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Service Brand Relationship Quality: Hot or Cold?

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Abstract

Customers' long-term brand relations are crucial drivers of a service brand's sustainable competitive advantage. This research empirically examines the quality of customer-service brand relationships in the context of an airline's frequent flyer program. The authors show that service brand relationship quality (BRQ) involves both a hot (based on emotions) and a cold (based on object-relevant beliefs) component. They find that these two components have different implications for a service brand's performance and are at least partially driven by different antecedents whose relative importance changes over time. Specifically, cold BRQ is important for word-of-mouth behavior and is strongly driven by partner quality (i.e., the generalized assessment of the brand in its role as a relationship counterpart). Hot BRQ, on the other hand, has a stronger impact on willingness to pay a price premium and consideration set size. In early stages of a customer-brand relationship hot BRQ is more strongly driven by self-congruence (i.e., consumer's perception of the fit between his/her self and the brand's personality), in later stages partner quality becomes more relevant. The authors discuss the implications of their findings for the development of BRQ and the implementation of alternative growth strategies in a services context.

Keywords

service brand, consumer-brand relationship, brand relationship quality, emotions, cognitions

Business practice has recognized the importance of brands and consumers' brand relationships for services success (Ostrom et al. 2010). The service brand as "a cluster of functional and emotional values that promises a unique and welcomed experience" (De Chernatony 2010, p. 12) can act as a relationship builder (Dall'Olmo Riley and de Chernatony 2000). A key challenge in establishing and maintaining service brand relationships is to fulfill the brand promise made to consumers (e.g., Ostrom et al. 2010) because service brand relationships are based on actual brand experiences and consumers' interaction with a service organization (i.e., service encounters; Shostack 1984). Such "moments of truth" build brand impressions and test the brand's ability to keep its promises (e.g., Berry 2000; Bitner 1995). Thereby, they also hold risks of reducing quality perceptions or decreasing trust. Since consumers with a strong and deep service brand relationship are more likely to forgive negative experiences and to stay loyal to the brand (Mattila 2001; Wieseke, Geigenmüller, and Kraus 2012), many service organizations search for ways to encourage their customers to develop a high level of brand relationship quality (BRQ)—a "customer-based indicator of the strength and depth of the person-brand relationship" (Fournier 1994, p. 124).

BRQ can be developed in different ways. Service companies can focus on developing trust and satisfaction as key aspects of relationship quality—two highly important constructs given a service brand's risk for inconsistent performance and the related high level of perceived uncertainty by consumers (Crosby, Evans, and Cowles 1990). However, they can also build strong emotional connections with consumers (Fournier 1998). According to Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz (2004) "the success of Starbucks demonstrates the fact we have built an emotional connection with our customers. [. . .] every day we get to touch and interact with our customers directly. Our product is not sitting on a supermarket shelf like a can of Coca-Cola." In this context, the emotions connected with the service brand are, at least, equally important as the service itself (Morrison and Crane 2007). The importance of emotions has been shown in studies on service encounters, service advertising, and responses to service failures (Cutler and Javalgi 1993; Mattila and Enz 2002; Smith and Bolton 2002).Thus, in addition to the well-established key aspects of relationship quality (i.e., satisfaction and trust that are more cognitive in nature), emotions may play a key role in establishing strong and deep consumer-brand relationships.

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Research has established the fact that emotions and cognitions have distinct influences on human behavior (e.g., Millar and Tesser 1986). Similarly, emotions and cognitions are two mechanisms that can differentially influence customer loyalty to a service. While prior studies have focused on overall BRQ (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004; Chang and Chieng 2006; Zhang and Bloemer 2008), we empirically examine the role of emotions and cognitions as two components of BRQ in a services context, based on a distinction between "hot" and "cold" attitudes (Park and MacInnis 2006). The first component, *cold BRQ*, is based on object-relevant beliefs and thus is rather cognitive in nature. The second component, *hot BRQ*, is largely based on emotions. We believe that examining the specific roles of the hot versus cold components of service BRQ has important academic implications (i.e., enriching our understanding of service BRQ, its emergence, and effects) and managerial implications (i.e., how to manage consumer-service brand relationships more effectively).

Against this background, our study has two research objectives. First, we investigate whether hot and cold BRQ develop in different ways. Specifically, our study provides an initial response to Ostrom's et al. (2010) call for research on how service brands can connect with consumers at the cognitive and emotional levels. Thus, we examine whether two important antecedents (i.e., self-congruence and partner quality) differ in their impact on hot versus cold BRQ and analyze how their impact varies depending on the length of a consumer-brand relationship. Second, we explore whether the two BRQ components have different effects on consumers' responses to service brands. More specifically, we determine the relative impact of hot versus cold BRQ on three key brand performance indicators: willingness to pay a price premium (WTP), consideration set size, and word-of-mouth communication (WOM). These performance variables reflect alternative strategies for growth. Increasing WTP and reducing consumers' consideration set reflect an internal growth path (growing revenues from the existing customer base). On the other hand, increasing WOM activities refer to an external (acquisition-oriented) growth strategy (expanding the customer base). Showing a relative impact of cold versus hot BRQ provides academics with insights on differing effects and service managers with guidance on how to implement growth strategies by focusing on specific types of BRQ (cold vs. hot).

The article is organized as follows: We first introduce hot and cold BRQ and define the constructs of our theoretical framework. We then develop hypotheses regarding the antecedents and outcomes of hot and cold BRQ. Next, we present our empirical study and its results. We conclude with a discussion of implications for service research and management.

Research Framework

The central component of our research framework (see Figure 1) is the quality of the consumer-service brand relationship (i.e., BRQ). BRQ, as a higher order construct, comprises different facets that refer to the cognitive evaluation of and emotional connection to a brand (Fournier 1994, 1998). We conceptualize BRQ along these cognitive and emotional relationship components that together cover the most important aspects of relationship quality discussed in social psychology (Fletcher, Simpson, and Thomas 2000).

Two Components of BRQ

The first component is called "cold" BRQ and reflects object-relevant beliefs that result from an evaluative judgment referring to the brand and its performance (Park and MacInnis 2006). We define *cold BRQ* as the strength and depth of a consumer's beliefs in and evaluations of the service brand's performance. This component is based on the conceptualization of relationship quality in the relationship marketing field, where satisfaction and trust are often considered as main dimensions (e.g., Crosby, Evans, and Cowles 1990). Satisfaction and trust each require a cognitive evaluation and reflect thoughts about a relationship partner (Selnes 1998). *Trust* arises from an accumulated knowledge that allows a person to make confident predictions regarding the likelihood that a relationship partner will meet his obligations (Johnson and Grayson 2005). In a branding context, trust represents a consumer's beliefs and attributions about the reliability, safety, and honesty of a brand (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001; Sung and Kim 2010) and hence reflects his or her confidence that the brand is dependable and competent (Herbst et al. 2012). A consumer's brand-related *satisfaction* results from his or her (cumulative) evaluation of the brand's performance relative to expectations (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004; Oliver 1993) and reflects a consistent satisfaction with the decision to consume the brand's underlying service or product. Taken together, trust and satisfaction form a BRQ component characterized by high confidence in and a positive evaluation of the service brand's performance (i.e., they are both tied to the quality of the service).

