Sustaining Brand Loyalty: the Moderating Role of Green Consumption values

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Abstract

Environmental issues are massively emerging in the current agendas of governments, businesses and consumers all over the globe. Consumers increasingly adopt a more energetic role in the environmental discussion and employ product consumption to manifest their contribution to the debate. Equally, a growing number of businesses try to affect positive social change, while others strategically approach green opportunities; at the same time, they persistently intensify their branding offerings to sustain loyalty. This article brings into discussion green consumption values as the authors aim to shed light into the way the latter moderate the effect of brand related factors, namely brand experiences and brand personality, on brand loyalty. Based on data received from 413 participants and using the wearable technologies industry as the focal context, the study underscores the significance of green consumption values. Findings are discussed and implications for managers are provided.

Keywords: Green Consumption Values, Brand Loyalty, Brand Experience, Brand Personality, Wearable Technology

1. Introduction

The relentless development of technology significantly affects consumers' lives (Williams and Page, 2011). Technology is now considered a standard of life rather than just a gadget, enabling time saving and convenience. Consumers need to be adaptable, broadminded, buoyant and skilled multi-tasking performers (Bergh and Behrer 2013) to take full advantage of technological evolution, digital advancements and hi-tech product offerings. On top of this, modern consumers are described as image driven entities demonstrating high motivation with regard to how they perceive accomplishment while their sense of acceptance from friends and relatives is pivotal. In an effort to be accepted by their peers in several group settings (Williams and Page, 2011) they often tend to define their personal style through brand consumption driving, thus, businesses to increasingly use brand experience and brand personality as integral elements of their communication and multifaceted brand positioning strategies (Parment, 2013). The substantial rise of customer sophistication hinders promotional tactics and contemporary consumers are, therefore, not easily accessible through traditional advertising methods (Bergh and Behrer 2013). In times where sophisticated hybrid consumers seek to economize while brightening life with everyday luxuries (KPMG, 2014) and their conflicted needs are manifest, businesses are, in turn, struggling to generate brand loyalty by giving emphasis on the experiential aspects and the personality properties of brands. The latter situation appears to be more profound in hi-tech products that hold by definition, both a strong technological aspect and a fun disposition (e.g. wearables) and are regarded as luxurious offerings (Carlson, 2015).

Evidently, the investigation of customer retention has become really complex (Rizomyliotis et. al, 2020; Wood, 2000); it becomes even more challenging to understand repurchasing behaviour as ethical and environmental concerns progressively take place in ecological debates of stakeholders (Gadenne et al., 2009). Health-consciousness (e.g. Green-consumption values) is rising and this has triggered a significant alteration (Trudel & Argo, 2013; Peloza et al., 2013; Catlin & Wang, 2013) of the way consumers behave and remain loyal to a brand (Naprta, 2015; White & Simpson, 2013). The drivers of loyalty for environmentally responsible consumers are not clearly presented in literature (Leonidou et al., 2013). The shift towards green consumption behaviour is massive but has been only recently discussed by marketing researchers while little has been done under the scope of branding e.g. brand experience (Wu, 2018); brand personality (Acharya & Gupta, 2016; Neto et al., 2020) and brand loyalty (Lin, 2017; 2019; Chen, 2020). Additionally, marketers foresee the need of social normalization of

the green marketing practices, given that green products are not efficiently positioned as mainstream alternatives. Thus, it needs to be further discussed in order to assess how green marketing practices have impacted new trends in such normalization, especially in the field of high-tech products.

Considering the emerging trends in green practice implementation across business functions, as well as the tendency to perceive greener products as material-symbolic artifacts among modern consumers, and just as the relevant brand management practices are not yet substantiated, the need for further investigation of them as determinants of brand loyalty is evident. Rather, the predictors of consumers repurchasing decisions towards hi-tech products are still unfolding, and this is where we offer new knowledge, as, to the best of our knowledge, no study has investigated the role of green consumption values on consumer repurchase behaviour towards hi-tech products. As such, the main aim of the study is to contribute to the current environmental debate and advance existing knowledge by offering new insights into the way green consumption values moderate the effect of branding on brand loyalty for high tech-products.

2. Theoretical background and related work

2.1 Green Consumption and Branding

A socially responsible consumer is described by Han and Stoel (2017) as one who supports businesses that try to affect positive social change or one who acquires services or buys products that are thought to have a positive impact on the environment. People whose consumption behaviour and purchasing habits indicate their concern for ethical matters and environmental protection are considered to be green consumers (Haws, Winterich & Naylor, 2014).

Green consumption beliefs refer to product development practices that may keenly and positively affect the general society. Equally, green behaviour involves product related activities that not necessarily benefit the environment but may as well embrace more neutral activities or those that are harmless to the environment. Buying such a brand can be considered a purchase related to green consumption values. Accordingly, consumers who believe that certain brands have not been environmentally responsible and that their own actions can contribute to change this status, are more likely to consume green products (Huang, Lin, Lai,

& Lin, 2014). At the point when customers accept that the selection of products on the basis of green consumption will be beneficial for them or potentially the society, they are substantially more prone to act in a responsible way (Young, Hwang, McDonald, & Oates, 2010). As customers become more mindful of the current ecological issues, they realise they can influence the environmental status quo via purchase decisions and they equally form their attitudes and consumption behaviour on that basis. (Huang, Lin, Lai, & Lin, 2014).

