

Unpacking Negative Brand Engagement: The Role of Brand and Chatbot Expectation Violation

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ABSTRACT

- **Purpose:** Drawing on expectation disconfirmation theory and assimilation-contrast theory, this study hypothesizes how different expectation violations – differentiated by object (brand vs. chatbot) but triggered within a same interaction – influence negative brand engagement across three dimensions: emotional, cognitive, and behavioral.
- **Design/methodology/approach:** Using a mixed methods approach, the research combines quantitative data (n=238) with qualitative insights from 36 interviews.
- **Findings:** The quantitative analysis shows that brand expectation violation triggers emotional and cognitive negative engagement, while chatbot expectation violation relates to behavioral negative engagement, including both constructive and destructive responses. The qualitative study further reveals how expectation violation can lead to various forms of negative engagement, including both active and passive manifestations.
- **Practical implications:** This research provides valuable insights for practitioners wishing to pro-actively work on avoiding negative brand engagement by managing expectations, and to respond adequately to the different manifestations of negative brand engagement.
- **Originality:** The research shows that brand and chatbot expectation violations, within the same interaction, generate different negative brand engagement manifestations. This research contributes to the brand engagement literature by adding to and refining the concept of negative brand engagement.

Keywords:

Brand Engagement, Customer Engagement, Negative Brand Engagement, Digital Marketing, Expectation Violation, Chatbots, Qualitative Research, Quantitative Methods.

1. Introduction

In today's landscape, branded chatbots are becoming central to customer interactions. For instance, retailers like H&M use chatbots to guide customers through product choices, while travel and hospitality brands such as Marriott deploy them to facilitate bookings and enhance loyalty programs (Chatbase, 2024). The rise of chatbots is striking, with annual customer-chatbot interactions projected to grow from 3.5 billion in 2022 to nearly 10 billion in 2026. Similarly, the chatbot market is expected to grow from \$12 billion in 2023 to \$72 billion by 2028 – an increase of 470% (Juniper, 2023). Chatbots are revolutionizing brand-customer engagement in several sectors such as tourism (Ivanov and Webster, 2019) and healthcare (Singh and Malik, 2024).

The implementation of high-tech solutions like chatbots can cast a shadow over the importance of social interactions in the customer experience (Ivanov and Webster, 2019), or create unrealistic expectations of human-like capabilities (Hsieh and Lee, 2024). This may lead to disappointment (Crolc *et al.*, 2022) and even hate toward the brand (Husnain *et al.*, 2025). Branded chatbots often fail to meet customer needs (Prentice and Nguyen, 2020), leading to unmet expectations (Sheehan *et al.*, 2020), negative customer responses and damaged consumer-brand relationships (Cheng and Jiang, 2022; Husnain *et al.*, 2025). For example, Air Canada's chatbot mishandled a customer's request for a bereavement fare, prompting the customer to take the matter to a public tribunal. The tribunal ruled in favour of the customer, holding the brand legally responsible for the chatbot's actions and resulting in both financial costs and reputational damage for the brand (Cecco, 2024). These adverse consequences highlight the importance for researchers and managers to understand how consumers react when such technologies fail to meet expectations, thereby enabling managers to anticipate negative outcomes and implement strategies that protect both the customer experience and the integrity of the brand in chatbot-mediated interactions.

In such negative interactions, consumers may experience expectation violation that stems from the brand, but also from the chatbot. While the literature has extensively examined expectation violations in service contexts (e.g., Wang *et al.*, 2020) and with brands and some technologies (e.g., Crolic *et al.*, 2022; Jacob *et al.*, 2020), branded chatbots have received less attention, particularly when the brand and the chatbot act concurrently. Brand management literature has evidenced the role of brands in shaping consumer expectations and has shown that unmet expectations can lead to significant detrimental outcomes such as brand dissatisfaction (Zarantonello *et al.*, 2016), hate (Yang and Mundel, 2022), or retaliation (Zhang, Zhang, *et al.*, 2021), highlighting a variety of negative outcomes (emotional, cognitive and behavioural). Despite the urgent need to understand the negative effects of evolving technologies on brand engagement, research on negative engagement in technology-mediated brand interactions remains limited (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2021). Further, a clear link between violated brand and chatbot expectations and negative engagement is lacking. The multidimensional perspective of consumer engagement could offer an integrative approach to understanding the complexity of brand expectation violation, particularly in online contexts (Dong *et al.*, 2024).

This paper draws on expectation disconfirmation theory and assimilation-contrast theory, alongside brand engagement literature, to examine how different expectation violations, differentiated by object (brand vs. chatbot), influence negative brand engagement. To address this, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1: What is the impact of expectation violation (brand vs. chatbot) on negative brand engagement?

RQ2: How does negative brand engagement manifest across its emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions following expectation violation in branded chatbot-mediated interactions?

To address these research questions, a mixed-methods approach is adopted integrating quantitative and qualitative studies. The complementary insights from these studies contribute to the literature by: (1) quantitatively showing that brand expectation violation primarily triggers emotional and cognitive engagement, while chatbot expectation violation drives behavioral engagement; and (2) qualitatively revealing how negative engagement manifests both actively and passively following these violations.

This study extends prior research by offering a nuanced understanding of how different types of expectation violation (brand vs. chatbot) shape what consumers feel, think, and how they behave. Unlike prior work considering brand or chatbot violation in isolation, this study examines both within a single branded-chatbot interaction. This integrated approach enables more precise attribution of the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions of negative engagement to the specific source of expectation violation. It also adds nuance to how this violation unfolds by capturing the dual active–passive nature of negative consumer engagement. As chatbots become increasingly embedded in service encounters, and evolve in functionality, identity, and perceived agency, consumer expectations and perceptions are likewise shifting. By examining these dynamics, the study provides a broader perspective on branded consumer–chatbot relationships, highlighting the complex and evolving nature of negative engagement in chatbot-mediated contexts (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2021). These insights are critical for researchers and practitioners, informing customer relationship management and guiding chatbot design aligned with consumer expectations.

2. Literature review

2.1. Customer expectations

Customer expectation, first introduced by Oliver (1977) through expectation (dis)confirmation theory, refers to the anticipation of future outcomes based on past experiences, current circumstances, or other sources of information. Early research emphasized what customers believed a service provider *should* provide, rather than simply what it *would* provide (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). Oliver (1977) conceptualized the process as comprising three stages. The first stage involves the expectations formation. The second stage entails exposure to new information or experiences and evaluation against prior expectations. This comparison results in confirmation if these new inputs match expectations, or disconfirmation if they do not. Disconfirmation can be categorized as positive if the new information exceeds expectations and negative if it falls short of expectations (Oliver, 1977); we refer to the latter as expectation violation. The third stage involves the individual's response to the (dis)confirmation of the formed expectations.

While EDT explains the nature and dimensions of customer reactions, assimilation-contrast theory (ACT) (Hovland *et al.*, 1957) emphasizes their intensity. ACT posits that reaction intensity depends on the discrepancy between expectations and actual experiences (i.e., the level of violation). Assimilation occurs when discrepancies between expectations and outcomes are minimal, and customers either do not notice the difference or make slight expectation adjustments. In contrast, larger discrepancies increase the perceived gap and often elicit stronger emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses (Cai and Chi, 2021). This paper draws on both EDT and ACT with a specific focus on situations where both the brand and the chatbot fail to meet, or violate, customer expectations.

