those of the others. All in all, it can be stated that the general influence of touchpoint satisfaction on the perception of a coherent image was high although the single influences were comparably low.

**Brand identification.** Brand identification was named as one of the main antecedents for the existence of brand love. To identify whether a FlixBus customer perceived the feeling of love towards the brand, one has to know whether this essential precondition was met. In total, brand identification was rated with a mean of 2.5 on a scale of 0 to 4. Factor analysis developed two new factors. Factor 1 was comprised of brand identification and brand love items (except duration and memories). Factor 2 included the feelings duration and memories. As a result, brand identification highly correlated with the brand love items – except duration and memories – which strongly correlated with each other. This result was strengthened by regression analysis. With an r-square of 47 %, brand identification had an influence on brand love by 66 % regression in total with a significance below 0.05 %. The detailed influences of brand identification on brand love are visible in Figure 45.

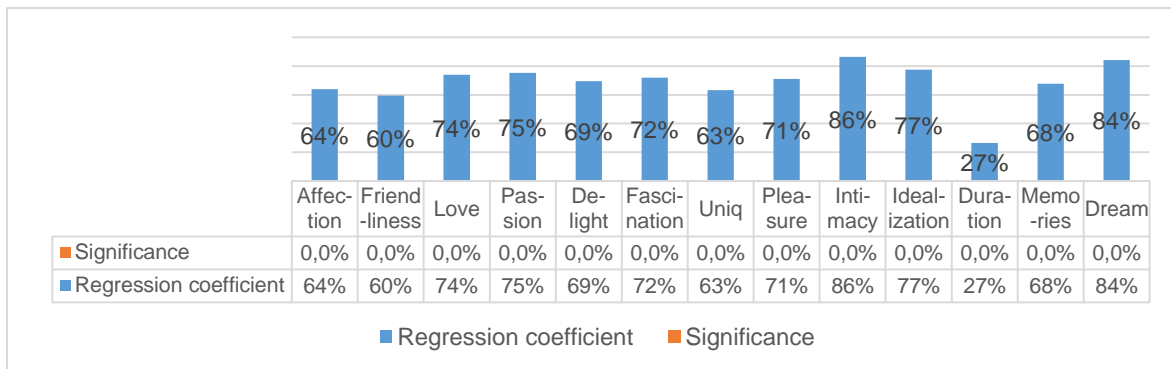


Figure 45. Brand identification influences on brand love

Intimacy, dream, idealization, passion and love were the most affected items on a comparably high regression level. Duration is the lowest influenced brand love item. It can be concluded that brand identification was influencing brand love. In this sense, brand identification can be considered as important concept of a precondition for the existence of brand love.

**Relationship forms.** The next question to be evaluated was: “Which of the following relationship forms best describes your relationship with the brand FlixBus?” The question included six possibilities to respond. First, the brand was occasionally used without official concession (affair). Second, the brand was adopted due to usage of friends and families (arranged marriage). Third, the brand was only used due to non-existent alternatives (dependency). Fourth, the brand was avoided due to negative emotions regarding the brand (enmity). Fifth, the brand was occasionally and casually used (friendship). At last, the brand was used spontaneously one-time due to perfect situational fit (one-night stand). The evaluation included answers of all 2,481 respondents – also those that never used FlixBus – to get an overall perception of how the people classify their relationship to the brand. The responses are visible in Figure 46.

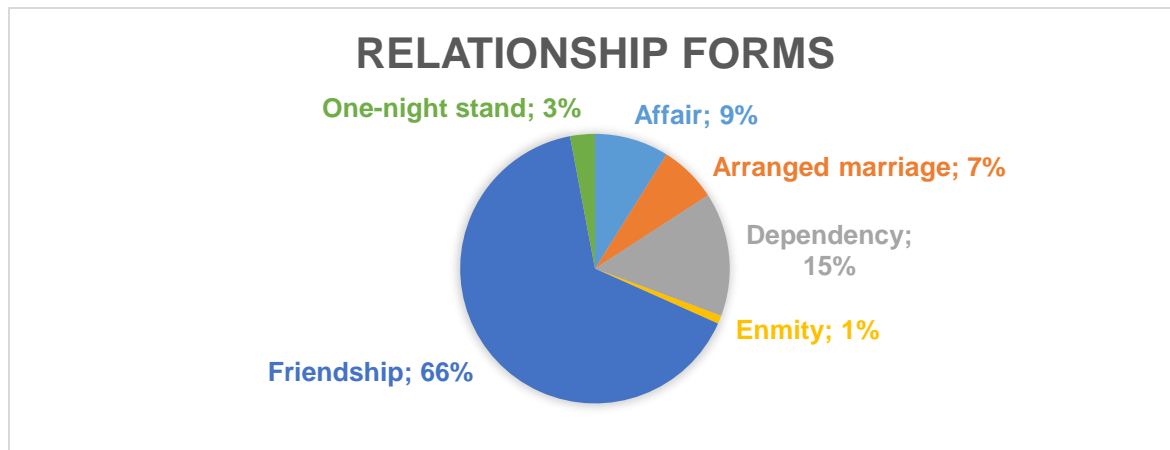


Figure 46. Relationship form evaluation

The brand was mainly perceived as a friend. Hence, most customers used the brand occasionally without involving many emotions. Dependency on the brand was the second highest relationship form with 15 %. The remaining customers fluctuated between the affair, one-night stand and arranged marriage relationship forms. 1 % of respondents assessed their relationship to the brand as hostile. As the survey was answered by 91 % by FlixBus Facebook fans it is obvious that the percentage of an enmity relationship form was fairly low. The same occurred with brand love related questions, customers struggled with associating human relationship forms to brand. One person mentioned that the survey is more a 'description of a relationship than a service'. Overall, FlixBus may strive to decrease the feeling of brand dependency. Customers who rated dependency as relationship form were less satisfied with the support of relationships among FlixBus customers as well as with the touchpoint bus stop. These and further results are applicable in the cross tables comparing the mean of brand experience qualities with relationship forms in Appendix 29 as well as of touchpoints with relationship forms in Appendix 30. It can be added that the most influencing brand experience items on consequent concepts were the lowest rated ones: customer, other customer as well as mailing, bus stop, bus and bus processes. If those items improve, it is likely that customers who ranked their relationship as dependent, do then rank it as a more positive relationship form in the future.

**Love Brands.** The following analyses what respondents classified as love brands and what characteristics they associated with an emotional brand. Regarding the question, "What brand(s) would you describe as 'Love Brand'?" 276 (10.1 %) answered with FlixBus. Since mainly FlixBus Facebook fans participated in the survey, this number is

subjectively influenced. Further mentioned love brands named in the survey are applicable in Figure 47.

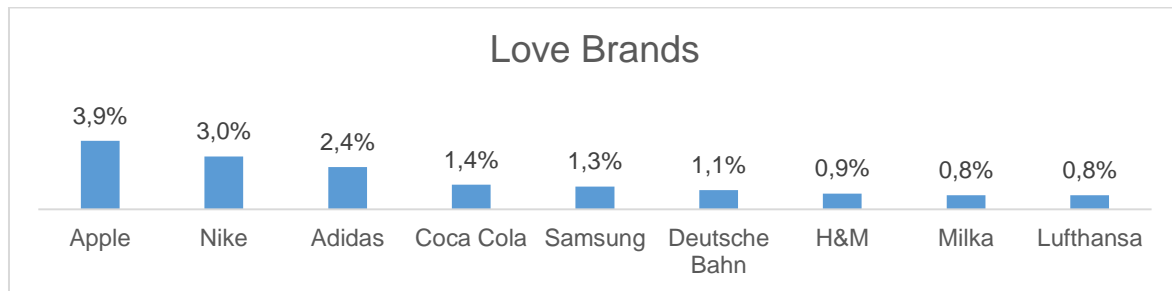


Figure 47. Love brand naming

It is interesting to note that 29 respondents named one of the main (railway) competitors of FlixBus – the Deutsche Bahn – as love brand. In addition, the airline Lufthansa as transportation brand was mentioned 21 times. As with all other emotional related questions, people struggled with defining a love brand. Some asked: “What is a love brand?” or “What does ‘love brand’ mean?” For future studies, it is therefore recommended to better define the term beforehand. Nevertheless, those who had an idea of the terms’ meaning, were able to associate different characteristics to a love brand. The most frequent answers to the question: “Which characteristics would you associate with a ‘Love Brand’?” are listed in Figure 48.

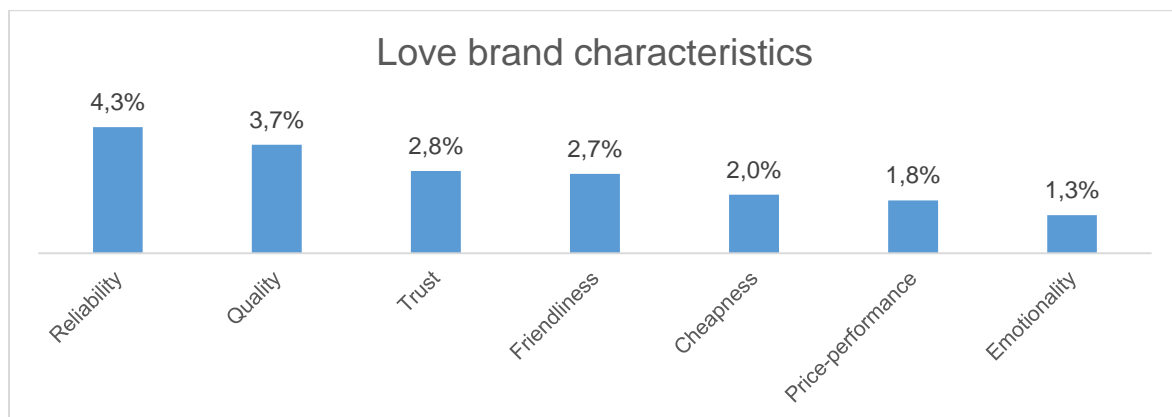


Figure 48. Love brand characteristics evaluation

It should be stated that this question was influenced by the main brand of the survey – FlixBus – since most characteristics mentioned were concerning a mobility brand like comfortability or punctuality. In addition to the items in the figure, other highly ranked characteristics were identification (which is a precondition for brand love), sustainability, love and satisfaction. Satisfaction counts as one of the main drivers of a love brand.



The love brand characteristics can further be used in communication and for advertisement. How satisfaction may be achieved for FlixBus is described in the subsequent paragraph.

**Recommendations for FlixBus.** These recommendations were responses from the question: “What improvement proposal do you have for the FlixBus service?” Those were classified with regard to related touchpoints. The items homepage, app and the booking processes of both were aggregated into one recommendation point. The items shop and mailing were not mentioned, as there were no recommendations named for those touchpoints. Further, non-classifiable items were mentioned in the sub-paragraph ‘other’. The following touchpoint buckets were created to sort recommendations qualitatively: marketing, homepage/app (booking process), bus stop, bus, bus processes and other.

When considering the touchpoint **marketing**, the desire of more promotions and discount marketing activities was uncovered. It was recommended that the communication of available discounts should be easier to find and more precise. Customers claimed that they would like to have an overview of existing offers. Other recommendations regarding marketing were to better visualize marketing activities via spots. It was mentioned that teaser marketing is not desirable; instead, clear, transparent and honest marketing should be distributed. Last of all, two customers who love the FlixBus designs recommended the availability of merchandise articles. With regard to the **homepage** and **app** many customers asked for better connectivity of routes and to expand the network of trips. In addition, overnight and express rides were recommended as well as more direct connections on busy routes. Many customers claimed that the cancellation process needs to be simplified and cancellation fees should not be involved. This was specifically mentioned with regard to the app. In this sense, the cancellation process should be firstly modified in the app. The customers stated that it should be more modern and look more like the homepage. One customer recommended adding a game to the FlixBus app. Regarding the booking process, it was requested to be more flexible in form of possible alternatives regarding price and departure times. A specific recommendation was to set a possible period of travel time in which the available prices are shown. It was mentioned 52 times that a set reservation is missing/would be a benefit. Additionally, the different stops on the route should be shown for better transparency. 87 respondents especially remarked their desire for

stable service prices. Recommendations like discounts for students, families, groups, kids, disabled and long rides were proposed as well as the possibility of last minute booking prices. Regarding extra allowances, the travel with animals was requested to be allowed. Prior to final booking, FlixBus was encouraged to again ask for the verification of the date – especially in the app – to avoid mispurchase. To finish, the payment possibilities were requested to be expanded and to make the usage of all-complimentary.

Concerning the **bus stop** not many recommendations were made, however, those mentioned covered better signage, recognizability and accessibility. Ideas for cooperation's with public transport apps or services like car sharing were mentioned for transportation to or from the bus stops. The service at the bus stops was requested to be improved regarding cleanness, service availability as well as the existence of restrooms and food.

Customers claimed that upon arrivals the **bus** is often not recognizable since not all busses are green. A tracking of the bus was recommended for reasons of monitoring via the app for example. Customers would then directly see when the bus arrives or departs at the terminal. Delay communication, as often named area for improvement, would be optimized. Customers would like to know what the standard of the arriving bus is, e.g. availability of WIFI or sockets. Regarding equipment in the bus, additional proposals and desires are as follows:

- WIFI – including more data volume
- (USB) sockets
- Seat screens plus optimized media center
- More comfortable seats plus optimized legroom
- Display – information distribution of breaks and arrival time
- Restroom cleanness and functionality of air conditioner

An additional area of improvement in the bus is the driver itself. They should be trained better regarding their ability to drive safely, they should be able to speak English or the language of the country they are driving to and they should try to improve on friendliness and motivation. The motivational aspect was especially important to customers. Customers would like to know more about the driver himself (name, professionalism) and the services available in the bus. In case of delays, the customers would like to get updates concerning the arrival time. It was also mentioned that drivers should be

relaxed and on long routes, more drivers should be used. For reasons of safety, the drivers should be regularly supervised and trained. Another recommendation was about additional services on the bus. These include a variety of snacks and beverages in every bus, as well as equipment to rent or buy, like pillows, blankets, magazines or earplugs. Since intoxicated passengers disturb some customers, a recommendation of alcohol prohibition in the buses was requested to preserve quiescence. To end, the general cleanness in the buses including needed equipment like rubbish is expected.

The **bus processes** mostly revolves around luggage. Customers claimed they needed support with their luggage especially during the storage process. An organized process is desired to prevent chaos. A big concern is luggage safety. 68 respondents of the study claimed they are worried that their luggage could disappear at any bus stop.

Lastly, several **other** non-touchpoint related recommendations were given. Long pauses during bus changes and breaks led to a better journey and management of the pause. Returning to recommendations of the booking process, an overview including breaks as well as an offer of alternative routes with less changes and fewer stops was requested. The customer service could be optimized through friendliness, accessibility channels and rapidity of responses. Some customers stated that the customer service via Facebook is satisfying; however, the response-time to respond to a customer via email was seen as excessively long. The lost and found process needs to be optimized. Some respondents did not know whom to contact with a specific question and if they reached someone the information they received was unsatisfactory. Customers requested some sort of loyalty program. 27 requests claimed discounts for returning customers. A mileage program – similar to airlines – or a points system like payback should be introduced. Last of all, it was mentioned that FlixBus should not exploit their monopoly and improve the working conditions of the drivers. The aspect of sustainability is an important fact for FlixBus customers.

**Social demographical evaluation.** This last segment of non-hypotheses related results compares means of social demographics (gender, age and education) with the evaluation of the touchpoint satisfaction, brand experience qualities, brand love, brand trust, brand loyalty as well as brand identification. Figure 49 shows how females and males differently evaluated the concepts.

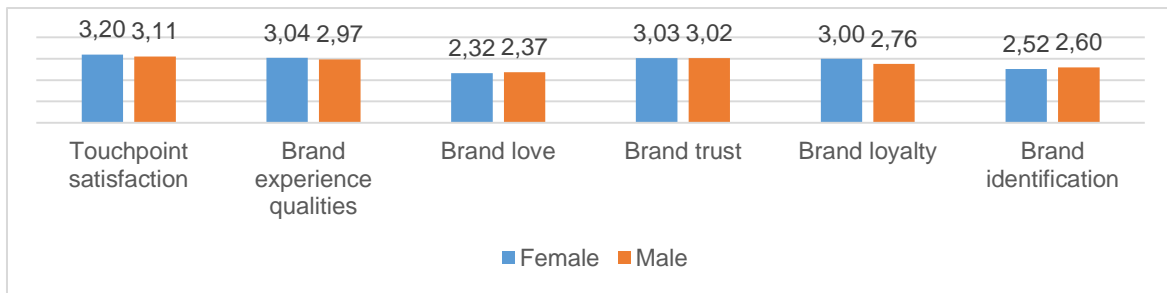


Figure 49. Mean comparison by gender

The only remarkable differences were that males tended to perceive more brand love whereas females were rather satisfied with brand experiences. They were further indicated to be more loyal, however, men were more able to identify themselves with the brand. As next, Figure 50 shows how the different age groups rated the discussed concepts.

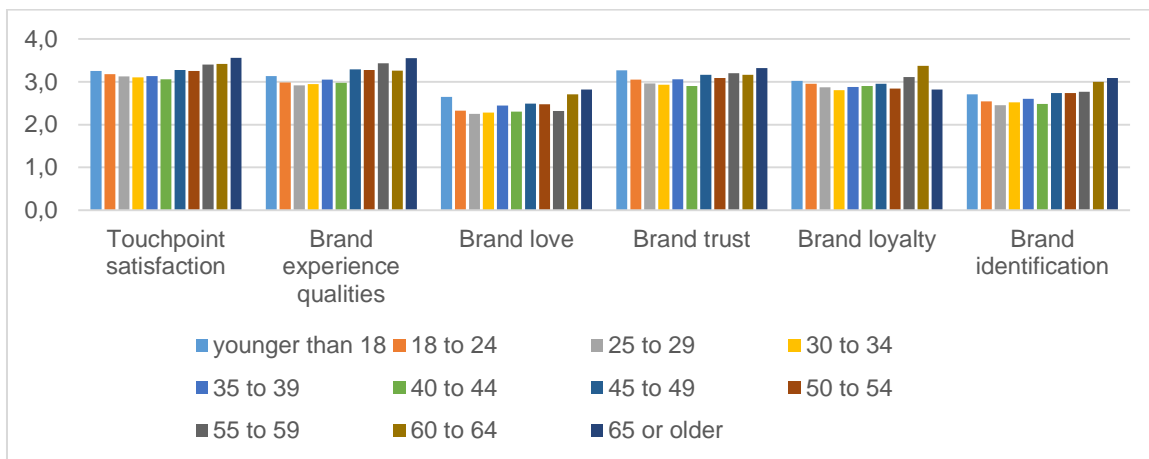


Figure 50. Mean comparison by age

It can be stated that the younger (younger than 18) and the older (55 and older) better rated most of the concepts. However, brand identification as well as brand love performed badly. The last social demographical mean comparison evaluated how the education influenced the rating of the concepts as visible in Figure 51.

