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## Studying the impact of food values, subjective norms and brand love on loyalty: findings obtained at fast food restaurants in Mexico

### ABSTRACT

This research aims at contributing to the advancement of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by assuming a different approach in order to make it more relevant and effective in predicting food consumer decisions at fast food restaurants. With this intention in mind, a conceptual model is proposed where both the direct and indirect impact of food values, subjective norm, and brand love, on customer loyalty towards fast food at fast food restaurants is analysed.

There are several key contributions from this research. First, one of the main contributions has been predicting the behaviour of loyalty –instead of other more usual behaviours in the TPB such as intention to purchase. Second, the influence of food values directly on the constructs of subjective norms and brand love has been also analyzed. Third, another key finding is the importance of including emotional variables in the TPB as the variables of brand love.

**Keywords:** Theory of planned behaviour (TPB), food values, subjective norm, brand love, loyalty, fast food industry

## Estudiando el impacto de los valores de los alimentos, la norma subjetiva y el Brand love en la lealtad: hallazgos obtenidos en restaurantes de fast food en México

### RESUMEN

Esta investigación pretende contribuir al avance de la Teoría del Comportamiento Planificado (TPB) asumiendo un enfoque diferente para hacerla más relevante y efectiva en la predicción de las decisiones de los consumidores de alimentos en los restaurantes de comida rápida. Con esta intención, se propone un modelo conceptual en el que se analiza el impacto, tanto directo como indirecto, de los valores de los alimentos, la norma subjetiva y el brand love, sobre la lealtad del cliente hacia la comida rápida en los restaurantes de comida rápida.

Son varias las aportaciones fundamentales de esta investigación. En primer lugar, una de las principales aportaciones ha sido la predicción del comportamiento de lealtad –en lugar de otros comportamientos más habituales en la TPB como la intención de compra-. En segundo lugar, también se ha analizado la influencia de los valores de los alimentos directamente en los constructos de normas subjetivas y el brand love. En tercer lugar, otro hallazgo clave es la importancia de incluir variables emocionales en la TPB como las variables del amor a la marca.

**Palabras clave:** Teoría del comportamiento planificado (TPB); valores de los alimentos; norma subjetiva; brand love (amor a la marca); lealtad; industria fast food.

**JEL classification:** M31



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## **Studying the impact of food values, subjective norm and brand love on loyalty: findings obtained at fast food restaurants in Mexico**

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## INTRODUCTION

Along the past years more dynamic and heterogeneous consumer demands for foods have been observed, which can be analysed in terms, among others aspects, of consumer demands for sensory, health, process and convenience qualities (Grunert, 2006; Ajzen, 2015). Due to this situation, consumers of food products must face a wide array of decisions in everyday life. Among other decisions, consumers must choose not only among a vast selection of diverse brands of the same products, but also, they must also consider more basic issues in relation to their purchase decisions, such as nutritional issues, environmental issues, origin issues, etc., especially in developed countries (Enneking, Neumann and Heneberg, 2007; Ajzen, 2015). All of this has contributed enormously to make consumers' food choices more complex than ever before, which has made it all the more difficult to understand and predict such behavior (Grunert, 2006). Given the complexity of such decisions, it is not surprising how the need for further research into consumer behavior of food choice has been really felt in the food industry (O'Connor and White, 2010), motivating the emergence of several researches devoted to explain food consumption behavior (Tuu et al., 2008).

Since the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) constitutes one of the most widely used socio-psychological models for understanding, predicting and explaining human behavior (Ajzen, 2015), it has been frequently applied with great success to predict food-related behaviors (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010; Stefan et al., 2013; Soorani and Ahmadvand, 2019). Many of these studies have focused on gaining insights about the motives for purchasing and consuming diverse type of foods, from green foods (e.g., Voon, Ngui and Agrawal, 2011; Ham et al., 2015) and healthy foods in general (Ajzen, 2015), to less healthy foods such as processed foods (e.g., Seo, Kim and Shim, 2014; Aliaga-Ortega et al., 2019), and fast food (Dunn et al., 2011; Ghoochani et al., 2018; Sapic, Filipovic and Dlacic, 2019).

The fast food industry has been one of the industries that has experienced one of the highest increases along the past years worldwide, especially in larger cities (Kara, Kaynak and Kucukemiroglu, 1995; Sapic et al., 2019). In fact, estimates made prior to the Covid-19 pandemic generally projected annual fast food industry average growths of around 4% through 2022. However, the short-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on fast food market growth is expected to be relatively high. This is because the social distancing policies being implemented to deal with the pandemic involve measures that are not beneficial to the sector,

such as the temporary closure of fast food outlets. Which means that in these latter situations, the only job possibilities for the sector are delivery, drive-through and take-away options (T4, 2020). All of this make especially interesting to focus the research on this sector.

