

UNIVERSITÉ DE SHERBROOKE

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**THE JOURNEY FROM BRAND'S SOCIAL CURRENCY TO SUPERIOR  
CUSTOMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIPS: THE INTERMEDIARY ROLES  
OF EXPERIENTIAL AND TRANSFORMATIONAL BENEFITS**

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Mémoire présenté au programme de Maîtrise en Administration en Marketing en  
vue de l'obtention du grade de Maître ès Sciences

FACULTÉ D'ADMINISTRATION

Mars 2015

# ABSTRACT

The rise in the popularity of digital communication and social media platforms has increased the speed of information exchange among customers, and enabled them to instantaneously voice their thoughts and opinions about brands. This trend however has created certain challenges for marketers since they could no longer exert the sole control over the identities of their brands. Past research has confirmed that social interaction plays a key role in development of strong relationships among individuals (e.g. Nahapiet and Ghosal, 1998; Lobschat et al., 2013). In branding context, social interactions and the benefits derived from them establish a brand's social value, and contribute to the formation of solid customer-brand relationships.

As an attempt to better capture a brands' social value, Lobschat et al. (2013) recently introduced the concept of social currency. Their findings reveal the importance of social currency as a key antecedent to several components of brand equity such as perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand trust. Due to the newness of the social currency construct, however, its relationship with many other key variables of consumer behavior has not been much verified yet. In particular, there has been very little investigation of the potential links between social currency and the two emerging paradigms of experiential and transformational branding.

Accordingly, the current study explores the role of brand's social currency in providing experiential and transformational benefits in the context of cosmetics consumption. It further investigates the roles of brand experience and customer transformation in shaping greater customer attachment towards the brand. To test these relationships, the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method is applied. In total, 373 participants took part in this study. Self-

administered questionnaires were distributed, and participants were invited to report on their consumption of their favorite cosmetic brands. Findings confirm that the various dimensions of social currency lead to experiential and transformational benefits in different ways. Results further suggest that both experiential and transformational benefits contribute to the enhancement of customer-brand relationships. Theoretical and managerial contributions are discussed.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis has been acknowledged and presented at the 2015 American Marketing Association (AMA) Winter Marketing Educators' Conference in San Antonio (USA), the 4th International Consumer Brand Relationship Conference in Porto (Portugal), and the 2015 AMA Summer Marketing Educators' Conference in Chicago (USA).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following thesis would not have been completed without the guidance and assistance of the following people. It is to them that I owe my deepest gratitude.

Foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my mentor, Dr. Saeed Shobeiri, for his continuous support, patience, enthusiasm, motivation, and immense knowledge. I thank you for your guidance during all the time of research and writing of this thesis. I could not have imagined having a better mentor, and will forever be thankful for your help. I am also very thankful to Dr. Jean Cadieux, for his valuable advice and suggestions for the improvement of this project. Many thanks to the jury members, Dr. Jean Roy and Dr. Caroline Boivin, for their time and valuable feedback, and to Andrée-Anne Chenier who made this journey possible. Also, I would like to acknowledge the financial support of “La Chaire Bombardier de gestion de la marque” that provided the necessary financial support to conduct this research.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my parents and my brother for their love and care, and to my friends Catherine Fortin-L’Allier, Marie-Pierre Ingham, Vicky Maronitis, Stephanie Coderre Porras, Anne-Sophie Ponsot, Kevin Beattie, Paula Théberge-Guertin, and all the others who supported me during this project. Thank you for being a part of my life, and for having been a part of this transformative experience.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**LIST OF FIGURES ..... viii**

**LIST OF TABLES .....ix**

## **CHAPTER 1**

**INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE ..... 1**

## **CHAPTER 2**

**STUDY 1 ..... 8**

**2.1 Theoretical Background ..... 8**

2.1.1 Theoretical Foundation ..... 8

2.1.2 Social Currency ..... 11

2.1.3 Brand Experience ..... 14

**2.2 Model Development..... 16**

2.2.1 Social Currency and Sensory Experience ..... 17

2.2.2 Social Currency and Affective Experience ..... 18

2.2.3 Social Currency and Behavioral Experience ..... 19

2.2.4 Social Currency and Intellectual Experience ..... 20

**2.3 Methodology ..... 21**

2.3.1 Sample and Data Collection ..... 21

2.3.2 Measures ..... 22

**2.4 Results ..... 22**

2.4.1 Measurement Model ..... 22

2.4.2 Tests of Hypotheses ..... 25

**2.5 Discussion and Implications ..... 26**

## **CHAPTER 3**

**STUDY 2 ..... 31**

**3.1 Theoretical Background ..... 31**

3.1.1 Transformation ..... 31

3.1.1.1. Self-Esteem ..... 35

3.1.1.2. Self-Expression ..... 37

3.1.2. Customer-Brand Relationships ..... 39

**3.4.2 Model Development..... 42**

3.2.1 Social Currency and Transformational Benefits ..... 43

3.2.2 Transformational Benefits and Customer-Brand Relationships .....	45
<b>3.3 Methodology .....</b>	<b>47</b>
3.3.1 Measures .....	47
<b>3.4 Results .....</b>	<b>47</b>
3.4.1 Measurement Model .....	47
3.4.2 Test of Hypotheses.....	54
<b>3.5 Discussion and Implications .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	
<b>STUDY 3 .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>4.2 Model Development.....</b>	<b>59</b>
4.2.1 Brand Experience and Customer-Brand Relationships.....	60
4.2.2 Transformation and Customer-Brand Relationships .....	62
<b>4.3 Methodology .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>4.4 Results .....</b>	<b>63</b>
4.4.1 Measurement Model .....	63
4.4.2 Test of Hypotheses.....	66
<b>4.5 Discussion and Implications .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	
<b>LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>APPENDIX A .....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>APPENDIX B.....</b>	<b>106</b>

# LIST OF FIGURES

<b>FIGURE 1 : CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	6
<b>FIGURE 2: RESEARCH FRAMEWORK - STUDY 1</b> .....	17
<b>FIGURE 3: THE ECONOMIC PYRAMID</b> .....	34
<b>FIGURE 4: RESEARCH FRAMEWORK - STUDY 2</b> .....	42
<b>FIGURE 5: RESEARCH FRAMEWORK - STUDY 3</b> .....	60

# LIST OF TABLES

<b>TABLE 1: RESULTS OF THE CFA AND RELIABILITY TEST - STUDY 1 .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>TABLE 2: TEST FOR CONVERGENT AND DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY - STUDY 1 .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>TABLE 3: STRUCTURAL PATH: SOCIAL CURRENCY AND BRAND EXPERIENCE .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>TABLE 4: RESULT OF THE CFA AND RELIABILITY TEST - STUDY 2 .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>TABLE 5: TEST FOR CONVERGENT AND DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY - STUDY 2.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>TABLE 6: STRUCTURAL PATH: SOCIAL CURRENCY, TRANSFORMATIONAL OFFERINGS AND CUSTOMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIPS.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>TABLE 7: RESULTS OF THE CFA AND RELIABILITY TEST - STUDY 3 .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>TABLE 8: TEST FOR CONVERGENT AND DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY - STUDY 3.....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>TABLE 9: STRUCTURAL PATH: BRAND EXPERIENCE, TRANSFORMATIONAL OFFERINGS, AND CUSTOMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIPS.....</b>	<b>67</b>





# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

---

Attractiveness and beauty are considered as admirable and desirable characteristics, as they are directly related to one's success in both career and personal life (Apaolaza-Ibáñez et al., 2011). Indeed, the body is central to one's self-concept and reflects a major social symbol (Thomson and Hirschman, 1995). The fact that physical attractiveness is positively related to social power, self-esteem, and positive reactions of others is well established (Adams, 1977; Adams and Read, 1983; Berscheid and Walster, 1974; Cann et al., 1981; Goldman and Lewis, 1977). The perceived potential benefits of physical attractiveness could also cause an excessive concern for improvement of physical appearance and achievement of personal goals (Netemeyer et al., 1995). Indeed, past studies demonstrate that a fixation on physical attractiveness leads to body-altering consumption behaviors (e.g. Bloch and Richins, 1992; Netemeyer et al., 1995). Individuals usually feel highly responsible for their physical appearances, and thus constantly try to find ways to improve their body images in order to achieve their personal desires (Smirnova, 2012).

Cosmetics consumption in general represents an accessible way to achieve one's aspirations and establish and cultivate one's self-concept (Solomon, 1985, 1992; Netemeyer et al., 1995). Cosmetics not only enhance one's physical appearance, but also provide symbolic benefits that affect a person's psychological well-being (e.g self-confidence). In recent years, the emergence of cosmeceuticals (a term used to describe the combination of cosmetics and pharmaceuticals) has provided individuals with extensive body-altering possibilities (Smirnova, 2012). Indeed, despite one's will and effort to get to his/her ideal self-image, some impending

factors such as aging always threaten the body's image. Cosmeceuticals are mostly used as a cure for this problem and offer a wide range of solutions to help one conform to his/her social beauty ideals (Smirnova, 2012). As Holstein and Minkler (2003) note, the body is used as a measure of success for females, and the way it looks conveys a message about one's health status. In fact, women are constantly pressured to conform to the homogenized Western ideals of perfect femininity that is characterized as young, healthy, thin, heterosexual, and passive (Bordo, 1990; Brooks, 2010; Smirnova, 2012). The belief that beauty maintenance is one's central responsibility emanates from social standards and reference groups that provide strong influences on one's appraisal and social comparison (Cachelin et al., 2002; Fujioka et al., 2009). In fact, we constantly forge our identities by comparing our appearances with those of other individuals who follow similar beauty standards (Smirnova, 2012).

Considering that social comparison is one of the main drivers of cosmetics consumption, the rise in online media platforms has started to play a major role in shaping customers' attitudes towards cosmetic brands (Smirnova, 2009; Euromonitor, 2013). Indeed, e-platforms have in general provided extensive opportunities for deeper interactions between consumers. The speed and extent of customer-to-customer interactions have largely increased over the past few years due to the popularity of digital communication and social media platforms (Lobschat, Zinbauer, M.A, Pallas, F., & Joachimsthaler, E., 2013). Using those platforms, consumers are now able to widely share their thoughts with their peers and other members of reference groups (Milkie, 1999). The increase in social interactions could, however, result in certain challenges for marketers who constantly struggle to develop strong brand identities. As a result of extensive customer-to-customer interactions, brands today have no longer the sole and dominant control over their images (Lobschat et al., 2013). Instead, customers continually interact with each other and conjointly shape the image and perceptions of the brand over time. Indeed, customers today

are able to diffuse and gather large amounts of information about brands openly and instantaneously in the form of recommendations, critics, shared opinions, etc. (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Consistent with this notion, a recent study by Euromonitor (2013a) shows that more than one in every three consumers uses social media to learn more about a product or service, or ask for advice when it comes to making purchase decisions.

In an effort to better capture the complex and multifaceted nature of a brand's social value, Lobchat et al. (2013) recently introduced the concept of social currency. A brand's social currency represents the sum of all social interactions and social benefits inherent in them that result from the brand's presence in online platforms and communities (Lobschat et al., 2013). Indeed, social interactions among customers could lead to information acquisition, knowledge exchange, and other social benefits such as achievement of status and recognition within a group of brand users. The concept of social currency derives from social capital theory, which suggests that the value of personal relationships relies upon the connections formed during individuals' interactions (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990). Since social currency is a very new concept, its role in the success of brands has not been much evaluated yet. Although Lobschat et al. (2013) found that solid social currency could enhance certain dimensions of brand equity including perceived quality, brand trust and brand loyalty, there is still a great potential to examine in more details the contribution of this concept to formation of strong brands. For the purpose of brand development, connections created between a brand user and other customers as well as the brand itself are of particular interest. The emerging paradigms of branding suggest that customer's experience with the brand plays a key role in identifying the level of brand's performance and popularity in today's market place (e.g. Brakus, 2009; Pine and Gilmore, 2011). Accordingly, this research would be interested in exploring the potential links between brand experience and social currency. The current research adopts the definition of Brakus et al. (2009) for brand experience:

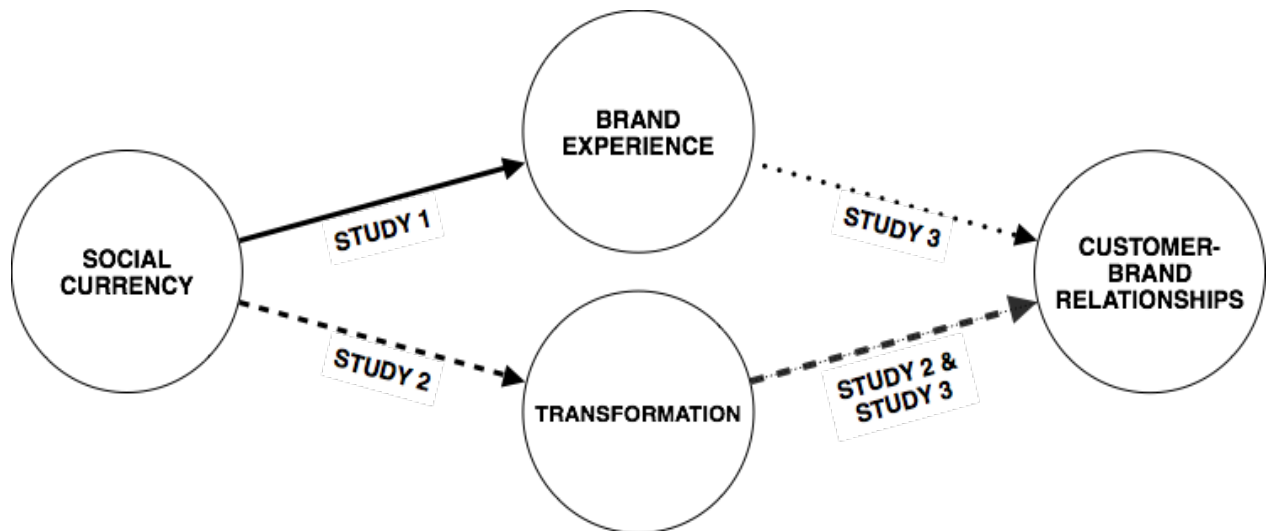
“subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design and identity packaging, communications, and environments” (p. 53). Could brand’s social currency be reflected in consumer’s actual experience with the brand? If so, on which dimensions would the brand experience improve as a result of superior social currency? And more fundamentally, what aspects of brand’s social benefits would represent its social currency for the specific category of cosmetics? This research aims to shed more light on these unexplored fields. Furthermore, although brand experience has received a lot of attention from both scholars and practitioners (e.g. Pine and Gilmore, 2011), very few authors acknowledged the need to customize experiences. Customizing an experience would turn it into a *transformation*, which occurs “when marketers (elicitors) bundle products, services, and experiences in ways that provides consumers with opportunities to alter who they are” (Kleine et al., 2009, p.54). Pine and Gilmore (2011) were among the first to acknowledge the emergence of a distinct transformation economy after economies of commodities, goods, services, and experiences. As these authors mention, customers today seek more than temporary experiences and desire to go through “life-transforming” events. Accordingly, this research further investigates the potential links between social currency and transformation. We seek to determine if social currency could also act as a source of transformational benefits for customers. In particular, the current study would focus on two aspects of transformation that are fundamental in the context of cosmetics consumption: potential improvements in self-esteem and self-transformation.

The general research model of the study is presented in Figure 1 below. In short, we believe that benefits inherent in social interactions - such as emotional attachment, personal development, and sense of affinity - would lead to a fulfilling brand experience and would also inspire a personal transformation. In other words, we suggest that social currency could act as a

*provider* (Schmitt, Experiential Marketing, 1999a) of experiential and transformational values when it comes to the consumption of cosmetics. We further investigate the potential outcomes of these two types of benefits for customers. Indeed, although a number of recent studies confirmed the fundamental role of experiential benefits (e.g. Zarantonello et al., 2013; Chen et al., 2014) and transformational benefits (Kleine et al., 2009) in meeting customer desires, there is still a great potential to examine the contribution of those two paradigms to formation of strong brands. In particular, this research would investigate how experiential and transformational benefits could enhance customer-brand relationships. The concept of customer-brand relationships has gained great popularity in marketing literature during the past decade as a key determinant of brand success (e.g. Park et al., 2013; Fetscherin and Heinrich, 2015). Past research has not much compared the predictive powers of experiential and transformational benefits in shaping solid customer-brand relationships. Investigation of this question is highly important, since it determines the degree of transition from experience economy to transformation economy (Pine and Gilmore 1999, 2014). To conceptualize customer-brand relationships, we use the Attachment-aversion (AA) model of Park et al. (2013) that capture both the valence and the salience of the relationships.

As it could be seen in Figure 1, this research integrates three studies. Study 1 and study 2 look at the contribution of social currency to the formation of superior brand experience and creation of customer transformation respectively. Study 3 compares the roles that brand experience and customer transformation would play in enhancement of customer-brand relationships.

**Figure 1**  
**Conceptual Framework**



This research provides a number of theoretical and managerial contributions. From a theoretical perspective, this research:

- 1) For the first time investigates the role of brand's social currency in creation of two emerging sources of value, i.e. experiential and transformational benefits.
- 2) For the first time investigates and compares the roles of brand experiential and transformational benefits in formation of AA (Attachment-Aversion) customer-brand relationships (Park et al., 2013).
- 3) Helps to enhance the validity of the two newly developed constructs of social currency (Lobschat et al., 2013) and attachment-aversion model of customer-brand relationships (Park et al. 2013).
- 4) Identifies the key dimensions of brands' social currency in the context of cosmetic consumption.

From a managerial perspective, the present research has the following objectives:

- 1) To propose a framework that would help managers to offer superior brand experiences and inspire transformations through social currency.
- 2) To help managers develop effective customer-to-customer interaction strategies that would reflect the brand's core identity and market position.
- 3) To show managers how to enhance customer-brand relationships in the context of cosmetic consumption through offering appropriate combinations of experiential and transformation benefits.

The rest of the thesis is organized as follows. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the social capital theory and social currency concept as the theoretical foundations of the research. Chapter 3, 4 and 5 elaborate on study 1, study 2, and study 3 respectively. For each of these studies, a theoretical background is first presented. Next, the research model and hypotheses are developed. Then, the methodology, data collection and measurement decisions are explained. Finally, findings as well as implications are discussed. Chapter 6 provides a general conclusion, and integrates the findings of the three studies. Finally, Chapter 7 discusses research limitations and provides a number of ideas for future research.