The majority of the customers, who are currently requesting ethical and environmentally friendly brands, consider it to be their responsibility to improve the world (World Economic Forum, 2013). Consequently, they are likely to reject those brands which damage society or the environment (Business Wire, 2004). These customers regard individual behaviour as being of less significance to them than seeing the whole picture and making a difference in the world (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Boyd, 2010). Therefore, it is more of a social statement than a personal one to be a green consumer (Griskevicius, Tybur & Van den Bergh, 2010). This perspective denotes a means of customer personality and values, indeed a lifestyle. Therefore, it could be having a powerful impact on customers' purchasing habits, irrespective of how they are influenced by the efforts of businesses brand strategy. Customers' mentality and ecological views towards the brands they intent to purchase seem to be, now more than ever, of fundamental significance when analyzing their brand loyalty.

Nevertheless, some customers are not necessarily prepared to pay the greater costs usually attributed to sustainable and green products (Dale, 2008). During a recession, the budget of some of them, especially Millennials, is limited and their investment priorities differ (IRC, 2019), whereas others hold a strong opinion that the extra cost should be absorbed by businesses. Businesses, at the same time, are trying to empower their brands – regardless if they are green or not – by adding intangible benefits to them through brand experiences and brand personality.

2.2 Brand Experience and Brand Personality

The components of every brand are constructed around its essence, being its core as well as denoting its promise, with the entire construct eventually representing its identity. Ambler (2002) presented an advanced proposition that brand characteristics could be emotional,

rational, illusory, tangible, real or invisible. Brand personality is described as the set of human characteristics associated with a brand (Aaker, 1997). Brand personality concerns the appearance, representing tangible and visual factors, and the tonality, representing atmosphere, style and communication. Consequently, it gives the customer greater symbolic advantages (Wysong et al., 2002). Moreover, Aaker (1997) placed it into the following five categories: competence, excitement, ruggedness, sincerity and sophistication. According to literature, brands having conclusive and powerful personalities create numerous advantages (Freling & Forbes, 2005).

According to Aaker (1997) and Fournier (1998), individuals can connect brands with human attributes, in that customers regard brands as being associated with themselves or showing similarity to a celebrity. Consequently, brands resemble living people, meaning that intangible elements can be perceived as being tangible, by which customers interact with brands as though they are human (Toldos-Romero & Orozco-Gómez, 2015). Customers' direct and indirect memories of contact with the brand lead to their impression of the personality of that brand (Plummer, 1985). Such perceptions are founded on associated attributes such as a products' category, packaging or price, or unrelated characteristics such as company or user image or advertising style (Aaker, 1996).

There is a tendency for connections formed with a brand's specific attributes to be comparatively clear and long-lasting (Aaker, 1997). Moreover, Williams & Page (2010) contends that such connections are of assistance to customers to regain information, thereby enabling them to make decisions regarding their purchases. Therefore, a specific group of unique associations, within the memory of the customer, constructs a brand equity which is enabled by a specific brand personality (Keller, 1993). Brand personality is of particular importance in that it refers to the brand cues that eventually influence customers' purchasing decisions more than the product's original properties (Dick et al., 1990). Consequently, for the purpose of gaining the customers' attention, brand managers attempt to link personality dimensions with a brand (Mulyanegara et al., 2009). Most of the high-tech products have a hedonic aspect; in the case of hedonic products, it is apparent that brand personality dimensions are more powerful (Frelling, 2005), particularly for younger people who are classified as emotional customers with considerable involvement with technology (Bergh & Behrer, 2013). Consequently, it is likely that a unique and powerful brand can encourage this association with the brand personality (Gurău, 2012).

Accordingly, brand experience can be described as subjective internal consumer responses sensations and behavioural responses induced by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments (Brakus et al., 2009). Fromm and Garton (2013) claim that customers are seeking stimulation and experiences. Consequently, it is possible that the discerned brand experience is a critical element for the construction of their brand preference, and subsequently their repurchasing objective.

Furthermore, when customers are forming their brand preference, brand experience is of specific significance (Behrer, 2013), whereas it is apparent that they search for services or products which involve emotional experiences (Ratneshwar & Mick, 2005). This is due to their influence which is greater than that of product advantages and attributes, thereby resulting in enduring memories which improve brand trust and give a more profound understanding (Schmitt, 1999). It is usual for customers to base their product judgement on their personal experience or that of their peers instead of on conventional advertising or information (Williams & Page, 2010). It is essential that brand experience is consistent, original and unique from evert aspect, thereby improving a decisive impact (Shaw & Ivens, 2002; Schmitt, 2003). Brand experience should also link a brand's emotional and practical aspects (Berry et al., 2002).

When customers connect to a brand, brand experience follows (Ambler et al., 2002). Such connection may be either physical and direct, or indirect through an advertising presentation of the product (Hoch & Ha 1986), which may become apparent as a consumption experience or as a service, product or shopping (Brakus, Schmitt & Zhang, 2008). The product assessment while a customer is seeking to buy a brand and the interaction with the product itself generate brand experience (Hoch, 2002). Moreover, brand experience may happen when customers discuss the brand with others (Ambler et al., 2002). This appears to resemble the creation of the experience when customers consume the brand or visit a shop (Kerin, Jain & Howard 2002). Brand experience, which varies in depth and effectiveness, may be positive or negative, anticipated or unanticipated, or enduring or brief (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009).