Beyond the traditional factors that make up the TPB (attitude toward the behavior, perceived behavioral control and subjective norm), this theory also recognizes the importance of other variables, such as personality traits and life values, among others. These variables are considered background factors in the TPB, and are expected to influence intentions and behavior indirectly (Ajzen, 2015). In the context of food, we can find the concept of values in the form of the food values proposed by Lusk and Briggeman (2009). However, despite the encouraging success of previous research into adequacy of using the TPB in the context of the decision-making process for food choice, there is still room for new research and the efforts to eliminate shortcomings of the existing theory (Ham et al., 2015). Especially, in specific contexts such as the one previously mentioned of fast food restaurants, where there is a scenario of strong competition characterized by a small number of operators. In this kind of contexts, where there are only a few number of operators that lead the industry, it is reinforced the importance of the brand within the general management process.

Taking into account the above context, it is important to highlight how the TPB can be also successfully applied to a consumer-brand relationship contexts such as the one existing in fast-food restaurants. Some studies (e.g., Henger, Fesko and Teravest, 2017) studied how the TPB could be applied to the context of brand management, being observed, among other results, how subjective norm was found to facilitate brand love for certain kind of consumers. Moreover, it was also observed how the TPB could be also used to predict the extent to which existing behavior would be repeated or reinforced in the future (in other words, the extent to which loyalty would be produced in the future) in a customer-firm relationship context, which could even represent a more important application than the traditional one of new behavior (Canniére et al., 2008).

Considering the above ideas, our research considers that it is essential to advance the literature of the TPB by taking a different approach in order to make it more relevant and effective in predicting food consumer decisions at fast food restaurants, by taking into account variables that have not traditionally considered. In particular, our intention is to analyse the direct and indirect influence of the above mentioned variables of food values, subjective norm, and

brand love, on customer loyalty. Thus, the behaviour that this research aims at predicting is the behaviour of loyalty towards fast food by the side of the consumer. The remainder of this article is as follows. In the next section, we will present the theoretical framework about the variables considered in this research, which will enable us to hypothesize the main relationships among such variables. After the theoretical review, the empirical part will be described, which will describe the methodology used (basically, descriptive statistics and PLS regression) as well as the main results obtained. This research will end by presenting the main conclusions, limitations and future research lines. Also, some managerial guidelines will be described, in order to facilitate the management of these kinds of companies.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In the framework provided by the TPB, this section will present a review of the relevant literature about the previously mentioned variables, which will enable us to hypothesize a series of hypothesis that will be tested in the next section, that is, the empirical part.

### **The influence of food values**

Companies operating in the food industry need to offer those products that really respond to consumers 'needs and desires, so that people really wish to pay for. This rationale becomes key in certain circumstances when there is the case, for example, of saturated markets (a rather common situation in the current context), where companies must then compete for market share (Schifferstein, 2020); in these situations companies in the industry are pushed to investigate which are the products that consumers are likely to acquire (Schifferstein, 2020). This situation can be found in the fast food industry, where there is a panorama of strong competition among leading companies such as McDonalds and Burger King, that need to constantly researching on diverse aspects that allow them to stay in fast food markets (Zion Market Research, 2018).

From the company point of view, it implies the development of diverse strategies to convince people to buy their foods, commonly by differentiating their foods from those of competitors. One of the potential differentiation strategies, for example, might be trying to optimize the sensory pleasure people can derive from their foods. This strategy could make sense since there are situations where consumers consider foods as a source of temporary relief and comfort (Schifferstain, 2020) -situation that can be attributed to the fast food industry.

Although this strategy in turn can also have some side aspects, such as worsen nutritional content of such foods, which typically are either higher in salt or in sugar (Mendis, 2014; Schifferstein, 2020). Another strategy could be focused on making foods more accessible in comparison to the accessibility provided by competitors by, for example, delivering them at home and/or facilitating payment services (e.g. by using credit cards or smartphones) (Schiffman, 2020). In addition, customer service has been also considered as a factor of growing relevance by the strategies pursued by managers in this industry (Kara et al., 1995). From the consumer point of view, one of the consequences of putting such differentiation at the consumer disposal, is that the decision to choose specific type of foods to consume becomes rather complex. No doubt that consumers, when confronting their purchase decisions, often find a wide variety of products at their disposal, which can have an ample range of attributes or characteristics that differentiate them (Lister et al., 2014).

Several studies have sought to identify consumer preferences for specific product attributes and their influence on other subsequent variables such as the decision to consume a certain kind of food (e.g., Glanz et al., 1998; Liu and Jang, 2009; Pieniak et al., 2009). In this regard, Lusk and Briggeman (2009) explain the influence that human values exert on consumers' food choices. More specifically, these authors study the general classifications attributable to food in the form of food values, which express more abstract attributes capable of explaining consumer purchases over time. In particular, they find that food values refer to a stable set of beliefs about the relative importance of meta-attributes, consequences, and end states associated with food purchase and consumption.