# CHAPTER 2

## STUDY 1

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In study 1, we investigate the relationship between social currency and the four dimensions of brand experience introduced by Brakus et al. (2009), i.e. sensory, affective, behavioral and intellectual experiences. We assess whether social currency could act as a brand experience provider, and further examine if certain dimensions of social currency could have a greater impact on brand experience in the context of cosmetic consumption. First, this study provides an overview of the concepts of social currency and brand experience. Then, the model and hypotheses are developed. Next, the methodology used for all three studies, as well as data collections and measurement decisions will be presented. Finally, our findings and research implications will be discussed.

### **2.1 Theoretical Background**

#### **2.1.1 Theoretical Foundation**

Bourdieu (1977, 1986) and Coleman (1988, 1990, 1995) were among the first to develop the theory of social capital. Bourdieu (1986) refers to social capital as the general social benefits derived from interactions and cooperation among individuals or groups. In this perspective, the functional and symbolic benefits generated from interactions or memberships serve as the main driver of cooperation among individuals. According to Bourdieu (1986), the amount of social capital builds upon the size of the social network, and the resources (capital) that the parties possess. Relationships are initiated and sustained through visible material and symbolic

exchanges within the group (Bourdieu, 1983). Therefore, social networks and resources act as key drivers of social capital (Häuberger, 2011).

While Bourdieu (1983) mostly emphasizes the benefits of social capital for single individuals, Coleman (1995) asserts that social capital could be beneficial to both the individual and the collective. As Coleman (1990) suggests, social capital facilitates and favors actions of individuals integrated in a shared social structure. Social capital thus allows the creation of certain norms that are valued by both the individual and the collective. For instance, according to Coleman (1995) a social structure that favors trust relations would guide and facilitate the cooperation among individuals sharing the same social structure. Coleman (1995) further states that actions of certain actors provide benefits to the entire collective. For example, when a few actors establish norms (e.g. the use of cellular phones while driving) in their own living area (e.g. province, state or country) they reduce the risk of accidents in the collective. They do not simply prevent danger for themselves, but for all individuals who are being a part of that social structure (Häuberer, 2001).

Extending Coleman's (1983, 1995) view, Putnam (1996, 2000) suggests that the network of relationships formed between individuals is based on characteristics of social life, and provides a foundation for individuals to reach their collective goals. According to Putnam (2000), the quality of social capital depends on the strength of the bonds between individuals sharing the network. More recently, Lin (2001) defined social capital as an "investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace" (p. 190). His theory draws upon Marx's (1933) idea of capital, which describes capital as an input (resource) and outcome (value) of a production process. Accordingly, Lin (2001) believes that social interactions and networks act as resources to produce profits and add value to the social structure (e.g. eases information exchange, strong social ties foster new business opportunities).

Scholars have used various approaches to better capture the essence of social capital and explicate its different facets. For instance, Bourdieu (1983) suggests three forms of capital: economic, cultural, and social. According to him, the amount and the type of capital possessed by a society would influence the structure of the collective in that society. Economic capital refers to anything that can be immediately converted into money or property rights. Cultural capital embeds a person's knowledge and skills, and is considered as a durable asset (e.g. diploma, paintings, and books). Social capital, as mentioned previously, is concerned with the benefits that emanate from having a strong social network. Bourdieu (1983) further explains that the different forms of capital are not static, and can change from one form to another through transformational processes. For instance, economic capital (e.g. money) could change to cultural capital (e.g. art piece). However, some forms of capital cannot be as easily transformed (e.g. knowledge into money). For instance, friendship and connections (social capital) cannot be easily transferred from one person to another or transformed into another type of capital (Nahapiet and Ghosal, 1998). One needs to have a great understanding of the usage of his or her social capital when wanting to transform the value gained from its network of connection to another form of capital (e.g. when and how to use strong relational connections for an economic capital –e.g. money - tradeoff). In another perspective, Coleman (1995) points to five kinds of social capital according to their function: Relations of Mutual Trust (i.e. An exchange of help and trust among members), Authority Relations (i.e. when one exerts the right of control over another person), Information Potential (i.e. provide helpful information to group members), Effective Norms (i.e. dictates one's behavior in the interest of the group), and Appropriate Social Organizations (i.e. organizations that produce public goods – e.g. voluntary associations). According to this author, these five dimensions form the basis of social norms. More recently, Putnam (2000) discerns three elements of social capital that provide value for the individual, i.e. trust, networks of civic

engagement, and norms of reciprocity. Putman (2000) believes that these social contacts impact the productivity of individuals and groups.

One of the most popular conceptualization of social capital is provided by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998). These authors introduced three distinct dimensions – including structural, cognitive, and relational – for social capital. According to Nahapiet and Ghoshal's (1998), the structural dimension refers to the existence of network connections between the actors, while the cognitive dimension covers resources that provide shared representations, interpretations and systems of meaning among them. The relational dimension, on the other hand, points to the personal relationships that individuals develop through a series of interactions, and serves as the foundation of the social currency construct developed by Lobschat et al. (2013). Indeed, social capital has been mostly studied in organizational contexts, and specifically focused on firms' capabilities to build strong personal and team relationships, as well as knowledge exchange among employees (e.g. Nahapiet and Ghosal, 1998). Recently, however, Lobschat et al. (2013) conceptualized social currency as a construct based on the relational component of social capital (Nahapiet and Ghosal's, 1998). Applied to the field of branding, this view suggests that personal relationships developed among individuals through a series of social interactions could be translated into potential connections that they form with both the brands and other brand users.

### **2.1.2 Social Currency**

The concept of social currency is defined for the first time by Lobschat et al. (2013) as “the extent and modality with which consumers share a brand with others, or information about a brand, and derive social benefit from interacting with other brand users as part of their everyday social lives” (p. 126). Indeed, bonding with both the brand and its other users allow one to fulfil

his or her social desires, sociability, approval and prestige (Lobschat et al., 2013; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998).

To better capture the essence of brand's social value, Lobschat et al. (2013) conceptualized social currency as a formative construct composed of six dimensions. The first dimension is Conversation, and refers to the flow of supportive discussions and positive information about a brand in both face-to-face and media-supported encounters. The conversation dimension plays a key role in shaping brand's awareness and image in the market. The second dimension is Advocacy and points to the active effort undertaken by a customer to promote a brand through recommendations, endorsements, etc. Active promotions can be made through blogs and other social network platforms by active, militant and playful customers (Kozinets, 1999; Cova and Pace, 2006), or simply in offline settings among friends and family members. Information serves as the third dimension of social currency, and refers to the informational value of the brand-related content shared between customers. Efficiency of information collection, reciprocal support, and the opportunity to learn from other customers are some key aspects of informational value, and would help one to better resolve potential problems associated to the usage of the brand (Dholakia et al., 2004; Gruen et al., 2006; Hennig-Taurau et al., 2010). The fourth dimension is Affiliation, and points to one's emotional attachment and sense of belonging to other brand users. As a result of regular interactions, peer recognitions, joint consumption experiences, and even anonymous communications on social e-platforms, users start to feel an enhanced connection to other customers and gradually develop a sense of community (Gruen et al., 2006; Lobschat et al., 2013). This notion is stronger in case of brands consumed publicly (Schmitt, 2012), and would facilitate one's "self-exposure" to the perceptions of other members (Cova and Pace, 2006). Utility is the fifth dimension of social currency, and refers to the influence of the previously described informational value on one's personal growth. This

dimension serves as a key motivation for customers' interactions. Indeed, past studies have well demonstrated that group/community memberships could significantly contribute to personal well-being through several ways such as increasing one's level of happiness, reducing one's worries, improving one's mental and physical health status, and enhancing his/her self-esteem (e.g. Davidson and Cotter, 1991; Busseri et al., 2009). Finally, Identity represents the sixth dimension of social currency and refers to the way customers present and express their personalities within a group of brand users. Consumers identify themselves with other users based on their perceived level of congruency between their own self-image and the image they have from typical brand-users (Escalas and Bettman, 2005). The more a consumer identifies himself with a brand community, the more behavioural and attitudinal loyalty he shows towards the brand (Liu et al., 2012; Marzocchi et al., 2013). Indeed, customers fortify their shared identity through differentiating themselves from other groups of brand users or communities of competing brands. According to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), in extreme cases, such reinforcement might even lead to "oppositional brand loyalty" against other brands.

In the conceptualization suggested by Lobschat et al. (2013), Advocacy, Information and Conversation depict distinct *facets* of customer-to-customer interactions while Affiliation, Utility and Identity mostly capture the social *benefits* accruing from those interactions. Lobschat et al. (2013), however, emphasize that the strength of social currency originates from the richness of all those six dimensions. Lobschat et al. (2013) further examined the relationships between social currency and three measures of brand equity including perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand trust. Their study showed that all these elements are positively affected by social currency. As an attempt to further explore the potential outcomes of social currency, our study investigates the role of this construct in shaping customer's experience of the brand. We investigate the relationships between social currency and brand experience in the context of cosmetics

consumption, in which brand experience plays a major role in shaping consumer decisions. In the following sections, we first provide an overview of the concept of brand experience and then discuss how it could be enhanced through social currency.

### **2.1.3 Brand Experience**

The early approaches to experiential consumption point to the importance of hedonic motives such as fantasies, feelings and fun (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) as well as product symbolism (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982) in shaping consumer behavior. In this view, customer's decisions are no longer simply inspired by mere rational choices about tangible features such as quality or price (Mathwick et al., 2001). Rather, it is believed that customers constantly look for unique and pleasurable experiences that they could enjoy both during the consumption session and after that through strong and positive memories (Pine and Gilmore, 1998, 1999; Mathwick et al., 2002; Brakus et al., 2009; Gilboa and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2013). The concept of experience marketing increased in popularity when Pine and Gilmore (1998, 1999) later noticed the emergence of an *experience economy*. These authors described experience economy as the latest stage of the economic progression following the economies of commodities, goods and services. In this view, an experience occurs when firms use goods and services as props to stage engaging and memorable events. According to these authors, experiences are also highly personal, and solely develop and exist in one's mind (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Similarly, Schmitt (1999a) mentions that in response to competition, a growing number of firms today try to depart from traditional marketing and focus more on experiential marketing through responding to the sensory-emotive desires of clients. He suggests that a rich experiential offer consist of five Strategic Experience Modules (SEMs) including Sensory (Sense), Affective (Affect), Intellectual (Think), Behavioural (Act), and Relational (Relate)

elements. In the context of traditional and online retailing, Mathwick et al. (2001) point to four types of experiential values that customers could achieve in a shopping session: aesthetics, playfulness, customer return on investment (CROI), and service excellence. They believe experiential value result during direct or indirect usage or appreciation of goods and services (Mathwick et al., 2001). More recently, Brakus et al. (2009) defined the concept of *brand experience* as the “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design and identity packaging, communications, and environments” (p. 53). According to these authors, an experience could occur both directly through brand consumption and indirectly through exposure to brand’s stimuli (e.g. advertisement, etc.). Brakus et al. (2009) identified four dimensions for brand experience including sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioral. As the authors confer, a stimulus may trigger different dimensions at the same time, and therefore lead to a greater consumption experience (Brakus et al., 2009).

Past studies confirm that offering experiential features and providing superior customer experience would lead to improvement in a number of key customer outcomes including customer satisfaction (Verhagen et al., 2011; Nsairi, 2012; Brakus et al., 2009; Oh et al., 2007), brand/company image (Chen et al., 2014), emotions (Zarantonello et al., 2013; Oh et al., 2007, Tsaor et al., 2006), customer involvement (Shobeiri et al., 2014), identification with brand (Jones and Runyan, 2013), brand trust and commitment (Lee and Kang, 2012), perceived overall quality (Oh et al., 2007), customer attitudes (Chang and Chieng, 2006; Keng and Ting, 2009), brand/company personality (Brakus et al., 2009; Chang and Chieng, 2006; Shobeiri et al., 2013), consumer-brand relationships (Chang and Chieng, 2006), memory for the brand (Oh et al., 2007), consumer preferences (Mathwick et al., 2001; Overby and Lee, 2006), and loyalty and patronage



intentions (Sullivan et al., 2012; Hsu and Tsou, 2011; Keng et al., 2007; Brakus et al., 2009; Jeong et al., 2009; Mathwick et al., 2001),

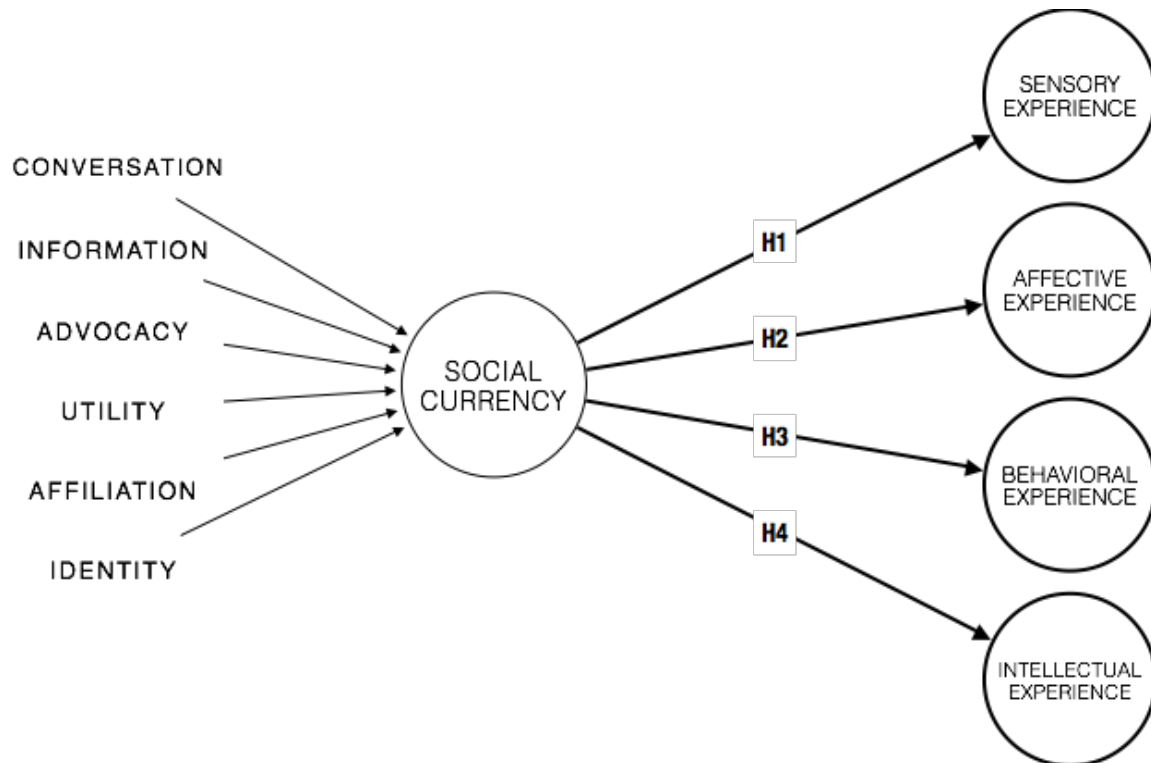
Despite the above-described strategic role of customer experience in shaping brand's performance, few studies investigated the antecedents of this fundamental construct. Indeed, a limited number of past studies found that elements such as nostalgia emotions (Chen et al., 2014), involvement (Sullivan et al., 2012), atmospherics (Nsairi, 2012; Keng et al., 2007), information credibility (Hsu and Tsou, 2011), personal interactions (Keng et al., 2007), interactivity and presentation (Keng and Ting, 2009; Jeong et al., 2009) and service innovation (Su, 2011) could help to create experiential values for customers. In this regard, the following section looks at the interactions between social currency and each of the four dimensions of brand experience, as suggested by Brakus et al. (2009), in more detail.

## **2.2 Model Development**

As Schmitt (1999b) suggests, experiences are not self-generated but rather induced. This study suggests that social currency could contribute to the enhancement of customers' brand experience in the context of cosmetics consumption. Similar to the context of automotive purchases explored in the original study of Lobschat et al. (2013), consumption of cosmetics usually entails a high degree of visibility and inspires extensive opinion exchange. The concept of social currency could thus play a fundamental role in shaping customer behavior for cosmetic products. We suggest that the extensive customer-to-customer interactions that form the foundation of social currency and the social benefits derived from them, as explained previously, would turn the brand consumption from an ordinary event into an engaging experience. More

specifically, we hypothesize that social currency positively impacts each of the four dimensions of brand experience suggested by Brakus et al. (2009).