According to Schmitt (2003), a brand-related stimulus, as part of brand identity, reveals brand experience, which may have an impact on brand personality (Kapferer, 1992). These concepts display numerous differences, despite the fact that they both concern the management of a brand's emotional advantages with reference to how customers react to a brand. Brand personality projects certain personality characteristics on a brand with regard to the judgement

or reflection of customers on that brand; therefore, this procedure is exceptionally presumptive (Johar, Sengupta & Aaker 2005). However, brand experience contrastingly indicates the subjective behavioural and internal responses on contact with a brand. Consequently, this is mostly a type of behaviour or an emotion which is developed by customers towards a brand, rather than being an exclusive conception of that brand. According to Brakus et al. (2009) the following four outcomes emanate from this: affective, behavioural, cognitive and sensory. The customers' senses form the sensory dimension, and their inner feelings and emotions indicate the affective dimension, whereas their creative thinking regarding the brand represents the cognitive dimension. Lastly, the customers' physical experiences associated with the brand indicate the behavioural dimension (Brakus et al., 2009; Schmitt, 1999). Therefore, although the principal emphasis of brand personality is on emotional relationships, these represent only one aspect of brand experience, despite the self-evident fact of the powerful and decisive impact of brand experience on brand personality.

Aaker (1997) categorised the following five brand personality dimensions: competence, excitement, ruggedness, sincerity and sophistication. Furthermore, Bergh and Behrer (2013) produced a branding paradigm whose five denominators improve the brands' success. These are: coolness, happiness, realness (authenticity), self-identification with the brand and uniqueness, all of which construct what is known as the CRUSH model. The single facets, which give a broad range of interpretation, also supply a brand orientation, and each facet's significance is dependent on the classification of the product. Moreover, this paradigm identifies numerous similarities with the five personality dimensions presented by Aaker (1997).

Self-identification with the brand is an underlying factor of the CRUSH model which promotes the theory that the decision-making procedure is strongly affected by the brand personality. Since brands give a perception of comfort to customers and enable them to express their feelings (Park & John, 2010), such consumers are likely to associate with brands in accordance with their image and self-conception (Malhotra, 1988). The brands for which they search emphasise conforming to their peers' crowd behaviour as well as the identity factors that they wish to represent (Bergh & Behrer, 2013). This can be summarised by stating that it is necessary for the personality of their favourite brands to intensify the uniqueness of their customers as well as to support their principles and lifestyle. However, this needs to conform to the families' and friends' expectations. Since uniqueness and brand coolness emphasise

personality characteristics (Bergh & Behrer, 2013) closely resembling the excitement dimension, several elements of the CRUSH model imply the need for brand personality to be exciting (Aaker, 1997). Brand uniqueness motivates customers to buy the recommended brand after discussing it with others, despite the difficulty in persuading them of the uniqueness of the brand. It is therefore essential that they see the principal claim of the brand as applied dependably for each of its aspects, and that they should also discern the unique selling recommendation as being appropriate for them. According to Aaker (1997) The independent and unique brand personality characteristics, which belong to the excitement dimensions, have an identical meaning.

Bergh and Behrer (2013) identified that the characteristic of coolness is included in the excitement dimension and they claim that since brand coolness heightens brand loyalty, it is of specific significance to the consumers. There is no specific definition of how customers perceive "cool" because "coolness" is a subjective factor which indicates a type of appearance and style which has an impact on brand personality. According to customers, a brand is cool when it has a clear and consistent brand vision or DNA, a unique cheerful style and creates exiting and creative innovations confirming that vision (Bergh & Behrer, 2013). This conforms to the personality characteristics described by Aaker (1997) which define the excitement dimension as being cool, stimulating, imaginative, young, unique, fashionable and progressive. Nevertheless, in the case of tech brands, the significance of coolness is somewhat high; therefore, the coolness expectation is not identical for every product classification. Customer brand loyalty, which is not straightforwardly shared or moved, is exclusive because of this being a high-involvement product (Gurău, 2012). Consequently, with regard to loyalty and differentiation, technological brands' personality is essential. Although self-identification with a brand is a critical precursor of buying intention, it is particularly important that customers are given assistance to express themselves (Maehle, Otnes & Supphellen, 2011).

What's more, the "sincerity" personality dimension of Aaker (1997) has a considerable overlap with certain facets of the "brand happiness and realness" of CRUSH model (Bergh and Behrer, 2013). Customer expectation of brands to be transparent, plausible and truthful is associated with the brand realness (or authenticity) dimension. Moreover, customers expect brands to "discuss" with them and to "listen" to them in the same way as communicating with a friend, and a brand should always maintain a fundamental vision and also be true to itself (Bergh & Behrer, 2013). According to Pattuglia, Mingione and Borra (2015), the preparedness of

customers to pay a high price as well as the brand image are increased by the brand authenticity. Moreover, Schallehn et al. (2014) claim that this has a firm connection with brand trust, which for 78 percent of customers is a significant purchasing concern (World Economic Forum, 2013). As a part of the sincerity dimension, the attributes of brand personality are: sincere, trustworthy, practical, original and amicable, thereby indicating this definition of authenticity (Aaker, 1997).

Although brands are meant to induce favourable feelings, it is also necessary to apply emotional branding because of customers' emotional nature; therefore, it is essential to eliminate negative emotions and to link the brand with positive ones (Bergh & Behrer, 2013). In order to motivate customers to buy, and to heighten brand differentiation, it is of greater importance to load the brand emotionally (Zarantonello & Luomala, 2011). This is because escapism or sensorial gratification is the driving force behind technological brands. Although a positive feeling that it is by means of communication and experience that a brand delivery is associated with brand happiness, a particularly subjective feeling is required to provide a broad scope for clarification. Nowadays, numerous factors are being sought by customers, particularly the younger ones: personal achievement, self-enhancement, a good work-life balance, worthwhile relationships, flexibility and liberty, and most importantly, to be in control of their lives. Such happiness facets, which may be compared with the personality characteristics, sentimental and cheerful within the sincerity dimension, may be achieved through the supporting the function of brands. Notably, the ability of brands to provide meaningful experiences can reflect these on brand personality traits. Thus, consumers that give a high rating to a brand experience, may also perceive a brand as being, for example, more sincere. Equally, this applies to other parts of brand experience given that customers who value the experience aspect of a brand tend to perceive this brand remarkably enhanced in terms of its personality (Riivits-Arkonsuo & Leppiman, 2016).

