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Understanding the Role of Brand Attachment in the Automotive Luxury Brand Segment

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Abstract: The automotive trade is one of the main drivers of world economies, contributing to the sustainability and competitiveness of countries at a global level. The luxury sub-segment is the one facing the most significant growth and the one which presents the greatest challenges in the business-to-consumer (B2C) relationship. Brand Attachment refers to the cognitive and effective connection between consumers and "their" brands. The central objective of this research is to analyze, measure, and understand the impact of Brand Attachment on consumer behavior, in the specific context of the luxury segment of the automotive market. The conceptual model that is proposed seeks to highlight and study the possible connections and associations between Brand Attachment, satisfaction, commitment, trust, expectations, and loyalty with the brand selected for this study, the luxury automotive brand Porsche. The selected methodology was based on a case study based in the Portuguese market and the application of a questionnaire to customers of Porsche from Portugal. The results obtained through the empirical data allowed us to reach the conclusion that respondents who have a stronger affective and emotional connection with Porsche (intense level of Brand Attachment) tend to be those who are more satisfied and confident with the brand and are, consequently, more loyal. This study represents an important contribution to research on Brand Attachment in marketing and strategic management in the automotive sector, particularly in the Portuguese market, and supports the definition of the best marketing strategies to promote fruitful B2C relationships.

Keywords: marketing; relational marketing; brand attachment; consumer behavior; luxury; car market; automotive sector

1. Introduction

We currently live in a world of global interaction. When we approach the subject of marketing, senior managers in various organizations and industries assume the importance of learning ways to strengthen the bond with consumers (IBM 2010). This requires a clearer understanding of the components of Brand Attachment and how best to nurture this emotional and cognitive bond between consumers and their favorite brands, known as Brand Attachment.

Creating strong bonds between consumers and brands is a goal for organizations, as it will lead to positive outcomes such as positive word of mouth (WOM), commitment, loyalty, and willingness to pay a premium price (Orth et al. 2010; Vlachos et al. 2010; Kim et al.

2005; Maharani and Marsasi 2024). As noted by Grisaffe and Nguyen (2011), organizations can benefit when they develop an affective and lasting attachment to the brand.

In this sense, being a construct with great exploratory potential and with several possible practical applications, this article focuses on the study of the impact of Brand Attachment on consumer behavior in the luxury car market, namely with regard to the opinions, perceptions, and attitudes of Porsche brand customers. Thus, the following initial research question arises: "What is the impact of Brand Attachment on the customer's connection with a luxury car brand?". In this sense, the main objectives of this research are to analyze the predisposition of customers of luxury car brands, based on the study of the Porsche brand, towards satisfaction, commitment, trust, and loyalty to the brand, as well as its relationship to Brand Attachment; to understand the specifics of the customer's decision-making process when choosing luxury car brands, given the alternatives available; to analyze the profile and behavior of consumers in specific marketing contexts (in this case, the profile and behavior of customers of luxury car brands); and to identify the practical implications of Brand Attachment in the luxury segment of the car market.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Marketing and the Concept of Luxury

Marketing is now a fundamental axis of economic growth for organizations and all identifiable goods in society. When we talk about marketing, we mean all forms of relationships between organizations and people, which go beyond the processes of buying and selling products and services (Levinson and Levinson 2011).

The marketing objectives are understood as the efforts made to bring potential customers together, to manage and strengthen the relationships established with customers, to consolidate organizational and commercial relationships, to clearly establish the identity of organizations, and to boost their image in the eyes of the public. These objectives must be directed by adapting actions to the needs and requirements of customers, within the scope of organizational management, with a view to growth and achieving the established goals (Kotler et al. 2017; Yanaze 2021).

2.2. Marketing and Luxury

According to Liu et al. (2017), the concept of luxury is characterized by a set of signs and codes present in people's behavior and lifestyle. When we talk about the concept of luxury, initial concepts in the literature identified the following three factors (Berthon et al. 2009): the functional factor, the emotional factor, and the symbolic factor. Other authors, in their search for a deeper understanding of the dynamics involved in the attraction and consumption of luxury goods, have broadened the scope of the concept of luxury, identifying four central characteristics of the concept, as follows: financial characteristics, which influence the acquisition process; functional characteristics—the way in which each product is used; individual characteristics—the consumer's personal perceptions; and social characteristics—the construction of each individual's conceptualization of the concepts (Hennigs et al. 2015; Chen and Lu 2024).

The marketing strategies chosen by companies are essential for individuals to perceive a brand as a luxury brand. The luxury brands are associated with products with an above-average standard of quality, so their prices are expected to match their quality, which justifies the above-average prices in the luxury market (Pencarelli et al. 2020). From this perspective, the more expensive a product is, the higher its quality tends to be.

In order to be considered part of a luxury level, items and products must be strategically crafted in such a way that the public builds a symbolic concept of them, using ideas such as the following (Kapferer and Bastien 2012): the brand stands out above the others, providing feelings of fulfilment and exclusivity; the message conveyed signals customer needs that are at the main levels of Maslow's pyramid of needs; the quality and standard advertised meets customer expectations; and establishing the appropriate monetary value

for the standard of luxury developed and offered to customers, considering that demand will increase according to the benchmark set by the price.

In short, luxury marketing should be understood as a set of elaborate, clearly developed strategies that bring together the ability to match the desires, habits, trends, and routines of individuals in order to predict and create responses that impact and awe customers, creating the feeling that it was everything they needed (Som and Blanckaert 2015).

3. Brand Attachment: Brand Attachment and Other Relational Concepts

Brand Attachment is defined by the establishment of a relationship between a customer and a particular brand, based on emotional attachment, which falls in line with relationship marketing, a trend that is geared towards working on the relationship between customers and potential customers and a brand. This concept is specific to relationship marketing and is useful for creating and strengthening the interaction between customers and those interested in a brand (Gómez-Suárez 2019).

When a brand's identity and personality are in line with the customer's personality and expectations, a connection is created that takes on an affective character, since the individual has contact with something through which they feel represented and can identify with (Japutra et al. 2019).

The literature provides evidence of some of the characteristics that favor the occurrence of Brand Attachment, as follows:

(a)   Self-congruity: the more likely a brand is to improve someone's image and status, the more easily that person will create an emotional bond with it (Malär et al. 2011);
(b)   Experience: the likelihood of a person becoming attached to a brand after having had a positive experience with a product from that range (Brakus et al. 2009);
(c)   Responsiveness: a brand's ability to respond and adapt to a variety of contexts is essential for attracting and meeting customer satisfaction levels (Thomson et al. 2005);
(d)   Perceived quality: levels of satisfaction that the customer experiences when purchasing and enjoying the product (Bagozzi et al. 2017; Shanahan et al. 2019);
(e)   Reputation: the image perceived by customers of a brand, its values, and its social responsibility (Loureiro et al. 2017).

As a result of this Brand Attachment process, customers take on the role of brand ambassadors and start spreading the word about the brand and its products in their social environment, recognizing the weaknesses present in the brand and accepting them, as well as defending the brand when necessary (Li et al. 2020).

In this sense, brands should focus their efforts on stimulating behaviors that boost trust, the association of affection, loyalty, commitment, and the feeling of satisfaction. The presence of an indicator such as trust is fundamental in building a brand's image, which is developed through the experiences customers have with the brand's performance and the way it responds to their demands and tastes (Li et al. 2020).

Regarding affectivity, the Brand Attachment process occurs when the customer creates a relationship that goes beyond the moment of buying a product, creating a symbolic and psychological interaction with everything the product represents to them. It is, therefore, a kind of extension of their identity, of who they are, with the customer building a personal history with the product or brand (Hur et al. 2020).

The authors Aaker and Aaker (2016) have addressed the concept of loyalty in this context, stating that it is established when a customer starts to buy a brand's products frequently; this attitude is maintained over time, demonstrating a position of commitment. Behaviors like this should be looked at closely by organizations and brands, as it is through their implementation that the positioning of organizations stands out in terms of profit and competitiveness.

The last concept discussed concerns customer satisfaction. With regard to this concept, the literature emphasizes how important it is for customers to generate good perceptions of brands in order to build positive images and achieve greater levels of satisfaction with their

purchase. Brand satisfaction is an explanatory factor for Brand Attachment, particularly in the context of luxury brands (Shimul et al. 2019).

