

Consumer Brand Relation Map - a New Brand Relationship Measurement Model



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Abstract

Building relationships between consumers and brands constitutes a very important aspect of marketing. This is because brand relationships can influence the evaluation of the consumers or even their purchase intention, concerning this brand. Although several concepts exist in the literature that captures some aspects of consumer-brand relationship, brand attachment is the most well-known. In addition, regarding the importance of brand relationship measurement, we developed a new quantitative measurement technique, the Consumer Brand Relation Map (CBRM), in which the participants evaluate more than one brand of the same category, simultaneously. Hence the purpose of the present thesis is the application and validation of CBRM, in order to effectively measure brand attachment. For this reason, we interviewed 50 persons, who were asked to place twelve car brands inside a circle, in a distance from the center, according to their attachment to these brands. The closer the brand to the center, the more attached they are to it. In parallel, each participant answered in a questionnaire comprising questions on their purchase intention, loyalty, and trust (antecedents and consequences of attachment) to some specific brands that they had placed into the circle. The statistical analysis of the results of the CBRM method and the questionnaire showed that there is a positive and significant correlation between them. The last, proves the validation of the our method. The advantages of this method, which are that it is easy to apply, for both the researchers and the participant, it is costless, fast and it provides an abundance of results, makes it a useful measurement method in many other different occasions.

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1. Introduction

In today's world, where there are multiple brands offering similar products to satisfy the same need and hence, competition is inevitable and sometimes unbeatable, it is important for branders to create strong relationships between consumers and their brand. Building relationships constitutes a cornerstone of marketing (Grönroos, 1997), as it can even influence people's general product evaluation and purchase intention (Keller, 1993; Batra et. al, 2012). To be more specific, the traditional approach, which is focusing on the marketing mix elements, is claimed to give less value to a company than a relational approach (Veloutsou, 2007). Consequently, marketers no longer aim to merely satisfy customers, instead they are trying to create more in-depth relationships with them (Hess and Story, 2005). Brand relationship is the repeated interactions between a brand and a customer, and is claimed that it has similar characteristics to peoples' relationship, such as love, connection, interdependence, and intimacy (Mogilner, 2011).

Several concepts have been identified in the literature that captures some aspects of consumer-brand relationship. One of the most commonly used concepts is the *brand attitude*, which is defined as "the degree of positivity or negativity with which a brand is evaluated" (Park et al., 2010, page 1). In other words, it is how positive or negative a consumer's opinion is. Secondly, is *brand attachment*, which is "the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self" (Park et al., 2010, page 2) and according to Batra et al. (2012), in this type of relationship consumers feel the brand as an old friend and build bonds with it. Another phenomenon is *brand love* and it is defined as "the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular brand" (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006, page 81). Subsequently, brand love includes passion, attachment, positive evaluation, and positive emotions for the brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). And lastly, is *brand commitment*, which refers to "consumers' ultimate relationship disposition, encompassing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors toward the brand and their relationship with that brand" (Hess and Story, 2005, page 314).

Among these related concepts, brand attachment is the most prominent one. To be more specific, it has concerned a lot of academic researchers and practitioners in the previous years,

since it is considered as a critical construct (Thomson, 2006; Fedorikhin et al., 2008; Chaplin & John, 2005). Moreover, Fournier (1998) stated that attachment to a brand can evoke feelings as love, and brand-self-identity connection, which strengthen the consumer-brand relationship and consequently increase its durability over time. Subsequently, brand attachment affects behaviors that foster brand profitability and customer lifetime value (Thomson et al., 2005).

Hence, brand attachment is really important for a brand's performance (Thomson et al., 2005) and consequently, branders should be able to build (Fournier, 1998; Keller, 1993; Chang & Chieng, 2006;), manage (Grossman, 1998; Hess and Story, 2005) and measure (Thomson et al., 2005; Veloutsou, 2007) such relationships. With respect to the last function, branders need to be aware of how to measure and evaluate a consumer-brand relationship efficiently, for the reason that an effective measurement technique can even predict a part of consumers' behavior (Park et al., 2010). That being said, measuring these relationships is not less important than building them or managing them. Therefore, branders have to give a lot of attention to the methods and tools that they use in this task, since it offers a lot of information and feedback to managers such as consumers' commitment/ loyalty and their willingness to pay (Thomson et al., 2005).

Because of the importance of brand relationship measurement, many academic researchers tried to address this issue by developing measurement techniques. The most common way to evaluate these relationships is by using Likert Scale (Chang and Chieng, 2006; Thomson et al., 2005; Fedorikhin et al.). However there are measurement models that use different ways to measure the relationship, such as in-depth interviews (Pawle and Cooper, 2006) and focus group technique (Papista and Dimitriadis, 2012; Veloutsou, 2007). Yet, all of the aforementioned models measure the consumer-brand relationship individually, which means between a consumer and a single brand. Consequently, participants evaluate a specific brand within a category, without considering their feelings and evaluations about all the other competitor brands in the same category. According to Art Markman (2020), the most efficient way to evaluate something is to compare it with something else. Taking this into consideration, we can come to the conclusion that in order for a customer to effectively evaluate a brand, it is paramount to compare it with other brands of the same category.

For this reason, by making allowance the aforementioned, we developed a new quantitative measurement technique, the Consumer Brand Relation Map (CBRM), in which the participants evaluate more than one brand of the same category, simultaneously. To be more precise,

participants express their attachment to a specific brand by comparing it with their attachment to the competitor brands. All these are happening by using distances, which represent the degree of relation between the respondent and the brand, as it is explained in the third chapter. Specifically, the measure technique of CBRM is close to the concept of slider scales, which means that it can capture the differences between someone's attachment with the brands in more detail than Likert Scale does. For this reason, and in combination with the comparison technique, it can provide a more complete evaluation of consumers' attachment to a specific brand.

Consequently, this thesis focuses on developing and validating the CBRM method. For this reason, we formed a questionnaire, which measures the purchase intention (consequence of brand attachment) (Ercis et al., 2012), trust (antecedent) (Mikulincer, 1998; Fedorikhin et al., 2008) and loyalty (consequence of brand attachment) (Fournier and Yao, 1997) of the respondent to a specific brand. By comparing our method's outcome with the questionnaire's outcome, we want to prove that CBRM's result is valid. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is:

“Developing and validating the Consumer Brand Relation Map (CBRM) method”

This new method will include an effective brand relationship measurement technique in the literature, which can aid not only the future academic researchers, but also industries and managers, since CBRM constitutes an innovative tool with a lot of potential. Apart from that, this method presents a completely new way of measuring, which will stimulate researchers to further explore and develop this measure technique. Also, because this study presents a real application of CBRM, as well as the exact steps of the technique and the necessary information of how to conduct it, marketers can observe and further understand its effectiveness and convenience. To be more specific, CBRM is really easy to use, both for the researcher and the participant, and provides a lot of different information within one application.

To sum up, in the present article, (a) we developed CBRM, a new and alternative technique to measure consumer-brand relationship, and (b) we demonstrated its validity by comparing the outcomes of CBRM in the attachment relationship, with the outcomes of valid questionnaires concerning trust, which is an antecedent of brand attachment, and brand loyalty and purchase intention, which are brand attachment consequences.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Consumer-Brand relationship

The need for relationship development was there even before the brand concept. Specifically, it has been stated that customers used to build relationships with the retailers since they offered credit, barter, and the necessary assortment of goods in a convenient location (Webster 2000). Today, when countless brands exist to satisfy the same need, individuals are still developing relationships with some specific brands in order to reduce their choice set (Sheth and Parvatiyar 1995). Therefore, it can be argued that consumers do develop relationships with brands.

The traditional approach of marketing, which focuses on the marketing mix elements alone, is not giving as much value to a company as the previous years. Thus, more and more companies are turning their attention to the relational approach and aim to develop relationships with their customers, in order to increase their commitment and loyalty (Veloutsou, 2007). According to Grossman (1998) and O'Malley and Tynan (2000), relationship marketing is a long-term process consisting of long-term transactions, which lead to emotional or social bonds with consumers.

2.1.1. Consumer-Brand Relationship Development

One crucial part of this long-term process is the relationship development. In order for a relationship to exist, it is important for each partner to feel attraction to the other (Grossman, 1998). To further explain, from the first stage of a relationship, individuals are exchanging information to make themselves attractive to the partner and also to get to know each other. Following the same line of thought, in marketing relationships, firms try to make themselves attractive to consumers so that they will purchase their products. On the other hand, consumers can also attract a brand. To be more precise, consumers that have the ability and willingness to purchase are considered as viable targets and thus, are more attractive to branders. Although consumers have less reasons to make themselves attractive to a brand, sometimes they benefit from this relationship since firms are willing to investigate their 'wants' and 'needs' and provide them with tailored products and services (Grossman, 1998).

Another way for a brander to motivate consumers to build a strong relationship with its brand is to invest in a strong brand identity, which will naturally contribute to this relation development (Blackston 1992; Aaker and Fournier 1995). Particularly, because brands are

perceived as having their own personality, (Blackston 1992; Fournier 1998), consumers treat them as “an active contributing partner in a dyadic relationship that exists between the person and the brand” (Veloutsou, 2007, page 12). Customers can think of brands as characters and relate with them (Veloutsou, 2007). For example, according to Rook (1985), some consumers think of the brands as if they are celebrities and develop relationships with them, which can be in different dimensions. These relationships can be long term or short term, public or private, formal or informal, and symmetric or asymmetric (Fournier 1998). Another important argument is that a stable brand personality will reduce the risk that buyers feel every time they purchase the brand (Veloutsou, 2007). As a result, customers’ trust and satisfaction will increase, and in combination with the customer’s feeling that the brand supports their needs, they will develop a strong bond with the brand (Veloutsou, 2007).