The "hot" component of BRQ reflects the emotional properties associated with the brand and includes consumers' feelings and connections to the brand. We define *hot BRQ* as the strength and intensity of a consumer's personal connection and closeness with a brand based on the positive feelings the consumer develops for that brand (see also Carroll and Ahuvia 2006). These feelings represent hot affect from the brand's linkage to the self (Park and MacInnis 2006). Based on the triangular theory of love (Sternberg 1986), we base this BRQ component on three facets: passion, intimacy, and commitment. *Passion* reflects a state of intense longing for the brand and a feeling of incompleteness when separated from the brand (Fournier 1994). *Intimacy* refers to a feeling of emotional closeness and connectedness to the brand (see also Sternberg 1986). *Commitment* reflects the loyalty to the brand (Warrington and Shim 2000) and the intention to stay with the brand through good times and bad (Fournier 1994).

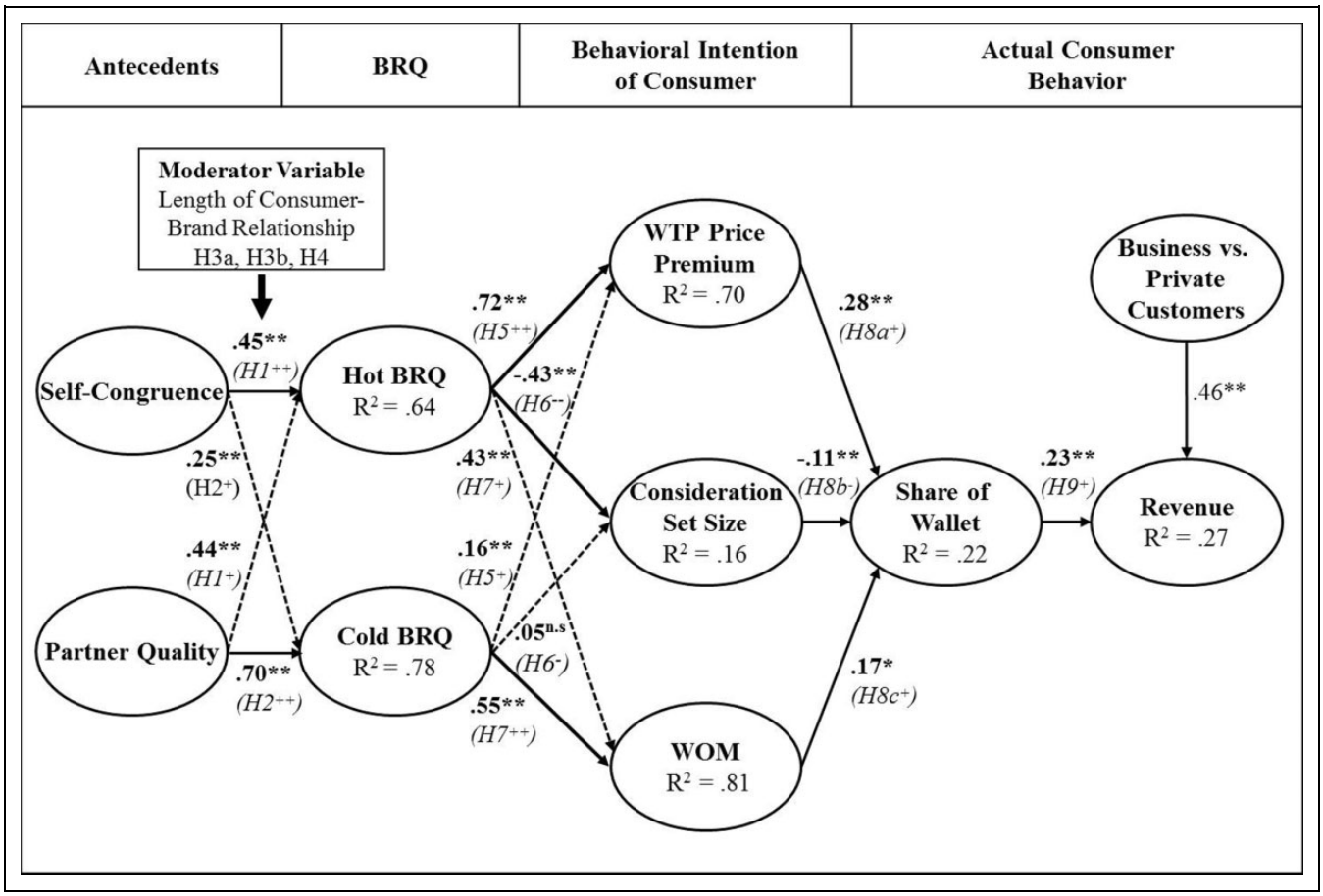

Figure 1. Research framework, hypotheses, and results.
*$p \leq .05$; **$p \leq .01$; RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .06, NFI = .93, NNFI = .94, and CFI = .95. *Note*. RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean squared residual; NFI = normed fit index; NNFI = nonnormed fit index; CFI = comparative fit index.

Antecedents of Hot and Cold BRQ

There are several potential antecedents that may have an impact on the hot and cold component of BRQ. However, we limited the potential antecedents to only a few due to the nature of our empirical study (survey among real customers of a service company). In order to do so, we first examined the literature and found that the quality of interactions (e.g., Baldwin 1992) and the similarity of relationship partners are of high relevance for relationship quality (e.g., Aron and Aron 1996). To learn more about relevant managerial considerations, we conducted qualitative in-depth interviews with 15 marketing managers of six major service brands in the banking, telecommunication, airline, railway, and restaurant industries. The managers were responsible for the respective corporate brand (on average for 4.5 years) and had the following positions: Head of Marketing, Head of Communications, Brand Manager, Marketing Manager, and CEO. We asked them to discuss factors that play a prominent role in the development of strong consumer-brand relationships. Based on these interviews as well as literature on BRQ (e.g., Huber et al. 2010) and interpersonal relationships (e.g., Hazan and Shaver 1994), the two most critical factors that surfaced were self-congruence and the partner quality of the brand.

In our context, *self-congruence* reflects the consumer's perception of the fit between himself or herself and the brand's personality. We thereby focus on actual self-congruence which reflects the perceived fit between the consumer's actual self (i.e., who and what I think I am now) and the brand's personality (Malär et al. 2011). The importance of self-congruence for BRQ is illustrated in the following quote by a brand manager we interviewed: "Market research shows us that consumers use and especially love brands they can identify with."

Partner quality is defined as the generalized assessment of the brand in its role as a relationship counterpart (Fournier 1998). Similar to the concept of reciprocity in interpersonal relationships, partner quality inferences include whether the brand/company treats the customer well, shows interest in, and cares for him or her (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004). The relevance of partner quality for BRQ is highlighted by the following statement of a marketing manager from our interviews: "We want to be a reliable partner to our customers and to make them feel 'at home' when using our services. This means that

we always try to be attentive to the needs of our customers, that we make them feel special, and that we really care for them.''

Since brand relationships change over time, their length plays an important role (Fournier 1998). We therefore examine the *length of a consumer-brand relationship* as a moderator of the relationship between the two antecedents and the hot and cold BRQ components. Understanding these interaction effects has implications for the development of the two BRQ components.

Outcomes of Hot and Cold BRQ

Our conceptual framework focuses on three outcome variables that have been widely studied in marketing and should affect key brand performance measures such as share of wallet and revenue: WTP a price premium, consideration set size, and WOM. WTP is defined as the excess price a consumer is willing to pay for a brand over comparable services/brands (Netemeyer et al. 2004). The consideration set size is defined as the number of brands of the same product category that a consumer considers when making a purchase decision (Desai and Hoyer 2000). Positive WOM refers to the action and intention of a consumer to recommend the brand to other people and friends. Finally, share of wallet is the percentage of money spent on a specific brand relative to the money spent for other brands in the same product category (Cooil et al. 2007), and revenue reflects the actual amount of money the consumer has spent on company services or products.