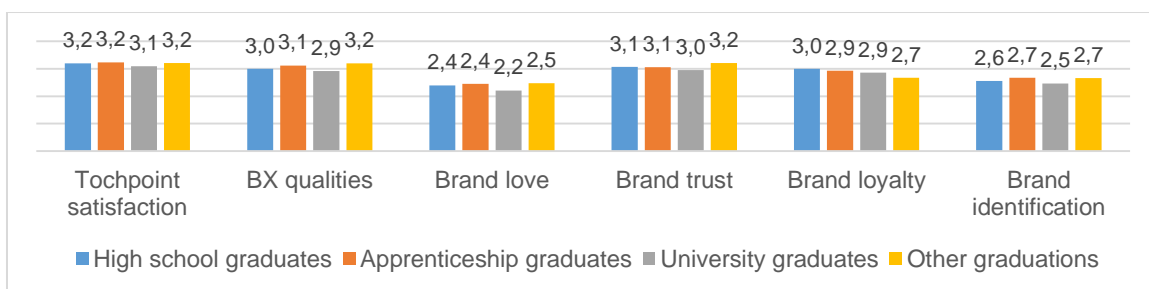


Figure 51. Mean comparison by education

It turned out that university graduates rated all concepts worse than high school and apprenticeship graduates. In addition, the evaluation of FlixBus employees was compared to non-employees. As a result, FlixBus employees perceived more love towards the brand (2.46 vs. 2.35) and they were better able to identify themselves with the brand (3.07 vs. 2.55). Customers again were more satisfied with the touchpoints (3.18 vs. 2.85) as well as the brand experience qualities (3.03 vs. 2.69). Non-employees trusted the brand more than employees (3.04 vs. 2.86) and were more loyal (2.92 vs. 2.87). After analyzing all hypotheses as well as non-hypotheses related results in detail, the chapter 5.6 focuses on summarizing all results.

## 5.6 Overview of the study results

Overall, the concepts of satisfaction and brand trust were identified as connecting links between the concepts brand experience and brand love. Moreover, the two concepts brand experience and brand love directly influenced each other. As opposed to literature, the outcome of brand loyalty on both concepts, brand experience and brand love were identified as very low and in some cases even negative. Hence, except for the hypotheses concerning brand loyalty, all other hypotheses were verified based on previous studies. When looking at Figure 52, it is clear that except of brand loyalty (brand experience (BX) on brand loyalty (BLY) and (BLY on brand love (BL)); all hypotheses were verified at high regression coefficients.

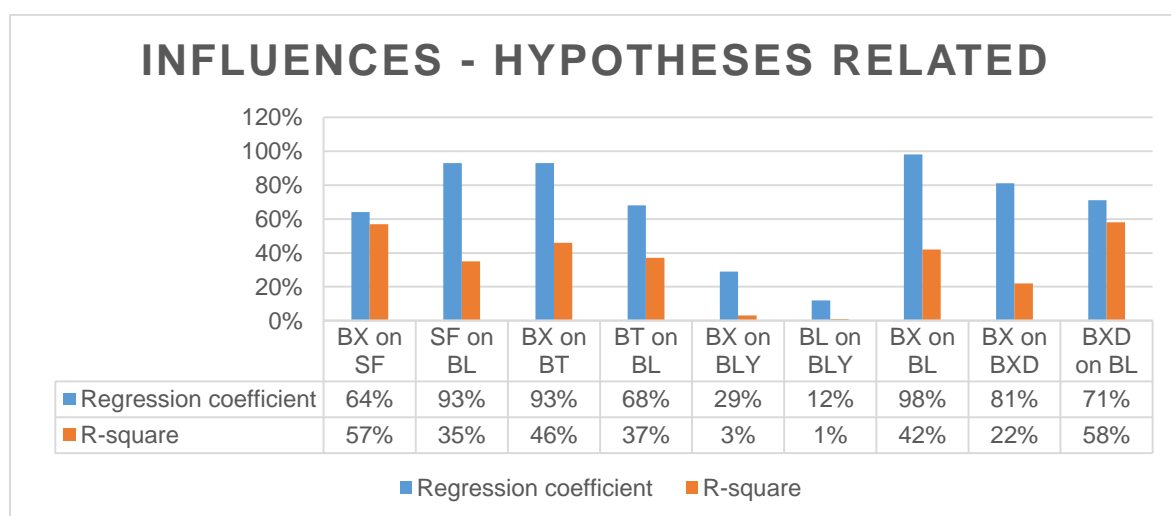


Figure 52. Regression coefficient overview according to hypotheses

Exceptionally significant was the influence of satisfaction (SF) on brand love (BL), brand experience (BX) on brand trust (BT) as well as brand experience on brand love. In those cases, the influenced factor increased by more than 93 % when the influencing factor increases by one. Overall, every hypothesis was verified. Hence, satisfaction and brand trust were influenced by brand experience and they influence brand love. In addition, the direct impact of brand experience on brand love is justified by an influence of 98 % (regression coefficient). The effect of brand experience and brand love on brand loyalty however was much lower than expected. Nevertheless, to see which brand experience items in detail had greatest impact on the outcomes of satisfaction, brand trust, brand love and brand loyalty is described in Figure 53. The graph shows the influences of brand experience qualities on the resulting concepts of satisfaction, brand trust, brand loyalty and brand love.

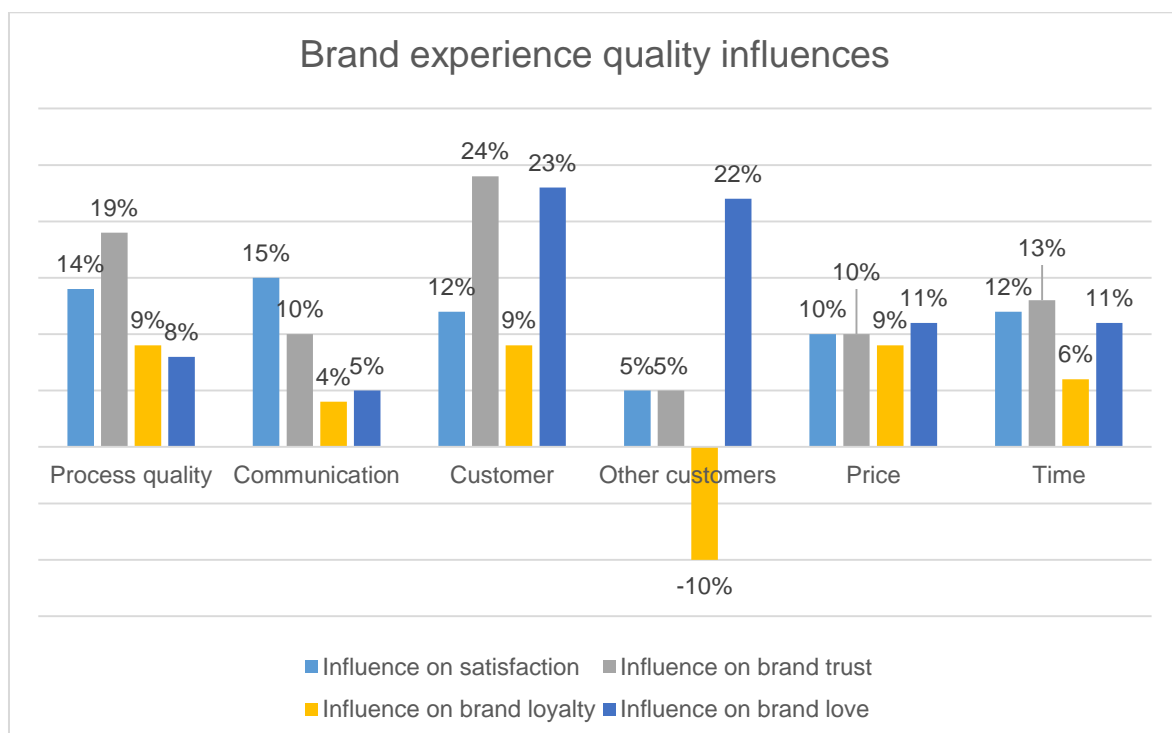


Figure 53. Brand experience quality influences on related concepts

As a result, satisfaction was mostly influenced by the quality of the communication as well as the quality of the processes. Hence, the better their quality is, the more satisfied consumers become. The effect of the relationship among customers had the least influence on brand satisfaction. Tailored recommendations on how to use the segmented influences for brand development are given in chapter 6.2. In addition, brand trust was mostly affected by the relationship the company has to its customers as well as by process quality. Hence, if the relationship to the customers improve the trust regarding

the company improves too. Furthermore, the efficiency of the qualities involved in the service led to increased trust towards the brand. Surprisingly, the items of the relationships customers have towards other customers had the lowest influence. The support of a brand community on part of the company had no influence on brand trust. In case of brand loyalty it had a negative impact of  $-10\%$ . If the relationships among customers improves by one, brand loyalty decreases by  $-10\%$ . In this sense, the quality of the processes, the relationship to the individual customer as well as the price management had on average  $9\%$  influence on brand loyalty. With this percentage, their influence was the highest on brand loyalty. In general, the percentage of the influences was relatively low. Looking at the influence of brand experience quality items on brand love, the interpersonal relations played a significant role. The more customers are supported and the stronger the brand community is maintained the more emotional attachment customers have towards the brand. Overall, especially the quality of the processes, the relationship to the customers as well as the relationship customers have among each other were the concepts with the biggest influence. Figure 54 shows touchpoints that need to be improved to enhance subsequent concepts like brand trust, brand loyalty or brand love.

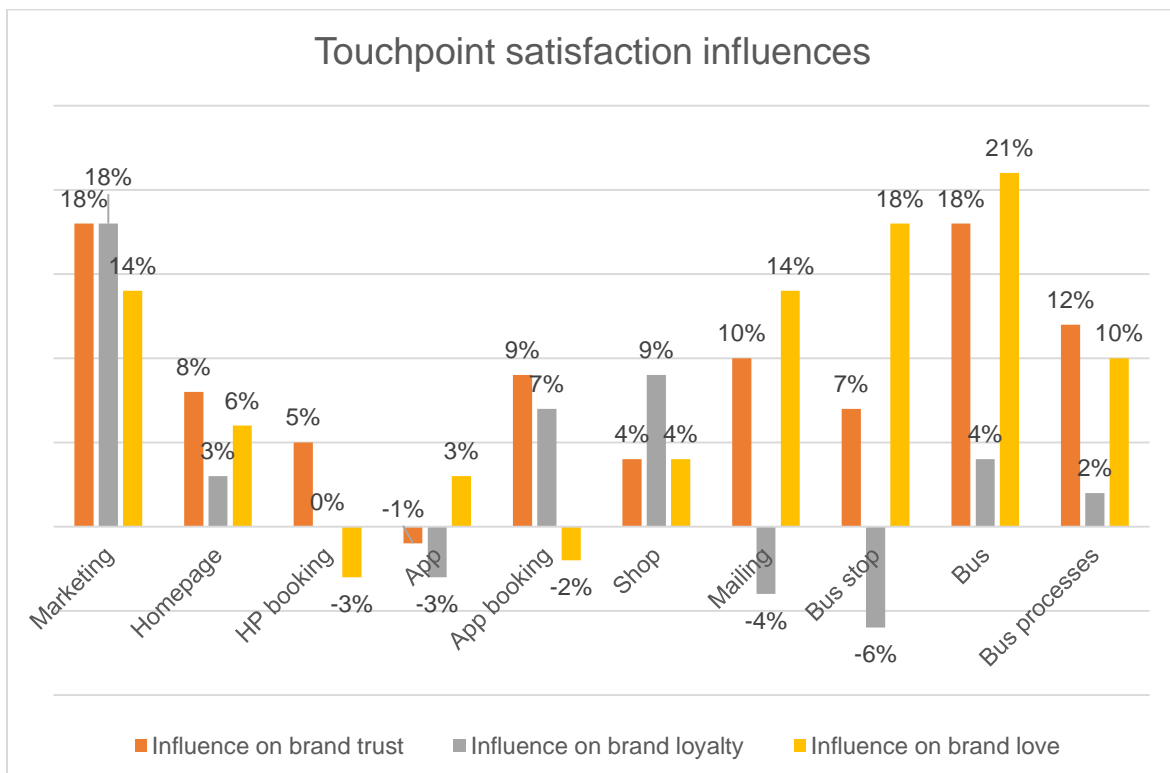


Figure 54. Touchpoint satisfaction influences on related concepts

First, brand trust was the most influenced concept by the touchpoints marketing and bus. The more satisfying the marketing materials and the ride service itself is designed, the more customers trust the brand. Marketing and the actual service of a brand were the main touchpoints to deliver the brand promise and to convince customers that FlixBus is a reliable partner. Brand loyalty was mostly influenced by marketing. The more reliable and honest marketing is communicated as well as the more memories, pleasure and delight customers feel towards the brand, the more loyal they become. As stated, the rest had surprisingly low influence on brand loyalty. The touchpoints app, mailing and bus stop were negatively influenced. By implication, this indicates that the more they improve, the worst brand loyalty becomes. Still, especially in case of the bus stop and the bus, brand love was positively influenced. If they improve, brand love improves. However, the booking processes of the homepage and the app negatively influenced brand love. Hence, if they improve, emotional attachment towards the brand decreases. Overall, the touchpoints mailing, bus stop and bus had the highest influences on subsequent concepts.

Concerning the non-hypotheses related results, the image of FlixBus was coherently perceived along all touchpoints. Moreover, the touchpoint satisfaction had an influence on the perception of the image coherency. Next, brand identification as an essential precondition of brand love can be improved by FlixBus. It needs to be analyzed if the relatively low brand identification is related to the brand itself or if customers do not identify themselves with bus transporting industry. According to the relationship forms, a higher degree of respondents stated that they depend on the brand. The monopoly position of FlixBus in the German market could be one of the main drivers of this result. This may have an influence on the lower brand or industry identification as well as the perception of a dependent relationship form. Nevertheless, the highest degree of participants of the study saw the brand FlixBus as a friend with a casual use of the brand. To become a love brand, respondents named different essential characteristics a brand needs to provide. Most often mentioned were reliability, quality, trust and friendliness. Those can be reached by improving the process quality and improved relationship to the customer at the bus stop and during the ride. Further improvement fields of FlixBus are visible in Figure 55.



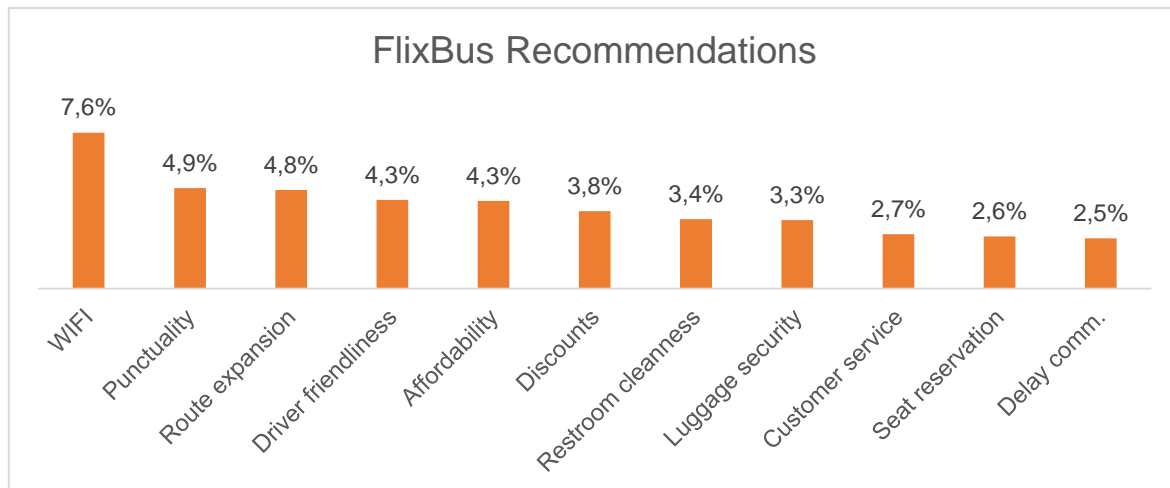


Figure 55. FlixBus recommendations evaluation - quantitative analysis

Above results were quantitatively measured; the qualitative analysis along the touch-points can be found in section 5.5. All areas mentioned in the figure showed room for improvement. The WIFI should reliably work in all busses with high data volume, the punctuality of the rides need to be improved regarding minimization of waiting periods and optimization of the route selection. Since punctuality often times is not controllable because of traffic jams the communication management of delays should be improved. A tracker inside the bus, to see where the bus is located was an often mentioned recommendation. During the rides as well as processes related to the ride, before and after, should be optimized by better driver friendliness. The drivers need to have enhanced communication skills and improved interpersonal behavior. Customers further requested more discounts for students, groups, families and disabled. And discounts should be better accessible. During the ride, the tidiness of the restrooms, the luggage process and the security of the luggage were all topics. With regard to seat management, it should be possible to reserve seats during the booking processes. The customer service friendliness and response times could be improved. Similar results were already seen in one of FlixBus' previous studies, described in 2.4. Tailored recommendations with regard to the empirical data are delivered in 6.2.