Although services remain the dominant focus of contemporary expectation violation research (Kumlin *et al.*, 2024; Wang *et al.*, 2020), there is increasing interest in exploring other areas of focus, including brands (Jacob *et al.*, 2020) and emerging technologies such as chatbots (Castillo and Farrugia Caruana, 2025; Grimes *et al.*, 2021)

2.2. Brand expectations

A brand goes beyond a name, term, design, or symbol to represent an intangible resource that creates value for firms. It embodies the global promise or proposition a company communicates, juxtaposed with the actual experience the brand delivers (Aydon Simmons, 2009; Iyer *et al.*, 2018). Consumers often develop distinct brand associations that help shape their expectations of the brand (Lee *et al.*, 2024). Brand expectations have been addressed indirectly, either by positioning the brand as central in classic definitions of customer expectations (e.g., Jacob *et al.*, 2020) or by linking it to other brand-related constructs. For instance, brand expectation has been described as a key trigger for brand image activation (Krishnamurthy and Kumar, 2018) or as an integral component of brand trust, defined as “the confident expectations of the brand’s reliability and intentions in situations entailing risk to the consumer” (Delgado-Ballester, 2004, p. 574). Recent research highlights that brand credibility can set the tone for customers’ expectations, such that highly credible brands elicit stronger expectations of brands willingness and ability to deliver on their promises than less credible brands (Nguyen *et al.*, 2023). In this paper, Cadotte *et al.*’s (1987) brand-adapted definition of expectations was adopted, referring to consumers’ “beliefs or predictions about a focal brand having desired attributes.” (P. 305).

Several factors influence consumer brand expectations. Some researchers argue that branding itself – simply identifying a product or service as branded – increases consumer expectations relative to unbranded offerings. This is due to factors such as brand equity, loyalty programs, and affective management, which increase perceptions of quality and reliability (Cai and Chi, 2021; Yang and Mao, 2017). Furthermore, brand personality (Lee *et al.*, 2024), brand reputation (Mu and Zhang, 2021) and accumulated interactions with the brand (Zafrani *et al.*, 2023) play important roles in shaping expectations. Importantly, the formation of these expectations relies on consumers associating the brand with specific outcomes through direct

personal experiences and indirect sources (e.g., advertising, word of mouth, and observing others), allowing expectations to be shaped even without actual brand interaction (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2024).

When consumers experience negative brand interactions and expectation violations, they may develop negative emotions such as brand hate, an intense negative emotional response toward a brand (Hegner *et al.*, 2017). These emotions can trigger negative behaviors such as brand switching, brand avoidance (Roy *et al.*, 2022), negative word-of-mouth, complaints, and protests. Brand expectation violation thus leads to behavioral outcomes (Zarantonello *et al.*, 2016) with brand hate as a potential mediator of this relationship (Hegner *et al.*, 2017).

2.3. Chatbot expectations

Chatbots are computer programs designed to conduct text-based conversations with users within a specific domain using natural language (Shevat, 2017). The chatbot adoption literature identifies factors that foster positive attitudes and sustain intentions to use chatbot-based services (Balakrishnan *et al.*, 2022). Leveraging the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), researchers identify perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness as key factors (Pillai and Sivathanu, 2020). The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) extends the factors by incorporating perceived intelligence and anthropomorphism (Balakrishnan *et al.*, 2022). As traditional technology acceptance frameworks were developed for non-intelligent systems, their applicability to AI-based technologies has been questioned. Addressing this limitation, Gursoy *et al.* (2022) developed the Artificially Intelligent Device Use Acceptance (AIDUA) model refining perceived performance expectancy as the extent to which AI devices are believed to match or outperform human employees in terms of accuracy and consistency (Gursoy *et al.*, 2019).

Similar to human interactions, individuals may form expectations about chatbot interactions, as information systems are often perceived as social actors (Grimes *et al.*, 2021). Technology

expectations refer to the expected performance of the technology, reflecting the degree of confidence in its ability to deliver desired (productivity) outcomes for a given task (Anggraeni *et al.*, 2024). In this paper, chatbot expectations are defined as consumers' anticipation of the technology's ability to fulfill requests or solve problems.

Like general consumer expectations (Oliver, 1977), chatbot expectations can be shaped by various factors including prior experiences, other sources of information about the technology and technology affinity (Castillo and Farrugia Caruana, 2025). In addition, anthropomorphizing features like avatars or emojis (Grimes *et al.*, 2021) may increase the chatbot's perceived humanity (Hsieh and Lee, 2024), thereby raising consumer expectations of chatbots' competence in regular service delivery and issue resolution (Lu *et al.*, 2024). Expectations are further elevated when a chatbot is labeled as an expert or provides personalized, contingent feedback, as both factors heighten perceived competence and attentiveness (Rheu *et al.*, 2024). As a result, users may perceive the chatbot as human-like and expect human-like responses, potentially increasing disappointment when expectations are unmet (Crollic *et al.*, 2022).

The distinction between brand and chatbot expectation violation lies in the object involved (brand vs. chatbot), and the role that object plays in consumption settings (relational versus functional). Brand violation occurs when customers' expectations toward the brand are violated, often involving emotional and symbolic aspects rooted in the brand's identity, values, and image (Zarantonello *et al.*, 2018). For example, brands promising premium or personalized service may disappoint when they deliver a generic or impersonal experiences. Chatbot expectation violation concerns unmet expectations regarding the chatbot's functional and performance-related capabilities, such as understanding requests, providing accurate information, or offering assistance. Previous research has examined brand and chatbot expectation violation independently (Table I). This study addresses this gap by investigating both simultaneously within a single branded-chatbot interaction.

INSERT_TABLE_I_HERE

2.4. *Expectation violation and negative brand engagement*

Expectation violation can elicit a variety of consumer responses that differ in type and intensity (see also Table I). These responses can be categorized into emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. Emotionally, expectation violations can evoke feelings of regret and anger (Crollic *et al.*, 2022; Pinem *et al.*, 2018), deception and betrayal (Su *et al.*, 2023; Siddiqi *et al.*, 2020), frustration (Mu and Zhang, 2021), and hate towards the brand (Yang and Mundel, 2022). Cognitively, it can raise doubts about future outcomes, fostering negative brand attitudes and perceptions (Zhang, Wei, *et al.*, 2021; Cai and Chi, 2021). Behaviorally, it can lead to decreased repurchase or recommendation intentions (Gupta and Stewart, 1996), complaints and negative word-of-mouth (Pinem *et al.*, 2018), warning reviews (Siddiqi *et al.*, 2020), brand avoidance (Wong and Lin, 2024) or switching to competing brands (Pinem *et al.*, 2018). Response intensity often correlates with the level of violation, as greater discrepancies elicit stronger responses (Cai and Chi, 2021).

This three-dimensional nature of expectation violation outcomes invites further exploration through the lens of negative brand engagement, particularly in technology-mediated contexts, where engagement dynamics continue to evolve (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2021). To our knowledge, no study has examined negative brand engagement through expectation violation as a theoretical lens, highlighting a critical gap in the literature.

Negative brand engagement is derived from (negative) customer engagement, a leading concept in marketing practice and research over the last fifteen years (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2022). Customer engagement refers to customers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investments in interactions with focal objects such as brands, products or communities (Dessart *et al.*, 2015). This study focuses on customer engagement with brands (Hollebeek, 2011) and therefore uses the term "brand engagement". Brand engagement influences customer trust, loyalty (Dessart *et*

al., 2015) and experience (Buhalis and Sinarta, 2019). Recent research has increasingly examined negative brand engagement (Do *et al.*, 2019; Hollebeek and Chen, 2014), which is particularly prevalent in technology-mediated interactions (Baiwir *et al.*, 2024; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2021).

The conceptualization of negative brand engagement remains fragmented, with inconsistencies in its nature, dimensionality, and focal object (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2022). Negative engagement is often viewed as the opposite valence of positive engagement (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014). Instead, prior research argues that negative engagement differs from negatively valenced engagement in terms of its triggers and resulting behavioral intentions (Bowden *et al.*, 2015; Juric *et al.*, 2015). Building on this view, Do *et al.* (2019) adapted Hollebeek and Chen's (2014) conceptualization to incorporate negative critical events and perceived threats as key triggers (Juric *et al.*, 2015). This paper adopts Do *et al.*'s (2019) definition of negative brand engagement, as a customer's unfavourable thoughts, feelings and behaviours towards a brand resulting from negative critical events that cause perceived threats to customers. In addition, the behavioral negative engagement dimension is conceptualized as dual in nature, encompassing constructive behaviors aimed at helping the brand, and destructive behaviors intended to harm the brand (Dong *et al.*, 2024). Table II summarizes key definitions of negative customer and brand engagement.