Hypotheses

Antecedents of Hot and Cold BRQ

Hot BRQ. Literature on interpersonal relationships suggests that perceived similarity between two individuals produces positive affect and increases the likelihood of a relationship (Levinger 1983). In a branding context, scholars have suggested that self-congruence enhances affective consumer responses to the brand (e.g., Malär et al. 2011). A brand congruent with the consumer's actual self helps the consumer verify and validate his or her self-concept (i.e., self-verification motive; Swann 1983), leading to positive emotions toward the brand. Thus, actual self-congruence should increase hot BRQ.

According to research in social psychology, a further key driver of relationship quality is reciprocity. People tend to like others who like them and treat them well (Newcomb 1956). In the eyes of the consumer, being treated well by the brand is a signal that he or she is ''liked'' and that the brand ''cares'' about and is responsive to his or her needs. This may increase emotional attachment (Thomson 2006) and the consumer's desire to maintain such a relationship over time. Partner quality should thus increase hot BRQ.

Although both antecedents should have positive effects on hot BRQ, we expect that self-congruence has the stronger impact. First, a brand's personality animates, humanizes, and personifies a brand. By doing so, it promotes a vivid connection between the consumer and the brand and acts as an active member of the consumer-brand relationship dyad (Fournier 1994). This may then lead to a meaningful and emotional consumer-brand relationship similar to an interpersonal relationship (e.g., Fournier 1998). Second, consumers' love should be greater for brands that play an important role in shaping their identity (see also Kleine, Schultz Kleine, and Kernan 1993), which is the case with a brand that has a similar personality to the consumer's self. In particular, since the consumer's self-concept plays the most critical role in the development of emotional brand attachment (e.g., Park et al. 2010), actual self-congruence plays a prominent role for creating emotions toward a brand (Malär et al. 2011). This leads us to assume that the possibility to shape one's own identity via a self-congruent brand is a stronger driver of consumer's hot BRQ than being treated well by the brand (i.e., partner quality). Partner quality certainly has benefits for the consumer, but they are less emotional in nature than the consumer's self-identity. Hence, we propose:

Hypothesis 1: Hot BRQ is more strongly driven by actual self-congruence than by partner quality.

Cold BRQ. Partner quality is viewed as a key antecedent of cold BRQ. Research has shown that partner quality inferences and the perceived benevolence drive satisfaction (Sirdeshmukh, Singh, and Sabol 2002) and trust in relationships (Levin, Whitener, and Cross 2006). Also in a service branding context, scholars have empirically established that the brand's partner quality positively influences consumer's satisfaction with the brand (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004). In a similar vein, the more a service brand and its representatives care for and are genuinely interested in a consumer, the more the consumer will trust the brand.

Actual self-congruence is also expected to influence cold BRQ. It has been shown that similarity among individuals in a relational context increases relationship satisfaction (Robins, Caspi, and Moffitt 2000) and trust (Doney and Cannon 1997). The important role of similarity between consumers and service providers in the formation of relationships has also been discussed (e.g., Coulter and Coulter 2002; Price and Arnould 1999). Thus, the similarity between the consumer's actual self and the service brand's personality (i.e., actual self-congruence) should increase consumer's levels of trust in and satisfaction with the brand.

When it comes to the relative effect, we argue that cold BRQ is more strongly driven by partner quality than by actual self-congruence. Trust and satisfaction are determined by the partner's actual behavior and expectations or comparison levels (Rusbult 1983). Partner quality is based on experiences of the brand's behavior and actions toward the consumer (as manifested in customer-employee interactions; Wieseke, Geigenmüller, and Kraus 2012). A continuous history of personalized interactions and positive experiences is an assurance of future performance (Crosby, Evans, and Cowles 1990) and a more accurate basis for cold BRQ than similarity judgments such as actual self-congruence. To evaluate partner quality,

consumers have to think about prior incidents and brand experiences in reference to their fulfilled promise. This then reduces uncertainty and increases confidence in the quality and reliability of the brand (i.e., cold BRQ). On the other hand, shaping one's own identity and self-expressing via a self-congruent brand certainly has benefits for the consumer, but they are less tied to the quality and reliability of the brand than being treated well by the brand (i.e., partner quality). Therefore, actual self-congruence should not be as strongly related to cold BRQ as partner quality. Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2: Cold BRQ is more strongly driven by partner quality than by actual self-congruence.

Moderating Effects of Relationship Length

A fundamental characteristic of a relationship is its temporality (Hinde 1997). Brand relationships can change over time, as consumers get to know and interact with the brand (Fournier 1998). We therefore explore whether the relative impact of actual self-congruence and partner quality on BRQ also depends on the length of the consumer-brand relationship.

The reasons an individual is emotionally attached to someone can shift in the course of a relationship. For instance, in the early stages of a relationship, people tend to rely on demographic information and initial impressions such as similarities (Levin, Whitener, and Cross 2006; Levinger 1983). As the relationship develops, the initial attraction based on similarity becomes less relevant (Reedy, Birren, and Schaie 1981) and the partner's behavior and the degree to which he or she cares for the individual become more significant (Hazan and Shaver 1994). In a branding context, a consumer may be able to assess whether the brand's personality is similar to his or her actual self, based on only a few brand encounters or an initial impression from marketing communications. Thus, self-congruence should play a key role for the buildup of hot BRQ early in a consumer-brand relationship. As the relationship evolves, the consumer repeatedly interacts with the brand and gains more substantiated experiences that can be used to assess the brand's partner quality. Over time, such accumulated positive experiences of high partner quality provide comfort and emotional support to the consumer. As a consequence, the impact of perceived partner quality on hot BRQ should increase over time, while the influence of the initial impression of perceived similarity may become relatively less relevant. Hence, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3: (a) In the earlier stages of a consumer-brand relationship, hot BRQ is driven more strongly by actual self-congruence than by partner quality. (b) In the later stages of a consumer-brand relationship, hot BRQ is driven more strongly by partner quality than by actual self-congruence.

As hypothesized in Hypothesis 2, cold BRQ should be more strongly driven by partner quality than by actual self-congruence. We argue that this effect should become even more pronounced in a mature consumer-brand relationship. In a services context, it has been shown that customers in the early stages of a relationship develop satisfaction and trust in a different way than longtime customers (Gounaris and Venetis 2002). Coulter and Coulter (2002) found that the impact of "person-related" service representative characteristics (i.e., similarity between customer and service representatives) on trust decreases with the length of the relationship. Conversely, the impact of more "offer-related" service representative characteristics (e.g., competence and customization) increases. In reference to the current context, self-congruence relates to person-related characteristics and partner quality to offer-related characteristics. Based on these considerations, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4: The relative importance of partner quality (as compared to actual self-congruence) as a driver of cold BRQ increases with the length of the relationship.

Outcomes of Hot and Cold BRQ

Our next three hypotheses focus on the differential effects of hot and cold BRQ on important outcome variables. Our theoretical reasoning for these hypotheses is based on the work of Millar and Tesser (1986) who provide evidence that a match between either a cognitive or affective focus and type of behavior can facilitate overall evaluations. It follows that an affective focus leads to stronger evaluations of behaviors based on emotions, while a cognitive focus facilitates instrumentally based behaviors.