2.1.2. Consumer-Brand Relationship Management

Furthermore, after the relationship has been developed, it is critical to maintain and further improve these relationships with the customers (Teng & Huang, 2016). In fact, marketers often spend a lot of time and effort thinking how to gain new customers, and not take into account the value of their current customers. This can damage the firm as, according to The National Retail Merchants Association, businesses lose approximately 20 percent of their customers each year (Grossman, 1998). Also it has been stated that 65 percent of a company’s business comes from its current customers, and the cost to gain new customers is five times the cost to service the existing ones (Vavra, 1992). In spite of this, new customers will need a lot of time to reach the values of the current customers. Hence, it is vital to take care of them since 91 percent of the disappointed customers will never purchase from the same company again and will make sure to communicate their dissatisfaction to at least nine people (Vavra, 1992). Therefore, as Grossman (1998) noted, “managing relationships with current customers is key to long-term firm success” (page 31).

Consequently, to effectively manage the consumer-brand relationship, firms should motivate the consumers to maintain this relationship. In other words, managers should inspire the feeling of satisfaction, trust and commitment to the customers in order to increase their loyalty (Ballantyne et al., 2006) and hence continue their relationship with the brand. According to Ercis et al. (2012), a satisfied customer will repurchase a brand and will share it’s positive experience with others. As a consequence, after many purchases of the same brand, the customer is considered highly committed, and this type of customers have limited desire to

seek out alternatives (Grossman, 1998). Apart from this, firms should build trust in the relationships with their customers in order to decrease the feeling of risk. To be more specific, trust is defined as the “degree of confidence one feels in a relationship” (Grossman, 1998, page 31) and it is believed that it is a crucial element in all human interactions (Grossman, 1998). Subsequently, when the customers are satisfied with a brand, they show their commitment by continuously buying the brand, and in combination with the feeling of trust, they become loyal (Ballantyne et al., 2006).

2.2. Different Phenomenon of Consumer-Brand Relationship

Although consumer-brand relationship has been of concern to many researchers for many years, it is still being considered as a vague concept. As a result several other concepts of relationship exist with a lot of similarities but still different from each other. The most common phenomena presented in the literature are Brand Attitude, Brand Attachment, Brand Commitment, and Brand Love.

2.2.1. Brand Attitude

Brand attitude is a psychological construct that shows “the degree of positivity or negativity with which a brand is evaluated” (Park et al., 2010, page 1). Subsequently, when a consumer has a positive or negative attitude towards a brand, means that it has a positive or negative opinion for that brand (Park et al., 2010), which can be developed without any direct contact or experience with it (Thomson et al., 2005). Also, consumers can have a favorable attitude to more than one brand, despite whether they are important for their lives or not (Thomson et al., 2005). Furthermore, attitude ranges from weak to strong and from negative to positive. That means that the valence of the attitude is continuum from strong-negative, to weak-negative, to weak-positive, to strong-positive. Lastly, brand attitude has implications for customers’ behavior such as purchase of the brand, repurchase, and brand recommendation. Specifically, both positive and negative ends of brand attitude can predict opposite consumer behaviors such as purchase intention and purchase avoidance (Park et al., 2010)

2.2.2. Brand Attachment

The most prominent concept is the brand attachment, which is defined as “the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self” (Park et al., 2010, page 2). As the individuals can be

attached to another person, they can also develop emotional attachment for objects, marketplaces, and brands (Fournier, 1998; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). The emotional attachment construct was created by Thomson et al. (2005), and it was based on Bowlby's seminal work in psychology, in 1977 (Sciarrino, 2014). According to Fournier and Yao (1997), customers can be attached to more than one brand in the same category, as long as they had an interaction with it in the past (Veloutsou, 2007), and also the customer feels satisfied and trust for it (Hess and Story, 2005). However, the number of brands that the customer is attached to, is usually small, but these brands are considered as profound and significant (Ball & Tasaki, 1992)

Furthermore, individuals who are strongly attached to a brand, feel that it is irreplaceable. To be more specific, attachment development is a time dependent process (Baldwin et al., 1996) that generates the feeling of a strong bond, which makes it possible for the consumers to present specific behaviors such as relationship maintenance (brand loyalty) and separation distress (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Thomson et al., 2005). This is happening because one of the two critical factors that reflect the conceptual properties of brand attachment, is brand-self connection (Mikulincer et al., 2001), with which the individuals develop a sense of unity with the brand, that renders them partially dependent (Chaplin & John, 2005).

In particular, Park et al. (2010) observed that both 'brand-self connection' and 'brand prominence' are critical indicators of emotional attachment:

Brand-self connection:

It is "the cognitive and emotional connection between the brand and the self" (Park et al., 2010, page 2). To be more specific, one part of attachment consists of a strong bond of the brand with the consumer, with which the brand is considered as part of the self (Chaplin and John, 2005). The individuals experience a sense of oneness with the brand that urges them to develop cognitive links with it (Thomson et al. 2005), which have as a result the generation of complex feelings such as sadness and anxiety from brand separation, happiness from brand proximity, and pride from brand display (Park et al., 2010). Additionally, consumers are connecting with a brand because it is important for achieving some goals, or addressing personal concerns (Mittal, 2006), or because it represents who they are (Park et al., 2010).

Brand prominence:

It has been observed that positive memories about the attached object are more prominent for the individuals who are highly attached to the object than for individuals who are weakly attached to that object (Mikulincer, 1998). To be more specific, brand prominence reflects “the salience of the cognitive and affective bond that connects the brand to the self” (Park et al., 2010, page 2), and this salience depends on how easy it is for the individual to bring brand-related thoughts and feeling in its mind, and how frequently this is happening. To further explain, if a consumer has the same degree of brand-self connection with two different brands, then it’s attachment is greater for the brand that it is perceived as more prominent (Park et al., 2010).

According to Thomson et al. (2005), brand attachment is correlated with brand attitude, since it involves the positive opinion towards a brand. To further explain, an individual who is emotionally attached to a brand, usually holds a favorable attitude towards it. Apart from that, both phenomena influence consumption behaviors such as brand purchase intention, repeat purchase, and willingness to recommend the brand. Nevertheless, brand attachment and brand attitude are regarded as different constructs because they differ in several fundamental aspects (Park et al., 2010): 1) The attachment ranges only from strong to weak. To be more precise, there is no negative attachment as there is (strong or weak) negative (or positive) attitude towards a brand. 2) There is a difference in their motivational power, because attachment has emotional and self-implications that have a great influence on consumers’ behavior. In contrast, favorable attitudes do not necessarily link the object to the self and the self-concept (thomson et al. 2005), thus it has less influence on behaviors. 3) There is a difference in strength. Strong attachment means a strong bond that connects the brand with the self, whereas, strong attitudes means a strong person's judgment of the brand. And 4) attachment is highly time dependent (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2003), where attitude need not be, and for this reason attachment may show a more advanced stage of relationship development (Park et al., 2010).

2.2.3. Brand Commitment

Another phenomenon of relationship is the variable of commitment, which represents the desire and intention of the consumer to maintain the relationship (Rusbult, 1983). To be more specific, we use the term “commitment” to refer to “consumers’ ultimate relationship disposition, encompassing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors toward the brand and their relationship with that brand” (Hess and Story, 2005, page 314). Furthermore, commitment has been considered as an

important determinant variable in successful marketing relationships (Sung and Campbell, 2009), which derives from a combination of personal and functional characteristics of developing these relationships (Hess and Story, 2005). To further explain, reciprocal and enduring satisfaction result in the formation of functional connections between the consumer and the brand, which promotes a shallow relationship that, relies on utility and reliability. On the other hand, trust results in a personal connection with the brand, which promotes deeper relationships that go beyond utility and reliability. Thus, the combination of personal and functional connections determines the level of customer commitment (Hess and Story, 2005).

Regarding the correlation between attachment and commitment, it has been mentioned that commitment constitutes an active choice, where attachment on the other hand is a passive outcome (Dossa, 2016). In fact, as it has been declared before, commitment is a conscious decision to maintain a relationship, whereas attachment is the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self. According to Rusbult (1983), brand commitment can include feelings of attachment and brand attachment involves commitment. Duemmler and Kobak (2001) stated that the two constructs can also be perceived as interrelated processes that build one another. However, in their article they are focusing on the correlation between commitment and ‘attachment security’, which is the appraisal that the object (partner, brand etc) is a safe haven and secure base. Because of this, they found that the development of attachment security is more dependent on commitment than commitment is dependent on attachment security.

2.2.4. Brand Love

Brand love is “the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular brand” (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006, page 81), and according to Fournier (1998), is one of the core elements of consumers’ relationships with brands. As a matter of fact, consumers that experience brand love are found to present relationship stability (brand loyalty), positive Word of Mouth, resistance to negative information, and willingness to pay a higher price to get it (Batra et al., 2012). According to Richins (1994), the loved brands apart from the wide variety that they provide, such as entertainment, relaxation, comfort, and so on, they are also called to provide deeper connections in order to be more likely to be loved, such as self-actualization, existential meaning, religious identities, or cultural identities. Furthermore, an important difference between this phenomenon and attitude is that brand love contains passion and goes beyond brand attachment (Thomson et al., 2005) and self-brand connections (Batra et al., 2012).