3. Conceptual Model and Hypotheses Development

According to current literature, loyalty is directly and indirectly influenced by brand experience (van der Westhuizen,2018; Ong at al., 2018, Mathew & Thomas, 2018). Therefore, the direct impact of brand experience on brand loyalty as well as the indirect impact resulting from brand personality are addressed in our study. Furthermore, brand loyalty is the principal dependent variable, or rather the intended outcome (Chandrashekaran et al., 2007).

Brand marketers must bond with consumers by staging holistic brand experiences (Schmitt, 1999). Since customer experience is valuable, it is anticipated that brand experiences will result in greater satisfaction, and consequently, a higher degree of loyalty (Sahin, et al., 2011). When consumers perceive greater value in the brand, then it is more likely not only to buy the specific product but also make a recommendation to others. Since positive brand experiences strengthen the brand's value consecutively the brand loyalty will be increased and thus is more likely to make a consumer loyal to the brand (Ramaseshan and Stein, 2014). Although customers look for their senses to be stimulated, as well as for happiness (Rey et al., 2012), they also seek intellectual stimulation in order to avert monotony (Schmitt, 2012). It is anticipated that they will repeat the brand experience that satisfies their requirements when they have found one. Consequently, there is a greater possibility of customers purchasing the same brand in future because their brand experiences have influenced their repurchasing decisions (Ebrahim et al.,2016).

H$_1$: Brand experience is positively related to brand loyalty.

Loyalty may also result exclusively from a customer expressing an interest in a brand and having a positive disposition towards it. Furthermore, this may result in the customer linking the brand to positive experiences by practising complex information processing (Keller, 1993), which may lead to such connections improving the likelihood of attaining loyalty. Customer exposure to a brand is followed by the conclusions of a brand's personality and experience (Aaker 1997; Johar, Sengupta & Aaker, 2005). In order to explain the procedures through which customers reach a conclusion regarding a brand, Aaker (1997) mentions a brand's ruggedness, sophistication, competence, excitement and sincerity, such attributes probably being associated with brand experience. In the light of customer experiences with brands, ranging from the packaging colour to salespersons, they have the potential to make effective decisions regarding such brand personality attributes. According to Chang and Chieng (2006) consumers use brand experience as the basis to appraise brand personality, which lead to favourable outcomes (i.e. enhanced brand loyalty). This means that brand experience encourages brand personality customer judgement, consequently being regarded as a brand personality precursor. Brands which are capable of delivering a superior brand experience can achieve preference over and differentiation from other brands and build brand loyalty (Brakus et al. 2009), so it is anticipated that customers will have personal connections with a brand with a high score on the experience scale.

Since consumers have a wide choice of brands, it's important for firms to build and sustain brand loyalty. Consumers have in their disposal a huge amount of information for each brand, which gives them the ability to constantly switch (Ramaseshan & Stein, 2014). Apparently, this is extremely costly and ineffective for brands and the only way to differentiate from competitors is to create exciting brand experiences that entice customers to continually purchase their products and remain loyal to the brand (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). Through these brand experiences, consumers relate to the personality that the brand coveys and develop strong bonds and relationships with the brand.

One of the main contributors of a successful brand is its personality (Doyle, 1990). For that reason brand personality should be shaped to be long-lasting and consistent. At the same time, it should differentiate from other brands and offer a unique sales proposition. Because brands have their own particular personalities, consumers may treat brands as real human beings (Kumar et al., 2006). In this case, consumers will expect the people's words, attitudes, behaviour or thoughts and so on to meet their respective brand personality traits. Since brands have their own personalities, users may choose the products matching their preferences and personalities according to the perceived product images (Milewicz & Herbig 1994).

According to several researchers (Guo 2003; Mengxia 2007; Kumar *et al.* 2006), brand personality has a positive impact on brand loyalty. Megxia (2007) in his researcher concluded that consumers scored higher on the cognition of some brand personalities of the brands they prefer. That was attributed to the fact that consumers like the brands having more distinct brand personality elements that could be conveyed through an anthropomorphic shape. According to Brakus et al. (2009) brand loyalty will have a positive relationship with brands that have anthropomorphic elements in terms of human attributes and personality. In practice, brand loyalty will grow if such brand is provided with a personality by means of numerous functions such as unique sales proposition and differentiation (Kim et al.,2001; Sop & Kozak, 2019). Therefore:

H$_2$: Brand experience is positively related to brand personality.

H$_3$: Brand personality is positively related to brand loyalty.

The green values denote the consumer's expression about environmental protection through

the adoption and consumption of eco-friendly offers (Koller et al., 2011; Khan and Mohsin, 2017; Sharma et al.,2020). Consumers are more likely to adopt and purchase products that promote green values as their concern and the value they attach to the environment protection has increased (Kautish and Sharma, 2018; Han et al., 2019), hence firms seek to enhance their organizational sense of green identity (Song et al., 2019; Nguyen et al.; 2020). On the other hand ecological concerns did not necessarily translate into environmentally friendly behaviour (Mostafa, 2007; Finisterra do Paço and Raposo, 2010). Roozen and De Pelsmacker (2000) in their study on consumers' attitudes towards environmentally friendly products, posit that purchase decision does not necessarily reflect consumers' environmentally friendly attitudes.