WTP a price premium. In general, WTP is based on the extent a consumer associates value with a brand (Park and Srinivasan 1994), which emerges from the consumer's experience with the service brand (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). Experiencing trust and satisfaction in a service brand interaction (i.e., cold BRQ) represents consumer's confidence in the service brand's quality and reliability. The associated risk reduction thereby provides a value to the consumer (Gwinner, Gremler, and Bitner 1998) for which he is willing to pay a higher price. Such a link between satisfaction, perceived value, and WTP has been established in several prior studies (e.g., Homburg, Koschate, and Hoyer 2005).

However, consumers may experience cold BRQ with several competitive service brands. The positive emotions elicited by service brand experiences can therefore provide an even more important value to consumers (Sweeney and Soutar 2001). Since service encounters are mainly social encounters, they are well suited to create a relational and emotional value for consumers which goes beyond the benefits derived from the delivery of the core service (Gwinner, Gremler, and Bitner 1998). Such an emotional value has the potential to strongly differentiate one service brand from another. Similarly, research on interpersonal relationships indicates that individuals who have a strong emotional relationship with someone perceive this relationship partner as differentiated and important to them (Hazan and Shaver 1994) and are more likely to invest in

and make sacrifices for that person (e.g., Johnson and Rusbult 1989). Transferred into a branding context, consumers with an emotional brand relationship experience a higher value from this brand relative to competitive brands, making them more willing to invest in and preserve interactions with that brand. Thus, a consumer's hot BRQ should strongly influence his or her WTP in order to continue to receive the corresponding emotional value from that brand (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005). When these conditions exist, we propose that WTP is a more affectively driven behavior. Therefore, consistent with Millar and Tesser (1986), we suggest that hot BRQ should have a greater influence on WTP than cold BRQ:

Hypothesis 5: Hot BRQ has a stronger positive effect on WTP than cold BRQ.

Consideration set size. In order to simplify their decision process, consumers generally do not consider all available brands in a product category. Rather, they limit the number of brands they consider purchasing to a smaller subset (i.e., consideration set; Roberts and Lattin 1997). The reduction of the consideration set size can be considered as the fundamental axiom of relationship marketing (Sheth and Parvatiyar 1995). We propose that the size of the consideration set is particularly affected by hot BRQ. First, consumers seem to develop an intense emotional attachment to only a small number of brands (exclusive nature of love; Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005). Second, since unique and affective cues are easier to recall from memory than evaluative information (Park, Arndt, and Reder 2006), the exclusivity of a strong emotional brand relationship creates an inhibitory effect on the recall of other brands (Raju and Unnava 2005), leading to a smaller consideration set size. These findings suggest that determining the consideration set size may be more affectively driven.

Cold BRQ, on the other hand, may be associated with a wider variety of brands (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005). Due to often small differentiation in terms of performance, a number of alternative brands can create satisfaction. Cold BRQ may hence not decrease consideration set size in the same way as hot BRQ. Taking all this together, consistent with Millar and Tesser (1986), we expect the consideration set size to be smaller when BRQ is hot relative to when it is cold:

Hypothesis 6: Hot BRQ has a stronger negative effect on consideration set size than cold BRQ.

WOM. A number of studies support the notion that favorable WOM is affected by satisfaction and trust (e.g., Garbarino and Johnson 1999). The extent to which the service brand performance meets or exceeds customers' expectations motivates them to tell others about their positive brand experiences (de Matos and Rossi 2008). Further, consumers are more likely to endorse a brand they trust (Gremler, Gwinner, and Brown 2001), reducing the risk of providing wrong recommendations (Mazzarol, Sweeney, and Soutar 2007). Thus, cold BRQ should have a positive effect on WOM.

Prior research has also shown that the love consumers feel toward a brand (Carroll and Ahuvia 2006) stimulates WOM. By recommending the brand to which a consumer feels emotionally attached (i.e., hot BRQ), he or she can make a statement about himself or herself and strengthen his or her sense of own identity (Carroll and Ahuvia 2006). However, the content of WOM tends to be more about objective and rational brand-related facts than about the emotional relationship with a brand (Westbrook 1987). This may be especially the case in the services context in which consumers face a certain level of uncertainty (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry 1985). Thus, their recommendations are rather based on brand experiences and the specific functional attributes and benefits the brand provides. Compared to the cold component of BRQ, hot BRQ provides the consumer with fewer objective arguments that can be used to convince others. Further, hot BRQ reflects the consumer's personal feelings toward a brand and these may be communicated to only a few persons (Derlega et al. 1993). Against this background, we propose that WOM is more strongly related to cognitive evaluations and therefore a cognitively driven behavior (de Matos and Rossi 2008). Thus, consistent with Millar and Tesser (1986), we suggest that cold BRQ should have a greater influence on WOM than hot BRQ:

Hypothesis 7: Cold BRQ has a stronger positive effect on positive WOM than hot BRQ.

Share of wallet. WTP, the reduction of the consideration set size, and positive WOM are all constructs that signal the customer's intention to stay loyal to the service brand. One important measure of loyalty is the customer's share of purchase of the respective brand in the product category (i.e., share of wallet; Bowman and Narayandas 2004). A consumer willing to pay a price premium for a brand is also more likely to buy it (compared to other brands), leading to a higher share of wallet. Further, the higher the number of brands a consumer considers buying (i.e., large consideration set size), the greater the number of brands he or she may buy over time, reducing the share of wallet with regard to a given brand. Finally, WOM is a very good metric for predicting consumers' purchasing behavior (Reichheld 2003), thus increasing share of wallet. Considering the previous arguments, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 8: Share of wallet: (a) increases as WTP increases (i.e., positive effect), (b) increases as consideration set size decreases (i.e., negative effect), and (c) increases as positive WOM increases (i.e., positive effect).

Revenue. The more a consumer buys a specific brand relative to other brands (i.e., high share of wallet), the more revenue the consumer will bring to the brand. That is, a more behaviorally loyal customer, as measured by a 3-year share of wallet, is

expected to generate greater annual customer revenue (Anderson and Mittal 2000). Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 9: Share of wallet has a positive effect on revenue per customer.

Method

Data Collection and Sample

We tested the proposed effects of BRQ in the context of an airline's frequent flyer program. Our unit of analysis was the individual brand relationship between a customer and a large European airline. The choice of this industry seemed appropriate for our research objectives, primarily due to the existence of a customer relationship management (CRM) program and the fact that the airline industry provides a good basis for the examination of cognitive versus emotional components of a brand relationship. BRQ for an airline can easily be cognitive (e.g., based on flight schedules, safety, etc.) and emotional (e.g., positive feelings during a flight).

To collect our data, we sent out 5,000 invitation e-mails to members of the frequent flyer program of the target airline. In the invitation e-mail, we provided a direct personalized link to our online study which was only accessible via the link provided in the e-mail. As an incentive to participate, respondents were entered into a lottery to win a flight for two within Europe and a digital camera after they completed the survey. A total of 631 customers between 26 and 65 years (average 45 years) filled out the online questionnaire. According to information provided by the airline's market research department, the sample is representative of the membership of the airline's frequent flyer program. We sent out all invitation e-mails on the same day and recorded the specific dates of response. This record enabled us to distinguish between early and late respondents. The tests showed no significant differences among the responses from early versus late respondents, suggesting that nonresponse bias is not a problem in our data (Armstrong and Overton 1977).