INSERT_TABLE_II_HERE

In its most passive form, negative brand engagement includes disengagement (Do *et al.*, 2019). Whereas negatively engaged customers actively express strong negative feelings, thoughts and behaviors toward the brand, disengaged customers exhibit a passive negative orientation. They demonstrate behavioral, emotional, and cognitive disengagement from one or more aspects of an exchange, often in response to negative service experiences or perceptions

(Goode, 2012). Disengagement can manifest cognitively as distrust, emotionally as frustration or rejection, and behaviorally as neglect (Naumann *et al.*, 2017).

While prior research has called for greater attention to the negative effects of evolving technologies on customer engagement (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2021), limited work has examined this phenomenon in specific technology-mediated brand interactions. Indeed, (negative) engagement is highly context-specific (Naumann *et al.*, 2020), and existing studies have focused on mobile apps, recommender systems, and online communities (Dutot and Mosconi, 2016; Maslowska *et al.*, 2022; Viswanathan *et al.*, 2017), rather than chatbots.

Chatbots can cause significant problems when both the chatbot and the brand fail to meet customer expectations (Sheehan *et al.*, 2020). Yet little is known about how negative engagement manifests in such interactions or what triggers it. Addressing this gap and responding to calls for research on negative engagement and expectations violation in branded technology contexts (Castillo and Farrugia Caruana, 2025; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2021), this paper examines how expectation violation contributes to negative engagement in chatbot-mediated brand interactions.

Expectation violation – whether related to the brand or the chatbot – can elicit negative emotions which vary in type and intensity. Violation of brand expectations may evoke passive negative emotions such as disappointment (Zafrani *et al.*, 2023) and dissatisfaction (Cadotte *et al.*, 1987), or more active emotions such as betrayal and anger (Ittefaq *et al.*, 2024; Su *et al.*, 2023) or brand hate (Yang and Mundel, 2022). Similarly, chatbot expectation violation may significantly intensify anger (Crollic *et al.*, 2022) or simply result in heightened disappointment (Rheu *et al.*, 2024) and reduced satisfaction (Rese and Witthohn, 2025). Based on these insights and the theoretical perspective offered by ACT, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Higher (a) brand and (b) chatbot expectation violation is associated with stronger emotional negative engagement with the brand.

Cognitive reactions represent key outcomes of both brand and chatbot expectation violations. When brand expectations are violated, consumers often form negative brand perceptions and evaluations (Krishnamurthy and Kumar, 2018), as such violation acts as a motivational trigger in cognitive processing that shapes brand evaluations (Lee *et al.*, 2024; Oliver, 1977). Similarly, chatbot expectation violation can generate negative brand evaluations and attitudes (Go and Sundar, 2019; Zhang, Wei, *et al.*, 2021), reduce satisfaction (Crollic *et al.*, 2022) and foster distrust (Rheu *et al.*, 2024). Expectation violations may also induce rumination, defined as conscious and repetitive thoughts focused on negative aspects of the situation, especially perceived discrepancies between actual and desired outcomes (Duffek *et al.*, 2023). Consistent with ACT, rumination intensity tends to increase with the severity of the expectation violation. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. Higher (a) brand and (b) chatbot expectation violation is associated with stronger cognitive negative engagement with the brand.

Negative brand or chatbot expectation violation can reduce consumers' loyalty (Tang *et al.*, 2022), purchase intentions (Crollic *et al.*, 2022; Go and Sundar, 2019) and willingness to recommend the brand (Sun *et al.*, 2024). Such violation may trigger behavioral responses, ranging from passive reactions such as brand avoidance (Hegner *et al.*, 2017) or brand switching (Roy *et al.*, 2022), to more active behaviors, including negative word-of-mouth and posting negative reviews (Su *et al.*, 2023). Prior research distinguishes two underlying motives driving these behaviors: constructive motives aimed at helping or improving the brand, and destructive motives intended to hurt and damage the brand. Constructive behaviors involve feedback provision, reparation seeking, and problem-solving actions driven by conciliatory mindset (Bonifield and Cole, 2007; Gelbrich, 2010). Destructive behaviors include retaliation (Hegner

et al., 2017), negative word-of-mouth (El-Manstrly *et al.*, 2021), and vindictive complaining through aggressive confrontations with provider employees (Gelbrich, 2010). These behaviors stem from a retaliatory mindset—rooted in revenge, hostile aggression, brand sabotage, or boycotting—and reflect a deliberate intention to impair the firm’s interests (Ittefaq *et al.*, 2024). The intensity of these behavioural responses varies with the level or severity of expectation violation, according to ACT. Considering both motives, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3. Higher (a) brand and (b) chatbot expectation violation is associated with stronger constructive behavioral negative engagement with the brand.

H4. Higher (a) brand and (b) chatbot expectation violation is associated with stronger destructive behavioral negative engagement with the brand.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model.

INSERT_FIGURE_1_HERE

4. Mixed-method overview

This paper adopts an explanatory mixed-methods design, leveraging the complementary strengths of quantitative and qualitative approaches (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2013) and following a sequence in which the quantitative phase precedes the qualitative phase (Creswell and Clark, 2017). To address RQ1 and test the hypotheses, the quantitative study examines the relationship between the perceived brand and chatbot expectation violations and the different dimensions of negative brand engagement. Given the complex and context-specific nature of negative engagement, a qualitative study complements the quantitative findings by enriching data interpretation, strengthening theoretical support, and explaining the observed results (Gonçalves *et al.*, 2024). Addressing RQ2, the qualitative analysis provides deeper insights into how negative engagement manifests and offers a more nuanced interpretation of the relationships identified in the quantitative study.

5. Study 1 - Quantitative

5.1. Data collection and measurement

The first study employed a scenario-based survey. Participants were recruited through a panel website during two weeks in August 2024. They were asked to project themselves into a negative interaction with a chatbot of a well-known Belgian airline brand that failed to provide adequate support. The brand was positioned as mid-tier – neither low-cost, nor luxury, nor premium. To minimize cultural influences and ensure sample homogeneity (Pitardi *et al.*, 2023), only Belgian residents were recruited. Participants were required to hold Belgian nationality and to be familiar with the airline either through prior interaction or general awareness. Other characteristics were left unrestricted to enhance sample diversity. In the scenario, respondents were instructed to imagine themselves as passengers whose luggage was lost and who sought assistance via the airline's chatbot, which repeatedly provided inadequate and unhelpful responses. A screenshot of a scripted interaction illustrated the chatbot's inability to resolve the issue. Attention checks were included in the survey to reduce careless responding.

The survey first assessed participants' initial expectations of the brand and the chatbot. A negative interaction scenario was then presented. After the interaction, expectations were reassessed, and negative engagement was measured. To reduce order effects, scale items were randomized across respondents.

Brand expectations were measured using Delgado-Ballester's (2004) brand trust scale, adapted to capture expectations of a brand's reliability and intentions in the study context. Chatbot expectations were measured using an adapted version of Lu et al.'s (2019) performance expectation scale assessing technology's ability to satisfy requests or solve problems. Negative

engagement was measured using Dong et al. (2024) scale. All constructs were measured with multi-item scales using a 5-point Likert format. Online Appendix 1 presents the items used.

5.2. Data analysis and results

Data were collected from 238 respondents, with a near-equal gender distribution. The sample was predominantly young, with 21% aged 18–24, 50% aged 25–34, and 20% aged 35–44.