**Figure 2**  
**Research Framework - Study 1**



### 2.2.1 Social Currency and Sensory Experience

The amount of positive information about a brand circulating among customers as well as the active effort taken by them to recommend a specific brand have significant impacts on customers' perceptions of the brand (e.g. Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Keller, 2007). Sense experiences aim to attract attention and provide aesthetic pleasure, excitement, and beauty through sensory stimulation (Schmitt, 1999a). Social interactions in brand communities allow

customers to better portray brand related elements. The interactions and information exchanges inherent in social currency reinforce mental anchors and reference points on the sensory imagery of the brand (Marzocchi et al., 2013; Schembri, 2009). Multi-sensory stimulation through shared imagery or discussions among customers is thus incorporated in brand concept (Schmitt, 2012). Discussions about hedonic of a new product - such as a new fragrance, visual beauty of a limited package, voice of the brand's new spokesperson, etc. – could increase one's sensory motives in purchase of the brand. Discussions among buyers of a new beauty product (e.g. sharing tips about the product usage) could also trigger and reinforce individuals' willingness to consume it more attentively, and thus help them better appreciate its inherent sensory pleasure (Bloch and Richins, 1992). Therefore, it could be hypothesized that:

**H1: Brand's social currency positively impacts customers' sensory experience.**

### 2.2.2 Social Currency **and Affective Experience**

Interactions among customers engage one's inner feeling and emotions, and increase one's sense of belonging and connection (Lobschat et al., 2013). Affiliation, as mentioned by Lobschat et al. (2013), is an emotional attachment arising from personal or non-personal interactions among brand users. Indeed, customers connect and identify themselves via objects of consumption (e.g. Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). Through expressing their personalities and desires, they develop an affinity with other brand users (Lobschat et al., 2013). According to Varhoef et al. (2009), attracting compatible customers may spark friendship, increase satisfaction, and lead to a fulfilling experiences. Sharing past experiences - such as how consuming a certain product (e.g. fragrance, lipstick) has unexpected inherent benefits (e.g. peer recognition, greater perceived physical attractiveness) - could also cause momentary emotional lifts and trigger

feelings of joy during subsequent consumption sessions (Bloch and Richins, 1992). Furthermore, Schmitt (1999b) argued that affect could be created through portraying a consumption situation in mind and anticipating the purchase, which is a common outcome of information exchange. As mentioned previously, information sharing, affiliation, and engagement are key signs of solid social currency. Therefore, and in line with past studies that show online communities enhance customer experience (e.g. Mittal and Tsiros, 2007), we suggest that:

**H2: Brand's social currency positively impacts customers' affective experience.**

### **2.2.3 Social Currency and Behavioral Experience**

In postmodern societies, the importance given to affirmation of individuality and the sense of style achieved through aggregation of lifestyle elements such as products, experiences, and practices are considered central to one's life time project (e.g. Featherstone, 1991; Coley and Burgees, 2003). Through customer-to-customer interactions, one might be inspired by the thoughts and beliefs of other users, and might consequently feel the need to alter some aspects of his or her lifestyle. In the context of cosmetics consumption, those interactions could motivate one to create a "New You" and alleviate one's feeling of boredom with oneself (Bloch and Richins, 1992). Indeed, behavioural experience comprises changes in lifestyle and behaviours, and is often originated by role models (Schmitt, 1999a), who could be other brand users. Other users may increase one's expectations prior to the purchase, which will have a significant impact on one's brand consumption experience (e.g. Ofir and Simonson, 2007). For instance, many stories about potential bodily sensations and flesh experiences during brand consumption could be passed by peer users. In addition, certain customers might share creative and new ways to

apply the brand, which could in turn trigger and inspire brand-related creativity among other users. Accordingly, we suggest following hypothesis:

**H3: Brand's social currency positively impacts customers' behavioral experience.**

#### **2.2.4 Social Currency and Intellectual Experience**

Brand-related information exchanges allow customers to obtain deeper knowledge of the brand and more effectively find solutions for problems inherent in usage situations (Lobschat et al., 2013). Social interaction platforms help customers to discuss product consumption, give and receive advices, and share past experiences in order to better inform other customers. Indeed, most consumers value peer advice very highly, since they consider peer users as individuals with similar thoughts and beliefs (e.g. Euromonitor, 2013a). For instance, past research has shown that inputs from independent bloggers – in contrast to company representatives – are highly appreciated by clients especially in the case of high involvement products such as nutricosmetics (Euromonitor, 2013b). For new users, access to such comparative information could create strong first impressions and mental images, and lead to enhanced brand experiences (Muthukrishnan and Chattopadhyay, 2007). Furthermore, readers on those platforms are often encouraged to engage in discussion about the bloggers' review. As a result, customers would entail in both analytical reasoning and associative thinking revolving around a brand and its products (Schmitt, 1999b). Accordingly we suggest the following hypothesis:

**H4: Brand's social currency positively impacts customers' intellectual experience.**

## 2.3 Methodology

### 2.3.1 Sample and Data Collection

To test our conceptual framework, data collection was made through a paper and pencil survey during the months of January and February 2014. The sample consisted mostly of undergraduate and graduate students who agreed to take part in the study. Subjects were recruited on a voluntary basis at a large North Eastern university that offers courses in both English and French. As suggested by Goldsmith (2002) and Malhotra and King (2003), homogeneity of the student sample facilitates controlling for various sources of error.

Surveys were prepared in both English and French languages. As the first step, all questionnaire items were adapted to the cosmetic industry and translated into French. To avoid any misinterpretation and to ensure adequate translation of items from English to French, back translation method was applied. A professional translator and a bilingual undergraduate student were asked to back-translate items from French to English. Inputs from both individuals demonstrated effective translation of items into French. Next, a total of 30 respondents took part in a pre-test of both English and French versions of the questionnaire. The pre-test indicated the need to modify the wording of a few items in order to reduce their complexity.

Revised self-administered questionnaires along with consent forms were distributed at the end of the class time or during the break. In exchange for their participation, subjects were entered into a draw for one of five \$50 gift cards. Participants were instructed to think about their favourite brand when it comes to buying cosmetic products for themselves, and to answer the questions with that brand in mind. To better help respondents imagine and recall their favorite brand, the name of the brand as well as the date of the last purchase were also asked at the beginning of the questionnaire.

In total, we had 373 participants. Questionnaires that were incomplete were eliminated, resulting in 357 usable responses. Fifty nine percent of the participants were female and their median age group was 20-24 years. Brands that appeared the most in responses included Dove, Old Spice, Axe, L'Oreal, Lancôme, and Vichy. Data for study 1, 2 and 3 was gathered through the same questionnaire, and therefore, all three studies refer to the same participants and data collection method.

### 2.3.2 Measures

All scales were adopted from the literature to measure our research variables. Social Currency was measured using the 17-item formative construct of Lobschat et al. (2013). Brand Experience was measured using the 12-item construct developed by Brakus et al. (2009). Items were all measured by seven-point Likert scales with anchors of 1='strongly disagree' and 7='strongly agree'.

## 2.4 Results

### 2.4.1 Measurement Model

We first conducted a Confirmatory Factor Analysis using AMOS 19 on ten factors including six representing social currency and four representing brand experience. Results demonstrated that all items except for two had high loadings. One item of Identity and one item of the behavioral dimension of brand experience were found to have insufficient loadings (.16 and .44 respectively). Moreover, and in line with the notion of Hair et al. (2010), two additional items from the social currency construct (one from the Advocacy dimension and one from the

Utility dimension) were dropped due to their high-standardized residuals associated with other items. Therefore, four items in total were eliminated and a second Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted. This time, all of the remaining items had acceptable factor loadings. Results demonstrated an overall goodness of fit for the measurement model. Fit indexes including Chi-square=490 (DF= 226), GFI= .903, AGFI= .86, RMSEA= .057, TLI= .936, and CFI= .95 were all in acceptable ranges (e.g. Hair et al., 2010; Roussel et al., 2002). Results of CFA and reliability test are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**  
**Results of the CFA and Reliability Test - Study 1**

	<b>Factor Loadings</b>	<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></b>
<b>Social Currency</b>		
<b>Conversation</b>		<b>0.65</b>
I read a lot of positive things about <b>XYZ</b> on the Internet and other media.	0.766	
I hear a lot of positive things about <b>XYZ</b> from people I know.	0.746	
<b>Information</b>		<b>0.88</b>
It is easy to share information and new ideas with other users of <b>XYZ</b> .	0.700	
Through other users of <b>XYZ</b> I get valuable information.	0.889	
Through other users of <b>XYZ</b> I get to learn something new or fun.	0.894	
I take the opinion of other users of <b>XYZ</b> seriously.	0.733	
<b>Advocacy</b>		<b>0.73</b>
I feel the need to tell others how good <b>XYZ</b> is.	0.858	
If someone speaks negatively of <b>XYZ</b> I will defend the brand.	0.736	



<b>Utility</b>		<b>0.69</b>
Users of <b>XYZ</b> share values that are important to me.	0.685	
Users of <b>XYZ</b> allow me to be cutting edge and in-the-know.	0.778	
<b>Affiliation</b>		<b>0.84</b>
Through <b>XYZ</b> I feel like a member of a community.	0.835	
I feel a connection to other users of <b>XYZ</b> .	0.799	
I get to know interesting people through <b>XYZ</b> .	0.786	
<b>Identity</b>		
I can identify myself well with other users of <b>XYZ</b> .	0.560	
<b>Brand Experience</b>		
<b>Sensory</b>		<b>0.83</b>
<b>XYZ</b> makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses.	0.716	
I find <b>XYZ</b> interesting in a sensory way.	0.769	
<b>XYZ</b> appeals to my senses.	0.796	
<b>Affective</b>		<b>0.83</b>
<b>XYZ</b> induces feelings and sentiments.	0.668	
I have strong emotions for <b>XYZ</b> .	0.868	
<b>XYZ</b> is an emotional brand.	0.762	
<b>Behavioral</b>		<b>0.66</b>
<b>XYZ</b> results in bodily experiences.	0.745	
<b>XYZ</b> is action oriented.	0.630	
<b>Intellectual</b>		<b>0.89</b>
I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter <b>XYZ</b> .	0.798	
<b>XYZ</b> makes me think.	0.922	
<b>XYZ</b> stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.	0.814	

The outcomes of convergent and discriminant validities are shown in Table 2. The indices of social currency and brand experience indicate an acceptable level of convergent validity, since AVEs of all factors were about or higher than 0.5. To test for discriminant validity, correlations between factors were compared with the square roots of the AVEs. It was found that the square

root of AVE for each factor was higher than correlations between that factor and other factors; except for the Utility dimension of social currency that demonstrates higher correlation with three other dimensions of social currency (Information, Affiliation and Advocacy). However, and as argued by Jarvis et al. (2003), internal consistency might not necessarily be a good indicator for evaluating measures' effectiveness in formative models. Therefore, we concluded sufficient reliability and validity for our measurement model.

**Table 2**  
**Test for Convergent and Discriminant Validity - Study 1**

	<i>AVE</i>	Conversation	Advocacy	Information	Affiliation	Utility	Sensory	Affective	Behavioral	Intellectual
Conversation	<b>.57</b>	<b>.75</b>								
Advocacy	<b>.64</b>	.59	<b>.80</b>							
Information	<b>.65</b>	.56	.7	<b>.81</b>						
Affiliation	<b>.65</b>	.38	.65	.73	<b>.81</b>					
Utility	<b>.54</b>	.53	.76	.93	.99	<b>.74</b>				
Sensory	<b>.58</b>	.12	.33	.33	.40	.39	<b>.76</b>			
Affective	<b>.59</b>	.15	.49	.40	.6	.56	.72	<b>.77</b>		
Behavioral	<b>.48</b>	.07	.32	.31	.51	.54	.74	.92	<b>.69</b>	
Intellectual	<b>.72</b>	.08	.34	.36	.54	.47	.6	.84	.89	<b>.85</b>

**Note:** Square roots of the AVEs are on diagonal (bold) and correlations among factors are off-diagonal.

### 2.4.2 Tests of Hypotheses

To test the full latent model, we used AMOS 19. Results demonstrated that the fit indicators of the model were all in the acceptable range: Chi-square= 551 (DF= 248), GFI= .89, AGFI= .86, RMSEA= .059, TLI= .93, and CFI= .95. Results showed that social currency

strongly influenced the sensory (.72), affective (.97), behavioural (.97) and intellectual (.88) dimensions of brand experience, supporting H1, H2, H3, and H4. However, solely the three dimensions of Conversation (-.19), Advocacy (.21) and Affiliation (.61) were found to be significant indicators of social currency. These results are presented in Figure 1 and Table 3 below, and are discussed in the following section.

**Table 3**  
**Structural Path: Social Currency and Brand Experience**

Hypothesis	Hypothetical Path	Beta Coefficient
	Conversation → Social Currency	.185**
	Advocacy → Social Currency	.211**
	Information → Social Currency	.173
	Affiliation → Social Currency	.606**
	Utility → Social Currency	.173
	Identity → Social Currency	.143
H1	Social Currency → Sensory Experience	.723***
H2	Social Currency → Affective Experience	.974***
H3	Social Currency → Behavioral Experience	.971***
H4	Social Currency → Intellectual Experience	.884***

**Note:** \*\*\* significant at  $p < .001$ , \*\* significant at  $p < .01$ , \* significant at  $p < .05$

## 2.5 Discussion and Implications

This study demonstrates the importance of the newly developed concept of social currency (Lobschat et al., 2013) as an antecedent of brand experience in the context of cosmetics consumption. Empirical data from a survey provided strong support for all our four hypotheses.

Results showed that social currency positively impacts all four dimensions of brand experience conceptualized by Brakus et al. (2009), i.e. sensory, affective, behavioral and intellectual experiences. The original study of social currency by Lobschat et al. (2013) in the context of automobiles showed that Conversation, Advocacy and Identity are the significant dimensions of this construct. Our findings, however, suggest that Conversation, Advocacy and Affiliation are the three significant dimensions of social currency when it comes to the consumption of cosmetics. The differences in the nature and patterns of consumption in those two product categories might account for this observed difference. This is consistent with the notion of Lobschat et al. (2013) that the relevance of social currency dimensions could vary from one industry to another. These authors also noted that some dimensions of social currency might be more important at earlier stages of consumption while certain other dimensions are more relevant at later stages. In the current study we asked our respondents to think about their *favourite* brand of cosmetics, which implies that the brand is already well established in their minds.

It is also interesting to note that in our study, Conversation had a significant negative impact on social currency. This suggests that once a cosmetic brand is adopted, the amount of positive information circulated about it would decrease the perceived benefits of interacting with other brand users. One possible explanation for this outcome could be the reflected controversy about a brand's product benefits. Considering the nature of cosmetics, all cosmetic brand products cannot appeal to all customers. Skin types are determined by genetics, and skin conditions are subject to various internal and external factors. There is a constant risk that the brand may not satisfy a customer's specific skin concerns, and in extreme cases, might even cause skin reaction or irritation. Even if the brand is considered as favorite, unlike clothing, consumers react differently to cosmetic products. However, it could be argued that controversy about brand products benefit is not necessarily a bad thing. Consumers are able to learn and

further prevent brand dissatisfaction when reading about a product from a customer they can relate to (e.g. sharing skincare concerns). Therefore, they can prevent undesirable experiences by selecting other brand products that would better satisfy their concerns. Another possible explanation for the negative effect of Conversation could be the customers' fear of possible alienations in brand identity. As Lobschat et al. (2013) mention, the rapid evolution in information exchange has largely changed the direction of the influence of brand image. More and more customers today believe that a brand no longer falls under the company's intellectual property, and that users are the ones responsible for creating its essence (Cova and Pace, 2006). Such empowerment, however, could create certain concerns that some militants might put the image and ideology of the brand at risk (Wathieu et al., 2002). As noted by Wipperfurth (2005), trying to seize control over a brand's ideology by consumer tribes could eventually lead to a "brand hijack". Furthermore, when a brand becomes more common and is used by many different groups of consumers, brand associations may no longer be apt to represent the brand user (Escalas and Bettman, 2005). This impression could in turn make it more difficult for customers to differentiate themselves from users of other brands, and could eventually weaken their perceived shared identity. From a managerial perspective, this would mean that brands should constantly prevent such alienation through effective monitoring and management of their social interaction platforms. In fact, the brand hijack is more accentuated when customer interactions take place in online environment (Kozinets, 2002; O'guinn and Muniz, 2005). Therefore, active involvement is needed in such situations to make sure that the brand-related information discussed among users is consistent with the brand's core identity. In this regard, recent studies show that brand communities consist of various segments (Ouwensloot and Odekerken-Schröder, 2008), and by customers do not simply connect to the overall brand community, but rather connect to subgroups with which they share a distinct identity (Johnson et

al., 2013) . Acknowledging these sub communities and providing a platform of interaction for them could help managers to prevent brand alienation and weaken the possible backlash of brand militants. It could also be concluded that the brand's formal communication environments - such as the company's web page – should not be used as a platform for users' interactions. Rather, the web page should mainly provide links and references to the brand' different social networking platforms.

Affiliation, on the other hand, was found to be the most influential dimension of social currency in our study. This implies that consumers have strong feelings of attachment towards other users of the brand, and therefore emphasis must be put on creating experiences where consumers are able to interact either in public or in anonymous settings. The Affiliation dimension could be enhanced through holding social events that serve as bonding opportunities. In this regard, online platforms that allow self-exposure and community activities should be developed and strongly promoted. Managers should also provide settings that would support face-to-face interactions with brand representatives or other brand users in order to increase affiliation and stimulate strong feelings towards other users and the brand itself (Schmitt, 1999b). It is important to note that even though consumption of the same brand is the primary reason for emotional attachments of the users, the emphasis of those activities should be on community building and not product promotions (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2002; Langerak et al., 2007). Finally, and in order to enhance customer's Advocacy, brands should facilitate bonding of new and returning customers through blogs or other social media platforms that allow customers to share tutorials, videos, or pictures of them in various brand usage situations. Members who post and reply to comments and provide a high volume of information and helpful advices to other customers create greater brand enthusiasm among the community (Adjai et al, 2014). Thus, a

reward system could also be implemented in order to motivate actual and new brand-users to participate in such activities.

To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first in the literature to explore the links between social currency and the four dimensions of brand experience, i.e. sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral as suggested by Brakus et al. (2009). In addition, and due to the newness of the social currency construct, its relationships with many variables of consumer behavior have not yet been verified. Our study revealed how this concept could enhance a fundamental component of brand equity, i.e. brand experience. Therefore, another important contribution of this research is the establishment of higher levels of validity for the newly developed concept of social currency. From a managerial perspective, understanding the concept of social currency and developing plans to improve its key dimensions have strategic importance for brand experience management. It is critical for managers to consider the role of consumer-initiated efforts - in addition to firm-initiated efforts such as advertising or promotions – in the formation of customer experience. Lobschat et al. (2013) also state that certain dimensions of social currency (e.g. Conservation) might be more relevant when application of social media within a product category is fairly new, while certain other dimensions (e.g. Identity) might become more critical when such application is well established. Brand managers should thus continuously adapt their marketing strategies according to such relative priorities. In sum, our findings suggest that to create superior brand experience, effort should be put in both offline and online social settings on facilitation of customer interactions. Yet, managers should carefully select only those user interaction strategies that are in line with the brand's core identity and market position.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **STUDY 2**

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Study 1 revealed that brand's social currency could create enriched experiential benefits (brand experience) for customers. Study 2 investigated how social currency could further provide customers with transformational benefits. This study primarily attempts to describe the concept of transformation and its roots in the fields of psychology and marketing. It would then examine the role of transformational benefits of self-esteem and self-expression on the recently developed Attachment-Aversion model of customer-brand relationships (Park et al., 2010). The study 2 is structured as follows: first a theoretical background on the concepts of transformation and customer-brand relationships will be provided. Next, our model and hypothesis will be developed. Finally, the measurement decisions, findings as well as implications will be discussed.

### **3.1 Theoretical Background**

#### **3.1.1 Transformation**

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) suggests that the jointure of all optimal experiences into a meaningful pattern could result in transformation. Wilber (1996) refers to transformation as a fundamental result of one's psychological growth. According to him, psychological growth occurs when the self reaches a higher-order structure in consciousness and detaches itself from its exclusive identification with the lower self-structure. Only then, the self would shift its essential identity to a higher level, resulting in a transformation. Later, Metzner (1998) noted that the state of consciousness is transformed when one experiences changes in thinking, worldview, beliefs,



feelings, motives, impulses, values, and altered perceptions. Similarly, such shifts in one's perceptions of self, one's aspiration and the way he or she views the surrounding environment could in turn impact one's behavior, lifestyle, physical and mental health as well as career path (Claybaugh, 1998).