This type of relationship between customers and brands can also have some disadvantages (Tan et al. 2021). Some of these are as follows:

(a) When the brand fails, the customer will experience negative emotions such as a sense of betrayal and frustration.

(b) Sharing information on digital platforms can serve to spread negative comments, using eWOM to the opposite of its intended effect.

3.1. Satisfaction

Satisfaction is defined by Kotler and Armstrong (2010) as the feeling of pleasure resulting from the positive performance of the product or service that meets and exceeds previously created expectations. Oliver (2014) defines satisfaction as pleasurable fulfilment.

This feeling of satisfaction is an opportunity that managers should take advantage of, as satisfied customers can positively persuade their circle of contacts, increasing the brand's positive word-of-mouth. Aaker (2009) states that it is this feeling of satisfaction that establishes a relationship of loyalty and affinity, generating bonds of friendship and trust that subsequently influence the choices made by the consumer, leading them to repeat purchases and even to defend the brand.

3.2. Trust

Brand trust can be perceived as a feeling of security that consumers maintain about a particular brand with which they interact and create a bond.

Sahin et al. (2011) state that brand trust has two main dimensions as follows: reliability and the belief on the part of consumers that the brand has good intentions and is honest in addressing their needs and seeking their well-being, even when problems arise associated with the products/services of the brand in question.

Belaid and Behi (2011) argue that trust has a relationship with Brand Attachment; it can reinforce it. According to the same authors, if a consumer has an emotional bond with a brand, they will believe and trust that the brand has no intention of being dishonest, breaking promises or taking any kind of advantage of their vulnerability as a consumer.

Similarly, several authors have stated that trust influences satisfaction and commitment and that a consumer who trusts a brand will consequently be more satisfied and will be willing to commit to that relationship in the future (Erciç et al. 2012).

3.3. Commitment

Relational commitment consists of the belief on the part of one of the partners involved in a relationship, in this case the consumer vis à vis the brand, that this ongoing relationship with the other is just as important as ensuring that maximum efforts are made to maintain the relationship.

According to a study by Erciç et al. (2012), organizations should give greater importance to affective commitment, which is strongly related to the notion of affective connection and identification, as it is capable of creating loyalty in consumers towards brands through the consistent and systematic presentation of valid and diverse reasons that allow them to enter into the context and reality of consumers. Belaid and Behi (2011) also defend this position, admitting that there are several studies that show that commitment is a central indicator for brand loyalty, since its affective component is linked to feelings of devotion and consumer identification with a particular brand.

3.4. Loyalty

Brand loyalty is the tendency to be loyal to a brand and reflects consumers' willingness to buy (Atulkar 2020).

Oliver (1999) identifies that loyalty can be formed in four phases, as follows:

(1) Cognitive loyalty, based on consumer preference and supported by previous experiences, is related to perceptions of quality, benefits, and price rather than a connection to the brand; any change in these elements could make that loyalty vulnerable.

(2) Affective loyalty is based on the satisfaction derived from the act of consumption, the affection, or attitude towards the brand because of successive satisfactory experiences. This type of affect-based loyalty is based on affective components and attitudes such as emotions, satisfaction, and mood swings; its vulnerabilities are dissatisfaction and the search for alternatives.

(3) Loyalty with behavioral intention is based on the existence of a stage of impulse stemming from previous episodes of positive affection towards the brand; its deterrents to switching brands are the so-called switching costs, be they monetary, psychological, or even learning, past experience, and expectations for the future.

(4) Action loyalty refers to the change from the intention to the action itself, the purchase or repurchase, and the overcoming of barriers to repurchase such as marketing efforts by other brands. This relationship promotes repurchase and, in the future, inertia in relation to the action of changing brands.

4. Marketing and Its Impact on the Automotive Sector

The automotive sector has a variety of characteristics that can be studied, since it encompasses several purposes and variants. This sector has a diverse target audience in terms of gender, age, and social stratum, with room for family needs and the needs of individuals with all kinds of backgrounds, belonging to different social groups and age groups.

When it comes to the decision-making and purchasing process in the automotive sector, studies such as that by Grohmann et al. (2012) identify the choice processes based on two functions—instrumental (inherent characteristics and qualities, symbolic and significant relevance of the vehicle, understanding its purpose, and the rationality associated with it) or expressive (e.g., issues such as comfort levels, the size of the vehicles, and the internal space available, the presence of details that emphasize safety).

In this sense, it is important to realize that the purchase of private cars has been challenged by the entry into the market of innovative and affordable services in private transport. With this trend, the decision to buy a car has increasingly been seen as a luxury purchase.

Studies dealing with consumer behavior state that there is a diversity of aspects involved in the type of influence exerted on each person and that their ambitions are often related to individual needs for socialization, recognition, and esteem, in the sense of the pyramid of needs outlined by Maslow (Cui et al. 2021).

In this way, products that are placed in a luxury category, endowed with characteristics such as restricted or exclusive access, an above-average price range, and which convey the idea of recognition to the individual, are those that are associated with greater levels of satisfaction and pleasure. The authors also emphasize that understanding the concept of luxury will depend on the characteristics of each person, their experiences, and the symbolic value attributed to them (Kotler et al. 2019).

Generally speaking, we can understand that most authors and research outline a customer profile for luxury products and brands that favor the notoriety and prestige offered by purchasing products in this range, and are strongly influenced by the feeling of exclusivity (Bairrada et al. 2018; Byun et al. 2018). The characteristics mostly pointed out by the literature are part of the recognized importance of understanding the dimensions that involve these customers, especially the social dimension, the personal dimension, and the hedonic dimension. Both an individual's personality, experiences, and socio-cultural context are relevant aspects in understanding the diverse types of customers in this sector (Cheah et al. 2015; Schade et al. 2016).

As concerns levels of consumer satisfaction within the automotive sector, Waligóra and Waligóra (2007) developed a framework of understanding to explain a series of points involved in its measurement, as follows:

- The image built is based on two concepts—the type of design and the quality of the car.
- The concept of car quality: customers' perception of the product is influenced by the actual quality, performance, and comfort provided by the car.
- Service: the perception of the level of quality is influenced by the type of after-sales service provided and the way in which people are looked after during the buying and selling process.
- Image: customer perception will influence the appropriateness of a car's price and value for money.

It is important to emphasize that perceived quality does not correspond to the actual quality of the product, but is constructed by the customer's critical eye based on a series of pieces of information that they consider relevant. This concept can derive from associations that the customer makes with the brand, which can be based on a sense of notoriety and other ideas created from the symbolic meaning suggested (Kotler and Keller 2007).

Marques and Pereira (2018) added that in this challenging panorama, the characteristics that should be the focus of brand intervention are related to perceptions of values, meanings, and brand identity in the context of the interactions established between people and the brand, which can have an influence on purchasing decisions.

According to a study conducted by Marques and Pereira (2018), the focus of marketing campaigns in the luxury car sector should be to work on the concepts present in establishing a relationship between the customer and the brand, stimulating the development of trust and creating interactions based on emotion and promoting loyalty. Valuing the customer, based on their behavioral pattern, should include strategies and experiences that appeal to emotion and direct contact, such as test drives and other experiences that can put the customer in a situation that projects the benefit of the purchase (Khalid et al. 2024).

5. Study Context: The Luxury Car Market

The automotive sector is exposed to technological, economic, and legal constraints, so the increase in investment and risks associated with launching new models is considerable. Regarding luxury in the automotive sector, Kapferer and Bastien (2009) point out that the current lack of clarity between luxury and premium products is not of direct concern to customers. Each manager must have a sharp vision of their brand and the product they sell in order to achieve the potential of their luxury market and remain there for as long as possible, since luxury must be continually differentiated in order to recreate new strategies and surprise its customers.

Thus, in the luxury segment, car brands can be categorized as "luxury, premium and top-of-the-range" (Kapferer and Bastien 2009, p. 47). The top-of-the-range category means the top of the car line, i.e., the top car in a range, the one that reflects the brand's know-how. The premium brand uses a wide range to instill loyalty in its customers throughout their lives ". . . from the small car to the family car, to the minivan for a larger family or a family with teenagers and finally to the top-of-the-range car with all the extras and options that give the car a personal, intimate and hedonic touch to the standard car" (Kapferer and Bastien 2009, p. 48).