Measures

The measurement scales used in our study were largely based on empirically validated scales from prior studies. We pretested our questionnaire and further refined it based on a prestudy among 608 students. Appendix A provides an overview of our final measurement scales and the individual items. With few exceptions (i.e., consideration set size, share of wallet, and revenue per customer), all items were measured with 7-point Likert-type scales anchored by *strongly disagree* and *strongly agree*.

We measured consumers' *cold BRQ* (second-order construct) in terms of satisfaction (3 items adapted from Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004; Oliver 1993) and trust (3 items; Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001). *Hot BRQ* was measured with commitment (3 items), passion (2 items), and intimacy (2 items). We used items adapted from Fournier's BRQ dimensions personal commitment, passion (interdependence), and love (Fournier 1994). In terms of our antecedents, we measured *partner quality* with 3 items from Fournier (1994). *Actual self-congruence* was measured with 2 items using the procedure and scale of Sirgy et al. (1997).

We measured the dependent variables *WTP* with 2 items adapted from Netemeyer et al. (2004), *consideration set size* using a methodology similar to Nordfält et al. (2004) as well as Raju and Unnava (2005), and *WOM* with 3 items previously used by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) and Maxham (2001). *Share of wallet* was assessed with a single question capturing the percentage the consumer has spent on the respective airline compared to other airline brands. Finally, to measure *revenue*, we obtained individual revenue information from the airline's database.

For the moderating variable *relationship length*, we obtained the amount of time (in days) that a customer had been a member of the frequent flyer program from the airline company, which we treated as a proxy of consumer-brand relationship length. Finally, we included the control variable *main purpose of flights* and distinguished between private and business customers. It seems reasonable that this variable influences revenue per customer, since business customers are generally generating higher revenues for airline companies.

Measurement Validation

To measure the reliability and validity of our constructs, we conducted confirmatory factor analyses using AMOS 17.0. The psychometric properties for all constructs are reported in Appendix A. Cronbach's α, composite reliability, indicator reliability, and average variance extracted for all measurement scales indicate sufficient reliability and convergent validity of our construct operationalization. The only exception was for WTP which displayed a slightly lower composite reliability and a coefficient α of .65; however, this seems still acceptable, given that it was measured with only 2 items (Cortina 1993). We assessed discriminant validity based on the criterion of Fornell and Larcker (1981) and found that the average variance extracted exceeds the squared correlations between all pairs of constructs. Table 1 presents the correlations between all variables in our basic model.

Based on our conceptual framework, we tested a two-factor model of BRQ, where the five dimensions loaded on two second-order factors (i.e., cold and hot component of BRQ). The two-factor model provided a good fit: root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .07, standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) = .03, normed fit index (NFI) = .97, nonnormed fit index (NNFI) = .97, and comparative fit index (CFI) = .98. To show the superior value of our two-dimensional BRQ measurement, we compared its model fit with the fit values of possible alternative BRQ measurement models (see Table 2). Our two-factor model of BRQ showed significant improvements in fit over all competing models. The most rigorous test of our cold and hot BRQ model was its comparison with a model where all five first-order factors were allowed to correlate. This model only showed a slightly better

Table 1. Correlations of Framework Variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Partner quality										
2. Self-congruence	.56**									
3. Cold BRQ	.77**	.62**								
4. Hot BRQ	.63**	.66**	.71**							
5. WTP price premium	.44**	.51**	.55**	.61**						
6. Consideration set size	−.20**	−.27**	−.28**	−.36**	−.29**					
7. Word of mouth	.62**	.60**	.78**	.74**	.58**	−.34**				
8. Share of wallet	.24**	.27**	.35**	.42**	.33**	−.27**	.40**			
9. Revenue	−.04n.s.	.04n.s.	−.03n.s.	.09*	.05n.s.	−.16**	.04n.s.	.23**		
10. Purpose of flight	−.08n.s.	−.04n.s.	−.07n.s.	−.07n.s.	−.06n.s.	−.04n.s.	−.05n.s	.01n.s.	.46**	
11. Relationship length	−.04n.s	−.04n.s	−.06n.s	−.07n.s	−.04n.s	−.03n.s	−.06n.s	−.12**	.15**	.16**

Note. BRQ = brand relationship quality; WTP = willingness to pay.
*$p \leq .05$. **$p \leq .01$.

Table 2. Comparison of Alternative Measurement Models of BRQ.

Model	χ^2	*df*	*p*	CFI	RMSEA	Comparison	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	*p*
Proposed two-factor model: Cold BRQ and hot BRQ									
Model 1 (five first-order factors and two second-order factors)	233.66	59	<.01	.98	.07				
Alternative BRQ measurement models									
Model 2 (five correlated factors)	224.39	55	<.01	.98	.07	Model 1 and Model 2	9.27	4	<.1
Model 3 (single factor)	1931.76	65	<.01	.74	.21	Model 1 and Model 3	1698.10	6	<.01
Model 4 (five first-order factors and one second-order factor)	312.16	60	<.01	.97	.08	Model 1 and Model 4	78.5	1	<.01

Note. BRQ = brand relationship quality.

model fit which is acceptable since the fit of a higher order model cannot be greater than the fit of a model where all first-order factors are allowed to correlate.

Results

Using AMOS 17.0, we modeled the structural relationships posited by our conceptual framework. Meeting conventional standards (e.g., Hu and Bentler 1999; Marsh, Hau, and Wen 2004), our global fit measures indicate that the empirical data acceptably fit our model: RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .06, NFI = .93, NNFI = .94, and CFI = .95. In Figure 1, we report the resulting parameter estimates. We tested for differential effects of our antecedents as well as of cold and hot BRQ based on a χ^2 difference test (Homburg and Dobratz 1992). In the course of this test, the χ^2 value of our general (unrestricted) structural equation model was compared with the χ^2 value of a special (restricted) model. In such a restricted model, the impact of, for example, cold and hot BRQ on the corresponding dependent variable was forced to be equal. If the difference in χ^2 is larger than 3.84 (based on one degree of freedom), the worsening of the goodness of fit (within the restricted model) is significant.

Concerning our two antecedents, the results show a positive impact of actual self-congruence on cold ($\gamma = .25$, $p < .01$) and hot BRQ ($\gamma = .45$, $p < .01$), as well as a positive effect of partner quality on cold ($\gamma = .70$, $p < .01$) and hot BRQ ($\gamma = .44$, $p < .01$). We hypothesized that hot BRQ should be more strongly driven by actual self-congruence than by partner quality (Hypothesis 1). The results revealed, however, that self-congruence has only a slightly stronger impact on hot BRQ than partner quality and the χ^2 difference is not significant ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1.92$, $\Delta df = 1$, n.s.). Thus, Hypothesis 1 could not be supported. When comparing the values of the two path coefficients reflecting the impact of self-congruence and partner quality on cold BRQ, we found support for Hypothesis 2. Cold BRQ is more strongly driven by partner quality than by actual self-congruence. Based on a χ^2 difference test, the difference of these effects is significant ($\Delta\chi^2 = 63.37$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < .01$).