The food values proposed by Lusk and Briggeman (2009) have an influence on the whole buying decision process by consumers, and within this process, have been shown to have the ability to explain consumer choices, as subsequent research has evidenced (eg Lusk, 2011; Lister et al., 2014; Lysterly and Reeve, 2015; Pappalardo and Lusk, 2016; Bazzani et al., 2018; Izquierdo et al., 2020; Onwezen et al., 2019). Not only is it key to identify consumer preferences for particular product attributes, but also to determine their influence on other subsequent variables. Given that (i) the TPB holds that there are variables such as values that can be acknowledged as background factors and, consequently, are expected to influence behavior indirectly (Ajzen, 2015), and (ii) the TPB can be applied to consumer-brand relationship contexts, such as that of the fast-food industry, we propose to study the influence of food values on key management constructs (Hegner et al., 2017).

On the one hand, among these management brand constructs, it is worth noting that TPB has often considered variables such as subjective norm. In the context of this research, it seems particularly interesting to consider this variable, as various social relationships constrain, among other decisions, food choices and/or setting selection (Dragone and Savorelli, 2012). At this point, it should be taken into account how people often follow social norms not only because they fear social pressure, but because they give information on what behavior they consider to be the most appropriate or beneficial (Jager, 2000; Bamberg et al., 2007). This would allow us to understand why in certain situations consumers would admit choosing certain types of food (e.g., organic food) due to social pressure, thinking that this type of food choices would allow them to be perceived in a more positive way (Lusk and Briggeman, 2009). In addition, most eating occurs with other eating units where the interests of many people are negotiated and managed, and decisions about food choices are not made as individual but as a group (Sobal and Bisogni, 2009). These ideas allow us propose the following hypothesis:

*H1: Food values exert a positive and significant influence on subjective norm.*

Moreover, it is not only important to note that TPB has also been applied to the context of brand love, but also that brand love is often perceived as one of the main objectives in brand management. However, it seems that research on the factors influencing brand love is still scarce (Hegner et al., 2017). This has motivated the development of research to apply TPB theory to the context of brand love and investigate the impact of various factors on brand love. Which has contributed to demonstrate the applicability of TPB to a consumer-brand relationship context (Hegner et al., 2017). Inspired by these valuable studies, and taking into account that TPB also recognizes the importance of variables such as values, which are considered background factors and are expected to influence behavior indirectly (Ajzen, 2015), we propose the following hypothesis:

*H2: Food values exert a positive and significant influence on brand love.*



## **The influence of subjective norm**

Traditionally, subjective norm have been considered to refer to the belief that an important person or group of people will approve and support a particular behaviour. Moreover, it reflects individuals' perceptions that the people most important to them think that they should or should not perform a given behaviour, making reference to both the perceived social pressure from others for an individual to behave in a certain manner as well as their motivation to comply with those people's views (Ajzen, 1991; Yang and Jolly, 2009; Jin et al., 2012; Ham et al., 2016). Hence, it is assumed that subjective norm is determined by the total set of accessible normative beliefs concerning the expectations of important referents for this person (for example, family or friends) (Ajzen, 2006).

This variable has been widely used in the TPB, including specific contexts for predicting particular behaviours such as food choices, where normative influences have been widely held to have an impact in such behaviors (Povey et al., 2000). As a matter of this fact, abundant researches (e.g., Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006; Chen, 2007; Arvola et al., 2008; Ruiz de Maya, López- López, and Munuera, 2011; Nurse; Onozaka and McFadden (2012); Zagata, 2012; Al-Swidi et al., 2014; Ham et al., 2015) have observed how subjective norms are positively correlated with stated intentions to buy certain specific kind of foods, such as sustainable, green and/or organic food. These results could make sense taking into account that this type of food might be perceived as associated to positive qualities such as healthier and environmental friendly (c.f., Chen, 2007; Van Loo, Hoefkens and Verbeke, 2017).

However, its use in the TPB has not been exempt from certain criticism (Povey et al., 2000; Ham et al., 2015). One of the most frequently mentioned weak points is precisely the very weak relationship between subjective norms and intentions (Goding and Kok, 1996), that was proved to be generally weaker in previous studies than the influence of other variables (Ham et al., 2015). This may happen due the narrowness of the conception of normative influences employed in the TPB (Conner and Sparks, 1996). This is the reason for why some authors (e.g, Krueger, Reilly and Carsrud, 2000) called for further research and further improvement of the used variables. With this idea in mind, some recent studies (e.g., Ham et al., 2015) considered descriptive and social norms within the subjective norms factor in order to analyse

the specific role of those two types of subjective norms in forming the intention to purchase a particular kind of food (in this specific research, green food).