Customers, who have a tendency to rely on the guaranteed values of their brands, anticipate that brands will promote green values, despite the fact that a green consumer may not necessarily affect that person's purchasing intention (Bucic, Harris & Arli, 2012). According to Musonen et al. (2016) both green image and perceived value have a direct positive link with customer loyalty and environmental values are positively linked to the green image of the supplier. According to Butt et al. (2017), a strong relationship exists between consumers' knowledge structure and their relational preference with green brands. Since brand value has an impact on customer perception of brands, this may influence how brand personality is understood, or decrease its positive impact. With regard to creative products, it is considered that wearable technologies damage the environment because they do not generally possess environmentally friendly properties. It is probable that customers having high green consumption values will be hesitant about purchasing expensive innovative products requiring high information processing because they have a tendency to apply their personal resources intelligently (Iyer, 2016; de Medeiros & Ribeiro, 2017). It is usual for green consumers to be innovative in finding new methods of reusing current products, but not in accepting novel products or services (Price & Ridgeway, 1983).

H₄: Green consumption values are expected to reduce the effect of brand experience on brand loyalty.

H₅: Green consumption values are expected to reduce the effect of brand personality on brand loyalty.

The conceptual framework and the hypotheses of the study are presented in Figure 1.

Place Figure 1 around here

4. Research Methodology

Wearable technologies industry provided a fertile ground to investigate the aforementioned relations. Wearable brands encompass innovative technological attributes along with fun and luxurious facets (Carlson, 2015); they are also thought to be a seeming part of a user's self. What's more, the wearable technologies market still booms, and this trend is expected to continue, according to the International Data Corporation (IDC) Worldwide Quarterly Wearable Device Tracker (IDC, 2020). Most of the wearable devices are wrist-worn, i.e. smart wristbands or smart watches, and according to predictions they will continue to emerge worldwide in the years to come. Nevertheless, the recorded interest for wearable technologies, isn't followed by an equal increase in sales and little is known about the factors that prevent these innovative products from thriving. While in the early stages of their lifecycle, still, they are reported to receive somewhat lower acceptance than expected (Lampkin, 2015). Moreover, we have targeted respondents from GenX (19-38) as their profile matches the scope of this study; according to research (Future Thinking, 2017; AMCS, 2019) they are not all that keen on recycling, although they have grown in an era of increasing environmental awareness, but they are quite environment-conscious and are prepared to pay a premium for sustainably manufactured products.

Aiming to test the validity of our research hypotheses, we carried out a primary quantitative survey with the use of structured questionnaires. The reason behind the choice of the specific research design is that it enables the generalisation of the study's results to the population (Polit & Hungler, 1999; Hallberg 2008). Since literature advises that brand personality rating ought to be similar to peer rating, this technique was considered to be the most appropriate (Costa & McCrae, 1992). This is because the subject's connection with the brand forms the basis of the imagined brand personality. Therefore, in order to avert unsatisfactory or incorrect responses, respondents ought to be acquainted with the brand. Therefore, we considered that the subject's most often utilised brand or favourite brand to be the more appropriate choice than a fictitious brand (Huang, Mitchell & Rosenaum-Elliott, 2012).

The questionnaire was administered through Qualtrics in order to eliminate human error at the data entry level (Evans and Mathur, 2005). By creating awareness and providing secure access any potential bias in coverage was minimized (Solomon, 2001). We also adopted the time-trend procedure suggested by Armstrong and Overton (1977) to identify between early and late respondents. No differences were found in early and late respondents; hence, non-response bias does not appear to be an issue in the current study. The questionnaire in the first section, had a filter question regarding the age group (GenX). The purpose of that filter question was to reduce respondent burden and not waste researcher time in collecting meaningless data. Prior to distributing the final questionnaire for the purpose of guaranteeing the instrument's dependability and authenticity, we setup a pilot test (Williams, 2003; Giuffre, 1995). We examined the reliability of the data for the purpose of ensuring the suitability of the scales, all of which attained a minimum score of 0.750 in the Cronbach's Alpha, deemed to acceptable (Kline, 1999). The survey elicited 437 questionnaires out of which 34 were partially completed. The completed questionnaires were 413 (Table 1) out of a targeted 935 participants, thus achieving a satisfactory response rate of 44.2%. Participants were asked to describe the experiences with their preferred wearable tech brand as well as to assess their brands personality and duly note their loyalty towards these brands.

Place Table 1 around here

4.1 Measurement

Several measurement scales were used in the measurement instrument (see Table 2); they were designed to record some general demographic data as well as the constructs under examination (see Table 2). Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scale was applied to measure brand personality which, as aforementioned, comprises five dimensions. We separated each dimension into two to four aspects, totalling 15, each of which comprises two or three characteristics which define the brand attributes, making an overall total of 42 items in the brand personality scale. Since the paradigm assesses the degree to which any particular brand has any of these personality characteristics (Freling & Forbes, 2005), we rated the items on a seven-point Likert scale in the scope of (1) "not at all descriptive" to (7) "extremely descriptive". Previous studies reference to this scale and have provided adequate Cronbach alpha values. Austin et al. (2003) reported values between .72 and .93 (tested in various brands),

Ekinci and Hosany (2006) reported an overall value of .84 and Chu and Sung (2011) reported values between .86 and .95 for the different subconstructs.