Transformation is closely related to the concepts of growth and change, but also has certain fundamental distinctions with them. Whereas growth encompasses the cognitive, physical, and quantitatively measurable skills attained through a collection of personal experiences, transformation is concerned with the overall impact of experiences on the self (Claybaugh, 1998). Change occurs when there is an alteration in one's behavior, while transformation arises when there is a variation in one's individuality, attitudes and beliefs (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Wilber, 1996; Metzner, 1998; Claybaugh, 1998). Indeed, the importance of both growth and change is reflected in the transformation process (Claybaugh, 1998; Metzner 1998; Kuhn, 2001).

Transformations could widely vary in the source, nature and level. According to Metzner (1998), transformations could be abrupt or gradual, temporary or lasting, externally- or internally-induced, invisible or openly manifested, and progressive, regressive or digressive.

Repeating transformations could lead to Maslow's (1982) concept of self-actualization or absolute Being. According to this author, the "need for growing" is a composition of various experiences in one's life and not simply the result of a single static experience. Maslow (1982) also mentions specific characteristics for self-actualized individuals including "1) a more clear and efficient perception of reality, 2) more openness to experience, 3) increased integration, wholeness, and unity, 4) increased spontaneity, expressiveness, full functioning and aliveness, 5) a firm impression of identity, autonomy and uniqueness, 6) increased objectivity, detachment, and transcendence of self, 7) recovery of creativeness, 8) ability to fuse concreteness and

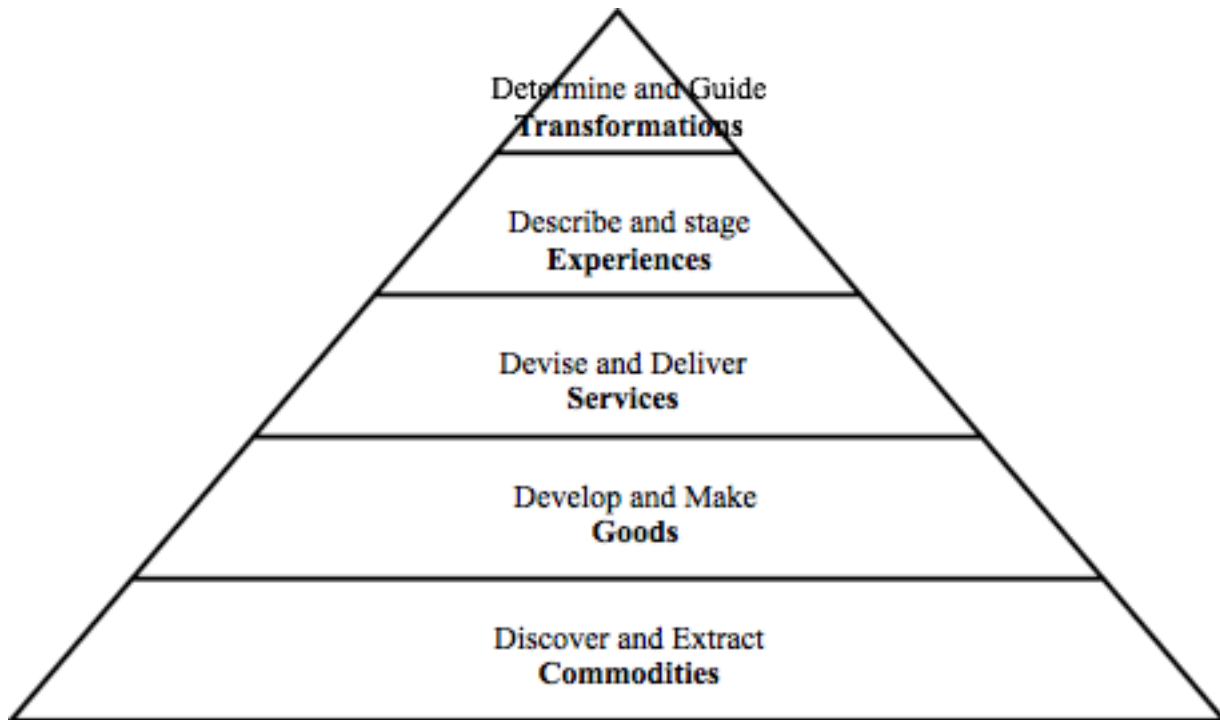
abstractness, 9) democratic character structure, and 10) ability to love” (Maslow, 1970, p.157). In order to reach transformation, one needs to be led by a guide that engages in his/her higher-self through various procedures that mirrors a person’s aspirational state of mind (Wilber, 1996; Pine and Gilmore, 2011).

The above-mentioned studies of transformation in psychology are mostly performed in the context of wilderness adventures or outdoor activities such as sailing, rafting, and mountain biking (Hendee and Brown, 1987; Arnould and Price, 1993; Dodson, 1996; Kuhn, 2001).

In marketing, Gilmore and Pine (1997) were among the first to point to the role of transformative experience as a core brand offer. Later, Kleine III et al. (2009) noted that transformation value is created “when marketers (elicitors) bundle products, services, and experiences in ways that provides consumers with opportunities to alter who they are” (p.54). According to Pine and Gilmore (1999, 2011), the core offering in transformation is indeed the improved version of an individual, or *aspirant* (i.e. one who aspires to be someone or something different). Whereas experiences are inherently personal, transformations are individual and should be sustained by the help of *Elicitors* over time (Pine and Gilmore, 2011). In other words, transformations should go beyond mere momentary lifts and need to lead to life-transforming habits. Furthermore, Pine and Gilmore (2011) note that a person cannot by definition go through the same transformation process more than once, since he/she would indeed become a different person after the first round (Pine and Gilmore, 2011). According to these authors, a transformation could however be displaced by another transformation that would focus on a different dimension of the self. The Economic Pyramid (Figure 3) illustrates the authors’ five distinct economic offerings, where transformations are the fifth and last economic offering, as their value surpasses any other in the pyramid (Pine and Gilmore, 2011).

**Figure 3**  
**The Economic Pyramid**

(Adapted from Pine and Gilmore, 2011, p. 614).



More recently, Kleine III et al. (2009) discussed the role of consumer's choice in adoption of transformational offerings. They believe transformations are role-related symbols that initiate fundamental cognitive and behavioral changes in a buyer. According to these authors, customers constantly evaluate the potential outcomes of a possible change in their self-definition when they consider a transformational offering. The more a prospect identifies with a transformational role and the better the emerging identity relates to the prospect's aspirational self-image, the more favorable his/her attitudes towards the transformational offering would be.

This study puts forth two transformational offerings - i.e. self-esteem and self-expression - based on Gilmore and Pine's (1997) concept of transformative experience as well as Maslow's (1982) theory of human motivation. Considering past findings on the impacts of physical

attractiveness and beauty on one's success in both personal and professional lives (Apaolaza-Ibáñez et al. 2011), this research investigate the role of self-esteem and self-expression in enhancement of customer relationships with cosmetic brands. These two sub-dimensions represent the last two steps of Maslow's (1982) pyramid, and are described in more details below.

### **3.1.1.1. Self-Esteem**

Self-esteem reflects an individual's overall perception of his or her worthiness as a person (Rosenberg, 1979), and is considered as one of the most prominent human needs (Maslow, 1970). Esteem captures both the personal need for achievement as well as the need for attention and recognition from others (Maslow, 1970). Global self-esteem affects the psychological wellbeing of a person, while specific self-esteem is strongly relevant to one's behavior in particular situations (Rosenberg et al., 1995). One's self-esteem level is high when one values and accepts his/her persona with all its imperfections. In contrast, low self-esteem level portrays one's negative general perception of the self (Malär et al., 2011). Self-esteem functions as a barometer that reflects one's aspirational and success experiences as well as feeling of being included or excluded, and thus keeping self-esteem would motivate one to take actions to reduce chances of potential future exclusions (Tefler, 1980; Dommer et al., 2013). Although self-esteem could be subject to momentary changes (Heatherton and Polivy, 1991), individuals in general tend to maintain and enhance their self-esteem (Crocker and Nuer, 2003, 2004; DuBois and Flay, 2004; Greenwald et al., 1988; Pyszczynski et al., 2004; Renaud and McConnell, 2007; Sheldon, 2004; Sheldon et al., 2001; Banister and Hogg, 2004). ). Indeed, even though certain daily circumstances may influence momentary self-esteem, one usually evaluates his/her overall self-esteem based on a series of experiences and situations from the past (Heatherton and Polivy,

1991).

According to Deci and Ryan (1995), true self-esteem and contingent self-esteem represent two ends of a spectrum on which one's actual self-esteem lies. True self-esteem refers to an anchored and stable feeling of self-worth (Roberts et al., 2014). Contingent self-esteem, on the other hand, is more fragile and depends on one's level of personal achievement and social acceptance (Patrick et al., 2004; Roberts et al., 2014). Accordingly, contingent self-esteem conveys a continuous need for social comparison and self-evaluation according to others' expectations and external standards (Deci and Ryan, 1995; Namasivayam and Guchait, 2013; Roberts et al., 2014). Past research also distinguishes between two dimensions of self-esteem in cognitive behavior, including explicit and implicit self-esteem (Bosson et al., 2000; Dijksterhuis, 2004; Spalding and Hardin, 1999). The conscious and reasoned evaluation of the self reflects one's explicit self-esteem, while the unconscious and spontaneous evaluation of the self shapes one's implicit self-esteem (Greenwald and Banaji, 1995; Koole et al., 2001).

Self-esteem is a key component of motivation and self-concept theories used in marketing literature (Durgee 1986, Ferraro and al., 2005, Hogg et al., 2000). Past studies also point to the role of self-esteem in lifting one's ego (Amdt et al., 2004), satisfying self-directed pleasures (Truong and McColl, 2011), and restoring one's damaged self (Rucker and Galinsky, 2008). Studies further demonstrate that low self-esteem serves as an antecedent to compulsive purchasing (e.g. D'Astous et al., 1999; Desarbo and Edwards, 1996; O'Guinn and Faber, 1989; Roberts, 1998) and materialistic behavior (e.g. Chang and Arkin, 2002; Park and John, 2011). Past studies have also shown that self-esteem could influence the way consumers remember and interpret past experiences (Sutin and Robins, 2008) and the way they imagine "yet-to-be-experience" consumption situations. To imagine future consumption situations, consumers

integrate past experiences, knowledge (e.g. one's self-concept, expected reactions from others), and add new sensory information (e.g. new product launch) to their cognitive process (Cowan and Dai, 2014).

### **3.1.1.2. Self-Expression**

The main motivation behind many behaviors of an individual is to reaffirm one's self-image (Rogers, 1947; Dunning, 2005). Self-expression refers to the use of a brand that reflects one's self-concept (Aaker, 1999) Individuals usually attempt to express themselves in a way that is consistent with how they would like their actual or ideal selves to be viewed by others (Tedeschi, 1981; Baumeister, 1982; Leary, 1996; Kokkoris and Kühnen, 2013). Individuals can chose to express who they wish to be (i.e. desired self), who they aspire to be (i.e. ideal self), as well as who they perceive they ought to be (i.e. ought self) (Markus and Kunda, 1986). In psychology, personal expressiveness is viewed as a step closer to the state of eudemonia also known as happiness (Waterman, 1993). According to Maslow (1943, 1970), self-expression figures among self-actualization needs and serves as a step closer to the desirable state of absolute being.

Situations of personal expressiveness arise when an unusual involvement is taken, where one feels a special fit or a feeling of being alive and fulfilled during an activity different from routine daily tasks (Waterman, 1990). Individuals in general use various activities as means of self-expression. Examples of those activities include sports (Kang, 2002), self-care, diet and cosmetic surgeries (Thompson and Hirschman, 1995), and entertainment including music and movies (Hackley and Tiwsakul, 2006). The act of choosing - when it comes to the purchase of products or services - has also been recognized as a mean of self-expression (e.g. Kokkoris et al.

2013). Recent studies show that those different means of self-expression interact and compete with each other (Chernev et al., 2011). Purchasing a brand could serve as a self-extension activity that helps one to achieve a sense of self and express it to others (Seanger and Johnson, 2013). Brands allow customers to express their actual (Belk, 1998), ideal (Ahuvia, 2005), and past (Park et al., 2006) self-concepts. The underlying motivation to purchase self-expressive brands can vary. Consumers may be motivated by conspicuous consumption, in order to obtain and express a desired social status (Chernev et al., 2011). Conspicuous consumption implies that consumers are able to display their wealth, knowledge of culture, style, taste, or membership to a group through the usage of particular brands (Wicklun and Gollwitzer, 1981; Braun and Wicklund, 1989; Twitchell, 2002; Amaldoss and Jain, 2005; Escalas and Bettman, 2005). On the other hand, a person could also strive to confirm and reaffirm its own self-scheme through the use of a brand. In this case, brands are consumed to fulfill self-signaling desires (Loewenstein, 1999; Bodner and Prelec, 2003). Through their usage, consumers reaffirm their own self-views (Chernev et al., 2011). Whereas conspicuous consumers purchase brands that represent their ideal self-scheme, consumers who purchase brands to satisfy their need for internal signaling adopt brands that are consistent with their actual self-concept (Ross, 1971). Studies also demonstrate that consumers tend to choose brands that enables them fully represent the image they want to share of themselves, as the brand better represent the hidden aspects of one's self-image (Tucker and Painter, 1961; Dolich, 1969). Indeed, consumers show higher purchase intentions towards a brand if they believe that they could transfer the brand meaning into their self-concepts (Saenger and Johnson, 2013). In line with this notion, a large stream of research in marketing suggests the importance of brand's symbolic meaning in shaping consumers' self-concept (e.g. Levy, 1959; Solomon and Douglas, 1987; Sirgy, 1982; Belk, 1988; Fournier, 1998; Dittmar, 1992; Kleine et al. 1993; Escalas and Bettman, 2005; Berger and Heath, 2007; Schembri et al., 2010;).

As an attempt to better explore the outcomes of brands' transformational values, this study further examine the role of self-esteem and self-expression in the creation of superior customer-brand relationships. We study the relationships between those value offerings and the attachment-aversion (AA) model of customer-brand relationships in the context of cosmetics consumption. In the following sections, we first provide an overview of the (AA) model (Park et al., 2013), and further discuss how it could be enhanced through transformation values.

### **3.1.2. Customer-Brand Relationships**

Building strong and meaningful relationships is an essential component of one's identity development (Fournier, 1998). Relationships help individuals to add meaning to their lives and are thus considered as highly valuable assets (Berscheid and Peplau, 1983; Hinde, 1995). According to Fournier (1998), the underlying meanings of relationships depend on the psychological, sociocultural, and relational contexts in which they are embedded. In branding, the idea that customers develop relationships with a "brand-as-person" is based on Fournier (1998) and Aaker's (1997) work on brand anthropomorphization, and brand personality. Consumers associate human-like characteristics to brands through direct or indirect contacts, and over time, develop relationships similar to interpersonal bonds with them (Sung and Kim, 2010; Sung and Choi, 2010). This is only possible when brands surpass human like characteristics qualifications, and adopt behaviors and actions that foster superior relationships with customers (Fournier, 1998). This conceptualization is based on the concepts of brand anthropomorphization and brand personality (Aaker, 1997; Aggarwal et and Sharmistha, 2005 ; Epley et al., 2007), which suggest that through direct or indirect contacts, consumers associate human-like characteristics to brands and over time develop relationships similar to interpersonal bonds with them (Sung and Kim,



2010). The proposed model of Fournier (1998) suggests six dimensions for customer- brand relationships including: Love/Passion (i.e the affection describing the strength and depth of the relationship), Self-Connection (i.e the degree to which the brand connect to one's self-concept.); Commitment (i.e. one's devotion to ensure a sustainable relationship with the brand); Interdependence (ie. The frequency of interactions with the brand.); Intimacy (i.e. the knowledge and understanding of a brand reflects one's level of intimacy with that brand.); Brand Partner Quality (i.e. the overall evaluation of a brand's performance as a partner). Using this framework, a number of past studies confirmed that effective customer-brand relationships would lead a number of key outcomes including: consumer attitude and behavior (Aaker et al., 2004; Aggarwal, 2004) such as commitment (Battacharya and Sen, 2003), brand love ( Ahuvia, 2005; Carrol and Ahuvia, 2006), positive and negative emotions (Ahuvia et al., 2008; Albert et al., 2008; Batra et al., 2012; Heinrich et al., 2012), brand passion (Bauer et al., 2007; Swimberghe et al., 2014), anti-brand emotions (Krishnamurthy and Kucuk, 2009), brand divorce (Sussan et al., 2012), brand communities (Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001; McAlexander et al., 2002; Algesheimer et al., 2005; Stokburger-Sauer, 2010), self-brand connections (Escalas and Bettman, 2005 ; Chaplin and John, 2005). The importance of culture in customer-brand relationships has also been acknowledged (Thompson and Arsel, 2004; Chang and Chieng, 2006; Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Nairn et al., 2008;).