In general, it was suggested how self-expressive brands signal personal information to significant others (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). A beloved brand is an integrated part of consumer's self-expressiveness, and by using a certain brand and demonstrating love towards it, the consumer expresses his or her self to others (Wallance, et al., 2014; Karjaluto, 2016). Consumers select brands they believe members of their reference or aspiration group would choose (Karjaluto et al., 2016). Brands are able to elicit greater brand love when they are able to satisfy consumer's social needs (Vernuccio et al., 2015). These ideas enable to understand how in the application of the TPB to consumer-brand relationship contexts, it was found that subjective norm was found to facilitate brand love, especially for high-involved consumers. Moreover, subjective norms reflect consumer perceptions of whether the feeling of love for a brand is accepted, encouraged and implemented by consumer's circle of influence (Henger et al., 2017). Also, in these kind of contexts, it has been suggested how the consumer's love for a brand depends, among other variables, on the identification with other clients, such as opinion leaders and other influential consumers, which may represent the potential influence derived from the social pressure (Albert and Merunka, 2013). These ideas allow us propose the following hypothesis:

*H3: Subjective norm exert a positive and significant influence on brand love.*

### **The influence of brand love**

As companies aspire to establish relationships with their customers, it becomes essential to understand the nature of consumer-brand relationships (Sung and Kim, 2010). In the kind of contexts of consumer-brand relationships, it becomes key to develop a deeper understanding of managerially important constructs such as brand love. Without any doubt, the situation of great competition in the fast food industry, characterized by a small number of operators leading the industry makes it more relevant than ever to take into account the management processes having a central focus on the brand.

However, in today's market, customer satisfaction is not enough to establish a continuous relationship with a brand. Moreover, in order for a consumer to be loyal, it is also necessary to

establish an emotional bond beyond satisfaction (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Roy et al. 2013; Aro et al., 2018). That is to say, it is also necessary to create brand love which expresses an emotional bond beyond satisfaction for a loyal customer group (Long-Tolbert and Gammoh, 2012). Customers loyal to the brand with love act as if they are in love and look for the brands they are loyal to against the alternatives and talks about the brand by means of word-of-mouth communication (Kumar and Sahah, 2004; Whang et al., 2004; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Unal and Aydin, 2013).

In this sense, it is important to differentiate that satisfaction and brand love are two totally different concepts. Brand love is defined as the degree of passionate emotional attachment a consumer has for a brand (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Its importance resides in the fact that it serves to more effectively predict key variables such as repurchase intentions, positive word-of-mouth and resistance to negative information. According to Carrol and Ahuvia (2006), brand love differs from the satisfaction in the facts that: (i) while satisfaction is generally conceptualized as a cognitive judgment, brand love has a much stronger affective focus; (ii) whereas satisfaction is typically regarded as a transaction-specific outcome, brand love is often the result of a consumer's long-term relationship with the brand; (iii) while satisfaction is frequently linked to the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm, brand love requires neither expectancy nor disconfirmation; and (iv) brand love includes a willingness to declare love, involving integration of the brand into the consumer's identity, neither of which is requisite in satisfaction.

Consumers identify with brands depending on the extent to which the brand delivers on relevant identity concerns, tasks, or themes, thereby expressing a significant aspect of the self. Brands possess deep meaning and serve to build consumers self-concept or identities Furthermore, brands have the ability to reflect important facets of the consumer's identity and express significant aspect of the self (Fournier, 1998). Dick and Basu (1994) argue that brand loyalty should be higher given a more positive mood and affect. Brands that make consumers "happy" or "joyful" or "affectionate" elicit more purchase and attitudinal loyalty.

In the retailing industry, Vlachos and Vrechopoulos (2012) observed that consumer-retail love positively influences re-patronage intentions, which means that investing in building relationships with a strong emotional charge, with consumers will probably pay off in terms of loyalty. Hence, it allowed them to highlight the importance it has for companies to build

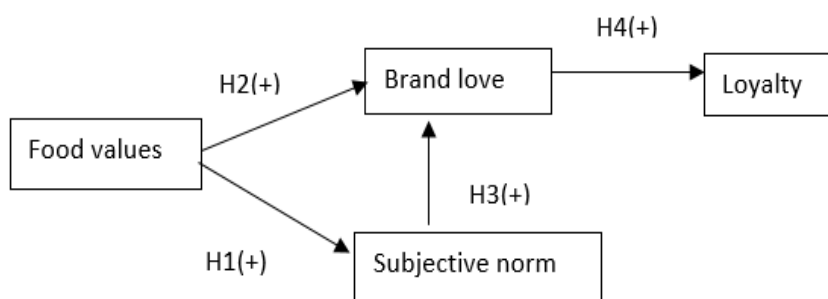
relationships with their clients full of emotions and feelings. In addition, marketers have already picked up the idea of beloved brands and are using emotionally laden advertising messages to create consumers’ love for brands. This can, amongst others, be recognized by slogans like the one used by McDonalds in the fast food industry of: “McDonalds – I’m lovin’ it” (Bauer, Albrecht and Heinrich, 2009).

The study of brand love is especially relevant in a context like the current one existing in the fast food restaurant industry (a situation of strong competition between leading competing operators serving products that serve the same consumer’s need) (Zion Market Research, 2018), the creation of emotional bonds of love with them, has become a strategic issue for companies. Also, taking into account that the TPB can be also applied to consumer-brand relationships contexts (Henger et al., 2017), even for predicting the extent to which existing behaviour would be repeated or reinforced in the future (Cannière et al., 2008), we propose to hypothesize next the following hypotheses regarding the expected positive influence of brand love on consumer loyalty:

*H4: Brand love exert a positive and significant influence on consumer loyalty.*

Figure 1 below describes the main hypotheses proposed in this research.