In conclusion for brand love, Batra et al. (2010) found that the prototype of brand love includes seven distinct elements. First is the passion-driven behaviors, which reflects a strong desire to use the brand, to invest resources into it, and the history of already having done these. Second is the self-brand integration, which includes the brand's ability to express consumers' actual and desired identities, its ability to connect to life's deeper meanings and provide intrinsic rewards, and also frequent thoughts about the brand. Third is the positive emotional connection that is broader than just positive feelings, including a sense of positive attachment and the feeling of rightness. Fourth is the separation distress. Fifth is the long-term relationship with the brand, which includes predicting extensive future use and a long-term commitment to it. Sixth is the positive attitude, which plays a really important role in brand love. And lastly, seventh is the high certainty and confidence of the consumer towards the loved brand.

2.3. Measurements of Consumer-Brand Relationship Concepts

Apart from building and managing customer-brand relationships, it is of high importance for branders to be able to measure these relationships (Thomson et al., 2005). A valid measure can predict consumers' commitment to a brand, such as their purchase intentions, their loyalty, and their willingness to pay a premium price to obtain it (Thomson et al., 2005). However, after examining the existing literature, it is surprising to see that the number of measurement researches is rather limited. In fact, we discover only a few quantitative instruments in the literature to assess the strength of the relationship, which could vary for different individuals and different product categories (Veloutsou, 2007).

In addition, in the existing consumer-brand relationship measurement studies, the researchers are using different methods of measuring the relationship. In particular, they were researchers who tried to evaluate the relation by conducting in-depth interviews with their participants (Pawle and Cooper, 2006), some other researchers did focus group research (Papista and Dimitriadis, 2012; Veloutsou, 2007), and other researchers, which were the majority, used likert scale questionnaires (Dawes, 2008; Hinkin, 1995; Chang and Chieng, 2006; Thomson et al., 2005; Fedorikhin et al., 2008; Ball and Tasaki, 1992). Although all of the methods have been validated and return similar important information, each of them is different and it has its own advantages and disadvantages:

2.3.1. In-depth Interviews

In-depth interview is a qualitative technique that offers the opportunity to the interviewer to have a face-to-face interaction with a participant and get to know its opinion about a topic (Morrison et al., 2002). It is advised that these interviews are conducted in a location where the behavior of interest occurs. In fact, natural settings are preferred over artificial ones (Morrison et al., 2002). Moreover a qualitative interview usually lasts between 30 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the time required for the participant to express all its thoughts, and for the interviewer to have a sufficient opportunity to hear all the things that the respondent has to share (Morrison et al., 2002).

As all the techniques, in-depth interviews have some advantages and some disadvantages (Sociology Group, 2019). A main advantage of this technique is that it provides flexibility to the interviewer. This is true because the interviewer can change the topic, or remain on it, change the order of the questions, and gently lead the discussion. Another advantage concerns the response rate. The percentage of people that responds to the questions of the research is larger (if not 100%) than the response rate of an email, questionnaire etc. Apart from that, people that are unable to write or read are also able to answer the questions. Additionally, during the interview, the interviewer can observe and evaluate non-verbal behaviors from the respondents, which can support or complete its answers to the questions.

As regards the disadvantages of the interview technique, it is a high cost method that consumes a lot of time not only in the preparation part, but also in the interviewing process. Secondly, since it is a face-to-face technique, it can cause biases. To be more specific, the responses of the participant can be influenced from the gender, the age, the race etc. of the interviewer. Moreover, the lack of anonymity can also influence the participant's response and especially when their thoughts are not considered socially accepted. Another drawback is that although the response rate is really high, it is difficult for the researcher to reach a lot of responses compared to a questionnaire. This is happening because, as we already mentioned, it is a high time-consuming technique, which makes it difficult for an interviewer to make many of them, and also, it is difficult to find a lot of people that are willing to give their time for this. Lastly, "interviewing is extremely demanding intellectual work, since it requires the ability to maintain a single focus of thought for several hours while formulating probes and follow-up questions at the same time" (Morrison et al., 2002, page 47) .

2.3.2. Focus Groups

Focus group is a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by a researcher (Morgan, 1996). To be more specific, the focus group is a qualitative technique based on an apparently informal discussion among a group of people, and it is suitable to obtain new answers and unexpected opinions (Acocella, 2012). Moreover, a moderator is leading the discussion of the group according to the characteristics of the participants, and an observer is observing and noting non-verbal behaviors and non-verbal information emerging from the interaction (Sim and Waterfield, 2019). Generally, the main aims of focus groups are: 1) to facilitate the interaction among the participants, and 2) to maximize the collection of high quality information in the little time available (Acocella, 2012). In order to facilitate the interaction, it is important that the moderator will be able to develop a comfortable environment, where the participants will feel free to express their opinions. For the same reason, it is believed that the discussion should be among people who share similar interests and who feel equal to each other (Acocella, 2012).

However, focus groups, as a technique, have some advantages and some disadvantages. Regarding the advantageous side of focus groups, it is argued that it is an effective method for investigating complex behaviors and motivations (Morgan, 1996). In fact, this kind of research provides explanations and comprehends processes by allowing flexibility, which helps in evolving the research process, and consequently generate richer data and useful insights (Papista and Dimitriadis, 2012). Also, the information generated by the discussion can be multiplied. In particular, the group synergy can support the production of many different positions in a topic, as well as, stimulate participants to remember forgotten or unconsidered thoughts (Acocella, 2012). Furthermore, another advantage of focus group technique is the benefit of the ability to observe the extent and nature of interviewees' agreement and disagreement, which provides a lot of information (Morgan, 1996). Apart from that, peer pressure can support honest revelation and spontaneous input by the participants. This can happen because in the sound of other people's experiences, individuals are motivated to expand and refine their own ideas and perceptions on the topic (Papista and Dimitriadis, 2012). Lastly, the focus group is considered as an easy to organise technique, with a low cost (Acocella, 2012).

With regard to the drawbacks of this technique, a common issue is the different use of the same word by the participants. This is a cognitive problem that can emerge during the process, and

cause semantic dispersion (Acocella, 2012). In particular, this problem can multiply according to the number and type of participants and make the communication imperfect. If this aspect is not taken into account, the results may have low levels of reliability and quality. Another problem that can emerge during the information collection is the decrease of free production of ideas, when participants are asked to share a set of information that is only individually possessed (Acocella, 2012). Actually, it has been highlighted that the quality of individual performance decreases as the number of participants increases (Acocella, 2012). In these situations, it is quite common that the participants are afraid of being judged from the rest, or disappoint their expectations, and consequently conform to the most popular opinion in the group, as it is considered socially accepted. Lastly, another disadvantage of focus groups, compared to interviews, is that when the moderator tries to guide the group discussion, it results in disrupting the interaction between the participants, which was the point of the group in the first place (Morgan, 1996).

2.3.3. Likert Scale

The Likert Scale is a psychometric measurement of people's attitudes, beliefs and opinions. To be more specific, in each question respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement by way of an ordinal scale (Likert, 1932). An example of the Likert scale responses is: strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, strongly agree. This example is a 5-point Likert scale, which is one of the most commonly used scales. In fact, the range of possible responses for a scale can vary to 5- or 7-point, which are the most common, or even 10- or 11-point scales, which are less frequently used (Dawes, 2008). Moreover, Likert scale is a non-comparative scaling technique, which is primarily used in questionnaires and it constitutes one of the most widely used tools in marketing research (Dawes, 2008).

Generally, Likert scale is the most universal method for survey collection, therefore it is easily understood (Lamarca, 2011). To be more specific, the responses are easily quantifiable and analysts can elaborate the data with less effort and less risk of errors. Apart from the analysts, this method favors respondents as well, since it does not require them to take a stand on a particular topic by answering a concrete yes or no, but allows them to respond in a degree of agreement (Likert, 1932). Furthermore, Likert scale provides neutral options to the respondents in case they are undecided or unaware. Lastly, Likert scale is a quick, efficient and inexpensive method for data collection. It has high versatility and can be sent out through internet text, e-mail, or given in person (Lamarca, 2011).

Although this method has a lot of advantages, it also has some disadvantages as well. In particular, an individual's attitude for a particular item exists in a multi-dimensional continuum. Nevertheless, the Likert scale is unidimensional, which means that it measures a single trait (Dawes, 2008). Additionally, the response options are only 5 to 11 choices and the distance between these choices is not equal (Likert, 1932). Apart from that, it is not possible to evaluate the responses that are between these choices and therefore, it fails to measure the true attitudes of respondents (Lamarca, 2011). Furthermore, according to Dawes (2008), it has been proved that data characteristics change according to the number of scale points used. That means that a 5-point scale can have different results from a 7-point scale. Another issue is that it is not unlikely that peoples' answers will heavily concentrate on one response side (agree/ disagree). And also, people often avoid choosing the "extremes" options on the scale (strongly agree/ disagree) even if the extreme choice would be the most precise (Lamarca, 2011).

The existing measurement methods in the literature are using one or more of the aforementioned techniques (In-depth interview, Focus groups, Likert scale). For example, Thomson et al. (2005) developed a technique that measures consumers' attachment to a brand by using a 7-point rating scale. Specifically, 68 students were asked to identify a brand that they feel strongly attached to, and rank their degree of agreement or disagreement with respect to the question "the extent to which the following words describe your typical feelings towards the brand". Furthermore, respondents could also add their personal words for the brand apart from the given list, in order to have the opportunity to express all of their thoughts about it.

However, a common characteristic of all the existing measurement techniques is that they evaluate the consumer-brand relationship 'individually', which means between a consumer and a single brand (Thomson et al., 2005; Papista and Dimitriadis, 2012; Veloutsou, 2007). To further explain, participants are evaluating a specific brand within a category, without considering their feelings and evaluations about all the other competitor brands in the same category. Although, this comparison is possible to happen if the questionnaire or the interviewer ask for it, it would be difficult to include many competitors. Also, according to Art Markman (2020), the most efficient way to evaluate something is to compare it with something else. Consequently, we can say that in order for a customer to make an effective and complete evaluation of the brand, it is important to compare it with competitor brands of the same category.