## 6 Conclusions

The underlying study examined the correlation of brand experience and brand love using the example of FlixBus, a mobility brand that originated in Germany. The young company already has expanded around Europe offering their transportation services. After several internal brand-related analyses, the company developed improvement potential in the areas of brand experience and brand love. The topic of the study was derived to evaluate how the status quo of brand experience and brand love is and how the two concepts depend on each other. According to literature (cf. 3.3), different concepts were identified as connecting links between brand experience and brand love. In an online survey of 2,481 participants, the correlation between brand experience and brand love was evaluated. The current last chapter contains three parts. First, a review of the entire study including the theoretical background, the research design as well as an overview of the calculated results is given. Second, custom-tailored recommendations for FlixBus are concluded from the study. Last of all, a limitation of the study is given as well as an outlook for future studies is presented.

### 6.1 Summary of the study

The underlying study aimed to give an answer to the question: “Which brand experience items have the greatest effect on brand love?” The study used the example of the mobility brand FlixBus that operates since 2013. With a transportation volume of over 60 million passengers since start, with more than 1,000 sub-contractor busses in use they reach a high scalability. The current company vision is to grow further, to increase profitability, to enhance excellence and to improve customer satisfaction by pursuing the following brand promise: ‘travel is the only thing you buy that makes you richer’. The five pillars of FlixBus are: be open minded, surprising, confident, curious and human. The current study focused on improving customer happiness by examining how customers experience the brand and why they feel love towards FlixBus and further through which items they correlate. Brand experience is a strategic marketing tool that is designed to deliver meaningful experiences for customers through every brand-related stimulus. It aims to trigger positive responses in sensorial, emotional, behav-

ioral, cognitive and/or other forms. Desirable outcomes of brand experience are satisfaction with touchpoints along the customer journey, brand trust and – as a long-term goal – to establish a loyal group of customers. Brand love is the passionate emotional attachment satisfied customers may perceive towards a brand. The involvement of positive emotions and a high level of feelings lead to repeated occurrence to a consumer-object relationship that involves the feeling of love towards a brand. Brand love is a direct result of satisfaction, brand trust, brand experience and several brand experience dimensions. The desired outcome of brand love is, same as in the case of brand experience, the establishment of brand loyalty. In this sense, seven hypotheses were derived; two named satisfaction as connecting link, two included brand trust as connecting link, one showed the direct influence of brand experience on brand love and finally two hypotheses presented brand loyalty as joint concept of brand experience and brand love. The connecting links were assumed to be consequences of brand experience and antecedents of brand love. The related survey included eight questions related to the seven hypotheses, plus six extra questions, which were concerned with recommendations for FlixBus. In total, 2,481 people participated in the study, 91 % were FlixBus fans, who participated in a raffle on the FlixBus Facebook page, 3 % were FlixBus employees and the rest originated of the author's private network (6 %).

**Résumé.** In conclusion, all seven hypotheses were verified. Regarding the brand experience touchpoints, especially the ride related touchpoints like mailings, bus stop, bus ride and bus processes (and in some cases marketing) had the greatest effects on concepts in all the tested hypotheses. Concerning the brand experience quality items, most often the relationship to the individual customer as well as the relationship among customers have greater effect on emotional related items. As a result, satisfaction and brand trust were identified as connecting link between brand experience and brand love with influences of above 64 % regression coefficient. The only surprising result of the study was that brand loyalty hardly ever depend on brand experience (29 %). Moreover, brand loyalty was influenced by brand love with only 12 %, which is comparably low. Based on according literature in 3.3, brand loyalty should have been much more dependent on brand experience and brand love than examined in the underlying study. In total, it is shown that brand experience was relatively positively ranked, with an overall mean of 3 on a scale of 0 to 4 (whereof 0 is the worst and 4 is the best). Brand love on the other hand, was only ranked with a mean of 2, which

indicates there is room for improvement. According to the high dependency degree of brand love on brand experience (98%), it is recommended to further focus on touch-point satisfaction and brand experience quality to improve brand love.

**Discussion.** The discussion part examines the received outcomes of the study with reference to past studies that evaluated satisfaction and brand trust as connecting concepts, the effect of brand experience (dimensions) on brand love as well as brand loyalty as joint concept. Related literature is available in 3.3. Satisfaction was a repeated outcome of brand experience, customer experience or retailer experience. In all reviewed literature, satisfaction was evaluated as a direct outcome of experiences. The same holds true for satisfaction as direct antecedent of brand love (cf. Thomson et al. 2005; Sarkar 2011). As a result, the existence of satisfaction as consequence of brand experience and antecedent of brand love was found in related literature and proven in the underlying study. Also the concept of brand trust was identified as connecting link between the two concepts. Hong-You and Perks (2005), Huaman-Ramirez (2015) as well as Rohra and Sharma (2016) assessed brand trust as direct outcome of brand experience. Moreover, Hee Jung and Myung Soo (2012) determined affective and behavioral experience as precondition for brand trust. Albert et al. (2010), Albert and Merunka (2013) as well as Karjaluoto et al. (2016) stated that brand trust is a direct precondition for brand love related concepts like brand passion. This was confirmed in the underlying study. Satisfaction and brand trust were identified as connecting links between brand experience and brand love in literature, the same as in this paper. Brand experience (dimensions) was identified as precondition of brand love related concepts, same as brand love related concepts were mentioned as consequence of brand experience (dimensions). According to the former, brand experience was also identified as precondition for brand attachment (cf. Japutra et al. 2014) as well as antecedent of romantic brand love (cf. Sarkar 2011). Furthermore, the brand experience dimensions sensory and intellectual (cf. Rohra & Sharma 2016), affective (cf. Sarkar et al. 2012) as well as surrealistic and nostalgic brand experience (cf. Sarkar 2014) were analyzed as preconditions for brand love. The direct influence of brand experience on brand love was assessed in the underlying study. According to the brand experience dimensions, all had an influence on brand love; strongest influence has senses (sensory), then emotions (affective), next thoughts (intellectual) and last of all behavior. The results of this study are in line with previous researches, except the

influence of behavioral brand experience, which has been added to this study. Brand love related concepts, like aroused feelings (cf. Grace & O’Cass 2004), affective commitment (cf. Iglesias et al. 2011), hedonic emotions (cf. Ding & Tseng 2015), brand attachment (cf. Huaman-Ramirez 2015), emotional outcomes (cf. Hwang & Seo 2016) as well as brand passion (cf. Rohra & Sharma 2016) were identified as consequences of brand experience (dimensions). Same direct influence of brand experience on brand love was found in this study. The last hypotheses that brand experience and brand love had an influence on brand loyalty was verified but on a much lower level than expected from literature, seeable in 3.3. In previous studies brand loyalty was often not directly affected by brand experience, however, indirectly through satisfaction and brand trust. According to the analyses, this statement can be verified, however on lower levels than expected. In summary, all hypotheses derived from literature have been verified. After reviewing the study, the next chapter delivers tailored recommendations for the FlixBus brand development.

## 6.2 Recommendations for brand development

After reviewing the theory as well as the empirical findings of the study, it will be interesting to see where FlixBus can start to enhance their brand. At first, when comparing the average means of the tested concepts – as visible in Figure 56 – it becomes apparent that brand identification (BI) and brand love (BL) are rated lowest.

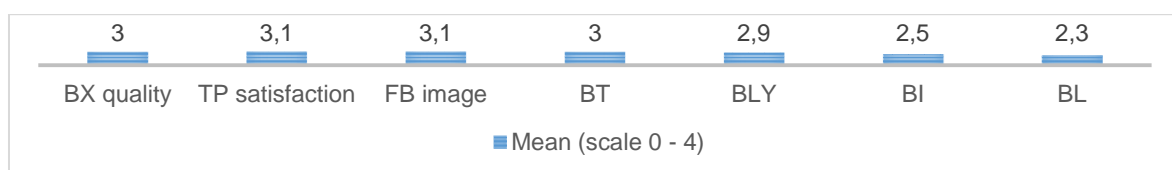


Figure 56. Mean comparison

The first recommendation is to start improving brand identification as precondition of brand love. Furthermore, brand loyalty (2.9) should be improved. As brand loyalty depends on all other concepts FlixBus should pick the tools that are easiest to improve which are the design of the brand experience, the brand experience quality and the touchpoint satisfaction. As seen in the mean comparisons of the respective items, it becomes apparent that the brand experience quality items of the relationship to the individual customer, as well as the relationship among customers were the lowest rated

items. Furthermore, the touchpoints bus stop and bus processes need improvement. An overview of the highest brand experience quality influences on touchpoint satisfaction is visible in Table 9.

Table 9. Highest influences of brand experience qualities on touchpoint satisfaction items

Highest influences	Marketing	HP, App, Shop	Mailing	Bus stop	Bus	Bus processes
Process quality	X	X				
Communication	X	X	X	X	X	X
Customer				X		X
Other customers				X		
Price	X					
Time	X		X		X	X

The satisfaction with marketing can be improved for example by better customer service and increased friendliness (process quality), by a more clear, transparent and honest communication style (communication), by offering more discounts for students etc. (price) or delivering a more reliable time management. The homepage, app, shop and their booking processes can be enhanced for example by adding more flexibility to the booking process and journey management. Listed price alternatives inside a specific departure or arrival period could be added to the process, orienting oneself towards the example of airlines. Moreover, communication style on the homepage, app and shop can be conscripted in a more emotional way. The touchpoint mailing can be improved by transmitting more transparency in the communication style as well as a better overview of time structure regarding the upcoming journey. Communication-wise the bus stop can be improved by delivering better signage, offering more (customer) services during the waiting hours, as well as organizing car sharing to get to the bus stop as well as offering meeting points (other customers). In the bus, the friendliness of the driver can be enhanced (communication) as well as including a bus tracker, which shows where the bus actually is located to optimize delay communication (time). The bus processes should entail a more clear communication as well as a better organization of the processes to reduce waiting time (time). Furthermore, customer relationships can be improved by offering more support with the luggage. Items to be optimized are the journey management and delay management. Additionally, better signage at the bus stops (e.g. at the gates, display listing departures), better access to the bus stops as well as further equipment to rent during the ride, e.g. blankets or pillows, can be added to improve services. A loyalty program is a desired program for repeated

FlixBus customers. An activity that should be stopped is teaser marketing, since people want to receive clear and honest communication. Performance marketing activities can be changed to brand marketing advertisement. Other actions like the luggage security and special offers should be continued.

### 6.3 Limitations of the study

In conclusion, the seven hypotheses were verified, as well as answers to the question: “Which brand experience items have the greatest effect on brand love?” were given. For the practice, empirical results were transformed into tailored recommendations for brand development of the brand FlixBus. Critics of the study are mentioned in the first part. Followed by an outlook for future studies, how the topic can be expanded and which fields can be additionally researched.

**Critics.** According to comments on Facebook on the raffle post, it was mentioned “the questionnaire is too long”. Other stated “some questions are absurd so it is hard to answer them positively” or “the survey used unclear terms, which are hard to be interpreted by a non-professional. This might have influenced the results”.

In the beginning of the study, an interview phase was set prior to the e-questionnaire. In total 23 people were interviewed on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> July 2017. The goal of the interviews was to shorten a list of 62 touchpoints according usage and relevance for the customers on a scale from 0 to 4, visible in Appendix 31. The interview evaluation was not integrated in the study due to an insufficient number of participants. However, since the shortlist of touchpoints should be further evaluated in the survey, they were too detailed in order to get an overview of the touchpoint satisfaction respectively the time management of the survey. To increase the satisfaction with the detailed list of 62 touchpoints, another evaluation should be provided by FlixBus. The clue is to identify unknown touchpoints that may influence both, brand experience and hence brand love.

Another important aspect to consider for future studies is the brand love related terminology used during the survey. People struggled to correctly interpret a love brand. The love brand-related items were difficult to understand. The projection of human

sentiments on objects like brands proved difficult. Thus, it is advisable either to paraphrase brand-related questions including items, or to save the questions for face-to-face interviews where instant clarification can be provided.

Since the factor brand identification had such a high influence on brand love (71 %) and has been evaluated with a mean of 2.5 (on a scale from 0 to 4), additional studies may more specifically query how FlixBus customers identify themselves with the industry, the marketplace, the company and the brand to generate a clearer picture which of them involves the driver, who had a relatively low mean. Furthermore, improvement possibilities should include the reasons for the (none) brand identification.

Regarding the participants of the study it should be mentioned that most respondents were not only FlixBus users, but also positive about the company. To perceive an objective assessment of the emotions and feelings of love towards the brand, the target group should include less pro-active customers to generate a larger picture of the brand perception and assessment. The age structure of the participants included only a few older respondents, which limits the results to an age group primarily between the ages of 20 to 30.

**Outlook.** The underlying study generated an insight in correlation (items) between brand experience and brand love for the mobility brand FlixBus. According to critics of the study and respondent feedback, the research field may be expanded by future studies.

Additional study proposals:

1. Brand experience touchpoint deepening/enlargement
2. Brand experience benchmark comparison
3. Brand community study
4. Brand loyalty dependency factor analysis
5. Industry identification study
6. Qualitative brand love evaluation

First, as stated in the critics, the brand experience perception may be analyzed along a greater field of touchpoints in the customer journey. Furthermore, the identified touchpoints as primary driver for brand love and related concepts can be deepened to identify specific areas of improvement. Second, it would be interesting to know how the



brand experience of other mobility brands is assessed to create a benchmark study of this industry. Third, since the factor relationships customer have with other customers had great influence on consequent concepts, a qualitative study may be conducted to get a feeling on how customers want to get involved with other customers and which aspects are influencing the existence of a brand community. Moreover, the aspect of a brand community is a repeatedly named precondition of brand love. Fourth, since brand loyalty influence did not perform as forecasted, it would be interesting to know which FlixBus related factors are driving brand loyalty. Fifth, the identification with the brand was developed as essential antecedent of brand love. In this sense, it is interesting to further evaluate the identification with the industry. Finally, since the study revealed a quantitative analysis of brand love characteristics and FlixBus recommendations, it would be interesting to know how a qualitative analysis of FlixBus recommendations, with regard to brand love would look like. In a word, the underlying study generated a solid basis for the actual brand experience and brand love status of FlixBus and shows which factors have significant influence on the changeability of other concepts. Nevertheless, there is still space for additional studies.

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## APPENDICES

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Appendix 25. Correlations of brand experience items and brand experience dimensions

Appendix 26. Correlations of brand experience dimensions and brand love items

Appendix 27. Correlations of brand experience items and brand loyalty

Appendix 28. Correlations of brand love items and brand loyalty

Appendix 29. Mean comparison of brand experience qualities and relationship forms

Appendix 30. Mean comparison of touchpoints and relationship forms

Appendix 31. Touchpoint evaluation

## Appendix 1. Brand experience dimensions

Dimension	Item terminologies	Authors
Sensorial	Aesthetic	Pine & Gilmore 1999
	Sense	Schmitt 1999
	Sensorial-perceptual	Fornierino et al. 2006
	Sensory	Gentile et al. 2007; Brakus et al. 2009
	Emotional	Pine & Gilmore 1998; Holt 1995; Carù & Cova 2003; Dubé & LeBel 2003; Mascarenhas et al. 2006; Gentile et al. 2007; Wall & Envick 2008; Verhoef et al. 2009
Affective	Affective	Dubé & LeBel 2003; Fornierino et al. 2006; Verhoef et al. 2009; Brakus et al. 2009; Rose et al. 2010; Bapat & Thanigan 2016
	Feel	Schmitt 1999
	Hedonic consumption	Holbrook & Hirschman 1982
	Cognitive	Holt 1995; Mascarenhas et al. 2006; Gentile et al. 2007; Wall & Envick 2008; Verhoef et al. 2009; Rose et al. 2010; Bapat & Thanigan 2016
Cognitive	Intellectual	Gentile et al. 2007; Brakus et al. 2009
	Educational	Pine & Gilmore 1999
	Think	Schmitt 1999
	Mental	Carù & Cova 2003; Fodor 1998
	Informational	Tynan & McKenchie 2009
	Behavioral	Mascarenhas et al. 2006; Brakus et al. 2009
Behavioral	Physical	Pine & Gilmore 1998; Carù & Cova 2003; Dubé & LeBel 2003; Verhoef et al. 2009
	Physical-behavioral	Fornierino et al. 2006
	Act	Schmitt 1999; Nahrstedt et al. 2004
	Pragmatic	Gentile et al. 2007
	Functional / utilitarian	Tynan & McKenchie 2009
	Social	Carù & Cova 2003; Dubé & LeBel 2003; Mascarenhas et al. 2006; Fornierino et al. 2006; Verhoef et al. 2009
Personal	Relational	Gentile et al. 2007
	Relate	Schmitt 1999
	Lifestyle	Gentile et al. 2007
	Entertaining	Pine & Gilmore 1999
	Spiritual	Pine & Gilmore 1998; Carù & Cova 2003
	Escapist	Pine & Gilmore 1999
Other	Subjective	Mascarenhas et al. 2006
	Objective	Mascarenhas et al. 2006
	Novelty	Tynan & McKenchie 2009
	Utopian	Tynan & McKenchie 2009

