The role of the emotion felt towards a brand in the development of the behaviour of loyalty: An application in the sector of mobile phones in Tunisia

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Accepted 1 July, 2011

This work aims at highlighting the contribution of the role of emotions in the formation and preservation of the relationship between the consumer and the brand. In fact, now, a firm that wants to conquer and keep its customers' base is expected to invest at the level of the emotional value that it has to give to its brand. Thus, the fact of eliciting the emotions of consumers has become a challenge to develop a close emotional and behavioral resistance to change. An experimental phase was conducted for a sample of 400 consumer brand of mobile phones. The results show that certain emotions can develop a relationship of loyalty to a brand.

Key words: Brand, emotion, emotional attachment, commitment, loyalty.

INTRODUCTION

Now, research on consumer behaviour focuses on the growing recognition of the emotional, hedonic and affective factors (Filser, 1996; Graillot, 1998, Schmitt, 1999; Gobé, 2001; Fournier, 1998). In fact, nowadays, consumption is no longer limited to the act of purchasing, but it also manipulates and exchanges feelings and emotions beyond the functional aspect (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). So, what today's consumer is looking for is a value-added and an emotion because consumption has become an experiment that is achieved in a research objective of emotions and pleasure. Thus, the challenge for a brand is not simply in displaying for the consumer a wide variety of products at acceptable prices, but also in providing an emotional experience. Besides, the emotional value that any brand should have is becoming, nowadays, the most important investment (Gobé, 2001) since it can stimulate consumption and expand such a form of psychological proximity and attachment to the brand. It even makes the consumer more involved and more resistant to changes (Laceoeuilhe, 1997; Gobé, 2001). Our goal through this research is to answer the following question:

How can we build and foster a relationship with consumers while raising their emotions?

To do this, we begin by defining what is meant by emotion and its promoters for a brand. Then, we will study the aspects of stabilizing the relationship with the brand such as commitment and brand loyalty. We will, then, establish a conceptual framework of our research reflecting the role of emotions in shaping the behaviour of fidelity. Then, we discuss the methodology used to empirically validate our model and detail the process of inquiry that was conducted with consumers of mobile phone brands. Finally we will discuss the results and identify some limitations and future pathways of research.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS FELT TO A BRAND IN THE FORMATION OF THE BEHAVIOR OF LOYALTY

Building our research on the achievements of literature, we will attempt to clarify the role of the emotional dimension in the development of behavioural loyalty between the consumer and the brand, in the context of
mobile phones in Tunisia. Thus, we try to identify the variables that intervene. We then propose a theoretical model with the hypotheses of links between these variables.

The emotional relationship between the consumer and the brand

In the context of relational approach, the special relationship between the consumer and the brand involves a new dimension that is the emotional dimension (Filser, 1996; Graillot, 1998; Gobé, 2001). Actually, the fact of eliciting emotions of consumers and affecting their minds becomes a major concern for any brand and a key success factor for developing long-term relationship (Lacoeuilhe, 1997; Cristau, 2001). In this research we will study the value of the emotional aspect in the formation and maintenance of the relationship between the Tunisian consumer and the various brands of mobile phones.

What is an emotion?

For Graillot (1998), emotion is an affective, subjective, experimental, temporary, multidimensional phenomenon and a source of motivation caused by exogenous factors to the individual that interact with the process of treatment of the collected information for the purpose of experience of consumption. As for Goleman (1997), an emotion is a combination of feelings and thoughts, a particularly psychological and biological condition, and a range of tendencies to action it inspires. For Amine (1998), emotion is a conscious occurrence caused by the combination of cognitive changes that can be (good, bad, pleasant, unpleasant, harmful, desirable, etc.) and the physiological assessment. All these components constitute the experience of emotion. We can say that for some researchers there are more than a thousand dimensions of emotion whereas for others there are only a few.

The promoters of the emotions of consumers for a brand

The emotional pull of the brand

Cristau (2006) defines the emotional attraction of a brand as a holistic perception of a power of seduction in the brand that gives it an important aesthetic value. Any contact with this brand brings a great pleasure. This attraction can be caused by a marvellous design, credibility with the product components as well as several other elements that make the brand touch some senses and arouse certain emotions among consumers as they get into contact with it.

