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The power of Relational Advertising: the moderating effect of the Social Context on the association between Attachment Style and Willingness to Buy.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

In the current economic scenario, characterized by the presence of competitive markets and consumers who are increasingly aware of what they want and what the many business can offer them, marketing researchers need to understand deeply the process of evaluation and creation of consumer's preferences that lead him to the final choice. This is necessary especially given the radical conclusions reached by recent researches in the last decades that, in the wake of the Experiential Marketing, have shown that there are emotional components that play an essential role in the consumer's decision-making process, that interfere with the individual's rationality, exerting a strong influence on his actions and decisions.

But what do these emotions depend on? And why, in the same situation, distinct individuals can feel different emotions, behave differently and, therefore, take different decisions?

The present thesis will try to give an answer to these questions taking into consideration some elements belonging to the personal sphere of consumers, such as their personality traits and their propensity for interpersonal relationships, both able to influence their economic choices.

The first chapter will be focused on the main academic theories proved by previous studies, which were taken in consideration with the aim of providing the right theoretical basis for the present research. This chapter will illustrate the *Attachment theory*, the distinction between *secure* and *anxious attachment styles* and their role in predicting the effectiveness of *"relational advertising";* it will expose the *Social Facilitation theory* and the implications of the particular social context; then, it will put together these two main exposed concepts, showing how the two attachment styles respectively react in a specific social context. Finally, the first chapter will end with the presentation of the research model and the formulated hypothesis.

The second chapter will explain the type of research method chosen to conduct the investigation of the present thesis, a survey with double scenario, and the reasons why this choice was made; it will illustrate the characteristics of the sample of the study, the modalities with which they have been reached and invited to the compilation of the questionnaire, the relative structure, the required tasks and the type of used measurement scales. Finally, the chapter will end with the illustration of the implemented pre-test and the received feedbacks.

The third chapter will focus on illustrating the procedures and methodologies adopted in the phases of preparation and execution of the statistical analysis, with the main intent to statistically test the hypothesis of the conceptual model of the study. It will first explain how the collected data have been subjected to the data pre-processing; then, it will illustrate the specific statistical analysis techniques used, the achieved results and the relative discussions. Finally, the chapter will end illustrating the practical implications and limitations of the present study, which may be taken as a starting point for possible future studies on the same covered topics.

CHAPTER 1 - THEORETHICAL BACKGROUND

The first chapter of this thesis will illustrate the main academic studies, whose proved models and assumptions constituted the right theoretical basis for the treatment of the topics covered by the present research and that, at the same time, represented a valid starting point for the development of the related investigation.

In particular, the topics that will be exposed in this chapter are the following:

- Attachment theory

- Relational advertising

- Implications of the specific social context

In particular, the first section will be devoted to the illustration of the *Attachment theory* and to the distinction between the two main psychosocial profiles studied in the present thesis, *secure* and *anxious attachment styles*; their main characteristics and personality traits will be described.

A study, that represented a good starting point for the research of this thesis, will be than presented; it used the model of attachment theory to obtain new potential forecasts on how the role of the attachment styles is able to predict the *"relational advertising"* effectiveness.

The next part of the chapter will include another essential component for the present study, the particular *social context* and the implications that derive from it. In this regard, this section will illustrate how the specific social context influences the advertising effectiveness and will introduce the *Social Facilitation theory*, a model that describes and analyzes the tendency of people to perform differently when in presence of others than when alone; in particular, in the wake of this theory, there will be a focus on how the presence of others influences impulsive purchasing.

The last part of this chapter will put together the two main exposed concepts, investigating how the two different attachment styles, anxious and secure, respectively react in the specific social context of reference, being alone or in the company of friends.

Finally, on the basis of the several presented theories, the chapter will end with the presentation of the conceptual model of this thesis and the relative formulated hypotheses that represent the starting point of the present research.

1.1. ATTACCHMENT THEORY

1.1.1. Attachment theory, the psychosocial model

The several emotions that arise in people, if placed in particular situations and contexts, derive from processes that act at the unconscious level and that are, at the same time, the result of the their personality; this, in turn, is the consequence of individuals' past interpersonal relationships that contribute to the formation of their characters traits, from the first moments of life.

To better understand how the interpersonal sphere of the individual interferes with his actions and his way of being and, therefore, also with the emotional components that arise in him when face specific situations, it is useful to consider the psychosocial model of the **Attachment theory,** a theoretical construct that identifies different types of attachment style, describing their essential peculiarities, that reflect the individuals' behavioral and affective attitudes and tendencies in interpersonal relationships, as a result of their prior experiences (Thomson & Johnson, 2006).

More specifically, the attachment theory states that the type of relationship that everyone develops in his first years of life with his caregivers (usually parents) form his perceptions and expectations about relationships with others throughout his life (David & Bearden, 2017). This means that people have particular interpersonal inclinations depending on the type of emotional relationship they experienced during the childhood; on the basis of caregivers' responsiveness, children develop different cognitive and emotional "working models" of relationships, which inevitably influence the interpersonal behavior of the individual in predictable ways from childhood to adulthood (Manning, 2003). Individuals with different past emotional ties will have a distinct predisposition to interpersonal relationships and will interpret the attitudes and the behaviors of people around them differently.

If caregivers are perceived by children as constantly present and responsive to their needs, they are more likely to become people who have high self-esteem, a good perception of themselves and of others and who can live quietly both alone and in close contact with others; if, instead, the caregivers in childhood are perceived by the children as absent and inconsistently responsive to their needs, they are more likely to become individuals characterized by anxiety and/or avoidance of relationships (Manning, 2003).

1.1.2. Secure and anxious attachment styles

The classical literature about attachment theory states that people can fall into three main categories of attachment style, named respectively **secure, anxious,** and **avoidant** (David & Bearden, 2017).

Secure attachment style includes those people who, having a solid past emotional basis, because they have been cared for in a reliable and responsive way, have positive inclinations and expectations towards interpersonal relationships and they believe that others are available and can represent a real support in time of need (David & Bearden, 2017).

In the **anxious attachment style** fall those people who in their childhood have been cared for in a inconsistent way and, consequently, they need to be constantly close to other individuals even if, at the same time, they are worried about social bonds (Mikulincer & Nachson, 1991).

Finally, in the **avoidant attachment style** fall those people who in their childhood have been cared for in a unresponsive way and, for this reason, they were forced to become very independent; they are emotionally unconcerned in social relationships and show an attitude of detachment towards others (David & Bearden, 2017).

The present thesis will focus on the study of only two types of attachment styles: *secure* and *anxious*; this can be explained by the fact that, while secure attachment styles have always represented the majority of people within a given society, on the other hand several and substantial changes in current social contexts have led to a drastic increase in the level of attachment anxiety, bringing the portion of people that can be identified as anxious attachment styles to be much greater than in the past (David & Bearden, 2017). This tendency could be explained, for example, by the fact that currently both parents spend most of the hours of the day away from home, at work; therefore, while previously at least mothers represented a stable point of reference for children, today even the figure of the mother is less present in their daily life, often leading to the need to hire baby sitters or find alternative solutions. From this it can be derived that, even if certainly it is not possible to generalize, children could feel lost and miss their parents in the early stages of their lives, thus giving rise to forms of anxiety attachment. On the contrary, the recent social trends do not seem to have led to significant changes in the levels of avoidance attachment.

Moreover, the decision to focus only on anxious attachment styles, as the extreme opposite to secure attachment styles, is also explained by the fact that individuals who fall into the category of anxious attachment style are characterized by a strong concern about how they and their behaviors can appear and be interpreted by others. Therefore, it means that they see interpersonal relationships as an essential and stressful part of their life (David & Bearden, 2017) and, as will be clear during this thesis, the particular social context and interpersonal relationships represent essential elements of the present study and its subsequent analysis.

Securely attached individuals feel comfortable both in being in a relationship and alone, although they usually prefer to be engaged in a relationship in which they generally tend to be independent, seeking, at the same time, to maintain a strong sense of intimacy with their partner. Secure attachment styles generally trust their partners and are confident and comfortable about how they build their healthy relationships, even if they can sometimes become jealous. They build and have a strong image of themselves and their partner (Schacter et al., 2009).

On the contrary, anxiously attached individuals, in the context of a relationship, have the constant fear of being abandoned, they worry a lot about the partners and their point of view, not only on the relationship per se, but also on the idea of themselves (Arriga et al., 2018). More precisely, they base much of their own self-worth on if they get approval, attention and responsibility from their partner. From this, it follows that very often the anxious attachment styles are "sticky" people in the interpersonal contexts and that, when they face rejection, they generally run towards the source of it.

From this analysis, it arises that these two attachment styles have totally different conceptions of themselves, of relationships and of their way of living them. On one hand, indeed, there are people who are sure of themselves, of the goals they want to achieve in life and who are aware of the fact that they are able to live quietly alone, but who prefer life in a couple that they manage in relaxed and peaceful way; on the other hand, there are people who are insecure and depend heavily on the idea of relationships and their partner, even though they are very fearful of interpersonal contexts.

It is important to analyze the personality and the relational aspects of people and to identify the attachment style category in which it is possible to locate them, because individual differences in

interpersonal relationship of attachment style represent a valid tool thanks to which it is possible to predict the likelihood of consumer relationships' success. Indeed, it has been demonstrated that the specific type of attachment style represents a precious resource for predicting levels of commitment, satisfaction and engagement in relations involving brands and service providers (Thomson, Johnson, 2006).

1.2. RELATIONAL ADVERTISING

1.2.1. Relational advertising, a definition

Attachment theory was adopted to acquire new and valid insights in predicting consumer decision making that leads to his final choice. In particular, a study of the *Personality and Individual Perspective* entitled *"The role of interpersonal attachment in shaping consumer preferences for products shown in relational advertisements"* used the psychosocial model of attachment theory to obtain new potential forecasts on the effectiveness of advertising strategies representing interpersonal relationships, to which it is possible to refer using the expression **"relational advertising"** (David & Bearden, 2017). To be clearer, it is possible to define "relational advertising" those ads that depict a group of individuals. In detail, the cited study has set the objective of investigating how the role of interpersonal attachment styles affects the formation of preferences towards the products shown in this type of advertising.

The two concepts, the attachment theory and the relational advertising, are connected to each other as both relate to the interpersonal sphere of the individual and to his conception of relationships; they allow to investigate how the personal characteristics can influence the reactions and responses of the consumer to advertisement, trying to understand the impact that the representation of interpersonal stimuli in ads has on the formation of the preferences of the promoted product. From this, it is easy to understand that, according to this study, interpersonal attachment styles play an essential role in the prediction of consumer behavior.

Starting from this assumption, the authors of this article succeeded in proving that ads representing relationships exert different effects on the evaluations provided by people that can be identified with different attachment styles.

1.2.2. The role of attachment styles in predicting advertising effectiveness

The authors of the cited study, from the beginning, expected that the secure attachment styles, who are optimistic and confident in relationships, would have preferred products promoted in relational ads and that, instead, the anxious attachment styles, characterized by concern and mistrust of social relations, would have preferred products represented in non-relational ads.

Through an experiment and a statistical analysis of regression, the cited investigation has, indeed, proved that securely attached individuals show a greater likelihood of buying the product promoted in an advertisement with relational stimuli and that anxiously attached individuals show a lower likelihood of buying the promoted product represented in a relational advertisement (David & Bearden, 2017).

The authors have conducted the ad hoc experiment, showing randomly to the participants of the research sample, under laboratory conditions, one of the two ads (relational and non-relational) for a period of 20 seconds. To the participants, identified between secure and insecure attachment styles, a series of questions were then asked to measure their likelihood of buying the product shown respectively in one case ad depicting people and in the other one ad where, instead, the product was promoted by a single person represented in the advertisement in question. The authors of the study, based on the recorded responses, then developed the above cited conclusions, demonstrating that securely attached individuals show a greater likelihood of buying products promoted in a relational ad and that anxiously attached individuals show a lower likelihood of buying products promoted in non-relational ads.

The participants of the experiment were subjected individually to the view of relational or non-relational ad; what would happen if the social context in which people create their own assessments and preferences about relational advertising and the products represented in it was changed?

If people were asked to evaluate a specific relational ad and the promoted product once alone and once in the company of friends or, in any case, thinking of choosing that product to share it with them, would the relations demonstrated by the study presented above remain the same?

In particular, the curiosity of the present thesis arose from understanding if the two attachment styles, secure and anxious, would have changed their inclinations towards the ad and the proposed product only because placed in two different social contexts, alone and in the company of friends.

However, the biggest interest was mostly about anxious attachment styles; indeed, if on the one hand it could be possible to think that secure attachment styles, being already so sure of themselves and confident towards other people, could maintain this general positive approach towards life, also because they feel comfortable to be in the company of others, on the other hand, it could be possible to ask: how would insecure attachment styles react if the social context of reference was changed from be alone to be in the company of friends? Would their sense of insecurity and concern for others increase or be lightened by the presence of someone else?

The present research, also based on the studies that will be exposed in the next part of the present chapter, has hypothesized that insecure attachment styles, when in the company of friends, could have a less negative general approach towards themselves and others.

In the next part of this chapter, the studies that will be presented could help to understand why, in this research, it has been decided to investigate what has been stated above, first showing the relationship that exists between the specific social context and the effectiveness of advertising and then investigating the reactions of attachment styles when they change the reference social context.

1.3. IMPLICATIONS OF THE SPECIFIC SOCIAL CONTEXT

1.3.1. Advertising effectiveness in social contexts

There are many factors that influence the way in which the consumer processes the information transmitted to through advertising and that, consequently, influence his behavior.

In the past years, several scientific researches were carried out with the aim to measure the effectiveness of advertising by analyzing mainly the components of the transmitted message (texts, images, colors, sounds, tone of voice, etc.), the used means of communication (press, TV, radio, web) and the features of the target consumers of communication (gender, age, habits, etc.).

However, only recently, it was realized that, in order to obtain a more complete and exhaustive assessment of the effectiveness of an advertising campaign on consumers, it is necessary to take into consideration also the conditions in which the recipient of the message is located at the moment in which he is exposed to the advertising stimuli.

Marketing researchers have thus begun to expand the field of investigation in question, going beyond the elements that can be measured even in a laboratory on a limited sample to determine the effectiveness of an advertising message and focusing, instead, more on the real context in which most people are facing daily when look at a new advertising announcement. Therefore, marketing research started to take into consideration also the so-called *"social dimension of advertising",* meaning the social context in which the generic consumer is located when he is exposed to a communication stimulus (Kamins et al., 1989). Other people and social interactions are elements capable of exerting considerable effects on the psychology of the consumer when he looks at an advertisement and he processes the transmitted information (Pozharliev et al., 2017).

The home, the street, the office, the restaurant, the gym and all people that surround each of us every day are respectively all environments and entities, which together constitute the social contexts that can influence people looking at and process an advertisement.

In particular, several marketing researches affirm that social contexts exert a strong influence on four key factors used to measure the effectiveness of advertising: Attention, Emotion, Memory, Preference and Purchase Behavior (Pozharliev et al., 2017).

- **Attention**. People with whom an individual is at the moment when looking at an advertisement represent an element that can influence his attention allocation towards that announcement. In some cases, the social context increases the attention index towards advertising; being in the company of other people, indeed, can lead to notice details to which otherwise would have not paid attention if alone. On the contrary, being in the company of others can only represent a strong source of distraction, which means not paying much attention to the advertising message and the information contained in it.

    A particular case is represented by socially sensitive commercials; in these situations, being in presence of others while looking at ads that promote products such as contraceptive methods, can arouse embarrassment in people and, consequently, can lead to a minor attention location due to the concern of the idea that other people can get about yourself.

- **Emotion**. The specific social context can enhance emotional engagement triggered by an advertising message with emotional value or, on the contrary, it can deaden any form of emotional experience. For example, it has been shown that men experience less emotional involvement when are in presence of other men, which would probably not happen when they are in the presence of women or, in any case, of people with who men are not embarrassed by feeling emotions.

- **Memory**. The situation and the context created while being in the company of other people can exert a strong influence also towards advertising memory, especially in cases where the transmitted message has value of social desirability, or it can lead to forget easily what has been seen. It may happen to look alone, after some time, at an ad seen for the first time in the company of others and remember it only because it is connected to people and to the social context in which it has been seen for the first time. On the contrary, the presence of other people can lead to a lower effectiveness of advertising, measured by delayed ad recall.

- **Preference and Purchase Behavior**. The social context in which the generic consumer is located when he looks at an advertisement, exerts a strong influence on the way in which he evaluates the advertising message and, consequently, the formation of personal considerations and preferences and, therefore, the buying behavior.

Based on these considerations, it is clear and justified that the researchers' interest in the effectiveness of advertising campaigns has shifted towards the particular social contexts in which people are present.

1.3.2. Social Facilitation theory

From the examples made about the strong potential "power" that social contexts can exercise on how the consumer processes and evaluates an advertising message, it is easy to understand that it is not necessary

that the other persons, with whom people are when looking at an ad, say or do something specific to influence the process of acquiring the information contained in the advertisement.

In all these situations, indeed, the ***"mere presence"*** is sufficient; with this expression, it is usual to indicate *"what is left when the other does not offer the chance for imitation or competition, cannot control the performance or provide any relevant information"* (Markus, 1978). Therefore, the mere presence implies the situation in which individuals are simply in the company of other people, regardless of any kind of influence they may exert, for which it is possible to speak of *passive presence* (Sanders, 1981).

It is precisely the mere presence of people to be taken into consideration and carefully studied in the so-called **Social Facilitation theory**, a psychosocial model that describes and analyzes the tendency of people to perform actions differently when in presence of others than when alone (Strauss & Bernd, 2002).

This field of study has been introduced by Norman Triplett (1897), who was the first to investigate the effect that the presence of an audience has on the performance of any action made by any person. To reach this conclusion, Triplett made several experiments, among which the best known is certainly that of the cyclist, of which he compared the performance when he ran alone and when he ran in competition with another cyclist; the researcher found that the cyclist improved his performance if he competed against another rider, compared to when he ran alone, in which case he was slower.

A second experiment, as representative as the previous one, is the one carried out in 1898 to study the competitive nature of children; also in this case, it was found that the children were much faster in their activities if placed in a competitive context (Strauss, 2002).

Subsequent studies have investigated beyond the competitive nature of people, until, Floyd Allport (1924) coined the expression *"Social facilitation"* to indicate the general tendency of people to improve their performance, in the presence of an audience, regardless of the competitive context. (Strauss, 2002)

This phenomenon has been explained as the direct consequences of the passage of an individual from a non-social to a social condition, in which the mere presence of others triggers something in him that leads

him to perform normal daily actions in a different way than when he is alone; it is a real state of arousal that is raised in people as a result of the presence of others.

However, it has subsequently been shown that this state of arousal can lead people to both positive and negative consequences on their behavior (Gaumer & LaFief, 2005).

In particular, it has been demonstrated that *"the presence of other people will enhance the performance in speed and accuracy of well-practiced tasks, but will degrade in the performance of less familiar task*s" (Kirby, 2011); this means that, when a subject is in the presence of other people, he tends to perform better simple tasks and actions, which he often accomplishes in a very easy way and, on the contrary, he performs worse more complex tasks.

1.3.3. The influence of social context on the impulsive purchasing

Examining in depth the concept that the mere presence of others involves a change in the way an individual carries out a performance, either enhancing or degrading it, it is important to cite a study, published in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* (Luo X., 2005), which investigates the effect of the specific social context on the individual's urge to purchase.

Specifically, the article examines how the presence of other people influences the *impulsive purchasing* of an individual, where the impulsive purchasing can be defined as *"a consumer's unplanned purchase"* (Kollat & Willett, 1967) and that depends heavily on factors such as time, money, mental and physical availability to purchase and even on the mood of the consumer at a given time (Rook & Gardner, 1993). In particular, Xueming Luo (2005) in his analysis went beyond these elements and examined three different dimensions and the type of influence that they exert on the willingness to purchase of the generic consumer. These dimensions are:

- *the presence of other persons;*

- *the group cohesiveness;*

- *the individual's susceptibility to influence.*

Regarding the first variable taken into consideration, *the presence of other persons*, the author of the cited article makes a difference between the influence exerted by peers and that exercised by family members,

which represent the two primary sources of social influence. In his opinion, while the presence of peers has the tendency to lead an individual to purchase, as they represent for him a sort of justification for the purchase itself or for reasons of social desirability, on the contrary, the members of a family have the tendency to limit the inclination to purchase, especially to impulsive purchase, because they usually inspire and transmit to the individual a sense of responsibility and, therefore, their presence acts as an incentive not to spend savings unnecessarily.

According to the researcher, the likelihood of purchase also depends on *the group cohesiveness*, which means whether the group is attractive or not to its members and on the *susceptibility to influence*, expression used to define *"an individual's willingness to accept information from other people about purchase decision"* (Bearden & Etzel, 1982). This concept immediately suggests the susceptibility to influence that anxious attachment styles show, given the extreme importance that they attribute to interpersonal relationships and to what others think about them and their choices.

The cited study proved that the different kind of influence exerted by peers and family members on the individual willingness to buy is even greater when the reference group is cohesive and the people are susceptible to being influenced.