## Appendix 2. Brand experience antecedents and consequences

Author	BX Antecedents	BX Consequences
Akesson & Edvardsson 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being inspired</li> <li>• Obtaining information</li> <li>• Accessing or evaluating alternatives</li> <li>• Reliable use</li> <li>• Convenient</li> <li>• Self-controlling</li> <li>• Service orientation</li> <li>• Problem-solving activity</li> <li>• Accessibility and availability</li> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Perceived capacity</li> <li>• Ease of use</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> </ul>	
Bapat & Thanigan 2016		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand loyalty</li> </ul>
Baser et al. 2015		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer satisfaction</li> <li>• Brand trust</li> <li>• Brand loyalty</li> </ul>
Berry et al. 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functional clues</li> <li>• Emotional clues</li> </ul>	
Brakus et al. 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand personality</li> <li>• Satisfaction</li> <li>• Loyalty</li> <li>• Dimensional responses</li> </ul>
Ding & Tseng 2015		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived quality</li> <li>• Brand awareness/association</li> <li>• Hedonic emotions → brand loyalty</li> </ul>
Grace & O’Cass 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service scape</li> <li>• Core services</li> <li>• Employee service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfaction</li> <li>• Brand attitude</li> <li>• Aroused feelings</li> </ul>
Hsieh & Yuan 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer expectations</li> </ul>	
Huaman-Ramirez 2015		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand attachment</li> <li>• Brand trust</li> </ul>
Hwang & Seo 2016	<p>Internal factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socio-demographics</li> <li>• Past/cumulative experience</li> <li>• Familiarity</li> <li>• Customer engagement</li> </ul> <p>External factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service/product quality</li> <li>• Physical characteristics</li> <li>• Social/online environment</li> <li>• Employee characteristics</li> <li>• Economic factors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional outcomes</li> <li>• Behavioral outcomes</li> <li>• Brand-related outcomes</li> <li>• Others</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-service technologies</li> </ul>	
Iglesias et al. 2011		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affective commitment</li> <li>• Brand loyalty</li> </ul>
Ismail 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertising</li> <li>• Price</li> <li>• Employees</li> <li>• Servicescape</li> <li>• Core service</li> <li>• Word-of-mouth</li> <li>• Mood</li> <li>• Perceived service quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand loyalty</li> </ul>
Khan et al. 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate visual identity</li> <li>• Emotional experience</li> <li>• Functionality</li> <li>• Lifestyle</li> <li>• Corporate self-identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand satisfaction</li> <li>• Brand loyalty</li> </ul>
Klaus & Maklan 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Product experience (freedom of choice, cross-product comparison, comparison necessity, account management)</li> <li>• Outcome focus (result focus, past experience, common grounding)</li> <li>• Moments-of-truth (flexibility, pro-activity, risk perception, interpersonal skills, service recovery)</li> <li>• Peace-of-mind (expertise, process ease, relationship/ transaction, familiarity, independent advice)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loyalty intentions</li> <li>• Customer satisfaction</li> <li>• Word-of-mouth behavior</li> </ul>
Rohra & Sharma 2016		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand trust</li> <li>• Brand passion → loyalty → Attitude towards participation</li> </ul>
Rose et al. 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information processing</li> <li>• Perceived ease-of-use</li> <li>• Perceived usefulness</li> <li>• Perceived benefits</li> <li>• Perceived control</li> <li>• Skill</li> <li>• Trust propensity</li> <li>• Perceived risk</li> <li>• Enjoyment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer satisfaction</li> <li>• Re-purchase intention</li> </ul>
Stuart-Menteth et al. 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrity</li> <li>• Meaningfulness</li> <li>• Relevance</li> <li>• Tribal validation</li> <li>• Customization</li> <li>• Excellence in expectation participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand attitude</li> <li>• Purchase intentions</li> <li>• Propensity to recommend</li> </ul>
Verhoef et al. 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social environment</li> <li>• Service</li> <li>• Retail atmosphere</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assortment</li> <li>• Price</li> <li>• Customer experience in alternative channels</li> <li>• Retail brand</li> </ul>	
Wall & Envick 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functional clues</li> <li>• Mechanic clues</li> <li>• Humanic clues</li> </ul>	
Wikström 2008	<p>Consumer variables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal interest</li> <li>• Involvement</li> <li>• Own activity</li> <li>• Social bonding</li> <li>• Excitement</li> <li>• Novelty</li> </ul> <p>Firm variables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goods &amp; services</li> <li>• The setting including scripts and peer-consumers</li> </ul>	

## Appendix 3. FlixBus customer journey

Customer Journey	Research & Planning	Shopping	Booking	Post-Booking & Pre-Travel	Travel	Post-Travel
Activities	Decisions about questions such as where, when and how to travel.	Customer considers bus as transportation medium. Ends with decision for a specific ride.	Customer has decided for a specific ride. Ends with successful purchase of that ride.	Customer obtained ticket for a ride. Ends with approaching of bus at station	Starts with check-in at bus and ends with leaving the bus, including luggage	Customer has left the bus and travels to final destination/ further post-travel activities
Customer goal	Get all necessary information about the trip	Find the best option regarding all factors of influence	Book and receive ticket for preferred trip, time, price	Get conveniently to the right station and the right bus on time	Experience a decent and well-planned trip with no issues or upcoming problems	Reach the final destination. experience a decent stay
Customer activity	Holistic planning of the trip and all factors of influence	Compare different options. Search for all important information, Check own resources	Fulfill needed actions within the booking process, Select payment methods, vouchers and other activities	General preparation for the trip, take journey to the bus, wait for and eventually enter the bus	Boarding procedures, experience different amenities during the ride	Plan further activities and transportation, engage with FlixBus, write reviews/evaluations
Touchpoints	Internet-offers, FlixBus-platforms, Family & Friends	FlixBus-platforms, Family & Friends, Travel agency, advertisement	FlixBus-platforms, ZOB-Shops, Travel agencies, Customer Service	FlixBus-platforms and –services, Staff and Service at the bus stop	Social Media channel, brand & product	FlixBus-platforms, FlixBus Mail-Service, Staff at the station/shop, Internet-services

## Appendix 4. Brand love antecedents and consequences

Author	Topic	BL Antecedents	BL Consequences
Albert et al. 2009	Emotional attachment	<p>Affection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affectionate</li> <li>• Loved</li> <li>• Peaceful</li> <li>• Friendly</li> </ul> <p>Connection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attached</li> <li>• Bonded</li> <li>• Connected</li> </ul> <p>Passion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passionate</li> <li>• Delighted</li> <li>• Captivated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loyalty</li> <li>• Positive word-of-mouth</li> <li>• Trust</li> </ul>
Albert & Merunka 2013	Brand love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand global identification</li> <li>• Brand trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand commitment</li> <li>• Word-of-mouth</li> <li>• Willingness to pay a premium</li> </ul>
Batra et al. 2012	Brand love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality</li> <li>• Linkages to strongly held values</li> <li>• Beliefs that the brand provided intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards</li> <li>• Use of the loved brand to express both current and desired self-identity</li> <li>• Positive affect</li> <li>• A sense of rightness and a feeling of passion</li> <li>• An emotional bond</li> <li>• Investments of time &amp; money</li> <li>• Frequent thought and use</li> <li>• Length of use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passion-driven behaviors (passionate desire to use. willingness to invest resources. things done in past (involvement)</li> <li>• Self-brand integrity (desired &amp; current self-identity. life meaning. frequent thoughts)</li> <li>• Positive emotional connection (intuitive fit. emotional attachment. positive affect)</li> <li>• Long-term relationship</li> <li>• Anticipated separation distress</li> <li>• Overall attitude valence</li> <li>• Certainty/confidence</li> </ul>
Bauer et al. 2007	Brand passion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand uniqueness</li> <li>• Self-expressive brand</li> <li>• Prestige of the brand</li> <li>• Hedonic brand</li> <li>• Consumers' extraversion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Price premium</li> <li>• Positive word-of-mouth</li> <li>• Purchase intention</li> </ul>
Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen 2010	Brand love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of community → brand identification</li> <li>• Brand identification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand loyalty</li> <li>• Active engagement</li> </ul>
Carroll & Ahuvia 2006	Brand love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hedonic product</li> <li>• Self-expressive brand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand loyalty</li> <li>• Word-of-mouth</li> </ul>



Japutra et al. 2014	Brand attachment (emotions, self-connection, importance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-congruity</li> <li>• Experience</li> <li>• Responsiveness</li> <li>• Quality</li> <li>• Reputation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intention to recommend, purchase and revisit</li> <li>• Resilience to negative information</li> <li>• Act of defending</li> </ul>
Karjaluoto et al. 2016	Brand love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-expressive</li> <li>• Brand trust</li> <li>• Hedonic product</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Word-of-mouth → Influenced by moderators (experience &amp; price)</li> </ul>
Kaufmann et al. 2016	Brand love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self expressiveness</li> <li>• Brand attachment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to community</li> <li>• Brand trust</li> <li>• Co-creation</li> <li>• Brand loyalty</li> </ul>
Park et al. 2010	Brand attachment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand-self connection (part of who you are, personally connected)</li> <li>• Prominence (automatic thoughts/ feeling, thoughts/ feelings come naturally)</li> <li>• Actual purchase</li> <li>• Purchase share</li> <li>• Need share</li> </ul>
Patwardhan & Balasubramanian 2011	Brand romance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand attitude</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleasure</li> <li>• Arousal</li> <li>• Dominance</li> <li>• Brand loyalty</li> </ul>
Rohra & Sharma 2016	Brand passion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensory brand experience</li> <li>• Intellectual brand experience</li> <li>• Brand admiration</li> </ul>	
Sarkar et al. 2012	Romantic brand love (brand intimacy & brand passion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affective brand experience</li> <li>• Romanticism</li> <li>• Product hedonism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase intention</li> <li>• Positive word-of-mouth</li> </ul>
Sarkar & Sreejesh 2014	Brand love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-expressiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand jealousy → purchase intention → active engagement</li> </ul>
Sarkar 2011	Romantic brand love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfaction</li> <li>• Romanticism</li> <li>• Brand experience</li> <li>• Customer delight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conative loyalty → action loyalty</li> <li>• Premium</li> <li>• Positive word-of-mouth</li> </ul>
Sarkar 2014	Brand love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surrealistic brand experiences</li> <li>• Nostalgic brand experiences</li> <li>• Product hedonism</li> <li>• Sustainable marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impulse buying</li> <li>• Active engagement</li> </ul>

Thomson et al. 2005	Emotional attachment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand attitude</li> <li>• Satisfaction</li> <li>• Involvement</li> <li>• Affection</li> <li>• Connection</li> <li>• Passion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity maintenance</li> <li>• Emotional security</li> <li>• Safe haven</li> <li>• Separation distress</li> <li>• Brand loyalty</li> <li>• Price premium</li> </ul>
Wallace et al. 2014	Brand love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-expressive brand (inner self &amp; social self)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand advocacy word-of-mouth</li> <li>• Brand Advocacy acceptance</li> </ul>

## Appendix 5. Brand love measurement scales

Study	Brand love scales
<b>Sternberg 1986</b> (interpersonal love)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Nonlove</li> <li>2. Liking</li> <li>3. Infatuated love</li> <li>4. Empty love</li> <li>5. Romantic love</li> <li>6. Companionate love</li> <li>7. Fatuous love</li> <li>8. Consummate love</li> </ol>
<b>Shimp &amp; Madden 1988</b> (consumer-object relations)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Nonliking</li> <li>2. Liking</li> <li>3. Infatuation</li> <li>4. Functionalism</li> <li>5. Inhibited desire</li> <li>6. Utilitarianism</li> <li>7. Succumbed desire</li> <li>8. Loyalty</li> </ol>
<b>Thomson et al. 2005</b> (emotional attachment to brands)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Affectionate</li> <li>2. Friendly</li> <li>3. Loved</li> <li>4. Peaceful</li> <li>5. Passionate</li> <li>6. Delighted</li> <li>7. Captivated</li> <li>8. Connected</li> <li>9. Bonded</li> <li>10. Attached</li> </ol>
<b>Carroll &amp; Ahuvia 2006</b> (antecedents & outcomes of brand love)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This is a wonderful brand.</li> <li>2. This brand makes me feel good.</li> <li>3. This brand is totally awesome.</li> <li>4. I have neutral feelings about this brand.</li> <li>5. This brand makes me very happy.</li> <li>6. I love this brand!</li> <li>7. I have no particular feelings about this brand.</li> <li>8. This brand is a pure delight.</li> <li>9. I am passionate about this brand.</li> <li>10. I'm very attached to this brand.</li> </ol>
<b>Albert et al. 2008</b> (the feeling of love toward a brand)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Passion (for the brand).</li> <li>2. Duration of the relationship (the relationship with the brand has existed for a long time).</li> <li>3. Self-congruity (congruity between self-image and product image).</li> <li>4. Dreams (the brand favors consumer dreams).</li> <li>5. Memories (evoked by the brand).</li> <li>6. Pleasure (that the brand provides to the consumer).</li> <li>7. Attraction (felt toward the brand).</li> <li>8. Uniqueness (of the brand and/or of the relationship).</li> <li>9. Beauty (of the brand).</li> <li>10. Trust (the brand has never disappointed).</li> <li>11. Declaration of affect (feel toward the brand).</li> </ol>
<b>Albert et al. 2009</b> (the feeling of love toward a brand)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Uniqueness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This brand is special</li> <li>○ This brand is unique</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Pleasure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ By buying this brand. I take pleasure</li> <li>○ Discovering new products from this brand is a pure pleasure</li> <li>○ I take a real pleasure in using this brand</li> <li>○ I am always happy to use this brand</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Intimacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ I have a warm and comfortable relationship with this brand</li> <li>○ I feel emotionally close to this brand</li> <li>○ I value this brand greatly in my life</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Idealization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There is something almost 'magical' about my relationship with this brand</li> <li>○ There is nothing more important to me than my relationship with this brand</li> <li>○ I idealize this brand</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. Duration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (I feel that) this brand has accompanied me for many years</li> <li>○ I have been using this brand for a long time</li> <li>○ I have not changed brand since long</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. Memories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This brand reminds me someone important to me</li> <li>○ This brand reminds me memories, moments of my past (childhood. adolescence. a meeting. ...)</li> <li>○ I associate this brand with some important events of my life</li> </ul> </li> <li>7. Dream <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This brand corresponds to an ideal for me</li> <li>○ I dream about that brand since long</li> <li>○ This brand is a childhood dream</li> <li>○ I dream (or have dreamt) to possess this brand</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<p>Albert &amp; Valette-Florence 2009 (feeling of love toward a brand)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Affection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ I experience great happiness with this brand</li> <li>○ I feel emotionally close to this brand</li> <li>○ When I am with this brand, we are almost always in the same mood</li> <li>○ I think that this brand and I are quite similar to each other</li> <li>○ There is something almost 'magical' about my relationship with this brand</li> <li>○ I feel tender towards this brand</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Passion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If I could never be with this brand. I would feel miserable</li> <li>○ I find myself thinking about this brand frequently during the day</li> <li>○ Sometimes I feel I cannot control my thoughts; they are obsessively on the brand</li> <li>○ If I were separated from this brand for a long time. I would feel intensely lonely</li> <li>○ There is nothing more important to me than my relationship with the brand</li> <li>○ I would feel deep despair if this brand left me</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<p>Patwardhan &amp; Balasubramanian 2011</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pleasure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ I love this brand</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

<b>(brand romance)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Using this brand gives me great pleasure</li> <li>○ I am really happy that this brand is available</li> <li>○ This brand rarely disappoints me</li> </ul> <p>2. Arousal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ I am attracted to this brand</li> <li>○ I desire this brand</li> <li>○ I want this brand</li> <li>○ I look forward to using this brand</li> </ul> <p>3. Dominance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ My day-dreams often include this brand</li> <li>○ This brand often dominates my thoughts</li> <li>○ Sometimes I feel I cannot control my thoughts as they are obsessively on this brand</li> <li>○ This brand always seems to be on my mind</li> </ul>
<b>Batra et al. 2012 (brand love)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. High quality</li> <li>2. Strongly held values and existential meaning</li> <li>3. Beliefs that the brand provided intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards</li> <li>4. Use of the loved brand to express both current and desired self-identity</li> <li>5. Positive affect</li> <li>6. Passionate desire and a sense of natural fit</li> <li>7. Emotional bonding and anticipated heartbreak</li> <li>8. Investments of time and money</li> <li>9. Frequent thought and use</li> <li>10. Length of use</li> </ol>
<b>Rossiter 2012 (difference brand love and brand liking)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hate – I would say that I hate this brand</li> <li>2. Dislike – I feel that I dislike this brand</li> <li>3. Neutral – I feel neutral about this brand – not strong feelings either way</li> <li>4. Liking – I would not say I love this brand but I would say that I like it</li> <li>5. Love – I would say I feel deep affection, like love for this brand and I would be really upset if I could not have it.</li> </ol>
<b>Sarker &amp; Ponnampalasa 2012 (romantic brand love)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Brand passion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ I find this brand very attractive</li> <li>○ This brand delights me</li> <li>○ This brand captivates me</li> <li>○ This brand really fascinates me</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Brand intimacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ I feel emotionally close to this brand</li> <li>○ I receive considerable emotional support from this brand</li> <li>○ There is something special about my relationship with this brand</li> <li>○ This brand is warm</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

## Appendix 6. Brand experience and brand love influences on brand loyalty

<b>Brand loyalty is affected by:</b>	
<b>Brand experience</b>	<b>Brand love</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Biedenbach &amp; Marell 2009 (direct)</b></li> <li>• <b>Brakus et al. 2009 (direct &amp; indirect through satisfaction)</b></li> <li>• <b>Iglesias et al. 2011 (direct)</b></li> <li>• <b>Ismail 2011 (direct)</b></li> <li>• <b>Hee Jung &amp; Myung Soo 2012 (indirect through brand trust)</b></li> <li>• <b>Ishida &amp; Taylor 2012 (indirect through satisfaction)</b></li> <li>• <b>Klaus &amp; Maklan 2013 (direct &amp; indirect through satisfaction)</b></li> <li>• <b>Kim, Lee &amp; Suh 2015 (indirect through satisfaction)</b></li> <li>• <b>Kim et al. 2015 (direct &amp; indirect through satisfaction)</b></li> <li>• <b>Bapat &amp; Thanigan 2016 (indirect through brand evaluation)</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thomson et al. 2005 (direct through emotional attachment)</li> <li>• Carroll &amp; Ahuvia 2006 (direct through brand love)</li> <li>• Albert et al. 2008, 2009 (direct through affection &amp; passion)</li> <li>• Bergkvist &amp; Bech-Larsen 2010 (direct through brand love)</li> <li>• Patwardhan &amp; Balasubramanian 2011 (direct through brand romance)</li> <li>• Sarkar 2011 (direct through romantic brand love)</li> <li>• Iglesias et al. 2011 (direct through affective commitment)</li> <li>• Ding &amp; Tseng 2015 (direct through hedonic emotions)</li> <li>• Rohra &amp; Sharma 2016 (direct through brand passion)</li> <li>• Kaufmann et al. 2016 (direct through brand love &amp; indirect through brand trust)</li> </ul>

## Appendix 7. Survey content translation English-German

English	German
What is your gender?	Welches Geschlecht hast du?
Female	Weiblich
Male	Männlich
How old are you?	Wie alt bist du?
Younger than 18	Jünger als 18 Jahre
18 to 24	18 bis 24 Jahre
25 to 29	25 bis 29 Jahre
30 to 34	30 bis 34 Jahre
35 to 39	35 bis 39 Jahre
40 to 44	40 bis 44 Jahre
45 to 49	45 bis 49 Jahre
50 to 54	50 bis 54 Jahre
55 to 59	55 bis 59 Jahre
60 to 64	60 bis 64 Jahre
65 and older	65 Jahre oder älter
Where are you from?	Woher kommst du?
What is your education level?	Welchen Bildungsabschluss hast du?
Please choose the highest education level you have reached so far.	Bitte wähle den höchsten Bildungsabschluss, den du bisher erreicht hast.
High school degree	Schulabschluss
Apprenticeship	Abgeschlossene Ausbildung
University degree	Hochschule-/Universitätsabschluss
What is your monthly net income?	Wie hoch ist ungefähr dein monatliches Nettoeinkommen?
This is the amount which is made up of all the income and is left after tax and social insurance.	Gemeint ist der Betrag, der sich aus allen Einkünften zusammensetzt und nach Abzug der Steuern und Sozialversicherungen übrig bleibt.
less than 450 €	weniger als 450 €
450 € until less than 1500 €	450 € bis unter 1500 €
1500 € until less than 2000 €	1500 € bis unter 2000 €
2000 € until less than 3000 €	2000 € bis unter 3000 €
3000 € until less than 4000 €	3000 € bis unter 4000 €
4000 € until less than 5000 €	4000 € bis unter 5000 €
5000 € and more	5000 € und mehr
no comment	ich will darauf nicht antworten
Do you work at FlixBus?	Arbeitest du bei FlixBus?
yes	ja
no	nein
When was your last ride with FlixBus?	Wann bist du das letzte Mal mit FlixBus gefahren?
Within the last six months (January 2017 - today)	Innerhalb des letzten halben Jahres (Januar 2017 - heute)
Within the last year (August 2016 - today)	Innerhalb des letzten Jahres (August 2016 - heute)
Before August 2016	Vor August 2016
Never	Nie
How satisfied are you with the quality of the FlixBus brand experience?	Wie zufrieden sind Sie mit der Qualität des FlixBus Marken-Erlebnisses?