Thus, the experience of consumption of a brand must be rich in emotion and all the senses must be provided by the brands to capture the attention of consumers, enrich their emotions, and involve them in a memorable customer experience (Hirschman et al., 1982). Even according to these researchers, the main motive for the actual purchase could well be some feelings and emotions of all kinds, no matter of what intensity they can be, even unsustainable.

In this relational perspective, recent work on the relationship between the consumer and the brand shows that the brand should go more to the heart than to the mind. It should be rich in emotional value (Gobé, 2001; Cristau, 2001, 2006). Thus, through this emotional value, the brand can become more interactive with the consumer, more humane because it relies on the values of a greater truth and a real exchange (Filser, 1996). It provides content to the brands by highlighting their personalities and by providing specific and special features (Gobé, 2001). It gives life to brands by creating a deep and durable connection between the consumer and the brand. These brands are the first brands that we love. They transmit joy and happiness, and that make us feel close, almost as if it were a friend (Cristau, 2001).

The emotional sensitivity to the brand

For Kapferer and Laurent (1992) sensitivity to brands is a psychological variable which brings the focus to the brand in the process of purchase decision, the value of the brand compared to other product characteristics, the interest that the customer gives to the brand in finding information, the order of acquisition of the brand. Gharbi et al. (2003) use the definition of D’Astous et al. (2003) to define the sensitivity to the brand. They see it as “the great importance of commitment to brand names when choosing and buying”. This sensitivity to the brand varies according to the belief in the difference between the brands for the customer, his perception of their competitively at the level of choice and its involvement in the product (Kapferer and Laurent, 1992).

Thus, Fazio (1986) “giving a very important value to the brand name that we like, is essential in the process of choosing and buying”. It may thus trigger diverse and intense emotions (Goüteron, 2006). Undeniably, when purchasing, decision making of the consumer may be influenced by various positive emotions triggered by emotional sensitivity to the brand to the extent that the consumer feels more attracted, more affected and more attached to a brand that has a very important name for him (Gharbi et al., 2003; Lacoeuilhe, 2000).

So, in this new relational and particularly emotional approach, we can speak of a relationship full of emotions that must be developed between a customer and a brand so that the feels as a close friend (Morgan et al., 1994). On the one hand these emotions are stimulating the emotional attraction of a brand and on the other the
emotional sensitivity to the brand. Throughout our research, we are going to distinguish three specific emotional dimensions that are connection, passion and affection because their importance and their role in developing the relationship with the brand are well verified by Mathew et al. (2005).

(i) The affection: it consists in developing a relationship of love, serenity, friendship: this type of emotion represents the warm feelings that a consumer can bring to a brand.

(ii) Passion: it is about being passionate, enchanted and captivated. This emotion reflects the positive and intense feelings aroused by a brand. It refers to the attraction and attachment between the consumer and the brand. This creates a certain melancholy in case of separation. Thus, the inseparability preserved by passion is a symptom of the strong relationship.

(iii) Connection: It is about being connected, attached and linked to a brand. These emotions describe the feelings experienced by a consumer who feels bound to the brand.

STABILIZATION ASPECTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CONSUMER AND THE BRAND: LOYALTY AND EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT TO THE BRAND.

Emotional attachment to the brand

For Lacoeuilhe (1997), "the idea of attachment was primarily studied in psychology where early research was conducted by Bowlby (1979) on the relationship between parents and new babies". The attachment theory in psychology demonstrates that the degree or intensity of emotional attachment to an object predicted the nature of the interaction between the individual and the object. In consumer behaviour, marketing research emphasizes on the importance of possession in the life of an individual. The attachment to an object, which is a powerful psychological investment in an object, reflects the role of ownership in maintaining the identity and the expression of self-concept of an individual. The brand can be described as a system of identity and as a means of communication with others but it also provides a benchmark towards oneself (Lacoeuilhe, 2000). It can even be seen as an active partner in a relationship, able to generate some emotion, as a person (Fournier, 1998). Heilbrunn (2001) focused on the psychological process of this close relationship between consumer and brand. According to him, the attachment is an emotional and affective relationship woven by a consumer towards a particular brand. In the same context Lacoeuilhe (2000) speaks of a psychological proximity between the consumer and the brand. He defines commitment as being a psychological variable reflecting a lasting and unalterable emotional connection (separation is painful) with the brand and which reflects a close psychological relationship with it. As for Cristau (2001), she considers the attachment to a trademark as being psychologically emotional, strong and sustainable and that it results from an association of feelings of friendship and confidence towards the brand.