We tested the moderating effect of relationship length proposed in Hypothesis 3a and 3b using the procedure of Homburg, Grozdanovic, and Klarmann (2007). We first conducted a median split of our sample along the values of the variable "relationship length." In a second step, we analyzed the model simultaneously in both subsamples. We then computed the relative importance $IMP_{sc,g}$ of actual self-congruence for hot BRQ in both subsamples ($g = 1$ refers to the subsample with shorter relationships and $g = 2$ refers to more established relationships). Using the respective parameter estimates, we defined $IMP_{sc,g}$ as the ratio of the effect of actual self-congruence to the sum of the effects of actual self-congruence (i.e., γ_{g11}) and partner quality (i.e., γ_{g12}) on the dependent variable hot BRQ:

$$IMP_{sc,g} = \frac{|\gamma_{g11}|}{|\gamma_{g11}| + |\gamma_{g12}|} \times 100\%.$$

To test statistically whether the relative importance of actual self-congruence as a driver of hot BRQ is affected by relationship length, we relied on χ^2 difference tests and ran the multiple group covariance structure analysis with a constraint that forced $IMP_{sc,g}$ to be equal across both subsamples. If the difference between the χ^2 goodness-of-fit statistics from both analyses was significant, we inferred that the relative importance of actual self-congruence was different in both subsamples.

The results (see Appendix B) showed that in the early stages of a relationship, hot BRQ is more strongly driven by self-congruence ($\gamma = .53$, $p < .01$) than by partner quality ($\gamma = .34$, $p < .01$), while the impact of partner quality becomes relatively stronger in an established relationship (partner quality: $\gamma = .52$, $p < .01$; self-congruence: $\gamma = .39$, $p < .01$). The χ^2 difference test revealed that this moderating effect is significant ($\Delta\chi^2 = 6.37$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < .05$), confirming Hypothesis 3a and 3b.

Using the same procedure for testing Hypothesis 4, we found that partner quality is always a stronger driver of cold BRQ in early stages of a consumer-brand relationship (partner quality: $\gamma = .62$, $p < .01$ vs. self-congruence: $\gamma = .33$, $p < .01$) and in longer relationships (partner quality: $\gamma = .75$, $p < .01$ vs. self-congruence: $\gamma = .22$, $p < .01$). However, the relative importance of partner quality as a driver of cold BRQ did not significantly increase with the length of a relationship ($\Delta\chi^2 = 3.60$, $\Delta df = 1$, n.s.), leading to the rejection of Hypothesis 4.

With regard to the outcomes of cold and hot BRQ, the empirical data confirmed our hypotheses. Compared to cold BRQ, hot BRQ has a significantly stronger impact on WTP (hot BRQ $\beta = .72$, $p < .01$ vs. cold BRQ $\beta = .16$, $p < .05$; $\Delta\chi^2 = 10.90$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < .01$) and on the consideration set size (hot BRQ $\beta = -.43$, $p < .01$ vs. cold BRQ $\beta = .05$, n.s.; $\Delta\chi^2 = 10.87$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < .01$), confirming Hypotheses 5 and 6. Our results also provide empirical evidence for Hypothesis 7. Cold BRQ has a significantly stronger impact on WOM ($\beta = .55$, $p < .01$) than hot BRQ ($\beta = .43$, $p < .01$; $\Delta\chi^2 = 5.31$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < .05$). Finally, we found support for Hypothesis 8, as share of wallet was influenced by WTP ($\beta = .28$, $p < .01$), consideration set size ($\beta = -.11$, $p < .01$), and WOM ($\beta = .17$, $p < .05$). Consistent with Hypothesis 9, share of wallet in turn positively affects revenue per customer ($\beta = .23$, $p < .01$). With regard to our control variable, business customers generate higher revenues than private customers ($\gamma = .46$, $p < .01$).

Discussion

Research Implications

Our study contributes to the extant literature in several important ways. We expand the knowledge on the role of the brand in a consumer-service relationship by studying service BRQ. Traditionally, service relationship literature has primarily analyzed consumers' relationships with service frontline personnel (e.g., Boles, Johnson, and Barksdale 2000) and has focused on satisfaction and trust as key aspects of relationship quality (e.g., Crosby, Evans, and Cowles 1990). In our study, we broaden this perspective by examining an emotional component of BRQ (i.e., hot BRQ). More specifically, we conceptually discuss and empirically verify that service BRQ has two components (i.e., hot and cold) and find that this distinction is important and relevant, in terms of both antecedents and consequences.

Antecedents of hot and cold BRQ. We contribute to the existing literature, which has shown that both self-congruence (Kressmann et al. 2006) and partner quality of the brand (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004; Huber et al. 2010) generally influence overall BRQ. By taking a more differentiated view on these antecedents, we show that the influence of each antecedent depends on whether BRQ is cold or hot as well as on the stage of the consumer-brand relationship. Cold BRQ is more strongly driven by partner quality than by self-congruence—illustrating the important role of a brand's representatives caring and empathic service experiences in reducing uncertainty and increasing confidence in the quality and reliability of the brand (Crosby, Evans, and Cowles 1990; Wieseke, Geigenmüller, and Kraus 2012).

For hot BRQ, we found—in contrast to our expectations—that it is almost equally driven by both antecedents. While it has been shown that self-congruence is highly relevant for emotionally connecting consumers with a brand (e.g., Malär et al. 2011), in a services context, the role of partner quality seems to be equally important for emotional brand relationships to develop. This finding may be explained by the critical role of personal interaction and reciprocity as a relational benefit in service brand relationships (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, and Gremler 2002). In this context, our study also extends prior findings on the relevance of image congruence (Kleijnen, de Ruyter, and Andreassen 2005) and value congruence (Zhang and Bloemer 2008) in a service-brand relationship by showing that congruence itself is not enough.

Another explanation for this finding may be the fact that brand relationships, like interpersonal relationships, tend to change over time, as consumers get to know and interact with the brand (Fournier 1998). In other words, we have customers in the early phase of their brand relationship, where self-congruence plays a more prominent role for the buildup of hot BRQ (which in fact was an empirical finding of our study). At the same time, there are customers in a more mature brand relationship where partner quality becomes more important (again, empirically confirmed in our study). The fact that these two customer groups were not isolated for the empirical testing of Hypothesis 1 may be another explanation why both self-congruence and partner quality equally increased hot BRQ. Such a shift of the relative importance of BRQ drivers is in line with dynamic models in marketing which confirm that loyalty drivers evolve over time (Johnson, Herrmann, and Huber 2006). Further, our findings support Moorman's, Zaltman's, and Deshpandé's (1992) claim and Grayson's and Ambler's (1999) findings that the dynamics of shorter relationships are different than those of longer relationships. It has been argued

by Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpandé that customers in long-term relationships may believe that service providers act opportunistically. This belief should be less prominent among customers who perceive a high relationship partner quality. Thus, partner quality may heal the issue of anticipated opportunistic behavior among long-term customers.

Outcomes of hot and cold BRQ. A further important contribution of our study is a deeper understanding of the consequences of both hot and cold BRQ in a service context. Hot BRQ was more strongly related to WTP and size of consideration set than cold BRQ. This finding provides additional insights on the notion that satisfaction and trust alone are not enough to improve brand performance. Thus, the important role of hot BRQ for service brand performance found in this study adds knowledge to the service literature, where the role of emotions has been already studied in other contexts (e.g., service encounters, advertising for services, and responses to service failures; Cutler and Javalgi 1993; Mattila and Enz 2002; Smith and Bolton 2002).