To investigate the type of effect that these three variables exert on an individual's urge to purchase, the participants of the research were asked to think making the purchase choices, proposed by the specific experiment's situation, imagining being in the presence of other people, such as peers or family members. Xueming Luo (2005) decided to ask respondents, represented by undergraduate students, simply to imagine the presence of others in some proposed social context, and not to carry out the experiment in real physical presence of other people, and to imagine the sensations, the emotions and feelings they would have felt on that occasion. The author decided to conduct the experiment according to these conditions for some explained reasons: first of all because, even if physically alone, just imagining the presence of other people influences the interviewee's choices, leading him to a greater or lesser probability of purchase; because imagining being in company of others experimentally can exert effects similar to those aroused by the real physical presence and, finally, because just imagining the presence of others reduces the effects linked to bias due to social desirability.

These conditions, under which the respondents had to participate in the experiment, proved to be effective; they have shown ease and naturalness in imagining being in company of other people in different social situations and this led to significant results for the study, showing that *the presence of other persons*, *the group cohesiveness* and *the individual's susceptibility to influence* have a significant influence on the consumer economic choices and on his urge to purchase.

The respondents, indeed, imagining the presence of peers, showed a greater impulsive buying and urge to purchase, compared to when they imagined the presence of family members who, on the contrary, had the effect to decreased the impulsive buying; furthermore, the study showed that the urge to purchase is greater when the peers are cohesive and when the respondent in question showed high susceptibility to influence.

1.3.4. The responses of attachment styles in different social contexts

Going beyond the type of effects arising from the mere presence of other people on the way in which an individual makes a generic performance and, in particular, on his purchase choices, it is important to underline that further studies have concluded that the mere presence does not affect everyone in the same way; therefore, not only the facility of a task or the dimensions that are able to influence purchase choices should be taken into consideration, but it must also consider more personal characteristics of the individuals who perform the action, which could mean that the mere presence of others has a distinct kind of influence on different individuals.

A study, published in *Journal Research in Personality* (Uziel, 2007), expanded the field of investigation of the theory of the reactions of individuals in presence of others and used individual differences as a moderator of the typical effect of social facilitation, with the aim of demonstrating that in presence of an audience, not all people react in the same way, because there are components that are more closely linked to the personality of everyone that play an important role. More specifically, the article showed that it is possible to identify mainly two macro-models of responses to the mere social presence: the so-called *positive-self-assured* and *negative-apprehensive*.

Liad Uziel (2007) explained that these two macro-categories of responses correspond to two general orientations of individuals, stable over time, towards the social context: a positive orientation, which include individuals with a strong self-esteem and with an extroverted, and a negative orientation, including those people who, on the contrary, have a low self-esteem and an introverted and emotionally unstable character. The so-called *"Big Two"* dimensions of personality have been identified, extraversion and neuroticism, and it has been shown that the mere presence of other people leads to an improvement in performance for positively oriented subjects and a deterioration in performance for negatively oriented subjects.

The different ways in which people react to social presence are the result of their past experiences, especially during childhood and adolescence, of the inclination towards the relationships they have developed during their lives and, therefore, of their personality. Extroverted people have a positive and optimistic predisposition towards what and who surrounds them and, therefore, also towards emotional stimuli and interpersonal relationships, in which they have the tendency to play a dominant role, even though they are assertive; for this kind of people is extremely easy to integrate into new social contexts where they feel well accepted, which means they have a high self-esteem. In contrast, the more introverted individuals experience all that is around them with a veil of negativity and pessimism that "darkens" every aspect of their lives, including interpersonal relationships. They are people whose personality is characterized by high levels of shyness and anxiety and a marked propensity for demoralization and depression. All this, of course, is reflected in their attitude towards interpersonal relationships and their fear of social rejection; negatively oriented individual, indeed, have a low sense of social inclusion and this leads to a low level of self-esteem.

From these extremely opposite characteristics of the so-called Big Two dimensions of personality, derive completely different types of reactions of individuals when, in presence of other people, carry out their actions and tasks.

The above cited article is particularly important talking about social facilitation, because the previous studies related to this psycho-social model have almost always ignored the individual differences due to the individuals' character and personality, focusing exclusively on the degree of complexity of the task to

be performed as the main moderator; in this case, instead, it has been proposed a dual personality-based approach to social presence. In particular, as anticipated at the beginning of this paragraph, it has been shown that spontaneous reactions of enthusiasm, challenge and creativity, usually generated in people associated with extraversion, when they are in the presence of others, lead to a positive orientation that, in turn, leads to an improvement in performance compared to when they are alone. On the other hand, reactions characterized by anxiety and worry, arisen in individuals associated with neuroticism, when in presence of an audience, lead to a negative orientation, that causes a deterioration in performance compared to when they are alone.

In addition, the present study also specified that people with positive orientation can be associated with a greater improvement of simpler tasks when in presence of others because, in these cases, the sense of challenge and the propensity to exhibit lead them to an improvement even greater of a performance considered already simple in general and that will appear even easier for them.

People with negative orientation, instead, may be associated to an even more accentuated deterioration for complex tasks; in these cases, indeed, the feelings of worry and anxiety lead these subjects to perform poorer performances when in the presence of others, as they will perceive even more hard a task that is already complex by its nature.

Therefore, the mere presence of others implies, for positively oriented people, a better performance both for simple and complex tasks and, for the negatively oriented people, a deterioration of the performance both for simple and complex tasks.

From a careful analysis of the study presented in this paragraph, it is possible to deduce that the personal characteristics of people and the traits of their personality represent an essential element to explain the social facilitation effect, that is, therefore, moderated by individual differences.

The differences shown by the study just examined between the two general orientations of individuals, respectively positive and negative, immediately suggest the typical orientations of the different attachment styles identified and illustrated at the beginning of this chapter, secure and anxious.

Indeed, it is possible to create a clear parallelism between the Big Two dimensions of personality, extraversion and neuroticism, and the two main attachment styles examined in the present study, secure and anxious attachment styles, of whose main characteristics have been extensively presented.

In particular, the secure attachment style fully fall into the so-called positive orientation because, as previously stated, it includes a type of people with high self-esteem, optimistic towards everything that surrounds them, including the relationships that they manage with great serenity, always feeling at ease. On the other hand, the anxious attachment style fall within the negative orientation, given that individuals with low self-esteem are part of this category; they are pessimistic and strongly concerned about what other people can think of them, with whom they have difficulty in building solid relationships.

Just as many past studies have neglected the role played by individual differences in the social facilitation effect, another significant limitation of the previous researches about the actions and reactions of people in social contexts is represented by the fact that they have neglected the effect that the specific social context has on the expression of attachment styles. Only few studies, indeed, have taken into consideration and analyzed the role of the attachment styles in the social conditions that are part of normal life; one of these is represented by the study of Sheribaum and Kwapil (2015), entitled *"Attachment style predicts affect, cognitive appraisals and social functioning in daily life"*, whose main objective was to analyze the particular expressions of attachment styles in daily life, using ESM (Experience Sampling methodology).

Through the results of this study, it has been possible to elaborate important considerations about the way in which the different attachment styles behave in everyday situations and contexts; in particular, the most important differences were found between the secure and the anxious attachment styles.

It has been found that the securely attached individuals report high positive affect and generally appear happy and positive towards who and what surrounds them, showing that they are particularly sure of themselves and confident in their own abilities. On the contrary, the anxiously attached people report high negative affect, have a constant fear of losing control during the day and perceive negatively themselves and their abilities; they are strongly mistrustful of other people and of what they say or do, assuming a real hypervigilance attitude. Specifically, when the anxiously attached individuals are in the company of

people whom they do not feel close to, their concern about what others think of them and the fear to be rejected are amplified.

Another study, as much significant, is represented by the investigations of Torquati and Raffaelli (2004) in which they, through a sample of undergraduate college students, examined how the emotions related to the experiences and situations of everyday life differ according to the type of attachment style, secure or insecure, and the particular social context, being alone or in the presence of familiar intimates, where this expression indicates the romantic partners, friends and roommates with whom common people are in daily contact.

This work studied and analyzed the different attachment styles as an organizational construct for everyday emotions in varying social context; people, indeed, react differently in a given social context because their expectations, inclinations and emotions aroused in them by interpersonal relationships differ according to the type of attachment style in which they are identified. The article carried out a careful comparison of the emotional states that people live in everyday life as a function of the particular profile of attachment style and of the specific social context in which they are located, demonstrating that secure and insecure attached individuals live in their everyday life completely different emotional experiences.

This cited study, before proceeding into the heart of the analysis, first underlines the main differences that exist between the secure attachment styles, which tend to have a positive representation of themselves and of other people, and the insecure attachment styles, characterized by a general more negative approach and with a hypervigilance attitude towards people around them, and then examines the different emotional moods and experiences in two main social contexts, alone / with familiar intimates.

The results of this study are clear and significant: both securely and insecurely attached individuals show more positive moods and emotions when they are in the company of familiar intimates compared to when they are alone; secure attachment styles, when they are with their friends, family members and partners, they feel loved, accepted and appreciated for what they are and also the insecure attachment styles show themselves more positive when they are in the company of others. In particular, the investigation has shown that, especially in the insecure attachment styles, more negative emotions are aroused when they are alone, as opposed to what happens when they are in the company of others. In moments when

insecurely attached people are alone, indeed, their moods characterized by insecurity, worry, loneliness and distrust towards themselves and others are amplified compared to when they are in situations that they live in the presence of their familiar intimates. When they are alone, they show low levels of energy, interpersonal connection and positive affect, all dimensions that, instead, report small but significant differences e improvements when insecurely attached individuals are in the presence of their familiar intimates.

All these differences, which represent very important results for the examined study, have clearly demonstrated the existence of a significant influence exerted by the particular type of attachment style, in a specific social context, on the emotional experiences lived by every person on a daily basis. The specific attachment style influences people emotions and mood both when they are alone and when they are with their familiar intimates and, therefore, in interpersonal contexts.

In particular, by carefully examining the results of the investigation, it is clear that insecure attachment style need the presence of their familiar intimates (friends, relatives or partners) to develop a more positive general orientation both towards themselves and the others; on the contrary, the secure attachment style continue to show a positive mood probably because they have a positive predisposition towards themselves and those around them that characterizes them even in normal situations, even when they are alone.

Summing up, Torquati and Raffaelli (2004) showed that secure attachment styles live more positive emotional experiences than insecure attachment styles, regardless of the social context taken into consideration, both when they are alone and when they are in the company of their familiar intimates. The insecurely attached people show, instead, more negative emotional moods compared to the securely attached in both the social contexts examined.

However, taking into consideration only the experiences and emotional moods that the insecure attachment styles live daily, two fundamental conclusions have emerged: they feel far more negative emotional states when they are alone than when they are in company, and, on the contrary, they show an improved humor and live more positive experiences when they are in the presence of their familiar intimates; their moods of pessimism, distrust of themselves and others, their concern of not to being

accepted and of the judgments that others may have of them are placated and they show more positive signs of their general orientation about themselves and everything around them. From this, it arose the curiosity of understanding if the insecure attachment styles can behave differently simply due to the fact that they are in the company of their friends, their partner or their family members and therefore assume, in these contexts, a more relaxed approach to everything that they think or do.

In this regard, the interest of my thesis became that of starting from the conclusions reached by the study of *relational advertising* and try to understand if, by altering the social context of reference, attachment styles elaborate different assessments towards a relational ad; the objective is, therefore, of investigating how the role of the particular attachment styles (**anxious** / **secure**) and of the specific social context in which they are located (**alone** / **in the company of friends**) affect the formation of preferences and, therefore, the willingness to buy (**WTB**) the product promoted in a relational ad.

The goal is of understanding if anxious attachment styles change their reactions to an ad that represents interpersonal relationships, showing a greater willingness to buy for the product promoted in this kind of ad only because they even just imagine being in the company of their friends.

Indeed, based on the result of the study of *relational advertising,* combined with the assumptions proved by the several studies about the social presence, this thesis will try to comprehend if, while they are alone, insecure attachment styles, who have a general negative orientation, show a low willingness to buy a product promoted in a relationship advertising, on the contrary, when they are in the presence of their familiar intimates, that are moments in which they show a general more positive orientation, they can instead show a greater willingness to buy the product promoted in a relational advertising.

The conceptual model of the present work and the three main hypothesis are show below, with the aim of better identify the variables being investigated and better explain the type of relations among them that this study aims to prove:
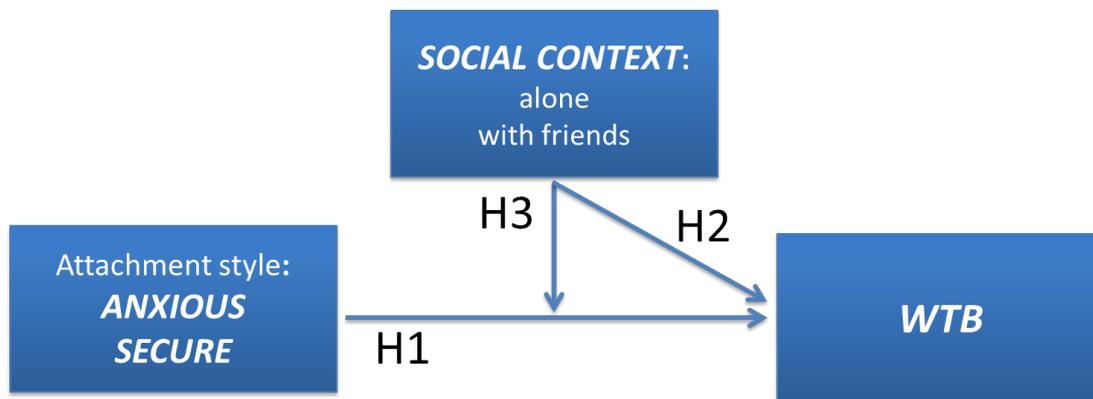
Figure 1.1. Conceptual model.

H₁: *There is an association between SECURE and WTB.*

H₂: *The WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends is greater than the WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone.*

H₃: *Social context has a moderating effect on the association between ANXIOUS and WTB; specifically, there is a higher positive association between ANXIOUS and WTB when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends, compared when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone.*

CHAPTER 2 – METHODOLOGY

In the second chapter of the present thesis, the research methodology used to create the ad hoc survey for the investigation in question and the related modalities and procedures of execution will be illustrated.

In particular, the topics that will be exposed in this chapter are the following:

• Research method

• Questionnaire structure

• Measures

This chapter first of all will include a part dedicated to the survey methodology and the reasons this research method has been chosen; the characteristics of the survey respondents, constituting the sample of the study, the modalities with which they have been reached and invited to the compilation of the questionnaire will be illustrated.

In the second part of the chapter, the structure of the questionnaire and the tasks to which the respondents have been submitted in each section will be described; the contents of the survey will be illustrated in detail, with the aim of making the topics investigated by the hypotheses formulated at the end of the first chapter more explicit and clear.

In the third part of the chapter the type of measurement scales that were used in the questions asked to the respondents and the reason why the choice fell on them will be explained.

At the end, there will be a last part in which the pre-test implemented with a reduced number of respondents and their feedbacks will be illustrated.

2.1.   RESEARCH METHOD

2.1.1. The choice of the survey as research method

For the present thesis, the chosen research method was the **survey**, one of the most common methodologies of investigation for collecting primary data, that consists of the use of a questionnaire to gather a significant number of opinions and attitudes.

In particular, in this work, the survey was used with the main intent to record the kinds of reaction to the relational advertising stimuli of individuals taking part in the study and their inclination for interpersonal contexts.

Since the interest of this research was also to see if people take different decisions depending on when they are alone or in company, it was necessary to produce two versions of the questionnaire, which differed only by the type of social condition imposed on respondents.

The survey methodology is based on some assumptions that represent the key reasons for which it has been decided to use it for the present research.

In particular, using a survey:

- the representativeness of the sample in question is expected;

- the survey goal consists of observing a sample able to describe the entire population;

- the results are used to generalize the conclusions that affect the entire population.

The specific type of survey that has been used in this study is the **online survey**, chosen taking into account the relative advantages, such as the speed of collection of responses, the potential high quantity of primary data available on the field, the low cost and the geographic distribution of potential respondents (Bethlehem & Biffignandi, 2012). Another important reason why it has been decided to use the online survey was to allow people to fill out the questionnaire at the moment of the day they preferred, to dedicate all the time they needed to fill in and to do it in an environment where they felt comfortable, without feeling the awe and pressure they might have felt in real laboratory conditions.

2.1.2. Sample survey

The survey was elaborated on Qualtrics, a subscription software for collecting and analyzing data for market research, whose license has been provided by LUISS Guido Carli University, and it was distributed via an anonymous link, sent by personal messages and e-mails to potential respondents, who were able to choose whether to proceed or not with the completion of the survey, available in two languages, Italian and English.

In this way, it has been possible to quickly and easily reach a large number of people, distinguished by different personal characteristics, who could take the role of participants in the survey drawn up.

The potential respondents were not selected based on any specific criteria, as the main topics from which the investigation in question is derived, attachment style and social facilitation theories, are phenomena that include all people without any particular distinction of gender, age, achieved level of education or ethnic or geographical origin, as it has been widely explained in the first chapter.

The specific profiles of attachment style, indeed, consist of a series of personal characteristics and personality traits that are formed in individuals from the early years of age and that distinguish each of them for the rest of the life; in the same way, the type of inclination that people show for interpersonal

relationships, characterizes and differentiates them from others in every stage of their existence. This does not mean that the attachment style profile in which a person can be identified and his social inclination remain unchanged forever; indeed, although each of us can maintain a certain personal and social orientation more or less constant, there are some events and situations that can influence us and modify some aspects of these orientations. What is certain, however, is that each individual, in every stage of his life, can be identified in a specific attachment style and shows a certain inclination towards social relationships.

In the present study, indeed, there was no interest in investigating the above-mentioned phenomena by means of a survey sample that had specific personal characteristics; on the contrary, the survey developed was designed with the aim of making it easy to understand and compile for the largest number of people, without any specific requirement.

The sample of respondents used for the research in question, indeed, can be defined a *convenience sample* that is a type of non-probability sampling method where the sample is taken from a group of people easy to contact and reach. The only criteria taken into consideration in this type of sampling methodology are the availability of potential respondents and their willingness to fill in the questionnaire proposed to them. (Saunders et al., 2012).

The link associated with the survey, as well as through personal messages and emails, was made available also to the users of social network such as Facebook and Instagram, just to allow all interested people to fill out the survey, aware of collaborating in the drafting of my master's degree thesis, as specified in the invitation to the compilation. To the respondents constituting the research sample were not offered any money reward; indeed, each potential participant, after reading the introduction of the questionnaire, in which the topics and the purpose of the study in question were specified, were free to choose whether to proceed with the compilation or not.

Another important specification that needs to be done about the sample survey is that, since two versions of the questionnaire were produced, it was possible to identify two subsamples, whose components were selected randomly among the potential respondents.

More specific details about the characteristics of the survey sample will be illustrated in the descriptive analysis part, in the next chapter of this thesis.

2.2. QUESTIONNAIRE STRUCTURE

The survey developed for the study in question was anonymous, it consisted of 40 questions and the average time of compilation was of 6 minutes.

The choice to conduct an anonymous questionnaire derived from the consideration that people do not always express easily their own way of being, their personality traits and the sensations and emotions that are aroused in them by external stimuli; likewise, individuals may have difficulty in indicating the kind of inclination they have for interpersonal relationships and this because they may be intimidated in talking about this topic with others.

The 30 questions of the questionnaire were divided into 9 questions that did not provide any response from the participants, but that had only the function of illustrating the contents of the different sections, and 21 multiple choice questions, for which the respondents had to choose and select one or more response options, depending of the kind of questions asked.

The choice of structuring the questionnaire using only closed-ended questions was taken considering the advantages related to this type of questions, such as the ease of response for the participants, who in this case only have to choose the answer option that most suits them, and the speed with which they can conduct the survey at any moment of the day; in addition, multiple choice questions represent an advantage also for those conducting research, as the answers obtained can be quickly recorded and are easily classifiable and usable for the analysis that follows.

The structure of the questionnaire consisted essentially of four main parts, distinguished in four different blocks of questions, respectively named:

1. *Introduction*

2. *Relational Advertising*

3. *Attachment Style*

4. *Demographics*

In the following paragraph there will be a more detailed description of each of the sections making up the four different blocks and the tasks to which the participants part of the survey sample were submitted.

The complete questionnaire, in both versions, in the structure and in the form as presented to the respondents, can be consulted in the final part of this thesis, in the Appendix A.

2.2.1. Introduction block

The first section of the questionnaire consisted of a part of text designed to invite the potential participants, acceding to the survey through the associated link, to fill out the questionnaire. In particular, the introduction contained the explanation of the purpose for which the survey was drawn up, the writing of my master's degree thesis, the reason why the respondent's participation was important and a reassurance about the anonymity of the answers and about the fact that there were no right or wrong answers, but that what mattered was only his opinion. Few lines, moreover, were dedicated to the explanation of the topics focus of the questionnaire and, finally, it was indicated an e-mail address to contact in case of any doubts or clarifications about the questionnaire.

At the end of this first section, everyone could decide freely whether to continue with the completion of the questionnaire and then proceed with the compilation of the subsequent sections or withdraw from participation in the study exposed in this first part and then simply abandon the questionnaire.

The text contained in this first section below:

"Hi! I invite you to become a participant in the realization of my master's thesis and I ask you to fill in the following questionnaire that will take only a few minutes of your time.

Your contribution is essential for me!

The questionnaire is completely anonymous and does not provide right or wrong answers, what matters is only your opinion.

You will be asked to respond to simple and quick questions that focus on the so-called "relational advertising" and the individual inclination for interpersonal relationships.