3. Consumer-Brand Relation Map (CBRM)

In the present research we developed a measurement method, which we named Customer-Brand Relation Map (CBRM), in order to cover the aforementioned need. To be more precise, CBRM is a quantitative technique that we inspired by the Brand Concept Map (BCM) (John et al., 2006), and can be used to evaluate the relation between the participant and the brands of a specific category. In fact, it is a relatively easy technique that can take place in a single interview and capture the complexity of the consumer-brand relationship in a playful, efficient, and user-friendly way. Also, the CBRM, measures this relationship by comparing it with the relationships that the participant has with the competitor brands of the same category. And according to Art Markman (2020), the competition is the factor of the most importance to efficiently evaluate performance, which in our case is the attachment.

Apart from that, another advantage of this technique is that it uses a scale similar to the slider scale, which provides more detailed information than a Likert scale does. To further explain, CBRM uses distances as a measurement method, which is computed in centimeters and millimeters, and provides the detailed difference of the position of a specific brand with the positions of the other brands. In fact, this way of answer enables the participants to express more precisely their opinions, and the result of the thesis will be more finely grained (Dobronte, 2012)

Regarding the “complexity” of the consumer-brand relationship, we used that word to emphasize the different relationships that are going on in the consumer’s mindset, simultaneously. The first relationship is between the consumer and the brand. This relationship is not dependent on the competition, which means that it shows the degree of the relation between them, without taking into account the competitor brands. The second relationship is the comparison of the relationship of the participant with a brand, and the participant with another brand. In this case, the brand is considered further or closer than another brand, to the consumer. And the last relationship is between the brands. This relation does not take into account the relationship between the consumer and the brand, but only the relation between a brand with the competitor brands. This shows the participant’s perceived correlation between the brands.

Description of the method

The CBRM method provides a map showing the perceived network of relationships between the brands and the participant. This technique has four main steps: 1) preparation, 2) mapping, 3) insight creation, and 4) analysis (Appendix 1, Image 1).

Preparation

Firstly, it is important for the interviewer to explain the tasks to the respondent in order to fully understand the process, and be aware of the steps that will follow. After that, the interviewer presents an example of a different product category to the participant to further explain and clarify the mapping step that follows. The example has to be in a different product category in order not to bias the response of the individual. Thereafter, the interviewer announces the product category of the research to the participant, and asks him/her to write down the brands that come to their mind. The decision of not providing a list with brands to the individuals is because the investigation of brand awareness is part of the process. Consequently, the interviewer should note the order in which the brands are written down (order of elicitation) during the mapping step.

Mapping

In this step, a circle-shaped paper with a “ME” tag on the center is given to the participants (Appendix 2, Image 1), and they are requested to position the brands of the category anywhere on the paper. The “ME” tag represents the respondent and the choice of the shape and the position of the tag is because we wanted to standardize the maximum distance for each possible brand that it has been mentioned. Hence, the strength of the relation between the consumer and the brand is being displayed by the distance of the brand from the “ME” tag. The closer a brand is placed to the tag, the more intense the relation is. Apart from that, the respondents should keep in their mind that they have to place the brands not only compared with the “ME” tag, but also compared to the other brands. The closer the brands are to each other, the more correlated to consumer’s mind. For example, two or more brands can be positioned really close to each other, which means that the participant considers these brands as similar. On the other hand, it is possible for an individual to place two brands in the same distance from the “ME” tag, but far away from each other. This could mean that the participant is equally attached (in our case) to both brands, but he/she considers them as totally different brands.

Insight Creation

For further information gathering and also clarification, the interviewer can ask the participant questions concerning the positioning. These questions can vary as the researches are different, but a good example could be: ‘Why did you place this brand close to you/far from you?’, ‘These two brands are very close to/far from each other, can you tell us why?’ In the next step, the interviewer measures all the distances of brands from the “ME” tag, as well as, the distances from the other brands. These distances are the participants' responses and it is important to be stored for further analysis. Also, a photo of the paper is a good way to restore the whole interaction. The last step of insight creation is the obtaining of participants' demographics. This step can support the analysis in further investigations, as a group or segment analysis. The demographic questions are chosen to be at the end of the mapping process, in order not to tire the participants with these questions.

Analysis

For the analysis process, all of the data (demographics, brands, and distances) should be input in a formula that will help the researcher answer its research question. An example of formula could be an excel or SPSS environment. Having the number of the distance of a specific brand from the “ME” tag, researcher is already provided with the degree of the relationship between the respondent and the brand (in our case, the attachment). However, it is possible to calculate the average distance of the brand from more candidates. This can have as a result the approximate distance of the brand from a group of candidates that share common characteristics. Apart from that, the researcher can compare the distance of a specific brand from the tag, and the distance of a competitor brand from the tag, and draw a conclusion about which marketing techniques is better. Lastly, another possibility for the analyst, is to investigate the distance of a specific brand from the other brands and try to explore how can differentiate the brand from the other brands (be far from the other brands on the paper), and at the same time be close to the consumer (“ME” tag). Generally, the aim of the brand is to be as close as possible to the consumer and as far as possible (distinct) from the competitor brands (Novak E. and Lyman M., 1998).

4. Methodology and Sample Description

In order to validate CBRM we applied the method in a real example. In particular, we conducted online interviews to 50 people via Skype, and we measured their attachment to brands of the same category, by using our new technique. Firstly, we approached people through social media (such as Instagram and Facebook) or the phone, and then, after we introduced ourselves and explained the purpose of the interview, we exchanged Skype names. During the Skype call, an example of the method of a different category was given to the participants to help them understand the process. Afterward, we mentioned the steps that will follow and sent a template of the circle-shaped surface (Appendix 2, Image 1) to the individuals through Skype. The diameter of the circle was pre-measured in 14 cm, and the respondents could use it to place the brands on it. This process was conducted through Microsoft Word and the participants were asked to share their screen for the interviewer to be able to monitor their responses. Subsequently, we communicated to the individuals the product category that we will use in the process, and we asked them to place the brands that come to their mind in the circle, according to their attachment to it and its correlation to the other brands. After the mapping process, we asked the respondents about the distances between some brands and the “ME” tag, as well as their name, gender, age, and product relation; own a car, share a family car, or have no car at all.

Then, we chose three of the brands that they mentioned during the process, one for each distance level; close, not far and not close, and far, from the “ME” tag and we measured their purchase intention, their loyalty, and their trust towards those brands. We chose these three factors since they constitute some of the attachment’s antecedent (trust) (Mikulincer, 1998; Fedorikhin et al., 2008) and some of its consequences (purchase intention, brand loyalty) (Fournier and Yao, 1997; Ercis et al., 2012) By this way, we estimated the attachment of the participants to three specific brands. To perform this measurement, we developed an online questionnaire that consists of 16 questions in total; Two questions about their name and the brand name, three questions concerning their purchase intention for the specific brand (Bemmaor, 1995), three questions concerning their loyalty to it (Bobalca et al., 2012), and eight questions concerning their trust towards the brand (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003). The questions of the above mentioned constructs can be seen in the table 1 below. Lastly, at the end of the interview, the participants sent a picture of the Word document with their responses back to the interviewer via Skype, and we thanked them for their time and their support.

Purchase Intention items	PI_1	Within the two to three years to come, do you (or some member of your household) plan to buy this car-brand?	From 1 to 5, with 1 : Yes, certainly 4: Certainly not 5: Don't know
	PI_2	And more precisely, do you plan to buy this car-brand between now (April 2020) and the end of the next April (2021)?	
	PI_3	At what approximate date do you plan to make that purchase?	From 1 to 4, with dates and 5: Don't know
Loyalty items	Loyalty_1	I consider this company as my first choice when I want to buy a car.	From 1 to 7, with 1: Strongly agree 7: Strongly disagree
	Loyalty_2	I say positive things about this car-brand to other persons.	
	Loyalty_3	I recommend this car-brand to those who ask my advise.	
Trust items	Trust_1	This car-brand has a name that meets my expectations.	From 1 to 5, with 1: Strongly agree 5: Strongly disagree
	Trust_2	I feel confidence in this car-brand name.	
	Trust_3	This car-brand has a name that never disappoints me.	
	Trust_4	This car-brand's name guarantees satisfaction.	
	Trust_5	This car-brand would be honest and sincere in addressing my concerns.	
	Trust_6	I could rely on this car-brand to solve the problem.	
	Trust_7	This brand would make any effort to satisfy me.	
	Trust_8	This brand would compensate me in some way for a problem with the car.	

Table 1: The questions of the questionnaire regarding the Purchase intention, Loyalty and Trust of the respondent.

4.1. Data collection

In order to collect our data we conducted Skype interviews, in which the participant shared its computer screen with the interviewer. The reason why this method has to be applied during an interview is because the presence of an interviewer will reduce the application mistakes of the participant, as well as, the observation of the responses during the process is important, since it provides additional useful information. For example, to notice whether there is any relation between the order of elicitation of the brands and the distance of them from the “ME” tag.

Furthermore, CBRM was online pretested among 5 students of Radboud University of Nijmegen, and National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and has been adjusted based on their findings. The majority of the interviews were conducted in Greek and 7 interviews were conducted in English. We back-translated the Greek transcript from English to Greek in order to ensure the accuracy and quality of the interview. Also we used the same category of products in all interviews. Particularly, the category of cars was considered as appropriate, because it is perceived as a neutral product, which refers to both female and male population. However, although we encourage participants to freely express themselves, we set a limit of maximum twelve car brands that they can mention during the process, since we wanted to keep the number of brands in all of the responses approximately even.