A paired samples t-test revealed a significant decrease in both brand and chatbot expectations following the negative interaction, indicating lower post-interaction expectations. The model was tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) in JASP. Perceived violation was measured as the difference between pre- and post-interaction expectations and used to assess its relationship with each dimension of negative brand engagement.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to validate the measurement model. All constructs demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values above 0.88 (Hair *et al.*, 2006). Items with factor loadings below 0.70 were removed. Convergent validity was supported by composite reliability (CR) values above 0.70 and average variance extracted (AVE) values above 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was confirmed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, as the square root of each construct's AVE exceeded its inter-construct correlations (Online Appendix 2). Variance inflation factors (VIFs) ranged from 1.20 to 1.55, below the recommended 3.3 threshold (Kock *et al.*, 2021), indicating low common method bias (Online Appendix 3).

The structural model demonstrated good fit, as illustrated in Figure 2 (Browne and Cudeck, 1992; Hooper *et al.*, 2008), with RMSEA = 0.048, χ^2/df = 1.55, CFI = 0.964, and NFI = 0.908. Supporting H1a and H2a, brand expectation violation was significantly related to emotional and cognitive negative engagement. Consistent with H3b and H4b, chatbot expectation violation was significantly related to constructive and destructive behavioral engagement. In contrast, the paths from brand expectation violation to behavioral engagement (H3a and H4a)

and from chatbot expectation violation to emotional and cognitive engagement (H1b and H2b) were not significant.

All significant paths were positive, indicating that higher perceived expectation violations are associated with stronger negative engagement. Brand expectation violation exerted a stronger effect on cognitive negative engagement ($\beta = 0.221$) compared to emotional negative engagement ($\beta = 0.152$). Chatbot expectation violation had a slightly stronger effect on destructive behavioral engagement ($\beta = 0.199$) than constructive behavioral engagement ($\beta = 0.181$). This suggests that brand-related expectation violation primarily affects cognitive (rather than emotional) responses, whereas chatbot-related expectation violation is more likely to provoke destructive behavior rather than constructive reaction.

Therefore, H1a, H2a, H3b, and H4b are supported, whereas the remaining hypotheses are rejected, as summarized in Table III and Figure 2.

INSERT_TABLE_III_and_FIGURE_2_HERE

5.3. Discussion

The results of Study 1 reveal a clear pattern. Brand expectation violation primarily triggers emotional and cognitive responses, whereas chatbot expectation violation shapes behavioral outcomes, including both constructive and destructive responses. This opposite alignment indicates that different sources of expectation violations relate to different forms of negative engagement. These findings extend prior research on customer expectation violation (e.g., Su et al., 2023), which highlights its role in eliciting emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses.

The support for H1a and H2a indicates that brand expectation violation affects consumers' thoughts and emotions toward the brand, consistent with prior research (e.g., Gupta and Stewart, 1996; Krishnamurthy and Kumar, 2018). This pattern aligns with the relational nature of consumer-brand relationships, which are often grounded in emotional and cognitive connections, whether positive or negative (Bıçakcıoğlu *et al.*, 2018; Zarantonello *et al.*, 2016). In contrast, chatbot expectation violation primarily affects behavioral responses (H3b and H4b), such as negative word-of-mouth and reduced recommendation intentions. This reflects the functional nature of the consumer-chatbot relationship, which emphasizes performance and efficiency (Anggraeni *et al.*, 2024). As a result, chatbot expectation violation tends to elicit task-oriented responses rather than emotional or cognitive reactions. Furthermore, chatbot expectation violation is more likely to provoke destructive behaviors, including switching intentions, complaints, and negative word-of-mouth. This is consistent with prior evidence linking expectation violation to harmful consumer behavior (Pinem *et al.*, 2018).

The non-significant hypotheses (H1b, H2b, H3a, and H4a) further reinforce this interpretation. The absence of significant effects when linking brand expectation violation to behavioral engagement, and chatbot expectation violation to emotional and cognitive engagement, highlights the complementary nature of these relationships. Specifically, brand expectation violation does not strongly shape behavior-oriented outcomes (Bıçakcıoğlu *et al.*, 2018), whereas chatbot expectation violation does not substantially influence emotional or cognitive reactions (Anggraeni *et al.*, 2024). The rejected hypotheses thus provide further evidence that emotional–cognitive consequences of expectation violation are primarily brand-related, whereas behavioral consequences are primarily chatbot-related when both expectation sources interact.

6. Study 2 - Qualitative

6.1. Data collection and procedure

Since expectation violation and negative brand engagement result from critical negative events, the critical incident technique (CIT) (Gremler, 2004) was used to better understand the individual's perspective on emotional, cognitive, and behavioral elements (Chell and Pittaway, 1998). Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with customers who had experienced at least one negative chatbot interaction within a branded context (i.e., inclusion criterion). As in the quantitative study, the interactions occurred in a tourism setting. Unlike the quantitative study, situations were not imposed, allowing a broader range of brands to be considered. There were no restrictions on participant residency (i.e., beyond Belgium).

The interview guide was designed to address RQ 2. Interviews began with questions on participants' brand interaction frequency and technology familiarity, followed by prompts to recall relevant negative chatbot experiences. Consistent with Gremler (2004), participants identified the most salient incidents to ensure rich and diverse data. They were then asked to describe the event context, their expectations of the brand and technology, and their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses (Stauss and Weinlich, 1997).

A combination of convenience and snowball sampling was used, consistent with qualitative research on brand engagement (e.g., Dessart et al., 2015) and chatbot interactions (e.g., Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2021), to reach data saturation. A total of 36 interviews were conducted, face-to-face or via videoconference, in English or French, according to participants' preferences. Data were collected over three-months. Participants represented 14 nationalities and included 22 females and 14 males, primarily aged 23–39, consistent with the quantitative sample. Online Appendix 4 provides detailed information about the interviews.

The qualitative data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach with an abductive logic, integrating theoretical insights with emergent empirical patterns (Dubois and Gadde, 2002;

Holmlund et al., 2020). Nearly 24 hours of transcribed interviews were analyzed using NVivo 12. Guided by a theoretical framework grounded in consumer-brand and consumer-technology relationships and customer engagement literature, the analysis focused on five main dimensions: brand expectations, chatbot expectations, emotional negative engagement, cognitive negative engagement, and behavioral negative engagement.

In the first phase, the coding scheme was applied to each interview, with transcripts coded according to the five categories. Each main theme was operationalized through a set of subthemes capturing more granular elements. For example, brand expectations included previous brand experience, pre-interaction expectations, post-interaction evaluations, and perceived expectation violation. The same was applied to chatbot expectation and the three dimensions of negative engagement (emotional, cognitive, and behavioral), capturing specific emotional responses (e.g., anger, frustration), cognitive/mental states (e.g., skepticism, distrust), and behavioral (in)actions (e.g., negative word of mouth, no purchase intention). Subthemes were coded inductively and then organized deductively within their theoretical categories.

In the second phase, coded segments were compared across interviews to identify recurrent patterns and co-occurrences (e.g., which violation types were most frequently related to specific engagement forms). Coding was conducted by the first author, supported by regular discussions ensuring alignment among the co-authors, with ongoing memo-writing and code refinement as peer debriefing to enhance rigor and consistency. Codes were then grouped into broader theoretical categories. The final codebook contained 21 subthemes organized into 5 main themes aligned with the theoretical framework and research questions (Grodal et al., 2021), as summarized in Online Appendix 5.

6.2. Analysis and results

The analysis confirmed that consumers hold different expectations toward the brand and the chatbot, shaped by factors such as brand reputation, chatbot familiarity, and prior experiences. These expectations evolved in different ways, leading to distinct negative engagement responses at the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral levels, with varying intensity and nature. The findings are discussed according to these engagement responses.