For any doubt or clarification, do not hesitate to contact me at the e-mail address rosanna.capparelli@studenti.luiss.it

Let's begin!"

2.2.2. Relational advertising block

The second section of the questionnaire, fundamental for the investigation under consideration, has been created to show to the respondents some stimuli of relational advertising and to measure their willingness to buy the relative promoted product, asking them to imagine themselves in a specific social condition, being alone or in the company of friends, depending on the two produced versions.

As anticipated, indeed, it was decided to elaborate two different versions of the questionnaire which differed only for the type of social condition imposed on the two respective random subsamples. Some of the respondents, in particular 92 of them, were asked to express their degree of willingness to buy, imagining being in the company of their friends, while on the other hand, 92 other respondents were asked to express their degree of willingness to buy by imagining being alone. The other sections of the questionnaire were identical for both scenarios.

The relational advertising stimuli used for this research consisted of five **movie posters** representing interpersonal relationships, with the aim of promoting the related film. The choice to use this specific form of relational advertising resides in the fact that movies represent a type product, generally appreciated, both by men and women, of any age, with any cultural background. Moreover, more importantly, films are products that could be well linked to different social conditions; indeed, people can choose to watch them either alone or in the company of other persons.

Since one of the main objective of this study is to see if distinct attachment styles can express a different willingness to buy towards a product promoted in a relational ad, depending on the specific imposed social condition, the film posters and the consequent choice of film, proved to be the right alternative for the survey in question.

More precisely, the task assigned to the participants in this section of the questionnaire, in both the survey scenarios, was to invite them to observe five different movie posters, promoting five different films, and

to indicate for each of them, only on the basis of the impressed images, the degree of probability with which they would have decided to buy the ticket to watch at the cinema, respectively alone or in the company friends, the promoted film.

The used movie posters presented the following three common characteristics:

1. all the movie posters promoted films belonging to the **comedy genre**. The choice fell on this kind of film with the intent to overcome limitations related to specific personal tastes of respondents in terms of film and to consider a type of movie that, in general, reach the consensus of a good part of people. Moreover, comedy is a genre of film that is well suited to be watched either alone or in the company of other persons, that were the two social conditions being studied;

2. all the movie posters represented a valid form of relational advertising, as the images used to promote the related comedy represented interpersonal relationships;

3. all the movie posters required the respondent to imagine himself in a specific social condition. After observing every movie poster, respondents were asked to imagine being in front of the entrance to the cinema, in the first survey version *alone* and in the second one *in the company of friends*, and to indicate the degree of probability with which they would have decided to buy the ticket to watch the film promoted by the poster in question.

To clarify the idea of the task assigned to respondents in this section of the questionnaire, two examples of the five movie posters shown to respondents and the two typologies of questions, used respectively in the two versions of the survey to measure the willingness to buy, are shown below:
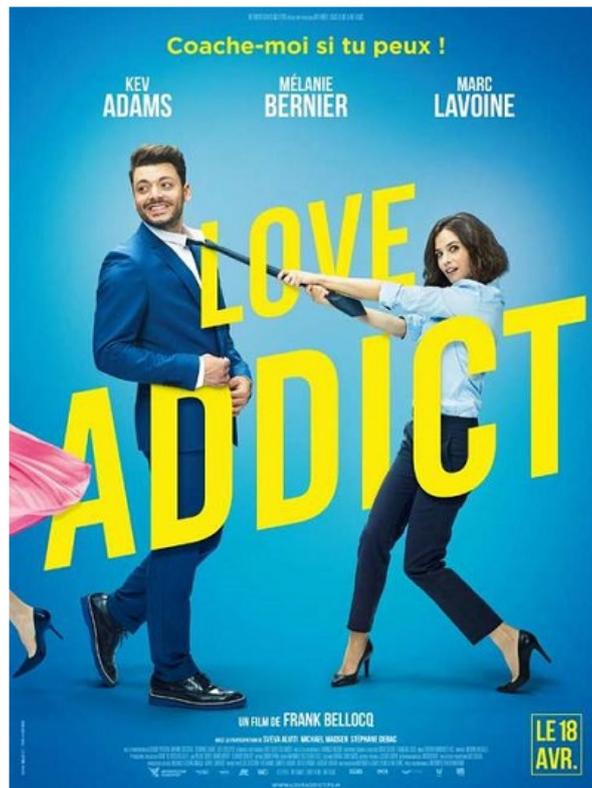
Figure 2.1. Love Addict (FilmTV.it, 2018).

Figure 2.2. Papa ou maman (FilmTV.it, 2015).

Each of the movie posters shown was followed by a question which required respondents to imagine themselves in a specific social condition, respectively be alone or be in the company of friends, according to which they had to indicate their degree of willingness to buy.

The type of question asked under each movie poster, in the first version of the survey, to measure the willingness to buy they respondents:

*"If you were facing the entrance of the cinema **alone**, how likely would you choose to buy the ticket to watch the film promoted by this poster?"*

The type of question asked under each movie poster, in the second version of the survey, to measure the willingness to buy they respondents:

*"If you were facing the entrance of the cinema **in the company of your friends**, how likely would you choose to buy the ticket to watch the film promoted by this poster?"*

As it is possible to see above, in both types of questions to measure the willingness to buy of the participants, the specific social condition (*alone* / *in the company of your friends*) that was required the respondents to imagine was highlighted in bold. This because the intent was to avoid that the participants of the survey neglected or forgot the particular social condition imposed for the questions related to each movie poster .

Another aspect of this section important to specify is that the participants of the survey were asked, in the respective two versions of the questionnaire, simply to imagine being in front of the entrance of the cinema *alone* or *in the company of friends*.

For the version that implied to imagine the presence of friends, indeed, it was not required to complete the survey in the actual physical presence of other people, but only to imagine being in that situation in their company. In the present study, the influence exerted by the presence of other people, in this case of friends, on individuals' reactions to relational ad of the movie posters and, consequently, on their

willingness to buy, was inferred from participants' responses to situations in which they had to imagine taking part.

The starting point to follow this strategy was taken from an article published in 2005 in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* (Xueming Luo, 2005), already exposed at the end of the first chapter, which investigated how shopping done in the presence of other people is able to influence the impulsive purchasing. Even in the mentioned study, indeed, the participants of the experiment were asked to imagine themselves in different situations that reflected four experimental conditions, to imagine being in each of these scenarios in the presence of peers and to respond to the questions imagining the sensations, the emotions and feelings they would have felt on that occasion.

In the wake of the decision taken by the author of the exposed article to proceed in this direction, this approach has also been maintained in the present study on the basis of the following proven reasons: first of all because, even if they are alone, just imagine the presence of other people, this influences the respondents' choices, leading to their greater or lower probability of purchase; because imagining the presence of others experimentally can exert effects similar to those aroused by the real physical presence and, finally, because just imagining the presence of others reduces the effects linked to bias due to social desirability (Xueming Luo, 2005).

Another reason for which it has been decided to proceed with this technique and, therefore, not asking the participants to fill out the survey with the real physical presence of their friends, is linked to the fact that the social facilitation implies that the individual behavior and performances are influenced already by the mere presence of another person, without it being necessary for the other person to say or do something in particular, thus maintaining a neutral position.

In this regard, it was thought that, since the survey was sent via an anonymous link and, therefore, each participant was able to fill it out in autonomy without a supervisor assisting in the compilation, there could have been cases in which the presence of a friend during the completion, it would not have been really neutral or other cases in which the participant would not have really asked a friend to assist him during the compilation of the questionnaire; in these cases, therefore, the answers would not have been completely true and the collected data would have been falsified.

A further observation that can be made about movie posters used in the questionnaire is that they are all posters promoting foreign comedies, as can be deduced from the title of the films and the texts impressed on the posters; the choice of using movie posters that did not include Italian names, texts and that did not depicts Italian actors was intended for the study in question and can be justified mainly by two reasons. The first reason why it has been decided to use these kind of movie posters is that the goal that it has been wanted to achieve through the questionnaire was to focus the respondents' attention only on the images printed on the posters; in the questionnaire, indeed, the participants were asked to indicate the degree of probability of buying the ticket to watch at the cinema the promoted film, relying exclusively on the images impressed on the poster. This strategy was followed with the aim of trying to maximize the effect aroused in people by the stimuli of relational advertising, focus of the present study.

The second reason why it was decided to use in the questionnaire movie posters of non-Italian films is related to the attempt to avoid that the final choice of respondents, revealing their willingness to buy towards the shown film, was also influenced by other variables, such the *familiarity*, both with the promoted film and the actors portrayed on the posters. In this regard, it is important to specify the fact that the choice of the posters selected and used in the questionnaire was made also trying to consider posters depicting faces of actors not known to the Italian public; for this reason, not only have foreign posters been chosen, but the real effort has been to search for posters of comedies known mostly in the countries where the film was produced and distributed.

With the aim of assessing whether the variable familiarity affected the degree of willingness to buy expressed by the respondents for each of the proposed relational stimuli, at the end of the section in which the several movie posters were shown, it was asked the participants if they already knew one or more of the posters shown and / or the relative promoted films; in case of positive response, it was asked to indicate those already known. These last two questions about the familiarity of the movie poster and the respective film were necessary for the phase of data cleaning of the collected data, before proceeding with the statistical analysis.

Therefore, one of the main attempts pursued by means of the produced questionnaire was to avoid that any other element or variable, in addition to the relational images impressed on the posters, would have

affected the willingness to buy of the participants; for this reason, a randomization option was used in showing the five movie posters to the participants of the study. To be clearer, through this option, to all respondents of the questionnaire, the several movie posters appeared in a different order from each other; in this way, it has been avoided that a preset order of appearance of the posters in some way have affected the evaluation of them.

Furthermore, as anticipated, the randomization option was also used for the composition of the two subsamples subjected to two different scenarios of social condition.

All these measures have been adopted because, in this type of research method, it is fundamental to try to minimize the potential bias that can lead to a distortion of the achieved results.

For this reason, before sending to the potential respondents the link associated with the final survey, it is also important to perform a pre-test and submit the questionnaire to a limited number of people in order to quickly become aware of possible errors and proceed with the relative appropriate modifications, as it has been done in the present study.

2.2.3. Attachment style block

The third section of the questionnaire, was aimed at measure the levels of secure and anxious attachment styles of the survey participants.

Also in this case, the questions of the block were preceded by a brief description used to explain, even if not in depth, the purpose of this section of the questionnaire, that was to investigate the individual inclination to interpersonal relationships.

Respondents were then shown twelve different statements, about which they had to express their degree of agreement or disagreement; this section was the same for both versions of the questionnaire.

The task as described and requested to the respondents and the list of the twelve used statements below:

"In this section of the questionnaire, you will have to express your degree of agreement or disagreement about the following statements concerning your approach to interpersonal relationships:

1. *I feel a certain amount of anxiety in my relationships with others.*

2. My desire to be close to others scares people away.

3. I often need reassurance from others in my relationships.

4. I worry about being neglected or ignored by others in my relationships.

5. I find that others don't want to get as close as I would like.

6. I get nervous if others are not available when I need them.

7. I am very self-reliant in my dealings with others.

8. I often discuss my problems and concerns with others.

9. turn to others in times of need.

10. I seek out others for comfort and reassurance.

11. I enjoy giving support to others.

12. Others seek me out for support and comfort in times of need."

2.2.4. Demographics block

The last section of the questionnaire, as usual for this method of data collection, was intended to gather some personal data of the respondents, the so called *demographics*.

In particular, the two types of personal information requested were *gender* and *age*. It was decided to collect only these two types of personal data because, as explained clearly at the beginning of the present chapter, there were no particular characteristics related to the personal sphere of people who particularly interested the object of the research in question. For this reason, it was decided to include in the survey only these demographic questions with the aim of having available the basic information of respondents, through which easily classify them by means of some descriptive statistics.

2.3.   MEASURES

The main objective of this last part of the second chapter of the present thesis is to illustrate the types of measurement scales that were included in the questionnaire and why they were selected to inspect the phenomena of interest in this research.

The scales used to measure the variables of the conceptual model of this thesis have been developed based on the existing literature and previous scientific studies and articles, using, where possible, existing scales. This is to make sure that the tools used in the questionnaire submitted to respondents were also valid from a scientific and statistical point of view.

In this regard, it is necessary for reasons of clarity, to recall the three main variables included in the conceptual model of the present research:

• *ANXIOUS* and *SECURE* attachment styles;

• *SOCIAL CONTEXT*

• *WILLINGNESS TO BUY* (*WTB*)

In the following three paragraphs, the types of measurements used for each of these variables will be illustrated and explained.

2.3.1. Attachment style measures

With regard to the attachment styles, the interest of the present study has always been to make a distinction mainly between two defined and well differentiated psychosocial profiles: *secure* and *anxious*. For this reason, the goal of the questionnaire section dedicated to this topic was to find, for each of the respondents, the type of inclination they have towards interpersonal relationships and social contexts; this was possible thanks to the emerged levels of agreement and disagreement that the participants of the survey expressed towards the twelve statements shown to them. Indeed, through the use of these assertions, it has been possible to determine the proportions of the respondents who have shown respectively high and low levels of anxiety and self-confidence.

For this purpose, the attachment style measurements were based on previous studies referring to the *ECR model*, *Experiences in Close Relationships*, developed for the first time in 1998 by Kelly Brennan, Catherine Clark and Philip Shaver (1998), an 18-item self-report used to evaluate the construct of the attachment style.

This model, characterized by high reliability, is based on the assumption that it is possible to use a self-report questionnaire to measure the individual attachment orientations; through the use of item-scales, it assesses levels of attitudes to intimacy, discomfort with closeness, self-reliance, jealousy, fear of abandonment, fear of rejection. Each item on the ECR is answered on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1, that means "strongly disagree" to 7, that means "strongly agree", with a middle score of 4, that means "neutral" (Brennan et al., 1998).

Many different measurement scales have been developed over the past years with the aim of identifying individuals in a specific attachment style, but most of them have been developed starting from the ECR model.

In this thesis, the twelve statements used in the questionnaire to measure the respondents' type of inclination towards social relationships and the way in which they live them, derive from the ECR model. The participants of the survey were asked to express their degree of agreement or disagreement about these assertions on a 7-point Likert scale codified in the following way:

Strongly disagree = 1
Disagree = 2
Disagree somewhat = 3
Neither agree or disagree = 4
Agree somewhat = 5
Agree = 6
Strongly agree =7

The statements used in the survey contained elements that, on the basis of the answers provided by the participants, proved to be very useful for delineating for each of them a profile pertinent, more or less, to the two attachment style orientations of interest.

From the answers provided, indeed, it was possible to identify relevant aspects of the individuals being studied and their attitudes towards interpersonal relationships, such as, for example, the way of living and managing personal bonds, the desire for closeness to other people and the ease with which it is reached,

the degree of confidence and trust towards themselves and others, all aspects that together characterize the way people conceive themselves and their relationships with other people.

In particular, high levels of agreement expressed about the first six statements, outlined profiles pertinent to the anxious attachment orientation:

1. *I feel a certain amount of anxiety in my relationships with others.*

2. *My desire to be close to others scares people away.*

3. *I often need reassurance from others in my relationships.*

4. *I worry about being neglected or ignored by others in my relationships.*

5. *I find that others don't want to get as close as I would like.*

6. *I get nervous if others are not available when I need them.*

On the other hand, high levels of agreement expressed on the remaining six statements, outlined profiles pertinent to the secure attached orientation:

7. *I am very self-reliant in my dealings with others.*

8. *I often discuss my problems and concerns with others.*

9. *turn to others in times of need.*

10. *I seek out others for comfort and reassurance.*

11. *I enjoy giving support to others.*

12. *Others seek me out for support and comfort in times of need.*

2.3.2. Social context measures

The social context represents another essential variable for the present study. The interest of this research, related to this variable, was mainly in understanding if people make different decisions according to the different social context of reference. In particular, the goal was to understand if the respondents could

41

change their willingness to buy, in this case towards a movie ticket, depending on whether they had to imagine being alone or in the company of friends.

This variable appeared on the questionnaire as a double condition imposed on the respondents in the questions used to measure their willingness to buy the ticket to watch at the cinema the film promoted by the movie poster shown. Indeed, *social context* was the manipulated independent variable, through which it was possible to create two different scenarios (*alone* / *in the company of friends*) of the same questionnaire.

It was decided to propose, through the "double survey", only these two social conditions, be alone and in the company of friends, without including other figures such as parents, partners, work colleagues, essentially for two reasons, first to avoid creating confusion in the respondents by proposing them, in the version that provided for the company of other people, a scenario always different with each of the posters shown and, therefore, divert their attention from the entrusted task; secondly, as explained in the academic studies presented in the first chapter, the effect that derives from being in the company of other people differs according to the group of influence considered. In this regard, it was decided to consider only the company of friends, in order to maximize the effect that the company of other people has on the purchase choice and obtain sharp results in the analysis between only two alternatives, without any partial outcomes.

Indeed, as illustrated in the part of the literature review, Luo X. (2005) have shown a significant difference between the influence exerted by peers and that exercised by family members; while the presence of peers has the tendency to lead an individual to purchase, as they represent a justification for the purchase or for reasons of social desirability, on the contrary, the members of a family have the tendency to limit the inclination to purchase, because they usually inspire a sense of responsibility and, therefore, their presence acts as an incentive not to spend money unnecessarily.

Given that one of the objectives of this thesis is to prove the increase of willingness to buy when individuals are in the presence of other people, the figure of the friends was the most suitable for the purpose.

2.3.3. WTB measures

A 7-point Likert scale adapted from a study of Mohr and Webb (2005), characterized by high reliability ($\alpha = .93$), was used to measure the willingness to buy of the survey participants.

Next to each of the movie posters shown to the survey participants, they were asked to indicate the degree of probability with which they would purchase the ticket to watch at the cinema the movie promoted by the poster shown, indicating their choice on a 7-point Likert scale codified in the following way:

Extremely unlikely = 1
Moderately unlikely = 2
Slightly unlikely = 3
Neither probable nor improbable = 4
Slightly probable = 5
Moderately probable = 6
Extremely probable =7

2.4. PRE-TEST

With the aim of verifying the clarity and completeness of the produced survey, for both versions, a preliminary test was carried out on ten people (five per social scenario), included in the convenience sample submitted to the research in question; they were asked to fill in the two elaborated versions of the questionnaire and to provide any kind of feedback that could be useful to implement any changes and refinements before proceeding to send the link associated to the questionnaire to the potential respondents.

The participation of these volunteers proved to be very important, as they made a significant contribution to answering questions that had been asked during and after the development of the questionnaire, such as:

- are the questions understandable for all potential respondents?
- have the questions been placed in the correct order in the questionnaire structure?
- are additional sections or questions necessary?
- are the instructions provided to respondents for completing the questionnaire clear?

- the questions, as they have been formulated, will be able to provide useful data for the research?

In order to answer these questions and to full check the questionnaire before proposing it in a definitive version to the survey sample, the respondents employed for the pre-test were asked to complete the online questionnaire both on computer and on mobile device, checking also the quality of display on the kind of devices allowed for the compilation, and to give judgments about the survey done.

Some of the suggestions received from the respondents, for which it was necessary to implement changes to the original questionnaire, below:

- highlight the specific social condition imposed in the two proposed scenarios and the fact that the respondents must imagine to be, according to the cases, alone or in the company of friends and to express their degree of willingness to buy on the basis of the feelings and emotions that the particular social context raise in them;

- underline the fact that, in indicating their degree of willingness to buy towards the promoted film, the respondents must be based only on the images impressed on the film posters;

- standardize the size of the posters, whose dimensions on computers appeared very different from each other and, some of them, not convenient to view, because too large to be displayed on one screen.

However, the results of the pre-test also brought several positive feedback:

- in general, the survey was defined simple, fast and easy to be filled out by anyone interested;

- the length of the survey was deemed adequate for the type of proposed study;

- the time required for compilation was not considered excessive;

- the questionnaire's contents have captured the attention and the curiosity of the pre-test respondents, who have found the questions, to which they had to respond, interesting; in particular, they judged the section showing the movie posters as pleasant and engaging and the section dedicated to measure the personal attitude towards interpersonal relationships as

stimulating; according to them, answering these latter questions, people have the opportunity to reflect on themselves and the way in which they live their relationships;

- the pre-test respondents who have completed the version of the questionnaire that provides for the social condition *in the company of friends*, said they found easy to imagine this social scenario and to express their degree of willingness to buy in this hypothetical context.

After making all the changes deemed reasonable and necessary based on the pretest feedback, the survey was confirmed and distributed via an anonymous link.

CHAPTER 3 - DATA ANALYSIS

The present chapter will focus on illustrating the investigation procedures and methodologies adopted in the preparation and the execution of the statistical analysis, with the main intent to test the three hypotheses of the conceptual model presented in the previous chapters of this thesis and to illustrate the reached results and conclusions.

In particular, the macro topics that will be exposed in this chapter are the following:

- Data preparation

- Statistical analysis and results

- Discussion

- Practical implications and limitations

The first part of the chapter will be dedicated to illustrate how the collected data have been subjected to the so-called **data pre-processing**, with the aim of obtain a complete data set suitable to proceed with the subsequent phases of analysis.

In the second section of this chapter, the specific statistical analysis techniques used to study the available primary data and to test the hypotheses of the conceptual model will be described and, each time, it will be explained the reason why it has been decided to proceed with that specific type of analytical technique; the obtained results will be shown and commented with the intent to make clear the whole process of analysis.