Our study further illustrates that for certain service brand performance indicators, cognitions play a key role as well. An interesting finding was that cold BRQ is a stronger driver of WOM. This finding is consistent with the notion that the content of WOM tends to be more about rational brand-related facts and specific functional benefits than about the emotional relationship with a brand. Given the intangibility and experiential nature of services, consumers may be particularly likely to rely on such information and experiences of existing customers (Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman 1993). Consistent with previous research which has found that satisfaction and trust as well as emotional connections drive consumers' engagement in WOM activities (for a review, see de Matos and Rossi 2008), our study finds that both have an influence on WOM but that cold BRQ has a stronger impact than hot BRQ. This suggests that the most important role for trust and satisfaction in a service relationship is to stimulate consumer conversations relative to influencing choice and WTP. Overall, our findings support the notion of Millar and Tesser (1986) that some types of behaviors are more emotionally driven, while others are more cognitively driven.

Relevance of hot and cold BRQ for CRM activities. Finally, another contribution of our study is to highlight the relevance of a brand relation perspective for CRM activities in a services marketing context. Our empirical data set consists of customers who are members of a CRM program (frequent flyers). Members of this program benefit from preferential treatments and rewards for past loyalty. We found that service brand performance indicators such as WTP, consideration set size, or WOM differ among these various frequent flyers and that these differences can be explained by their levels of hot and cold BRQ. This finding suggests that engagement of a customer in a CRM program alone may not be enough to foster consumer-brand relationships and increase service brand performance. In other words, mere satisfaction with a CRM program and its related special treatment may not be enough for a high level of service brand performance. A stronger driver of performance may be consumers' hot BRQ. In this regard, our findings are in line with Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, and Gremler (2002) who have shown that special treatment benefits do not have a significant influence on customer loyalty and fail to contribute to the development of true relationships.

Our findings further contribute to Fournier's and Avery's (2011) call to "put the relationship back into CRM." These authors identified important ways in which current CRM practices could be improved and pointed out the need to address deeper relational needs, to be cognizant of the requirements of diverse types of relationships, and to recognize that relationships are two sided and evolve with each interaction. Our study contributes to this call by analyzing two components of BRQ that differ in their impact on service brand performance and involve different relational needs and drivers. The high relevance of hot BRQ for brand performance illustrates the importance of true emotional relationships in the context of CRM programs. Further, the important role of partner quality in driving cold and hot BRQ supports the notion that relationships are two-sided (i.e., reciprocal).

Managerial Implications

Due to its impact on brand performance, BRQ has also important implications for service brand management. Our results (based on a "real" customer base and actual company revenue) reveal that investments in hot and cold BRQ have an economic impact by influencing marketplace behaviors.

On one hand, hot BRQ has been shown to have a stronger impact on customers' WTP. This insight can guide service providers with regard to pricing decisions. Instead of lowering prices (e.g., when faced with high competition and heavy price cutting), it may pay off for service providers to focus on the emotional value they provide to customers and to build up hot BRQ. By doing so, service brands might successfully implement price increases. As one example, Starbucks customers are willing to pay a relatively high price for their coffee due to the emotional brand experience and connections. In addition, hot BRQ is more important for a reduced consideration of competitive brands. This finding is especially relevant for the competitive positioning and the deterrence of new market entrants. Those service providers who can establish strong emotional ties with their customers achieve a sound protection from competitive threats and new competitors.

On the other hand, cold BRQ better helps to attract new customers via positive WOM by existing customers. Although not neglecting the role emotions may play, for example, in viral marketing activities, our results show that satisfaction and trust are a solid and highly important basis for WOM activities of existing customers. These customers need to be convinced about the quality and reliability of the service in order to recommend the service brand to others.

Finally, both the growth from the existing customer base and the attraction of new customers are crucial drivers for the sustainable future of a service brand. This suggests service

providers should try to cultivate both the hot and cold BRQ of their customers, but for different reasons: If the main objective is to grow revenues from the existing customer base (i.e., "internal" growth via a higher WTP and a reduced consideration set size), managers may want to focus on building hot BRQ with their customers. On the other hand, if their main objective is to expand the customer base by acquiring new customers (i.e., "external" growth via more intense WOM activities of existing customers), cold BRQ becomes more important.

The antecedents of hot and cold BRQ also lead to important managerial recommendations. Specifically, in early stages of consumer-brand relationships, our research suggests managers should focus on self-congruence between the service brand and its consumers in an effort to increase hot BRQ. In order to emotionally connect new customers to their brands, managers should therefore adopt a customer-oriented perspective in defining service brand personality. This means, for example, that the design of the service environment, marketing communications, and behavior of frontline personnel has to create brand personality associations that foster similarity perceptions.

Especially for customers in later stages of the relationship, managers should gradually develop the brand's partner quality in order to increase hot BRQ. Special efforts should be made to treat long-term customers well and give them the feeling to be an important and valuable customer. Thus, employees who are able to sense customer expectations and provide symbiotic service interactions are highly relevant for a service brand (Wieseke, Geigenmüller, and Kraus 2012). This implies the training of the service frontline personnel to treat customers with attention and empathy (e.g., by appreciating their lives and interests; see also Fournier and Avery 2011). Finally, in their CRM activities, brand managers should not solely focus on how customers perceive the brand and how they emotionally bond with it. Rather, managers should also focus on how the brand treats and rewards its customers in exchange for their emotional attachment toward the brand.

Limitations and Future Research

Our study also has some limitations that provide directions for future research. First, the data used in this survey are based on only one service category. While we presented arguments for why the airline industry was appropriate for studying BRQ, research is still needed to determine the extent to which the findings hold true for other service categories.

Second, we limited the potential antecedents of hot and cold BRQ to only two critical factors (i.e., self-congruence and partner quality) due to the nature of our empirical study. While our choice was well founded on literature on interpersonal relationships (e.g., Hazan and Shaver 1994) and on BRQ (e.g., Huber et al. 2010) as well as our manager interviews, future research might consider other antecedents, particularly brand-related interaction variables and consumer characteristics. For example, brand experience (Schmitt, Zarantonello, and Brakus 2009) could be examined. Because experience provides value to consumers, one could expect that the more a brand evokes particular experience dimensions, the stronger the BRQ will be. More specifically, the two dimensions affective and sensory brand experience may be more important drivers of hot BRQ, whereas intellectual and behavioral brand experience might have a higher relevance in increasing cold BRQ. Further, a consumer's personality may also be a relevant antecedent of the two BRQ components since personality affects relationship quality (Asendorpf and Wilpers 1998). For example, narcissistic consumers may experience lower relationship commitment because they are more attracted to alternatives (similarly, Campbell and Foster 2002).

Finally, our findings concerning the moderating role of relationship length support the idea that a dynamic perspective on brand relationships may be a worthwhile avenue for future researchers. While our study is of a cross-sectional nature, longitudinal field experiments that examine the evolutionary nature of brand relationships would significantly add to our knowledge concerning the factors that make relationships lasting and strong.

Appendix A

Table A1. Measurement Scales and Psychometric Properties.