Premium brands are chosen rationally and for their excellence, i.e., "the high price recognizes signs of the owner's social position, but also the fact that they are buying more than just the quality of the car, more passive safety, better handling, more technology, more connectivity, more energy savings, more passenger space, more interior comfort, less pollution, less vibration and noise" (Kapferer and Bastien 2012, p. 50).

A premium brand is a propagation of luxury through the imitation of luxury codes, while also having a higher production volume. The premium car range remains earthly and tangible, while luxury cars extract their additional value through a sacred dimension,

linked essentially to a relationship with time, its history, death, and life (Lipovetsky and Roux 2003; Kapferer and Bastien 2012).

Luxury cars, "can be recognized by their price, their rarity which derives from their quality and the prestige of the brand. These are sacred products or models, descendants of a brand that is also sacred". (Kapferer and Bastien 2012, p. 50). They materialize time, as they "constantly refer back to the origins of the brand, or through the rejection of mass-produced cars, subjected (…) to the best price-quality ratio."

In the premium segment, you have a system designed to recreate desire in customers and keep the production lines moving, while "luxury" takes timelessness into account, even if the vehicle has advanced technology. "History alone is not enough: you need to create a myth, a legendary discourse that gives birth to the dream. This is what distinguishes the luxury brand from the premium brand" (Kapferer and Bastien 2012, p. 52).

In models belonging to the luxury category, past models gain the potential to dream, while rarity and mythology are necessary. Luxury likes short series, traditional values, while adapting to tastes and technological innovation (Kapferer and Bastien 2012).

5.1. The Luxury Car Market in Portugal

The car market in Portugal and in the European context has shown remarkable vitality in recent years and is recognized as an extremely competitive sector whose economic importance is particularly important; therefore, trying to identify the determining factors influencing the demand is of great importance.

From the analysis conducted, there is a scarcity of broad-based studies of the sector on the national and international scene. This scientific gap is because the full development of a study in this area implies access to a wide range of elements that often belong to the private domain of market operators and are therefore not openly available to the public.

Analyzing the car market over the last ten years (2013/2022), it shows a consolidated growth in the years 2013 to 2019, a sharp drop in 2020 and a slow recovery until 2022.

Luxury car sales in Portugal increased by 22 per cent in 2022, a much higher growth rate than the market. All the super sports car brands reported sales increases, with two brands standing out with triple-digit growth.

In Portugal, 886 luxury cars were sold in 2021. In 2022, 1080 units were sold, according to data from the Automobile Association of Portugal (ACAP 2023).

5.2. The Brand Porsche

Started in 1948, the Porsche brand remains one of the most popular luxury car brands, reflecting the image of prestige and power with its top-of-the-range features and strong engine options.

Porsche currently offers almost 90 different vehicles in various trims and configurations including the 718 Cayman, 718 Boxster, 911 (992), Panamera, Macan, Cayenne, and all-electric Taycan.

Worldwide, the sports car manufacturer delivered a total of 309,884 vehicles in 2022 (Table 1). In relation to the distribution of sales of the Porsche brand, the evolution of the market in Portugal was as follows in 2022.

Table 1. Light vehicles registered in Portugal.

Brand	Units		%	% on the Market	
	2022	**2021**	**Var.**	**2021**	**2022**
Porsche	852	765	11.4	0.55	0.52

Source: ACAP.

Porsche—the brand with the highest volume on the list of luxury sales in Portugal— sold 852 cars in 2022, up 11 per cent on the previous year.

Porsche continues to have the most loyal customers in the automotive market, ranked number one in the premium car category in the 2023 JD Power US Automotive Brand Loyalty Study, with a 56.8% loyalty rate.

5.3. Methodology

Research question

> **'What impact does Brand Attachment have on the customer's connection with a luxury car brand?**

Thus, the problem under study focuses precisely on measuring and understanding the impact of Brand Attachment on the behavior of luxury car brand customers, in interaction with other relevant relational variables, as well as determining the existence of a consequent emotional connection between customers and luxury car brands.

Descriptive research design is focused on determining the frequency with which a particular event occurs or the relationship between two variables. This type of research is guided by an initial relationship between two variables (Shukla 2008, p. 40).

This chapter highlights the presentation of the conceptual model developed through a process of adapting knowledge and data from a model published by other authors. It should be emphasized that the conceptual model serves as the basis for defining the hypotheses and preparing for the subsequent collection of empirical data.

5.4. Objective of the Study

The general objective of this research is in line with the research question and mirrors the problem inherent in all the research being conducted. In this sense, it consists of analyzing, measuring, and understanding the impact of Brand Attachment on consumer behavior in the context of the luxury car market, based on the affective relationship that is established between customers and Porsche, the brand under study.

Bearing in mind that Brand Attachment is something that develops and strengthens over time within any relationship (Park et al. 2010), we list the four specific objectives that this study sets out to achieve and which guide the entire investigation, in order to obtain an answer to the research question and, therefore, the problem.

- Objective 1: To analyze Porsche customers' predisposition to satisfaction, commitment, trust, and loyalty to the brand and its relationship to Brand Attachment.
- Objective 2: Understand the specifics of the customer's decision-making process when choosing the Porsche brand, given the alternatives available.
- Objective 3: To analyze the profile and behavior of consumers in specific marketing contexts (customer behavior towards the Porsche brand).
- Objective 4: To identify the practical implications of Brand Attachment in the luxury car market in Portugal.

In addition to these objectives, there is also a fifth objective, which involves empirically verifying the statistical adequacy of the proposed conceptual model.

6. Conceptual Model and Definition of Hypotheses

The conceptual model (Figure 1) assumes that Brand Attachment is an antecedent of satisfaction, commitment, and trust in the brand and that brand loyalty is a consequence of these three variables, which are already related and directly affected by Brand Attachment. The model is also composed of variable expectations, as far as the aim is to understand whether expectations have any influence on consumer satisfaction after contact with the reality experienced.
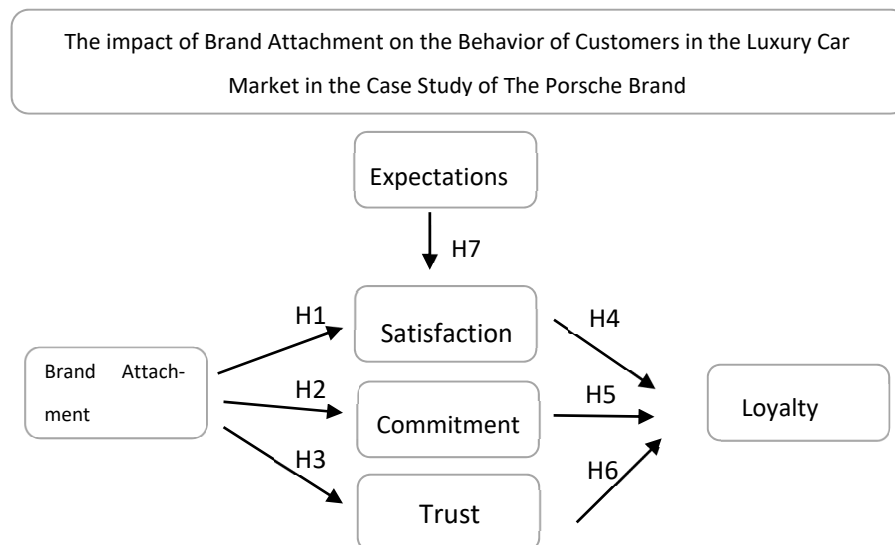
Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model. Source: Adapted from Belaid and Behi (2011).

The conceptual model in the context analyzed in this research means that the Brand Attachment that exists in the relationship between the customer and the brand is associated with, and has an influence on, their degree of satisfaction, commitment, and trust towards the brand; it is these same factors that, together, are associated with and determine their degree of loyalty to the Porsche brand. In addition, the model also defines that the customer's expectations about the brand can be related to their subsequent satisfaction.

The six variables presented in the conceptual model, which were explored theoretically in the framework chapter, gave rise to seven hypotheses that establish the existence of a relationship between them, which can be actively and empirically tested. It is through these tests that it will become possible to answer the main research question.