In the third part of the chapter, the conclusions reached through the analysis carried out will be presented, with extensive discussions and explanations about what, by means of hypothesis tests, it was possible to prove or not.

Finally, in the fourth and last part of this chapter, the practical implications and limitations of the present study will be illustrated.

The content of the entire chapter, therefore, aims to provide a clear and complete overview of this final section of the present thesis work, whose main focus will be represented by the statistical analysis and consequent illustration of the achieved results and conclusions.

3.1. DATA PRE-PROCESSING

The first step of the statistical analysis process included all the procedures of the so-called **data pre-processing**, which is a data preparation phase, preliminary to the practical execution of the statistical analysis and essential to proceed with a correct and effective treatment of the obtained data.

It consists of a series of adjustments necessary to organize the information gathered during the data collection phase, with the aim of providing a complete data set easily accessible, containing information relevant to the study in question and which can be used efficaciously for the subsequent analysis steps (Pyle, 1999). The data analyzed in this thesis, can be defined as primary data, as they have been collected directly in the field through an ad hoc questionnaire realized on Qualtrics software for the present research and, therefore, not coming from previous empirical researches.

Data pre-processing is an essential phase in the marketing research process, as any element of incompleteness, incorrectness or inconsistency of the data can lead to distortions of the results and final conclusions. In order to avoid these problems, in this thesis **data cleaning** and **data transformation** interventions have been implemented.

3.1.1. Data cleaning

On the original Excel data set, exported directly from Qualtrics, containing information on all the responses recorded by the questionnaire, first adjustments that mainly fall into the so-called **data cleaning** have been made. Data cleaning is one of the most common tasks falling on data pre-processing and it represents an essential part of statistical analysis; it is the process of detecting and correcting errors in the data arising from various sources to get consistent data (Wu, 2013). In the specific case, this process was applied to the data collected through the questionnaire and consisted mainly in the treatment of answers that were incomplete or whose presence could have led to distortions of the final results.

Below there is a quick list of the main data cleaning interventions implemented on the original data set of this thesis work.

- Elimination of the data set columns named with respondents' personal information (e.g. name, surname, email address) that the Qualtrics data set provides by default; indeed, these cells of these

columns were empty, given that the survey was submitted to the sample to be answered anonymously, so that no strictly personal information was requested and, consequently, made available to the analysis phase.

- Elimination of information concerning respondents for whom some answers were missing; this type of intervention is part of the treatment of missing responses and, in particular, of the *casewise deletion* option, according to which the cases, or respondents, with any missing responses are discarded from the analysis.

- Elimination of information about respondents who answered positively about the familiarity with one or more movie posters shown in the questionnaire. As anticipated in the second chapter, this elimination process was carried out to avoid that the results concerning the measurement of willingness to buy were distorted by the previous knowledge of the proposed posters or films.

3.1.2. Data transformation

After having completed the changes related to the data cleaning, further interventions implemented on the original data falling into the so-called **data transformation** process (also known as data conversion), another task of data pre-processing. It is a process that consists of converting the original form of data to a new format (CIO.com, 2014).

This type of changes have been mainly implemented to create the new variables to be used on Stata software in the statistical analysis of the data.

More specifically, these variables were created in two different ways:

- mean of items-of a multi-item scale, used in the present research to obtain respectively the variables named *ANXIOUS, SECURE, WTB*;

- recoding, creating dummy variables (that take only values 1 or 0), as in the case of the variable named *SocialContext*, for which to the social condition "alone" the value "0" has been assigned, and to the social condition "in the company of friends" the value "1" has been assigned. This adjustment has been made with the aim of combining the answers of the participants of the two versions of the survey on a single data set.

3.2. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This second part of the third chapter of the present thesis will have as main focus the treatment of the statistical analysis carried out in the present research, with the aim of illustrating in detail and in a technical way all the analytical methods used for the scientific treatment of the data.

In particular, this section will include and illustrate both the so-called **descriptive statistics** and the **inferential statistics**, with the final goal of making this part of quantitative analysis as much complete as possible. The descriptive statistics are intended to describe the main and most evident r of the information contained in the data set object of analysis, but which do not allow to reach and extract conclusions or to make interferences about the collected data (Mann & Prem, 1995). Some examples of descriptive statistics are: frequency table, summary statistics, histogram, bar charts, pie charts; these are types of statistics able to describe all the same information, but with a different presentation of the data obtained.

On the other hand, inferential statistics consist of a set of methods, whose main purpose is to draw conclusions and interferences about the properties of populations based on data from a sample (Mann & Prem, 1995). Some examples of methods of inferential statistics are: regression analysis, t-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA).

There are several potential methods of statistical analysis that can be used to reach conclusions on scientific research; the reason why it is possible to opt for a certain technique of analysis rather than another depends essentially on the type of data available, which represent the object of analysis, and on the type of results to be achieved.

During the course of this chapter, the statistical techniques used for the study research in question will be exposed and the reasons why it has been decided to use each of these will be explained.

All the types of analysis performed in this study have been carried out on Stata, a statistical software whose license to use has been provided to the students of LUISS Guido Carli University to conduct scientific research.

3.2.1. Analysis of the variable *Gender*

The first type of method that was employed in this research is the **frequency table**, a descriptive statistic used in scientific research to know the number of times a specific value is repeated in its distribution (Malhotra et al., 2012); it describes one variable at a time and it is usually used for categorical data. The frequency tables provide values for three indicators named *Freq.*, *Percent* and *Cum.*; *Freq.* indicates the number of times a certain value is repeated in its distribution, *Percent* indicates the relative frequency for each value and *Cum.* represents the cumulative frequency in ascending order of the values.

In the present study, this type of descriptive statistic has been used with the aim of obtain information about the gender of the participants of the research.

Gender	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Female	100	54.35	54.35
Male	82	44.57	98.91
Not specified	2	1.09	100.00
Total	184	100.00	

Figure 3.1. Frequency table of the variable *Gender*.

From the frequency table above, it was possible to see that of the 184 people who completed the survey, 100 respondents are women, 82 respondents are men and 2 respondents have preferred not to indicate their gender; the *Percent* column shows that women, therefore, accounted for 54.35% of total respondents, men 44.57% and only 1.09% of participants decided not to express their gender.

3.2.2. Analysis of the validity and reliability of the multi-item scales

The next part of the analysis process was more focused on the statistical investigation of the variables constituting the conceptual model of the present research; in particular, the first step of this analysis consisted in inspecting the validity and reliability of the multi-item scales of the variables measured by 7-point Likert scale, *anxious*, *secure* and *willingness to buy (WTB)*. As explained in the second chapter, the

scales used to measure these variables were pre-validated scales; however, it is always important to test the validity and reliability of them after the data collection process of each specific research, to avoid that the results and the findings of the study prove to be distorted and useless.

For this reason, the following analysis techniques will be used to inspect the validity of these scales, through **Factor Analysis**, and then their reliability, through **Cronbach's Alpha**.

Factor Analysis is the study technique that is used when it is necessary to investigate the construct validity of the multi-item scales used and discover underlying patterns in order to find a smaller number of variables, the so-called factors (or components), which could largely explain observed variables (Malhotra et al., 2012).

The main purposes for which this type of analysis is used in research, therefore, are mainly two:

-   data validation, which consists in identifying underlying constructs in data;

-   data reduction, which involves reducing the number of variables of the study to a manageable set.

The *factor* is an "artificial variable" able to describe the correlation among a set of variables; highly correlated items are able to represent the same phenomenon; for this reason, the higher the correlation among the considered variables, the smaller the number of factors necessary to explain a given phenomenon.

A characteristic of this type of analysis is known as the *interdependence technique*, which means that in factor analysis no distinction is made between independent variables and dependent variables; all the observed variables correlate with each other and depend on unobserved factors (Malhotra et al., 2012).

The first variables that have been included in the factor analysis have been those related to the attachment style phenomenon; the six variables to measure the profile of the respondents' anxious attachment style and the six variables used to measure the profile of secure attachment style have been submitted to the Principal-Component Analysis.

In order to carry out this analysis, it has been set up to obtain only two factors that were able to represent the attachment style phenomenon and, more precisely, to explain respectively the psychosocial profile of anxious attachment style and that of secure attachment style.

After running factor, a factor rotation has been conducted with the aim of obtain a clear pattern and to analyse the scale validity and labelling; by default, the factor rotation has been performed on Stata software with the orthogonal rotation (*Varimax*) method. This method of rotation is used when there is no correlation and, therefore, the factors are independent, and when the aim is to generate new variables without inter-correlated components. Furthermore, the orthogonal rotation allows a simpler factor interpretation (Malhotra et al., 2012).

Through the obtained pattern matrix it has been possible have a clear representation of the relevance of each variable in the factor. In particular, the factor loadings, whose values are present in the first two columns of the pattern matrix, represent the correlations and weights between each variable and the relative factor; the more higher is the value of a certain factor loading, the more relevant it will be in defining the factor's dimensionality.

However, in the interpretation of the factors it is necessary to take into account also the size for practical significance, as specified below:

- > 0.30 minimal importance

- > 0.40 more important

- > 0.50 significant for practical purpose

For this reason, for the description of the two macro-variables *Anxious* and *Secure*, it has been decided to consider only the variables for which the value of the factor loadings was higher than 0.5. After such consideration, it has been possible to state that *Factor1* was significantly defined for practical purpose by five of the variables all related to the measurement of anxious attachment style and *Factor2* was significantly defined for practical purpose by four of the variables all related to the measurement of secure attachment style. It was thus possible to verify the validity of the multi-item scales of *anxious* and *secure* attachment styles.

These same variables have been used to create the two new variables, named *ANXIOUS and SECURE*, generated to describe respectively the anxious attachment style and the secure attachment style with a method called *Naïve*, that consists in aggregating the selected variables to create new ones.

After having tested the validity of the multi-item scales related to the measurement of the two attachment style and after having generated two new variables, *ANXIOUS* and *SECURE*, able to adequately describe these two psychological-social profiles, it has been necessary to also inspect the reliability the multi-item scales used in the study and, in particular, their internal consistency.

This kind of investigation, as previously anticipated, was conducted through the reliability analysis known as **Cronbach's Alpha**.

Reliability, in statistical analysis, means the extent to which a measure yields the same number or score each time it is administered, all other things being equal. Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of the internal reliability of multi-item scales; it is the average of all possible split-half coefficients resulting from different splittings of the scale items (Malhotra et al., 2012).

The values of alpha are range from 0 to 1 and the higher these values, the greater the reliability of the multi-item scale in question will be.

In particular:

-    values larger than 0.60 are considered acceptable;

-    values larger than 0.70 are considered good;

-    values larger than 0.80 are considered very good;

-    values larger than 0.95 indicate redundancy issues.

A typical property of this method of reliability investigation is that reliability can be increased by deleting an item with poor item-total correlations.

Conducting Cronbach's alpha analysis, it emerged that Cronbach's alpha of *Anxious* scale was equal to 0.7779 which, a value greater than the cutoff 0.7, representing a good reliability.

However, it has been noticed that one of the six items of *Anxious* included in the analysis was characterized by the lowest item-total correlations.

Eliminating this item from the analysis, Cronbach's alpha of *Anxious* scale became equal to 0.7984, a higher value than the previous one, very close to the cutoff 0.80, representing a very good reliability.

After this necessary adjustment, it has been possible to conclude that *Anxious* scale is reliable to be used in further analysis.

The same investigation on the reliability of multi-item scales has been carried out for the variables used to measure the secure attachment style. Cronbach's alpha of *Secure* scale resulted equal to 0.6808 which, a value greater than the cutoff 0.60, representing an acceptable value for the reliability of the multi-item scale.

However, even in this case, it has been possible to note that two of the total six items were characterized by the lowest item-total correlations; eliminating these two items from the analysis, Cronbach's alpha of *Secure* scale became equal to 0.7697, a much higher value than the previous one, close to the cutoff 0.80, representing a very good reliability.

After this necessary adjustment, therefore, it has been possible to conclude that *Secure* scale was reliable to be used in further analysis.

The Cronbach's alpha methodology, each time it is conducted, involves the generation of a new variable that is the average of the original variables included into the analysis in question. In the present case, after having calculated the Cronbach's alpha of the multi-item scales of the two attachment style and after having eliminated from the analysis those items that resulted in a minor alpha value, two new variables named respectively *anxious2* and *secure2* have been obtained, the values of which were the same as those of the variables *ANXIOUS* and *SECURE*, generated as a result of the Naïve method, employed after the factor analysis; from this, it has been possible to deduce that the analyses aimed at inspecting the reliability of the multi-item scales have been conducted properly and that, therefore, the variable *anxious2* and the variable *ANXIOUS* were the same and that, likewise, *secure2* and the variable *SECURE* they were also the same.

The same analysis, Factor Analysis and Cronbach's Alpha, carried out to inspect respectively the validity and reliability of the multi-item scales used in the present study, have been implemented for those measuring the willingness to buy of the participants of the experiment.

After having conducted the factor analysis and the subsequent factor rotation, through the obtained pattern matrix, it has been possible to see that only one factor appeared necessary to describe the variable *willingness to buy*, because it is appeared defined by all the five variables related to the measurement of

the willingness to buy. It was thus possible to verify the validity of the *willingness to buy* scale. Also following the criterion of size for practical significance, it emerged that, for the description of the variable *willingness to buy*, it has been possible to take into account all the five variables because the value of the factor loadings related appeared higher than 0.5; from this, it followed that that factor was significantly defined for practical purpose by the five variable in questions.

The same variables have been then used to create the new variable, named *WTB*, generated to describe the willingness to buy, with the Naïve method.

The step following the inspection of the validity of the multi-item sales used to measure the willingness to buy and subsequent creation of the new variable *WTB*, has been that of inspecting the reliability of the multi-item scales used in the study and, in particular, their internal consistency, through the analysis of Cronbach's alpha.

Cronbach's alpha of *willingness to buy* scale resulted equal to 0.8229, a value larger than the cutoff 0.80, representing a very good reliability.

In this case, contrary to what happened in the analysis of the internal reliability of the multi-item scales related to the two attachment styles, it has been not necessary to eliminate any of the items included in the reliability analysis with the aim of increasing the value of Cronbach's alpha; from this, it has been possible to deduce that all the items were reliable.

Therefore, it has been possible to conclude that *willingness to buy* scale was reliable to be used in further analysis.

After inspecting the validity and reliability of the multi-item scales used in the present study to measure anxious and secure attachment style and the willingness to buy of the respondents of the survey and after having generated three new variables, *ANXIOUS, SECURE* and *WTB,* able to adequately describe respectively the relative phenomena, it has been possible to obtain descriptive statistics that provided useful information about some characteristics and properties of the studied variables, which have been used also to conduct more specific analysis, suitable to study relations and draw conclusions on the data

and the variables of the research. In the present study, among the usable statistical characteristics, the median has been employed; the median is the central value of the data available for each variable and which corresponds, depending on whether the number of cases is odd or even, respectively to a single central value or to the average of the two central values (Monti, 2008). In particular, for the variable *ANXIOUS*, the median was equal to 3.5, for the variable *SECURE*, the median was equal to 4.75 and the for the variable WTB, the median was equal to 4.4.

The median is a measure that can be used to transform a metric variable into a categorical variable, via the median-split. In this thesis, this technique has been used to transform the metric variables *ANXIOUS* and *SECURE* respectively into the categorical variables named **Anxiety** and **SelfConfidence** with the aim of obtaining frequency tables of these variables in order to gather useful information about the two attachment styles of the participants of the study. In this way, it was possible to understand how many of the participants of the present study showed high and low levels of anxiety and how many showed, instead, high and low levels of self-confidence.

In particular, the two new non-metric variables, named respectively *Anxiety* and *SelfConfidence*, have been generated as follows:

- values of *ANXIOUS* larger and equal than the median (≥ 3.5), associated with "high levels of anxiety" have been recoded as "1" and values of *ANXIOUS* smaller than the median (< 3.5), associated with "low levels of anxiety" have been recoded as "0";

- values of *SECURE* larger and equal than the median (≥ 4.75), associated with "high levels of self-confidence" have been recoded as "1" and values of *SECURE* smaller than the median (< 4.75), associated with "low levels of self- confidence" have been recoded as 0;

From a representation of the levels of anxiety shown by the participants of the present study, it emerged that exactly 50% was characterized by low levels of anxiety and the other half 50% was characterized by high levels of anxiety.
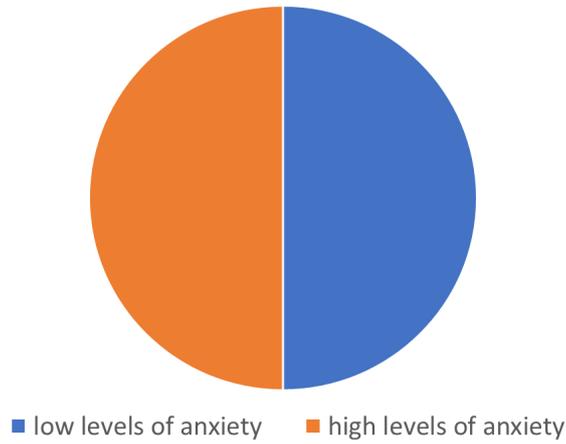
Figure 3.2. Pie chart of the variable *Anxiety.*

On the contrary, from a representation of the levels of self-confidence shown by the participants of the present study, it emerged that 81.52% was characterized by low levels of self-confidence and only 18.48% was characterized by high levels of self-confidence.
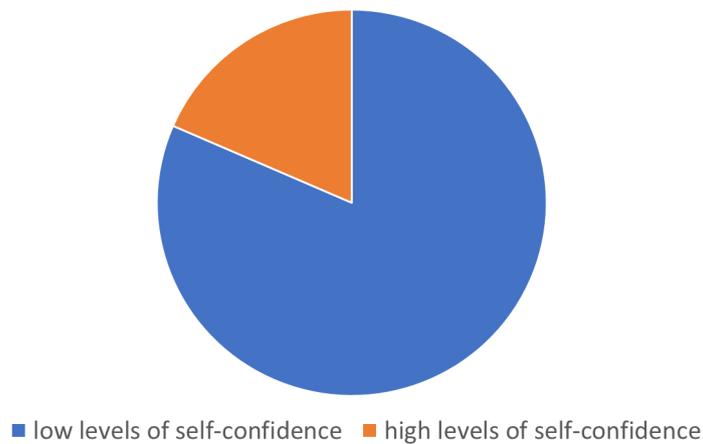
Figure 3.3. Pie chart of the variable *SelfConfidence.*

By generalizing the obtained information, it was possible to conclude that the participants of the present study showed higher levels of anxiety compared to the levels of self-confidence; this has been interpreted as a confirmation of the current social trend, anticipated in the first chapter, which states that several changes in current social contexts have led to a drastic increase in the level of anxious attachment anxiety compared to secure attachment style.

By means of a two cross-tabulation, it was possible to examine in depth the anxiety phenomenon among the participants of the present study and, through a joint representations of the frequencies of the variables *Gender* and of the new non-metric variable *Anxiety*, it emerged that the women who participated in this research showed higher levels of anxiety than men.

Anxiety	Female	Male	Not specified	Total
low levels	47	43	2	92
high levels	53	39	0	92
Total	100	82	2	184

Figure 3.4. Cross-tabulation of the variables *Gender* and *Anxiety*.

3.2.3. Statistical analysis of the conceptual model

This thesis section will get to the heart of the statistical analysis of the conceptual model of the present study, with the final aim of statistically testing the hypotheses formulated in the previous stages of the research and show the obtained results.

With the aim of clarifying which associations and relations will be inspected and the variables involved, the three hypothesis of the research model are shown below:

The first association that will be tested is that respectively existing between the secure attachment style with the willingness to buy. In particular, the first hypothesis states as follows:

H₁: *There is an association between SECURE and WTB.*

Subsequently, it will be examined whether the distinction between the two social contexts imposed in the present study, *alone / in the company of friends*, is statistically significant in measuring the willingness to buy, testing the second hypothesis of the conceptual model:

H₂: *The WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends is greater than the WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone.*

Finally, it will be investigated whether the combined effect between the attachment styles and the particular social context is significant in the assessment of willingness to buy, testing the third and last hypothesis of the conceptual model:

H₃: *Social context has a moderating effect on the association between ANXIOUS and WTB; specifically, there is a higher positive association between ANXIOUS and WTB when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends, compared when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone.*

Before proceeding with the presentation and discussion of the statistical analysis of the present part, it is important to make some specifications about the formulation and the test of hypotheses, which will prove useful and valid for all the study methodologies used in this thesis.

For each analysis study, two types of hypotheses have been formulated:

- the Null Hypothesis (H₀), an affirmation that represents the status or the prevailing viewpoint, which implies the existence of no difference or effect;
- the Alternative Hypothesis (Ha), an affirmation that indicates the opposite of what is asserted by the null hypothesis and, therefore, represents what the research hopes to prove.

The critical probability in choosing between H₀ and Hₐ is represented by the so-called Significance Level which, in theory, is the measure of how frequently a true statement is accidentally rejected; the Confidence Level (1- α), on the other hand, represents the proportion of times that an interval estimate for a population parameter will be correct (Malhotra et al., 2012).

In the case of this thesis, the results of the analysis have been submitted to the significance level α = 0.05 and, therefore, to a confidence level 1- α = 95%.

