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Consumer Brand Perception through Social Media

A study on the Influences of Brand Perception on Generation Y

Pro gradu-avhandling i Internationell Marknadsföring

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With the increasing popularity of social media, the concept has gained increasing focus as a platform for branding strategies. To address the efficiency and the power of influence of social media branding over more traditional methods, we will investigate its effect on the brand perception among Generation Y.

We created an online survey which we tailored after the literature review. In total, we gathered 52 valid responses from participants located in Scandinavia and analyzed the data with the help of SPSS. We found that there is a positive correlation between the participant's brand perception and social media activity. Among all the investigated brand perception elements, this correlation was most strongly pronounced regarding the partner quality and dependence, nostalgic attachment, and intimacy.

Keywords: Digital Branding, Social Media, Anthropomorphism, Consumer Behaviour, Brand Perception, Brand Attitude

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The consumer brand perception is an essential element of brand equity, which makes it a crucial part of nearly any marketing strategy. By being able to understand the concepts and psychological elements that are involved in how social media can impact brand perception and brand attitude, we can utilize and optimize the underlying cognitive mechanisms more efficiently, and increase, modify, and leverage the perception of a brand in the eyes of the consumer.

The topic of brand perception itself is extensive and contains a vast amount of related research and elements such as brand knowledge (Von Wallpach & Kreuzer, 2013), memory structures (Ng & Houston, 2009), associations (Romaniuk & Nenycz-Thiel, 2013), involvement (Piong, 2015), suggestiveness (Sen, 1999), typicality (Goedertier, Dawar, Geuens, & Weijters, 2015), attachment (Cheng, Luo, Yen, & Yang, 2016), congruence (Vermeir, Kazakova, Tessitore, Cauberghe, & Slabbinck, 2014) and many more.

Research has found that social media branding can have a direct positive impact on the perceived brand equity and brand image (Tsai & Men, 2013; Godey, et al., 2016). However, there seems to be an informational gap when it comes to better, more condensed sources of information with a more specific focus on the context of social media in combination with brand perception. In recent years, such information has become increasingly important due to the massive transformation that has taken place in the global markets (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). It represents a research gap that offers a remaining demand for empirical data (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden, 2016) which the thesis aims contribute towards and support.

Today, the average consumer and people in general, tend to spend an extensive part of their time on social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others. Not only is this applying to leisure and entertainment activities, but it also includes the execution of consumption-related actions (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). We see social media as an increasingly frequent replacement of more traditional media, which is reinforced by the fact that an increasing number of consumers are migrating away from traditional media formats such as radio, television, and magazines (Mangold & Faulds,

2009). The result of this migration is so impactful that it led to the outcome of social media being rated as a more trustworthy information source than traditional media by the consumer (Foux, 2006).

As most of us know from their own experience, nearly every person, especially those of the more recent generations (such as Generation Y) are frequenting at least one of the many available social media networks such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and others. Most importantly social media networks have altered the way consumers behave and relate towards brands since they provided a transformation from the more traditional one-way communication to a multidimensional matrix model (Berthon, Pitt, & Campbell, 2008).

Companies are no longer in sole control of brand communication and observe an increase in complexity (Li & Bernoff, 2011). Additionally, and most importantly, in social media environments, brands are used as a significant part of the consumer's self-identification process (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012), which provides the unique possibility for brands to deepen their relationships with the consumer, in a way that was not possible in the past (Sashittal, Hodis, & Sriramachandramurthy, 2014). It opens a whole new world of possibilities in the context of brand behaviors and motivators.

1.2 Problem Discussion

With the increasing popularity of social media, we can observe increasing importance of the use of social media as a branding tool, but there is a finite volume of information and data available (Algharabat, 2017). Research from various sources indicates that there is a significant chunk of potential for an improvement in branding if we utilize it in combination with social media (Kim & Ko, 2012; De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012). Not only have multiple studies confirmed this indication, but they found that there is a direct correlation between an increase in brand perception and the exposure of brand content on social media (Gao & Feng, 2016). Nevertheless, most of the academic research papers do not specifically aid the managerial perspective of the relationship between social media and the general impact on more traditional elements of brand perception.

While there is a certain amount of research available that highlights the impact of social media on the consumer brand perception, it may be difficult to isolate a clear picture from the various research papers. Most of the theory related to brand perception has its basis

in cognitive psychology and memory structures (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1991), which is an extensive and relatively complicated topic. Therefore, we aim to identify and summarize the fundamental constructs which connect the leveraging factors of brand perception with social media networks and allow for an integration of concepts that are linked to consumer psychology. This form of content is currently difficult to come by, which reinforces the usefulness of such an aim.

Based on the observations from the previously discussed research, we can conclude that social media have shown themselves repeatedly to be a valuable part of branding, if used appropriately. Most of the strengths that originate from the social media element are based on the global influence and the broad exposure that includes nearly all types of consumers. This is connected to the increasing global availability of internet access, which is highlighting the need for a source of condensed and useful information. (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016)

Commonly, the increased information flow that is enabled between brands and the consumers leads to an expansion of trust which, in turn, creates a connection to the social exchange theory (Roloff, 1981). The social exchange theory has its roots in sociology and psychology and postulates that inter-human relationships are built on the grounds of a subjective cost-benefit analysis (Lambe, Wittmann, & Spekman, 2001). If we consider this, it is not surprising that social media networks have an increase in the potential for success over traditional one-way communication when it comes to branding and marketing with their consumers (Colliander & Dalhén, 2011).