Constructs and Items	Mean Value (*SD*)	Indicator Reliability	Coefficient α	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Cold BRQ			.82	.87	.78
(1) Satisfaction (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004; Oliver 1993)	*4.95* (*1.25*)	*.74*	*.91*	*.91*	*.78*
– I am consistently satisfied with my decision to fly with X	5.26 (1.26)	.74			
– I am completely satisfied with X	4.75 (1.41)	.81			
– X offers exactly what I expect from an airline company	4.85 (1.37)	.79			
(2) Trust (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001)	*5.50* (*1.04*)	*.81*	*.87*	*.87*	*.70*
– I rely on X	5.56 (1.11)	.75			
– X is an honest brand	5.28 (1.28)	.71			
– X is a safe brand	5.65 (1.10)	.63			
Hot BRQ			.86	.90	.75
(1) Commitment (Fournier 1994)	*4.31* (*1.48*)	*.83*	*.93*	*.94*	*.83*
– I feel very loyal to X	4.70 (1.48)	.77			
– X can count on me to always be there	4.13 (1.60)	.89			
– I will stay with X through good times and bad	4.09 (1.65)	.83			
(2) Intimacy (Fournier 1994)	*4.50* (*1.66*)	*.90*	*.86*	*.87*	*.76*
– Compared to other airlines, I feel strongly connected to X	4.70 (1.48)	.81			
– I feel emotionally attached to X	4.13 (1.60)	.71			
(3) Passion (Fournier 1994)	*3.06* (*1.67*)	*.53*	*.91*	*.91*	*.83*
– There are times when I really long to fly with X again	3.31 (1.82)	.85			
– I feel like something's missing when I haven't flown with X for a while	2.82 (1.67)	.81			
Partner quality (Fournier 1994)			.91	.92	.78
– X takes good care of me	4.86 (1.34)	.79			
– X treats me like an important and valuable customer	4.51 (1.44)	.87			
– X shows a continuing interest in me	4.39 (1.45)	.69			
Actual self-congruence (Sirgy et al. 1997)			.96	.96	.91
– The personality of brand X is consistent with how I see myself	3.64 (1.56)	.91			
– The personality of brand X is a mirror image of me (my actual self)	3.55 (1.58)	.92			
Willingness to pay a price premium (Netemeyer et al. 2004)			.65	.65	.48
– The price of X would have to go up quite a bit before I would switch to another airline brand	3.61 (1.78)	.51			
– I am willing to pay a higher price for X than for other airline brands	2.97 (1.60)	.45			
Consideration set size (Nordfält et al. 2004; Raju and Unnava 2005) How many other airlines would you consider booking/flying? (1) I would consider no other airline than X. (2) I would consider 1–3 other airlines. (3) I would consider 4–6 other airlines. (4) I would consider more than 6 other airlines. (5) I would consider all possible airlines	2.64 (1.08)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Positive WOM (Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Maxham 2001)			.90	.89	.74
– I have recommended X to many people	4.44 (1.78)	.63			
– I would recommend X to my friends	4.92 (1.53)	.78			
– If my friends were planning an air travel, I would tell them to fly with X	4.60 (1.69)	.82			
Share of wallet (in %) Considering all your flights in the last 3 years, what percentage have you spent on X compared to other airlines?	63.17 (23.91)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Revenue per customer Provided by airline company in categories from 1 (*lowest revenue*) to 11 (*highest revenue*)	4.60 (3.10)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Purpose of flight For which purpose do you generally fly with X? (1 = *mainly private*, 2 = *equally private and business*, and 3 = *mainly business*)	1.99 (.85)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Length of consumer-brand relationship Provided by airline company; measured in days	1821	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Note. BRQ = brand relationship quality; WOM = word of mouth.

Appendix B

Interaction Effects of the Length of the Consumer-Brand Relationship With the Relative Importance of Self-Congruence (Compared to Partner Quality) as a Driver of Hot and Cold BRQ

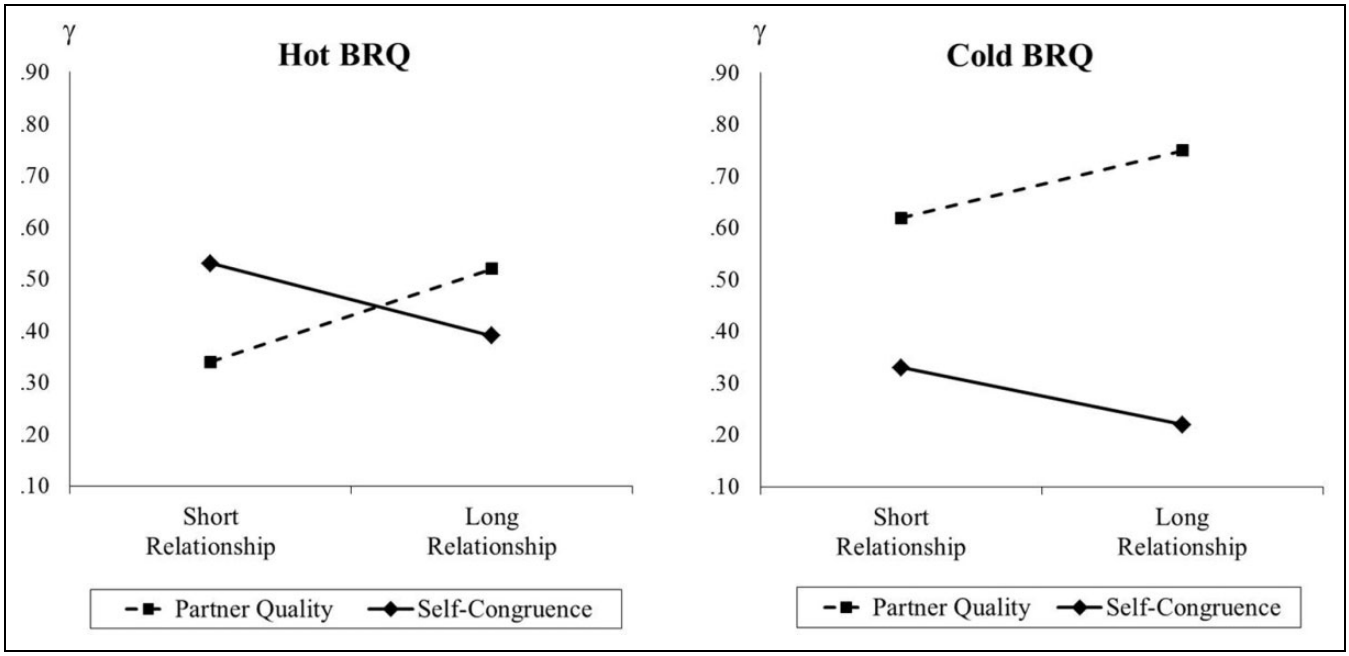

Figure B1. Illustration of the moderating role of relationship length.

Table B1. Results of Multiple Group Analyses.

	Relative Importance of Self-Congruence ($IMP_{sc,\ g}$)		
Dependent Variable	Short Relationship Length ($g = 1$)	Long Relationship Length ($g = 2$)	$\Delta\chi^2$ ($\Delta df = 1$)
Hot BRQ	$\frac{\lvert\gamma_{111}\rvert}{\lvert\gamma_{111}\rvert+\lvert\gamma_{112}\rvert} = \frac{.53}{.53+.34} = 61\%$	$\frac{\lvert\gamma_{211}\rvert}{\lvert\gamma_{211}\rvert+\lvert\gamma_{212}\rvert} = \frac{.39}{.39+.52} = 43\%$	$\Delta\chi^2 = 6.37$ ($p < .05$)
Cold BRQ	$\frac{\lvert\gamma_{121}\rvert}{\lvert\gamma_{121}\rvert+\lvert\gamma_{122}\rvert} = \frac{.33}{.33+.62} = 35\%$	$\frac{\lvert\gamma_{221}\rvert}{\lvert\gamma_{221}\rvert+\lvert\gamma_{222}\rvert} = \frac{.22}{.22+.75} = 23\%$	$\Delta\chi^2 = 3.60$ (n.s.)

Note. BRQ = brand relationship quality.

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