The scale that Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009) developed in order to measure brand experience was employed in this study as well. This scale applies to the following four dimensions: affective, behavioural, intellectual and sensory, which comprise three items each, making a total of 12. The items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale in which (7) indicated "extremely descriptive" and (1) "not at all descriptive", with the instructions conforming to Aaker's (1997) work. Previous studies have used the same measurement scale and reported adequate Cronbach values. Nysveen et al. (2013) report values between .86 and .96 and Dwivedi et al (2018) values between .82 and .91 for the different subconstructs.

We also applied the GREEN-Scale (Haws, Winterich and Naylor, 2014) which concisely indicates customers' opinions on green consumption, in comparison with wider opinions concerning environmental awareness or socially responsible behaviour (Dunlap, Van Liere, Mertig & Jones, 2000). This scale, which comprises six items concerning values that pertain sustainable and environmentally friendly products, was assessed on a seven-point Likert scale in the scope of (7) "strongly agree" to (1) "strongly disagree". Lastly, You and Donthu's (2001) scale was applied to test brand loyalty. This scale has been used in previous studies (Larson 2019; Yan et l. 2019; Cruz-Cárdenas et al. 2019) providing adequate Cronbach alpha values (.87, .93, .84 respectively). All scales items with relevant mean scores and standard deviations are presented in Table 2.

Place Table 2 around here

Self-report techniques were applied in this study in order to gather the required data, and the survey instrument effectively comprised numerous aspects. The purpose of these was to reduce variance occurrences to a minimum, such variations being caused not by the participants' real cause but by the method, thereby creating method bias. It is impossible to give a reason for every potential bias origin within a specific research method; however, the appropriate processes were followed to decrease bias associated with method within the sample, in line with MacKenzie & Podsakoff (2012).

In doing this, we explicitly described the meaning and aspects of green products and wearable technologies so that all the respondents could have the same, well-shaped idea of the constructs before answering the questions. Thus, we provided them with the definitions of these variables/constructs which assisted in removing any bias across the responses. Essentially, all responses were recorded once we have asked respondents to consider one smartwatch brand, so that the definitions would not produce any bias to their responses.

5. Analysis and Results

The brand experience scale's discriminant validity obtained from the brand personality scale was investigated as a first step. Exploratory factor analysis (varimax rotation) was performed and, along with composite scores' factor analysis, it was shown that both the brand personality and the brand experience displayed high discriminant validity levels. Therefore, we applied composite measures of assessing the structural equation model so that the number of items would be decreased.

The results for the estimated model (Table 3) show a good fit to the data: GFI = .87, CFI = .93, and RMSEA = .07, with $\chi2(143) = 792.7$, $p < .001$. Every path coefficient was found to be significant ($p < .05$). and the composite measures' internal consistencies were acceptable (Cronbach's alphas: the sensory dimension = .78, the affective dimension = .71, the intellectual dimension = .80, the behavioural dimension = .73, sincerity = .87, excitement = .85, competence = .84, sophistication = .74, and ruggedness = .73).

Place Table 3 around here

The results (Table 4) revealed, in accordance with the existing knowledge, that loyalty is directly as well as indirectly affected by experience – by means of brand personality (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello (2009). Apparently, brand experience explains repurchasing behaviour better than brand personality does, given that the direct effect on loyalty (.53) in the case of brand experience is greater than in the case of brand personality (.42).

Place Table 4 around here

This can be partially explained by the fact that it is deemed as normal for a person who is involved in an inspirational experience to wish to live it again. It is anticipated that customers whose experience with a brand was remarkable, moving or impressive will choose such stimulation a second time. Contrastingly, as a result of such experiences being private, it is likely consumers will be less flexible and not as prone to situational impacts than with the more self-expressive brand personalities (Aaker, 1999).

The 2 moderating hypotheses were tested, with a multi-group analysis (see Table 5). We used the median as the cut-off point (median split approach) in order to divide the sample in two groups and then estimated results for the two new models. With regard to H_4 the results indicated that green consumption values have a significant moderating effect on the association between brand experience (BE) and brand loyalty (BL) ($\Delta\chi^2 = 3.21$, $p < .10$). More specifically although under low green consumption values ($\beta = .54$, $t = 3.12$, $p = .00$), the association becomes even stronger under high green consumption values ($\beta = .79$, $t = 5.69$, $p = .00$). In the case of H_5 the results indicated that green consumption values do have a significant moderating impact on the association between brand personality (BP) and brand loyalty (BL) ($\Delta\chi^2 = 3.18$, $p < .10$). More specifically although under low green consumption values ($\beta = .49$, $t = 3.31$, $p = .00$), the association becomes even stronger under high green consumption values ($\beta = .83$, $t = 5.74$, $p = .00$). This moderating effect was found to be stronger in affecting the relationship between personality and loyalty than that between experience and loyalty.

Place Table 5 around here

6. Discussion

The contribution of this work is threefold. Firstly, and more importantly, we offer new knowledge in the field of environmental research. Green consumption studies are still at an early stage, especially when it comes to tech products. They may serve as a key driver in food consumption or even fast-moving consumer goods, but little is known about their influence on consumer decision-making process for high tech products. Within this scope, we have

investigated wearable technologies and present a more profound comprehension of the way green consumption moderates the effect of branding elements (namely brand personality and brand experience) on brand loyalty. Moreover, using the specific context, this study adds value to the extant literature in branding for new technological products. Thus, we provide additional knowledge on the way brand loyalty is influenced by brand personality and brand experience in a product category (e.g. wearables) where it still remains inadequately explored and unconfirmed.