More recently, Park et al. (2013) suggested a new model of customer-brand relationships based on two key constructs in consumer behavior including brand attachment (e.g. Thomson et al., 2005; Park et al, 2010) and brand love (e.g. Ahuvia, 2005; Batra et al. 2012). According to Park et al. (2013), this conceptualization originates from an internal process (e.g. perceptions and feelings towards the brand) that is both cognitive and affective, and provides a more complete

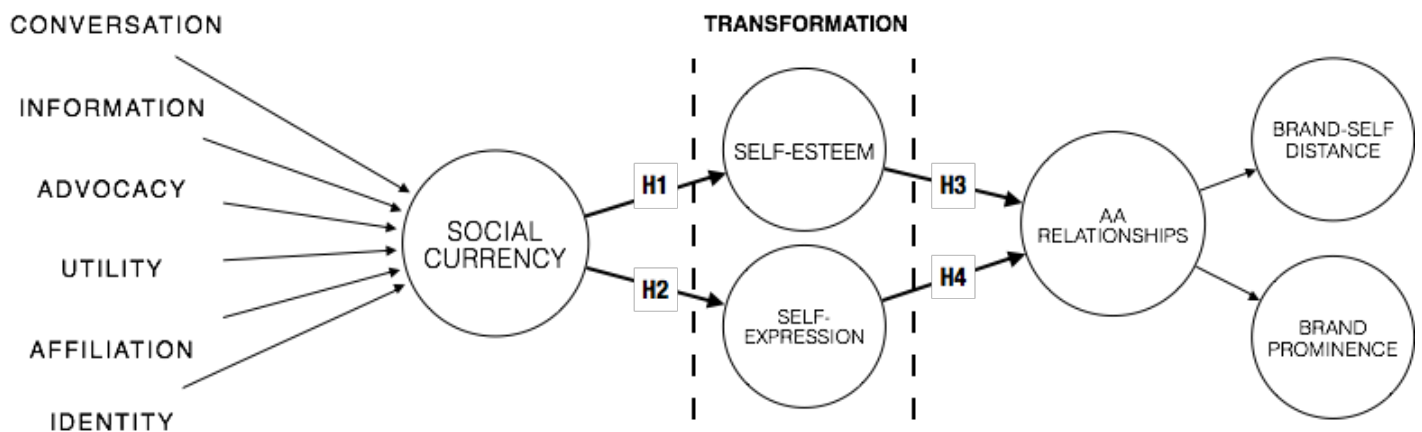
spectrum of the valence and salience of customer-brand relationships. This self-based model (i.e. how the brand is integrated in the self through internal processes) of customer-brand relationships, named as AA (Attachment-Aversion), provides an opportunity to measure customers' approach and avoidance relationships with brands. Customer-brand attachment arises when a brand enables customer's self-expansion (i.e. when the brand is incorporated to one's self-concept) (Park et al., 2010). In contrast, when such expansion is not easily accessible, customers adopt a distant and aversive reaction towards the brand. In this perspective, attachment or aversion towards a brand are not static and may vary over time. Park et al. (2013) point to brand-self distance and brand prominence as two factors that could determine the valence and the salience of AA relationships. Brand-self distance reflects the brand's relevancy to the customer, but is not only restricted to the self-concept (e.g. a brand can be relevant for its functional or symbolic benefits). The more relevant the brand memories - both in cognitive (i.e. links with the self-concept) and affective (i.e. meaning to one's identity, goals, and concerns) forms - the smaller the gap between the self and the brand. On the other hand, brand prominence deals with the level of accessibility of the brand memories. The degree to which brand memories quickly and frequently come to one's mind determines the significance of the brand-self relationships. Park et al. (2013) further describe the dynamics between brand-self distance and brand prominence. As noted by them, it would be difficult for the customer to judge if the brand is self-relevant or not when access to brand memories is limited. However, as the authors describe, a brand that is functional in nature might be highly relevant (e.g. facilitate one's everyday life), but will not necessarily be as prominent in one's mind as opposed to a brand that is equally relevant, but more symbolic in nature, and thus important for other reasons (e.g. helps to develop one's core identity). Park et al. (2013) also found that AA relationships play a key role in shaping customer's pro-brand behaviors and brand purchase decisions. These authors further note three

key determinants for AA relationships: brand’s role in Enticing (vs. annoying), Enabling (vs. disabling), and Enriching (vs. impoverishing) the self. These determinants represent three different types of assets owned by a brand. Enticing the self refers to the sum of hedonic and aesthetic pleasures conveyed by a brand. On the other hand, brands that enable the self through product or service performances create an impression of mastery and efficient self by helping one achieve his/her desired goals in an efficient way. Finally, enriching the self reflects a brand’s capacity to represent the ideal self in both symbolic and spiritual manners.

### 3.4.2 Model Development

This study suggests that social currency would positively impact self-esteem and self-expression, which would in turn lead to stronger attachment towards the brand. These relationships are discussed in details in the following.

**Figure 4**  
Research Framework - Study 2



## 3.2.1 Social Currency and Transformational Benefits

### 3.2.1.1 Social Currency and Self-Esteem

Past studies show that self-esteem is enhanced in social contexts through meeting the collective goals of a reference group, avoiding goals from avoidance or rejected groups, and eluding any possible negative evaluation from significant others (Banister and Hogg, 2004). Brands could satisfy customers' needs of belongingness to a group and reduce their feelings of social exclusion by facilitating customer-to-customer connections (Dommer et al., 2013). Use of cosmetics increases one's physical attractiveness and thus positively impacts one's perceived social power and acceptance (Bloch and Richins, 1992). The level of satisfaction that would potentially arise from the use of adornments depends on the others' reaction towards the new enhanced self (Bloch et Richins, 1992). Indeed, one's overall self-evaluation is strongly influenced by social comparisons, others' expectations, and external standards.

Furthermore, through social interactions and achievement of social acceptance, one reduces the feeling and risk of social exclusion (Dommer et al., 2013). Social acceptance creates a sense of belonging to a group. Feelings of being accepted by a group creates a sense of relief, and thus improves one's momentary self-esteem. Indeed, belonging to a group means that one meets certain social standards, which in turn would enhance one's perceptions of self-worth (Deci and Ryan, 1995; Namasivayam and Guchait, 2013; Roberts et al, 2014). Therefore, a brand with strong social currency not only allows customers to use social interactions for social comparison, but also helps them to use benefits inherent in these interactions (e.g. affiliation) as a way to enhance their self-worth. The following hypothesis is thus developed

**H1: Brand's social currency positively impacts self-esteem.**

### 3.2.1.2 Social Currency and Self-Expression

Environments that allow peer-to-peer interaction enable individuals to voice their thoughts and opinions, socialize with people with whom they share similar interests, and therefore enhance their social identities (Chernev et al., 2011). Richman and Leary (2009) suggest that everyday interactions have an impact on one's overall self-concept since they influence one's thoughts, motivations, psychological well-being and emotions (p.365). Strong social currency provides customers with an opportunity to interact and display their knowledge, taste, style and wealth through the use of a particular brand (Wicklun and Gollwitzer, 1981; Braun and Wicklund, 1989; Twitchell, 2002; Amaldoss and Jain, 2005; Escalas and Bettman, 2005). During these interactions, individuals become able to express their desired social status and reaffirm their own self-views (Chernev et al., 2011). In this view, it is not the branded product that is mainly used as a means of self-expression. Rather, it is the social interactions that allow customers to better represent themselves, since individuals could always use the information provided by other brand users to portray certain aspects of their own self-images. One may also be inspired by characteristics of other brand users (e.g. style, personality, lifestyle, etc.) and decide to reconsider some of his or her attitudes and beliefs. In this view, the brand could serve as a transformation provider by inspiring one to bring some changes to his/her persona. The following hypothesis summarizes the above notions:

**H2: Brand's social currency positively impacts self-expression.**

## 3.2.2 Transformational Benefits and Customer-Brand Relationships

### 3.2.2.1 Self-Esteem and Customer-Brand Relationships

High discrepancy between implicit (spontaneous and unconscious) and explicit (conscious) self-esteem creates psychological discomfort, and as a result, one might increase his or her desire to purchase products that will convey self-enhancement benefits (Park and John, 2011). When a brand enables a person to create a sense of capable self, achieve desired goals and take control of his/her environment, the brand soothes the discomfort caused by discrepancy in self-esteem, and further reduces the gap between the self and the brand (Park et al. 2013). The feeling of attachment that results from such brand offering mirrors the same feelings of attachment felt in real life relationships (Schmitt, 2013). Therefore, when a brand provides opportunities for customers to reach desired goals and reinforce core elements of their self-concept such as their perceived self-worth, the brand further creates meaningful relationships with customers (Fournier, 1998).

Further, momentary lifts in self-esteem through the usage of a brand might foster memories that influence one's attachment towards a brand. Since self-esteem is one of the most fundamental human needs (Maslow, 1982), memories of brands with symbolic meanings enrich one's self-construal. Indeed, these highly relevant cognitive and affective memories influence the salience of the relationship between the customer and the brand (Park et al., 2013). Accordingly, when a brand enriches oneself and becomes a component of one's self-concept, it cannot help but to develop strong relationships with the customer. Thus:

**H3: Self-esteem positively impacts customer-brand relationships.**

### 3.2.2.2 Self-Expression and Customer-Brand Relationships

Self-expressive brands are valued for their ability to reinforce a person's principles and beliefs (Chernev et al., 2011). Indeed, an ideal representation of the self should integrate the meanings behind one's projected image. Self-expressive products generally improve one's performance in various professional and social roles (Bloch and Richins, 1992). They enable consumers to foster a sense of efficient and capable self that directly impacts one's evaluation of the self (Park et al., 2013). By doing so, brands enhance their relationships with customers and further contribute to increase their attachment towards the brand (Gile and Maltby, 2004; Park et al., 2013). In this view, the distance that separates the brand from the self is reduced when self-expressive brands provide an opportunity for consumers to represent who they are or want to be. Whereas some consumers use brands to better express their ideal image, others seek to fulfill self-signaling desires through the use of self-expressive brands (Loewenstein, 1999; Bodner and Prelec, 2003). However, in both cases the brand is used as a mean of self-extension, becomes a part of one's identity, and thus becomes highly relevant in shaping of customers' self-concept.

A brand that is relevant to one's identity construction and self-definition would enhance one's emotional being, resulting in a reduction of the gap between the self and the brand (Johnson et al., 2011). The act of self-expansion through a brand usually leads to greater attachment to it and stronger brand-self relationships (Johnson et al, 2011; Park et al. 2013). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is developed:

**H4: Self-expression positively impacts customer-brand relationships.**

### **3.3 Methodology**

#### **3.3.1 Measures**

All scales used to measure research variables were adopted from the literature. Social Currency was measured using the 17-item formative construct of Lobschat et al. (2013). Self-esteem was measured using the 20-item construct developed by Heatherton and Polivy (1991), and self-expression was measured using the 6-item construct suggested by Waterman (1993). Finally, the attachment-aversion model of customer-brand relationships was measured using Park et al.'s (2013) construct composed of two second order factors: brand-self distance (2 items) and brand prominence (2 items). Items were all measured by seven-point Likert scales with anchors of 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree.

### **3.4 Results**

#### **3.4.1 Measurement Model**

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS 19 with ten factors, six factors representing social currency and four factors representing brand experience. Results demonstrated that all items except four had high loadings (higher than .65). One item from the social currency construct (Identity dimension) was found to have insufficient loadings (.16), two items from the self-esteem construct (0.57 and 0.57) as well as one item from the self-expression construct (0.62) was found to have feeble loadings. Moreover, and as suggested by Hair et al. (2010), one item from the social currency construct (Utility dimension), one from the self-esteem construct (Appearance dimension), and one from the self-expression construct were dropped due to their high-standardized residuals associated with other items in the model. Therefore, four



items in total were eliminated and a second confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. This time, all of the remaining items had acceptable factor loadings. Results demonstrated an overall goodness of fit for the measurement model: Chi-square: 1990 (DF= 808), GFI= .78, AGFI= .74, RMSEA= .06, TLI= .88, and CFI= .89 were all in acceptable ranges considering the complexity of the model (e.g. Hair et al., 2010; Roussel et al., 2002). The complexity of the model resides in the number of items as well as the use of a second order construct in which each of the two variables were solely measured by two items. Results of CFA and reliability tests are shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4**  
**Result of the CFA and Reliability Test - Study 2**

	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's $\alpha$
<b>Social Currency</b>		
<b>Conversation</b>		<b>0.65</b>
I read a lot of positive things about XYZ on the Internet and other media.	0.760	
I hear a lot of positive things about XYZ from people I know.	0.752	
<b>Information</b>		<b>0.88</b>
It is easy to share information and new ideas with other users of XYZ.	0.704	
Through other users of XYZ I get valuable information.	0.890	
Through other users of XYZ I get to learn something new or fun.	0.892	
I take the opinion of other users of XYZ seriously.	0.731	
<b>Advocacy</b>		<b>0.81</b>
I feel the need to tell others how good XYZ is.	0.845	
If someone speaks negatively of XYZ I will defend the brand.	0.745	
I have recently recommended XYZ to other people.	0.720	
<b>Utility</b>		<b>0.69</b>
Users of XYZ share values that are important to me.	0.685	
Users of XYZ allow me to be cutting edge and in-the-know.	0.779	
<b>Affiliation</b>		<b>0.84</b>
Through XYZ I feel like a member of a community.	0.840	
I feel a connection to other users of XYZ.	0.800	
I get to know interesting people through XYZ	0.780	
<b>Identity</b>		
I can identify myself well with other users of XYZ.	0.563	
<b>Transformation</b>		
<b>Self-esteem</b>		<b>0.96</b>
When I use XYZ,		
I feel confident about my abilities.	0.670	

I feel satisfied with the way my body looks at that moment.	0.570	
I feel satisfied about my performance.	0.715	
I feel that I do not have trouble understanding things I undertake.	0.708	
I am not worried about whether I am regarded as a success or failure.	0.669	
I feel satisfied with my weight.	0.712	
I feel as smart as others.	0.807	
I don't feel self-conscious.	0.784	
I feel pleased with myself.	0.821	
I feel confident that I understand things.	0.840	
I am pleased with my appearance at that moment.	0.667	
I am not worried about what other people think of me.	0.648	
I feel good about myself.	0.738	
I feel attractive.	0.688	
I feel I have no inferiority to others at that moment.	0.797	
I am not worried about looking foolish.	0.701	
I feel that I have as much (professional and/or scholastic and/or other) abilities at that moment than others.	0.823	
I feel like I'm doing well.	0.858	
I don't feel concerned about the impression I am making.	0.661	
<b>Self-expression</b>		<b>0.87</b>
Using XYZ gives me my greatest feeling of really being alive.	0.597	
When I use XYZ, I feel more intensely involved than I do with most other cosmetic brands.	0.845	
When I use XYZ, I feel that this is what I was meant to use.	0.835	
I feel more complete or fulfilled when using XYZ, than I do when using most other cosmetic brands.	0.823	
I feel a special fit or meshing when using XYZ.	0.702	
<b>Brand-self distance</b>		<b>0.64</b>
XYZ is far away from me and who I am/ XYZ is very close from me and who I am	0.646	
I am personally disconnected from XYZ/ I am personally connected to XYZ.	0.750	

<b>Brand prominence</b>		<b>0.84</b>
To what extent are your thoughts and feelings toward XYZ often automatic, coming to mind seemingly on their own? (“Not at all” and “Completely”)	0.898	
To what extent do your thoughts and feelings toward XYZ come to mind so naturally and instantly that you don’t have much control over them? (“Not at all” and “Completely”)	0.810	
	Factor Loadings	<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></b>
<b>Social Currency</b>		
<b>Conversation</b>		<b>0.65</b>
I read a lot of positive things about XYZ on the Internet and other media.	0.760	
I hear a lot of positive things about XYZ from people I know.	0.752	
<b>Information</b>		<b>0.88</b>
It is easy to share information and new ideas with other users of XYZ.	0.704	
Through other users of XYZ I get valuable information.	0.890	
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I take the opinion of other users of XYZ seriously.	0.731	
<b>Advocacy</b>		<b>0.81</b>
I feel the need to tell others how good XYZ is.	0.845	
If someone speaks negatively of XYZ I will defend the brand.	0.745	
I have recently recommended XYZ to other people.	0.720	
<b>Utility</b>		<b>0.69</b>
Users of XYZ share values that are important to me.	0.685	
Users of XYZ allow me to be cutting edge and in-the-know.	0.779	
<b>Affiliation</b>		<b>0.84</b>
Through XYZ I feel like a member of a community.	0.840	
I feel a connection to other users of XYZ.	0.800	
I get to know interesting people through XYZ	0.780	
<b>Identity</b>		
I can identify myself well with other users of XYZ.	0.563	
<b>Transformation</b>		

<b>Self-esteem</b>		<b>0.96</b>
When I use XYZ,		
I feel confident about my abilities.	0.670	
I feel satisfied with the way my body looks at that moment.	0.570	
I feel satisfied about my performance.	0.715	
I feel that I do not have trouble understanding things I undertake.	0.708	
I am not worried about whether I am regarded as a success or failure.	0.669	
I feel satisfied with my weight.	0.712	
I feel as smart as others.	0.807	
I don't feel self-conscious.	0.784	
I feel pleased with myself.	0.821	
I feel confident that I understand things.	0.840	
I am pleased with my appearance at that moment.	0.667	
I am not worried about what other people think of me.	0.648	
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I feel attractive.	0.688	
I feel I have no inferiority to others at that moment.	0.797	
I am not worried about looking foolish.	0.701	
I feel that I have as much (professional and/or scholastic and/or other) abilities at that moment than others.	0.823	
I feel like I'm doing well.	0.858	
I don't feel concerned about the impression I am making.	0.661	
<b>Self-expression</b>		<b>0.87</b>
Using XYZ gives me my greatest feeling of really being alive.	0.597	
When I use XYZ, I feel more intensely involved than I do with most other cosmetic brands.	0.845	
When I use XYZ, I feel that this is what I was meant to use.	0.835	
I feel more complete or fulfilled when using XYZ, than I do when using most other cosmetic brands.	0.823	
I feel a special fit or meshing when using XYZ.	0.702	

<b>Attachment-aversion model of customer-brand relationships</b>		
<b>Brand-self distance</b>		<b>0.64</b>
XYZ is far away from me and who I am/ XYZ is very close from me and who I am	0.646	
I am personally disconnected from XYZ/ I am personally connected to XYZ.	0.750	
<b>Brand prominence</b>		<b>0.84</b>
To what extent are your thoughts and feelings toward XYZ often automatic, coming to mind seemingly on their own? (“Not at all” and “Completely”)	0.898	
To what extent do your thoughts and feelings toward XYZ come to mind so naturally and instantly that you don’t have much control over them? (“Not at all” and “Completely”)	0.810	

The indices of social currency, self-esteem and self-expression indicate an acceptable level of convergent validity, since AVEs of all factors were about or higher than 0.5. To test for discriminant validity, correlations between factors were compared with the square roots of the AVEs. It was found that the square root of AVE for each factor was higher than correlations between that factor and other factors, except for the Utility dimension of social currency that demonstrated higher correlations with three other dimensions of social currency (Information, Affiliation and Advocacy), However, and as argued by Jarvis et al. (2003), internal consistency reliability is not necessarily a good indicator for evaluating measures’ effectiveness in formative models. We thus concluded sufficient reliability and validity for our model. The outcomes of convergent and discriminant validities are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5  
Test for Convergent and Discriminant Validity - Study 2**

	<i>AVE</i>	Conversation	Advocacy	Information	Affiliation	Utility	Self-Esteem	Self-Expression	Brand-Self Distance	Brand Prominence
Conversation	<b>.57</b>	<b>.75</b>								
Advocacy	<b>.60</b>	.62	<b>.77</b>							

Information	<b>.65</b>	.56	.72	<b>.81</b>						
Affiliation	<b>.65</b>	.38	.64	.73	<b>.81</b>					
Utility	<b>.54</b>	.53	.77	.93	.99	<b>.73</b>				
Self-Esteem	<b>.54</b>	-.012	.19	.23	.30	.37	<b>.73</b>			
Self-Expression	<b>.59</b>	.32	.60	.46	.60	.65	.42	<b>.77</b>		
Brand-self distance	<b>.49</b>	.46	.65	.50	.63	.61	.27	.57	<b>.70</b>	
Brand prominence	<b>.73</b>	.34	.50	.47	.52	.54	.35	.54	.83	<b>.85</b>

**Note:** Square roots of the AVEs are on diagonal (bold) and correlations among factors are off-diagonal.

### 3.4.2 Test of Hypotheses

To test the full latent model, we used AMOS 19 again. Results demonstrated that the fit indicators of the model were all in the acceptable range: Chi-square= 2077 (DF= 827), GFI= .77, AGFI= .74, RMSEA= .065, TLI= .88, and CFI= .89. Results in Table 6 showed that social currency strongly influenced self-expression and self-esteem, supporting H1 and H2. Furthermore, self-expression showed a strong influence on attachment-aversion relationships while self-esteem had a significant but weaker influence on this construct. Therefore, H3 and H4 were supported. The three dimensions of Advocacy, Identity, and Affiliation were found to be significant indicators of social currency. On the other hand, both dimensions of self-brand distance and brand prominence were found as indicators of attachment-aversion relationships.