At the emotional level, the qualitative study revealed that the higher the brand expectation violation, the more frustrated consumers became, leading to intense negative emotions such as anger (Respondents 9 and 27). Respondents expressing active emotional responses typically held strong relational expectations prior to the interaction, such as perceiving the brand as premium or expecting privileged treatment due to loyalty. When these expectations were violated, the interaction was interpreted as unjust, resulting in heightened anger and frustration. In addition, a group of individuals was identified who, although disappointed, did not express active negative emotions. Instead, they emotionally distanced themselves from the brand after it failed to meet their expectations (Respondents 6 and 31). In these cases, the violation was perceived as abandonment, leading to profound disappointment and a loss of emotional relevance. A decision to avoid future interactions with the brand ensued. This suggests that a higher brand violation can lead to two polarized emotional responses: active (anger) and passive (indifference). For respondents with a lower brand violation, the emotions were less severe, such as mild annoyance or mild disappointment (Respondents 2 and 24). These respondents continued to evaluate the brand positively overall and perceived the issue as limited in scope, contributing to contained and non-escalating emotional reactions.

“For the flight prices, it’s clear that this is not low-cost. So, we were expecting a more premium service... Moreover, I travel a lot with them, I even have a loyalty account, so I should be considered a privileged customer... This experience was a shock for me, and I was very angry with the company.” Respondent 9

"I had already offered a travel voucher with Bongo to my Godfather and it went wonderfully, so I was really confident in Bongo at first... This experience made me very angry, with enormous frustration inside because I was expecting a rather positive experience, and I also had a feeling of injustice." Respondent 27

"I have travelled with this company more than 10 times in the last 2 years, and they were good... but this experience caused me huge stress and disappointment. I felt abandoned when I needed help the most... I have no feelings for them anymore, neither positive nor negative. I just don't want to deal with them ever again in my life." Respondent 6

"The experience was disappointing because I was expecting something better, but I remain neutral, with no particular opinion toward the brand... Still, I won't turn to this brand anymore to look for flights, because it would be pointless." Respondent 31

"I was upset at the beginning, but not for so long... they are a great company overall... However, they need to give more options to clients for help and support." Respondent 2

"I wasn't angry because it wasn't a big deal, but it still was below my expectations, so I felt a bit sad and upset... Considering the reputation of this agency, I expected them to handle my requests better than this." Respondent 24

Regarding the cognitive dimension, the qualitative study found that the higher the brand expectation violation, the more cynical and skeptical respondents were of the brand following their negative interactions. Many believed that brands use chatbots for their own benefit rather than focusing on customers (Respondent 19), viewing it as a "dirty business" tactic to avoid refunds or to project a superficial image of innovation (Respondent 12). In these cases, the interaction triggered broader negative inferences about brand intentions, leading to generalized doubts about the brand's integrity and priorities.

Conversely, among respondents who displayed emotional indifference after the interaction, cognitive responses reflected a loss of trust in the brand's reliability, extending beyond the specific incident to the overall customer support system (Respondent 6). Rather than active skepticism, these respondents expressed a more passive form of cognitive negative engagement, marked by doubt and distancing from future brand interactions.

Finally, respondents whose brand expectations were less severely violated demonstrated a more contained cognitive response. Although they expressed caution and anticipatory concern

about potential future issues, their evaluations did not escalate into generalized cynicism or distrust (Respondents 17 and 25). This suggests that lower brand expectation violation may prompt vigilance rather than a fundamental reassessment of brand intentions.

“The blame is always on the brand, not the technology, because the brand made the technology... Even if these kinds of airlines have good budgets, they design stupid chatbots to minimize refunds... It’s a somewhat dirty business in my mind...they count on you getting frustrated with the bot and giving up on the refund... I will be very cautious with them next time.” Respondent 12

“If a hotel is rated 5 stars, it should invest more in these technologies to make things easier for guests instead of wasting their time. I was very disappointed. It felt like the hotel introduced this technology just to appear modern rather than genuinely caring about the guests’ experiences.” Respondent 19

“After what happened, I’ve lost trust in them. I don’t feel confident at all about booking a flight with them again... I now doubt their entire customer support system since I didn’t receive any decent help when I had a problem.” Respondent 6

“Imagine if I were stuck with that problem in some country. In that case, the company would probably have let me down while I was in an urgent situation. How can I trust them again?” Respondent 17

“I used to like Expedia, but after this experience, I feel they’re not great when things go wrong... Now, we’re a bit cautious about booking flights with them, and we try to avoid the longer, more expensive flights to avoid taking too much of a risk.” Respondent 25

At the behavioral level, the data revealed that respondents with higher chatbot expectation violation exhibited the most polarized negative behaviors, ranging from highly active responses, such as intense public negative word-of-mouth (Respondent 18) to more passive responses. These behaviors extended beyond negative word-of-mouth to include changes in repurchase and recommendation intentions, reflecting either active opposition to the brand or deliberate distancing. In contrast, respondents with lower chatbot expectation violation displayed milder behavioral responses, marked by behavioral restraint and limited escalation following the negative chatbot interaction (Respondent 16).

Consistent with Study 1, respondents demonstrated different behavioral intentions, reflecting distinct underlying motives. Some showed constructive intentions, engaging in

restrained and selective behaviors, such as limiting negative word-of-mouth to close social circles and favoring private complaints over public exposure (Respondent 16). These behaviors were often accompanied by continued, albeit cautious, willingness to consider future transactions with the brand, indicating that the violation did not fully disrupt the behavioral relationship. In contrast, the majority expressed destructive intentions aimed at warning others and damaging the brand's reputation through public complaints and repeated sharing of negative experiences (Respondent 18). These divergent behavioral intentions were particularly evident among respondents with a positive history or emotional attachment to the brand, who were more likely to engage in constructive behaviors, such as contacting the brand privately and offering feedback aimed at service improvement (Respondents 16 and 14). Conversely, respondents lacking such attachment predominantly expressed destructive behaviors, characterized by public negative word-of-mouth and explicit brand avoidance (Respondent 18).

"If the company created this chatbot to assist us, it should have been able to find a solution. But instead, the chatbot was unhelpful and didn't understand... I was really disappointed...and, yes, I've talked a lot about this to those around me, and I still bring it up, especially when someone complains about Ryanair or EasyJet. I tell them, 'You don't know what I went through with Volotea.' I advise all my friends to be very careful and never travel with them... It was my first and last trip with Volotea. I'm willing to pay more for an airline that values you, just to have better service." Respondent 18

"When I asked the bot to change my flight, I had some doubts, like whether I should just call and have a human do it. I told myself it might work, but it didn't, just like I doubted... I shared my experience with my family and friends... I sent them a complaint in private... but I didn't go as far as posting on social media... If I need to go to Panama and they offer a cheap flight, I'll take it, but I'll be more careful." Respondent 16

"I have mixed feelings, I love Etihad, I love the service provided, everything is really amazing, but I am not happy with the customer service... , I just shared my experience with my relatives and close friends but not that much but sent them a complaint email telling them That I understand why they implemented chatbots, I know why they exist, I believe they should exist, but they need to be carefully managed in a way that should not be the entry point of all the situations, they should be a direct option to talk a human as well, we should not have the bot alone, the bot and the human agent needs to coexist together." Respondent 14

6.3. Discussion

The second study provides deeper insights into the manifestations of negative brand engagement following negative branded chatbot interactions. Consistent with prior research (Cai and Chi, 2021) and Study 1, higher expectation violation is associated with more active forms of negative engagement. The findings of Study 2 further reveals that a higher expectation violation may also elicit marked passive responses, with consumers choosing to emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally disengage from the brand (Naumann *et al.*, 2017).

The findings further enrich existing insights by specifying the range of emotions, thoughts, and behaviors triggered by expectation violations. The emotional dimension extends beyond anger and frustration (Dong *et al.*, 2024; Pinem *et al.*, 2018), to include disappointment and indifference. The cognitive dimension extends beyond the search for external negative information (Dong *et al.*, 2024) to encompass internal negative thoughts, such as skepticism and cynicism toward the brand. The behavioral dimension includes not only negative word-of-mouth, but also reduced purchase and referral intentions (Crollic *et al.*, 2022; Gupta and Stewart, 1996). Figure 3 summarizes key manifestations of negative engagement following brand and chatbot expectation violations.