Therefore, in this study, it is assumed that there is a relationship between the degree of intensity of the brand.

Attachment (in interaction with the relational variables 'satisfaction', 'commitment', 'trust', and 'loyalty') and customer behavior towards the Porsche brand is impacted in the following ways:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *The stronger the Brand Attachment that is established between the brand and the customer, the greater the customer satisfaction.*

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *The stronger the Brand Attachment between the brand and the customer, the greater the customer's commitment.*

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *The stronger the Brand Attachment that is established between the brand and the customer, the greater the customer's trust.*

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *The stronger the customer's satisfaction with the brand, the greater their loyalty.*

Hypothesis 5 (H5). *The stronger the customer's commitment to the brand, the greater their loyalty.*

Hypothesis 6 (H6). *The stronger the customer's trust in the brand, the greater their loyalty.*

In addition to the six hypotheses mentioned above, a seventh hypothesis was added, which is related to customer expectations of the brand.

Hypothesis 7 (H7). *The closer the reality is to the customer's expectations of the brand, the greater their satisfaction.*

7. Operationalization of the Variables

According to the conceptual model presented, it is essential to operationalize the variables that make it up. The variables used for the conceptual model of this research are variables that have already been studied by other authors and, therefore, have measurement scales that are part of the scientific literature. Therefore, at this stage, the variables were adapted to the context in which this dissertation is being analyzed, i.e., the luxury car market.

As well as this and bearing in mind that the questionnaire surveys used to collect the data were available in Portuguese, it was necessary to translate the scales that were originally written in English and French (1 item).

It should be noted that to measure all the variables explained in the conceptual model, except for the 'expectations' variable, the original Likert scale was used, consisting of 5 points ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. In the case of the 'expectations' variable, the semantic differential scale was used.

The operationalization of each of the variables is presented below.

7.1. Brand Attachment Variable

For question 6 of the questionnaire, related to the Brand Attachment variable, the measurement scale chosen includes four items and is based on the scales already used by Louis and Lombart (2010) and Lacoeuilhe (2000) in their respective investigations (Table 2). The scale, therefore, had to be adapted to the context. The first three items were also translated from English into Portuguese, while item 4 was translated from French.

Table 2. Brand Attachment Scale applied to the luxury car market.

Brand Attachment to the Porsche Brand
1. I feel connected to the Porsche Brand.
2. I have a lot of affection for the Porsche Brand.
3. Thinking about the Porsch Brand brings me feelings of joy.
4. I feel a certain comfort in buying or owning a Porsche.

Source: (Louis and Lombart 2010) and (Lacoeuilhe 2000).

7.2. Satisfaction Variable

The scale used to measure the satisfaction variable has two items and is based on the scale used by Maxham (2001) (Table 3) in his study. It was adapted to the context of the luxury car market and the scale was translated from English into Portuguese.

Table 3. Satisfaction scale applied to the luxury car market context.

Satisfaction with the Porsche Brand
1. I'm very satisfied with the Porsche Brand
2. The Porsche Brand provides good and satisfactory service

Source: (Maxham 2001).

7.3. Commitment Variable

Regarding the question related to the commitment variable, the measurement scale defined has seven items and was adapted from the scale used by Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2010) (Table 4) in their research.

Table 4. Commitment scale applied to the luxury car market context.

Commitment to the Porsche Brand
1. I often tell my friends that the Porsche brand is a great choice
2. I am proud to tell others that I own a Porsche
3. For me, Porsche is the car brand to own
4. Somethinfg serious would have to happen for me to opt for a car from another brand
5. I am very happy to have a Porsche-Branded vehicle rather than vehicles form other brands that I might consider
6. I would like to continue buying Porsche vehicles in the future
7. I care about and am interested in the Porsche brand

Source: (Kimpakorn and Tocquer 2010).

7.4. Trust Variable

The scale used to measure the trust variable consists of five items and was based on the scale used by Sahin et al. (2011) (Table 5) in their respective study.

Table 5. Scale of trust towards the Porsche brand.

Confidence in the Porsche Brand
1. The Porsche brand cares about me as a costumer
2. I trust the Porsche brand
3. The Porsche brand never disappoints me
4. Porsche is honest and sincere when I raise me concerns/issues
5. I can rely on the Porsche brand to resolve the situations/issues I raise with it

Source: (Sahin et al. 2011).

7.5. Loyalty Variable

With regard to question 10, the scale used to measure the loyalty variable in this case has four items and is the result of a scale used by Loureiro et al. (2012) (Table 6) in their respective study.

Table 6. Loyalty scale applied to the context of the luxury car market.

Porsche Brand Loyalty
1. If I decide to change vehicles, I intend to choose the Porsche brand again
2. If I was given the choice between Porsche and another luxury brand at a lower price, I'd choose Porsche again
3. I recommend my Porsche to other people
4. I speak positively about the Porsche brand to other people

Source: (Loureiro et al. 2012).

7.6. Expectations Variable

Regarding question 11 of the questionnaire, made up of two questions (i.e., two items) related to the variable expectations, a 5-point semantic differential measurement scale was adopted. It should be noted that the expectations variable, as stipulated in the conceptual model, is linked to the satisfaction variable, since it is considered that there is a relationship between the two constructs.

Measuring expectations makes it possible to understand whether the opinions resulting from a given experience are lower or higher than those expected by the consumer before making the decision to buy the product and/or service. Thus, in the first question,

the aim was to find out what Porsche customers thought of their experience as a user of a Porsche vehicle, in more general terms, i.e., whether the customer's experience was "worse than expected" or "better than expected". This was carried out by adapting a scale proposed by Oliver (1980) (Table 7). In the second question, using a scale based on that from Churchill and Surprenant (1982) (Table 8), the intention was to understand whether customers' expectations of the Porsche brand had been "very high" or "very low" when compared to reality.

Table 7. Scale 1 of expectations applied to the context of the luxury car market.

Expectations of the Porsche Brand
Generally speaking, my experience of using a Porsche vehicle is being. . .
. . .Worse than I expected. 1 2 3 4 5 . . .. Better than I expected

Source: Own elaboration based on Oliver's (1980) scale.

Table 8. Scale 2 of expectations applied to the context of the luxury car market.

Expectations of the Porsche Brand Higher
In general, my expectations of the Porsche brand were
. . .Worse than I expected. 1 2 3 4 5 . . .. Better than I expected

Source: Own elaboration based on the Churchill and Surprenant (1982) scale.

7.7. Luxury Brand Attachment Variable

Regarding question 12, the scale used to measure Brand Attachment in luxury brands has seven items and was adapted from a scale used by Shimul et al. 2019 (Table 9), in their respective study. The aim of using this scale is to compare the responses obtained on the Brand Attachment variable and analyze any significant differences in the orientation of the responses obtained.

Table 9. Luxury Brand Attachment Scale applied to the luxury car market in Portugal.

Luxury Brand Attachment	
1.	I'm completed in love with this luxury brand
2.	I love this luxury brand
3.	When I think of this luxury brand, I'm happy
4.	I have a deep emotional connection with this luxury brand
5.	I would feel a huge loss if this luxury brand were no longer available
6.	I believe that this luxury brand helps me achieve what I want to achieve
7.	I feel that this luxury brand is unique

Source: Own elaboration based on the Shimul et al. (2019) scale.

8. Data Collection Method

8.1. Sampling Process

For this study, the sampling process consisted of using a non-probabilistic convenience sample, since the questionnaire surveys were made available through the Google Forms platform, known email addresses, and social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, to connoisseurs, owners, and former owners of the Porsche brand.

Before the questionnaire was made available, it underwent an initial test with 15 users of Porsche vehicles who work for the brand. This phase was of elementary importance, as it allowed us to validate the relevance of the questions posed and helped us to determine whether their wording was really providing answers to the starting question of the whole investigation. The questionnaire survey was available from 1 October to 30 November 2022.

8.2. Survey Design

The questionnaire survey was designed in such a way that the answers were mandatory in each section. This made it easier to answer each section and ensured that the respondents would answer all the questions put to them.