**Table 6**  
**Structural Path: Social Currency, Transformational Offerings and Customer-Brand Relationships**

Hypothesis	Hypothetical Path	Beta Coefficient
	Conversation → Social Currency	-0.37

	Advocacy → Social Currency	0.504***
	Information → Social Currency	0.043
	Affiliation → Social Currency	0.513*
	Utility → Social Currency	-0.443
	Identity → Social Currency	0.261**
H1	Social Currency → Self-esteem	0.43***
H2	Social Currency → Self-expression	0.984***
H3	Self-esteem → Attachment-Aversion	0.098*
H4	Self-expression → Attachment-Aversion	0.599***
	Brand-self distance → Attachment-Aversion	0.926***
	Brand prominence → Attachment-Aversion	0.893***

**Note:** \*\*\* significant at  $p < .001$ , \*\* significant at  $p < .01$ , \* significant at  $p < .05$

### 3.5 Discussion and Implications

This study depicts the role of social currency in creation of transformational benefits, and the impact of those benefits on the attachment-aversion model of customer-brand relationships. Data from our survey provide strong support for all hypotheses. The results indicate that social currency positively impacts two transformational dimensions of self-esteem and self-expression. Findings further demonstrate that self-esteem and self-expression both positively impact customer-brand relationships.

Our findings suggest that Advocacy, Affiliation and Identity provide a more significant representation of the social currency construct. Considering that the concept of transformation mostly deals with identity development, it could be concluded that social benefits directly inherent to one's self-concept - such as Affiliation and Identity - play a more solid role in our



model. Indeed, our findings suggest that in the context of cosmetic consumption, actively promoting and sharing thoughts about a brand as well as developing emotional attachment towards other brand users would reinforce the transformational values offered by the brand. Hence, this research supports previous studies that recognized the role of customers' interactions on social media platforms and customer generated content as vehicles of self-expression and self-actualization (e.g. Shao, 2009; Courtois et al., 2009).

Our study revealed that self-esteem has positive but limited impact on customer-brand relationships. Previous studies suggest that a brand's ability to enrich and reinforce one's self-concept leads to meaningful customer-brand relationships (Fournier, 1998; Johnson et al., 2011; Park et al., 2013). Our findings generally support this notion but demonstrate that a brand's ability to bolster one's self-esteem is not a major player in shaping customers' relationships with cosmetic brands. Perhaps this issue originates from consumers' feeling that the beauty standards portrayed by cosmetic brands are mostly inaccessible (Smirnova, 2009). According to the self-enhancement theory, consumers get emotionally attached to a self-enhancing symbol if it allows them to adequately represent their ideal versions of themselves (Mälär et al., 2011; Horcajo et al., 2010; Abel et al., 2013). However, if the brand represents something perceived as way out of reach, customers might experience negative feelings such as jealousy or envy, and consequently distance themselves from the brand (Mälär et al., 2011; Cowan and Dai, 2014). To reduce perceived brand-self distance, brands should thus consider more authentic approaches that would focus on the consumer's true sense of self. To do so, one possible way is to promote ideals that are perceived as realistic promotion of the "actual self", such as the approach of recent Dove campaigns (Mälär et al., 2011). Also, repeated exposures to the brand culture in different environments (e.g. social networks, web site, store environment, etc.) could ease the way consumers authenticate brands. Indeed, constant and repeated exposure to brand related symbols

(e.g. beliefs, values, culture) would facilitate consumers' inferences about the brand, and would lead to customers' higher attachment to those brands that promote values and beliefs consistent with customers' self-concepts (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010).

Our study further reveals the importance of self-expression as a key component of transformation. The relationship between social currency and self-expression was found to be very solid, and the direct effect of self-expression on the AA relationship was also found to be positively significant. In fact, cosmetic brands are used as a means of self-expression and our study reveals that such transformational benefit would lead to greater attachment to the brand. Our findings further confirm the influence of customers' interactions on a person's overall self-concept (e.g. Richman and Leary, 2009). Therefore, managers should make sure that they provide customers with different alternatives to voice their thoughts and opinions about the brand. For instance, different types of reward systems and contests (e.g. pictures with the brand, etc.) could encourage customers to share their experience, thoughts and feelings about the brand. Emphasis could also be put on providing product feedbacks. Furthermore, and since customers mostly tend to socialize with people with whom they share similar interests, brands should also consider addressing sub-groups within the brand community pool (Ouwensloot and Schröder, 2008). Indeed, online social networking would help an individual to validate his/her self-concept in the community (Rose and Woods, 2005). Sub-group members usually share specific customer preferences (e.g. desire for cosmetic trends). Addressing those interests and preferences could facilitate customer's bonding and identification with the community, help him/her achieve higher recognition from peers, and provoke higher levels of attitudinal loyalty towards the brand (Ouwensloot and Schröder, 2008; Marzocchi et al., 2013). Furthermore, our study reveals that transformational benefits lead to greater attachment towards the brand. Accordingly, managers should consider and integrate various symbolic benefits that could potentially provide

opportunities for customer's personal development. By doing so, a brand would offer an opportunity to change one's overall self-concept in various manners, impact one's overall well-being, and thus, create strong and meaningful relationships with its customers.

This study brings a number of contributions to the marketing theory and practice. To the best of our knowledge, this research is the first to explore the links between the two newly developed constructs of social currency and attachment-aversion model of customer-brand relationships. It would thus contribute to the establishments of higher levels of validity for these constructs. The proposed research model reveals how perceived transformational benefits could explain the contribution of social currency to the enhancement of customer-brand relationships. From a managerial perspective, understanding the concept of social currency and developing plans to improve its key dimensions have strategic importance. It is vital for managers to consider the role of customer interaction platforms - in addition to firm-initiated efforts such as firm's website – in development of transformational benefits and creation of superior customer-brand relationships. Lobschat et al. (2013) mentioned that the significant dimensions of social currency might vary according to the type of the industry. Brand managers should therefore continuously adapt their marketing initiatives according to the industry's relative priorities. Our proposed model on the role of social currency in enhancement of transformational benefits suggests that managers should carefully select only those user interaction strategies (i.e. Conversation, Advocacy and Information) that reflect the brand's core identity and market position.

# CHAPTER 4

## STUDY 3

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### 4.1 Study Background

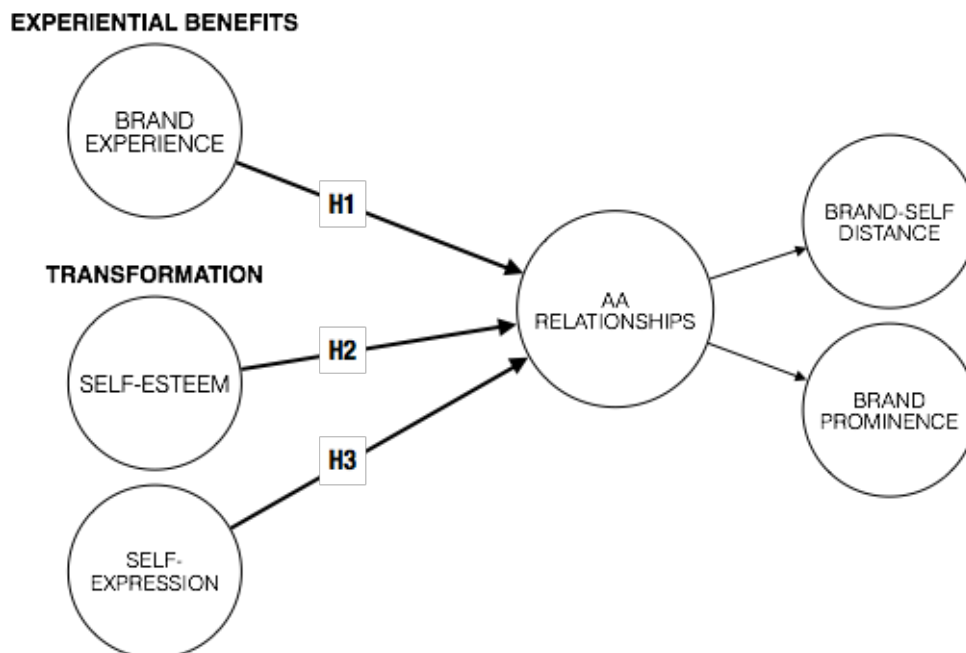
This study aims to investigate and compare the roles of brand's experiential benefits (brand experience) and transformational benefits (self-esteem and self-expression) in enhancement of customer-brand relationships. The study suggests that both brand experience and transformation could lead to brand attachment, and further investigates their comparative impacts in this process. All constructs used in this study are described earlier in studies 1 and 2. In the following, the proposed model of the study is discussed in details.

### 4.2 Model Development

As described previously, due to the newness of the AA model (Park et al., 2013), its relationships with many key variables of consumer behavior have not been much verified yet. Schmitt (2013) recently noted that brand experience could act as a key factor in development of strong customer-brand relationships. He proposed that the four dimensions of brand experience (i.e. sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual) could serve as antecedents of the three determinants of AA relationships, as discussed above. Schmitt (1999), however, did not conduct any empirical study to verify this proposition this proposition. Accordingly, one of the objectives of this study is to take the first step in this regard. Furthermore, we suggest that transformative experiences could also play a fundamental role in shaping AA relationships. This notion is inspired by empirical studies that show the strength of emotional attachments in case of identity-

related brands (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). We believe that the two transformational offerings proposed in this study – i.e. self-esteem and self-expression - could provide further insights to the creation of solid customer-brand relationships. Finally, we aim to compare the predictive power of experiential and transformational aspects of consumption in formation of AA relationships.

**Figure 5**  
**Research Framework - Study 3**



#### 4.2.1 Brand Experience and Customer-Brand Relationships

According to Schmitt (2013), brand experience is essential to understanding the self-based process underlying customers' approach and avoidance relationships with brands. As mentioned earlier, Brakus et al. (2009) refer to brand experience as the sum of subjective sensory, affective, cognitive and behavioral responses induced by the brand-related stimuli. According to these

authors, the strength and intensity of each of the four dimensions of brand experience play fundamental roles in creation of superior customer-brand relationships. Consistent with this notion, past research shows that brands can create meaningful memories through offering hedonic and aesthetic pleasure (e.g. Krishna, 2012) as well as sensory attributes (e.g. Shapiro and Spence, 2002). The salience of the customer-brand relationships depends on how cognitive and affective memories come easily to mind (i.e. brand prominence). Affective experiences, on the other hand, could change individuals' moods and create intense emotions that force them to draw more attention on themselves and less attention on other elements (Schmitt, 1999, 2012). These experiences lead to a combination of arousal and emotional delight, which in turn influence one's brand attachment (Almedia and Nique, 2005; Schmitt, 2012). In addition, brands could create a sense of efficiency and mastery in customers through shifting their attention on goal-directed behaviors (Brakus et al., 2009; Schmitt, 2012; Park et al., 2013). When a brand stimulates a person to take actions and feel in control of his/her life, psychological distance between the self and the brand is reduced (Giles and Maltby, 2004). The self-brand distance would also decrease when customers engage in analytical reasoning, reevaluation of their basic beliefs and values, and review of their past, actual and future aspirations (Escalas and Bettman, 2005; Park et al., 2013). By doing so, a customer engages in a cognitive, problem solving type of experience, which refers to the intellectual dimension of brand experience. Consistent with these notions, Chang and Chieng (2006) found that the five experiential modules of Schmitt (1999) - including SENSE, FEEEL, THINK, ACT, and RELATE - could enhance traditional models of customer-brand relationships.

The potential capacity of cosmetics to improve one's appearance stimulates high involvement of consumers in the entire purchase and usage process (Guthrie and Kim, 2008). Meaningful experiences with cosmetic brands could engage customers both cognitively and

emotionally in a self-based evaluation process similar to the mechanism used in the development of personal relationships (Park et al. 2013; Schmitt, 2013). Based on the above notions, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H1: Brand experience positively affects customer-brand relationships.**

#### 4.2.2 Transformation and Customer-Brand Relationships

Study 2 described in details the impacts of the two transformational offerings, i.e. self-expression and self-esteem, on AA customer-brand relationships. Study 3 compares the role of transformational benefits (self-expression and self-esteem) with that of experiential benefits (brand experience) in the enhancement of customer-brand relationships. The following two hypotheses from study 2 are thus replicated here:

**H2: Self-esteem positively affects customer-brand relationships.**

**H3: Self-expression positively affects customer-brand relationships.**

### 4.3 Methodology

The scales used for the measurement of brand experience, self-esteem, self-expression and customer-brand relationships in study 3 were the same as the ones used previously in study 1 and 2. This study also uses the same data collected for the past two studies.

## 4.4 Results

### 4.4.1 Measurement Model

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS 19 with 5 factors, one factor representing brand experience, one representing self-esteem, one for self-expression, and finally two for the Attachment-Aversion second order construct. One item from the brand experience construct was found to have insufficient loadings (0.4). Moreover, two items, one from the self-esteem construct and one from the self-expression construct, were dropped due to their high-standardized residuals associated with other items in the model. Therefore, three items in total were eliminated and a second confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. This time, all of the remaining items had acceptable factor loadings. Results demonstrated an overall goodness of fit for the measurement model: Chi-square: 1810.37 (DF= 676), GFI= .78, AGFI= .75, RMSEA= .069, TLI= .88, and CFI= .89, were all in acceptable ranges considering the complexity of the model (e.g. Hair et al., 2010; Roussel et al., 2002). The complexity of the model resides in the number of items as well as the use of a second order construct in which each of the two variables were solely measured by two items. Results of CFA and reliability test are shown in Table 7 below.



**Table 7**  
**Results of the CFA and Reliability Test - Study 3**

	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></b>
<b>Brand Experience</b>		<b>0.91</b>
XYZ makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses.	0.560	
XYZ induces feelings and sentiments.	0.657	
I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter XYZ.	0.767	
I have strong emotions for XYZ.	0.815	
XYZ results in bodily experiences.	0.733	
XYZ makes me think.	0.859	
XYZ is an emotional brand.	0.745	
XYZ stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.	0.784	
I find XYZ interesting in a sensory way.	0.591	
XYZ is action oriented.	0.617	
XYZ appeals to my senses.	0.517	
<b>Transformation</b>		
<b>Self-Esteem</b>		<b>0.957</b>
When I use XYZ,		
I feel confident about my abilities.	0.674	
I feel satisfied with the way my body looks at that moment.	0.564	
I feel satisfied about my performance.	0.718	
I feel that I do not have trouble understanding things I undertake.	0.714	
I am not worried about whether I am regarded as a success or failure.	0.675	
I feel satisfied with my weight.	0.712	
I feel as smart as others.	0.787	
I don't feel self-conscious.	0.778	
I feel pleased with myself.	0.816	
I feel confident that I understand things.	0.837	
I am pleased with my appearance at that moment.	0.653	

I am not worried about what other people think of me.	0.652	
I feel good about myself.	0.725	
I feel attractive.	0.660	
I feel I have no inferiority to others at that moment.	0.796	
I am not worried about looking foolish.	0.703	
I feel that I have as much (professional and/or scholastic and/or other) abilities at that moment than others.	0.826	
I feel like I'm doing well.	0.860	
I don't feel concerned about the impression I am making.	0.663	
<b>Self-Expression</b>		<b>0.873</b>
Using XYZ gives me my greatest feeling of really being alive.	0.595	
When I use XYZ, I feel more intensely involved than I do with most other cosmetic brands.	0.842	
When I use XYZ, I feel that this is what I was meant to use.	0.833	
I feel more complete or fulfilled when using XYZ, than I do when using most other cosmetic brands.	0.831	
I feel a special fit or meshing when using XYZ.	0.697	
<b>Attachment-aversion model of customer-brand relationships</b>		
<b>Brand-Self Distance</b>		<b>0.638</b>
XYZ is far away from me and who I am/ XYZ is very close from me and who I am	0.634	
I am personally disconnected from XYZ/ I am personally connected to XYZ.	0.765	
<b>Brand Prominence</b>		<b>0.84</b>
To what extent are your thoughts and feelings toward XYZ often automatic, coming to mind seemingly on their own? ("Not at all" and "Completely")	0.889	
To what extent do your thoughts and feelings toward XYZ come to mind so naturally and instantly that you don't have much control over them? ("Not at all" and "Completely")	0.818	

The indices of brand experience, self-esteem and self-expression indicate an acceptable level of convergent validity, since AVEs of all factors were about or higher than 0.5. To test for discriminant validity, correlations between factors were compared with the square roots of the

AVEs. It was found that the square root of AVE for each factor was higher than correlations between that factor and other factors. The outcomes of convergent and discriminant validities are shown in Table 8.