Consequently, if the p-value of the data, which from a statistical point of view represents the area under the curve that is beyond the statistics, was not less than 0.05, it has not been possible to reject the null hypothesis H₀ and, in this way, to validate the relative hypothesis of the conceptual model; if, on the other hand, the p-value of the data was less than 0.05, then it has been possible to reject the null hypothesis H₀ and, therefore, prove the alternative hypothesis (Hₐ) that means the hypothesis of the conceptual model.

3.2.3.1.   Correlation Analysis

With the aim of testing the first hypothesis of the present research that states that "*There is a positive association between SECURE and WTB.*" a **Correlation Analysis** has been conducted.

This type of analysis is used to investigate and measure the strength and direction of the linear association between two variables (Malhotra et al., 2012); in the present case, therefore, the correlation analysis has been carried out between the two continuous variables *SECURE* and *WTB*.

In the case of the so-called Bivariate or Simple Correlation, which involves the study of the correlation between only two variables, a coefficient is used, the Pearson product-moment Correlation Coefficient (r), often called Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, which measures and indicates the strength and direction of the linear association between two continuous variables (Malhotra et al., 2012):

$$r_{xy} = \frac{COV_{xy}}{s_x s_y}$$

where COV_{xy} is the covariance between two generic variables x and y and $s_x s_y$ are their standard deviations.

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient values can range from -1 to 1 ($-1 \leq r_{xy} \leq 1$); in particular:

- r = 1 indicates a perfect positive association;

- r = 0 indicates that there is no association;

- r = -1 indicates a perfect negative association.

However, the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) can also assume all the intermediate values among these of reference; r > 0 indicates the existence of a positive association, but this has a different strength depending on the range of positive value assumed by r.

The higher r, taking values close to 1, the more the association between the two variables will be strong, which will mean that they "move together" with a high extent. In this regard, an important specification to make is that in the case in which the existence of a positive correlation between two variables can be proved, this does not automatically mean that an increase of the first one leads to a subsequent increase of the second one, but simply that the two variables move in the same direction.

With the aim to test the statistical validity of first hypothesis of the conceptual model, the correlation analysis has been conducted between the two continuous variables *SECURE* and *WTB*.

The null (H_0) and the alternative (H_a) hypotheses formulated to conduct the correlation analysis are the following:

H_0: *There is no an association between SECURE and WTB ($\rho = 0$).*

H_a: *There is an association between SECURE and WTB ($\rho \neq 0$).*

From the conducted analysis, it emerged that between the variables *SECURE* and *WTB* there is a slightly negative association (r = - 0.0453) not statistically significant at 0.05 level (p-value = 0.5412 > α = 0.05).
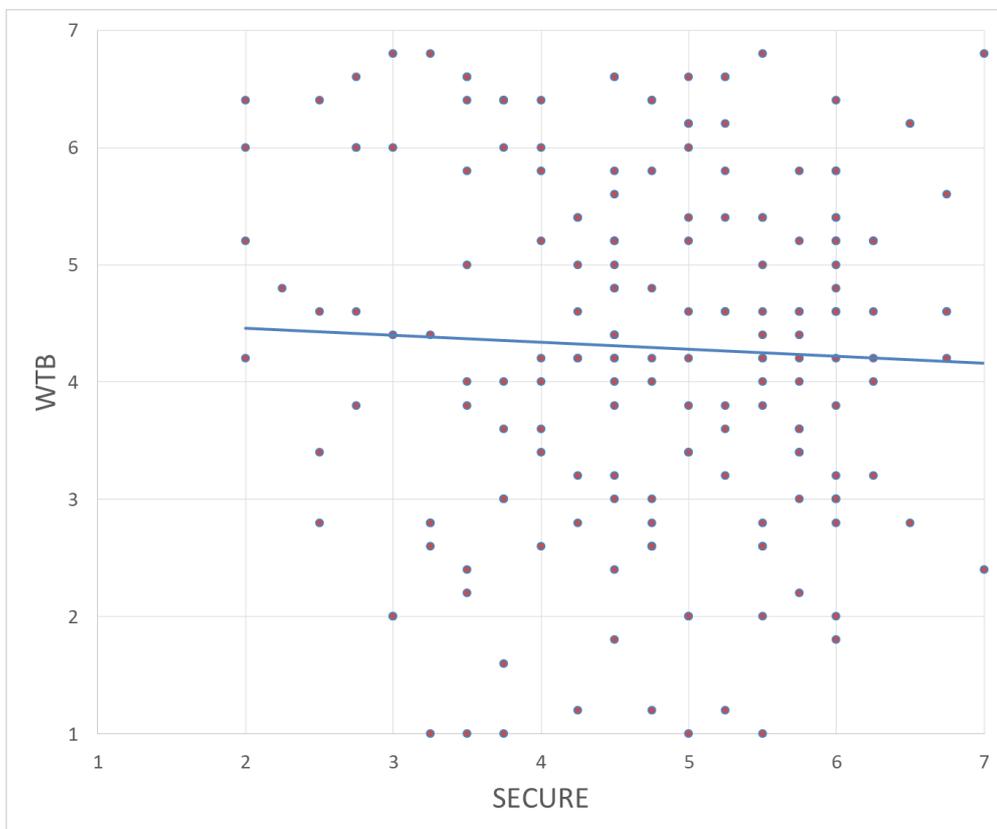
Figure 3.5. Scatterplot of the correlation between *SECURE* and *WTB*.

Also from the scatter plot, it has been possible to verify that all the observations were spread among the whole graph without showing a clear relation between *SECURE* and *WTB*.

Therefore, it has been possible to conclude that there is no association between the two variables *SECURE* and *WTB*, that means that they do not move together.

Since, through the correlation analysis, it has not been possible to prove the statistical validity of the first hypothesis of the conceptual model of this thesis, it was decided to carry out the same type of analysis including, this time, in place of the variable *SECURE*, the variable *AXIOUS*. Therefore, a second correlation analysis has been conducted with the aim of investigating the existence of a statistically significant association between the continuous variables *ANXIOUS* and *WTB*.

The null (H_0) and the alternative (H_a) hypotheses formulated to conduct the correlation analysis are the following:

H_0: *There is no an association between ANXIOUS and WTB ($\rho = 0$).*

H_a: *There is an association between ANXIOUS and WTB ($\rho \neq 0$).*

From the conducted analysis, it emerged that between the variables *ANXIOUS* and *WTB* there is a positive association (r = 0.3238) statistically significant at 0.05 level (p-value = 0.0000 < α = 0.05). This association is significant also with a 99% confidence level (p-value = 0.0000 < α = 0.01).
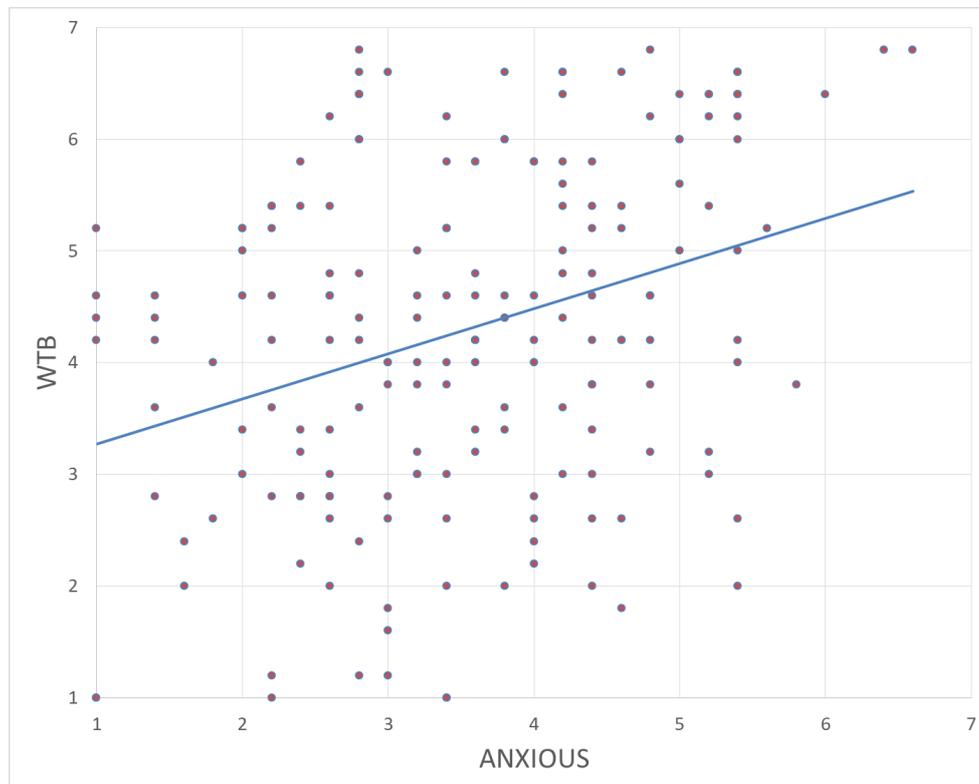

Figure 3.6. Scatterplot of the correlation between *ANXIOUS* and *WTB*.

Also from the scatter plot, it has been possible to prove that all the observations were not spread away from the trend line, but they followed overall its same direction.

Therefore, it has been possible to conclude that there is a significant positive association between the two variables *ANXIOUS* and *WTB*, which, therefore, move together, which means that an increase in the variable *ANXIOUS* is associated with an increase in the *WTB*, and vice versa.

From the two analysis just illustrated, therefore, it emerged that there exist a significant positive correlation only between one of the two attachment styles considered in the present study and the willingness to buy; in particular, it emerged that there is a statistically significant positive association (r = 0.3238) between the variables *ANXIOUS* and *WTB* and that, on the contrary, the slight negative association between the variables *SECURE* and *WTB* (r = - 0.0453), could not be considered statistically significant at the level of α= 0.05.

It has been possible to conclude that the two variables *ANXIOUS* and *WTB* move together and so that, as one increases, the other also increases and vice versa. From the obtained results, therefore, it emerged that among the individuals exposed to the vision of relational ad impressed on the film posters, those who showed high levels of the anxious attachment style, also showed a high willingness to buy the ticket to watch at the cinema the promoted movie.

3.2.3.2. Independent samples t-test

The second type of statistical analysis carried out in this thesis section concerned essentially the categorical variable *SocialContext* and the continuous variable *WTB* and it has been conducted with the aim of testing the second hypothesis of the conceptual model which states the following:

H$_2$: *The WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends is greater than the WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone.*

In the specific case, the main purpose was to verify if the respondents to whom the social condition *"in the company of friends"* has been imposed in the survey, expressed higher levels of willingness to buy compared to respondents to whom the social condition *"alone"* has been imposed.

To carry out this analysis, the **Independent samples t-test** has been employed. This analysis methodology is used when it is necessary to compare the mean of an interval dependent variable for two independent groups; the analysis has been conducted considering as interval dependent variable *WTB* and as two independent groups respectively the respondents who compiled the survey imagining the social context *alone* and those to who compiled it imagining the social context *in the company of friends*.

The null (H₀) and the alternative (Hₐ) hypotheses formulated to conduct the analysis of independent samples t-test are the following:

H₀: *The WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends is not greater than the WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone.* ($\mu_{withfriends} \leq \mu_{alone}$)

Hₐ: *The WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends is greater than the WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone.* ($\mu_{withfriends} > \mu_{alone}$)

The sample means for *WTB* of the two independent groups, *people that had to imagine to be alone* and *people that had to imagine to be in the company of friends*, are different.
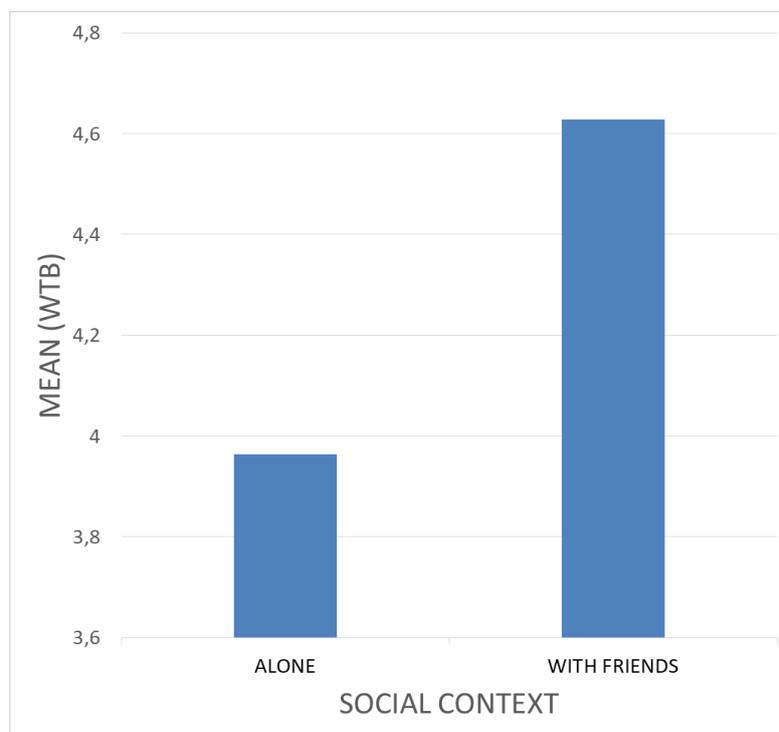
Figure 3.7. Bar chart of the mean of *WTB* and *SocialContext.*

Sample mean for *WTB* for people exposed to relational ad imagining being alone: $\bar{X} = 3.963$.

Sample mean for *WTB* for people exposed to relational ad imagining being in the company of friends: $\bar{X} = 4.628$.

However, although it is clear that the sample mean for *WTB* of people exposed to relational ad imagining being *in the company of friends* is greater than the sample mean for *WTB* of people exposed to relational ad imagining being *alone*, a priori it has not been possible to say that this difference in sample means was significant from a statistical point of view; to investigate this, it has been necessary apply to population through the independent samples t-test.

For the present analysis, an independent samples t-test with equal variance has been performed.

From the conducted analysis, it emerged that with 95% confidence it has been possible to state that the willingness to buy of people exposed to relational ad imagining being in the company of friends is greater than the willingness to buy of people exposed to relational ad imagining being alone ($M_{withfriends} = 4.63$, $M_{alone} = 3.96$, p-value $= 0.0013 < \alpha = 0.05$). This is significant also with a 99% confidence level (p-value $= 0.0013 < \alpha = 0.01$).

Therefore, from this second type of analysis, it emerged that the second hypothesis of the conceptual model of the present thesis is statistically valid, so it was possible to state that:

the WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends is greater than the WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone.

3.2.3.3.   Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA)

This part of statistical analysis was essentially dedicated to statistically testing the third and last hypothesis of the conceptual model of the present research, which states as follows:

H3: *Social context has a moderating effect on the association between ANXIOUS and WTB; specifically, there is a higher positive association between ANXIOUS and WTB when people are exposed to the*

relational ad imagining being in the company of friends, compared when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone.

The types of analysis in this section included the continuous variable *ANXIOUS*, the categorical variable *SocialContext* and the continuous dependent variable *WTB*.

The first step of this part of the study has been to test if significant differences on the dependent variable *WTB* are due respectively to both the two independent variables *ANXIOUS* and *SocialContext*; as regards the variables related to the attachment style, only the continuous variable *ANXIOUS* has been taken into consideration, since it, together with the variable *SocialContext*, appeared to be the object of the third hypothesis of the conceptual model of the present study.

To conduct this analysis, it has been decided to conduct the **Analysis of Covariance**, also known as **ANCOVA**. As it is usual in the field of statistical research, the choice has fallen on this analysis method based on the type of studied variables.

More specifically, since the present study included a metric dependent variable, in this case *WTB*, and two independent variables of which one categorical and the other interval, in this case respectively *SocialContext* and *ANXIOUS*, it has been necessary to carry out the analysis of covariance.

ANCOVA is a statistical analysis methodology that can be considered a combination of ANOVA (analysis of the variance) and the linear regression.

As anticipated, to be able to conduct this type of analysis, it is necessary that the study in question includes the presence of three types of variables with the following characteristics:

- a dependent variable → continuous → *WTB*

- a independent variable → categorical → *SocialContext*

- a covariate variable → continuous → *ANXIOUS*

The covariate variable is the continuous variable that is included in this type of analysis because, like the independent categorical variable, it has an effect on the dependent variable; indeed, the covariate is related to the dependent variable, which cannot be manipulated (Malhotra et al., 2012).

From the conducted analysis, it emerged that the model is significant ($F_{(3,180)} = 10.81$, p-value = 0.0000 < α = 0.05) and, therefore, it implied that there are significant mean differences on *WTB* due to either *ANXIOUS* or *SocialContext*.

Moreover, from the analysis it emerged that the model has explanatory power, R-square = 0.1527.

R-square (R^2) measures the proportion of the variance of the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables. The values of R^2 range from 0 to 1 ($0 \leq R^2 \leq 1$), where values close to 1 indicate that a large proportion of the variance of the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables in question and values close to 0 indicate that a small proportion of the variance of dependent variable is explained by the independent variables in question (Sollis, 2014). In this specific case, the analysis output showed that the 15.27% of *WTB* is explained by the independent variables; a not very high value of R^2 can be explained by the fact that together with *ANXIOUS* and *SocialContext* other variables, both those included in the conceptual model and not, contribute to the explanation of the variance of *WTB*. A typical property of R^2, indeed, is that its value always increases if a greater number of independent variables are included in the analysis.

From the conducted analysis, it emerged also that the two independent variables *ANXIOUS* ($F_{(1,180)} = 21.99$, p-value = 0.0000 < α = 0.05) and *SocialContext* ($F_{(1,180)} = 8.52$, p-value = 0.0040 < α = 0.05) are significant variables, that means that there are significant mean differences on *WTB* due respectively to *ANXIOUS* and *SocialContext*.

To fully test the validity of the third hypothesis of the conceptual model, it has been necessary to verify the statistical significance of the interaction effect between the variables *ANXIOUS* and *SocialContext* and so to inspect if the variable *SocialContext* has a moderating effect on the positive association existing between the variable *ANXIOUS* and the variable *WTB*; this with the aim of understanding if it is possible to prove there is a higher positive association between ANXIOUS and WTB when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends, compared when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone.

To conduct this study, the so-called **Moderation** analysis has been used, which, together with mediation, is a type of interaction between variables. In particular, the moderation implies the existence of a

moderating variable, called *Moderator*, which is able to influence the form and the strength of a relation between two other variables, the *Predictor* and the *Outcome* (Malhotra et al., 2012).
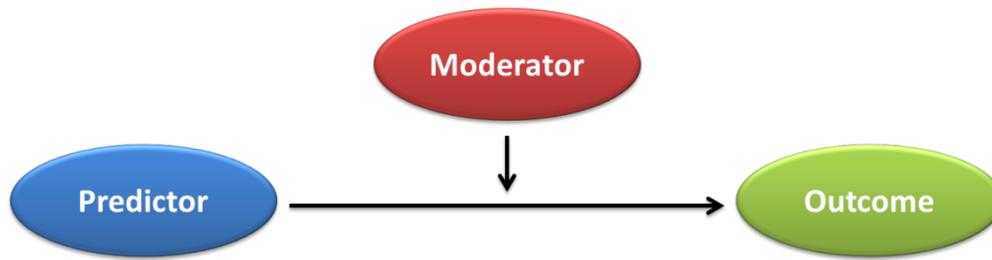
Figure 3.8. Illustration of moderation effect.

There are three cases of moderation, which are distinguished on the basis of the different characteristics of the studied variables.

- Case1: Moderator and Predictor are both metric variables

- Case 2: Moderator is a nonmetric variable, Predictor is a metric variable

- Case 3: Moderator and Predictor are both nonmetric variables

The interaction analysis of the present study is part of the second case of moderation; indeed, the variables of the analysis are distinguished as follows:

- Predictor → metric variable → *ANXIOUS*

- Moderator → nonmetric veriable → *Socialcontext*

- Outcome → metric variable → *WTB*

The null (H_0) and the alternative (H_a) hypotheses formulated to conduct the moderation analysis are the following:

H_0: *SocialContext has not a moderating effect on the association between ANXIOUS and WTB.*

H_a: *SocialContext has a moderating effect on the association between ANXIOUS and WTB.*

The mean centering technique has been performed before creating the variable *ANXIOUSxSocialContext* and investigating the existence and the statistical significance of the moderation effect.

From the conducted ANCOVA, it emerged that *ANXIOUSxSocialContext* interaction is not statistically significant at 0.05 level (F $_{(1,180)}$ = 1.56, p-value = 0.2134 > α = 0.05, not reject H$_0$), that means that *SocialContext* has not a moderating effect on the positive association between *ANXIOUS* and *WTB*.

Therefore, it has been possible to state that there is no a higher positive association between ANXIOUS and WTB when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends, compared when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone.

3.2.4. Summary of the achieved results

Through the specific statistical analysis methods that have been used, it has been possible to test the three main hypotheses of the conceptual model of this thesis and to comment the relative obtained results.

To get a clear and comprehensive overview of the statistical conclusions that have been reached by means of the several analysis carried out, it is possible to summarize the results as follows.

1. Through correlation analysis, the existence of a positive and significant association between the variables *ANXIOUS* and *WTB* has been proved and, on the contrary, it has not been possible to prove the existence of a significant association between the *SECURE* and *WTB*; therefore, it has been possible to conclude that only the two variables *ANXIOUS* and *WTB* "move together". From the obtained results, therefore, it emerged that among the individuals exposed to the vision of relational ad impressed on the film posters, those who showed high levels of the anxious attachment style, also showed high levels of willingness to buy the ticket to watch at the cinema the promoted movie.