Brand loyalty

Recently, research on consumer behaviour is directed towards new components of brand loyalty by enhancing its emotional dimension. Thus, we begin to define brand loyalty through a more emotional perspective especially with the rise of the experimental approach (Hirschman et al., 1982). In this context, N’Goala (2003) considers that brand loyalty is an emotional link that leads the consumer to maintain an action in favour of a brand despite the circumstances he encounters. According to Olivier (2004), loyalty is a strong commitment to regularly buying a product or service more popular than others, despite the fact that changing circumstances or marketing activities represent a potential impact which can be sufficient to cause behavioural changes.

In all the work on the brand loyalty, three main approaches have appeared: the first is the behavioural approach (behavioural) which tends to consider loyalty as a passive response because it is based on an analysis of shopping behaviour. The second is the attitudinal approach (deterministic), which causes the active nature of customer loyalty to be highlighted. The third approach, a mixed one, is the one that highlights the characteristics of both behavioural and attitudinal loyalty to the brand and it is the newest and the most conceptually robust (Lacoeuilhe, 1997). In fact, according to this latter approach, the brand loyalty has two components: one is the attitudinal component; the other is the behavioral component. These two components are complementary in order to constitute a true loyalty (Lacoeuilhe, 1997; Dubois, 1994).

N’Goala (2003) also justifies the existence of these two components of loyalty and he considers that in the long-term real loyalty is not simply based on a favourable or positive evaluation of the brand since they vary greatly over time. In order to last for the long term, it is important that loyalty is based on a consumer’s affective commitment toward the brand accompanied by a repetitive purchase of the same brand.

Thus, in this new relational approach of marketing, we can not speak of loyalty without underlining the vital role of commitment to the brand (Lacoeuilhe, 2000; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Aaker, 1992) since it represents the long-term commitment to see the relationship continue (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). From a consumer perspective it is an implicit or explicit intention to maintain a stable relationship (Gurviez, 2000). Indeed, thanks to this commitment, we can distinguish the true brand loyalty from other forms of behaviour acquisition (Lacoeuilhe,
1997). Through these definitions, we can notice that the commitment is a psychological one and it refers to the vigour of the relationship that the consumer has with the brand. If the consumer is really committed, he will be able to cope with temptations of the competition. That is why client’s commitment is vital for a brand because:

(i) Committed customers devote most of their expenses to the brand and they do not give much importance to the price.
(ii) They can hardly accept substitutes in case of unavailability and they are more receptive to brand communication.

The attachment: A factor of commitment towards the brand

Numerous researchers have proposed to distinguish as a source of commitment to the brand, the development of an emotional connection that is expressed in the concept of commitment between the brand and the individual (Aaker, 1992; Lacoeuilhe, 1997). However, the specificity of the emotional ties that underpin this relationship makes it particularly difficult for them to imitate or transpose (Lacoeuilhe, 2000, Amine, 1998, Aaker, 1992). For this reason we may well believe that brand loyalty will be stronger if it has its origin in an attachment, reflecting a stable relationship between the individual and the brand. Thus, it enables a brand to stand firm despite the changing environment or with the arrival of a new brand with new equal or superior benefits to the brand. For this reason a breach of loyalty is not systematic and commitment to the brand will persist.