**Figure 1. Proposed model**



## **METHODOLOGY**

In this section, the empirical methodology followed in order to test the model proposed in Figure 1 will be described.

### **Methodology description**

To contrast the model proposed, a questionnaire was designed containing questions aimed at obtaining the information related to our research. Thus, information related to both the sociodemographic profile and the study variables (food values, subjective norm, brand love and loyalty) was obtained. For the food values scales, questions focused on how much appreciated were the food values, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was least appreciated and 5 the most appreciated. To assess subjective norm, brand love and loyalty, 5-point Likert scales were used –on these items, individuals had to express their opinion on a scale of 1 to 5 points, with 1 being the lowest degree of agreement, and 5 the highest degree of agreement. At this point it is recommendable to point out how for the subjective norm scales in particular, we followed a traditional vision with regard to these variables and included items referred to the social pressure. This decision was taking into account considering, among other reasons, that the behavior that this model aims at predicting is loyalty. Remember that descriptive norms were begun to be recently incorporated into the subjective norm construct as a potential solution to enhance the weak relationship between subjective norms and intentions. Complete details about the variables and the works that inspired their development are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1. Variables description**

CODIFICATION		ITEM	RESEARCHES
FOOD VALUES	NATRALNESS	Food produced without modern technologies	Lusk and Briggeman (2009; Lusk (2011); Izquierdo-Yusta (2020)
	TASTE	Taste of food	
	PRICE	Price of food	
	SAFETY	Food does not cause illnesses	
	CONVENIENCE	Ease with which food is cooked or consumed	
	NUTRITION	Nutritional value of food	
	TRADITION	Preservation of traditional consumption patterns	
	ORIGIN	Where the agricultural commodities used to make the food were grown	
	FAIRNESS	Extent to which all parties involved in the trade equally benefit	
	APPARENCE	Extent to which the food seems appealing	
	ENVIROIIMPACT	Effect of food production on the environment	
SUBJECTIVE NORM	SOCIALPRESS1	The people who are important to me (family and friends) they think I should eat ( hamburgers, pizzas..) at.....	Teng and Wang (2015); Kim et al. (2013); Seo, Lee and Nam (2011)
	SOCIALPRESS2	The people who influence my behavior as opinion leaders (TV, radio, artists, youtubers, etc.) think they should eat ( hamburgers, pizzas...) at.....	
	SOCIALPRESS3	People whose opinion I value, they prefer that I eat (hamburgers, pizzas...) at.....	
	SOCIALPRESS4	The people that are important to me (family and friends), they think that I should go to eat (hamburgers, pizzas.....) at ....., as soon as possible	
	SOCIALPRESS5	The people whose opinion I value, they would agree if I ate hamburgers as soon as possible at.....	
BRAND LOVE	BRAND1	I find it thrilling eating (hamburgers; pizzas.....) at.....	Carroll and Ahuvia (2006); Unal, and Aydin (2013)
	BRAND2	I like to eat (hamburgers, pizzas....) at	
	BRAND3	I enjoy eating (hamburgers, pizzas....) at	
	BRAND4	I love eating (hamburgers, pizzas....) at	
	BRAND5	It makes me happy to eat (hamburgers, pizzas....) at .....	
	BRAND6	I find it exciting to eat (hamburgers, pizzas....) at .....	
	BRAND7	I enjoy eating (hamburgers, pizzas....) at	
LOYALTY	LOYALTY1	Probably, I'll eat a (hamburger, pizzas...) at XXXX	East et al. (2000), Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000), Baloglu (2002), Schiffman and Kanuk (2004), Söderlund (2006), Donnelly (2009), and Kamran-Disfani et al. (2017)
	LOYALTY2	In the future, I am encouraged to eat a (hamburger, pizzas) at XXXX	
	LOYALTY3	Definitely, I'll have a (hamburger, pizzas...) next time at XXX	
	LOYALTY4	I will recommend other people who eat a (hamburger, pizzas) at XXX	

## Results

Information was collected from January 2019 to May 2019. The questionnaires were delivered to consumers after having eaten the food at the fast food restaurant. A total of 3,565 valid surveys were collected. The technical data is described in Table 2.

**Table 2. Technical details**

<b>Universe</b>	Individuals from Puebla (Mexico) over 17 years of age
<b>Sample unit</b>	Individuals from Puebla (Mexico), over 17 years of age who have eaten at a fast-food restaurant
<b>Data collection method</b>	Personal questionnaire
<b>Number of surveys</b>	3,565 valid surveys
<b>Date of collection information</b>	January-may 2019
<b>Place of collection</b>	Fast food restaurants (McDonald's, Subway, Domino's Pizza, KFC)

The data gathered show how 52.3% of the respondents were female and 47.8% male. Of the sample analyzed, 40.6% have income equal to or less than 300 euros; 21.8% of the population has an income of between 301-600 euros and 14.8% of the population has an income of between 601-900 euros. A total 63.6% are single and 13.5% are married and have children under 15 years of age. A total 68.5% are in the age range of 18-33 years; 18.8% have an age between 34-50 years. With regard to educational attainment, 51.9 with university studies; and 33.1% had completed high school (see Table in the Annex).