   Therefore, it has not been possible to prove the statistically validity of the first hypothesis of the conceptual model of the present study, which states that *"There is an association between SECURE and WTB."* On the contrary, the first section of statistical analysis has demonstrated that There is a positive association between ANXIOUS and WTB.

2. The analysis of independent samples t-test has been conducted to verify if when the relational ad printed on the movie posters has been shown to people to whom the social condition *in the company of friends* has been imposed, *WTB* resulted greater than when to the same respondents the social condition *alone* has been imposed. The results of this analysis method proved that the sample mean for *WTB* of people exposed to relational advertising in the company of friends is greater than the sample mean for *WTB* of people exposed to relational advertising alone and the statistical significance of this difference.

   Therefore, it has been possible to demonstrate the validity of the second hypothesis of the conceptual model of the present thesis, which states that *"The WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends is greater than the WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone"*.

3. To verify the statistical validity of the third hypothesis of the conceptual model, the analysis of the covariance, also known as ANCOVA, has been conducted, with the aim of testing the significance of the statistical model used, of the examined independent variables (*ANXIOUS* and *SocialContext*) and any moderation effect exercised by the variable *SocialContext* on the positive association between the variable *ANXIOUS* and the dependent variable *WTB*.

   Through ANCOVA, it has been shown that the statistical model of reference is significant, the variables *ANXIOUS* and *SocialContext* are both significant variables, and that there are significant mean differences on *WTB* due either to *ANXIOUS* and *SocialContext*; however, introducing the variable *ANXIOUSxSocialContex*t into the analysis in question, the results also showed that there is no significant interaction effect and that, therefore, *SocialContext* has not a moderating effect on the positive association between *ANXIOUS* and *WTB*.

   It follows that it has not been possible to demonstrate the statistical *"Social context has a moderating effect on the association between ANXIOUS and WTB; specifically, there is a higher positive association between ANXIOUS and WTB when people are exposed to the relational ad*

imagining being in the company of friends, compared when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone".

3.3. DISCUSSION

The following paragraphs of this thesis will illustrate discussions about the reached results and conclusions and reasonable explanations about the hypotheses whose statistical validity has been proved or not, with the aim of having a clear understanding of the findings derived from the present study.

3.3.1. Discussion about the first hypothesis of the conceptual model

The formulation of the first hypothesis of the conceptual model of the present study has been based mainly on the study of the *Personality and Individual Perspective* entitled "*The role of interpersonal attachment in the shaping of consumer preferences for products shown in relational advertisements*", presented in first chapter of this thesis (David & Bearden, 2017).

The authors of this scientific paper have shown that securely attached individuals show a greater likelihood of buying products promoted in a relational ad and that anxiously attached individuals show a lower likelihood of buying products promoted in relational ads. The reasons why they expected to reach these conclusions from the beginning derive from a careful study of personality traits typical of the two examined attachment styles; in particular, the authors claimed that the secure attachment styles, which are by nature optimistic and confident in relationships thanks to their past characterized by the presence of consistent support, would have preferred products promoted in relational ads and that, instead, the anxious attachment styles, characterized by concern and mistrust of social relations, due to their past marked by the presence of unreliable support, would have preferred products presented in non-relational ads, as they by nature have a negative perception of interpersonal relationships.

However, in the case of the present thesis, through the results obtained by means of the conducted analysis, it has not been possible to prove the statistical validity of the first hypothesis of the conceptual model, which states that *"There is an association between SECURE and WTB."* on the contrary, it has been demonstrated that there is a positive association between *ANXIOUS* and *WTB*.

A reasonable explanation regarding the validity of the proven positive association between anxious attachment style and the willingness to buy, can be found in a study of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* entitled *"What's Inside the Minds of the Secured and Insecurely Attached People? The Secure-Base Script and Its Associations With Attachment-Style Dimensions"*; the authors of this article found that "priming thoughts of a security-enhancing attachment figure, using a procedure called **Security Priming**, has positive effects on mood, and less defensive access to memories of painful experiences" and they have demonstrated that this happens both for secure attachment styles and anxious attachment styles.

Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) defined security priming as the temporarily activating mental representations of attachment figures, claiming that this has the effect of restore positive mood, increase the sense of felt security of an individual and maintain his emotional balance and adaptability, even under fairly stressful circumstances. Among the most common and validated techniques used to activate the mental representation of supportive attachment figures, there is showing images that suggest attachment-figure availability. The methodology used in the survey of the present thesis can be assimilated to this technique; indeed, to the participants of the survey have been shown five film posters representing all smiling and apparently happy people, able to convey positive feelings. This also because the kind of film promoted chosen for the posters to be shown to the respondents is the comedy, a genre to which by its nature is associated a positive value, as characterized by stories that include humor, which usually end with a happy ending and that deal with pleasant topics.

Therefore, a valid explanation of the proved positive association between anxious attachment style and the willingness to buy, can be represented by the fact that the relational representations printed on the movie posters have the effect of improving the mood of anxious attachment styles in a positive way and make them much more inclined to the interpersonal relationships represented on the posters and to the interpersonal dynamics showed in the movies; this, therefore, leads to a greater willingness to buy the ticket to watch at the cinema the promoted film, when they are exposed to a relational ad.

On the other hand, even if security priming is a procedure that leads to improvements in the mood of both attachment styles, both anxious and secure, the fact that for the latter it has not been possible to prove the

existence of a statistically significant association with the willingness to buy, thanks to the use of relational ads, can have an additional explanation: secure attachment styles are people who are always characterized by their nature by a positive mood and a positive inclination towards social relationships, so their willingness to buy a ticket to watch a comedy, that is a genre which in itself has a positive value regardless of the type of advertising used, is not significantly altered by the condition that the movie poster represents social bounds, and can be considered a relational ad, or that it represents a single or no person. Therefore, their choices will be based more on their preferences about the movie genre and the specific film in question.

Moreover, a further aspect that can represent a valid explanation of why it has not been possible to prove the existence of any significant association between the secure attachment styles and the willingness to buy can be linked also to the type of product promoted by the posters. In the article by David and Bearden (2004), the type of products represented in the relational ad was essentially consumer goods, such as drinks or clothes, for which the authors claimed that the secure attachment styles would have shown a greater likelihood of purchase towards that product also because they would have been more likely to experience a feeling of fit between oneself and the product shown in the relational ad. On the contrary, the product promoted in the relational ad of the present thesis has been represented by a movie; in this case, therefore, it has not been necessary for each respondent to identify himself with the use of the promoted product and to experience a feeling of fit between it and one self, but only to express his taste of towards the advertised film.

3.3.2. Discussion about the second hypothesis of the conceptual model

The formulation of the second hypothesis of the conceptual model of the present thesis has been based mainly on the assumption, originating from the social facilitation theory, that the mere presence of others involves changes in the way individuals carry out a performance or take decisions.

In this regard, a study published on the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* (Luo X., 2005), which investigated the effect of the social context on the individual's impulse to purchase, has been taken into consideration. In particular, the authors of this article have shown a significant difference between the

influence exerted by peers and that exercised by family members; while the presence of peers has the tendency to lead an individual to purchase, as they represent a justification for the purchase or for reasons of social desirability, on the contrary, the members of a family have the tendency to limit the inclination to purchase, because they usually inspire a sense of responsibility and, therefore, their presence acts as an incentive not to spend money unnecessarily.

The statistical validation of the second hypothesis of the conceptual model of this thesis confirmed what has been supported by the mentioned study. Indeed, to the respondents of the survey were imposed two different social conditions in which they were asked to indicate their degree of willingness to buy the ticket to watch at the cinema the movie proposed by the poster in question; specifically, the two versions of the developed survey included respectively five questions to measure the willingness to buy in which people were asked to imagine the social condition *alone* and five questions to measure the willingness to buy in which it was asked to imagine the social condition *in the company of friends*.

Through the analysis of independent samples t-tests it has been possible to demonstrate the statistical validity of the second hypothesis, which states that *"The WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends is greater than the WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone"*.

What has been proved by the present thesis about the effect of the specific social context, therefore, is a confirmation of both the concept according to which the presence of others, even if only imagined, involves changes in the way in which people behave and take decisions and of the theory which states that the presence of friends, in particular, represents a strong incentive to purchase. In the social condition that required to imagine the presence of other people, indeed, it has been explicitly specified to imagine the presence of friends and not a generic company.

Moreover, a further consideration that can be made regarding the statistical validation of the hypothesis in question is that watching a film at the cinema is already in itself a situation that implies the association with a social moment to be shared with other people; moreover, comedy is a genre of film that is often chosen when people decide to go to the cinema in company, as it is a genre that potentially collects the consensus of a large number of people. For this reason, it is justifiable that in cases where respondents

were asked to express their degree of willingness to buy to watch the proposed film at the cinema, they expressed a greater propensity in case they had to imagine being in the company of their friends compared to when they had to imagine being alone.

3.3.3. Discussion about the third hypothesis of the conceptual model

The formulation of the third and last hypothesis of the conceptual model of this thesis has been based mainly on the study of Torquati and Raffaelli (2004), entitled *"Daily Experiences of Emotions and Social Contexts of Securely and Insecurely Attached Young Adults"*, that examined how the emotions and situations of everyday life differ according to the type of attachment style and the specific social context. The authors of this study have shown that both securely and insecurely attached individuals show more positive moods and emotions when they are in the company of familiar intimates (friends, partner, roommates) compared to when they are alone. In particular, the investigation has shown that, especially in the insecure attachment styles, more negative emotions are aroused when they are alone, as opposed to what happens when they are in the company of others. It is clear that insecure attachment styles need the presence of their friends, relatives or partners to develop a more positive general orientation both towards themselves and others.

From the conclusions presented by the study in question, derived the curiosity of understanding through the present thesis if, by altering the social context of reference, attachment styles would have elaborated different assessments towards the relational advertisement, leading to changes on the willingness to buy. By means of the third hypothesis of the conceptual model, indeed, it has been investigated whether the specific social context (*alone / in the company of friends*) significantly influenced the association between attachment style and the willingness to buy the ticket to watch the film promoted in relational ad.

The attention in demonstrating this effect of moderation exercised by the specific social context has been placed only on the association between the anxious attachment style and the willingness to buy; the aim was therefore to understand if a higher positive association between *ANXIOUS* and *WTB* there would have been in the case in which people see the relational ad imagining to be in the company of friends (which fall into the category of familiar intimates), compared when people see the relational ad imagining

to be alone The reason why it has been decided to include only anxious attachment style derives from the fact that, although the study by Torquati and Raffaelli (2004) has shown that both securely and insecurely attached individuals show more positive moods and emotions when they are in the company of familiar intimates compared to when they are alone, however, it is important to keep in mind that the securely attached individuals are by their nature always characterized by a positive mood. For this reason, it has been hypothesized that they would not significantly change their degree of willingness to buy just because they asked them to imagine themselves alone or in the presence of other people. On the contrary, in the case of insecurely attached individuals, from what emerged from the study mentioned above, there is a real change in their mood that appears negative, when they are alone, and becomes positive, when they are in the company of familiar intimates. For this reason, since the anxious attachment styles change their approach when they are in the company, it has been hypothesized that they would have significantly increased their degree of willingness to buy if it is imposed to them the condition of imagining being in the company of friends, compared when it is imposed to them the condition to imagine being alone.

However, despite the theoretical foundations above, in the case of the present study it has not been possible to prove the statistical validity of the third hypothesis of the conceptual model which states that *"Social context has a moderating effect on the association between ANXIOUS and WTB; specifically, there is a higher positive association between ANXIOUS and WTB when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends, compared when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone".*

By demonstrating the validity of the second hypothesis of the conceptual model, it has been shown that respondents, without making any difference between anxious and secure attachment styles, expressed higher levels of willingness to buy when they were asked to imagine the social condition *in company of friends*; this can be explained as a general tendency also for individuals participating in the present research to show a greater willingness to buy when they are in the company of friends, confirming the results of the study by Xueming Luo, entitled *"How Does Shopping With Others Influence Impulsive Purchasing?".*

However, when it has been tested, in the third hypothesis, if the social context has a moderating effect between the existing association between the anxious attachment styles and the willingness to buy, it has not resulted statistically significant.

A reasonable explanation of this can be represented by the fact that, in the case of the present research, the security priming that arises from showing the relational images impressed on the movie posters, improves the mood of the anxiously attached individuals, increases their sense of felt security and maintain their emotional balance and adaptability, even under fairly stressful circumstances. Therefore, in this context of evaluating the purchase of a ticket to watch at the cinema the promoted film, they assume a mood characterized by greater tranquility in the choice, which no longer depends in a predominant way on the specific social context imposed, being alone or in the company of other people; in this circumstance, the approach of the anxious attachment style in relation to the specific social context of reference, become close to that of the secure attachment styles, which, characterized by their nature by a positive mood, do not allow their choices to depend exclusively on the presence of others or not.

From this it can be deduced that the increase in levels of willingness to buy caused by imagining the presence of friends, has a moderate effect that appears to be distributed homogeneously among all respondents, both anxious and secure, without showing a significant effect that could be attributed exclusively to the group of anxious attachment styles.

3.4. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

3.4.1. Practical implications

The study of the present thesis and the related reached conclusions offer to marketers some potential practical implications.

The findings of the present research have shown that the particular type of images impressed on the posters used to promote different kinds of products and, in particular, the individuals eventually depicted on it, represent a valid stimulus that can be manipulated with the aim of obtaining different results about the effectiveness of advertising. Taking advantage of this, companies could periodically submit to their most loyal customers questionnaires through which they could obtain information about the general type

of attachment style and, in this way, develop communication campaigns specifically tailored to the type of promoted product and the specific customer target.

However, in the case of big and diversified businesses such as that of movies, where everyone can represent a potential consumer and there is no a well-defined base of loyal customers, it is not easy to obtain useful information to identify the specific attachment style. In these cases, therefore, marketers could segment and target the reference market on the basis of other personal information correlated to attachment style, such as gender and age; for example, from the present research, it emerged that among the respondents who showed high levels of anxious attachment styles, most of them were found to belong to the female gender and to the 18-34 age group. In the case of a business whose core product is represented by movie genre such as comedy and similar, marketers should make use of the "predictive power" attributable to the anxious attachment styles and use, for the promotion of this kind of film, movie posters showing characteristics, such as relational images, capable of transmitting positive sensations, with the aim of reaching the interest and the consent of the largest number of people.

Other valid practical implications can be derived from the fact that the present research has shown that, just as it happens for more traditional forms of shopping, even when buying a ticket to watch a comedy at the cinema, the company of friends represents a factor able to increase the willingness to buy. Watching a film at the cinema generally implies the situation of being in the company of other people; however, with the aim of reinforcing this effect of increasing willingness to buy, film companies or those who work for them to advertise the produced movies, could implement several actions, for example:

- including in the used advertising message the incitement to go to the cinema to watch the promoted comedy with friends, even offering special promotions;
- communicating the launch of new comedies in periods that generally people spend in the company of their friends (e.g. weekends, holidays);
- affixing movie posters in places that people generally frequent with their friends (e.g. shopping centers, universities).

3.4.2. Limitations and suggestions for future research

In the present study, some limitations that have characterized the research in question can be identified and, at the same time, can be taken as a starting point for future studies on the covered topics.

A first limitations can be represented by the fact that the two versions of the questionnaire were not compiled by respondents under laboratory conditions; indeed, if on the one hand this had positive implications because each participant was free to decide when to fill out the questionnaire, feeling at ease without the pressure that he could have experienced in laboratory conditions, but, on the other hand, there cannot be the certainty that he filled out the questionnaire with the appropriate attention and that he has well understood all the required tasks. For example, it is possible that some respondents did not fully understand the statements aimed at measuring their inclination to social relationships and, therefore, have faced difficulties in expressing their degree of agreement and / or disagreement about these.

Moreover, for the study of the present thesis, self-report measurements have been used to evaluate the levels of willingness to buy and anxious and secure attachment style; in future studies, it would be interesting to make the same measurements also through techniques that are not based exclusively on what self-reported by respondents, such as Neuromarketing methodologies, in order to have also a comparison between what emerges from them and what respondents say.

Another suggestion for future research is to include additional variables in the investigation that can explain the results related to the willingness to buy; in the specific case, for example, the emotional involvement aroused by the movie posters could be included in the conceptual model as a valid antecedent of the willingness to buy.

Finally, one last observation that can be made about the study carried out is that the conclusions reached by means of the implemented analysis, concerned relational ad stimuli promoting the comedy movie genre; it is not said that by using as a stimulus a movie poster ascribable to the relational advertising, designed to promote another kind of film, the positive relation between the anxious attachment styles and the willingness to buy would be confirmed. For example, it would be interesting to know the type of relations existing between attachment style profiles and the willingness to buy if relational images are used to promote a movie genre completely different from comedy, like a thriller or a drama.

Conclusion

In an increasingly dynamic and competitive economic landscape, marketers need to fully understand the processes of evaluation that lead to the final choice of consumers and the means to achieve them. Among these, the advertising posters have always been an efficient tool through which capture the attention of consumers and shape their preferences for the promoted products. In particular, previous studies have shown that the evaluation process for economic choices is influenced by particular stimuli of visual imagery impressed on the ad; in this context, it has been proved that "relational advertising", that depicts interpersonal relationships, is able to influence the individuals' willingness to buy.

Through the present thesis, it has been possible to prove that this effect attributable to the relational advertising may vary according to the particular attachment style and the specific social context in which people are when exposed to the advertising stimulus.

In particular, it has been shown that, when a movie poster depicting forms of interpersonal relationships is shown, there is a positive association between the anxious attachment styles and the willingness to buy the ticket to watch the promoted film at the cinema; this can be interpreted as a consequence of the type of advertised product, the comedy, and of the effect of security priming, resulted from the images printed on the posters, which improves the mood of anxious attachment styles, making them more inclined to interpersonal relationships.

It was then proved, as a derivation of the social facilitation effect, that people show a greater willingness to buy the ticket to watch at the cinema the promoted film when they look at the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends, than when they imagine being alone.

However, it was not possible to prove a significant interaction effect between the anxious attachment style and the specific social context on the willingness to buy; this can be interpreted as another consequence of the security priming effect, which aligning the mood of the anxious attachments styles to that of secure attachment styles, makes them more relaxed and independent in their choice, without being influenced by the fact that they imagine being in the company of friends or not. Therefore, it has been possible to conclude that the increase in levels of willingness to buy caused by imagining the presence of friends, has a moderate effect, distributed homogeneously among all respondents, both anxious and

secure, without showing a significant effect that could be attributed exclusively to the group of anxious attachment styles.

The conclusions reached through this thesis can be considered valid starting points for potential practical implications. Marketers should benefit from the fact that the particular type of images impressed on the advertising posters are stimuli that can be manipulated with the aim of obtaining different results about the effectiveness of advertising; by means of periodic surveys, they could obtain information related to the type of attachment style of different customer segments, on the basis of which they could adapt their advertising campaigns to the type of promoted product and the specific target to be reached. Furthermore, current marketers should use the potential competitive advantage deriving from the effect that the social presence has on the individual willingness to buy and implement strategies through which create situations in which people evaluate their economic choices in the company of other people, better if friends. With the aim of maximizing the results of their campaigns, therefore, marketers should intelligently manipulate these two aspects, the particular attachment style and the social presence, in order to find, perhaps, one day, "the perfect recipe".

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Appendix A – questionnaire

VERSION 1 – social context "alone"

Block 1 - Introduction

Q1) Hi! I invite you to become a participant in the realization of my master's thesis and I ask you to fill in the following questionnaire that will take only a few minutes of your time.

Your contribution is essential for me!

The questionnaire is completely anonymous and does not provide right or wrong answers, what matters is only your opinion.

You will be asked to respond to simple and quick questions that focus on the so-called "relational advertising" and the individual inclination for interpersonal relationships.

For any doubt or clarification, do not hesitate to contact me at the e-mail address rosanna.capparelli@studenti.luiss.it

Let's begin!

Block 2 – Relational advertising

Q2) In this section of the questionnaire, you will be shown five movie posters and you will be asked to indicate, based only on the impressed images, the degree of probability with which you would choose to buy the ticket to watch at the cinema the promoted film. You will be asked to imagine being in front of the entrance of the cinema alone; please imagine really being alone and indicate your choice based on the emotions you would feel in that social scenario.

Q3) Look at this movie poster and answer the following question:

Q4) If you were facing the entrance of the cinema **alone**, how likely would you choose to buy the ticket to watch the film promoted by this poster?

○ Extremely unlikely (1)

○ Moderately unlikely (2)

○ Slightly unlikely (3)

○ Neither probable nor improbable (4)

○ Slightly probable (5)

○ Moderately probable (6)

○ Extremely probable (7)

Q5) Look at this movie poster and answer the following question:

Q6) If you were facing the entrance of the cinema **alone**, how likely would you choose to buy the ticket to watch the film promoted by this poster?

○ Extremely unlikely (1)

○ Moderately unlikely (2)

○ Slightly unlikely (3)

○ Neither probable nor improbable (4)

○ Slightly probable (5)

○ Moderately probable (6)

○ Extremely probable (7)

Q7) Look at this movie poster and answer the following question:

Q8) If you were facing the entrance of the cinema **alone**, how likely would you choose to buy the ticket to watch the film promoted by this poster?