In fact, this article sheds light on the process of loyalty by showing that the consumption value of a brand is not only determined by its material component which includes in some way, all the characteristics of what is consumed in addition to function usage (Holbrook et al., 1982). The attachment to the brand can offer the opportunity to understand how a consumer may be loyal to a brand without having to differentiate it from its competitors in terms of functionality or utility. This feeling that links the consumer to the brand is independent of specific purchase situations. In this context, brand loyalty is a barrier against replacing a brand and a pledge of loyalty from the consumer.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Conceptual framework of research

Following this review, we determined a set of relationships reflecting the role of the emotional dimension in the formation and preservation of the relationship between consumer and brand. We expressed this network of relationships through a conceptual framework (Figure 1) showing how certain emotions, especially the more intense and long-lasting (connection, passion, affection), which are generated by an emotional sensitivity and an emotional attraction to the brand and that can develop an emotional attachment in relation to the brand, which in turn can generate a commitment and a repetitive purchase of that brand. This network of relationships can be summarized in a simplified manner as shown in Figure 1.

The theoretical model and assumptions

The theoretical model and the various hypotheses can be summarized in a simplified manner as illustrated in Figure 1. Thanks to the emotional value of the brand that is today the most important investment on one hand and
to the sensitivity of an emotional nature of such a consumer brand on the other, many emotions of the consumer can be aroused. In our framework we only brought three emotional dimensions that are: affection, connection and passion. These emotions can generate some form of attachment to the brand. In fact, consumers who feel affected, passionate and connected to that brand may also feel a closeness and emotional attachment to that brand. This may lead consumers to a commitment and a desire to stabilize the relationship over time. This commitment leads in turn to an actual and repetitive purchase of the same brand. Hence the following assumptions:

\( H_{1a} \): The emotional attraction of the brand has a positive effect on the emotion of affection felt by the consumer.

\( H_{1b} \): The emotional attraction of the brand has a positive effect on the emotion of passion felt by the consumer.

\( H_{1c} \): The emotional attraction of the brand has a positive effect on the emotion of connection felt by the consumer.

The consumer may give the brand a strong emotional value, as suggested by the theory given by Beatty et al. (1988). It is also the central question of Heilbrunn (2001); Fournier (1998) and Lacoeuilhe (1997, 2000).

Therefore, it is possible to touch the senses of consumers and generate some of their emotions through emotional attraction. Some researches even say that it can arouse intense emotions of consumers and somehow lasting affection, passion and connection.

\( H_{2a} \): The emotional sensitivity to the brand has a positive influence on the emotions of affection felt by the consumer.

\( H_{2b} \): The emotional sensitivity to the brand has a positive influence on the emotions of passion felt by the consumer.

\( H_{2c} \): The emotional sensitivity to the brand has a positive influence on the emotions of connection felt by the consumer.

The power of the brand name is an important value in the decision of choosing and buying. Thus, sensitivity to the brand represents the intensity of the relationship between consumer and brand. More than cognitive, this relationship can take an emotional and sensitive dimension (Kapferer et al., 1992). In this case it may trigger certain emotions like affection, passion and connection.

\( H_{3a} \): There is a positive relationship between feelings of affection felt by the consumer and the emotional attachment to the brand.

\( H_{3b} \): There is a positive relationship between feelings of passion felt by the consumer and the emotional attachment to the brand.

\( H_{3c} \): There is a positive relationship between feelings of connection felt by the consumer and the emotional attachment to the brand.

The emotional attachment to the brand reflects a relationship full of emotions and specifically targeted and developed between a consumer and his favourite brand. The vigour of this link is associated with the strongest feelings of connection, affection and passion. Matthew et al. (2005) are the first to have tried to measure this relationship with reference to the brand. Through an exploratory study, they showed that the three dimensions of emotion: affection, connection and passion are first-order factors underlying the creation of emotional attachment:

\( H_{4a} \): There is a positive relationship between emotional attachment of a consumer to a brand and his commitment to that brand.

\( H_{4b} \): There is a positive relationship between commitment of a consumer to a brand and repetitive purchase of the brand.