The survey is divided into three main parts. The first part includes an introductory question of an eliminatory nature, where informed consent is obtained and an attempt is made to understand whether the respondent is an owner/ex-owner and/or user of the brand, thus enabling them to continue or not to complete the questionnaire. The second part, a section focusing on the profile of the respondents, consists of questions that are related to the characterization of the respondents. And finally, the third section contains questions related to the variables analyzed in the conceptual model, the main objective of this research.

As mentioned in the introduction to the operationalization of the variables, most of the questions listed in the conceptual model that make up the questionnaire were measured using the original Likert scale of agreement. The Likert scale (1932) makes it possible to assess the degree to which respondents agree or disagree with a given set of statements. Thus, the answers to these specific questions were given using an agreement scale whose options ranged from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Only one of the variables was then measured using the semantic differential scale—the expectations variable.

Anonymous in nature, the questionnaire was developed in such a way that it did not take more than 3/4 min to complete, so that it would not be too long in the eyes of the respondents and would promote a greater level of collaboration.

The questionnaire survey template is available in both Portuguese and English.

8.3. Data Analysis Method

The data were analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program. Only those responses considered valid were considered when analyzing the data.

Univariate analysis, applied to data related to the profile of the respondents, and bivariate analysis, which was applied whenever the aim was to examine the associations between the variables of the conceptual model under study, were utilized. In this context, descriptive statistics techniques were used, such as absolute frequencies and measures of central tendency (modes and medians, considering the ordinal nature of the measurement scales of the variables in the conceptual model), as well as correlation techniques, namely Pearson's correlation coefficient, and variable mediation (Marôco 2014).

9. Analysis and Discussion of Results

In this chapter, we analyze the data resulting from the application of questionnaire surveys to the study sample, i.e., customers and users of the Porsche luxury car brand.

In this sense, it should be noted that the data were extracted from a set of 146 responses. All the analyses carried out refer to the respective sample, since, given the non-probabilistic nature of the sample, the purpose of this study is not to extrapolate the results, i.e., to generalize the results to the population from which the sample was taken, but rather to identify the relationships between the variables and their respective implications according to the empirical evidence gathered through the responses of all the respondents.

At the same time, the chapter opens a space for the discussion of the results derived from the collection process. This phase also makes it possible to reach conclusions that explain the initial research question and the various hypotheses defined and explained in the conceptual model.

Thus, in the first phase, a socio-demographic analysis of the respondents' profile is presented, based on descriptive statistics for variables such as gender, age, marital status, and academic qualifications. In the second phase of the process, the data and indicators related to the hypotheses under study are analyzed in order to understand the behavior of the variables associated with them, where hypothesis tests for independent samples were applied, namely the Mann–Whitney test, as well as Spearman's correlation coefficient.

Microsoft Excel and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) programs, version 26.0, were used, with a significance level of 0.05.

9.1. Sociodemographic Profile of Respondents

Analyzing the sociodemographic profile of the respondents, it can be said that the sample consists of 146 respondents, whose common denominator is that they are all users of Porsche brand vehicles.

In terms of their relationship with the brand, 65.7% (96) are owners/users and 34.2% (50) are former owners. The sample is made up of 146 respondents from Portugal. Gender equality was not achieved, as men accounted for 80.8% (118) of all respondents. A large part of the sample has post-secondary education (Bachelor's/graduate/Master's degree), 69.8% (102), and the majority are married or in a civil partnership, 54.8% (80).

9.2. Context of the Study

The context of the study was aimed at people who had contact with the Porsche luxury car brand, either as users, owners, or former owners, from Portugal. In total, 96 (65.8%) of the individuals surveyed are owners and users, while 50 (34.2%) of the individuals surveyed are former owners.

9.3. Analyzing the Conceptual Model

In order to study the behavior of the variables identified in the conceptual model, Brand Attachment, satisfaction, commitment, trust, loyalty, expectations, and luxury Brand Attachment, in the context of the relationship established between the customer and the luxury car brand—Porsche—some measures of central tendency analysis were used, which will be discussed in this chapter.

9.4. Reliability Testing of the Scales

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to test the reliability of the conceptual model scales (Table 10). This step is essential to ensure the validity of the variables under study and their suitability for statistical analysis (Marôco 2011). According to Gliem and Gliem (2003), Cronbach's Alpha coefficient generally varies between 0 and 1, and the closer the coefficient is to 1, the greater the internal consistency of the items that make up a given scale. Thus, the internal consistency of the scales being analyzed is assessed, taking into account the following levels defined by George and Mallery (2003):

- More than 0.9 is excellent;
- Between 0.8 and 0.9 is good;
- Between 0.7 and 0.8 is acceptable;
- Between 0.6 and 0.7 is questionable;
- Between 0.5 and 0.6 is poor;
- Less than 0.5 is unacceptable.

In view of this, the results obtained for the conceptual model used in this research show that the measurement scales for the variables trust, loyalty, and luxury Brand Attachment have values above 0.9, which means, according to the levels described above, that these variables have excellent scale reliability.

The measurement scale for the Brand Attachment and commitment variables showed values above 0.9 for the sample, which means, according to the levels described above, that this variable has excellent scale reliability.

The measurement scale for the expectations variable shows values of 0.734, which means, according to the levels described above, that this variable has acceptable scale reliability.

The measurement scale for the satisfaction variable shows values of 0.83, which means, according to the levels described above, that this variable has good scale reliability.

Table 10. Reliability of the conceptual model scales.

N	Variable	Context	N°. of Scale Items	Coefficient Alpha of Cronbach	Descriptive Measures	
					Average	Standard Deviation
146	Affectivity	Portugal	4	0.947	16.68	3.61
	Satisfaction		2	0.830	8.22	1.67
	Commitment		7	0.929	27.75	6.06
	Confidence		5	0.954	19.04	4.56
	Loyalty		4	0.927	16.41	3.33
	Expectations		2	0.734	8.37	1.36
	Luxury Brand Affectivity		7	0.957	27.73	6.05

Source: Own elaboration based on data generated in SPSS.

In short, all the aforementioned scales have reliability values that are suitable for analyzing the variables using statistical means.

We, thus, have the following interpretation of the scale's degree of reliability, as shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Interpretation of the scale's degree of reliability.

Variable	Interpretation (Degree of Reliability of the Scale)
Affectivity	Excellent
Satisfaction	Good
Commitment	Excellent
Confidence	Excellent
Loyalty	Excellent
Expectations	Acceptable
Luxury Brand Affectivity	Excellent

Source: Own elaboration based on data generated in SPSS.

9.5. Descriptive Analysis of the Variables in the Conceptual Model

For an initial analysis of the variables that make up the conceptual model and are the basis for formulating the hypotheses, some descriptive statistical techniques were applied.

The following tables show the relative frequencies for each of the items that make up the scale and, bearing in mind that the scales used are ordinal in nature—Likert (each item contains a statement presenting a favorable opinion with which the respondent could agree or disagree, with a choice of five levels of agreement) and semantic differential—the respective mean, median, and mode are presented as measures of central tendency.

9.5.1. Brand Attachment

The Brand Attachment variable, considered the independent variable of the conceptual model being analyzed and therefore the one to which most importance and attention is given, was measured using a 4-item scale (Table 12).

In view of the above, it can be concluded that both users and the owners and former owners surveyed have a positive, moderate–high level of emotional bond with the Porsche luxury car brand, developing a relationship with it characterized by feelings such as connection, affection, joy, and comfort.

Table 12. Brand Attachment.

N	Items	Context	Level of Agreement					Mean	Median	Mode
			1	2	3	4	5			
146	I feel connected to the Porsche Brand	Portugal	2.70%	4.10%	16.40%	30.10%	46.60%	4.14	4	5
	I have a lot of affection for the Porsche Brand		1.40%	5.50%	15.10%	32.90%	45.20%	4.15	4	5
	Thinking about the Porsche brand brings me feelings of joy		1.40%	8.20%	9.60%	31.50%	49.30%	4.19	4	5
	I fell a certain confort in buying or owning a Porsche		1.40%	4.10%	11.0%	39.70%	43.80%	4.21	4	5

Source: Own elaboration based on data generated in SPSS.

9.5.2. Satisfaction

The satisfaction variable was measured using a 2-item scale (Table 13).