First and foremost, this study offers new evidence pertaining to the role of customers' green consumption values in the interplay between brands personality and consumers repurchase habits. Given that the expectations regarding tech brands may be changed by various customer opinions, it is important that businesses have complete and thorough understanding of who is being targeted by their branding strategy. In order to obtain such insight for the expected brand personality, additional and ongoing qualitative research should be conducted. The development of green(er) products is inscribed by the certain environmental morality and is driven through a process of socio-material comprehension (Zaharia & Zaharia, 2014). The specific aspect of this development process is positioning green products as distinct, mapping it to the green marketing claims regulated by the state authorities against common environmental needs. What's more, the development of new brand experiences associated with green consumerism is also positioned as a part of responsible consumer behaviour, which drives loyalty to the relevant products among socially and environmentally responsible individuals. Hence, green consumption values are primarily created among younger generations, who acknowledge the need of change in daily practices, also reflecting on their changing lifestyles.

Understanding of green consumer behaviors also emerges from a series of purchasing decisions made individually rather than as a distinct consumer group. Young et al. (2010) mentioned that brand experience in the case of green consumption is associated with certain hierarchy of importance in ethical drivers involved into decision-making process. Shaw et al. (2005), Young et al. (2010) also mentioned a typology of the ethical consumer practices according to the way consumers relate to the product or try to influence the change in seller's attitude or product stance. Considerably, green consumers develop loyalty to their products through the series of interactions, further attempting to lobby their views in line with publicly discussed social and environmental concerns.

Considering that customers shape their brand preferences mostly based on first-hand experiences, they are unlikely to develop their likings according to conventional advertising, but rather tend to do so on the basis of personal experience and peer influence (Williams & Page, 2010). Brand personality can be impacted by brand experience, as shown by brand-related stimuli (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009), a presupposition verified by the results of the survey.

Exciting experiences are a result of exciting brands which help customers to display their personality (Maehle, Otnes & Supphellen, 2011), a critical element being self-identification with a brand (Malhotra, 1988). Moreover, customers, as suggested by literature, search for worthwhile experiences which are deliverable through sincere brands (Park & John, 2010). Hence, an attempt ought to be made by managers to generate a differentiated brand personality and communicate it to the audience in such a way that they can clearly recognise and understand. The positive impact of an inspiring brand experience on brand personality is also stressed out in this study. Should hi-tech brands managers wish to give their customers a worthwhile experience, they ought to be conscious of this impact. In order to attract these customers, empirical research suggests a mix of competence, sincerity and excitement, whereas on the other hand we expect ruggedness and sophistication to be relevant to brand differentiation.

Another important aspect of our findings refers to how green consumption values affect brand personality. According to He, Cai, Deng, and Li (2016), green consumers often tend to boycott the non-green products, foreseeing green consumption as the mean to minimize purchase frequency and hence choose recyclable products with ecological labels and higher durability of use. Considerably, green consumers put certain degree of symbolism into the products they choose, replicating behaviors of luxury consumers from psychological standpoint (Sadachar, Khare, & Manchiraju, 2016). Hence, marketers should consider personalities of green consumers as those who differentiate their purchasing decisions from non-green ones, being ready to pay for the high quality and product stance, while not being exaggerated with the need to self-express through money and status.

Finally, it is important to consider that green consumer values fall in line with regulatory norms established by social groups and institutions. Miniero et al. (2014) admitted that green consumers are prevention-focused individuals, who strategically regulate their behaviors and

use vigilance strategies to ensure personal stability. Marketers need to keep in mind that (Stoimenova, 2016) green consumers demonstrate stronger environmental knowledge, which is often a barrier to communicate personal appeals natural to the non-green consumption. From brand personality perspective, it means that high-tech products would only develop consumer loyalty if their marketing communication practices would be in line with regulatory frameworks and social orientation, while any deviation from the green practices might create a significant loyalty breach.

In all, as wearables and other technological products include trendy and fashionable elements as well as technology components, they should be positioned in the market as products that meet potential customers' hedonic needs but also functional requirements; individual needs but also social requirements. In other words, "cool" brands ought to satisfy consumers' societal well-being; however, although the majority of wearable brands offer increased satisfaction and give convincing and sophisticated answers to meet to technical requirements, they have minimal success in balancing environmental issues. Overshooting design with playful colours or virtual elements and exceeding the customers' expectations by offering stimulating brand experiences and exciting brand personality can be considered as critical features of a branding strategy; still, they are expected to be less effective in positively affecting repurchasing behaviour unless they also offset customers green concerns.

7. Limitations and Future Research

This research, like most studies, faces some restrictions. Firstly, on one hand applying a single-country sample enables us to generalise our findings and to secure for the internal validity of the research. Nevertheless, taking a sample from different countries would help in gaining a better insight into the purchase behaviour of various customer profiles, and check whether behaviours are comparatively steady in various samples and contexts. In addition to this, the respondents' bias is another issue, although they were unbiased in their responses given that we used a specific non-brand definition of the product category and they had the choice to pinpoint the actual effect of several factors on their attitude. Still, some of them might have an affection (Albert & Merunka , 2012) or a strong attachment (Belaid & Behi, 2011) to a specific brand and would purchase that brand, irrespective of the product.   This research focuses on wearables; however, we expect managerial implications to be transferable to different technological products.