INSERT_FIGURE 3_HERE

7. Integrated discussion and implications

The first study, which addresses RQ1, identifies significant relationships between consumer expectation violation (of brand vs. chatbot) and negative brand engagement across emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. A key contribution of this study lies in its bifocal perspective on expectations and its multidimensional approach to negative brand engagement, examining how brand and chatbot expectation violation affects each engagement dimension. The results show a clear pattern: brand expectation violation drives emotional and cognitive

negative engagement, whereas chatbot expectation violation leads to behavioral negative engagement with the brand, whether constructive or destructive. This distinction reflects the nature of the underlying relationships: brands tend to elicit more emotional and cognitive connections (Bıçakcıoğlu *et al.*, 2018), while chatbot interactions are more solution-oriented, emphasizing functionality and performance, and thus translated into action-based responses (Anggraeni *et al.*, 2024). This aligns with evidence that brand engagement is stronger in emotional than functional relationships (Fernandes and Moreira, 2019), explaining why brand expectation violation primarily triggers emotional and cognitive responses.

Building on these findings, the second study addresses RQ2 and complements the first study by moving beyond the dichotomous patterns identified in the quantitative analysis. Whereas Study 1 identifies which engagement dimensions are primarily affected by brand versus chatbot expectation violation, Study 2 provides a more nuanced exploration of how these effects manifest following expectation violation. Specifically, it examines the active and passive manifestations of negative engagement (Do *et al.*, 2019) and offers richer insights into the specific emotions, thoughts, and behavioral responses triggered by expectation violation. Moreover, the study shows that some customers may exhibit a mix of active and passive responses across engagement dimensions. For example, consumers may experience active emotions while adopting passive behaviors, such as disengaging from the brand. This qualitative nuance adds depth to the results of Study 1: whereas the quantitative analysis reveals clear associations between expectation violation and negative engagement dimensions, the qualitative results demonstrate that the manifestations of these associations can be complex, multidimensional and occasionally contradictory across dimensions.

Taken together, the two studies provide a richer understanding of how expectation violations shape negative brand engagement in brand–chatbot interactions. Study 1 identifies the structural relationships between brand versus chatbot expectation violation and negative

engagement dimensions, while Study 2 complements these findings by explaining how these patterns manifest. This integrated perspective highlights the value of combining quantitative analysis of structural relationships with qualitative analysis into lived experiences, offering a more complete account of negative brand engagement in brand–chatbot interactions.

7.1. Theoretical implications

This research makes several contributions to the customer engagement and expectation violation literatures.

First, it enriches customer engagement literature by highlighting the negative side of engagement, which remains underexplored despite repeated calls for research (Hollebeek et al., 2021; 2022). Whereas engagement is often conceptualized positively, the findings confirm that negative engagement is also multidimensional (emotional, cognitive, and behavioral) and can be shaped by different sources of expectation violation. The paper further advances theorization of negative engagement’s dual active–passive nature. Consistent with Do et al. (2019), it shows that negative engagement may manifest in active (e.g., anger, negative word-of-mouth) or passive (e.g., indifference, withdrawal) forms, and may co-exist within the same consumer. This nuance moves beyond a simple dichotomy and aligns with calls to examine the constructive and destructive potential of negative engagement (Dong *et al.*, 2024; Yang and Mundel, 2022).

Second, this paper advances expectation violation literature by conceptualizing consumer expectations in branded chatbot interactions as complex and bifocal, consistent with recent research highlighting the need for a deeper understanding of consumer expectation mechanisms in chatbot-mediated contexts (Castillo and Farrugia Caruana, 2025). Rather than considering brand- or chatbot-based expectations in isolation, the findings show that these expectations co-exist and should be examined jointly, as brand- and chatbot-related violations generate distinct negative engagement responses. Consumers simultaneously evaluate relational brand promises

and chatbot performance, making a bifocal expectation perspective theoretically necessary to explain negative engagement following negative chatbot-mediated interactions.

Last, this study bridges expectation violation and negative engagement research by demonstrating source-specific effects of expectation violation. Brand expectation violations primarily elicit emotional and cognitive responses, whereas chatbot expectation violations predominantly drive behavioral reactions, reflecting the affective bonds consumers form with brands and the functional, performance-oriented nature of chatbot interactions (Anggraeni *et al.*, 2024; Bıçakcıoğlu *et al.*, 2018).

In sum, this research (1) conceptualizes negative engagement as nuanced and multidimensional, (2) positions customer expectation as bifocal, and (3) bridges the two literatures by demonstrating source-specific effects in brand–chatbot interactions. By integrating quantitative and qualitative insights, this paper provides a more complete account of how expectation violation reshapes engagement dynamics in the branded chatbots interactions.

7.2. Managerial implications

This research underscores that consumer expectations function as a double-edged sword for marketers (Cai and Chi, 2021). While meeting expectations can strengthen relationships, unmet expectations may trigger negative engagement. Managers should therefore adopt proactive expectation management strategies that align both brand and chatbot capabilities with customer perceptions. This alignment requires coordinated governance between brand managers, who define relational promises and tone, and digital experience teams, who operationalize these promises through chatbot design and service protocols. Transparent pre-interaction communication about chatbot’s scope and limitations, combined with positioning it as an “assistant” rather than a human substitute, may help recalibrate expectations and mitigate the

severity of negative reactions (Cheng and Jiang, 2022; Haupt *et al.*, 2023). This framing is particularly critical when chatbot failures risk being attributed to the brand itself rather than to the technological interface.

Given that negative engagement manifests differently, companies must differentiate between active and passive responses. Active negative behaviors, such as public complaints or angry posts, require rapid service recovery, including timely and personalized apologies, visible corrective measures, and targeted compensation. Passive negative engagement, reflecting indifference, calls for re-engagement tactics such as personalized follow-ups, tailored offers, and proactive outreach to re-establish contact and rebuild the relationship.

Managers should recognize that negative behaviors stem from different motives. Constructive behavioural engagement should be met with validation, accessible feedback channels, and opportunities for involvement in service improvement, which can strengthen loyalty and foster brand-consumer relationships (Eisingerich *et al.*, 2014). Destructive engagement, driven by frustration or hostility, requires empathetic responses that prioritize emotional concerns, followed by swift resolution, escalation to human agents, and, when necessary, personalized gestures to signal genuine care. These differentiated responses are especially relevant in high-involvement service contexts (e.g., travel or financial services), where negative interactions are more likely to escalate into brand-level violations, compared to low-involvement contexts, where efficiency and rapid recovery may suffice (Bambauer-Sachse and Rabeson, 2015).

Finally, brands should implement continuous feedback loops by analyzing chatbot interaction data to detect early dissatisfaction, refine scripts, and adjust escalation protocols based on the severity and focus of expectation violations. Integrating chatbot and human service pathways enables efficiency for routine requests while ensuring timely human intervention for complex or emotionally charged issues. By aligning expectations, tailoring engagement

responses, and continuously improving processes, companies can turn failed interactions into opportunities for relationship reinforcement.

7.3. *Limitations and future research*

This study has several limitations. First, the data was collected in a tourism context, which may limit the generalizability to other sectors and service settings. Future research should replicate the study across industries and examine context-sensitive strategies distinguishing high- and low-involvement service environments to enhance external validity. Similarly, the quantitative study relied on a hypothetical chatbot failure scenario and self-reported responses, which may limit ecological validity. However, this concern is partly mitigated by the qualitative study, which does rely on actual experienced failed chatbot interactions. Second, the study did not account for potential moderators such as consumer characteristics or violation sensitivity (Cai and Chi, 2021), which may shape how consumers react to unmet expectations. Third, different chatbot designs and cues (e.g., identity, verbal, non-verbal, disclosure) were not considered, although these may strongly influence consumer expectations and engagement. Finally, as AI technologies evolve, research should explore how next-generation chatbots with more advanced capabilities reshape consumer expectations and engagement outcomes.