Table 13. Satisfaction.

N	Items	Context	Level of Agreement					Mean	Median	Mode
			1	2	3	4	5			
146	I'm very satisfied with t Porsche brand	Portugal	2.70%	1.40%	12.30%	38.40%	45.20%	4.22	5	5
	In my opinion the Porsche brand provides a good and satisfactory service		1.40%	4.10%	19.20%	43.80%	31.50%	4	4	4

Source: Own elaboration based on data generated in SPSS.

In this sense, and also taking into account the percentages of relative frequencies, it can be said that, in general, the variable under study registered positive levels of agreement.

9.5.3. Commitment

As for the commitment variable, this was assessed using seven measurement items (Table 14).

Table 14. Commitment.

N	Items	Context	Level of Agreement					Mean	Median	Mode
			1	2	3	4	5			
146	I often tell my friends that the Porsche brand is a great choice	Portugal	4.10%	4.10%	9.60%	41.10%	41.10%	4.11	4	4
	I am proud to tell others that I own a Porsche		2.70%	5.50%	24.70%	31.50%	35.60%	3.92	4	5
	For me, Porsche is the car brand to own		4.10%	8.20%	19.20%	41.10%	27.40%	3.79	4	4
	Something serious would have to happen for me to opt for a car from another brand		9.60%	11.00%	26.00%	27.40%	26.00%	3.49	4	4
	I am very happy to have a Porsche-Branded vehicle rather than vehicles form other brands that I might consider		4.10%	2.70%	15.10%	42.50%	35.60%	4.03	4	4
	I would like to continue buying Porsche vehicles in the future		1.40%	4.10%	13.70%	34.10%	46.60%	4.21	4	5
	I care about and am interested in the Porsche brand		2.70%	0.0%	16.40%	35.60%	45.20%	4.21	4	5

Source: Own elaboration based on data generated in SPSS.

The respondents have a highly intense sense of commitment to the Porsche luxury car brand, namely in the sense that they are happy to own/use or have owned a Porsche vehicle to the detriment of other available options, and also because they are proud to say that they own/use or have owned a Porsche vehicle, which they care about and are interested in.

9.5.4. Trust

As far as the trust variable is concerned, it was measured using five items (Table 15).

Table 15. Trust.

N	Items	Context	Level of Agreement					Mean	Median	Mode
			1	2	3	4	5			
	The Porsche brand cares about me as client		8.20%	11.00%	17.00%	39.70%	23.30%	3.59	4	4
	I trust in the Porsche brand		4.10%	2.70%	12.30%	39.70%	41.10%	4.11	4	5
146	The Porsche brand never disappoints me	Portugal	2.80%	7.00%	22.20%	47.20%	20.80%	3.76	4	4
	The Porsche brand is honest and upfront when I air my concerns/questions		4.10%	8.20%	21.90%	45.20%	20.50%	3.70	4	4
	I can rely on the Porsche brand to solve the situations/questions I have		4.10%	5.50%	21.90%	50.70%	17.80%	3.73	4	4

Source: Own elaboration based on data generated in SPSS.

In this sense, it can be said that the level of agreement with the trust items, namely the notion that the Porsche brand cares about the customer, never lets them down, and is honest and sincere when they ask questions, is still of moderate–high intensity and, in a way, significant for the existence of trust.

9.5.5. Loyalty

With regard to the intention to continue buying a Porsche luxury car in the future by means of other more economical options, respondents show a moderate-to-high level of agreement (see Table 16).

Table 16. Loyalty.

N	Items	Context	Level of Agreement					Mean	Median	Mode
			1	2	3	4	5			
	If I decide to change vehicles, I intend to choose the Porsche brand again		2.70%	5.50%	16.40%	45.20%	30.20%	3.95	4	4
146	If I was given the choice between Porsche and another luxury brand at a lower price, I'd choose Porsche again	Portugal	1.40%	6.80%	20.50%	42.50%	28.80%	3.90	4	4
	I recommend my Porsche to other people		1.40%	5.50%	6.80%	42.50%	43.80%	4.22	4	5
	I speak positively about the Porsche brand to other people		1.40%	2.70%	9.60%	32.90%	53.40%	4.34	5	5

Source: Own elaboration based on data generated in SPSS.

Thus, with regard to brand loyalty, it can be seen that the level of agreement is higher and is more relevant when it comes to the respondent's intention to recommend the luxury car brand Porsche to others.

9.5.6. Expectations

The expectations variable was measured using two items, in this case semantic differential items (Table 17).

Table 17. Expectations.

N	Items	Context	Level of Agreement					Mean	Median	Mode
			1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**			
146	Overall, my experience of using a Porsche branded vehicle is being (worse than I thought/better than I expected)	Portugal	0.00%	2.70%	12.30%	42.50%	42.50%	4.25	4	4
	Generally speaking my expectations of the Porsche brand were (very high: Porsche is worse than I expected/very low: Porsche is better than I expected)		0.00%	1.40%	19.20%	45.20%	34.20%	4.12	4	4

Source: Own elaboration based on data generated in SPSS.

As for item 1, the results show that this means that the respondents' experience of using a Porsche luxury car was better than they initially expected.

For item 2, 39 per cent of respondents chose a scale value of 4, which means that their expectations of the Porsche luxury car brand exceeded their expectations of the reality they had experienced in the meantime.

9.5.7. Luxury Brand Attachment

The luxury Brand Attachment variable was measured using a 7-item scale.

It was created to compare the responses between the Brand Attachment variable—affectivity towards the brand—and the luxury Brand Attachment variable—affectivity towards the luxury brand.

It can be concluded that both users and the owners and former owners surveyed have a positive, moderate–high level of emotional bond with the Porsche luxury car brand, developing a relationship with it characterized by feelings such as connection, affection, joy, and comfort.

Comparing the data obtained through the descriptive statistics of the variables affectivity and affection for the luxury brand, we see that, in both cases, users, owners, and former owners have an affective bond of a moderately high level.

9.6. Evaluation of the Conceptual Model and Hypothesis Testing

This stage of the chapter is based on carrying out an analysis that is based on the application of a statistical test that makes it possible to establish the existence of links between the variables, test the hypotheses represented in the conceptual model, and, from there, draw conclusions from the possible relationships between the variables in question.

It is, therefore, an essential phase for this research, as it will allow us to understand and evaluate the conceptual model under study.

Table 18 shows the Spearman correlation coefficients recorded for the variables in this research's conceptual model, thus analyzing the relationships established between them. This bivariate statistical analysis made it possible to collect a series of results, which, in turn, made it possible to understand the variation that can be observed through the associations established between the different variables.

Table 18. Spearman correlation coefficients.

N	Items	Context	Level of Agreement					Mean	Median	Mode
			1	2	3	4	5			
146	I'm completed in love with this luxury brand	Portugal	2.70%	2.70%	24.70%	37.00%	32.90%	3.95	4	4
	I love this luxury brand		2.70%	1.40%	30.10%	34.30%	31.50%	3.90	4	4
	When I think of this luxury brand, I'm happy		2.70%	1.40%	16.40%	42.50%	37.00%	4.10	4	4
	I have a deep emotional connection with this luxury brand		2.70%	2.70%	28.80%	31.50%	34.30%	3.92	4	5
	I would feel a huge loss if this luxury brand were no longer available		1.40%	1.40%	19.10%	32.90%	45.20%	4.19	4	5
	I believe that this luxury brand helps me achieve what I want to achieve		4.10%	5.50%	32.80%	28.80%	28.80%	3.73	4	3
	I feel that this luxury brand is unique		2.70%	5.50%	19.20%	39.70%	32.90%	3.95	4	4

Source: Own elaboration based on data generated in SPSS.

Based on these values, the coefficients shown in Table 19, the first conclusion that can be drawn from the results is that all the associations between the variables are statistically significant, positive with values that oscillate between moderate and strong. Therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected in all the cases analyzed, i.e., the possibility of not observing any kind of relationship between the variables.

Table 19. Correlation coefficients (Spearman) between the variables in the conceptual model.

n = 146	Satisfaction	Commitment	Confidence
Brand Attachment	0.611 *	0.693 *	0.463 *
Expectations	0.234 *		
Loyalty	0.428 *	0.683 *	0.565 *

* Significant correlation at a significance level of 0.01. Source: Own elaboration based on data generated in SPSS.

