Dyads, Triads and Consumer Treachery: When Interpersonal Connections Guard Against Brand Cheating

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Strong Bonds Drive Loyalty

committed, satisfying, important etc... → discourages cheating
(e.g. Drigotas et al., 1999; Glass and Wright, 1985)

love, commitment, attachment etc... → loyalty
(e.g. Batra et al., 2012; Fournier 1998; Park et al., 2010)
Interpersonal Insights

**Relationship Factors**
- stress/conflict
- lack of affection
- general dissatisfaction

**Individual Factors**
- high narcissism
- insecure attachment style
- divorces and young

**Situational Factors**
- reference group norms
- work-related travel
- alternatives available

Emotional Cheating (e.g. flirting, temptation)

Behavioral Cheating (e.g. sexual infidelity)

(e.g. Atkins, Baucom and Jacobson, 2001; Buss and Shackelford, 1997; Gailliot and Baumeister, 2007; Treas and Giesen, 2000)
“I am in the early stages of cheating on one of the longest-standing relationships of my (consumer) life. I have betrayed Apple”
“I have a confession to make: I’ve been cheating on my toothpaste brand”

www.corebrand.com
Imperfect Loyalty...
Imperfect Loyalty...
Branding Insights

brand fling vs. secret affair...

LACKS COMMITMENT

RISKY IF EXPOSED

Key: Expectations of Exclusivity

(Alvarez and Fournier, 2012; Fournier 1998)
Brandining Insights

Commitment Partnerships

High in love, intimacy, commitment

Norm of Exclusivity

(Alvarez and Fournier, 2012; Fournier 1998)
Def: Brand Cheating

The act of buying and/or using a brand within the same category in which one has a STRONGLY COMMITTED relationship.

≠ Brand switching
RQ:

Loyalty vs. cheating?
Norms of exclusivity?
Role of interpersonal influences?
Study 1: Probing C-B Partnership

Consumer Interviews (n = 20, non-students)

→ “strongly committed” to a brand

→ four themes emerged
Theme 1: Brand Cheating Does Not Exist

“I don’t feel unfaithful. No. I don’t think an item deserves faithfulness.”

“The idea that you could even say ‘cheating on Apple’ is pathetic” (www.news.yahoo.com)
Theme 2: Some C-B Relationships are Exclusive

“I am loyal and exclusive just to Michael Kors... For purses and wallets and watches, I stayed just true to Michael Kors. I don’t even look at other brands to be honest.”

→ Monogamy
Theme 3: Loyalty is First Chance to Say No

“I would probably look at North Face first and exhaust those options before I would consider something else.”

→ Right of First Refusal?
“Growing up I was an athlete. I played competitive basketball and that sort of thing... My family was all Nike wearers... I always felt like I was betraying Nike when I was younger wearing an Adidas shirt or something like that.”

→ Associated with monogamy, cheating
Theory: Triads vs Dyads

Brands as ends (*dyad*) or means to interpersonal ends (*triad*)

(Fournier, 2009)

Triad = norms of exclusivity? reduced cheating?
Qualtrics Survey (n = 175)

Name a brand “that you are committed to buying and using in the future” ($M_{commitment} = 5.5/7$)

Measured:
- Interpersonal Connection (“sense of contact with people who care for me”)
- Brand Relationship Strength (commitment, attachment)
- Brand Substitutability (“easy to replace this brand with a new one”)
- Monogamy (Using another brand “would be wrong”)
- Right of First Refusal (“I always consider BRAND first...”)
- Emotional Cheating (“tempted to use or buy other brands...”)
- Behavioral Cheating (“how many different brands... actually used...”)

Covariates: materialism, product/service dummy, age, gender
SEM Results

Results of ML Bootstrapping (iterations = 1,000) analysis; Chi-sq. = 1147.94; DF = 486; CMIN/DF = 2.36; CFI = .86; RMSEA = .09; all paths p < .05; Materialism (covariate) impacts Emotional Cheating (γ = .17, p < .02); Brand Type dummy (0 = product; 1 = service) impacts Behavioral Cheating (γ = .24, p < .01); all other covariates (age, gender) are not significant.
Mturk Experiment (n = 292)

Now, we want you to think about a specific brand that you are committed to buying and using in the future and that you generally use alone [with other people in mind]. That is, when you think about or use this brand, it does not link you in any way to other people (e.g. family, friends) - it's just yours [it links you in some way to other people (e.g. family, friends) – it’s something you share]. $M_{dyad} = 2.94$ vs. $M_{triad} = 4.10$, $p < .01$

Past: Reminds me of an important friend from my past ($\alpha = .81$)
Present: Reminds me of a person who is important to me now ($\alpha = .82$)
Future: Will help me carry on a tradition ($\alpha = .75$)

Moderator: Need for Belonging (e.g. I do not like being alone...) ($\alpha = .89$)
Focal Interest:

Interpersonal Connection \(\rightarrow\) Need for Belonging \(\rightarrow\) Emotional Cheating

Need for Belonging \(\uparrow\) Relationship Future Oriented

Relationship Strength
Brand Substitutability
Monogamy etc...

Past & present oriented relationships had no effects...
Among those with a low need for belonging:

→ a more interpersonally connected brand relationship reduces emotional cheating...
Among those with a high need for belonging:

- a more interpersonally connected brand relationship increases emotional cheating...
- effect mediated by C-B Relationship’s Future Orientation
Wrap-Up

Interpersonal Connections:
• Strengthen relationships, monogamy → reduce cheating

Loyalty is:
• Giving partner first chance to say no

Emotional cheating only direct path to behavioral cheating

Ongoing:
• Interpersonal connections → temptation, fantasizing
## Study 1 Summary Statistics

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*Bold = p < .05*