Table 3 shows some interesting results. In the first place, almost most of the items have achieved scores above the average, except for the items that measure the subjective norm construct, whose values do not achieve scores above the mean on the scale used. The items that make up the food values construct are the best valued, followed by the loyalty construct items; and finally, the brand love construct items. A deeper analysis allows us to verify that the best valued items are naturalness, taste and price. The rest of the highest rated items are associated with loyalty.

**Table 3. Univariate analysis, reliability and validity**

	ITEM	Mean	Standard deviation	Loading/Weight	Crombach's Alfa	Composity Reliability	AVE
FOOD VALUES	Naturalness	3.67	1.15	.098	.865	n.a	n.a.
	Taste	3.62	1.13	.360			
	Price	3.52	1.14	-.049			
	Safety	3.31	1.13	-.029			
	Convenience	3.28	1.23	.094			
	Nutrition	3.01	1.19	.177			
	Tradition	2.89	1.15	.251			
	Origin	2.87	1.22	.112			
	Fairness	2.79	1.16	.223			
	Apparence	2.78	1.17	.150			
	Enviroimpact	2.60	1.23	.077			
SUBJECTIVE NORM	SocialPress1	2.14	1.17	.855	.897	.924	.710
	SocialPress2	1.90	1.11	.721			
	SocialPress3	1.90	1.06	.891			
	SocialPress4	1.87	1.06	.879			
	SocialPress5	1.78	1.05	.857			
BRAND LOVE	Brand1	2.44	1.22	.824	.940	.951	.736
	Brand2	3.01	1.28	.824			
	Brand3	2.43	1.18	.849			
	Brand4	2.54	1.26	.897			
	Brand5	2.53	1.25	.896			
	Brand6	2.32	1.20	.870			
	Brand7	2.41	1.28	.842			
LOYALTY	Loyalty1	3.35	1,33	.821	.894	.927	.760
	Loyalty2	3.12	1,30	.905			
	Loyalty3	2.89	1,35	.909			
	Loyalty4	2.66	1,35	.849			

To validate the model proposed in Figure 1, PLS will be used. The model was estimated using SmartPLS 3.2.8 software. To establish the significance of the parameters, bootstrapping was performed with 10,000 resamples. To ensure construct reliability and validity, first, the indicator loadings were examined for the reflective constructs. Those items with a loading of less than .7 were omitted (Hair et al., 2018). The food values construct was considered a formative construct. The assessment of this type of construct is based on: (1) convergent validity; (2) collinearity; and (3) the weight of each indicator (Hair et al., 2017). For the measurement of the formative constructs, convergent validity was assessed through the construct's correlation with an alternative measure of the same concept (Hair et al., 2017). With regard to the weights of each indicator, some items had a low score. Unlike reflective indicators, formative indicators are not interchangeable; therefore, omitting a single indicator



can reduce the validity of the measurement model’s content (Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer, 2001).

The next step was to evaluate construct reliability and validity. The most commonly used criterion is that proposed by Jöreskog (1971), which establishes that values over the .7 to .9 range are considered good or very good (see Table 3). Other indicators are Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). Cronbach’s alpha coefficient is accepted, as all constructs have greater than .7 (Hair, 2010). The AVE of each individual construct is above the acceptability value .5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Huang et al., 2013). In fact, the composite reliability (CR) values below .6 indicate a lack of internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2017).

To determine discriminant validity, the sole criterion offered by PLS was used, which verifies whether the AVE of each factor is greater than the square of the correlation between each pair of factors (Fornell and Larcker 1981). The results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4 Discriminant validity**

	Food Values	Subjective Norm	Brand Love	Loyalty
Food Values				
Subjective Norm	.379	.843		
Brand Love	.578	.581	.858	
Loyalty	.523	.467	.703	.872

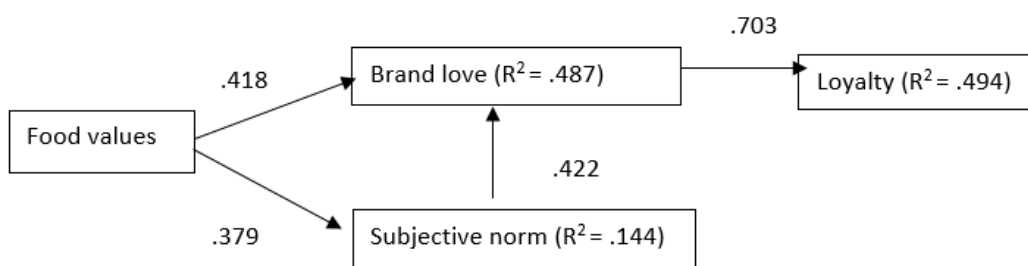
Before the structural model can be validated, it is necessary to test for collinearity. This process must be performed for both formative and reflective constructs. As all the indicators have values lower than 3, it can be concluded that there is no collinearity (Hair *et al.*, 2018; Becker et al., 2013). To evaluate the structural model’s predictive power, the criterion proposed by Falk and Miller (1992) was used, namely, the R<sup>2</sup> of each dependent construct must be greater than .1. The values obtained reflect that the model has a good explanatory capacity and a good fit of the model, as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. Model fit**

Item	R <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup> (=1-SSE/SSO)	Q <sup>2</sup> Predictive
Subjective Norm	.144	.100	.141
Brand Love	.487	.356	.329
Loyalty	.494	.371	.257

Finally, once all the measurement instrument’s psychometric properties had been evaluated, the model proposed in Figure 2 was estimated. The estimated final model is shown in Figure 3. The model estimation results are shown in Table 6.