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Table 1. Sample Profile

Variable	Values	Frequency	Valid (%)
Gender	Male	173	41.9
	Female	240	58.1
Family Cycle	Single	116	28.1
	Married	204	49.4
	Married+Children	93	22.5
Age	19-22	121	29.3
	23-27	157	38
	28-32	135	32.7
Educational Level	High School	24	5.8
	Graduate	254	59.3
	Postgraduate	135	32.7
	PhD	9	2.2
n=413			

Table 2. Scales of measurement

Brand personality	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Er Mean
Sincerity			
1. Down to earth	5.05	.926	.042
2. Family oriented	4.74	.865	.039
3. Small town	5.32	879	.040
4. Honest	4.52	1.003	.046
5. Sincere	5.19	.989	.045
6. Real	4.75	.730	.047
7. Wholesome	3.70	.747	.038
8. Original	3.65	.723	.058
9. Cheerful	3.65	.836	.032
10. Sentimental	3.58	.798	.037
11. Friendly	3.70	.747	.037
Excitement			
12. Daring	4.46	.642	.041
13. Trendy	4.27	.729	.036
14. Exciting	4.23	.732	.040
15. Spirited	4.20	.750	.038
16. Cool	4.19	.808	.037
17. Young	4.31	.722	.058
18. Imaginative	4.16	.795	.065
19. Unique	4.08	.747	.043
20. Up to date	4.16	.737	.053
21. Independent	3.49	1.143	.052
22. Contemporary	3.59	1.285	.053
Competence			
23. Reliable	3.49	1.055	.070
24. Hard working	3.42	1.022	.068
25. Secure	3.42	1.047	.076
26. Intelligent	3.27	1.177	.090
27. Technical	3.85	.950	.083
28. Corporate	2.97	1.186	.087
29. Successful	3.83	.926	.062
30. Leader	3.70	1.141	.038
31. Confident	3.65	.859	.059
Sophistication			
32. Upper class	3.58	.831	.070
33. Glamorous	3.70	.878	.074
34. Good looking	3.11	.744	.062
35. Charming	4.46	.945	.079
36. Feminine	4.27	.807	.068
37. Smooth	4.08	.724	.061
Ruggedness			
38. Outdoorsy	3.49	.741	.062
39. Masculine	3.59	1.002	.086
40. Western	3.81	.832	.072
41. Tough	3.49	.827	.071
42. Rugged	3.42	.900	.078
Brand Experience			
Sensory			

1. This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses.	4.95	1.065	.048
2. I find this brand interesting in a sensory way.	4.36	.966	.044
3. This brand does not appeal to my senses. *	3.92	1.134	.051
Affective			
4. This brand induces feelings and sentiments.	4.19	1.133	.051
5. I do not have strong emotions for this brand. *	3.64	1.137	.052
6. This brand is an emotional brand.	4.13	.959	.033
Behavioural			
7. I engage in physical actions and behaviours when I use this brand.	3.70	0.747	.058
8. This brand results in bodily experiences.	3.11	1.141	.032
9. This brand is not action oriented. *	4.46	.642	.037
Intellectual	4.27	.729	.037
10. I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand.	4.23	.732	.038
11. This brand does not make me think. *	4.20	.750	.041
12. This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.	4.19	.808	.036
Green scale			
1. It is important to me that the products I use do not harm the environment.	4.63	1.097	.050
2. I consider the potential environmental impact of my actions when making many of my decisions.	4.16	1.170	.053
3. My purchase habits are affected by my concern for our environment.	4.12	1.117	.051
4. I am concerned about wasting the resources of our planet.	4.68	.993	.045
5. I would describe myself as environmentally responsible.	4.23	.939	.043
6. I am willing to be inconvenienced in order to take actions that are more environmentally friendly.	4.12	1.283	.058
Brand loyalty			
1. I consider myself to be loyal to this brand.	4.14	.812	.056
2. This brand would be my first choice	4.36	.837	.053
3. I will not buy other brands if this brand is available at the store.	4.41	.920	.052
*Reverse item			

Table 3. Indicators of Reliability and Validity

Constructs and measurements	a	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
BE	.831	.854	.714	.321	.141
BP	.861	.911	.713	.088	.070
BL	.811	.885	.829	.313	.074
GCV	.852	.911	.733	.166	.092

Note: BE=Brand Experience, BP=Brand Personality, BL= Brand Loyalty, GCV=Green Consumption Values

Table 4. Standardized structural coefficients

Hypothesis	β	t-value	p-value	Acceptance
H$_1$ Brand experience is positively related to brand loyalty.	.53	2.06	.003	Supported
H$_2$ Brand experience is positively related to brand personality.	.66	2.72	.008	Supported
H$_3$ Brand personality positively related to brand loyalty.	.42	3.25	.010	Supported

Note: Cmin/df = 2.72; CFI = .93; NNFI = .90; RMSEA = .07 (90 % C.I. 0.02, 0.07); SRMR = 0.04

Table 5. Results of moderating effects

	Green Consumptions Value as a moderator				
Main effect	**Hypothesized moderating effects**	**High Green Consumption Values Group**	**Low Green Consumption Values Group**	**Δχ² (Δdf=1)**	**Acceptance**
BE→BL	H$_4$ Green consumption values are expected to reduce the positive effect of brand experience on brand loyalty.	$\beta = .79$ t = 5.69	$\beta = .54$ t = 3.12	3.21 (p<.10)	Supported
BP→BL	H$_5$ Green consumption values are expected to reduce the positive effect of brand personality on brand loyalty.	$\beta = .83$ t = 5.74	$\beta = .49$ t = 3.31	3.18 (p<.10)	Supported