4.2. Research ethics

According to the APA Ethics Code, before the beginning of the process, respondents were informed about the purpose of this interview and the expected duration. After that, the interviewer gave a brief introduction about herself and what the procedure will be. Besides, respondents were made aware that participation is voluntary and that they have the right to decline participation, even after the process has begun. Also, the interviewer asked the participants whether they agree with sharing their computer screen, and requested their permission to record the whole Skype call. Lastly, the interviewer ensured the individuals that their answers and the recorded video will be used only for the analysis, and after the completion of it, their data will be deleted. In this way, privacy and confidentiality were assured to encourage participants to speak openly and reduce the probability of socially desirable answers.

4.3. Sample description

In total 50 people interviewed in two weeks' time. The sample consisted of respondents who are living in Greece, as well as respondents who are living in Dutch, for at least one year. After analysing the 50 responses, we found that 16% of our sample was from the Dutch population, and the rest 84% was from the Greek population. Furthermore, the gender of the respondents was mostly male with 68%, where females were 32%. Also, the majority of the respondents, which is 86%, is between 18 and 29 years old and the rest 14% is between 30 and 63 years old. Also, 32% of the respondents own a car, and 44% share a family car. Additionally, an overview of the demographic variables of the participants can be found in Table 1a.

		Total (n = 50)
Gender:		
	Female	32%
	Male	68%
Age:		
	18-23	40%
	24-29	46%
	30-40	8%
	41-50	0%
	> 50	6%
Product Relation:		
	Own a car	32%
	I have no car	24%
	Share a family car	44%

Table 1a: Demographic characteristics of the final sample.

4.4. Validity analysis

For the validation analysis we inserted the data from the questionnaire in the SPSS program, and we examined univariately and bivariaetly each item. After we ensured that our data are suitable for analysis, by conducted Barlett's test and KMO test, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to confirm that the items correctly load in their factor (Trust, Purchase Intention, Loyalty). Afterwards, we examined Cronbach's Alpha to be as close to one, as possible. And we checked if there is any item that will increase Cronbach's Alpha when it is deleted. This process aimed to validate the questionnaire that we used, in order to be sure that its results will be valid. As for the next step, we took the results of each of the three questionnaires for each participant, and we came out to a number that constitutes the level of attachment for each brand. Then we compared the level of attachment for the three brands of the participant with the distance of the brands from the "ME" tag. For CBRM to be valid, it was needed to find a small level (number) of attachment for the furthest brand, medium level of attachment for the brand that was neither far away nor close, and high level of attachment for the brand that was close to the tag.

4.5. Running the analysis

In the analysis part, due to the decision of conducting the interviews online and the lack of an online application, in which it would be much easier to run the mapping process, we came up against some difficulties. The circles in the pictures that the respondents sent back to the interviewer had different rays from each other and this could influence our results. Eventually we chose to calculate the distances in percentages of the circle ray instead of centimeters. Also, since the questions of our questionnaire were taken from different articles, initially the factor analysis presented some problems. Specifically, the items were loading to more than one factor at the same time (Crossloadings). To address this issue, we had to exclude some questions (items) from our first analysis, as can be seen in the Image 1 (Appendix 3). However, to avoid deleting questions from our final analysis, we decided to analyse each set of questions (Purchase intention items, Loyalty items, Trust items) independently.

5. Results

Before starting our analysis we wanted to present some descriptive statistics of our data (Table 2). First of all we can see in table 2 below that the mean value of the PI items are very close to 3 or bigger. This means that the majority of the answers in these questions had an inclination to the negative side. The same applies for the answers of Loyalty_1 item, which is measured in a 7-point scale, and its mean value is 4.31. However, the value of the next two Loyalty questions (Loyalty_2 & Loyalty_3) had an inclination to the positive or/and neutral side of answers, with their mean value being 3.05 and 3.61, respectively. Regarding the trust questions, all the 8 items have mean values smaller than 3, in 5-point scale, which means that the majority of the answers of the participants answered these questions positively.

Concerning the Kurtosis and Skewness of our data we can see from the table 2 below that both values do not exceed the values -3 and +3. Lastly, by having no missing value in every item, we were ready to start our analysis.

Item	Mean	St. Deviation	Kurtosis	Skewness	Maximum	Minimum
PI_1	2.95	.992	-.240	-.677	5	1
PI_2	2.86	1.080	.502	-.374	5	1
PI_3	4.00	.949	-.777	-.006	5	2
Loyalty_1	4.31	2.105	-.164	-1.336	7	1
Loyalty_2	3.05	1.864	.653	-.759	7	1
Loyalty_3	3.61	1.914	.373	-1.023	7	1
Trust_1	2.54	1.251	.512	-.685	5	1
Trust_2	2.31	1.209	.820	-.192	5	1
Trust_3	2.69	1.147	.327	-.607	5	1
Trust_4	2.49	1.140	.585	-.285	5	1
Trust_5	2.42	1.005	.443	-.120	5	1
Trust_6	2.42	1.131	.639	-.299	5	1
Trust_7	2.37	.980	.361	-.131	5	1

Trust_8	2.46	.994	.548	.255	5	1
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Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the questions of our questionnaire.

5.1. Validation of the CBRM Method

In order to compare the results of the questionnaire with the results of the CBRM method we split the questionnaire into three constructs; Purchase Intention, Loyalty, and Trust questions. Subsequently, we ran a reliability analysis for every set of items (PI items, Loyalty items and Trust items), which can be seen in the table 3 below. And lastly we conducted four correlation analyses between the distance percentage of the brands and the answers of the participants in the questionnaire concerning those brands.

Construct name	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Purchase Intention	3	0,674
Loyalty	3	0,930
Trust	8	0,932

Table 3: Reliability analysis results for all the three constructs.

Correlation between the distance of the brand from the tag and the purchase intention items.

Regarding the purchase intention questions, as the table 3a shows below, in the second column we can see that if we delete question three, the cronbach's alpha will be increased from 0,674 to 0,769. This means that the analysis of the purchase intention items would be more reliable if we exclude the last item. Apart from that, since the second question of purchase intention items (PI_2) depends on the answer of the first question (PI_1), we decided to run the correlation analysis by using only the first question of the purchase intention items (i.e. Within the two to three years to come, do you (or some member of your household) plan to buy this car-brand?, scaled from 1 to 5, with 1 being "Yes, certainly!", 4 being "No, certainly" and 5

being “I don't know”)

Items	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
PI_1	0,560
PI_2	0,528
PI_3	0,769

Table 3a: Cronbach's alpha of the purchase intention items, if an item deleted..

Concerning the correlation analysis that we conducted between the distance percentage variable and the PI_1 variable, we found that these two variables are positively and significantly correlated (Table 3b below). We also conducted a partial correlation analysis which we include two control variables, i.e. the age of the respondent and its relation with the category (own a car, do not own a car, or share a family car), and the outcome of this analysis was also positive and significant. These results mean that the smaller the distance between the brand and the “ME” tag, the smaller the number of the value in the PI_1 question. To be more clear, in our case, the smaller the value of the answer, the more positive it is (answers 1 and 2). Consequently, the closer the brand to the tag, the bigger the purchase intention of the participant. In other words, the majority of participants answered positively to the PI_1 when the brand was closer to the tag and vice versa.

	Simple correlation	Partial correlation
PI_1 item	0,516**	0,509
	Distance Percentage	Distance Percentage

Table 3b: Correlation matrix of the distance percentage and the PI_1 and their partial correlation controlled by the age and the relation of the participant with the category..

Correlation between the distance of the brand from the tag and the trust items.

Concerning the items of trust, according to Delgado-Ballester et al., they found two subfactors of trust, which are the ‘Reliability items description’ and the ‘Intentions items description’

(Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003, page 41). We conduct a confirmatory factor analysis and as it is shown at the pattern matrix below (image 2, appendix 3), we also confirmed that the same four items of the article are loading to the first component (Reliability component) and the next four items are loading to the second component (Intentions component). Below we present analytically which items load to which component (Table 4a & 4b).

1. Reliability Component
This car-brand has a name that meets my expectations.
I feel confidence in this car-brand name.
This car-brand has a name that never disappoints me.
This car-brand's name guarantees satisfaction.

Table 4a: The items that are loading in the Reliability component.

2. Intentions Component
This car-brand would be honest and sincere in addressing my concerns.
I could rely on this car-brand to solve the problem.
This brand would make any effort to satisfy me.
This brand would compensate me in some way for a problem with the car.

Table 4b: The items that are loading in the Intentions component.

We also ran a reliability analysis as we mentioned above, and since the value of cronbach's alpha is 0.930, which is very close to 1, and no deletion of an item could increase this number, we proceeded in the correlation analysis. We first calculated the mean of the first four trust items (Reliability items), and the mean of the next four trust items (Intentions items). Then we conducted two correlation analyses and two partial correlation analyses. Two (one partial and one bivariate) correlation analyses between the distance percentage and the mean of Reliability trust items, and two for the distance percentage and the mean of Intentions trust items. All the

analyses showed the same result; The variables are significantly and positively related (Tables 5a and 5b) and hence, the closer the brand to the tag, the more positive the answer of the participant to the trust questions.

	Simple Correlation	Partial Correlation
Reliability Trust items	0,754**	0,839
	Distance Percentage	Distance Percentage

Table 5a: Correlation matrix of the distance percentage and the Reliability Trust Items and their partial correlation controlled by the age and the relation with the category.

	Simple Correlation	Partial Correlation
Intentions Trust items	0,516**	0,612
	Distance Percentage	Distance Percentage

Table 5b: The simple correlation of the distance percentage and the Intentions Trust Items and their partial correlation controlled by the age and the relation with the category.