○ Extremely unlikely (1)

○ Moderately unlikely (2)

○ Slightly unlikely (3)

○ Neither probable nor improbable (4)

○ Slightly probable (5)

○ Moderately probable (6)

○ Extremely probable (7)

Q9) Look at this movie poster and answer the following question:

Q10) If you were facing the entrance of the cinema **alone**, how likely would you choose to buy the ticket to watch the film promoted by this poster?

○ Extremely unlikely (1)

○ Moderately unlikely (2)

○ Slightly unlikely (3)

○ Neither probable nor improbable (4)

○ Slightly probable (5)

○ Moderately probable (6)

○ Extremely probable (7)

Q11) Look at this movie poster and answer the following question:

Q12) If you were facing the entrance of the cinema **alone**, how likely would you choose to buy the ticket to watch the film promoted by this poster?

○ Extremely unlikely (1)

○ Moderately unlikely (2)

○ Slightly unlikely (3)

○ Neither probable nor improbable (4)

○ Slightly probable (5)

○ Moderately probable (6)

○ Extremely probable (7)

Q13) Did you already know one or movie more posters among those that were shown to you?

    ○ Yes (1)

    ○ No (2)

Skip To: End of Block If Did you already know one or more movie posters among these that were shown to you? = No

----

Q14) Please indicate which one (more than one response is allowed):

    ☐   the first one (1)

    ☐   the second one (2)

    ☐   the third one (3)

    ☐   the fourth one (4)

    ☐   the fifth one (5)

    ☐   the sixth one (6)

    ☐   the seventh one (7)

    ☐   the eighth one (8)

    ☐   the ninth one (9)

    ☐   the tenth one (10)

Block 3 – Attachment style

Q15) In this section of the questionnaire, you will have to express your degree of agreement or disagreement about the following statements concerning your approach to interpersonal relationships.

Express your degree of agreement or disagreement about the following statements:

Q16) I feel a certain amount of anxiety in my relationships with others.

○ Completely disagree (1)

○ I disagree (2)

○ Quite disagreeing (3)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

○ Pretty agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Totally agree (7)

Q17) My desire to be close to others scares people away.

○ Completely disagree (1)

○ I disagree (2)

○ Quite disagreeing (3)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

○ Pretty agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Totally agree (7)

Q18) I often need reassurance from others in my relationships.

○ Completely disagree (1)

○ I disagree (2)

○ Quite disagreeing (3)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

○ Pretty agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Totally agree (7)

Q19) I worry about being neglected or ignored by others in my relationships.

○ Completely disagree (1)

○ I disagree (2)

○ Quite disagreeing (3)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

○ Pretty agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Totally agree (7)

Q20) I find that others don't want to get as close as I would like.

○ Completely disagree (1)

○ I disagree (2)

○ Quite disagreeing (3)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

○ Pretty agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Totally agree (7)

Q21) I get nervous if others are not available when I need them.

○ Completely disagree (1)

○ I disagree (2)

○ Quite disagreeing (3)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

○ Pretty agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Totally agree (7)

Q22) I am very self-reliant in my dealings with others.

○ Completely disagree (1)

○ I disagree (2)

○ Quite disagreeing (3)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

○ Pretty agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Totally agree (7)

Q23) I often discuss my problems and concerns with others.

○ Completely disagree (1)

○ I disagree (2)

○ Quite disagreeing (3)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

○ Pretty agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Totally agree (7)

Q24) I turn to others in times of need.

○ Completely disagree (1)

○ I disagree (2)

○ Quite disagreeing (3)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

○ Pretty agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Totally agree (7)

Q25) I seek out others for comfort and reassurance.

○ Completely disagree (1)

○ I disagree (2)

○ Quite disagreeing (3)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

○ Pretty agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Totally agree (7)

Q26) I enjoy giving support to others.

○ Completely disagree (1)

○ I disagree (2)

○ Quite disagreeing (3)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

○ Pretty agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Totally agree (7)

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○ Completely disagree (1)

○ I disagree (2)

○ Quite disagreeing (3)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

○ Pretty agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Totally agree (7)

Block 4 - Demographics

Q28) We are almost there, only few last questions to conclude.

Q29) Gender

○ Man (1)

○ Woman (2)

○ I prefer not to say it (3)

Q30) Age

○ Less than 18 (1)

○ 18 - 24 (2)

○ 25 - 34 (3)

○ 35 - 44 (4)

○ 45 - 54 (5)

○ 55 - 64 (6)

○ 65 or more (7)

VERSION 2 – social context "in the company of friends"

Block 1 - Introduction

Q1) Hi! I invite you to become a participant in the realization of my master's thesis and I ask you to fill in the following questionnaire that will take only a few minutes of your time.

Your contribution is essential for me!

The questionnaire is completely anonymous and does not provide right or wrong answers, what matters is only your opinion.

You will be asked to respond to simple and quick questions that focus on the so-called "relational advertising" and the individual inclination for interpersonal relationships.

For any doubt or clarification, do not hesitate to contact me at the e-mail address rosanna.capparelli@studenti.luiss.it

Let's begin!

Block 2 – Relational advertising

Q2) In this section of the questionnaire, you will be shown five movie posters and you will be asked to indicate, based only on the impressed images, the degree of probability with which you would choose to buy the ticket to watch at the cinema the promoted film. You will be asked to imagine being in front of the entrance of the cinema in the company of friends; please imagine really being with them and indicate your choice based on the emotions you would feel in that social scenario.

Q3) Look at this movie poster and answer the following question:

Q4) If you were facing the entrance of the cinema **in the company of friends**, how likely would you choose to buy the ticket to watch the movie promoted by this poster?

○ Extremely unlikely (1)

○ Moderately unlikely (2)

○ Slightly unlikely (3)

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○ Extremely probable (7)

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Q6) If you were facing the entrance of the cinema **in the company of friends**, how likely would you choose to buy the ticket to watch the movie promoted by this poster?

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Q9) Look at this movie poster and answer the following question:

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Q13) Did you already know one or movie more posters among those that were shown to you?

○ Yes (1)

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Q26) I enjoy giving support to others.

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    ○ I disagree (2)

    ○ Quite disagreeing (3)

    ○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

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    ○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

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Block 4 - Demographics

Q28) We are almost there, only few last questions to conclude.

Q29) Gender

○ Man (1)

○ Woman (2)

○ I prefer not to say it (3)

Q30) Age

○ Less than 18 (1)

○ 18 - 24 (2)

○ 25 - 34 (3)

○ 35 - 44 (4)

○ 45 - 54 (5)

○ 55 - 64 (6)

○ 65 or more (7)

Appendix B – statistical analysis on Stata

Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances

Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Uniqueness
Anxious1	0.7374	-0.0416	0.4545
Anxious2	0.6915	0.0424	0.5201
Anxious3	0.6664	0.3610	0.4256
Anxious4	0.7592	0.1845	0.3895
Anxious5	0.7715	-0.0101	0.4047
Anxious6	0.3499	0.2836	0.7972
Secure1	-0.3221	0.0156	0.8960
Secure2	0.1002	0.7254	0.4637
Secure3	0.0691	0.8127	0.3347
Secure4	0.1699	0.8219	0.2956
Secure5	0.0214	0.4811	0.7681
Secure6	-0.1303	0.6221	0.5960

Output 1. Factor Analysis of attachment styles' scales.

. alpha Anxious1 Anxious2 Anxious3 Anxious4 Anxious5, detail generate(anx2) item

Test scale = mean(unstandardized items)

Item	Obs	Sign	item-test correlation	item-rest correlation	average interitem covariance	alpha
Anxious1	184	+	0.7267	0.5554	1.20567	0.7676
Anxious2	184	+	0.7065	0.5459	1.265641	0.7707
Anxious3	184	+	0.7342	0.5533	1.176071	0.7691
Anxious4	184	+	0.7869	0.6347	1.088956	0.7419
Anxious5	184	+	0.7660	0.6140	1.143977	0.7492
Test scale					1.176063	0.7984

Output 2. Cronbach's alpha of Anxious scale.

```
. alpha Secure2 Secure3 Secure4 Secure6, detail generate(sec2) item
```

Test scale = mean(unstandardized items)

Item	Obs	Sign	item-test correlation	item-rest correlation	average interitem covariance	alpha
Secure2	184	+	0.8004	0.5891	.9263582	0.7077
Secure3	184	+	0.8337	0.6736	.8725845	0.6575
Secure4	184	+	0.8471	0.6906	.8294924	0.6461
Secure6	184	+	0.5675	0.3528	1.489903	0.8091
Test scale					1.029584	0.7697

Output 3. Cronbach's alpha of Secure scale.

Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances

Variable	Factor1	Uniqueness
WTB1	0.7792	0.3928
WTB2	0.7674	0.4110
WTB3	0.7284	0.4694
WTB4	0.7636	0.4169
WTB5	0.7857	0.3827

Output 4. Factor Analysis of WTB scale

```
. alpha WTB1 WTB2 WTB3 WTB4 WTB5, detail generate(wtb) item
```

Test scale = mean(unstandardized items)

Item	Obs	Sign	item-test correlation	item-rest correlation	average interitem covariance	alpha
WTB1	184	+	0.7780	0.6333	1.846148	0.7830
WTB2	184	+	0.7687	0.6188	1.867234	0.7873
WTB3	184	+	0.7296	0.5735	1.994397	0.8000
WTB4	184	+	0.7635	0.6143	1.88970	0.7886
WTB5	184	+	0.7847	0.6413	1.822449	0.7806
Test scale					1.884002	0.8229

Output 5. Cronbach's alpha of WTB scale.

```
gen ANXIOUS=( Anxious1+ Anxious2+ Anxious3+ Anxious4+ Anxious5)/5

gen SECURE=( Secure2+ Secure3+ Secure4+ Secure6)/4

gen WTB=( WTB1+ WTB2+ WTB3+ WTB4+ WTB5)/5
```

Output 6. Naïve method, generation of the variables ANXIOUS, SECURE and WTB.

```
. tab Gender

        Gender |      Freq.     Percent       Cum.
---------------+----------------------------------
        Female |       100       54.35       54.35
          Male |        82       44.57       98.91
 Not specified |         2        1.09      100.00
---------------+----------------------------------
         Total |       184      100.00
```

Output 7. Frequency table of the variable Gender.

```
. sum ANXIOUS, detail

                            ANXIOUS
-------------------------------------------------------------
      Percentiles      Smallest
 1%            1              1
 5%          1.4              1
10%            2              1       Obs                184
25%          2.6              1       Sum of Wgt.        184

50%          3.5                      Mean          3.531522
                        Largest       Std. Dev.     1.213713
75%          4.4            5.8
90%          5.2              6        Variance      1.473099
95%          5.4            6.4        Skewness     -.0041936
99%          6.4            6.6        Kurtosis      2.432288

. gen Anxiety=.
(184 missing values generated)

. replace Anxiety =1 if ANXIOUS>=3.5
(92 real changes made)

. replace Anxiety =0 if ANXIOUS<3.5
(92 real changes made)
```

```
. tab Anxiety
```

Anxiety	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
0	92	50.00	50.00
1	92	50.00	100.00
Total	184	100.00	

Output 8. Generation and frequency table of the variable Anxiety.

```
. tab Anxiety Gender
```

Anxiety	Gender Female	Male	Not spe..	Total
0	47	43	2	92
1	53	39	0	92
Total	100	82	2	184

Output 9. Cross-tabulation of the variables *Gender* and *Anxiety*.

114

```
. sum SECURE, detail
```

                                  SECURE

	Percentiles	Smallest		
1%	2	2		
5%	2.75	2		
10%	3	2	Obs	184
25%	4	2	Sum of Wgt.	184
50%	4.75		Mean	4.728261
		Largest	Std. Dev.	1.156564
75%	5.75	6.75		
90%	6	6.75	Variance	1.33764
95%	6.25	7	Skewness	-.3510892
99%	7	7	Kurtosis	2.448231

```
. gen SelfConfidence=.
(184 missing values generated)

. replace SelfConfidence =1 if ANXIOUS>=4.75
(34 real changes made)

. replace SelfConfidence =0 if ANXIOUS<4.75
(150 real changes made)
```

SelfConfidence	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
0	150	81.52	81.52
1	34	18.48	100.00
Total	184	100.00	

Output 10. Generation and frequency table of the variable Anxiety.

```
. pwcorr WTB ANXIOUS, sig
```

	WTB	ANXIOUS
WTB	1.0000	
ANXIOUS	0.3238	1.0000
	0.0000	

Output 11. Correlation analysis between the variables ANXIOUS e WTB.

```
. pwcorr WTB SECURE, sig

             |      WTB    SECURE
-------------+------------------
         WTB |   1.0000
             |
             |
      SECURE |  -0.0453    1.0000
             |   0.5412
             |
```

Output 12. Correlation analysis between the variables SECURE e WTB.

```
. ttest WTB, by ( SocialContext)

Two-sample t test with equal variances

----------------------------------------------------------------------------
   Group |     Obs        Mean    Std. Err.   Std. Dev.   [95% Conf. Interval]
---------+------------------------------------------------------------------
       0 |      92    3.963043    .157529    1.510965    3.650131    4.275955
       1 |      92    4.628261    .1509828   1.448176    4.328352    4.92817
---------+------------------------------------------------------------------
combined |     184    4.295652    .111545    1.51307     4.075573    4.515732
---------+------------------------------------------------------------------
    diff |           -.6652174    .2181999              -1.095744   -.2346907
----------------------------------------------------------------------------
    diff = mean(0) - mean(1)                                  t =  -3.0487
Ho: diff = 0                                    degrees of freedom =      182

    Ha: diff < 0                 Ha: diff != 0                  Ha: diff > 0
 Pr(T < t) = 0.0013        Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0026        Pr(T > t) = 0.9987
```

Output 13. Independent samples t-test.

```
. sum ANXIOUS SocialContext

    Variable |       Obs        Mean    Std. Dev.       Min        Max
-------------+--------------------------------------------------------
     ANXIOUS |       184    3.531522    1.213713          1        6.6
 SocialCont~t |      184          .5    .5013643          0          1

. gen AnxiousxSociaC= ( ANXIOUS - 3.531522) * ( SocialContext - 0.5)
```

Output 14. Mean centering and generation of the variable ANXIOUSxSocialContext.

```
. anova WTB c.ANXIOUS SocialContext c.AnxiousxSociaC
```

| | Number of obs = | 184 | | R-squared | = | 0.1527 |
| | Root MSE | = 1.40434 | | Adj R-squared = | | 0.1386 |

Source	Partial SS	df	MS	F	Prob > F
Model	63.9602900	3	21.3227663	10.81	0.0000
ANXIOUS	43.3580730	1	43.3580730	21.99	0.0000
SocialCon~t	16.8071752	1	16.8071752	8.52	0.0040
AnxiousxS~C	3.07464836	1	3.07464836	1.56	0.2134
Residual	354.988220	180	1.97215682		
Total	418.956527	183	2.28937993		

Output 15. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA).

Summary

In the current economic scenario, characterized by the presence of competitive markets and consumers who are increasingly aware of what they want and what the many business can offer them, marketing researchers need to understand deeply the process of evaluation and creation of consumer's preferences that lead him to the final choice. This is necessary especially given the radical conclusions reached by recent researches in the last decades that, in the wake of the Experiential Marketing, have shown that there are emotional components that play an essential role in the consumer's decision-making process, that interfere with the individual's rationality, exerting a strong influence on his actions and decisions. But what do these emotions depend on? And why, in the same situation, distinct individuals can feel different emotions, behave differently and, therefore, take different decisions?

The **first chapter** of the present thesis illustrates the **main academic studies**, whose proved models and assumptions constituted the right theoretical basis to give a valid answer to these questions. A first psychosocial model able to explain why several kinds of emotions and sensations are aroused in different individuals when they face a certain situation, is the **Attachment theory,** a theoretical construct that identifies different types of *attachment style*, that reflect the individuals' behavioral and affective attitudes and tendencies in interpersonal relationships, as a result of their prior experiences (Thomson & Johnson, 2006). In particular, based on the kind of rapport that people developed in the first years of life with their caregivers, it is possible to make a distinction between the two attachment style focus of the present study, **secure** and **anxious**. Secure attachment styles, thanks to their past characterized by the presence of a consistent support, are self-confident and have a positive inclination towards social relationships, that they manage with serenity; on the contrary, anxious attachment styles, because of their past marked by the presence of unreliable support, are insecure and have negative perceptions and expectations of interpersonal relationships, that they live with concern and mistrust (David & Bearden, 2017). Therefore, these two psychosocial profiles have totally different conceptions of themselves, of social relationships and of their way of living them. It is important to understand the type of attachment style to which people are more similar, because their typical individual differences in personality and in propensity for

interpersonal relationship represent valid tools through which obtain new and valid insights in predicting consumer decision making that leads to his final choice. A study entitled *"The role of interpersonal attachment in shaping consumer preferences for products shown in relational advertisements"* (David & Bearden, 2017) used the psychosocial model of attachment theory to obtain new potential forecasts on the effectiveness of the so called **"relational advertising",** expression indicating the type of ad depicting interpersonal relationships. The authors of this paper proved that securely attached individuals, who are by their nature optimistic and confident in relationships, show a greater likelihood of buying products promoted in relational ads and that anxiously attached individuals, who reveal a more negative inclination for personal interactions, show a lower likelihood of buying products promoted in relational ads.

The curiosity of the present thesis arose from understanding if these two attachment styles would have changed their preferences towards the relational ad and the related promoted product only because placed in different social contexts, respectively *alone* and *in the company of friends.* The biggest interest was mostly about anxious attachment styles; if on the one hand it could be possible to think that secure attachment styles, being already so sure of themselves and confident in interpersonal relationships, could maintain this general positive approach, on the other hand, it could be possible to ask: how would insecure attachment styles react if the social context of reference is changed from being alone to being in the company of friends? Would their sense of insecurity and concern for others increase or be lightened by the presence of someone else? With the aim of developing the research based on these questions, it was necessary to investigate the implications deriving from the specific social context, proved by previous academic studies. The first of these, an article by the Professor Pozharliev (2004), investigated the advertising effectiveness taking into consideration the *"social dimension of advertising"*, stating that the specific social context is able to influence the psychology of the consumer when he looks at an ad and processes the transmitted information. In particular, several marketing researches showed that social contexts exert a strong influence on some key factors used to measure the effectiveness of advertising: Attention, Emotion, Memory, Preference and Purchase Behavior. To see the effect that the specific social context has on these elements and on the process of acquiring the information contained in the advertisement, it is not necessary that the individuals with whom people are looking at an ad say or do

something in particular, but the *"mere presence"* is sufficient. The mere presence implies the situation in which individuals are simply in the company of other people, regardless of any kind of influence they may exert. It is precisely the mere presence of people to be taken into consideration and carefully studied in the **Social Facilitation theory**, a psychosocial model that describes and analyzes the tendency of people to perform actions differently when in presence of others than when alone (Strauss & Bernd, 2002); in particular, recent studies proved that, when an individual is in the presence of others, he tends to perform better simple tasks, which he often accomplishes in very easy way and, on the contrary, he performs worse more complex tasks (Kirby, 2011). This effect of the distinct social context of changing the way in which people perform daily actions has also been confirmed by a study published in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* (Luo X., 2005), which showed that the presence of other people influences the impulsive purchasing of an individual. The author of this article proved that there are two types of influence exercised respectively by peers and by family members, which represent the two primary sources of social influence; while the presence of peers has the tendency to lead an individual to purchase, as they represent for him a sort of justification for the purchase itself or for reasons of social desirability, on the contrary, the family members have the tendency to limit the inclination to purchase, especially to impulsive purchase, because they usually inspire and transmit a sense of responsibility and, therefore, their presence acts as an incentive not to spend money unnecessarily.

However, going beyond the type of effect arising from the mere presence of other people on the way in which an individual performs a generic action and, in particular, on his purchase choices, it is important to highlight the fact that further studies concluded that the mere presence does not affect everyone in the same way. A study of Torquati and Raffaelli (2004) examined how the emotions and situations of everyday life differ according to the type of attachment style and the specific social context. The authors of this study proved that both securely and insecurely attached individuals show more positive moods and emotions when they are in the company of familiar intimates (friends, partners, roommates) compared to when they are alone. In particular, focusing the attention on the experiences and emotional moods that the anxious attachment styles live daily, it emerged that they feel far more negative emotional states when they are alone than when they are in company, and, on the contrary, they live more positive humor and

affective experiences when they are in the presence of their familiar intimates; their moods of pessimism, distrust in themselves and others, their concern of not to being accepted and of the judgments that others have of them are placated and they show more positive signs of their general orientation about themselves and everything around them. From this, it arose the curiosity of understanding if anxious attachment styles can behave differently and assume a more relaxed approach simply due to the fact that they are in the company of their friends.

The objective of the present research is that of starting from the conclusions reached by the study about the relational advertising and try to understand how the role of the particular attachment styles (**anxious / secure**) and of the specific social contest in which they are located (**alone / in the company of friends**) affect the willingness to buy (**WTB**) the product promoted in a relational ad. In particular, the interest is in understanding if anxious attachment styles change their reactions to an ad depicting interpersonal relationships, showing a greater willingness to buy the product promoted in this kind of ad, only because they even just imagine being in the company of their friends.