The association between Brand Attachment and satisfaction with the Porsche brand, in turn, shows a relevant and statistically significant value, with rs = 0.611 ($p \leq 0.01$). This means that there is a strong, positive relationship between Brand Attachment and respondents' satisfaction with the Porsche brand. This situation therefore suggests that Brand Attachment can affect customer satisfaction with Porsche and its services, i.e., when Brand Attachment is stronger, Porsche customer satisfaction evolves in the same direction, i.e., it also increases. This confirms Hypothesis 1 (H1):

H1. *The stronger the Brand Attachment between the Porsche brand and the Porsche customer, the greater their satisfaction.*

With regard to the correlation values between the Brand Attachment and commitment variables, we analyzed that the sample shows correlation values that are considered strong. In fact, the association between these two variables results in a Spearman correlation coefficient (hereinafter referred to as 'rs') of 0.693 that is statistically significant ($p \leq 0.01$).

In this logic, what the data indicates is that when Brand Attachment increases, the Porsche customer's commitment to the brand also increases. It is therefore possible to state that the two variables are significantly and positively related, thus confirming Hypothesis 2 (H2):

H2. *The stronger the Brand Attachment between the Porsche brand and the customer/user, the greater the customer/user commitment.*

The case with the lowest correlation was the association between Brand Attachment and trust in the brand. In this case, the rs = 0.234 ($p \leq 0.01$), i.e., weak. Despite this, it

can be seen that there is a positive relationship of moderate intensity between the Brand Attachment that respondents have for Porsche and the trust they have in it. Even so, it is important to emphasize that the relationship between Brand Attachment and trust does not have as much impact as that observed, for example, between Brand Attachment and commitment or between commitment and brand loyalty, when the context is, therefore, the relationship between the respondent and the Porsche brand. Thus, the values observed are statistically significant. According to all the above factors, Hypothesis 3 (H3) is confirmed:

H3. *The stronger the Brand Attachment between the Porsche brand and the customer, the greater the customer's trust.*

With regard to the association between the variables brand satisfaction and brand loyalty, this shows a value of rs = 0.428 ($p \leq 0.01$). In this context, it can be assumed that the two variables are statistically and positively related and that the correlation observed is of moderate intensity. We can therefore conclude that if Porsche customers are more satisfied with the brand, they will also show a higher level of loyalty towards it.
This confirms Hypothesis 4 (H4):

H4. *The stronger the customer's satisfaction with the brand, the greater their loyalty.*

Regarding the correlation between the variables commitment and brand loyalty, this association recorded an rs = 0.683 and $p \leq 0.01$, i.e., a strong correlation. These are positively connected and related. Thus, respondents who are more committed to the Porsche brand also tend to show high levels of brand loyalty. In addition to this, and taking into account the fact that the correlation is statistically significant, Hypothesis 5 (H5) of this research is confirmed:

H5. *The stronger the customer's commitment to the Porsche brand, the greater their loyalty.*

With regard to the association between trust and brand loyalty, it can be concluded that the two variables in question also show a positive and statistically significant correlation, since it registers a value of rs = 0.565 ($p \leq 0.01$). The strength of the relationship is considered statistically significant and strong. In this sense, the association suggests that respondents who have greater trust in the Porsche brand also show a greater predisposition towards brand loyalty. With this in mind, Hypothesis 6 (H6) can be confirmed:

H6. *The stronger the respondent's trust in the Porsche brand, the greater their loyalty.*

The remaining two associations between the variables, in line with what was stipulated in the conceptual model, obtained lower correlation values, but they are still statistically significant relationships.
In fact, the correlation between the variables expectation and satisfaction shows an rs = 0.234 and $p \leq 0.01$, i.e., a weak correlation. It can therefore be inferred that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between the two variables in question. Although with a lower correlation value, the association can be considered to be of strong intensity and, since it is a positive value, this means that, from the outset, the respondents who are most satisfied with the Porsche brand tend to be those who had expectations more in line with the reality with which they have already had contact. Hypothesis 7 (H7) is therefore confirmed:

H7. *The closer the respondent's expectations are to the reality of the Porsche brand, the greater their satisfaction.*

In this sense, the main conclusion reached is that the seven hypotheses formulated within the framework of the conceptual model are fully confirmed and that, consequently,

the relationships established between them can be theoretically explained. Table 20, as a structured model for testing the hypotheses, summarizes all of the above conclusions.

Table 20. Testing the study hypotheses using Pearson's correlation coefficient.

Formulating of Hypothesis	Correlation Value	Confirmation of Hypotheses
H1: The Stronger the *brand attachment* that is established between the Brand Porsche and the Porsche Customer, the greater your satisfaction.	0.611 *	Yes
H2: The Stronger the *brand attachment* that is established between the Brand Porsche and the Porsche Customer, the greater their commitment	0.693 *	Yes
H3: The Stronger the *brand attachment* that is established between the Brand Porsche and the Porsche Customer, the greater your trust	0.463 *	Yes
H4: The Stronger the Porsche customer's satisfaction with the Porsche brand, the greater their loyalty	0.428 *	Yes
H5: The Stronger the Porsche customer's commitment to the Porsche brand, the greater their loyalty	0.683 *	Yes
H6: The Stronger the Porsche customer's trust in the Porsche brand, the greater their loyalty	0.565 *	Yes
H7: The close the expectations of the Porsche customers are more satisfied with brand	0.234 *	Yes

* Significant correlation at a significance level of 0.01. Source: Own elaboration based on data generated using SPSS.

The table represents the last version of the proposed conceptual model. This definitive version shows the strength of the correlation observed in the different associations between the variables on which the study was centered, according to the links defined by the seven previously stipulated hypotheses, and using, as previously mentioned, Spearman's correlation coefficient. The model (Figure 2) also contains a reference to the research context.
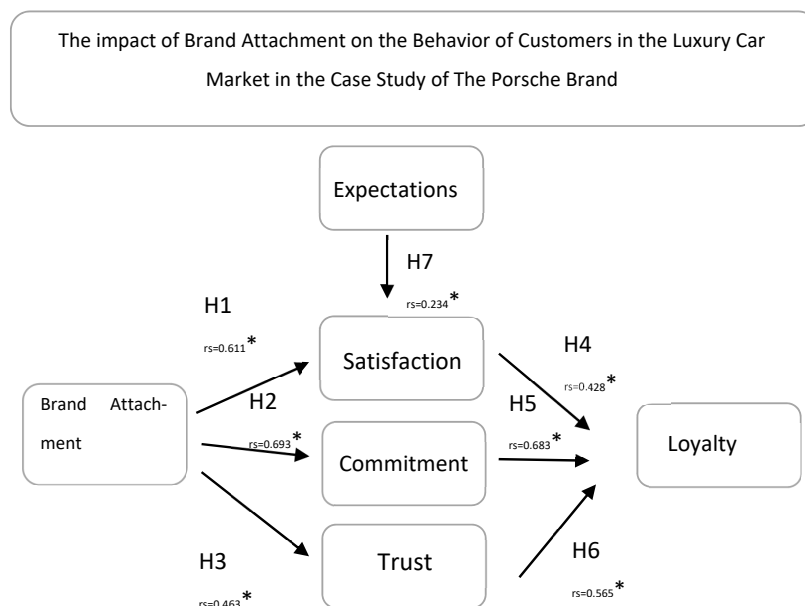

Figure 2. Final proposal for the conceptual model based on the correlations between the variables under study Portugal. Source: Own elaboration based on data generated using SPSS. * Significant correlation at a significance level of 0.01.

Once the proposed analysis had been completed, a mediation analysis was carried out. A variable is a mediator if it affects the relationship between a dependent and independent variable, i.e., if the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable is influenced by the level of the mediating variable (Marôco 2014). Therefore, regression models were used to conduct the analysis of mediators, according to the most widely used methods described in the classic work by Baron and Kenny (1986).

The aim was to assess the mediating role of satisfaction between the Brand Attachment variable and loyalty.