**Figure 2. Estimated model**



**Table 6. Path coefficients**

	$\beta$	T (O/STDEV)	P Values	
H1 Food Values → Subjective Norm	.379	25.124	.000	Accepted
H2 Food Values → Brand Love	.418	42.445	.000	Accepted
H3 Subjective Norma → Brand Love	.422	27.654	.000	Accepted
H4 Brand Love → Loyalty	.703	2.555	.005	Accepted

All the hypotheses that have been formulated in the investigation have been accepted, with a value of \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . First, the most intense effects are pointed out by the influence of brand love on loyalty, H4 ( $\beta = .703$ ;  $p = .000$ ), expressing how the greatest influence of the model corresponds to the emotional bond that eating fast food at a particular restaurant can create on loyalty. This result is in line with what previous research has shown, that brand love is an antecedent of loyalty; the second most intense effect is found on the influence of subjective norm on brand love H3 ( $\beta = .438$ ;  $p = .000$ ), which corroborates how acquiring certain fast food at certain fast food restaurants may represent a way to be able to identify ourselves with our group of belonging or reference influences on the emotional bond to eating hamburgers at a particular restaurant; third, it can be observed the influence of food values on brand love H2 ( $\beta = .418$ ;  $p = .000$ ), which let us observe how food values contribute significantly and positively to the emotional bonds to eating fast food at a particular restaurant; and finally, the influence of food values on subjective norm H1 ( $\beta = .379$ ;  $p = .000$ ), which leads us observe how the food values exert a positive influence over the social pressure that certain individuals

(family or friend members) can exert over others fomenting them to eat fast food at fast food restaurants.

To finalize this section of results, the impact of each of the food values on the subjective norm and the brand love constructs will be analyzed below (see Table 7). The food values that exert the greatest influence on the subjective norm are, in this order, nutrition, tradition and fairness. In turn, those that exert the greatest influence on the brand love construct are taste, tradition and fairness. On the other hand, there are a series of values that are not significant. Thus, taste, safety, convenience and appearance have no influence on the subjective norm. On the other hand, naturalness, price and safety have no influence on the brand love construct.

**Table 7. Weight of each food values over the subjective norm and brand love constructs**

	Subjective Norm			Band Love		
	$\beta$	T	Sig	B	T	Sig
(Constante)		11.878	.000		.887	.375
Naturalness	.072	3.740	.000	-.007	-.437	.662
Taste	.033	1.620	.105	.273	15.115	.000
Price	-.040	-2.373	.018	-.014	-.927	.354
Safety	-.032	-1.584	.113	-.005	-.269	.788
Convenience	.023	1.243	.214	.063	3.931	.000
Nutrition	.148	7.389	.000	.047	2.641	.008
Tradition	.117	5.992	.000	.130	7.543	.000
Origin	.041	1.895	.058	.066	3.417	.001
Fairness	.103	5.043	.000	.117	6.505	.000
Appearance	.026	1.358	.174	.107	6.390	.000
Enviroimpact	.035	1.892	.059	.042	2.581	.010
F	60.47			167.449		
Sig	.000			.000		

## DISCUSSION

This research has aimed at trying to contribute to the advancement of the TPB by assuming a different approach in order to make it more relevant and effective in predicting food consumer decisions at fast food restaurants, by taking into account variables that have not traditionally considered. In particular, we have analysed both the direct and indirect impact of food values, subjective norm, and brand love, on customer loyalty towards fast food at fast food restaurants. Therefore, one of the novelties of this research has been predicting the behaviour

of loyalty –instead of other more usual behaviours such as intention to purchase. This consideration has had key implications for the assumptions of this study, such as the variables to include in certain study constructs -in particular, the subjective norm construct.

The results obtained have allowed us to accept all the proposed hypotheses, with a high confidence level and low sampling error. With regard to the food value variables, it is worth noting that in general the values most appreciated by consumers were those of naturalness, taste and price. However, one of the new features of this study has been to analyze the influence of food values directly on the constructs of subjective norms and brand love. Above all, taking into account that most previous research has usually focused on measuring the relative importance of food values in food preference. Taking into account the influence of food values on these constructs, it has been possible to observe how the most influential values on the subjective norm have been, in this order, those of nutrition, tradition and fairness; while the most valued values on brand love have been, in this order, those of taste, tradition and fairness. Therefore, of the most appreciated values on a general level, taste reinforces its importance as it is also a variable that influences the brand love construct. While the values of tradition and fairness reinforce their importance insofar as both exert a positive and significant influence on the constructs of subjective norm and brand love.