Please rate the following comments on your FlixBus experience.	Bitte bewerten Sie die folgenden Kommentare zu Ihrem FlixBus-Erlebnis.
I cannot rate	kann ich nicht beurteilen
do not agree at all	stimme gar nicht zu
totally agree	stimme voll zu
FlixBus processes are organized in a clear and structured way (e.g. sales process, compliant handling).	FlixBus Prozesse sind übersichtlich und klar strukturiert (z.B. Buchungsprozess, Beschwerdemanagement).
FlixBus applies a clear, open and effective communication style (e.g. advertisement, direct mails, explanations).	Der Kommunikationsstil von FlixBus ist klar und offen (z.B. Werbung, E-Mails, Erklärungen).
FlixBus values and maintains relationships with customers over time and over a series of transactions.	Für FlixBus steht die Beziehung zu seinen Kunden an erster Stelle.
The relationships among FlixBus customers is supported (e.g. customer-to-customer relationship).	Die Beziehungen unter/zwischen einzelnen FlixBus-Kunden werden gefördert.
The FlixBus service offers value for money (e.g. availability discounts).	FlixBus bietet ein gutes Preis-Leistungs-Verhältnis (z.B. Verfügbarkeit von Rabatten).
FlixBus is time efficient throughout the customer journey (e.g. value for time).	FlixBus ist zeiteffizient während des gesamten Dienstleistungsprozesses.
How satisfied are you with the FlixBus touchpoints you have used/ experienced so far?	Wie zufrieden bist du mit den Berührungspunkten zwischen der Marke FlixBus und dir?
I did not use/experience it	habe ich nicht genutzt
Very unsatisfied	Sehr unzufrieden
Very satisfied	Sehr zufrieden
Marketing (search engine accessibility, social media, promotions)	Marketing (Suchmaschinen-Erreichbarkeit, Social Media, Werbung)
FlixBus webpage (available information)	FlixBus Homepage (verfügbare Informationen)
FlixBus webpage (booking process)	FlixBus Homepage (Buchungsprozess)
FlixBus app (available information)	FlixBus App (verfügbare Informationen)
FlixBus app (booking process)	FlixBus App (Buchungsprozess)
FlixBus shop (design, atmosphere, booking process)	FlixBus Shop (Design, Atmosphäre, Buchungsprozess)
Mailings (transaction, newsletter, customer satisfaction survey)	Mailings (Transaktionsmails, Newsletter, Zufriedenheitsbefragung)
Bus stop (information display, atmosphere, accessibility)	Bushaltestellen (Informationsanzeige, Atmosphäre, Erreichbarkeit)
Bus (design, cleanness, equipment)	Bus (Aussehen, Sauberkeit, Equipment)
Processes (luggage stowage, check-in/-out, breaks)	Prozesse (Gepäck-Verstauung, Ein-/Auschecken, Pausen)
Are you of the opinion that the FlixBus image is identifiable/coherent at all brand touchpoints?	Bist du der Meinung, dass das FlixBus Image an allen Berührungspunkten mit der Marke einheitlich erkennbar ist?
Are you of the opinion that FlixBus is more innovative and modern compared to other mobility brands in terms of advertising and appearance?	Bist du der Meinung, dass FlixBus innovativer und moderner im Vergleich zu anderen Mobilitätsmarken ist in Bezug auf Werbung und Aussehen?
How do you respond to the brand FlixBus?	In welcher Weise reagierst du auf die Marke FlixBus?




Please rate the effect of the brand on your senses, feelings, physical reactions and thoughts.	Bitte bewerte den Effekt der Marke auf deine Sinne, Gefühle, körperliche Reaktionen und Gedanken.
The FlixBus brand makes a strong impression on my senses.	Ich finde die Marke FlixBus interessant, auf eine sinnliche Art und Weise.
The FlixBus brand induces feelings and sentiments (not matter what kind).	Die Marke FlixBus ruft in mir Gefühle und Empfindungen hervor (egal welcher Art).
I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use the FlixBus brand.	Wenn ich mit der Marke FlixBus in Kontakt komme, reagiere ich durch körperliche Handlungen.
I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter the FlixBus brand.	Wenn ich der Marke FlixBus begegne, regt mich diese zum Nachdenken an.
How do you describe your relationship with the brand FlixBus regarding the following features?	Wie beschreibst du deine Beziehung zur Marke FlixBus in Bezug auf folgende Eigenschaften?
Affectionate	Herzlich
Friendly	Wohlwollend
Loved	Liebend
Passionate	Leidenschaftlich
Delighted	Begeisternd
Fascinated	Faszinierend
How do you evaluate your feelings toward the brand FlixBus?	Wie beurteilst du deine Gefühle gegenüber der Marke FlixBus?
FlixBus is a special brand.	FlixBus ist eine besondere Marke.
I am always happy to use FlixBus.	Ich bin immer glücklich, wenn ich den FlixBus-Service nutze.
I feel emotionally close to FlixBus.	Ich fühle mich emotional verbunden mit FlixBus.
There is something almost 'magical' about my relationship with FlixBus.	In meiner Beziehung mit FlixBus ist etwas fast Magisches.
I have been using FlixBus for a long time.	Ich benutze FlixBus schon seit einer langen Zeit.
I associate FlixBus with some important events of my life.	Ich verbinde FlixBus mit wichtigen Ereignissen in meinem Leben.
FlixBus corresponds to an ideal for me.	FlixBus entspricht meinem Ideal.
How strongly do you identify yourself with the brand FlixBus?	Wie stark identifizierst du dich mit der Marke FlixBus?
Do you trust the brand FlixBus?	Vertraust du der Marke FlixBus?
Which of the following relationship forms best describes your relationship with the brand FlixBus?	Welche der folgenden Beziehungsarten beschreibt am besten deine Beziehung zur Marke FlixBus?
Arranged marriage (brand taken by friends/partner)	Arrangierte Ehe (Marke von Freunden/dem Partner übernommen)
Friendship (occasional, casual use)	Freundschaft (gelegentliche, ungezwungene Nutzung)
Enmity (targeted avoidance of the brand)	Feindschaft (gezielte Vermeidung der Marke)
Dependency (usage due to non-existent alternatives)	Abhängigkeit (Nutzung aufgrund nicht vorhandener Alternativen)
Affair (occasional use without official concession)	Liebschaft (gelegentliche Nutzung ohne offizielles Zugeständnis)
One-night stand (one-time, spontaneous use)	One-night stand (einmalige, spontane Nutzung)

What brand(s) would you describe as 'Love Brand'?	Welche Marke(n) würdest du für dich als 'Love Brand' bezeichnen?
Which characteristics would you associate with a 'Love Brand'?	Welche Eigenschaften macht eine Marke für dich zur 'Love Brand'?
How would it feel for you if you could not use FlixBus anymore?	Wie würde es sich für dich anfühlen, wenn du FlixBus nicht mehr nutzen könntest?
I do not use the product anymore	Ich nutze das Produkt nicht mehr
What improvement proposal do you have for the FlixBus service?	Welche Verbesserungsvorschläge hast du für den FlixBus Service?
Please enter your e-mail address here if you would like to participate in our raffle, where you can win 1 of 5 free rides for FlixBus.	Wenn du am Gewinnspiel teilnehmen willst, dann setze bitte hier deinen Haken und gib daraufhin deine Email-Adresse an. Es gibt 1 von 5 Freifahrten für FlixBus zu gewinnen.

## Appendix 8. Brand experience quality question

**1. How satisfied are you with the quality of the FlixBus brand experience?**

Please rate the following comments on your FlixBus experience.

	do not agree at all						totally agree	I can not rate
	0	1	2	3	4			
FlixBus processes are organized in a clear and structured way (e.g. sales process, compliant handling).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
FlixBus applies a clear, open and effective communication style (e.g. advertisement, direct mails, explanations).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
FlixBus values and maintains relationships with customers over time and over a series of transactions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
The relationships among FlixBus customers is supported (e.g. customer-to-customer relationship).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
The FlixBus service offers value for money (e.g. availability discounts).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
FlixBus is time efficient throughout the customer journey (e.g. value for time).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	









## Appendix 13. Item terminology overview

Concepts	Divisions	Factors	Items	Related questions	
Brand experience	Brand experience qualities	Travel brand experience	Process quality	FlixBus processes are organized in a clear and structured way.	
			Communication	FlixBus applies a clear, open and effective communication style.	
			Customer	FlixBus values and maintains relationships with customers over time and over a series of transactions.	
			Other customers	The relationships among FlixBus customers is supported.	
			Price	The FlixBus service offers value for money.	
			Time	FlixBus is time efficient throughout the customer journey.	
	Touchpoints	Travel & pre-travel BX	Ride	Bus stop	(information display, atmosphere, accessibility)
				Bus	(design, cleanness, equipment)
				Bus processes	(luggage stowage, check-in/-out, breaks)
		Pre-travel brand experience	Point of sales	Mailing	(transaction, newsletter, customer satisfaction survey)
				Marketing	(search engine accessibility, social media, promotions)
				Homepage	(available information)
				HP booking	(booking process)
				App	(available information)
				App booking	(booking process)
				Shop	(design, atmosphere, booking process)
Brand experience dimensions	Responses to brand experiences	Senses	The FlixBus brand makes a strong impression on my senses.		
		Emotions	The FlixBus brand induces feelings and sentiments (not matter what kind).		
		Behavior	I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use the FlixBus brand.		
		Thoughts	I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter the FlixBus brand.		
Brand love	Emotions	Brand love factor	Affection	Affectionate	
			Friendliness	Friendly	
			Love	Loved	
			Passion	Passionate	
			Delight	Delighted	
			Fascination	Fascinated	
	Feelings		Uniqueness	FlixBus is a special brand.	
			Pleasure	I am happy to use FlixBus.	
			Intimacy	I feel emotionally close to FlixBus.	
			Idealization	There is something almost 'magical' about my relationship with FlixBus.	
			Dream	FlixBus corresponds to an ideal for me.	
			Memories	I associate FlixBus with some important events of my life.	
	Duration	I have been using FlixBus for a long time.			



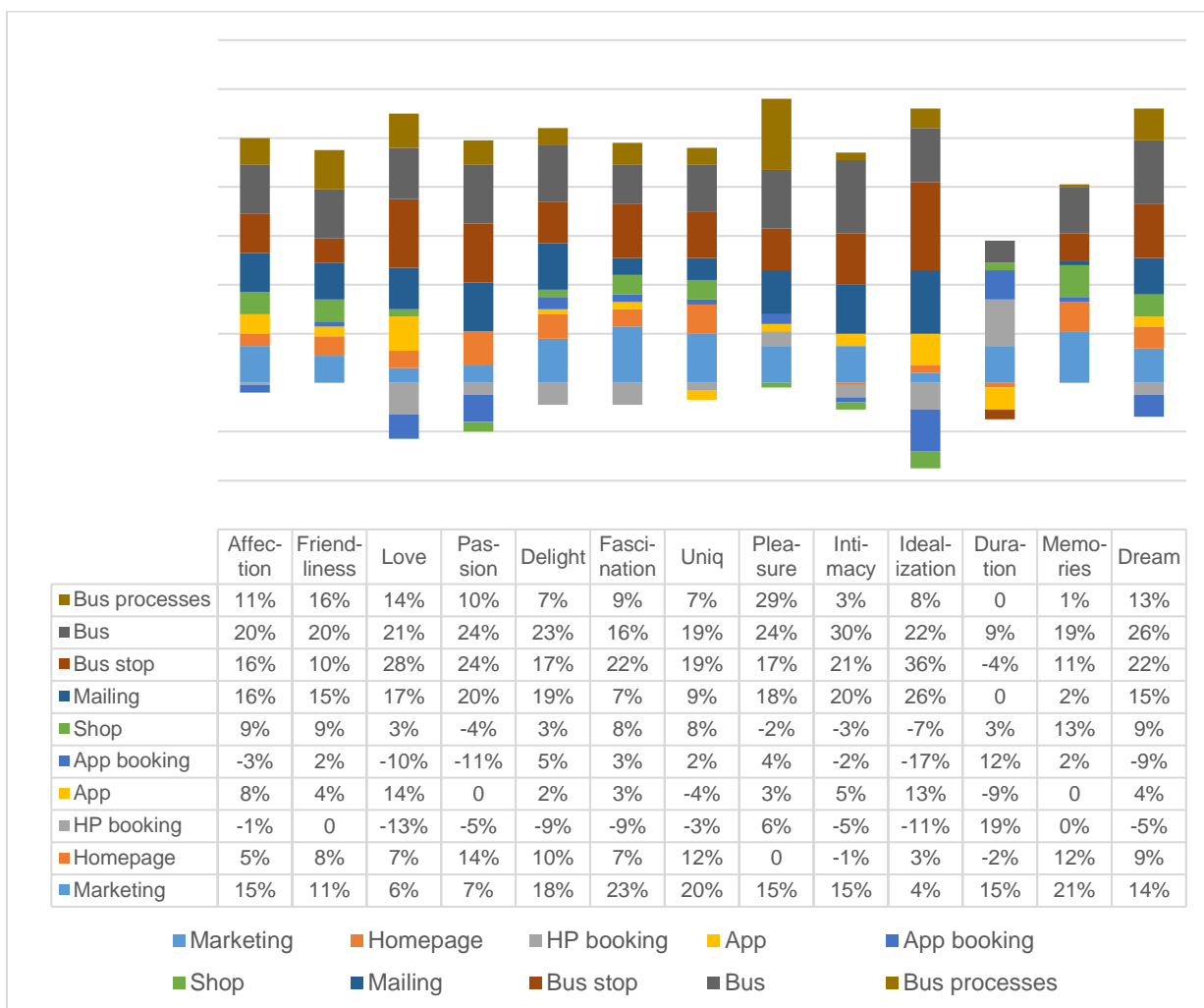
## Appendix 14. Correlations of brand experience quality items and touchpoint satisfaction items

	Process quality	Communication	Customer	Other customers	Price	Time	Marketing	Homepage	HP booking	App	App booking	Shop	Mailing	Bus stop	Bus	Bus processes
Process quality	1	0.64	0.61	0.43	0.42	0.57	0.47	0.48	0.49	0.5	0.48	0.47	0.49	0.43	0.45	0.46
Communication	0.64	1	0.6	0.46	0.39	0.58	0.46	0.51	0.43	0.47	0.45	0.49	0.52	0.46	0.43	0.49
Customer	0.61	0.6	1	0.68	0.49	0.63	0.46	0.45	0.39	0.47	0.44	0.49	0.57	0.55	0.55	0.57
Other customers	0.43	0.46	0.68	1	0.44	0.55	0.38	0.4	0.33	0.41	0.34	0.4	0.5	0.51	0.45	0.49
Price	0.42	0.39	0.49	0.44	1	0.54	0.45	0.35	0.35	0.36	0.4	0.39	0.4	0.38	0.42	0.43
Time	0.57	0.58	0.63	0.55	0.54	1	0.5	0.48	0.45	0.47	0.44	0.48	0.54	0.51	0.55	0.58
Marketing	0.47	0.46	0.46	0.38	0.45	0.5	1	0.58	0.47	0.5	0.47	0.47	0.56	0.44	0.44	0.4
Homepage	0.48	0.51	0.45	0.4	0.35	0.48	0.58	1	0.6	0.58	0.49	0.54	0.51	0.43	0.41	0.44
HP booking	0.49	0.43	0.39	0.33	0.35	0.45	0.47	0.6	1	0.6	0.65	0.55	0.47	0.4	0.38	0.38
App	0.5	0.47	0.47	0.41	0.36	0.47	0.5	0.58	0.6	1	0.72	0.55	0.54	0.46	0.41	0.45
App booking	0.48	0.45	0.44	0.34	0.4	0.44	0.47	0.49	0.65	0.72	1	0.56	0.49	0.42	0.4	0.4
Shop	0.47	0.49	0.49	0.4	0.39	0.48	0.47	0.54	0.55	0.55	0.56	1	0.61	0.46	0.45	0.51
Mailing	0.49	0.52	0.57	0.5	0.4	0.54	0.56	0.51	0.47	0.54	0.49	0.61	1	0.53	0.45	0.49
Bus stop	0.43	0.46	0.55	0.51	0.38	0.51	0.44	0.43	0.4	0.46	0.42	0.46	0.53	1	0.53	0.57
Bus	0.45	0.43	0.55	0.45	0.42	0.55	0.44	0.41	0.38	0.41	0.4	0.45	0.45	0.53	1	0.63
Bus processes	0.46	0.49	0.57	0.49	0.43	0.58	0.4	0.44	0.38	0.45	0.4	0.51	0.49	0.57	0.63	1