The research on brand loyalty has shown that brand loyalty consists of two components: one is an attitudinal commitment concerning the brand, the other is a behavioural one and it is represented by a repetitive and effective purchase. To develop a commitment to a brand one must first be attached to it (Lacoeuilhe, 2000). This feeling that unites the consumer and the brand is independent of specific purchase situations. In this context, brand loyalty is a barrier to the substitution and a guarantee of customer loyalty (Lacoeuilhe, 2000; Heilbrunn, 2001).

**METHODOLOGY**

The empirical validation of our hypotheses is based on several methodological choices concerning the plan of experimentation and development of measures.

**Scope and plan of experimentation**

As part of our research and to measure the influence of emotions on the purchasing behaviour of consumers as well as on the repetition of this purchase, we chose the field of mobile phones for which the importance of the concept of brand enables us to meet our needs in the study.

We chose this field for the following reasons: Firstly, choosing a mobile phone highlights the brand’s name. Therefore, there is a strong sensitivity to the brand name in this type of product. We also often find, among dealers of mobile devices, many consumers looking with desire at the different brands available and what is new in this field. Thus, these conditions lead us to study the nature of the relationship that can be created between the consumer and the
Table 1. Reliability test by two indicators: Cronbach’s alpha and rho of Jöreskog.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha</th>
<th>Rhô of joreskog</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATTR</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.910</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.844</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFFEC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.864</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PASS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.880</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONNE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.716</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.897</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMII</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.878</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REP-PUR</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.931</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Test of discriminator validity of the various constructs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Pvc</th>
<th>Test t (t&gt; 1.96)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATTR</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>16.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENS</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>18.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFFEC</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>21.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PASS</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>21.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONNE</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>20.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>16.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMII</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>16.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REP-PUR</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>21.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

brand of mobile phones and which involves the affective and especially emotional dimension.

The final sample consisting of 400 consumers of these brands is interviewed about their relationship with the various brands sold in the Tunisian market (NOKIA, SAMSUNG, LG, SONY ERICSSON, PHILIPS, MOTOROLA, SIEMENS, EVERTEK, ALCATEL, and SAGEM) and that is done on the basis of three socio-demographic factors: gender (50% man, 50% woman), age (young, adult) and place of residence (north of Tunisia, south of Tunisia,…). In this research we adopted the method of convenience (our sample is taken at random).

Development of measures

Measuring instruments are designed for different constructed models. The scales of measurement of concepts are adjusted to existing scales in the literature with some adjustments to fit in our study area that is the area of mobile telephony.

For the emotional attraction of the brand we selected the scale of Cristau (2006). For their susceptibility to the brand the items that we selected are from the work of Kapferer and Laurent (1992), and meet the full range of theoretical elements of the definition provided by the authors. The Scales of measurements of the three dimensions of emotion (affection, passion, connection) come mainly from the work of Mathew et al (2005).

As for the emotional attachment to the brand, we adopted the measurement used by Heilbrunn (2001) who measured the attachment to the brand through these different and influential facets.

Finally, for the brand loyalty with its two components (commitment and repetitive purchase) we selected scales from the doctoral research Hakiri (2004).

RESULTS

Quality of the measures

A pre-test carried out on a first sample of 80 users of cell phones has led to an initial refinement of the measure (we used the SPSS software). Then exploratory analysis was performed on the final sample (n = 400). This time, we conducted a study of confirmatory through methods of structural equations using LISREL 8.0 software. Our choice on this method is based on the fact that our variables are latent (not directly measurable.) Thus this method allows us to take account of measurement errors. We started by reaching a preliminary psychometric validation of the measurement model. In fact, for the test for single dimension constructs, we eliminated some items not having a strong correction with the remaining items. The test of reliability of measurement scales is summarized in the Table 1.