The conceptual model of the present thesis and the three main hypotheses are shown below:
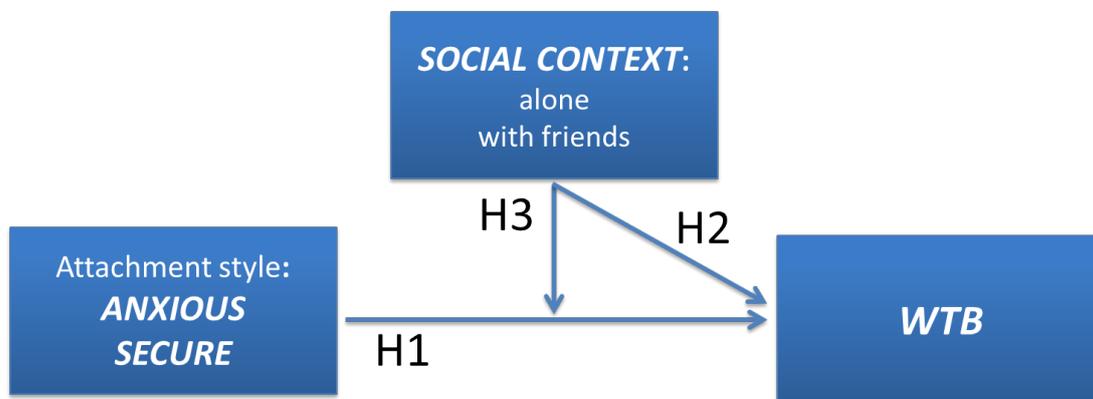
H₁: *There is an association between SECURE and WTB.*

H₂: *The WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends is greater than the WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone.*

H₃: *Social context has a moderating effect on the association between ANXIOUS and WTB; specifically, there is a higher positive association between ANXIOUS and WTB when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends, compared when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone.*

The **second chapter** of the thesis focuses on the research method used in the present study, the **survey**, that is one of the most common methodologies of investigation for collecting primary data, which consists of the use of a questionnaire to gather a significant number of opinions and attitudes. In this research, the survey was used with the main intent to record the kinds of reaction of individuals taking part in the study to relational advertising stimuli and their inclination for interpersonal relationships. Since the interest of this thesis is to see if people take different decisions depending on when they are alone or in company, it was necessary to produce two versions of the questionnaire, which differed only by the type of social scenario imposed on respondents. The specific type of survey that has been used in this study is the **online survey**, chosen considering the relative advantages, such as the speed of collection of responses, the potential high quantity of primary data available on the field, the low cost and the geographic distribution of potential respondents (Bethlehem & Biffignandi, 2012). Another important reason why it has been decided to use the online survey was to allow people to fill out the questionnaire when they preferred, to dedicate all the time they needed to complete it and to do it in an environment where they felt comfortable, without the awe and pressure they might have experienced in real laboratory conditions. The survey was elaborated on Qualtrics and it was distributed via an anonymous link, sent by personal messages and e-mails to the potential respondents, who were able to choose whether to proceed or not with the compilation of the questionnaire, available in two languages, Italian and English. In this way, it was possible to quickly and easily reach a large number of people who could take the role of participants in the survey drawn up. The potential respondents were not selected based on any specific criteria, as the main topics from which the investigation derived, attachment style and social facilitation theories, are phenomena that concern all people without any particular distinction of gender, age, achieved level of education or ethnic and geographical origin; each individual in every stage of his life, can be assimilated to a specific attachment style and shows a particular inclination for interpersonal relationships. The sample of respondents used for the present research, indeed, can be defined a *convenience sample*, that is a type of non-probability sampling method where the sample is taken from a group of people easy to contact and reach and where the only criteria taken into consideration are the availability of potential respondents and their willingness to fill in the questionnaire. (Saunders et al.,

2012). The link associated with the survey was, indeed, made available also to the users of social network such as Facebook and Instagram, just to allow all interested people to fill out the questionnaire.

Since two versions of the questionnaire were produced, it was possible to identify two subsamples (each of 92 respondents), whose components were selected randomly among the potential respondents. The survey developed for the present study was anonymous, it consisted of 30 questions and the average time of compilation was of 6 minutes; the 30 questions included 9 questions that had only the function of illustrating the contents of the different sections, and 21 closed-ended questions, for which the participants had to choose and select one or more response options, depending of the kind of questions asked. The structure of the questionnaire consisted essentially of four main parts, distinguished in four different blocks of questions, respectively named *Introduction, Relational advertising, Attachment style, Demographics.*

The *Introduction block* consisted of a part of text designed to invite the potential participant to fill out the questionnaire and to explain the contents and objectives of the related research.

The *Relational advertising block* has been created to show to the respondents some stimuli of relational advertising and to measure their willingness to buy the promoted product, asking them to imagine being in a specific social scenario, being alone / being in the company of friends. The relational ad stimuli used for this research consisted of five movie posters depicting interpersonal relationships, with the aim of promoting the related film, belonging to the genre of comedy. The choice to use this specific form of relational advertising resides in the fact that comedies represent a type of product, generally appreciated both by men and women, of any age, with any cultural background; moreover, comedy is a genre of film that is well suited to be watched either alone or in the company of friends, that were the two social conditions being studied. The task assigned to the participants in this section of the questionnaire was, in both the versions, to invite them to observe singularly these five movie posters which promoted five different comedies, and, imagining respectively being alone (version 1) or in the company of friends (version 2), to indicate for each of them, only on the basis of the images impressed on the posters, the degree of probability with which they would have decided to buy the ticket to watch at the cinema the promoted film.

The selected movie posters, shown with a random order to each respondent, were posters promoting foreign comedies; the choice of using movie posters that did not include Italian names, texts and that did not depicts Italian actors was intended for the study in question, both to allow focus participants' attention only on the impressed images and to avoid that their choices were influenced by other variables, such as the familiarity with the promoted films and the depicted actors.

The *Attachment style block* was aimed at measure the levels of secure and anxious attachment styles attributable to the survey participants. Respondents were shown twelve different statements, regarding the individual inclination for interpersonal bonds, about which they had to express their degree of agreement or disagreement; this section was the same for both the versions of the questionnaire.

The last section, named *Demographic block*, as usual for this method of data collection, was intended to gather some personal data of the respondents, the so-called *demographics*; in particular, the two types of personal information requested were *gender* and *age*, used to classify the survey participants by means of some descriptive statistics.

The multi-item scales used to measure the variables included in the conceptual model of this thesis (*ANXIOUS* and *SECURE* attachment styles, *SOCIAL CONTEXT*, *WILLINGNESS TO BUY*) have been developed based on the existing literature and previous scientific studies, using, where possible, existing scales. This is to make sure that the tools used in the questionnaire submitted to respondents were also valid from a scientific and statistical point of view. In particular, the attachment styles' measurements were based on previous studies referring to the ECR model, Experiences in Close Relationships, an 18-item self-report used to evaluate the construct of the attachment style (Clark & Shaver, 1998); regarding the twelve statements used to measure the individual inclination for interpersonal relationships, the participants of the survey were asked to express their degree of agreement or disagreement on a 7-point Likert scale. The second variable of the conceptual model, *social context*, was the manipulated independent variable, through which it was possible to create two different social scenarios (*alone / in the company of friends*) of the same questionnaire. It was decided to use only these two social conditions, without including other figures such as parents, partners, work colleagues, to avoid creating confusion in the respondents by proposing them social scenarios always different and because friends are the group of

influence that most affect the economic choices of people, leading to purchase. Finally, to measure the willingness to buy, a 7-point Likert scale adapted from a study of Mohr and Webb (2005) was used. Following each movie poster shown to the survey participants, they were asked to indicate the degree of probability with which they would purchase the ticket to watch at the cinema the promoted movie.

With the aim of verifying the clarity and completeness of the produced survey, a **pre-test** was conducted for both versions of the questionnaire, including for each five respondents from the convenience sample; they were asked to fill in the questionnaire and to provide any kind of feedback that could be useful to implement any changes and refinements before proceeding to send the link associated to the final questionnaire to the potential respondents. After making all the changes deemed reasonable and necessary based on the pre-test feedback, the survey was confirmed and distributed via an anonymous link.

The **third chapter** of the present thesis focuses on illustrating the investigation procedures and methodologies adopted in the preparation and the execution of the **statistical analysis**, with the main intent to statistically test the three hypotheses of the conceptual model of this study and to illustrate the reached results and conclusions. The first step of the statistical analysis included the procedures of the so-called **data pre-processing**, which is a data preparation phase, preliminary to the execution of the statistical analysis, that consists of a series of adjustments necessary to organize the collected primary data, with the aim of providing a complete data set easily accessible, containing information relevant to the study in question and which can be used efficaciously for the subsequent analysis steps (Pyle, 1999). It is an essential phase in the marketing research process, as any element of incompleteness, inaccuracy or inconsistency of the data can lead to distortions of the results and final conclusions. In order to avoid these problems, in this thesis **data cleaning** and **data transformation** interventions have been implemented; these are two of the most common tasks of data-preprocessing that were applied respectively to treat the incomplete answers of the questionnaire or whose presence would have led to a distortion of the final results and to convert the original form of the data to a new format generating the variables to submit to the statistical analysis (CIO.com, 2014). After carrying out these preliminary actions, a frequency table was used with the aim of obtaining information on the gender of the

participants of the research; it has been found that of 184 respondents (92 version1, 92 version2), 54.35% of are women, 44.57% are men and only 1.09% have preferred not to indicate their gender.

The next part of the analysis process was more focused on the statistical investigation of the variables constituting the conceptual model of the present research. In particular, the first step of this analysis consisted in inspecting the validity, through **Factor Analysis**, and the reliability, through **Cronbach's Alpha**, of the multi-item scales used to measure the variables *ANXIOUS*, *SECURE* and *willingness to buy* (*WTB*). Through Factor Analysis, it has been possible to prove the validity of the these multi-item scales and it emerged that only one factor was necessary to describe each of the three variables; through the study of the internal consistency of the employed multi-items scales, from the values of Cronbach's Alpha of *ANXIOUS* scale ($\alpha = 0.7984$), *SECURE* scale ($\alpha = 0.7697$) and *WTB* scale ($\alpha = 0.8229$) it was possible to prove their reliability.

After verifying the validity and reliability of the used multi-items scales, the chapter focused on the core of the statistical analysis of the present thesis, with the aim of statistically testing the three hypotheses of the research model and expose the related results.

With the aim of testing the first hypothesis of the present research that states that "*There is an association between SECURE and WTB*" the **Correlation Analysis** has been conducted; this type of analysis is used to investigate and measure the strength and direction of a relation between two variables (Malhotra et al., 2012). A first correlation analysis has been carried out between the two continuous variables *SECURE* and *WTB* and from it emerged that between these there is a slightly negative association ($r = - 0.0453$) not statistically significant at 0.05 level (p-value = $0.5412 > \alpha = 0.05$); therefore, it was possible to conclude that there is no association between *SECURE* and *WTB* (e.g. $\rho = 0$). Since, through this first correlation analysis, it was not possible to prove the statistical validity of the first hypothesis of the research model, a second correlation analysis has been carried out between the variable describing the other attachment style, *ANXIOUS*, and *WTB*; this time, from the conducted analysis, it emerged that between the variables *ANXIOUS* and *WTB* there is a positive association ($r = 0.3238$) statistically significant at 0.05 level (p-value = $0.0000 < \alpha = 0.05$), that means that an increase in the variable *ANXIOUS* is associated with an

increase in the *WTB*, and vice versa. This association is significant also with a 99% confidence level (p-value = 0.0000 < α = 0.01).

With the aim of testing the second hypothesis of the conceptual model of the present thesis, that states that *"The WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends is greater than the WTB of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone"* an **Independent samples t-test** has been employed; this analysis methodology is used when it is necessary to compare the mean of an interval dependent variable, *WTB*, for two independent groups, respectively the respondents that had to imagine being *alone* and the those who had to imagine being *in the company of friends*. From the conducted analysis, it emerged that with 95% confidence, it has been possible to state that the willingness to buy of people exposed to relational ad imagining being in the company of friends is greater than the willingness to buy of people exposed to relational ad imagining being alone ($M_{withfriends}$ = 4.63, M_{alone} = 3.96, p-value = 0.0013 < α = 0.05); this is significant also with a 99% confidence level (p-value = 0.0013 < α = 0.01). Therefore, it was possible to prove the statistical validity of the second hypothesis of the research model.

To test the third hypothesis of the conceptual model, that states *"Social context has a moderating effect on the association between ANXIOUS and WTB; specifically, there is a higher positive association between ANXIOUS and WTB when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends, compared when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone"* it has been decided to conduct the Analysis of Covariance, also known as **ANCOVA.** From the conducted analysis, including a study of **Moderation**, it emerged that interaction between ANXIOUS and SocialContext in the prediction of WTB is not statistically significant at 0.05 level ($F_{(1,180)}$ = 1.56 , p-value = 0.2134 > α = 0.05), that means that *SocialContext* has not a moderating effect on the positive association between *ANXIOUS* and *WTB*. Therefore, it was not possible to statistically validate the third hypothesis of the research model and, consequently, it has been possible to state that there is no a higher positive association between ANXIOUS and WTB when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends, compared when people are exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone.

The third chapter then provided a part devoted to the **discussions** about the results obtained. First of all it was explained that the formulation of the first hypothesis of the conceptual model of the present study was based mainly on the study that proved that that securely attached individuals show a greater likelihood of buying products promoted in relational ads and that anxiously attached individuals show a lower likelihood of buying products promoted in relational ads (David & Bearden, 2017). However, in the present thesis, through the results obtained by means of the conducted correlation analysis, it has not been possible to prove the existence of a positive association between *SECURE* and *WTB*; on the contrary, it was proved that there is a positive association between *ANXIOUS* and *WTB*. The methodology used in the survey, that included showing to the respondents five comedy posters depicting all smiling and apparently happy people, able to convey positive feelings, can be assimilated to one of the most common and validated technique used to activate the so called **Security Priming**. Security priming is the temporarily activating mental representations of attachment figures, that has the effect of restore positive mood, increase the sense of felt security of an individual and maintain his emotional balance and adaptability, even under fairly stressful circumstances (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Therefore, a valid explanation of the proved positive association between *ANXIOUS* and *WTB*, can be represented by the fact that the images impressed on the movie posters have the effect of improving the mood of anxious attachment styles and make them much more inclined to the interpersonal relationships; this, therefore, leads to a greater willingness to buy the ticket of the promoted comedy, when they are exposed to a relational ad. On the other hand, even if security priming is a procedure that leads to improvements in the mood of both attachment styles, the fact that for securely attached individuals it was not possible to prove the existence of a significant association with the willingness to buy, thanks to the use of relational ad, can be explained by the fact that they are people who are characterized by their nature by a positive mood and a positive inclination for social relationships, so their willingness to buy the ticket to watch a comedy, that is a genre which in itself has a positive value, is not significantly altered by the condition that the movie poster can be assimilated to a relational ad or not; their choices is based more on their preferences about the movie genre and the specific film. Moreover, the product promoted by the relational ad of the present thesis is a

movie; in this case, contrary to what happens for consumer goods, such as drinks or clothes, to express a degree of willingness to buy, it has not been necessary for each respondent to identify himself with the use of the promoted product and to experience a feeling of fit between it and one self, but only to express his personal tastes for the advertised film.

The formulation of the second hypothesis of the conceptual model of the present thesis has been based mainly on the assumption, derived from the social facilitation theory, that the mere presence of others involves changes in the way individuals carry out a performance or take decisions. In this regard, a study published on the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* (Luo X., 2005), which investigated the effect of the specific social context on the individual's impulse to purchase, has been taken into consideration; the authors of this article proved that the presence of peers has the tendency to lead an individual to purchase, as they represent a justification for the purchase or for reasons of social desirability. Through the analysis of independent samples t-tests it was possible to prove the statistical validity of the second hypothesis and, therefore, that the willingness to buy of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being in the company of friends is greater than the willingness to buy of people exposed to the relational ad imagining being alone. This represented a confirmation of the concepts according to which the presence of others, even if only imagined, involves changes in the way in which people behave and take decisions and that the presence of friends, in particular, represents a strong incentive to purchase. A further consideration that can be made is that watching a film at the cinema is in itself a social moment to be shared with other people; moreover, comedy is a genre of movie that is often chosen when people decide to go to the cinema in company, as it is a generally liked by a large number of persons. For this reason, it is understandable that in cases where respondents were asked to express their degree of willingness to buy to watch the proposed film at the cinema, they expressed a greater propensity in case they had to imagine being in the company of their friends compared to when they had to imagine being alone.

The formulation of the third hypothesis of the conceptual model of this thesis has been based mainly on the study of Torquati and Raffaelli (2004), that proved that both securely and insecurely attached individuals show more positive moods and emotions when they are in the company of familiar intimates (friends, partner, roommates) compared to when they are alone. From this, derived the curiosity of

understanding, through the present thesis, if anxious attachment styles, given this mood improvement, would have significantly increased their degree of willingness to buy if imposed them to imagine being in the company of friends, compared when imposed them to imagine being alone. This investigation did not even include secure attachment styles because they are by their nature characterized by a positive mood and, for this reason, it was hypothesized that they would not significantly change their degree of willingness to buy just because asked them to imagine being alone or in the company of friends. However, despite these theoretical foundations, in the present study it was not possible to statistically prove the third hypothesis of the research model and, therefore, it was not possible to prove that *SocialContext* has a moderating effect on the association between *ANXIOUS* and *WTB*. A reasonable explanation of this can be represented by the fact that the security priming effect that arises from showing the relational images impressed on the movie posters, improves the mood of the anxiously attached individuals, increases their sense of felt security and maintain their emotional balance and adaptability, even under fairly stressful circumstances (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Therefore, in this context of evaluating the purchase of the ticket to watch at the cinema the film promoted in the relational ad, they assume a mood characterized by greater tranquility in the choice, which no longer depends in a predominant way on the specific imposed social context; in this circumstance, the approach of the anxious attachment style in relation to the social context of reference, become close to that of the secure attachment styles, which, characterized by their nature by a positive mood, do not allow their choices to depend exclusively on the presence of others or not. From this it can be deduced that the increase in levels of willingness to buy caused by imagining the presence of friends, proved by the second hypothesis of the research model, has a moderate effect that appears to be distributed homogeneously among all respondents, both anxious and secure, without showing a significant effect that could be attributed exclusively to the group of anxious attachment styles.

Despite the interesting results achieved by the present study and the potential implications deriving from it, some **limitations** attributable to the research can be identified and, at the same time, can be taken as a starting point for future studies covering the same topics. A first limitation can be represented by the fact

that the two versions of the questionnaire have not been compiled by respondents under laboratory conditions; indeed, if on the one hand this allowed participants to freely decide when complete the questionnaire, to feel at ease without the pressure that they could have experienced in laboratory conditions, on the other hand, there cannot be the certainty that they filled out the questionnaire with the appropriate attention and that they understood well all the tasks required. Moreover, for the study of the present thesis, only self-report measurements have been used to measure the willingness to buy and the kind of individual inclination for social relationships; in future studies, it would be interesting to make the same measurements also through techniques that are not based exclusively on what self-reported by respondents, such as Neuromarketing methodologies, in order to have also a comparison between what emerges from them and what respondents say. Another suggestion for future research is to include additional variables in the investigation that can explain the results about the willingness to buy; in the specific case, for example, the emotional involvement aroused by movie posters could be included in the conceptual model as a valid antecedent of the willingness to buy. Finally, one last observation that can be made about the study carried out is that the reached conclusions are related to the effect that relational ad has in promoting movies belonging to the genre of comedy; it is not said that by using a relational ad designed to promote another kind of film, the positive relation between the anxious attachment styles and the willingness to buy would be confirmed. For example, it would be interesting to know the type of relations existing between attachment styles and the willingness to buy if relational ads are used to promote a movie genre completely different from comedy, like a thriller or a drama.

Despite the exposed limitations, the present research and the related reached results and conclusions offer to marketers some potential **practical implications**. The findings of this study have shown that the particular type of images employed to promote different products is a valid stimulus that can be manipulated with the aim of obtaining interesting results about the effectiveness of advertising. Taking advantage of this, companies could periodically submit to their most loyal customers questionnaires through which they could obtain information related to the type of attachment style of different customer segments, on the basis of which develop advertising campaigns specifically tailored to the kind of

promoted product and the specific customer target to be reached. However, in the case of big and diversified businesses, such as that of movies, where each individual can represent a potential consumer and there is no a well-defined base of loyal customers, it is not easy to obtain exact information for identifying the specific attachment style; in these cases, marketers could segment and target the reference market on the basis of other personal information correlated to attachment style, such as *gender* and *age*, and use advertising stimuli pertinent to the types of the emerged profiles.

Furthermore, current marketers should use the potential competitive advantage attributable to the effect that the social presence has on the willingness to buy and implement strategies through which create situations in which people evaluate their economic choices in the company of other people, better if friends. In the specific case, watching a film at the cinema generally implies the situation of being in the company of other people; however, with the aim of reinforcing this effect of increasing the willingness to buy, film companies or those who work for them to advertise the produced movie, could implement several actions, such as including in the advertising message the incitement to go to the cinema to watch the promoted comedy with friends, even offering special promotions, communicating the launch of new comedies in periods that generally people spend in the company of their friends (e.g. weekends, holidays), affixing movie posters in places that people generally frequent with their friends (e.g. shopping centers, universities). With the aim of maximizing the results of their campaigns, therefore, marketers should intelligently manipulate these two aspects, the particular attachment style and the social presence, in order to find, perhaps, one day, "the perfect recipe".