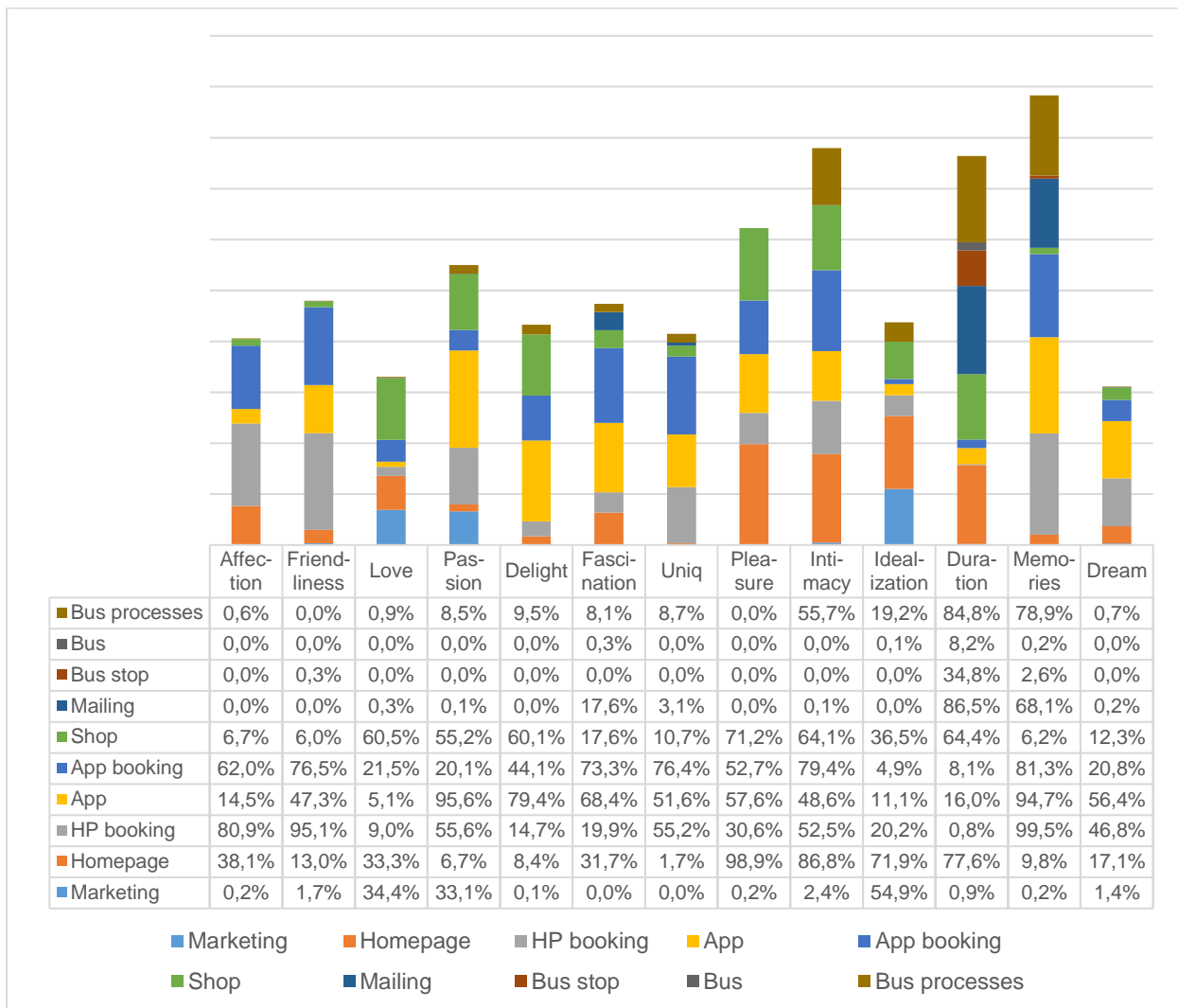
## Appendix 15. Correlations of touchpoint satisfaction items and brand love items

	Marketing	Homepage	HP booking	App	App booking	Shop	Mailing	Bus stop	Bus	Bus processes	Affection	Friendliness	Love	Passion	Delight	Fascination	Uniqueness	Pleasure	Intimacy	Idealization	Duration	Memories	Dream
Marketing	1	0.61	0.48	0.51	0.47	0.5	0.56	0.45	0.46	0.4	0.44	0.44	0.33	0.32	0.44	0.39	0.47	0.46	0.33	0.29	0.21	0.32	0.39
Home-page	0.61	1	0.63	0.58	0.49	0.56	0.53	0.45	0.43	0.43	0.42	0.42	0.34	0.32	0.41	0.35	0.42	0.41	0.29	0.28	0.17	0.3	0.39
HP booking	0.48	0.63	1	0.59	0.63	0.56	0.48	0.44	0.42	0.4	0.37	0.37	0.27	0.26	0.34	0.3	0.36	0.4	0.25	0.21	0.2	0.25	0.32
App	0.51	0.58	0.59	1	0.72	0.53	0.52	0.46	0.43	0.45	0.4	0.4	0.35	0.28	0.39	0.32	0.36	0.43	0.29	0.27	0.13	0.26	0.35
App booking	0.47	0.49	0.63	0.72	1	0.54	0.48	0.45	0.41	0.41	0.36	0.38	0.27	0.23	0.35	0.3	0.36	0.41	0.26	0.21	0.18	0.25	0.31
Shop	0.5	0.56	0.56	0.53	0.54	1	0.61	0.47	0.46	0.49	0.45	0.45	0.36	0.31	0.42	0.36	0.43	0.45	0.31	0.29	0.16	0.31	0.41
Mailing	0.56	0.53	0.48	0.52	0.48	0.61	1	0.53	0.45	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.41	0.38	0.49	0.39	0.46	0.51	0.37	0.37	0.13	0.29	0.44
Bus stop	0.45	0.45	0.44	0.46	0.45	0.47	0.53	1	0.57	0.58	0.5	0.48	0.48	0.43	0.48	0.43	0.5	0.55	0.41	0.45	0.14	0.33	0.51
Bus	0.46	0.43	0.42	0.43	0.41	0.46	0.45	0.57	1	0.64	0.49	0.49	0.44	0.39	0.49	0.4	0.47	0.55	0.41	0.39	0.18	0.34	0.5
Bus processes	0.4	0.43	0.4	0.45	0.41	0.49	0.48	0.58	0.64	1	0.48	0.49	0.44	0.38	0.44	0.39	0.43	0.55	0.36	0.37	0.13	0.29	0.47
Affection	0.44	0.42	0.37	0.4	0.36	0.45	0.48	0.5	0.49	0.48	1	0.77	0.73	0.65	0.71	0.66	0.62	0.67	0.6	0.62	0.24	0.5	0.65
Friendliness	0.44	0.42	0.37	0.4	0.38	0.45	0.48	0.48	0.49	0.49	0.77	1	0.7	0.61	0.67	0.63	0.64	0.66	0.56	0.58	0.19	0.46	0.6
Love	0.33	0.34	0.27	0.35	0.27	0.36	0.41	0.48	0.44	0.44	0.73	0.7	1	0.8	0.7	0.67	0.6	0.64	0.64	0.74	0.17	0.45	0.63
Passion	0.32	0.32	0.26	0.28	0.23	0.31	0.38	0.43	0.39	0.38	0.65	0.61	0.8	1	0.7	0.71	0.58	0.6	0.63	0.72	0.16	0.43	0.6
Delight	0.44	0.41	0.34	0.39	0.35	0.42	0.49	0.48	0.49	0.44	0.71	0.67	0.7	0.7	1	0.76	0.65	0.69	0.6	0.61	0.21	0.47	0.66
Fascination	0.39	0.35	0.3	0.32	0.3	0.36	0.39	0.43	0.4	0.39	0.66	0.63	0.67	0.71	0.76	1	0.66	0.62	0.61	0.64	0.22	0.46	0.63
Uniqueness	0.47	0.42	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.43	0.46	0.5	0.47	0.43	0.62	0.64	0.6	0.58	0.65	0.66	1	0.69	0.6	0.58	0.26	0.47	0.62
Pleasure	0.46	0.41	0.4	0.43	0.41	0.45	0.51	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.67	0.66	0.64	0.6	0.69	0.62	0.69	1	0.61	0.6	0.24	0.49	0.69
Intimacy	0.33	0.29	0.25	0.29	0.26	0.31	0.37	0.41	0.41	0.36	0.6	0.56	0.64	0.63	0.6	0.61	0.6	0.61	1	0.76	0.3	0.58	0.66
Idealization	0.29	0.28	0.21	0.27	0.21	0.29	0.37	0.45	0.39	0.37	0.62	0.58	0.74	0.72	0.61	0.64	0.58	0.6	0.76	1	0.21	0.52	0.7
Duration	0.21	0.17	0.2	0.13	0.18	0.16	0.13	0.14	0.18	0.13	0.24	0.19	0.17	0.16	0.21	0.22	0.26	0.24	0.3	0.21	1	0.42	0.32
Memories	0.32	0.3	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.31	0.29	0.33	0.34	0.29	0.5	0.46	0.45	0.43	0.47	0.46	0.47	0.49	0.58	0.52	0.42	1	0.63
Dream	0.39	0.39	0.32	0.35	0.31	0.41	0.44	0.51	0.5	0.47	0.65	0.6	0.63	0.6	0.66	0.63	0.62	0.69	0.66	0.7	0.32	0.63	1

Appendix 16. Brand experience influence on brand love items (regression coefficient)



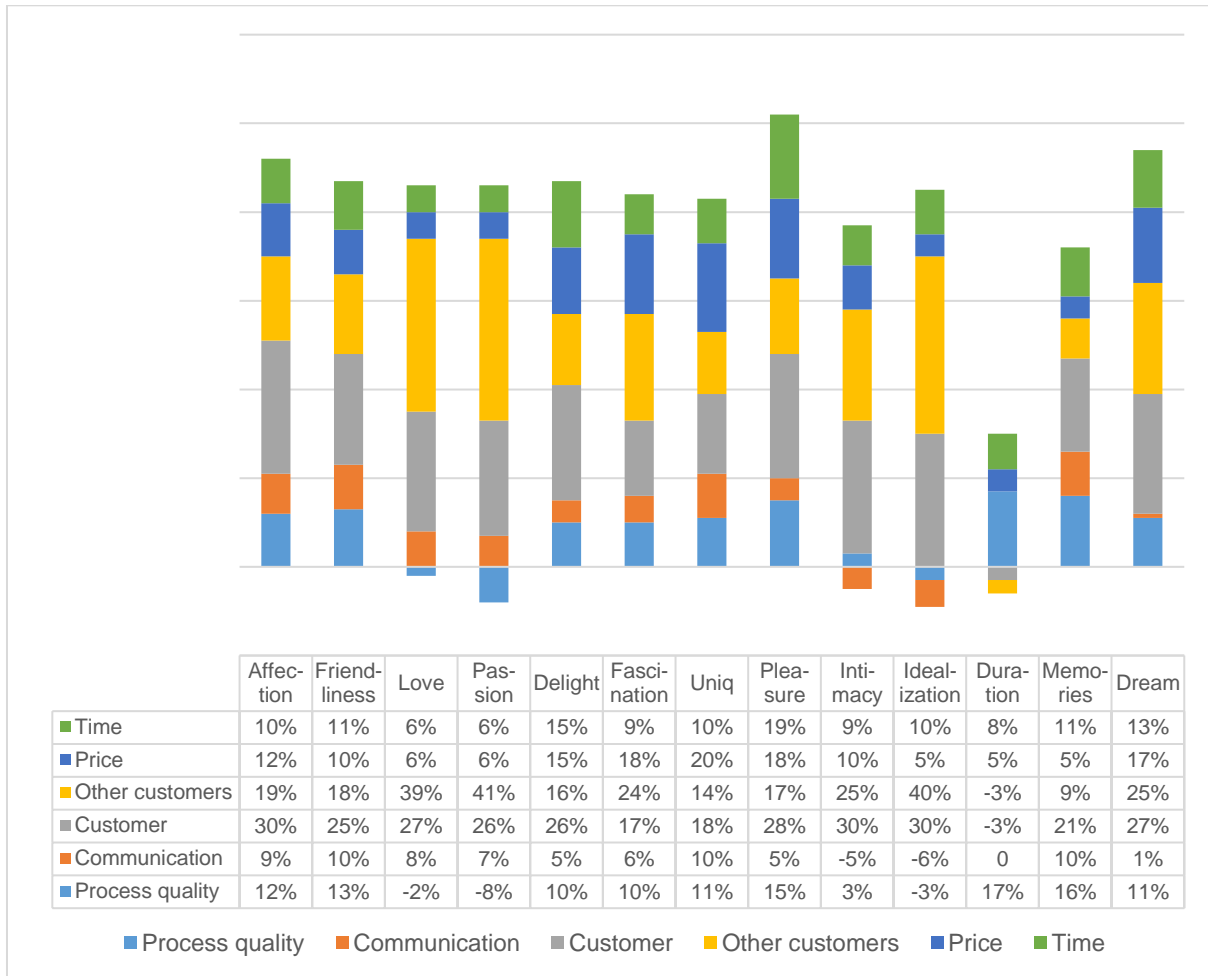
Appendix 17. Significances of touchpoint satisfaction items on brand love items



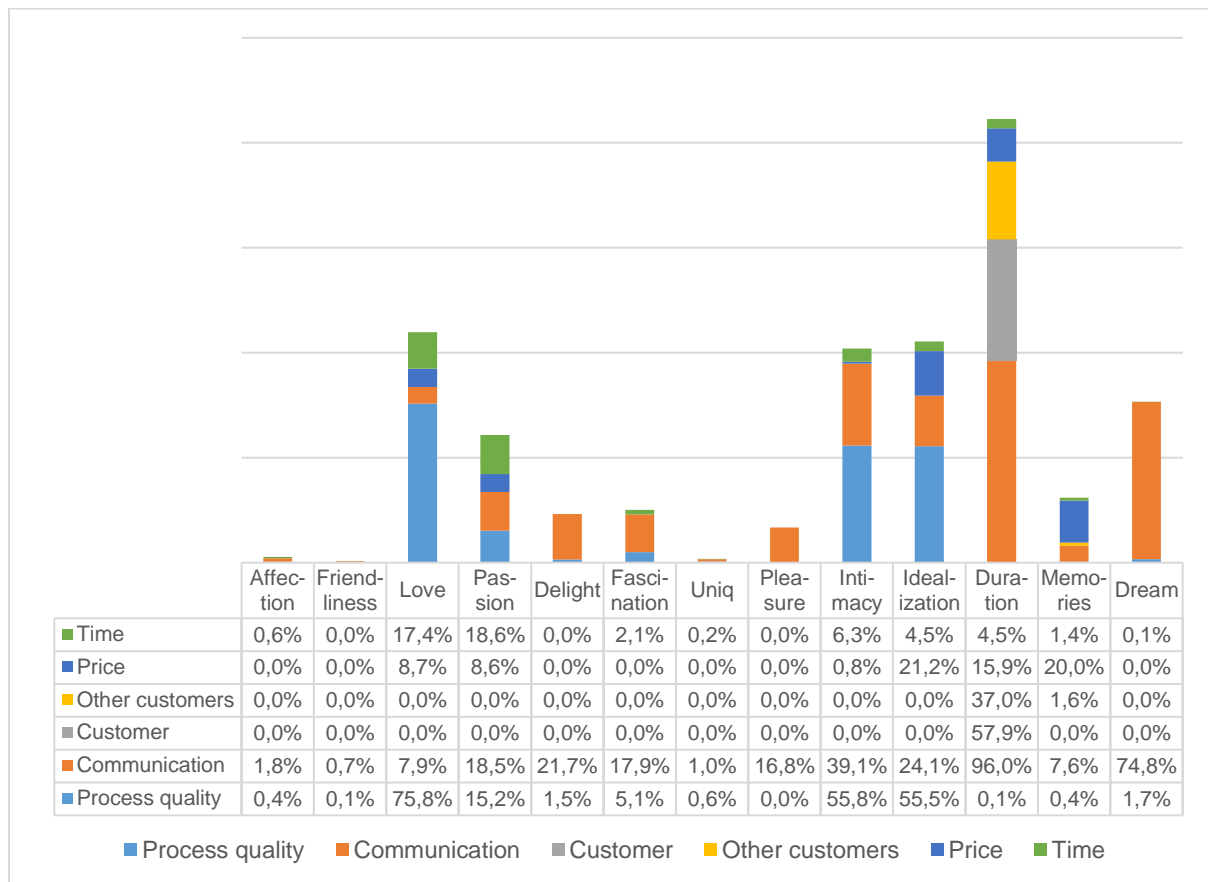
## Appendix 18. Correlations of brand experience items and brand trust