**Table 8**  
**Test for Convergent and Discriminant Validity - Study 3**

	<i>AVE</i>	Brand experience	Self-esteem	Self-expression	Brand-self distance	Brand prominence
Brand Experience	<b>.495</b>	<b>.70</b>				
Self-Esteem	<b>.534</b>	.32	<b>.73</b>			
Self-Expression	<b>.587</b>	.51	.43	<b>.77</b>		
Brand-self distance	<b>.494</b>	.62	.27	.56	<b>.70</b>	
Brand prominence	<b>.73</b>	.64	.35	.55	.83	<b>.85</b>

**Note:** Square roots of the AVEs are on diagonal (bold) and correlations among factors are off-diagonal.

#### 4.4.2 Test of Hypotheses

To test the full latent model, we used AMOS 19. Results demonstrated that the fit indicators of the model were all in the acceptable ranges: Chi-square= 1813.49 (DF= 678), GFI= .78, AGFI= .75, RMSEA= .069, TLI= .88, and CFI= .89. Results showed that brand experience strongly affects customer-brand relationships, supporting H1. Consistent with H2, self-expression also had a significant impact on customer-brand relationships, but this impact was lower than the impact of brand experience. . On the other hand, the influence of self-esteem on customer-brand relationships, was found to be non-significant (H3 not supported). Results of hypothesis test are presented in Table 9 below.

**Table 9**  
**Structural Path: Brand Experience, Transformational Offerings, and Customer-Brand Relationships**

Hypothesis	Hypothetical Path	Beta Coefficient
H1	Brand Experience → AA Relationships	.509***
H2	Self-Esteem → AA Relationships	.053
H3	Self-Expression → AA Relationships	.318***
---	AA Relationships → Brand-Self Distance	.902***
---	AA Relationships → Brand Prominence	.922***

**Note:** \*\*\* significant at  $p < .001$ , \*\* significant at  $p < .01$ , \* significant at  $p < .1$

## 4.5 Discussion and Implications

This study compares the roles of brand’s experiential benefits (brand experience) and transformational benefits (self-expression and self-esteem) in formation of effective customer-brand relationships. Empirical data from a survey on the cosmetics consumption patterns provided strong support for the majority of our hypotheses. Results show that brand experience and self-expression have significant positive impacts on AA customer-brand relationships. Compared to transformational benefits, brand experience was found to have a higher influence on the AA relationships. Marketers should therefore prioritize creation of enriched brand experiences through methods such as improving consumer involvement (Sullivan et al., 2012), investing on atmospherics (Keng et al., 2007; Nsairi, 2012), and enhancing customer service (Keng et al., 2007; Su, 2011). As Pine and Gilmore (2014) suggest, however, experiential benefits would become less and less effective over time and brands that solely stage experiences will soon become “passé” unless they provide experiences that lead to lasting benefits and personal enrichment. Consistent with this notion, our study found that self-expression benefits

also play a significant role in enhancing AA brand relationships. Managers should therefore provide opportunities for customers to use their brands as a mean of self-expression in both online and offline settings through customer interaction. For instance, online brand communities and sub communities should be used to encourage customers to express themselves and enhance their social selves (Wallace et al., 2014). Different types of reward systems and contests (e.g. pictures with a brand product) could encourage customers to share their experience, thoughts and feelings about the brand once they purchase the brand's product(s). Compared to brand experience, however, self-expression had a lower impact on the AA relationships. Perhaps satiation effect could explain the lesser contribution of self-expression to the formation of effective customer-brand relationships. According to Chernev et al. (2011), the need for self-expression could reach a satiation level that might not be easily recovered. Today, customers have access to many platforms for self-expression such as different forms of social media. Furthermore, an increasing number of brands in recent years have adopted lifestyle positioning (Chernev et al., 2011), which further facilitates self-expression for customers. As a result, brands that mainly emphasize self-expressive benefits constantly struggle for winning a segment of customers' identities (Chernev et al. 2011). It could thus be concluded that self-expression alone would eventually become insufficient for building strong customer-brand relationships. Consistent with human motivation theories (e.g. Weinstein and DeHann, 2014), brands should in these situations focus on deeper transformational benefits - such as self-actualization - in their value propositions.

On the other hand, self-esteem was found to have no significant influence on the AA relationships. This finding might have originated from the study's approach in conceptualization of self-esteem. Indeed, the scale used in this research mainly deals with one's immediate lift in self-esteem following the consumption of cosmetics. This type of self-esteem would mostly arise

from recognitions and appraisals that one would receive from others (Roberts et al., 2014; Cowan and Dai, 2014). The resulting self-esteem, however, is highly fragile and could disappear quickly if, for instance, one realizes that similar compliments are offered to someone else as well (Roberts et al., 2014). Such transitory nature of this type of self-esteem might limit its potential role in shaping strong customer-brand relationships, since formation of solid relationships normally requires consistent stimuli that pertains to one's self concept (Park et al., 2013). This notion is consistent with past studies that show creation of strong customer's attachment with the brand depends on the brand's capacity to provide sensory and aesthetic pleasure in a meaningful way (Shapiro and Spence, 2002; Krishna, 2012), offer opportunities to create a sense of capable self through product performance (Giles and Maltby, 2004; Park et al., 2013), and represent and reinforce different facets of one's self through symbolic representation (Escalas and Bettman, 2005). Although past studies revealed that cosmetics are used to establish and cultivate one's self-concept (e.g. Netemeyer et al., 1995), our study demonstrates that an increase in self-esteem after cosmetic consumption is not consistent. In other words, self-esteem does not necessarily lead to a greater attachment to the brand. Therefore, to make sure that solid customer-brand relationships are formed, managers would need to provide opportunities for frequent customer recognition for long enough after the actual consumption of cosmetic brands. For instance, brands could enhance the quality of online communication by increasing the frequency of information exchange among products users (e.g. encouraging replies to comments) and facilitating their interaction with brand forums (Adjei et al., 2012). Cosmetic brands could also consider opportunities in traditional settings – such as holding events in the point of purchase or holding public events (e.g. The Benefit Cosmetics Make U Laugh Tour) – as part of their continuous efforts to facilitate interactions among customers.

In short, this study revealed for the first time how two important types of brand benefits, i.e. experiential and transformational benefits, could influence one's level of attachment/aversion with the brand. Considering the above described limitations of transformational benefits in building long-term customer-brand relationships, differentiation through experiential benefits (brand experience) might serve as a more effective strategy to build solid customer-brand relationships. This study makes a number of contributions to both theory and practice of marketing. To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first in the literature to investigate the impacts of brand's experiential and transformational benefits on the Attachment-Aversion model of customer brand relationships suggested by Park et al. (2013). Due to the newness of the AA model, very few studies have verified its relationship with other variables of consumer behavior. Therefore, another important contribution of this research is the establishment of higher levels of validity for the newly developed AA model of customer-brand relationships. From a managerial perspective, understanding the differences between experiential and transformational aspects of consumption could be a key to successful brand design and management. Indeed, finding new sources of value for customers is a fundamental challenge in contemporary brand management. As Pine and Gilmore (2014) note, adoption of the rapidly growing experience and transformation concepts could significantly help brands for this purpose.

## **CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION**

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It is essential for brand managers today to understand how social interactions among customers, in both online and real life situations, could influence customers' brand perceptions. In this line, studies 1 and 2 provide an important contribution to the marketing literature as they underline the importance of social currency construct and its role in providing two emerging sources of value for customers, i.e. experiential and transformational benefits. Several scholars have previously acknowledged the importance of brand experience as a key antecedent of brand equity. The significance of customer transformation, on the other hand, has remained mostly unexplored so far. As Pine and Gilmore (1999) expressed, transformations are the only economic offering that could eventually outpace experiences, and thus understanding the potential sources and outcomes of transformations is of crucial importance in brand management.

Certain findings of this thesis deserve to be further highlighted. First, study 1 suggests that Conversation, Advocacy and Affiliation are the three significant dimensions of social currency when it comes to enhancement of brand experience, while study 2 reveals that Advocacy, Affiliation and Identity are the three significant dimensions of the construct in provoking customer transformation. This finding is consistent with the notion of Lobschat et al. (2013) that the significant dimensions of social currency could be context-specific. While experiences deal with creation of memorable events, transformations are mainly valued for their ability to engage customers in identity development (Pine and Gilmore, 2011, 2014). Hence, it seems logical that the amount of information circulating about a brand and the information's likelihood of being easily brought on top of the consumer's mind would have significant impacts on one's experience with the brand. The more customers read and hear about a brand, the more they anticipate their



brand experiences prior to the consumption and the more they would be attentive to it during the consumption process. However, the amount of information circulating about a brand would not be necessarily valued if the brand is not relevant to one's self-concept, individuality or identity development. Therefore, it could be concluded that the importance of different social currency dimensions would vary according to the type of the economic offering in addition to the brand's industry.

Finally, even though the current work supports Pine and Gilmore's idea that transformation is the newest source of customer value, it does by no means suggest that experiential benefits have become obsolete. Indeed, the study 3 compared the roles of brand experience and customer transformation in shaping solid customer-brand relationships, and well revealed that compared with self-esteem and self-expression, brand experience has a higher influence on the AA relationships. It could thus be concluded that the dominant paradigms in today's cosmetics consumption are both the experience and the transformation economies.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

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There are certain limitations that should be considered before applying the findings to our three studies. First, the survey questions were based on participants' favorite brand of cosmetics and what they could remember from their most recent consumption of this brand. Therefore, the quality of the obtained data depends on the richness of information retrieved from respondents' memories. Furthermore, we used self-administered questionnaires, which allow for little correction of possible misinterpretations and confusions. Finally, our study was conducted in a North Western university and the sample might not be representative of the general population. Therefore, it is possible that the importance of certain dimensions of transformational offerings might have altered when not limited to students. For instance, students might use cosmetics as a mean of self-expression, whereas mature women might use cosmetic brands to increase their self-esteem. Another shortcoming of this study might be due to the social context in which the study has been conducted. Collectivism society might attach greater importance to the social value of a brand than Northeastern societies. Therefore, the significant dimensions of social currency might alter depending on the society in which the research is conducted.

Lobschat et al. (2013) suggest, the six dimension of social currency do not necessarily need to covary, or have similar antecedents and consequences. As a potential area for future research, the potential links between each separate dimension of social currency and the four elements of brand experience could be examined. For instance, one could investigate which dimension(s) of social currency would have the greatest impact on intellectual aspect of brand experience. Furthermore, As we are living a transient state between a progressing experience

economy and the emergence of a transformation based economy (Pine and Gilmore, 2014), it is important to consider how transformative experiences can occur. Future research could expand on possible transformative experiences across all industries. For instance, creativity might be important in the technology industry, whereas spontaneity could be an important dimension of transformative experience in the tourism industry. Another topic of research could be to evaluate the moderating effect of involvement in such context. The degree of involvement with cosmetic products might alter or even switch the importance of experiential and transformative experiences. Also, the degree of satiation is an important factor to consider for both brand experience dimensions and transformative dimensions across all industries. In their study on the perils of lifestyle branding, Chernev et al. (2011) assert that customer's need for self-expression is finite, and can be fulfilled through various means (e.g. activities, brands, social media). Therefore, marketers must be cautious when providing opportunities for customers to use their brands as a mean of self-expression. Managers who focus on developing lifestyle branding must put forth other symbolic benefits that could provide opportunities for different aspects of customers' personal development (e.g. creativity). Finally, our study was limited to the cosmetics sector, where the influence of reference group on reflected appraisals is well documented (e.g. Smirnova, 2012). Future research could thus replicate our study in other contexts.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**ENGLISH CONSENT FORM AND QUESTIONNAIRE**

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**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY:  
Experiential and transformational dimensions of cosmetic products**

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Sabrina Trudeau-Hamidi (student) under the supervision of Dr. Saeed Shobeiri, Adjoint Professor of Marketing at University de Sherbrooke.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this research is to identify factors that would enhance customer attachment to cosmetic brands. You will be asked to answer the items of a paper-based questionnaire. There are no right or wrong answers. Results could provide useful information for improvement of customer-brand relationship in the cosmetic industry.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS**

This study might take up to 10-15 minutes of your time. This study will give you an opportunity to experience an example of marketing research. You will be compensated for participating in this study by being entered into a gift card drawing (5 gift cards at \$ 50 value each will be given among the 300 participants) if you complete the questionnaire.

**CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

Your participation to this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at anytime without negative consequences. Results of this study are kept confidential and identities of research participants will not be disclosed. Data from this study may be published, discussed during scientific meetings, and might inspire future research.

**I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I AM AT LEAST 18 YEARS OLD AND I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.**

NAME (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator Sabrina Trudeau-Hamidi (email: Sabrina.Trudeau-Hamidi@USherbrooke.ca). If you wish to receive a copy of the summary of the results, please contact Sabrina Trudeau-Hamidi (contact info above). If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the chair of Research Ethics Board of Université de Sherbrooke, Dr Dominique Lorrain (email: cer\_Ish@USherbrooke.ca, Tel :819 821-8000 #62644)

If you decide to discontinue your participation and demand to have your data destroyed, you have one week to contact the Investigator. The questionnaire will than become anonymous and it will be impossible for the Investigator to identify the participant's questionnaire.



**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE STUDY:**  
**Experiential and transformational dimensions of cosmetic products**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

This study focuses on consumption of cosmetic products. Please think about your favourite brand when it comes to buying cosmetic products for yourself and answer the following questions with that brand - represented by **XYZ** in the following questions - in mind. Please note that a cosmetic product could be any of these items: skin care, perfume, make-up, moisturizers, shaving cream, hair care, nail polish, deodorant, etc.

Q1: What is the name of the brand you are referring to in this study as **XYZ**? \_\_\_\_\_

Q2: When was the last time you purchased **XYZ**? (*X days/X months*) \_\_\_\_\_

Q3: In general, how frequently do you use **XYZ**?

1.  Never    2.  Rarely    3.  Sometimes    4.  Often    5.  Very Often

**SECTION 1**

Using the seven point scale below, please circle the number that best represents your degree of agreement, from “1= Strongly Disagree” to “7= Strongly Agree” with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
1. I read a lot of positive things about <b>XYZ</b> on the Internet and other media.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I hear a lot of positive things about <b>XYZ</b> from people I know.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Other people like me use <b>XYZ</b> .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I feel the need to tell others how good <b>XYZ</b> is.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. If someone speaks negatively of <b>XYZ</b> I will defend the brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I have recently recommended <b>XYZ</b> to other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. It is easy to share information and new ideas with other users of <b>XYZ</b> .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Through other users of <b>XYZ</b> I get valuable information.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
9.	Through other users of XYZ I get to learn something new or fun.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	I take the opinion of other users of XYZ seriously.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	Users of XYZ share values that are important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	Through XYZ I feel like a member of a community.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13.	Users of XYZ allow me to be cutting edge and in-the-know.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14.	I get to know interesting people through XYZ	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15.	I can identify myself well with other users of XYZ.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16.	Other users of XYZ help me to learn and grow as a person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17.	I feel a connection to other users of XYZ.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

<b>SECTION 2</b>
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The following questions are designed to measure how consumption of XYZ <b>makes you feel</b> . The best answer is what you feel is true of yourself when you use XYZ – <b>AT THAT MOMENT</b> .
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Using the seven point scale below, please circle the number that best represents your degree of agreement, from “1= Strongly Disagree” to “7= Strongly Agree” with each of the following statements.

		Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
18.	<u>Using XYZ</u> gives me my greatest feeling of really being alive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19.	<u>Using XYZ</u> gives me my strongest feelings that this is who I really am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20.	<u>When I use XYZ</u> , I feel more intensely involved than I do with most other cosmetic brands.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
21. <u>When I use XYZ</u> , I feel that this is what I was meant to use.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I feel more complete or fulfilled <u>when using XYZ</u> , than I do when using most other cosmetic brands.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I feel a special fit or meshing <u>when using XYZ</u> .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

<b>SECTION 3</b>
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The following questions are designed to measure how consumption of <b>XYZ makes you feel</b> . The best answer is what you feel is true of yourself when you use <b>XYZ – AT THAT MOMENT</b> .
--

Using the seven point scale below, please circle the number that best represents your degree of agreement, from “1= Strongly Disagree” to “7= Strongly Agree” with each of the following statements.

<u>When I use XYZ,</u>	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
24. I feel confident about my abilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. I feel that others respect and admire me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. I feel satisfied with the way my body looks at that moment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I feel satisfied about my performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. I feel that I do not have trouble understanding things I undertake.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. I am not worried about whether I am regarded as a success or failure.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. I feel satisfied with my weight.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. I feel as smart as others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. I don't feel self-conscious.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. I feel pleased with myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. I feel confident that I understand things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

<u>When I use XYZ,</u>	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
35. I am pleased with my appearance at that moment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. I am not worried about what other people think of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. I feel good about myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. I feel attractive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. I feel I have no inferiority to others at that moment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. I am not worried about looking foolish.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. I feel that I have as much (professional and/or scholastic and/or other) abilities at that moment than others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. I feel like I'm doing well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43. I don't feel concerned about the impression I am making.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

<b>SECTION 4</b>
------------------

Using the seven point scale below, please circle the number that best represents your degree of agreement, from "1= Strongly Disagree" to "7= Strongly Agree" with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
44. XYZ holds a special place in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45. Cosmetics hold a special place in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46. XYZ is central to my identity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47. Cosmetics are central to who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48. I feel emotionally attached to XYZ.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49. XYZ helps me narrow the gap between what I am and try to be.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
50.	Cosmetics help me be who I want to be.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51.	If any of my <b>XYZ</b> products were stolen from me I will feel as if a part of me is missing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52.	If I weren't able to use <b>XYZ</b> , I would feel as if a part of me was missing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53.	I would be a different person without <b>XYZ</b> .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54.	I hesitate to loan my <b>XYZ</b> products to others for fear that it will be different when it returns.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55.	I feel betrayed when one of my <b>XYZ</b> products breaks down.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
56.	It is important to me that all my <b>XYZ</b> products are well-maintained.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
57.	I take good care of my <b>XYZ</b> products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
58.	If I decide to get rid of one of my <b>XYZ</b> products, it would be important that it goes to a good home.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
59.	I like to be identified as a cosmetic user.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
60.	I trust <b>XYZ</b> .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
61.	Cosmetics in general are more important to me than any particular cosmetic brand I have owned.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
62.	Even if I need a new cosmetic product like my <b>XYZ</b> one, I will still keep my current <b>XYZ</b> product.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
63.	If one of my <b>XYZ</b> products doesn't work well I feel that <b>XYZ</b> has let me down.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**SECTION 5**

Using the seven point scale below, please circle the number that best represents your degree of agreement, from “1= Strongly Disagree” to “7= Strongly Agree” with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree							Strongly Agree
64. XYZ makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
65. XYZ induces feelings and sentiments.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
66. I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use XYZ.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
67. I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter XYZ.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
68. I have strong emotions for XYZ.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
69. XYZ results in bodily experiences.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
70. XYZ makes me think.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
71. XYZ is an emotional brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
72. XYZ stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
73. I find XYZ interesting in a sensory way.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
74. XYZ is action oriented.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
75. XYZ appeals to my senses.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

**SECTION 6**

Using the 7 points scale below, please circle the number that best represents your feelings about XYZ.