According to the values of two indicators (Cronbach’s alpha and rho Jöreskog) used to test the reliability of measurements, we found satisfactory results. Therefore, we can say that all the suggested measurements of scale are reliable and have good internal consistency (Table 2). The convergent validity of each latent variable is checked by pvc coefficients ranging from 0.63 to 0.88, so, they are all above 0.5 and the values of t tests are significant because they are all above 1.96 (Roussel et al., 2002).
Table 3. Test of discriminator validity of different constructs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ATTR</th>
<th>SENS</th>
<th>AFFE</th>
<th>PASS</th>
<th>CONNE</th>
<th>ATT</th>
<th>COMMI</th>
<th>REP-PUR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pvc</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>√ pvc</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTR</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENS</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFFE</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PASS</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONNE</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMI</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REP-PUR</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. The main indices of adjustment of our model structure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>X²/ddl</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>RMR</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model of structure</td>
<td>4132/771</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.047</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The discriminating validity is also demonstrated (√ pvc is always higher than the correlations shared with other constructs (Roussel et al., 2002) (Table 3). So, the scales proposed are only meant for the construct they are supposed to measure. A factor analysis that confirms this using methods of structural equation (LISREL), gives satisfactory results. In fact, the structural model provides a correct adjustment, allowing the testing of hypotheses (Table 4).

The vigour of the relationships between different latent variables in the model is presented in Figure 2. The different hypotheses are confirmed in different way as shown in Table 5.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Through all selected empirical results we could confirm all our hypotheses. In fact, from these results we can say that the emotional attraction of the brand and sensitivity to the brand may be regarded as good stimulators of consumer emotions. However, for the sensitivity to the brand it is very important to mention that this influence, despite the fact that it is positive, is not very strong. In fact, it is recognized that this sensitivity has a cognitive dimension more than an affective one. Indeed, the presence of brand name in the minds of consumers and the importance that everyone gives to his favourite brand, lead to a process of choosing and buying that is more reasonable and more rational and based on criteria that are more objective than on emotional, cognitive and sentimental (superior quality, value for money .....). However, the significance of the relationship between the two variables (susceptibility to the trademark / emotions) is due to the existence of an emotional dimension in the sensitivity to the trademark.

Regarding the existence of a positive relationship between the emotions of love, passion and connection on one side and the emotional attachment on the other, our study has confirmed earlier studies of Matthew et al. (2005) who have shown that the stimulation of the emotions of the consumer is responsible for creating a deep and long lasting bond between the consumer and the brand.

In our field of study, we emphasized on the strength of the link which shows the strong cause and effect relationship between the two variables (emotions, emotional attachment). This allows us to assert that if a consumer feels bound and connected to a brand, he can develop a close emotional relationship and a willingness to maintain this relationship in the future.

Thus, the relation of cause and effect is undoubtedly significant between the emotional attachment and emotional commitment to a brand. It leads us to suggest that:

(i) The psychological and emotional proximity between the consumer and the brand reinforces the latter's resistance to change.

(ii) The feeling of emotional attachment to the brand allows us to predict the behaviour of the individual in terms of consumption of the same brand of mobile phones in a second purchase. We emphasize, moreover, that attachment has a regression coefficient with high commitment. So, we can say that the commitment is a key factor in maintaining the intentional behaviour of brand loyalty.

(iii) Following this justification, it seems necessary to
emphasize the importance of commitment as a source of brand loyalty.

In the end, and through our study on mobile phone sector, we observe that there is a highly significant relationship between affective commitment to the preferred brand and repetitive purchasing behaviour. This confirms the notion that brand loyalty plays an important role in explaining the phenomenon of brand loyalty. In this way, we just put on the consistency of research results with other studies of (Simon, 2004; Lacoeuilhe, 2000) who insisted on the existence of a direct relationship between loyalty to the brand and commitment to it, which in turn originates from the attachment to the brand.

Finally, we can say that through this research, we tried to show the importance of affective and emotional dimension especially in the formation and preservation of the relationship between consumers and the brand in the mobile sector in Tunisia. Our empirical results did not contradict previous research that has emphasized this value of the affective dimension (Lacoeuilhe, 1997; Filser, 1996; Graillot, 1998).