	Process quality	Communication	Customer	Other customers	Price	Time	Marketing	Homepage	HP booking	App	App booking	Shop	Mailing	Bus stop	Bus	Bus processes	Brand trust
Process quality	1	0.64	0.61	0.43	0.42	0.57	0.47	0.48	0.49	0.5	0.48	0.47	0.49	0.43	0.45	0.46	0.6
Communication	0.64	1	0.6	0.46	0.39	0.58	0.46	0.51	0.43	0.47	0.45	0.49	0.52	0.46	0.43	0.49	0.56
Customer	0.61	0.6	1	0.68	0.49	0.63	0.46	0.45	0.39	0.47	0.44	0.49	0.57	0.55	0.55	0.57	0.64
Other customers	0.43	0.46	0.68	1	0.44	0.55	0.38	0.4	0.33	0.41	0.34	0.4	0.5	0.51	0.45	0.49	0.52
Price	0.42	0.39	0.49	0.44	1	0.54	0.45	0.35	0.35	0.36	0.4	0.39	0.4	0.38	0.42	0.43	0.47
Time	0.57	0.58	0.63	0.55	0.54	1	0.5	0.48	0.45	0.47	0.44	0.48	0.54	0.51	0.55	0.58	0.62
Marketing	0.47	0.46	0.46	0.38	0.45	0.5	1	0.58	0.47	0.5	0.47	0.47	0.56	0.44	0.44	0.4	0.53
Homepage	0.48	0.51	0.45	0.4	0.35	0.48	0.58	1	0.6	0.58	0.49	0.54	0.51	0.43	0.41	0.44	0.48
HP booking	0.49	0.43	0.39	0.33	0.35	0.45	0.47	0.6	1	0.6	0.65	0.55	0.47	0.4	0.38	0.38	0.45
App	0.5	0.47	0.47	0.41	0.36	0.47	0.5	0.58	0.6	1	0.72	0.55	0.54	0.46	0.41	0.45	0.47
App booking	0.48	0.45	0.44	0.34	0.4	0.44	0.47	0.49	0.65	0.72	1	0.56	0.49	0.42	0.4	0.4	0.47
Shop	0.47	0.49	0.49	0.4	0.39	0.48	0.47	0.54	0.55	0.55	0.56	1	0.61	0.46	0.45	0.51	0.49
Mailing	0.49	0.52	0.57	0.5	0.4	0.54	0.56	0.51	0.47	0.54	0.49	0.61	1	0.53	0.45	0.49	0.52
Bus stop	0.43	0.46	0.55	0.51	0.38	0.51	0.44	0.43	0.4	0.46	0.42	0.46	0.53	1	0.53	0.57	0.52
Bus	0.45	0.43	0.55	0.45	0.42	0.55	0.44	0.41	0.38	0.41	0.4	0.45	0.45	0.53	1	0.63	0.55
Bus processes	0.46	0.49	0.57	0.49	0.43	0.58	0.4	0.44	0.38	0.45	0.4	0.51	0.49	0.57	0.63	1	0.55
Brand trust	0.6	0.56	0.64	0.52	0.47	0.62	0.53	0.48	0.45	0.47	0.47	0.49	0.52	0.52	0.55	0.55	1

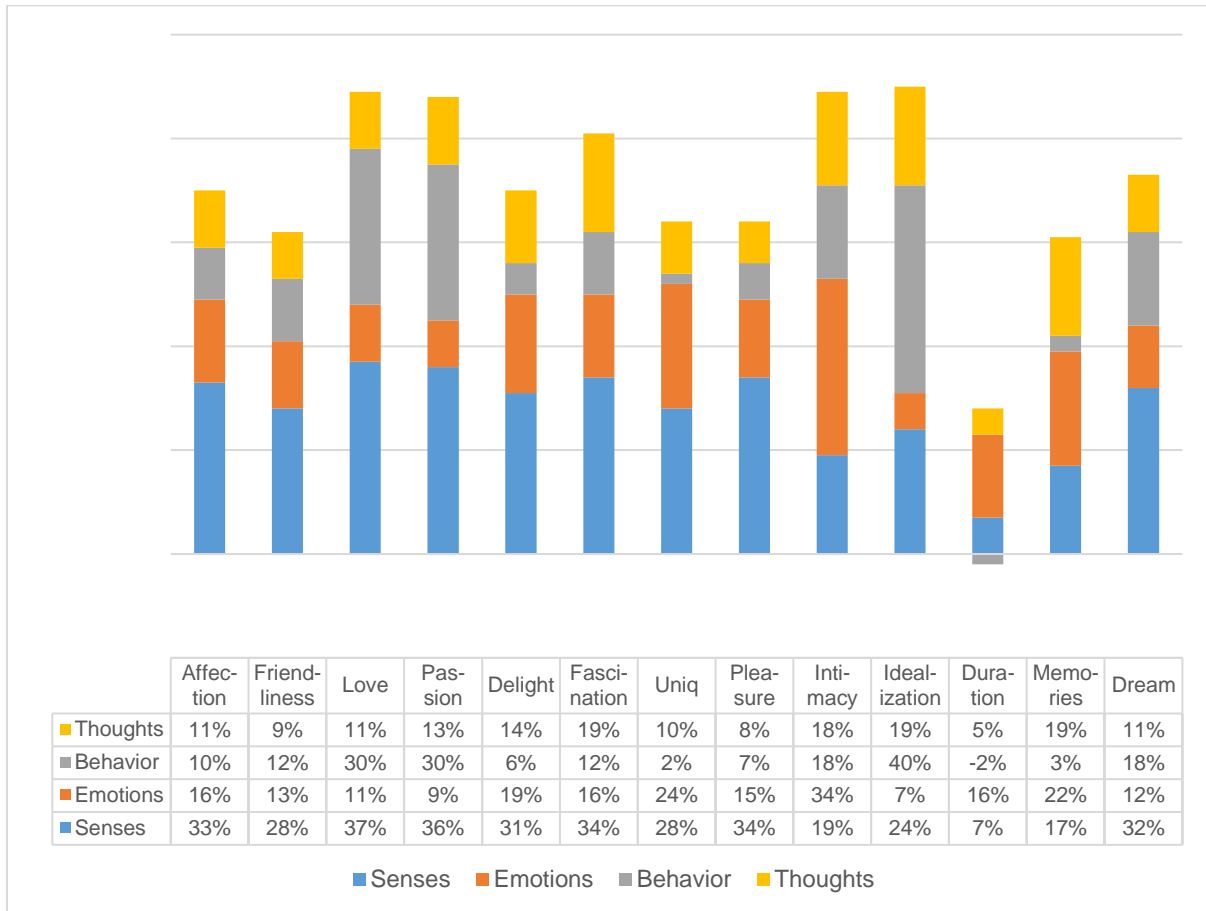
Appendix 19. Brand experience quality influence on brand love items (regression coefficient)



## Appendix 20. Significances of brand experience qualities on brand love items

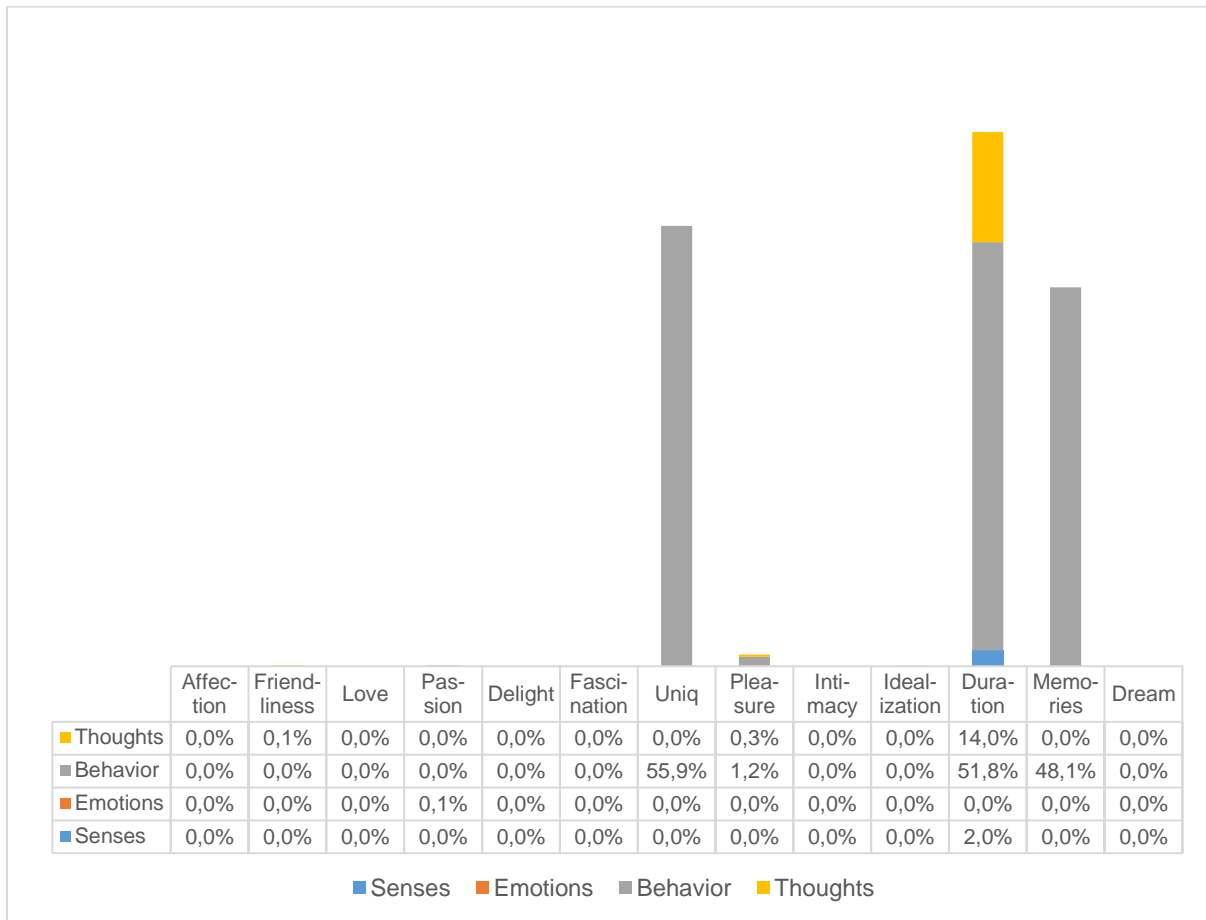


Appendix 21. Brand experience dimensions influence on brand love items (regression coefficient)





## Appendix 22. Significances of brand experience dimensions on brand love items



## Appendix 23. Correlation of brand love items and brand trust

	Affection	Friendliness	Love	Passion	Delight	Fascination	Uniqueness	Pleasure	Intimacy	Idealization	Duration	Memories	Dream	Brand trust
Affection	1	0.71	0.71	0.62	0.67	0.61	0.57	0.64	0.59	0.59	0.24	0.48	0.62	0.54
Friendliness	0.71	1	0.67	0.58	0.61	0.56	0.59	0.63	0.54	0.54	0.18	0.42	0.58	0.59
Love	0.71	0.67	1	0.8	0.68	0.66	0.58	0.63	0.64	0.72	0.19	0.43	0.62	0.5
Passion	0.62	0.58	0.8	1	0.68	0.68	0.57	0.58	0.63	0.7	0.17	0.4	0.59	0.45
Delight	0.67	0.61	0.68	0.68	1	0.75	0.64	0.68	0.59	0.57	0.21	0.45	0.64	0.57
Fascination	0.61	0.56	0.66	0.68	0.75	1	0.65	0.61	0.61	0.62	0.2	0.43	0.61	0.5
Uniqueness	0.57	0.59	0.58	0.57	0.64	0.65	1	0.67	0.6	0.55	0.24	0.46	0.61	0.56
Pleasure	0.64	0.63	0.63	0.58	0.68	0.61	0.67	1	0.59	0.56	0.21	0.46	0.67	0.67
Intimacy	0.59	0.54	0.64	0.63	0.59	0.61	0.6	0.59	1	0.75	0.27	0.53	0.62	0.46
Idealization	0.59	0.54	0.72	0.7	0.57	0.62	0.55	0.56	0.75	1	0.2	0.49	0.66	0.46
Duration	0.24	0.18	0.19	0.17	0.21	0.2	0.24	0.21	0.27	0.2	1	0.41	0.31	0.19
Memories	0.48	0.42	0.43	0.4	0.45	0.43	0.46	0.46	0.53	0.49	0.41	1	0.6	0.42
Dream	0.62	0.58	0.62	0.59	0.64	0.61	0.61	0.67	0.62	0.66	0.31	0.6	1	0.59
Brand trust	0.54	0.59	0.5	0.45	0.57	0.5	0.56	0.67	0.46	0.46	0.19	0.42	0.59	1

Appendix 24. Correlations of brand experience quality items and brand love items

	Process quality	Communication	Customer	Other customers	Price	Time	Affection	Friendliness	Love	Passion	Delight	Fascination	Uniqueness	Pleasure	Intimacy	Idealization	Duration	Memories	Dream
Process quality	1	0.64	0.61	0.43	0.43	0.58	0.49	0.5	0.37	0.34	0.46	0.39	0.49	0.53	0.33	0.29	0.19	0.37	0.44
Communication	0.64	1	0.61	0.47	0.41	0.59	0.45	0.48	0.38	0.36	0.43	0.38	0.47	0.49	0.34	0.31	0.16	0.34	0.41
Customer	0.61	0.61	1	0.69	0.5	0.63	0.61	0.6	0.56	0.52	0.59	0.51	0.56	0.64	0.51	0.53	0.12	0.42	0.58
Other customers	0.43	0.47	0.69	1	0.46	0.55	0.56	0.6	0.61	0.59	0.56	0.5	0.53	0.58	0.47	0.54	0.12	0.33	0.55
Price	0.43	0.41	0.5	0.46	1	0.53	0.43	0.44	0.33	0.32	0.44	0.39	0.5	0.51	0.34	0.31	0.17	0.28	0.43
Time	0.58	0.59	0.63	0.55	0.53	1	0.53	0.54	0.46	0.42	0.54	0.47	0.54	0.61	0.42	0.41	0.21	0.38	0.52
Affection	0.49	0.45	0.61	0.56	0.43	0.53	1	0.77	0.74	0.67	0.72	0.67	0.63	0.68	0.6	0.62	0.21	0.49	0.66
Friendliness	0.5	0.48	0.6	0.6	0.44	0.54	0.77	1	0.7	0.62	0.69	0.64	0.64	0.69	0.57	0.58	0.15	0.45	0.61
Love	0.37	0.38	0.56	0.61	0.33	0.46	0.74	0.7	1	0.81	0.71	0.68	0.6	0.66	0.63	0.74	0.15	0.44	0.64
Passion	0.34	0.36	0.52	0.59	0.32	0.42	0.67	0.62	0.81	1	0.72	0.72	0.59	0.62	0.62	0.73	0.13	0.43	0.61
Delight	0.46	0.43	0.59	0.56	0.44	0.54	0.72	0.69	0.71	0.72	1	0.78	0.66	0.71	0.61	0.62	0.21	0.48	0.67
Fascination	0.39	0.38	0.51	0.5	0.39	0.47	0.67	0.64	0.68	0.72	0.78	1	0.67	0.63	0.62	0.65	0.23	0.47	0.64
Uniqueness	0.49	0.47	0.56	0.53	0.5	0.54	0.63	0.64	0.6	0.59	0.66	0.67	1	0.7	0.61	0.59	0.27	0.46	0.62
Pleasure	0.53	0.49	0.64	0.58	0.51	0.61	0.68	0.69	0.66	0.62	0.71	0.63	0.7	1	0.63	0.61	0.24	0.52	0.7
Intimacy	0.33	0.34	0.51	0.47	0.34	0.42	0.6	0.57	0.63	0.62	0.61	0.62	0.61	0.63	1	0.77	0.28	0.56	0.67
Idealization	0.29	0.31	0.53	0.54	0.31	0.41	0.62	0.58	0.74	0.73	0.62	0.65	0.59	0.61	0.77	1	0.19	0.52	0.71
Duration	0.19	0.16	0.12	0.12	0.17	0.21	0.21	0.15	0.15	0.13	0.21	0.23	0.27	0.24	0.28	0.19	1	0.43	0.32
Memories	0.37	0.34	0.42	0.33	0.28	0.38	0.49	0.45	0.44	0.43	0.48	0.47	0.46	0.52	0.56	0.52	0.43	1	0.65
Dream	0.44	0.41	0.58	0.55	0.43	0.52	0.66	0.61	0.64	0.61	0.67	0.64	0.62	0.7	0.67	0.71	0.32	0.65	1