Another key finding of this research is the importance of including emotional variables in the TPB as the variables of brand love. In fact, although this variable has not been traditionally considered from the perspective of TPB, this research has shown how its inclusion is of vital importance, since it has been possible to observe how the highest effect detected corresponds to the direct influence that represents the construct of brand love on loyalty. This is a reflection of the great relevance of establishing emotional ties with the consumer in the fast food industry when it comes to achieving consumer loyalty in the long term. However, in order to achieve this brand love, it is also important to take care of the construct of subjective norm, whose influence on brand love represents the second most intense relationship detected, which allows us to glimpse the close connection between the influence of the subjective norm and its identification through brands; followed by the influence of food values on brand love, whose influence represents the third most intense relationship of the model. It should also be noted that although a positive and significant influence of food values on the subjective norm has also been observed, its influence represents the relationship of least intensity detected in the model. However, in spite of its lower intensity, it is also important to take care of the

influence that food values may represent on the subjective norm exercised by groups of relatives and friends.

From this research, interesting contributions for the management of operators in the fast food industry have emerged. Thus, this research has confirmed that companies operating in the fast food industry must continue to work on the differentiation of their products by emphasizing those values that are most appreciated by consumers. To achieve this differentiation, work must be done to highlight those values that are most appreciated by the consumer in this type of food, both in general terms (naturalness, taste and price), and in relation to the influence they represent on the constructs of subjective norm and brand love (tradition and fairness), so that the products and services offered can be positioned in relation to these values. Additionally, operators in the fast food industry should be concerned with creating close emotional ties with the consumer through the brand love variables, either by trying to exert a direct influence on these variables (for example, through communication campaigns that highlight brand love variables), or by trying to exert an indirect influence through influencing the subjective norm variables especially (for example, by having communication campaigns also target subjective norm variables), and also, although to a lesser extent, on the food values variables.

Finally, it should be noted that this research has some limitations. The first limitation is that it has only been applied to a specific food category such as fast food, which may bias the results obtained. Therefore, it would be interesting to be able to apply it to healthier foods and make a comparison of results. Secondly, the sample reflects a predominance of young individuals with low income levels -which is to some extent logical as this segment is the usual audience for this type of restaurant. In third place, it should be noted that the sample has been obtained in a specific country such as Mexico, so it would be interesting to corroborate if these results could be obtained in other countries such as the United States, or the European continent.

Finally, it would be interesting for future research to analyze the motive or reason that motivated the purchase / consumption of this food in a specific establishment (e.g. birthday celebration, friend's meeting, convenience, because it is my first option, etc), this would allow us to analyze in greater depth the relationship between the subjective norm and brand love.

It would also be interesting to analyze, as a future research line, whether some sociodemographic variables, such as age or income level, influence consumer behaviour for this type of food. It would also be interesting to investigate whether these variables play a moderating role in the relationships studied (mainly between subjective norm and brand love, as well as between brand love and loyalty).

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## ANNEX

Table. Descriptive analysis

		Total (N= 3,565)	McDonald's (N= 1,088)	Subway (N=808)	Domino's (N= 792)	KFC (N= 877)
		%	%	%	%	%
GENDER	Male	47.8	48.7	43.1	52.1	47.2
	Female	52.2	51.3	56.9	47.9	52.8
AGE	Up to 17 years	5.9	4.8	6.7	9.1	3.9
	18-22 years	33.5	32.0	31.4	50.8	21.7
	23-33 years	35.0	40.3	32.7	25.1	39.5
	34-50 years	18.8	17.3	22.0	10.4	25.3
	51-60 years	5.3	4.0	6.2	2.9	8.2
	More than 60 years	1.5	1.7	1.0	1.8	1.5
	STUDY LEVELS	Less than high school	4.7	5.1	5.8	2.1
High school		33.1	31.9	32.1	35.5	33.4
University		53.2	52.3	52.6	56.4	51.9
Master		9.0	10.8	9.5	5.9	9.2
MARITAL STATUS	Single	63.6	61.5	59.5	78.7	56.2
	Married without children	8.4	8.5	12.9	3.4	8,7
	Married with children under 15 year	13.5	16.9	12.1	7.8	15.5
	Married with children over 16 year	8.3	7.0	8.9	5.9	11.6
	Divorced	1.3	1.2	1.9	1.1	0.9
	Divorced with children under 15 year	2,4	2.6	2.5	1.1	3.3
	Divorced with children over 16 year	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.3	2.3
	Widowed	0.8	0,6	0.5	0.6	1.5
	INCOME	Up to 300 euros	40.6	38.0	44.6	49.9
300-600 euros		21.8	20.8	26.5	15.8	24.3
601-900 euros		14.8	13.5	14.0	12.4	19.4
901-1200 euros		9.1	9,1	7.4	9.1	10.8
More than 1,201 euros		13.7	18,7	7.5	12.9	13.8