76. XYZ is far away from me and who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	XYZ is very close to me and who I am.
77. I am personally disconnected from XYZ.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	I am personally connected to XYZ.

78. To what extent are your thoughts and feelings toward **XYZ** often automatic, coming to mind seemingly on their own?

Not at all      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Completely

79. To what extent do your thoughts and feelings toward **XYZ** come to mind so naturally and instantly that you don't have much control over them?

Not at all      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Completely

### SECTION 7

Using the numbers below, please circle the closest number to the term that best matches your beliefs about **cosmetics in general**.

To me, **cosmetics** are:

- |     |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                   |
|-----|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| 80. | Unimportant   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Important         |
| 81. | Boring        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Interesting       |
| 82. | Irrelevant    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Relevant          |
| 83. | Unexciting    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Exciting          |
| 84. | Means nothing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Means a lot to me |
| 85. | Unappealing   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Appealing         |
| 86. | Mundane       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Fascinating       |
| 87. | Worthless     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Valuable          |
| 88. | Uninvolving   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Involving         |
| 89. | Not needed    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Needed            |

### SECTION 8

Please answer the following questions or check the item that applies to you.

90. What is your gender? Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

91. Which age group do you belong to?

- |                                      |                                   |  |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Under 20 | 4. <input type="checkbox"/> 30-34 | 7. <input type="checkbox"/> 45-49        |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> 20-24    | 5. <input type="checkbox"/> 35-39 | 8. <input type="checkbox"/> 50 and above |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> 25-29    | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> 40-44 |  |

92. What is your ethnic or cultural background? (Please select one.)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> French Canadian   | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Middle Eastern                      |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> English Canadian  | 7. <input type="checkbox"/> African                             |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> American  | 8. <input type="checkbox"/> Asian (Please specify):             |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> French (France)   | 9. <input type="checkbox"/> _____ Other (Please specify): _____ |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Maghrebien (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Lybia, Mauritania) |   |

93. In general, how frequently do you buy cosmetic products? (Please select one.)

1.  Never    2.  Rarely    3.  Sometimes    4.  Often    5.  Very Often

94. Where would you place yourself on the following scale with regards to consumption of cosmetic products?

Non-user      1          2          3          4          5          6          7          Heavv-user

95. What is your annual income (before tax)?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 19 999\$ | 5. <input type="checkbox"/> 80 000 to 99 999\$   |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> 20 000 to 39 999\$ | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> 100 000\$ and more   |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> 40 000 to 59 999\$ | 7. <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> 60 000 to 79 999\$ |  |

96. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> High school or equivalent            | 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree               |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Technical School or equivalent (DEP) | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral degree               |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Cegep                                | 7. <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify): _____ |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree                    |   |

97. What is your current marital status? (Please select one.)

1.  Single
2.  Common law partner
3.  Married
4.  Divorced
5.  Separated
6.  Widowed



**Thank you very much for your help! If you wish to enter the contest, please fill in the form on the next page.**

**CONTEST FORM**

To be eligible to enter the drawing, please provide the following information. We will use this info to contact you if you win.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX B**  
**FRENCH CONSENT FORM AND QUESTIONNAIRE**

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**FORMULAIRE D'INFORMATION ET DE CONSENTEMENT**  
**Les dimensions expérientielles et transformationnelles des produits cosmétiques**

Ce document vous renseigne sur les modalités d'un projet de recherche dirigé par Sabrina Trudeau-Hamidi (étudiante à la maîtrise en marketing) sous la supervision de Dr. Saeed Shobeiri, Professeur adjoint du département de marketing de l'Université de Sherbrooke.

**RAISON ET NATURE DE LA PARTICIPATION**

L'objectif de cette recherche est d'identifier les facteurs contribuant à augmenter l'attachement des consommateurs aux marques de produits cosmétiques. Votre participation à cette recherche consiste à remplir un questionnaire. Il n'y a pas de bonnes ou de mauvaises réponses. Les résultats peuvent fournir de l'information utile afin d'améliorer la relation entre les consommateurs et les marques cosmétiques.

**AVANTAGES ET INCONVÉNIENTS**

Cette étude peut prendre 10-15 minutes de votre temps. Votre participation contribuera à l'avancement des connaissances entourant ce domaine et vous permettra de vivre une expérience de recherche. En complétant le questionnaire, vous courrez la chance de gagner un certificat-cadeau (5 certificats-cadeaux de 50\$ dans les galeries beauté Pharmaprix tirés parmi les 300 participants à l'étude).

**DROIT DE RETRAIT SANS PRÉJUDICE À LA PARTICIPATION**

Votre participation est tout à fait volontaire et vous restez libre, à tout moment, d'y mettre fin sans avoir à motiver votre décision ni à subir de préjudice de quelque nature que ce soit.

**CONFIDENTIALITÉ, PARTAGE, SURVEILLANCE ET PUBLICATION**

Tous les renseignements recueillis au cours du projet demeureront confidentiels. Seuls les renseignements nécessaires à la bonne conduite du projet seront recueillis. Les données pourront être publiées dans des revues scientifiques, partagées lors de discussions scientifiques et peuvent inspirer de futures recherches.

**JE COMPRENDS LA NATURE ET LE MOTIF DE MA PARTICIPATION AU PROJET. J'AI PLUS DE 18 ANS ET JE CONSENS LIBREMENT À PRENDRE PART À CETTE RECHERCHE.**

NOM (nom en caractères d'imprimerie) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

Si à tout moment vous avez des questions à propos de la nature de ce projet de recherche, vous pouvez contacter la responsable du projet Sabrina Trudeau-Hamidi (email : Sabrina.Trudeau-Hamidi@USherbrooke.ca) ou la présidente du Comité d'éthique de la recherche Lettres et sciences humaines de l'Université de Sherbrooke, Mme Dominique Lorrain (courriel : cer\_Ish@USherbrooke.ca, Tel :819 821-8000 poste 62644)

Dans le cas d'un retrait de participation, si vous voulez la destruction de vos données vous pouvez envoyer un courriel à la chercheuse au plus tard une semaine suivant la réception du questionnaire rempli, après quoi les noms ne seront pas associés aux questionnaires. La chercheuse sera dans l'impossibilité d'identifier l'identité de la personne ayant répondu au questionnaire.

**QUESTIONNAIRE SUR L'ÉTUDE SUIVANTE:  
Les dimensions expérientielles et transformationnelles des produits cosmétiques**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Cette étude porte sur la consommation de produits cosmétiques. S'il vous plaît, répondez au questionnaire en vous basant sur la question suivante: parmi les marques de produits cosmétiques que vous avez déjà achetés, quelle est votre marque cosmétique favorite? La marque à laquelle vous allez vous référer sera représentée par **XYZ** dans les questions suivantes. Veuillez noter qu'un produit cosmétique peut être l'un des produits suivants: soins du visage, parfums, maquillage, lotions pour le corps, produits pour hommes, soins des cheveux, déodorants, vernis à ongles, etc.

Q1: Quel est le nom de la marque **XYZ** à laquelle vous allez vous référer dans le cadre de cette étude ?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q2: À quand remonte le dernier achat de **XYZ** (X jours/X mois)? \_\_\_\_\_

Q3: En général, à quelle fréquence portez-vous **XYZ**?

1.  Jamais    2.                        3.  Parfois    4.  Souvent    5.  Très souvent

**SECTION 1**

À l'aide de l'échelle en 7 points, encerclez le numéro qui correspond à votre niveau d'accord avec chacun des énoncés ci-dessous, où « 1= Fortement en désaccord » et « 7= Fortement en accord ».

		Fortement en désaccord						Fortement en accord
1.	J'ai lu plusieurs commentaires positifs à propos de <b>XYZ</b> sur Internet et dans d'autres médias.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	J'ai reçu plusieurs commentaires positifs à propos de <b>XYZ</b> de la part de gens que je connais.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	D'autres personnes comme moi portent <b>XYZ</b> .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	Je ressens le besoin d'exprimer aux autres à quel point <b>XYZ</b> est une bonne marque.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	Si quelqu'un me dit des commentaires négatifs à propos de <b>XYZ</b> je vais défendre la marque.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	Récemment, j'ai suggéré <b>XYZ</b> à des gens.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Fortement en désaccord					Fortement en accord	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	Il est facile de partager de l'information et des idées nouvelles avec les autres utilisateurs de <b>XYZ</b> .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	Grâce aux autres utilisateurs de <b>XYZ</b> , j'obtiens de l'information pertinente.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	Grâce aux autres utilisateurs de <b>XYZ</b> , j'apprends des choses nouvelles ou amusantes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	Je prends au sérieux l'opinion des autres utilisateurs de <b>XYZ</b> .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	Les utilisateurs de <b>XYZ</b> partagent des valeurs qui sont importantes pour moi.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	Grâce à <b>XYZ</b> , j'ai l'impression de faire partie d'une communauté.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13.	Les utilisateurs de <b>XYZ</b> me permettent d'être à la fine pointe et à l'affût des nouveautés.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14.	Grâce à <b>XYZ</b> , je rencontre des personnes intéressantes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15.	Je m'identifie bien aux autres utilisateurs de <b>XYZ</b> .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16.	Les autres utilisateurs de <b>XYZ</b> me permettent de me découvrir et de me réaliser en tant que personne.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17.	Je me sens lié(e) aux autres utilisateurs de <b>XYZ</b> .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## SECTION 2

Les questions suivantes ont pour but d'évaluer ce que vous ressentez lorsque vous employez **XYZ**. La meilleure réponse correspond à ce que vous ressentez véritablement lorsque vous employez **XYZ – AU MOMENT OÙ VOUS PORTEZ XYZ**

À l'aide de l'échelle en 7 points, encerclez le numéro qui correspond à votre niveau d'accord avec chacun des énoncés ci-dessous, où « 1= Fortement en désaccord » et « 7= Fortement en accord ».

	Fortement en désaccord						Fortement en accord
18. <u>Lorsque je porte XYZ</u> , j'ai l'impression d'être revigoré(e).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. <u>Lorsque je porte XYZ</u> , j'ai vraiment l'impression que cela me permet de représenter qui je suis vraiment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Je me sens beaucoup plus investi <u>lorsque je porte XYZ</u> , qu'avec d'autres marques de produits cosmétiques.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. <u>Lorsque j'utilise XYZ</u> , j'estime que c'est la marque que je devais porter.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. Je me sens plus complet(e) ou accompli(e) <u>lorsque je porte XYZ</u> , qu'avec d'autres marques de produits cosmétiques.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. Je sens que la marque me correspond et concorde avec mes besoins, <u>lorsque je porte XYZ</u> .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### SECTION 3

Les questions suivantes ont pour but d'évaluer ce que vous ressentez lorsque vous employez XYZ. La meilleure réponse correspond à ce que vous ressentez véritablement lorsque vous employez XYZ – **AU MOMENT OÙ VOUS PORTEZ XYZ**

À l'aide de l'échelle en 7 points, encerclez le numéro qui représente le mieux votre niveau d'accord avec chacun des énoncés ci-dessous, où « 1= Fortement en désaccord » et « 7= Fortement en accord ».

<u>Lorsque je porte XYZ,</u>	Fortement en désaccord						Fortement en accord
24. J'ai confiance en mes capacités.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. J'ai l'impression que les autres me respectent et m'admirent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. Je me sens satisfait(e) de l'apparence de mon est corps à ce moment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	<u>Lorsque je porte XYZ,</u>	Fortement en désaccord					Fortement en accord	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27.	Je suis content(e) de mes réalisations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28.	Je sens que je n'ai pas de difficulté à comprendre ce que j'entreprends.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29.	Je ne m'inquiète pas à savoir si l'on me perçoit comme une personne qui a du succès ou non dans sa vie.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30.	Je me sens satisfait(e) de mon poids.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31.	Je me sens tout aussi intelligent(e) que les autres.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32.	Je ne me sens pas complexé(e).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33.	Je suis satisfait(e) de moi-même.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34.	J'estime que je comprends bien les choses.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35.	Je suis satisfaite de mon apparence à ce moment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36.	Je ne me préoccupe pas de ce que les autres pensent de moi.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37.	Je me sens bien avec moi-même.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38.	Je me sens séduisant(e).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39.	Je ne me sens pas inférieur(e) aux autres à ce moment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40.	Je n'ai pas peur d'avoir l'air ridicule.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41.	Je sens que j'ai autant d'habiletés (professionnelles et/ou scolaires et/ou autres) que les autres à ce moment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42.	Je pense que je réussis bien.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	<u>Lorsque je porte XYZ,</u>						
	Fortement en désaccord			Fortement en accord			
43. Je ne suis pas soucieux(se) de l'impression que je donne aux autres.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

#### SECTION 4

À l'aide de l'échelle en 7 points, encerclez le numéro qui représente le mieux votre niveau d'accord avec chacune des énoncées ci-dessous, où « 1= Fortement en désaccord » et « 7= Fortement en accord ».

	Fortement en désaccord			Fortement en accord			
44. XYZ occupe une place importante dans ma vie.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45. Les cosmétiques occupent une place importante dans ma vie.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46. XYZ fait partie intégrante de mon identité.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47. Les cosmétiques définissent qui je suis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48. Je me sens attaché(e) à XYZ.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49. XYZ me permet de réduire l'écart entre qui je suis et celui/celle que je voudrais être.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50. Les produits cosmétiques me permettent de devenir la personne à laquelle j'aspire.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51. Si l'on me volait ou m'enlevait l'un de mes produits XYZ, j'aurais l'impression qu'il me manquerait une partie de moi-même.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52. Si pour une raison quelconque je ne pouvais porter XYZ, j'aurais l'impression qu'il me manquerait une partie de moi-même.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Fortement en désaccord						Fortement en accord
53. Sans <b>XYZ</b> , je serais une personne différente.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54. J'hésite à prêter mes produits <b>XYZ</b> aux autres, par crainte qu'ils soient dans un état différent au retour.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55. Je me sens trahi(e) lorsqu'un de mes produits <b>XYZ</b> est défectueux.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
56. Il est important pour moi de bien entretenir mes produits <b>XYZ</b> .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
57. Je prends soin de mes produits <b>XYZ</b> .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
58. Si je décide de me départir de l'un de mes produits <b>XYZ</b> , il me serait important de savoir qu'il se trouve entre de bonnes mains.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
59. J'aime être identifié(e) comme un(e) consommateur(trice) de cosmétiques.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
60. Je fais confiance à <b>XYZ</b> .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
61. Les cosmétiques en général sont plus importants pour moi que n'importe quelles marques cosmétiques que j'ai déjà eues.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
62. Même si je dois me procurer un nouveau produit comme celui de la marque <b>XYZ</b> , je vais quand même garder ce qui me reste de <b>XYZ</b> .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
63. Si l'un de mes produits <b>XYZ</b> est défectueux, j'aurai l'impression que <b>XYZ</b> me laisse tomber.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## SECTION 5

À l'aide de l'échelle en 7 points, encerclez le numéro qui correspond à votre niveau d'accord avec chacun des énoncés ci-dessous, où « 1= Fortement en désaccord » et « 7= Fortement en accord ».

Fortement en désaccord

Fortement en accord

		Fortement en désaccord					Fortement en accord	
64.	XYZ stimule ma vue et mes autres sens (ouïe, odorat, goût et toucher).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
65.	XYZ éveille en moi des sentiments et des sensations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
66.	Lorsque je porte XYZ, je prends part à des activités physiques.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
67.	Je réfléchis beaucoup lorsque je me trouve en présence de XYZ.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
68.	J'éprouve de forts sentiments envers XYZ.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
69.	XYZ génère des expériences physiques.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
70.	XYZ me fait réfléchir.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
71.	XYZ est une marque émotionnelle.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
72.	XYZ stimule ma curiosité et ma capacité à résoudre des problèmes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
73.	Je trouve que XYZ est intéressante au point de vue sensoriel.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
74.	XYZ est une marque orientée vers des actions concrètes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
75.	XYZ fait appel à mes sens (vue, ouïe, odorat, goût et toucher).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

<b>SECTION 6</b>
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À l'aide de l'échelle en 7 points, encerclez **le numéro qui représente le mieux votre opinion à l'égard de XYZ.**

76. XYZ est très loin de moi et de qui je suis.    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    XYZ est très proche de moi et de qui je suis.

77. Je ne suis pas personnellement lié(e) XYZ. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Je suis personnellement lié(e) à XYZ.

78. Dans quelle mesure vos pensées et vos sentiments à l'égard de XYZ vous viennent-ils automatiquement à l'esprit?

Pas du tout 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Complètement

79. Dans quelle mesure vos pensées et vos sentiments à l'égard de XYZ vous viennent-ils à l'esprit de façon si naturelle et instantanée, que vous ne pouvez pas les maîtriser?

Pas du tout 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Complètement

## SECTION 7

Encerclez le numéro qui **est le plus près du terme** qui correspond le plus à votre opinion concernant **les produits cosmétiques en général**.

Pour moi, **les produits cosmétiques sont**:

- |     |                 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |
|-----|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------------|
| 80. | Sans importance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Importants   |
| 81. | Sans intérêt    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Intéressants |
| 82. | Sans pertinence | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Pertinents   |
| 83. | Ennuyants       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Excitants    |
| 84. | Insignifiants   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Signifiants  |
| 85. | Fades           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Attrayants   |
| 86. | Banals          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Fascinants   |



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Secondaire                  | 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Maitrise   |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> École professionnelle (DEP) | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Doctorat   |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Collégial                   | 7. <input type="checkbox"/> Certificat(s) universitaire(s)<br>supérieur(s) au baccalauréat |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Baccalauréat                |  |

97. Quel est votre état civil?

1.  Célibataire
2.  Conjoint de fait
3.  Marié(e)
4.  Divorcé(e)
5.  Séparé(e)
6.  Veuf

**Je vous remercie énormément pour votre aide. Si vous souhaitez participer au tirage, veuillez remplir le formulaire de participation à la page suivante.**

## FORMULATION DE PARTICIPATION AU TIRAGE

Afin d'avoir la possibilité de gagner l'un des cinq certificats cadeaux d'une valeur de 50\$ dans les **galeries BEAUTÉ Pharmaprix**, veuillez indiquer votre nom et votre adresse courriel. Cette information sera utilisée uniquement pour vous contacter si vous figurez parmi les gagnants.

NOM: \_\_\_\_\_

ADRESSE COURRIEL: \_\_\_\_\_