## Appendix 25. Correlations of brand experience items and brand experience dimensions

	Process quality	Communication	Customer	Other customers	Price	Time	Marketing	Homepage	HP booking	App	App booking	Shop	Mailing	Bus stop	Bus	Bus processes	BXD - senses	BXD - emotions	BXD - behavior	BXD - Thoughts
Process quality	1	0.67	0.62	0.43	0.46	0.59	0.5	0.49	0.51	0.5	0.49	0.5	0.5	0.44	0.46	0.47	0.43	0.27	0.26	0.2
Communication	0.67	1	0.62	0.47	0.42	0.6	0.49	0.52	0.44	0.49	0.47	0.52	0.56	0.48	0.46	0.5	0.4	0.28	0.29	0.21
Customer	0.62	0.62	1	0.68	0.49	0.65	0.48	0.48	0.38	0.47	0.43	0.49	0.58	0.56	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.41	0.47	0.33
Other customers	0.43	0.47	0.68	1	0.46	0.57	0.43	0.42	0.34	0.43	0.35	0.42	0.52	0.53	0.48	0.51	0.58	0.41	0.56	0.42
Price	0.46	0.42	0.49	0.46	1	0.56	0.47	0.35	0.36	0.37	0.41	0.39	0.4	0.37	0.45	0.44	0.37	0.36	0.3	0.27
Time	0.59	0.6	0.65	0.57	0.56	1	0.53	0.51	0.45	0.49	0.46	0.49	0.56	0.52	0.57	0.58	0.49	0.37	0.37	0.32
Marketing	0.5	0.49	0.48	0.43	0.47	0.53	1	0.59	0.49	0.53	0.49	0.49	0.58	0.47	0.47	0.43	0.36	0.35	0.29	0.26
Homepage	0.49	0.52	0.48	0.42	0.35	0.51	0.59	1	0.6	0.59	0.5	0.56	0.53	0.43	0.45	0.46	0.39	0.29	0.25	0.2
HP booking	0.51	0.44	0.38	0.34	0.36	0.45	0.49	0.6	1	0.58	0.64	0.55	0.46	0.42	0.42	0.4	0.31	0.27	0.21	0.23
App	0.5	0.49	0.47	0.43	0.37	0.49	0.53	0.59	0.58	1	0.72	0.55	0.55	0.46	0.42	0.47	0.39	0.31	0.28	0.23
App booking	0.49	0.47	0.43	0.35	0.41	0.46	0.49	0.5	0.64	0.72	1	0.57	0.5	0.44	0.43	0.42	0.31	0.27	0.18	0.18
Shop	0.5	0.52	0.49	0.42	0.39	0.49	0.49	0.56	0.55	0.55	0.57	1	0.61	0.47	0.47	0.51	0.42	0.37	0.3	0.25
Mailing	0.5	0.56	0.58	0.52	0.4	0.56	0.58	0.53	0.46	0.55	0.5	0.61	1	0.53	0.47	0.49	0.43	0.37	0.37	0.26
Bus stop	0.44	0.48	0.56	0.53	0.37	0.52	0.47	0.43	0.42	0.46	0.44	0.47	0.53	1	0.56	0.58	0.47	0.39	0.42	0.32
Bus	0.46	0.46	0.58	0.48	0.45	0.57	0.47	0.45	0.42	0.42	0.43	0.47	0.47	0.56	1	0.66	0.42	0.38	0.37	0.33
Bus processes	0.47	0.5	0.58	0.51	0.44	0.58	0.43	0.46	0.4	0.47	0.42	0.51	0.49	0.58	0.66	1	0.42	0.35	0.37	0.28
BXD - senses	0.43	0.4	0.58	0.58	0.37	0.49	0.36	0.39	0.31	0.39	0.31	0.42	0.43	0.47	0.42	0.42	1	0.57	0.62	0.47
BXD - emotions	0.27	0.28	0.41	0.41	0.36	0.37	0.35	0.29	0.27	0.31	0.27	0.37	0.37	0.39	0.38	0.35	0.57	1	0.6	0.58
BXD - behavior	0.26	0.29	0.47	0.56	0.3	0.37	0.29	0.25	0.21	0.28	0.18	0.3	0.37	0.42	0.37	0.37	0.62	0.6	1	0.7
BXD - thoughts	0.2	0.21	0.33	0.42	0.27	0.32	0.26	0.2	0.23	0.23	0.18	0.25	0.26	0.32	0.33	0.28	0.47	0.58	0.7	1

Appendix 26. Correlations of brand experience dimensions and brand love items

	BXD - senses	BXD - emotions	BXD - behavior	BXD - Thoughts	Affection	Friendliness	Love	Passion	Delight	Fascination	Uniqueness	Pleasure	Intimacy	Idealization	Duration	Memories	Dream
BXD - senses	1	0.53	0.62	0.47	0.61	0.57	0.68	0.64	0.58	0.61	0.58	0.61	0.55	0.6	0.19	0.4	0.6
BXD - emotions	0.53	1	0.55	0.56	0.51	0.47	0.54	0.5	0.52	0.52	0.55	0.48	0.6	0.51	0.23	0.41	0.48
BXD - behavior	0.62	0.55	1	0.68	0.54	0.51	0.67	0.65	0.51	0.57	0.5	0.5	0.57	0.69	0.15	0.37	0.57
BXD - thoughts	0.47	0.56	0.68	1	0.48	0.45	0.56	0.54	0.49	0.54	0.47	0.43	0.55	0.6	0.16	0.39	0.5
Affection	0.61	0.51	0.54	0.48	1	0.72	0.72	0.63	0.69	0.62	0.59	0.66	0.6	0.59	0.25	0.49	0.64
Friendliness	0.57	0.47	0.51	0.45	0.72	1	0.67	0.6	0.63	0.58	0.61	0.64	0.55	0.55	0.19	0.43	0.59
Love	0.68	0.54	0.67	0.56	0.72	0.67	1	0.8	0.69	0.67	0.59	0.64	0.65	0.73	0.2	0.45	0.65
Passion	0.64	0.5	0.65	0.54	0.63	0.6	0.8	1	0.7	0.69	0.58	0.6	0.64	0.71	0.19	0.42	0.61
Delight	0.58	0.52	0.51	0.49	0.69	0.63	0.69	0.7	1	0.76	0.65	0.69	0.6	0.59	0.23	0.48	0.66
Fascination	0.61	0.52	0.57	0.54	0.62	0.58	0.67	0.69	0.76	1	0.65	0.63	0.62	0.64	0.21	0.45	0.63
Uniqueness	0.58	0.55	0.5	0.47	0.59	0.61	0.59	0.58	0.65	0.65	1	0.69	0.61	0.57	0.26	0.46	0.62
Pleasure	0.61	0.48	0.5	0.43	0.66	0.64	0.64	0.6	0.69	0.63	0.69	1	0.59	0.58	0.24	0.47	0.68
Intimacy	0.55	0.6	0.57	0.55	0.6	0.55	0.65	0.64	0.6	0.62	0.61	0.59	1	0.75	0.28	0.54	0.64
Idealization	0.6	0.51	0.69	0.6	0.59	0.55	0.73	0.71	0.59	0.64	0.57	0.58	0.75	1	0.21	0.49	0.68
Duration	0.19	0.23	0.15	0.16	0.25	0.19	0.2	0.19	0.23	0.21	0.26	0.24	0.28	0.21	1	0.4	0.33
Memories	0.4	0.41	0.37	0.39	0.49	0.43	0.45	0.42	0.48	0.45	0.46	0.47	0.54	0.49	0.4	1	0.62
Dream	0.6	0.48	0.57	0.5	0.64	0.59	0.65	0.61	0.66	0.63	0.62	0.68	0.64	0.68	0.33	0.62	1

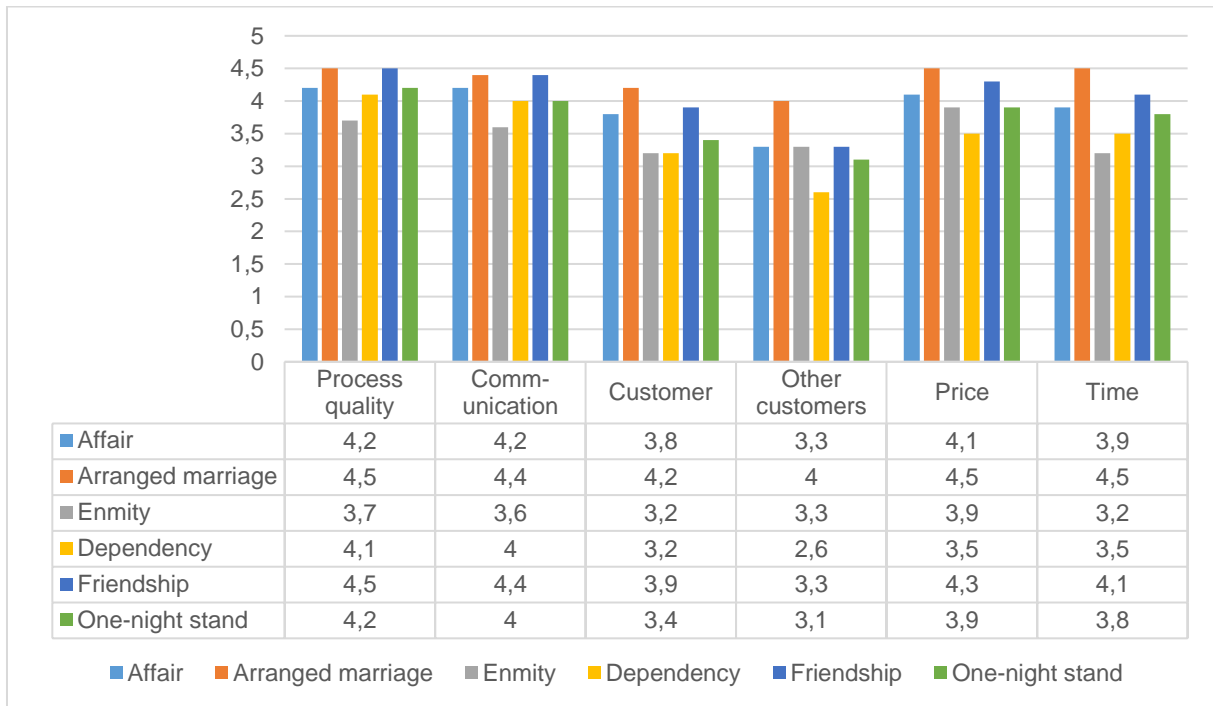
## Appendix 27. Correlations of brand experience items and brand loyalty

	Process quality	Communication	Customer	Other customers	Price	Time	Marketing	Homepage	HP booking	App	App booking	Shop	Mailing	Bus stop	Bus	Bus processes	Brand loyalty
Process quality	1	0.62	0.59	0.4	0.4	0.56	0.44	0.46	0.45	0.48	0.45	0.45	0.46	0.41	0.43	0.44	0.14
Communication	0.62	1	0.58	0.44	0.37	0.56	0.44	0.49	0.4	0.45	0.42	0.46	0.49	0.44	0.4	0.47	0.14
Customer	0.59	0.58	1	0.66	0.48	0.62	0.44	0.44	0.37	0.47	0.42	0.47	0.55	0.54	0.54	0.55	0.11
Other customers	0.4	0.44	0.66	1	0.43	0.53	0.37	0.38	0.31	0.4	0.32	0.38	0.48	0.5	0.44	0.48	0.04
Price	0.4	0.37	0.48	0.43	1	0.53	0.44	0.34	0.34	0.35	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.37	0.4	0.42	0.15
Time	0.56	0.56	0.62	0.53	0.53	1	0.48	0.46	0.42	0.45	0.41	0.45	0.52	0.5	0.53	0.56	0.16
Marketing	0.44	0.44	0.44	0.37	0.44	0.48	1	0.57	0.44	0.48	0.45	0.45	0.54	0.43	0.41	0.38	0.14
Homepage	0.46	0.49	0.44	0.38	0.34	0.46	0.57	1	0.57	0.54	0.46	0.51	0.49	0.42	0.4	0.42	0.09
HP booking	0.45	0.4	0.37	0.31	0.34	0.42	0.44	0.57	1	0.57	0.63	0.52	0.44	0.4	0.36	0.35	0.08
App	0.48	0.45	0.47	0.4	0.35	0.45	0.48	0.54	0.57	1	0.72	0.52	0.53	0.45	0.39	0.44	0.09
App booking	0.45	0.42	0.42	0.32	0.38	0.41	0.45	0.46	0.63	0.72	1	0.54	0.47	0.41	0.37	0.38	0.11
Shop	0.45	0.46	0.47	0.38	0.38	0.45	0.45	0.51	0.52	0.52	0.54	1	0.59	0.45	0.43	0.49	0.09
Mailing	0.46	0.49	0.55	0.48	0.38	0.52	0.54	0.49	0.44	0.53	0.47	0.59	1	0.51	0.43	0.46	0.06
Bus stop	0.41	0.44	0.54	0.5	0.37	0.5	0.43	0.42	0.4	0.45	0.41	0.45	0.51	1	0.52	0.56	0.05
Bus	0.43	0.4	0.54	0.44	0.4	0.53	0.41	0.4	0.36	0.39	0.37	0.43	0.43	0.52	1	0.63	0.08
Bus processes	0.44	0.47	0.55	0.48	0.42	0.56	0.38	0.42	0.35	0.44	0.38	0.49	0.46	0.56	0.63	1	0.08
Brand loyalty	0.14	0.14	0.11	0.04	0.15	0.16	0.14	0.09	0.08	0.09	0.11	0.09	0.06	0.05	0.08	0.08	1

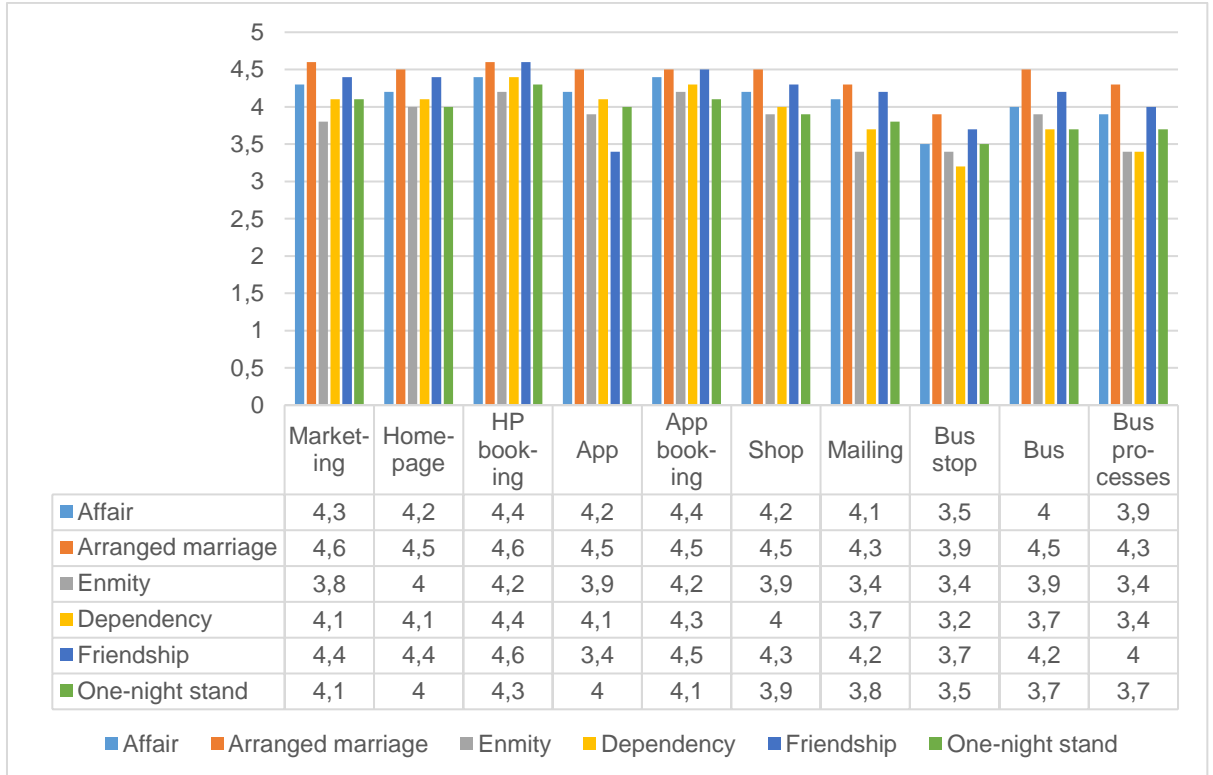
## Appendix 28. Correlations of brand love items and brand loyalty

	Brand loyalty	Affection	Friendliness	Love	Passion	Delight	Fascination	Uniqueness	Pleasure	Intimacy	Idealization	Duration	Memories	Dream
Brand loyalty	1	0.14	0.16	0.08	0.06	0.2	0.14	0.19	0.22	0.14	0.06	0.16	0.25	0.19
Affection	0.14	1	0.7	0.71	0.62	0.66	0.61	0.56	0.64	0.59	0.59	0.24	0.47	0.62
Friendliness	0.16	0.7	1	0.66	0.58	0.61	0.56	0.58	0.62	0.54	0.54	0.17	0.41	0.57
Love	0.08	0.71	0.66	1	0.79	0.68	0.66	0.57	0.62	0.64	0.72	0.18	0.42	0.62
Passion	0.06	0.62	0.58	0.79	1	0.68	0.68	0.56	0.58	0.63	0.7	0.16	0.39	0.59
Delight	0.2	0.66	0.61	0.68	0.68	1	0.74	0.64	0.67	0.59	0.57	0.21	0.45	0.64
Fascination	0.14	0.61	0.56	0.66	0.68	0.74	1	0.64	0.6	0.61	0.62	0.19	0.42	0.61
Uniqueness	0.19	0.56	0.58	0.57	0.56	0.64	0.64	1	0.66	0.59	0.55	0.24	0.45	0.61
Pleasure	0.22	0.64	0.62	0.62	0.58	0.67	0.6	0.66	1	0.59	0.56	0.21	0.45	0.66
Intimacy	0.14	0.59	0.54	0.64	0.63	0.59	0.61	0.59	0.59	1	0.75	0.26	0.53	0.62
Idealization	0.06	0.59	0.54	0.72	0.7	0.57	0.62	0.55	0.56	0.75	1	0.19	0.48	0.66
Duration	0.16	0.24	0.17	0.18	0.16	0.21	0.19	0.24	0.21	0.26	0.19	1	0.4	0.3
Memories	0.25	0.47	0.41	0.42	0.39	0.45	0.42	0.45	0.45	0.53	0.48	0.4	1	0.59
Dream	0.19	0.62	0.57	0.62	0.59	0.64	0.61	0.61	0.66	0.62	0.66	0.3	0.59	1

Appendix 29. Mean comparison of brand experience qualities and relationship forms



Appendix 30. Mean comparison of touchpoints and relationship forms







30. FlixBus shop – payment possibilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31. FlixBus shop – free WIFI	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. FlixBus shop – ticket (printed)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
33. Travel agency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34. Transaction mailing (e.g. booking confirmation)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35. Bus stop locator (google maps)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36. Bus stop – atmosphere	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
37. Bus stop – printed timetable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
38. Bus stop – departure display	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
39. Bus – outside/design	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
40. Bus – cleanness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
41. Bus – seating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
42. Bus – smell/scent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
43. Bus – luggage stowage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
44. Bus – snacks & drinks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
45. Bus – trash bin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
46. Bus – carry-on baggage slots	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
47. Bus – rest rooms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
48. Bus – security equipment (e.g. fire extinguisher)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
49. Bus – printed information (e.g. flyer)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
50. Bus – available technology (e.g. device charger, WIFI)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
51. Luggage storage process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
52. Check-in process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
53. Breaks process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
54. Check-out process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
55. Driver – outfit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
56. Driver – personality information (e.g. experience)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
57. Driver – announcement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
58. Customer satisfaction survey	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
59. E-mail newsletter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
60. Information distribution medium – e-mail	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
61. Information distribution medium – app	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
62. Information distribution medium – sms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General Feedback:						