The results presented in Table 20 show a positive and significant direct effect of Brand Attachment on satisfaction (b = 0.67, $p < 0.001$) and on loyalty (b = 0.56, $p < 0.001$). The indirect effect of satisfaction is statistically significant and positive (EI = 0.14; 95% CI = [0.0349; 0.2764).

Satisfaction therefore plays a mediating role between Brand Attachment and loyalty.

In addition to confirming the hypotheses, the results obtained in this phase, characterized by the analysis of the data, made it possible to answer the original research question, since they made it possible to effectively measure the impact of Brand Attachment on the behavior of customers of the Porsche luxury car brand (Figure 3).
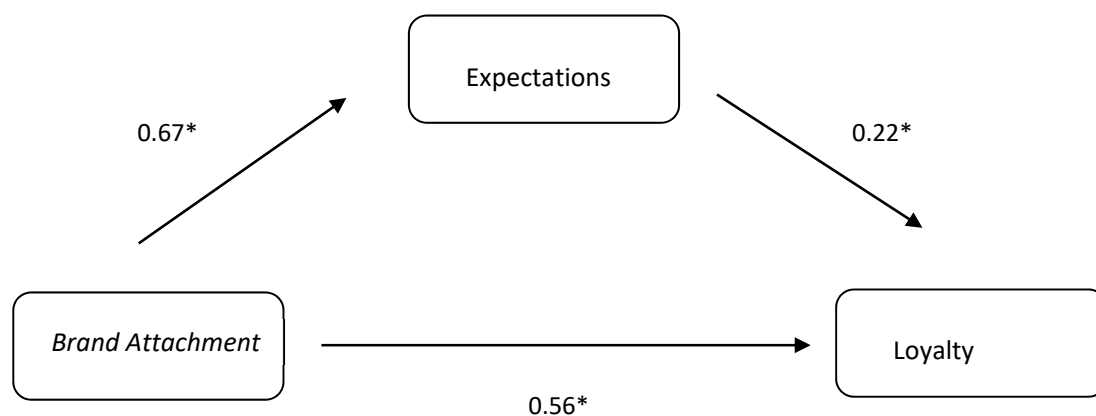
Figure 3. Mediation analysis between Brand Attachment and loyalty. * Significant correlation at a significance level of 0.01.

To conclude this chapter, it should be emphasized that there is indeed a clear relationship between the Brand Attachment that customers of the luxury car brand feel towards the Porsche brand, their commitment to it, and their trust in it, with all the variables evolving in the same direction. Porsche customer (consumer) satisfaction, commitment, and trust are effectively related to Porsche (brand) loyalty. Therefore, Brand Attachment, albeit indirectly, ends up influencing loyalty through the action of satisfaction, commitment, and trust.

In this sense, it can be said that the Porsche brand customers surveyed are more emotionally and affectively connected to the Porsche brand; those who show a greater and more intense level of Brand Attachment tend to be those who are also more satisfied, committed, and confident with the Porsche brand.

Consequently, they become more loyal. It should be noted that this conclusion is particularly relevant when it comes to the issue of commitment, since its association with Brand Attachment is very strong indeed. This translates into a relational influence on the part of both indicators (Brand Attachment and commitment) that can lead to brand loyalty.

The following chapter contains the general conclusions of the study, which were reached through all the work of exploration, analysis, and reflection described above. The chapter also closes with a reference to the study's limitations, relevant academic contributions, and suggestions for future research.

10. Conclusions

The aim of this chapter is to summarize all the previous work quickly and clearly. The first part presents the general conclusions, then the limitations of the research and finally the suggestions for future research.

General Conclusions and Practical Implications

The luxury car market is increasingly a multiple and complex reality in full expansion and with enormous potential. In addition to traditional comfort, convenience, entertainment, and safety features, luxury cars are packed with advanced connectivity elements, autonomous driving options, and the latest powertrain electrification technologies.

Brand Attachment, as explained throughout this research, represents one of the most efficient ways of establishing a relationship between the consumer and a luxury car brand that goes beyond the simple functional context of comfort, convenience, entertainment, and safety. Brand Attachment can, in fact, support the building of a relationship based on the existence of an affective bond based on satisfaction, commitment, trust and even loyalty, aspects that marketing seeks to emphasize and guarantee.

Luxury car brands produce products and provide services and consumers have numerous needs and interests in the areas of comfort, convenience, entertainment, and safety that need to be met.

As analyzed in this study, an increase in the level of Brand Attachment is related to a significant increase in the level of intensity of other crucial aspects of the relationship, such as satisfaction, commitment and trust, which, in turn, are also related to increased brand loyalty. Therefore, if car brands in the luxury segment work on marketing techniques that promote Brand Attachment, there is a greater likelihood that consumers will also be more satisfied with the product offered and the service provided, more committed to the brand itself, and more trusting of the institutional mission, in such a way that they may even be more loyal, i.e., more likely to buy the same brand in the future and recommend it to their peers.

Against this backdrop, it is important that the marketing professionals of car brands in the luxury segment—in the case of Portugal (the context of the study), in particular—do not neglect the relational and emotional management of the brand, since there are many positive aspects associated with Brand Attachment. The results obtained in this research show that consumers behave more positively towards the success of the brand, i.e., they are more loyal to it (one of the ultimate goals of marketing), if there is this important emotional connection. The luxury car segment could, therefore, enjoy important benefits if its marketing departments took this issue into consideration.

In fact, all the correlations used to analyze the conceptual model proved to be positive and statistically significant, with particular emphasis on the associations between Brand Attachment and brand commitment, as well as between brand commitment and brand loyalty, both of which showed strong relational intensity. This shows that the greatest potential that marketing professionals need to be aware of is the ability to develop strategic plans that encourage customers to feel a sense of belonging, affection, joy, and comfort in belonging to and being part of a community that is connected to a particular brand in an affective way (aspects of Brand Attachment), in such a way that this results in positive word of mouth, a sense of pride, and a sense of prioritizing choice over other possible choices (aspects of commitment). It is the successful achievement of these aspects that will translate into an improved experience for customers, who, at the same time, are more likely to return and recommend the brand to others (loyalty aspects).

Marketers therefore need to do extensive exploratory work to establish their strengths and weaknesses and, from there, design and implement the most appropriate strategic plan.

To summarize, it is considered that the relevance of marketing in the luxury car market segment is entirely justified and that the sector should focus on improving the relationship between the customer and the luxury car brand, to promote and increase Brand Attachment, so that it goes beyond the barrier of a one-off sale or provision of a service and becomes

a continuous and lasting experience based on an emotional connection. In addition to effectively answering the research problem, the study had two limitations. The first limiting factor is the fact that the sample used was non-probabilistic, which means that the results cannot be generalized to the entire population related to the context of the study. This research represents an important contribution to the field of Brand Attachment in terms of marketing and strategic management, as this has been an area in which academics have shown a recent and growing interest.

The fact that this is a study applied to the context of the luxury car market can also be seen as an important contribution both to scientific research and to the car industry itself, since there are not many studies on this subject that use this specific context of analysis, the luxury car market, and that seek to measure the impact of the Brand Attachment relationship and other relational variables on consumer behavior. In this sense, it can be said that this study adds some pertinent reflections to the knowledge that already exists on the impact and effects of Brand Attachment, in this case from the perspective of consumers.

Another contribution to be highlighted is the fact that this study contains some reflections that could be useful for marketing professionals working in the automotive sector, and the luxury market in particular, as it provides important data for these managers to gain a deeper understanding of the motivations and interests of consumers, so that they can define the best marketing strategies to promote a closer and fruitful relationship between customers and luxury car brands.

In terms of suggestions for future research, it would be important to pay some attention to the limitations mentioned above and try to overcome them, as well as reapplying it more widely and with more time available to other luxury car brands.

In the same vein, this topic and context could also be analyzed using methodological approaches other than just quantitative ones, in order to cross-reference knowledge and look at the subject from other perspectives and paradigms. In this context, there is, for example, the possibility of conducting this study using a qualitative methodology with the development of focus groups with customers and in-depth interviews with professionals in the luxury car market. Finally, it is suggested that the topic of Brand Attachment continues to be analyzed in other contexts, since the issues of brand affectivity and emotional brand management can have very pertinent impacts and provide useful conclusions for understanding the affective relationship and attachment that consumers feel towards brands.

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