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Table I. Previous research on brand/chatbot expectation violation

Authors	Method	Expectation Violation Object	Expectation Violation Outcomes
Crolic et al., 2022	Field Data Analysis Experiments	Chatbot	Customer Satisfaction Firm Evaluation/ Purchase Intentions
Go et al., 2019	Experiment	Chatbot	Consumer attitude/ Performance Evaluation Behavioral intentions
Hegner et al., 2017	SEM	Brand	Brand hate / Brand avoidance/ Brand Retaliation Negative WOM
Rese and Witthohn, 2025	Experiment	Chatbot	Chatbot Perception (Humanness, competence, warmth) Customer Satisfaction
Rheu et al., 2024	Experiment	Chatbot	Chatbot Evaluation (Trust, sincerity, caring) Consumer disappointment
Roy et al., 2022	PLS-SEM	Brand	Brand hate /Brand Switching/ Brand Avoidance Complaining
Sun et al., 2024	Experiment	Chatbot	Chatbot Evaluation (Expertise and friendliness) Consumer attitude /Behavioral intentions
Yang and Mundel, 2022	Experiment	Brand	Consumer Satisfaction Brand Hate
Zarantonello et al., 2016	Survey	Brand	Brand hate Consumer complaining/ Negative WOM /Protest
Zhang et al., 2021	Experiment	Brand	Customers attitude Behavioral intentions

Source: Authors' own work

Table II. Key definitions of negative customer/brand engagement.

Authors	Definitions	Dimensions
Hollebeek and Chen, 2014	“Consumers’ unfavorable brand-related thoughts, feelings and behaviors during focal brand interactions” (p. 69).	• Cognitive: Immersion • Emotional: Passion • Behavioral: Activation
Juric et al., 2015	“A series of mental states and an iterative psychological process, which is catalyzed by perceived threats (or a perceived or reconstructed threat) to self” (p. 285)	• Cognitive
Naumann et al., 2017	“Active and emotionally-charged, with many customers harboring strong negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward their service provider”.(p.182)	• Cognitive: Cynicism • Emotional: Anger • Behavioral: Collective complaining, value destruction
Do et al., 2019	“Customer’s unfavourable thoughts, feelings and behaviours towards a brand or provider resulting from negative critical events that cause perceived threats to customers” (p.123)	• Emotional • Cognitive • Behavioural
Naumann et al., 2020	-	• Cognitive: Interest and attention to negative information about a brand • Emotional: Anger and dislike • Behavioral: Collective complaint and anti-brand activism.
Dong et al., 2024	“Consumer negatively valenced brand-related cognition, affection and online behaviour”(p. 797)	• Emotional • Cognitive • Behavioural Constructive • Behavioural Destructive

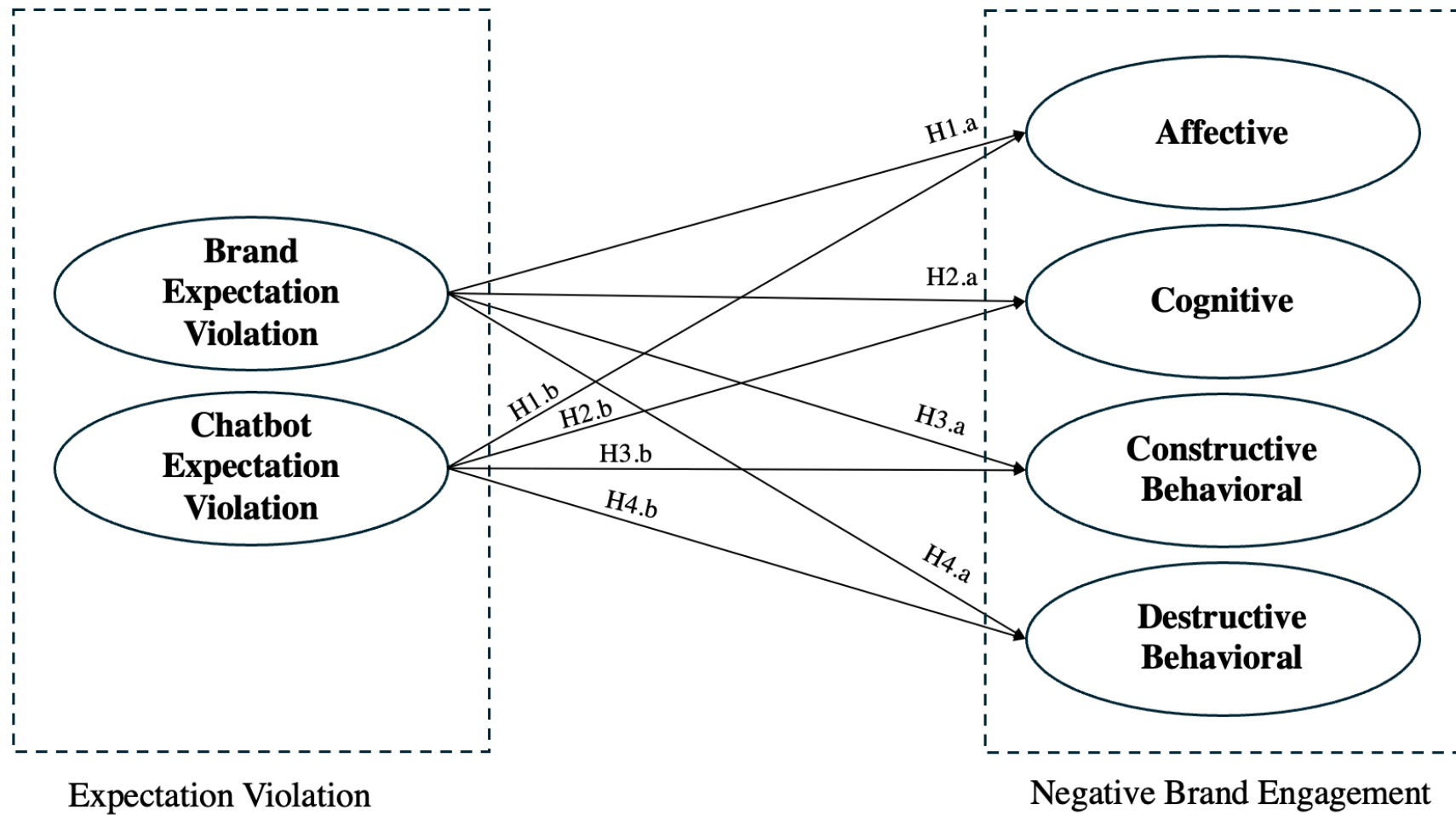
Source: Authors’ own work

Table III. Hypotheses outcomes.