To further support the result, we conducted another two correlation (partial and bivariate) analyses between the distance percentage and all the trust items (8 items). In this partial analysis we also controlled for the age of the participant and its relation with the category. As we can see in the table 5c below, the same outcome arises here as well.

	Simple Correlation	Partial Correlation
All Trust items	0,690**	0,775
	Distance Percentage	Distance Percentage

Table 5c: Correlation matrix of the distance percentage and the Trust Items and their partial correlation controlled by the age and the relation with the category.

Correlation between the distance of the brand from the tag and the loyalty items.

For the loyalty items, the reliability analysis showed that no deletion of an item could increase the value of cronbach's alpha, which was 0.932. For this reason, we could proceed with the calculation of the mean of the three loyalty items. In subsequent, we conducted a correlation analysis between the distance percentage of the brand and the mean of the loyalty items. We also conducted a partial correlation analysis between the same variables by controlling the age of the participant and its relation with the category. In the table 6 below, we see that the variables are positively correlated. Hence, the closer the participants placed the brand to the "ME" tag (ie the smaller the distance), the more positive the answer to the loyalty questions was (i.e. mainly answers 1 and 2).

	Simple Correlation	Partial Correlation
Loyalty items	0,839**	0.856
	Distance Percentage	Distance Percentage

Table 6: Correlation matrix of the distance percentage and the Loyalty Items and their partial correlation controlled by the age and the relation with the category.

Homogeneity of Variance analysis between the Dutch and Greek respondents.

In the end of the analysis we conducted a test of Homogeneity of Variance of the final variables between the Dutch and Greek respondents. We did this analysis in order to examine if the variance between the two groups of respondents is the same. According to the table 7 below, the p-value is not less than 0.05. Therefore we can assume the homogeneity of variance in the two groups. In other words, the distributional shapes are essentially equal across Greeks and Dutch participants.

Item		Levene Statistic	Sig.
PI_1	Based on Mean	0.040	0.842
Reliability Trust items	Based on Mean	0.855	0.357
Intentions Trust items	Based on Mean	0.787	0.376
Loyalty items	Based on Mean	0.253	0.616

Table 7: Test of Homogeneity of Variance of the final variables between the Dutch and Greek respondents.

5.2. General Results Observed by Running the CBRM Method

During the interviews we made some observations concerning general results of our method that we will discuss in the Discussion chapter. First of all, 14% of the participants mentioned at least one car model as a brand. Secondly, 40% didn't mention first the brand that they feel more attached to. In fact, 14% mentioned their closer brand second, and the rest 26% mentioned it almost at the end of the process. Also, a similar observation was that 10% of the respondents placed first all the brands that they feel the least attached to, and then the brands that they feel closer with. Another 10% of the respondents placed first some special brands that they could remember (as Aston Martin, Lamborghini and Pagani), and then the more conventional ones (as Fiat, Toyota and BMW).

Furthermore we noticed that whenever a participant included a new brand in the circle, they often wanted to change the position of some pre-placed brands. Apart from that, although almost every participant kept changing and improving the positions of the brands during the whole process, when we finally asked them the questions at the end of the mapping process concerning the positions that they chose, they wanted to change them again. Also, all the fifty participants mentioned in total fifty three different brands, in which the top ten common brands were Toyota, BMW, Mercedes, Ferrari, Fiat, Volkswagen, Ford, Nissan, Audi and Opel.

For further results we calculated the average distance of all the brand distance percentages of every respondent. We did this to see how close or far are the majority of a respondent's brands from the "ME" tag. Thereafter, we compared this distance percentage with their gender to examine whether there is a positioning difference between the male and the female participants. Subsequently, we conducted a one-way ANOVA between these variables and as it can be

displayed by the table 8 below, there is a difference between the groups. In fact, according to the Means Plots the male population of our sample had the tendency to position the brands closer to the “ME” tag than the female population. However, this difference is not significant.

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	sig.
0.369	1	48	0.546

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.007	1	0.007	1.411	0.241
Within Groups	0.253	48	0.005		
Total	0.261	49			

Table 8: Test of Homogeneity of Variance between the average distance and the gender of the participants.

After the finding above we decided to conduct two more one-way ANOVAs to study the relation between the average distance of the brands of every participant with their relation to the category (own a car, do not own a car, share a family car) and the Country that they live in. At table 9 we can see that there is a difference in the average position of the brands of every participant between the two countries. The Means Plots of SPSS showed that people, who do not own any car, tend to place the majority of the brands closer to the tag than the people who own or share a family car. Also, the respondents that share a car found that they are the ones that tend to place the majority of brands further from the tag. Concerning table 10, we also found that the average position of all the brands of every participant differs between the two countries. Furthermore, the Means Plot showed that the interviewers who live in Greece

appeared to have an average distance closer than the respondents who live in the Netherlands. This means that the residents of Greece placed the majority of the brands closer to the tag than the residents of The Netherlands. However, both of the aforementioned results are not significant.

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	sig.
1.003	2	47	0.374

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.001	2	0.000	0.089	0.915
Within Groups	0.260	47	0.006		
Total	0.261	49			

Table 9: Test of Homogeneity of Variance between the average distance and the relation of the participant with the category.

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	sig.
0.114	1	48	0.737

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.025	1	0.025	5.193	0.027
Within Groups	0.235	48	0.005		
Total	0.261	49			

Table 10: Test of Homogeneity of Variance between the average distance and the country that the participants live in.

6. Discussion

The objective of this article was to develop and test an innovative quantitative technique that measures brand attachment by visualising and comparing the strength of the relation between the consumer and the brands. By running this technique and simultaneously using a questionnaire, which constitutes the conventional method of measuring brand attachment, we succeeded in proving that the closer a participant places the brand to the “ME” tag, the more attached they feel to it. The proof comes from the correlation analyses between the distance of the brand and the questionnaire constructs (purchase intention, loyalty, and trust), which show that all the above variables are significantly and positively related. Hence our method is valid.

Beside this, during the research we made several observations concerning the strengths and weaknesses of our method, and due to limitations that we experienced, we suggest some future research ideas.

Advantages and Disadvantages of CBRM

During the research we verified the expected advantages of using our method, but we also found some new ones. First of all, the majority of the participants that we interviewed for our sample, said that CBRM method is a really fun technique that they enjoyed participating in. This is because CBRM is an easy method that does not exhaust the respondents and makes them feel like they're playing a game. Also, the demanding time of the process is between 10

to 40 minutes (the online version), depending whether the respondents has or has not any experience in using an application, which means that it is a quick technique.

Secondly, CBRM is a method that can easily and effectively catch the complexity of the consumer-brand relationship. Specifically, the same relationship can be observed in more than one dimension. In our example we measured the attachment of the consumer to specific brands in three dimensions. The first dimension, which is between the consumer and a single brand, was expressed from the distance of the brand from the “ME” tag. The second dimension is the relationship between the consumer and the brand compared with the relationship of the consumer with other brands. In this case we compared the distance of a brand with the distance of another brand from the tag. And the third dimension is the relation between the brands and how much related they are in the consumer's mind. In other words, what is the perceived difference of the brands for the consumer. This difference is not only displayed by the number of the centimeters between the brands, but also by the chosen side of the circle. For example, when a brand is placed on the opposite side of the circle from another brand, no matter the number of centimeters between them, the customer perceives them as completely different brands.

For this reason, a third advantage of the method that has been verified is that CBRM can have as an outcome more than just the attachment of a consumer to a brand. In fact, brand attachment questionnaires measure whether a consumer is attached or not to a brand, whereas CBRM has as a result a complete picture of the consumers' attachment to more than one brands, simultaneously. The last gives the opportunity to researchers to use the data for several analyses. For example, in our application we noticed that many people mentioned models instead of car brands, this could mean that some consumers separate the model from the actual brand. Also, we saw that when the participants finished the mapping process and then we asked them the questions concerning the positions of the brands (e.g. Why did you put this brand that close to you?), they wanted to change their answers. This could mean that at first they placed a brand unconsciously (according to their feelings), but when they started thinking about it, they had a different opinion. By noting the position of the brand before the change and after that, we could have a new analysis to do.

Also, we observed that all the participants kept changing the position of some brands everytime they included a new brand in the circle. The last is a result of the comparing nature of our technique. This means that people can feel attached to more than one brand, but when they

have to compare their attachment to many of them, they distinguish which brands are even closer to them, and which they are not. For example, a participant placed the Toyota brand really close to the tag, since they feel very attached to it. But when they remembered the Porsche brand, they also placed it really close to the tag. Afterwards, they realised that although they feel very attached to both brands, they are more attached to Porsche than to Toyota, and they moved Toyota a little bit further (Image 1 and 2, appendix 4).

Apart from that, the measurement scale that we used in our technique has the advantage of freedom. The participants can place the brands wherever they want into the circle, which gives them unlimited options as possible answers. This measurement scale provides more detailed information about the respondent's opinion than a Likert scale does, which makes the result of the present thesis more finely grained. Lastly, by presenting this new scale many researchers can be inspired and use it in other methods as well.

A new advantage of the CBRM method that we realised during the research is that the process can effectively be done with or without the presence of an interviewer. In the first case, this technique can happen during a one meeting interview, where the interviewer will be able to observe reactions, order of elicitation etc. Concerning the second case, we noticed that with the existence of a new online environment, the whole method could be done without the presence of an interviewer. In fact, this environment could include the instruction of the process, an automatic screen recording, and the automatic save of the brand distances after the submission of the answers. This constitutes an advantage since it will make the data collection even easier and faster.