Following this research, we can say that to act on the emotions of consumers is becoming a major concern for investors to gain a customer and form a relationship with him. That is why, nowadays, the brand must have an emotional value in order to stimulate the emotions of the consumer. In our framework, we stressed on the fact that the importance of the emotional value of a brand of mobile phone which is reflected in the design, credibility with product features, options, etc., has become a criterion of selection and a criterion of purchase. Thus, factors such as emotional attraction of the brand and the

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Table 5. Validation of hypothesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Force assumption of link</th>
<th>t-test of Student</th>
<th>Significance of Student t</th>
<th>Test verification of the hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SENS – AFFE</td>
<td>$H_{1a}$</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENS-PASS</td>
<td>$H_{1b}$</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENS-CONNE</td>
<td>$H_{1c}$</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTR-AFFE</td>
<td>$H_{2a}$</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>9.28</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTR-PASS</td>
<td>$H_{2b}$</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>9.45</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTR-CONNE</td>
<td>$H_{2c}$</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>17.76</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFFE-ATT</td>
<td>$H_{3a}$</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>15.76</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PASS-ATT</td>
<td>$H_{3b}$</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>11.63</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONNE-ATT</td>
<td>$H_{3c}$</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>13.23</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATT-COMI</td>
<td>$H_{4a}$</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>14.31</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM-REP_PUR</td>
<td>$H_{4b}$</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>11.66</td>
<td>significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
emotional sensitivity to the brand can stimulate and arouse certain emotions in the consumer. In our research we emphasized on a three-dimensional framework of some intense emotions such as affection, passion and connection. If a consumer feels that he is assigned, passionate and connected to a brand, he can develop such a form of psychological proximity and emotional attachment. This attachment can be so strong that it makes the consumer more resistant to changes despite the diversity of competing products. Therefore, he feels more committed to this brand and this generates in him the desire to keep buying the same brand in the future. In this case we can speak of such a form of emotional loyalty of a consumer towards his favourite brand to which he feels attached.

CONTRIBUTIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH WAYS

In our point of view, this research could be regarded as a clarification and extension of previous work in this field and allows us to better understand the potential role of the emotional dimension in the formation and maintenance of the relationship between the consumer and the brand.

In fact, the consumer is nowadays extremely anxious, impatient, faithless and hyper individualist. He is constantly moving, he flirts and he is elusive. However, he is always in the search of happiness. The hyper-consumer seeks a consumption that may become an emotional journey. Thus, a firm that wishes to retain its customers must play on the emotions of the consumer. Indeed, the awakening of emotions in the consumer will help attract him and link him closely to the brand. Thus, the brand must be very close to the consumer and should go more to his heart more than his brain. It must seduce more than argue. Therefore, it must have human qualities to be able to convince. In other words, the brand must be a “friend” very close to the consumer in order to attract him.

Our contributions in this research are reflected at the level of the development of a conceptual model showing the involvement of the role of emotions in the formation and maintenance of the relationship between consumer and brand. Thus, most previous research has demonstrated the role of emotional attachment to the brand loyalty. However, through this research, we have shown that emotions that are prerequisites to the emotional attachment to the brand can also form and maintain the relationship between consumer and brand. Similarly, our contribution helps demonstrate the role of these emotions in creating a consumer loyalty in a definite area and in this case it is the field of mobile telephony in Tunisia.

On the managerial plan, the aims of this work is to give professionals in the sector, a new criterion of market segmentation exceeding the classic criteria (age, socio-professional category, ...) to provide an adequate supply and effective communication taking into account the different explanatory variables in our model. Thus the investment in the emotional value of the brand (design, color, charm, charisma, options...) becomes a solution that is very important to conquer the consumer and establish a stable relationship with him.

We finally emphasize that our research, like any academic research, is not without limits. In fact, we limited our search to two stimuli of emotions: the emotional attraction of the brand and the brand sensitivity. But, through a literature review, we found that there is a diversity of factors that may arouse the emotions of the consumer. We can cite for example: emotional advertising, atmosphere.

We expressed emotion in the following three dimensions only: affection, passion and connection. But there is a multitude of consumer emotions, which may be generated through the emotional dimension of the brand (pleasure, love...). Evocation of contributions and limits opens new perspectives in research. As an illustration, we can consider the following points: the model developed through this research can be tested in other sectors. Another line of research could be explored in future research on the reciprocal cause and effect relationship between the different variables of the model.

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