Hypothesis	Estimate	<i>p</i> -value	95% Confidence Interval		Outcome
			Lower	Upper	
H1a. Higher brand violation→Negative emotional brand engagement	0.152	<0.001	0.062	0.242	Supported
H1b. Higher chatbot violation→Negative emotional brand engagement	0.042	0.309	-0.039	0.124	Rejected
H2a. Higher brand violation→Negative cognitive brand engagement	0.221	<0.001	0.121	0.321	Supported
H2b. Higher chatbot violation→Negative cognitive brand engagement	0.065	0.150	-0.024	0.154	Rejected
H3a. Higher brand violation→Negative constructive behavioral brand engagement	-0.031	0.734	-0.209	0.147	Rejected
H3b. Higher chatbot violation→Negative constructive behavioral brand engagement	0.181	0.035	0.012	0.349	Supported
H4a. Higher brand violation→Negative destructive behavioral brand engagement	0.119	0.212	-0.068	0.305	Rejected
H4b. Higher chatbot violation→Negative destructive behavioral brand engagement	0.199	0.026	0.024	0.374	Supported

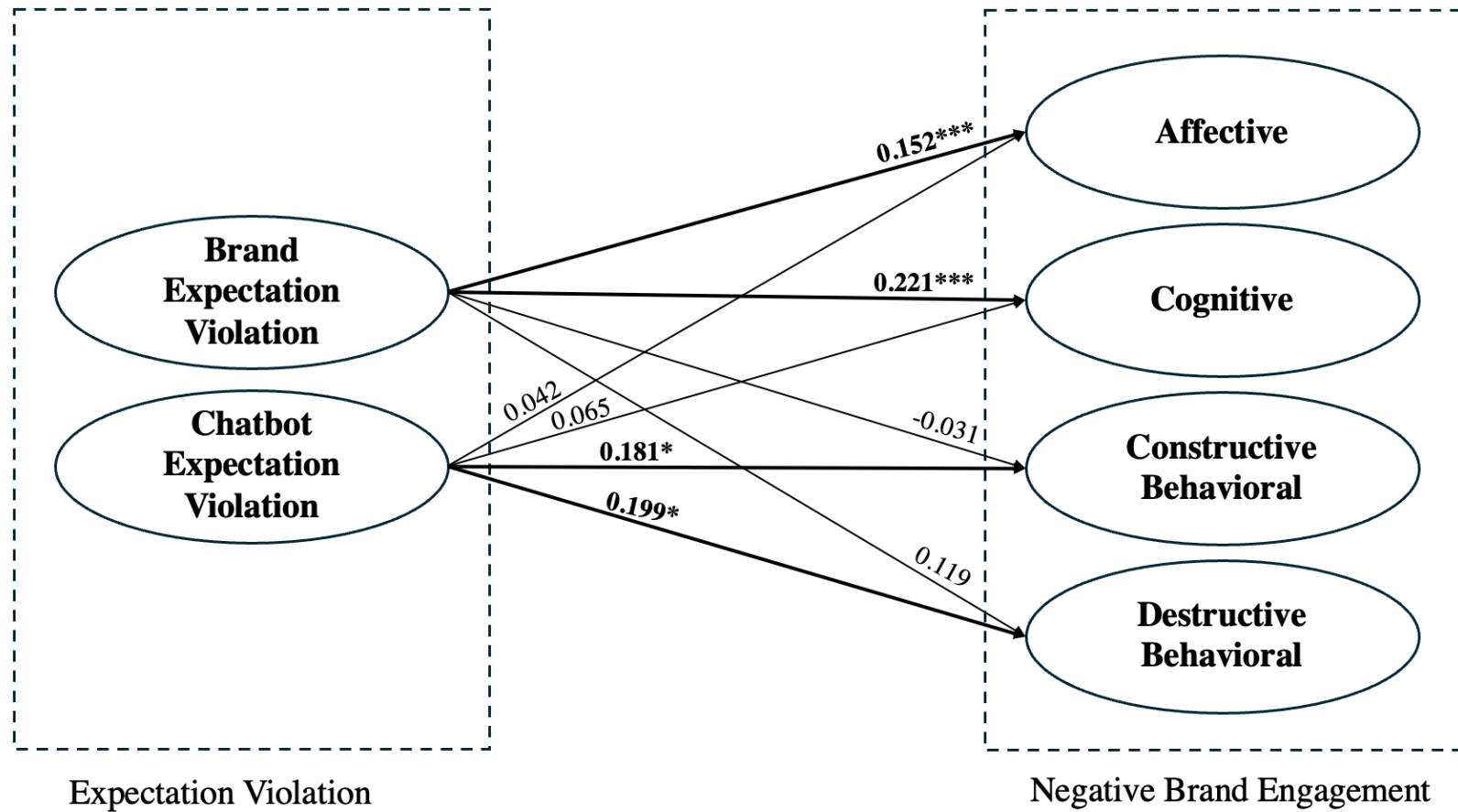
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Figure 1. Conceptual model



Source: Authors' own work

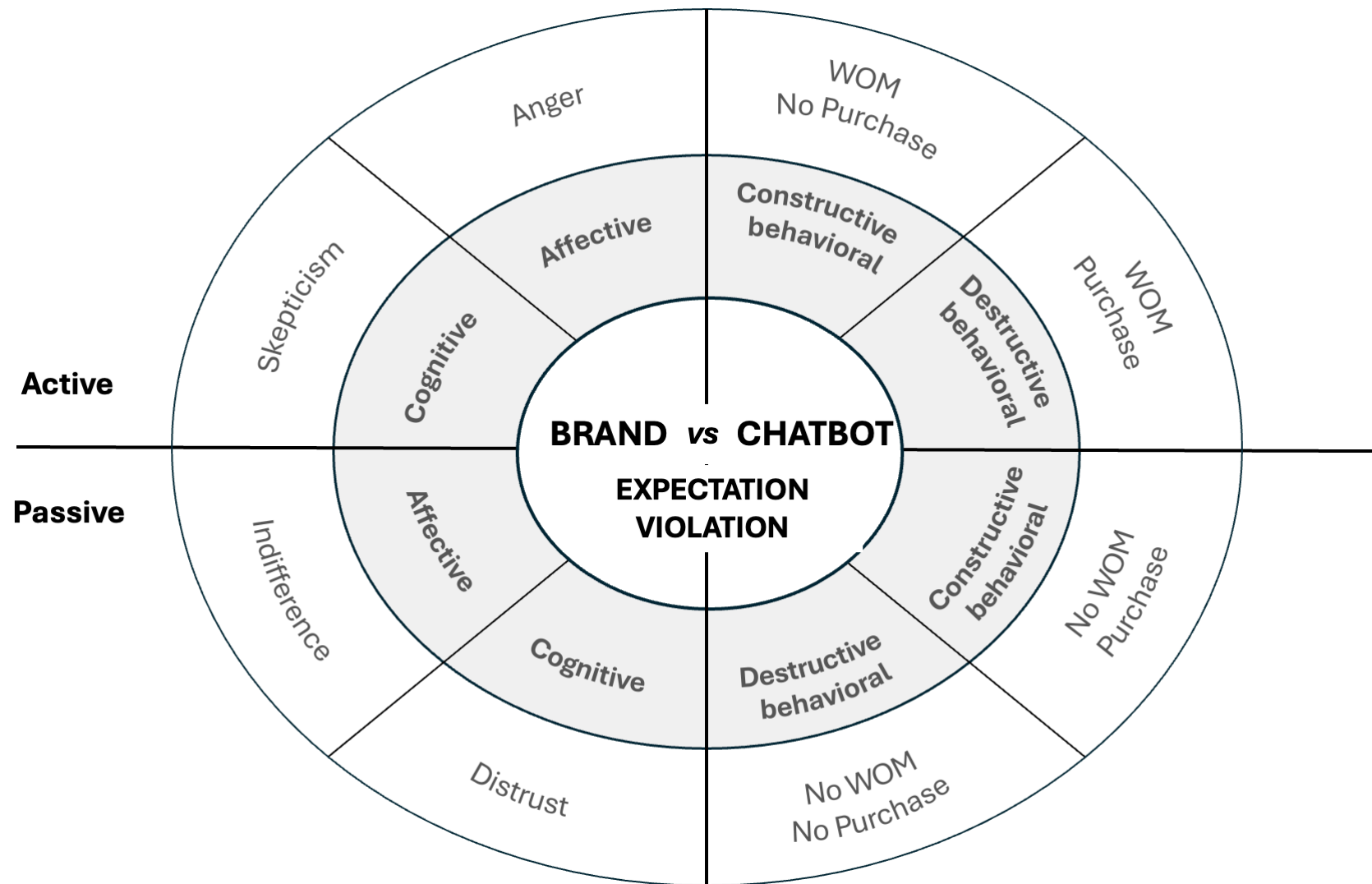
Figure 2. SEM Diagram



Notes: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Source: Authors' own work

Figure 3. key negative engagement manifestations



Source: Authors' own work