We also discovered some weaknesses of the technique that could possibly diminish the effectiveness of the method. Firstly, when the number of the brands is too big, the positioning of them into the circle becomes too hard. In fact, because the respondent tries to keep the meaning of the distance between the brands, it is not possible for them to place many brands far away from each other. This can be even more difficult especially when the consumer feels the same degree of attachment with all of them. For this reason, in our research we chose to limit the number of the brands to twelve, to keep the circle understandable and easy to place the brands.

On the other hand, limiting excessively the number of the brands can also have a negative outcome in our method. It was noticed that almost 30% of the respondents mentioned first the

brands that they are less attached to or the ones that they do not like at all, and last the closer brands to them. This can be justified through the negativity effect theory, which is defined as “the tendency for negative information to be weighted more heavily than positive information when forming evaluations of social stimuli” (Kellermann, 1984, page 37). Another similar observation is that 10% of the participants remembered the special brands first and then the more conventional and everyday ones. Lastly, we noticed that people have the tendency to mention the brands in categories. This means that first they will mention a random brand but the next one will follow the same category of the previous one (e.g. special cars, cheap cars, cars that they owned once). All of the aforementioned examples show that an inappropriate limit of the brand’s number could cut this process in the middle and leave out of the process some brands that could make an important difference.

Comparison of CBRM with other methods

As our method belongs to the In-depth interviews, it possesses the advantages of this category. i.e. flexibility, high response rate, observation of non-verbal behavior, and an option for oral response of people who are unable to write or read. However, our technique does not present all the disadvantages of the in-depth category. Specifically, the in-depth interviews usually are time consuming and expensive processes (Morrison et al.,2002). In our case, CBRM constitutes a fast and costless method.

CBRM shares, though, some weaknesses of this category. For example, the responses of the participant can be influenced from the individual characteristics and the personality of the interviewer (i.e. appearance, gender, behavior etc.). Another disadvantage of the category is the lack of anonymity which is experienced by the participant in the presence of an interviewer. Lastly, there are difficulties gathering a big sample in in-depth interviews. In our opinion, all the aforementioned weaknesses could be overcome by the replacement of the interviewer with the automatic environment we mentioned above.

Concerning the methods that use Likert-scale as a measurement technique (e.g. Thomson et al., 2005), they have some advantages which our method also shares. For example, these methods are perceived as easily understood and flexible, regarding the type of answer. This means that the respondents are not called to answer in a statement with a yes or no, but with their degree of agreement to it. CBRM is also an easily understood method, which not only provides flexibility, but also an unlimited number of possible answers. The last is something that Likert-scale does not provide. Apart from that, both measurements techniques are quick, efficient and

inexpensive and also offer high versatility. This means that they can be transformed in some way into an online document and be sent via internet, email, message to other people. Lastly, Likert-scale is a unidimensional technique, where CBRM is a multidimensional one, which offers a lot of information to the researcher.

Managerial implications

Having conducted more than 50 interviews and using the CBRM method, we came into some conclusions concerning useful managerial actions. First of all, researchers should hide the brand category till the respondents are ready to start the mapping process. If the participants know the category earlier, the order of elicitation would not be spontaneous, as desired. This order is important to be recorded from the researcher to be used for further analysis.

Secondly, given that a company uses the CBRM method to measure the attachment that some of their consumers have to their brand(s), it is effective to start the interview anonymously and reveal their brand in the end. More specific, managers could keep their brand name as a secret and note the order that the customer mentioned their brand. In case the company's brand never comes to consumer's mind, then managers could mention it in order to be included in the analysis. Another way could be to provide the participants with a list of brands including their own, in a random order. However, the fact that the consumers didn't remember their brand name is something that the company should also analyse.

Furthermore, the number of mentioned brands that the researcher will set as a limit to the participants, is something that needs a lot of thought. As it appeared, a big number of brands can make the mapping process really hard for the participant when they want to keep a distance between the brands. However, a small number of brands can also limit the respondent to express their opinion. Consequently, the researcher should find a convenient number to avoid these negative outcomes. Also, the number should be appropriate to control the sample to have an approximately same number of answers. This means that this number should be related to the category that the researcher will choose. For example, in our case (car brands) we chose the number twelve, because there are people who can name six or less brands, and people who can name more than twenty brands.

A third suggestion of managerial actions is to note everything that happened during the process. As we mentioned, during the interviews we can observe several things, such as the order of

elicitation and the changes of brand positions during the questions part. As CBRM is a method with many possibilities, it can be used to measure several things. For this reason it is crucial to keep notes for any move of the participant and understand why it happened since it can provide important data in the analysis. This constant monitoring would be easier by the use of a recorder, which will enable the researcher to repeatedly observe in detail. Also, since CBRM is a visual method it can serve managers to communicate the data and the results of the research to all the other departments of their company in an easy and understandable way.

Limitations and Future Research

During conducting the research we came across some limitations that could influence the results of CBRM method and consequently the results of this thesis. The present year (2020) was a difficult one because of the coronavirus that spread all over the world. This virus rendered the data collection even more challenging, considering the reluctance of the people to participate in an interview during this huge crisis. Also, the interview was supposed to happen manually and facing the participants, but the fear of the virus didn't let people come close. Yet, we managed to find many participants through the internet, but the sample size ended up small.

Apart from that, the idea of online interviews was a decision of the last weeks that limited us in creativity. In fact, the process would be easier and faster if we possessed some useful tools. For example, the lack of time restricted us in developing or exploring an application that could help us build a more effective environment for the participants and hence a more detailed response by them. Besides, by using the last, the interview could be even more enjoyable and relaxed and subsequently, the sample size could be bigger. However, although these limitations didn't stop us from conducting our analysis and have results, we suggest some future research that could complement or even integrate the image of CBRM method.

Our first suggestion is to run the same research with an increased number of participants. A bigger sample size will contribute to the validation of the analysis, since a big sample average will be closer to the true population average than a smaller sample average. Therefore, the application of CBRM in many more people could provide different results from the one that the present thesis provided. Furthermore, the development or the exploration of an application that will be used during the interview instead of Microsoft Word could aid in data collection and make the process easier. Also, running CBRM offline could help in interviewing people with less experience on computers and electronic devices and thus expanding the sample.

A second suggestion could be the development of the electronic environment that we discussed in the advantages of the CBRM part above. This environment could help the researchers do the research without interviews. Everything will happen electronically and automatically and will be easier for the analyst to collect and analyse the data, and for the participants to complete the process and respond in more detail. Moreover, regarding the fact that the method does not require the presence of an interviewer, many respondents can participate in the research simultaneously and hence the cost will be lower, and the collection of many responses will be effortless.

Another idea for a future research is to choose different antecedents and consequences of brand attachment to validate the method. In the present thesis, in order to evaluate whether CBRM method is valid or not, we chose an antecedent of brand attachment (trust) and two consequences (purchase intention and loyalty) and we used them in a questionnaire. What we're suggesting is to use different antecedents and consequences (such as satisfaction and separation avoidance) to prove the validation of the method. Also, a researcher can use all the existing in the literature consequences and antecedents of brand attachment to obtain the reliability and validity of the method.

In the present paper we decided to conduct the CBRM method on cars as a product, which according to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of Cacioppo constitutes a central route product of high involvement (Cacioppo, 1984). Future research could conduct the CBRM technique by using a low involvement product (peripheral route decision), like the hair shampoo or the toothpaste, and observe whether the results are different from the present research. Furthermore, a study that runs the method with both products (high and low involvement), could compare the results directly and analyse what the difference of the results means.

An alternative of the method that it would be interesting to study is the replacement of the circle by a square. In our research we used a circle-shaped surface to standardize the maximum distance of each possible brand mentioned. A new study could use a square-shaped surface that can give the opportunity to the respondent to discriminate between some brands and position them to the corner. In other words, the circle gives the illusion that every brand is almost in the same distance when the consumer doesn't feel attached to it. But there are also some brands that not only the consumer doesn't feel attached to, but also doesn't like them at all. These brands could be placed in the corners of the surface to present the literal distance between them.

Similar to the aforementioned idea is the possibility of moving and placing the “ME” tag anywhere on the surface. Specifically, the surface could be used to represent the whole category (e.g. of cars) and the participants can place the tag wherever they feel that it displays their position in the category. In our case we placed the “ME” tag in the middle of the circle as a default. In another study, if a respondent feels far and distant from this category they could possibly choose to place the “ME” tag in a corner of the square or on the outline of the circle. This could provide even more data for the respondents feelings and attachment to the brands.

In the present thesis the CBRM method developed and tested in brand names. Future research could assess the reliability and validity of the technique in a specific brand by using models. Of course this could not be applied for brands that do not possess more than one model, but it will be a step further of the use of CBRM method. Companies that want to compare the performance of their brand models concerning the attachment of the consumers to them, they could use the CBRM technique on these models.

Last but not least, CBRM method is not limited only to measure brand attachment but also can be used in other concepts, too. Specifically, future researchers could use our method to measure the love that the participants feel for some brands. Or even the brand commitment or brand attitude of a consumer. These constitute some ideas for future research by using CBRM in a very similar case. However, concerning the flexibility that our method provides, gives to many researchers the opportunity and possibility to use it in other fields, as well. For example, a psychologist could use CBRM to measure a feeling of a patient (such as fear or stress) in different situations. This analysis would return as a result a complete picture of the situations that make the patient feel the same feeling. And also in which of them they feel it stronger and which situations are related with others (regarding this feeling).

7. Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to test the validation of a new measurement method that we developed, the CBRM. By testing this method in parallel with the conventional questionnaire method, in measuring a characteristic on the same sample, i.e. the attachment of the respondents to car brands, and analysing the results of both methods, we found that they are statistically comparable. That proves that our method is valid. The many advantages that it has, especially its simplicity and the abundance of findings it can provide, make the method attractive and

useful. Personally, our experience by using this method provided us with a strong belief that the more it is used, the more its capabilities could be expanded and any weaknesses could be restricted. Of course, more research is needed to reexamine the validation of the method by testing it on bigger samples and on different occasions, a fact that will confirm that CBRM is a new and useful managerial and research tool in many different fields.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Main Steps	Steps	Roles
Preparation	1. The interviewer explain the tasks to the participant	This is for the participant in order to understand the whole process, and be aware of the following steps.
	2. An example of the technique in a different category is given to the participants	The example will help the respondents in better understanding the method and reduce any mistake.

Mapping	1. The participants receive a premeasured circle-shaped paper with their self in the middle	The surface is a circle and the “ME” tag is in the middle in order to standardize the maximum distance of each possible brand mentioned.
	2. Participants are requested to place the brands of the category, that they are aware of, on the paper according to their feelings	Participants should remember from the example that the distance from the “ME” tag shows how close the individuals feel to the brand and also how correlated are the brand with each other.
Insight Creation	1. The interviewer take note of the order of elicitation	This step gives some information about the first brands in participant’s mindset
	2. The interviewer measure all the distances from the “ME” tag, and from one brand to the other	These distances are like their answers in a questionnaire. They need to be stored for further analysis.
	3. The interviewer take a photo of the paper with the positions and the distances	To store the whole picture
	4. Participants are asked about their demographics, such as: Gender, Age, Education	This step is in the end of mapping, in order not to tired participants in the beginning of the process.
Analysis	1. All the data could be inserted in a formula	The formula will help the analyst do its further analysis.
	2. The analyst chose the analysis that they want to conduct	There are many analyses that can be conducted from the same method.

Image 1: The table with the steps and their roles of CBRM method.

Appendix 2

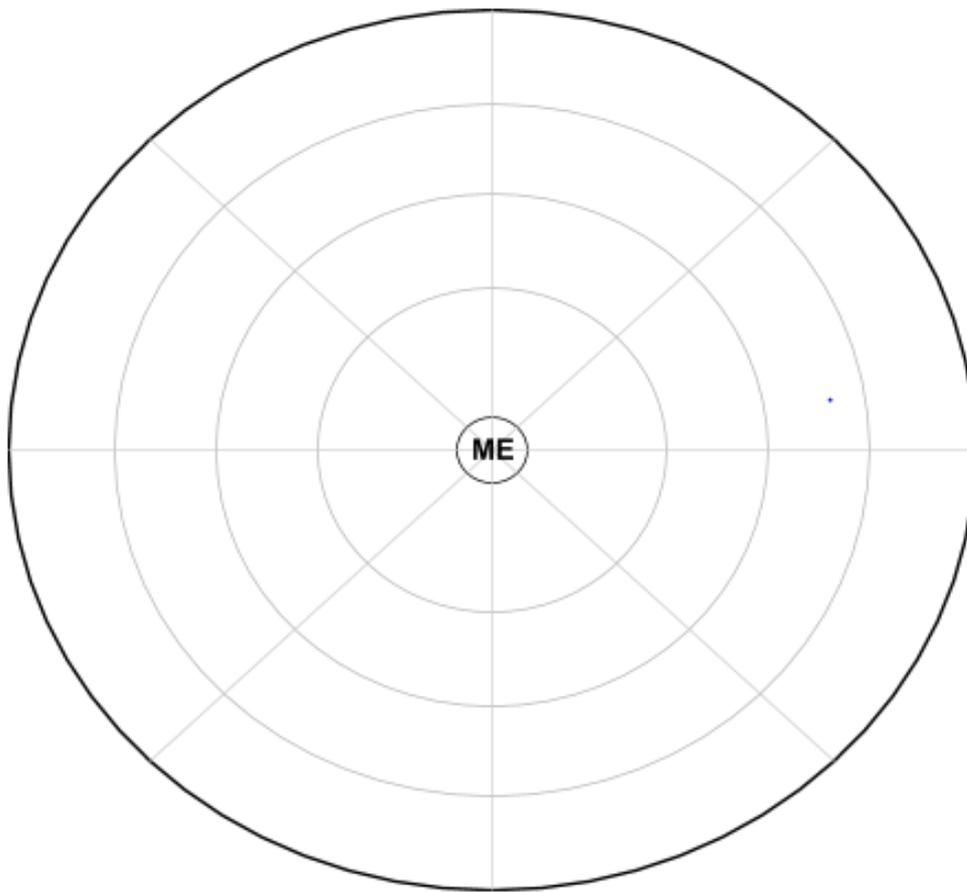


Image 1: The circle-shaped surface template with the “ME” tag in the center.

Appendix 3

Pattern Matrix			
	Component		
	1	2	3
PI_1			0.805
PI_2			0.931

PI_3			0.753
Loyalty_2	0.873		
Loyalty_3	0.786		
Trust_1		0.589	
Trust_3	0.906		
Trust_4	0.889		
Trust_6		0.784	
Trust_8		0.746	

Image 1: Pattern matrix of questionnaire items.

Pattern Matrix		
	Component	
	1	2
Trust_1	0.974	
Trust_2	0.889	
Trust_3	0.808	
Trust_4	0.866	
Trust_5		0.896
Trust_6	0.331	0.585
Trust_7		0.797
Trust_8		0.896

Image 2: The pattern matrix of trust items.

Appendix 4

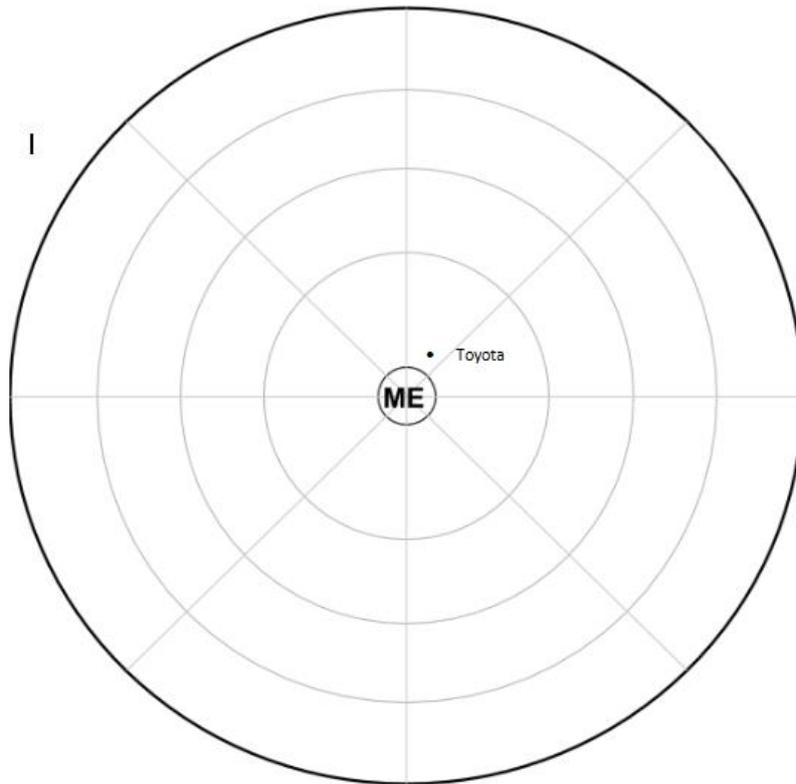


Image 1: The CBRM circle of a participant.

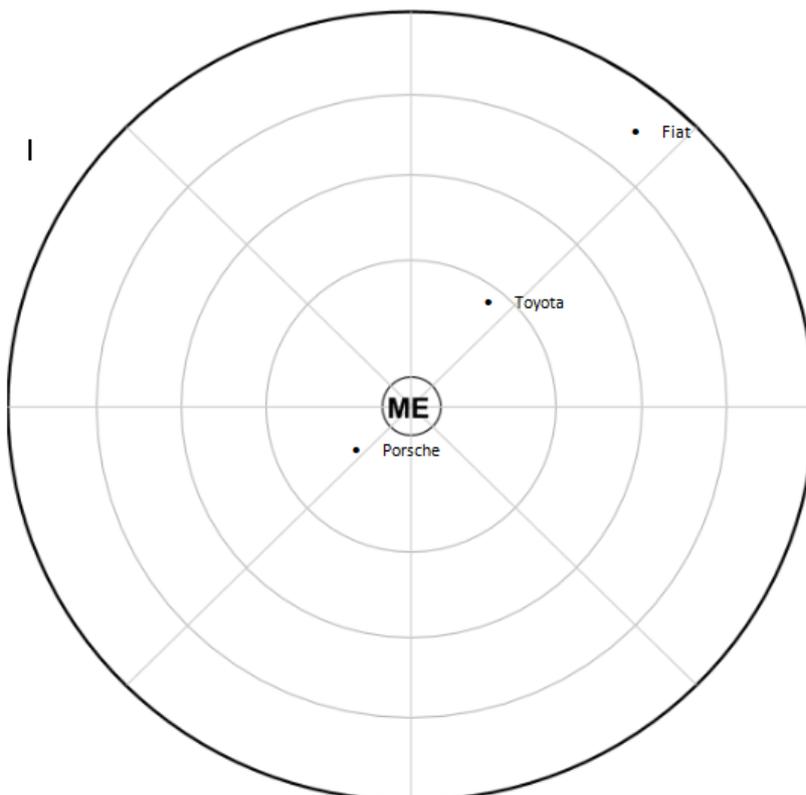


Image 2: The CBRM circle of the same participant.