The problem which this thesis aims to solve is related to the problematic dilution and spread of data, and contribute towards the empirical data, research, and literature within the combined field of social media and consumer brand perception. Without knowing how the influencing factors of brand perception on social media function, it remains an undervalued concept in the eyes of many brand managers that do not fully grasp the indirect implications (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

1.3 Research Questions and Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to understand the possible influences of social media activity and marketing strategies on the consumer brand perception of Generation Y, and the underlying mechanisms that act most strongly on the consumer's perception. This

includes the psychological background concepts that are involved in the cognitive processes, to create a better understanding of the underlying functions of consumer behavior control through social media interactions and content. Therefore, we have designed three separate research questions that we aim to answer with the content of this thesis.

RQ1: Which psychological background concepts influence consumer brand perception most efficiently?

RQ2: What are the specific potentials and limitations of social media influences on brand perception?

RQ3: How can an organization utilize psychological tools in social media to increase their brand perception?

The concepts that are discussed in theory are not limited to a single social media platform. Instead, they explore the general picture of social media activity. Due to the wide variety of different platforms and their individual properties, it is crucial to understand what platforms are most useful for which type of strategy and consumer type before engaging in a practical implementation. Since we do not have the resources to cover all the individual cases we decided to take a more general approach.

Furthermore, many of the elements that are explored in the thesis can also be applied to more traditional non-digital branding channels, making this thesis a useful source of information even if social media are not the reader's center of attention.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis progresses as follows: It commences the discussion of the theory and research that has been completed to date in marketing regarding the combination of social media and the leveraging of brand perception, its particularities, and the psychological background concepts that are involved in them and how the consumer's mind is working and most efficiently targeted. The thesis relies on extant research papers, literature, and empirical data to derive the most impactful strategies and elements to leverage the consumer's brand perception with the help of social media.

Subsequently, gathered survey data are presented and analyzed based on consumer's feedback about the extent of perception, behavior, connection, and reflection of favorite brands. The analysis of the data serves the purpose of identifying the most potent leveraging strategies to increase the consumer's brand perception with the help of social media and isolate the underlying elements that support and lead to a strong positive perception of each participant's favorite brands. In the conclusion, we discuss the findings and compare them to the theoretical framework and empirical data from third party sources. Last follows a discussion of the limitations and possibilities for further research, and a summary of the thesis.

Chapter two provides an elemental overview of the current state of research and theory that is available to us through journals and other forms of literature. Therefore, our focus will lie heavily on theories that form the underlying foundation of the conducted research. These theories consist of psychological processes of consumer brand perception (anthropomorphism, cognitive fluency and consistency, moods and emotions, automatic behavioral priming), and the elements that are applicable to leverage brand perception through social media and traditional media (brand categorization, brand association, inter-brand relations, multisensory perception, brand affect and brand love, brand participation, brand concept, brand personality, brand relationships, brands as informational cues, brands as identity signals, brand symbolism, brand attitude, brand attachment, and brand community).

In chapter three, we will form our hypothesis which is followed by chapter four that addresses the methodology and describes how we addressed the empirical research. This chapter will also contain further details on the execution of the data collection through a quantitative survey process and the descriptive research design. Our target demographic regarding data acquisition were consumers in the age range of 20-30 years that belong to Generation Y and are mostly located in Scandinavia. The participants were recruited with the help of a convenience sampling.

Chapter five contains the empirical findings and data analysis, which is exclusively conducted with the help of SPSS version 25 and MS Excel version 1806. In chapter six we present our findings, the conclusions, and a discussion of the gathered data. The last chapter number seven contains a summary of the thesis.

1.5 Delimitations

There are several limitations regarding the execution of the empirical research and the content of this thesis. There were no monetary resources available to support the research and the timeframe for the execution was limited, which is also reflected in the number of participants and size of dataset that we were able to acquire. We had to rely on convenience sampling which has many downsides regarding accuracy and forces us to depend on a limited generalization regarding data interpretation. It is therefore essential to keep in mind that our findings and data are not generalizable. They serve merely as a guide for possible outcomes. We just did not have the needed resources to conduct an extensive amount of research. Furthermore, the number of existing research papers that are relevant for this thesis is limited, which complicates the acquisition of secondary data to support or contradict our findings.

1.6 Contribution

This thesis contributes to the relevant knowledge of the topics of brand perception and the effects of social media on the brand perception of Generation Y. It explores not only the final effects but also the underlying psychological concepts and expands on the most effective strategies to leverage a consumer's perception of a brand. The content and findings are most beneficial to organizations and corporations that aim to understand the mind of the consumer better and increase the perception strength of their brand.

Based on the data and findings, it is made simpler for brands to understand which tools should be utilized for different scenarios and how social media can be used as a useful element in their individual branding strategy. Academic contributions are mainly covered in terms of additional data and insight into the current state of research and knowledge around the topic of social media and their impact on brand perception. There still remains a knowledge gap regarding the thematic which this thesis aims to contribute towards.

1.7 Thesaurus

Anthropomorphism: the attribution of human characteristics to non-human objects.

Cognitive: relates to the mental processes that are involved with reasoning, perception, and memory.

Causality: refers to the cause and effect that links one process to another.

Generation Y: refers to the population born between the early 1980s and the early 2000s (at the time of this thesis 20-30 years of age).

Homophily: the tendency of associating bonds with something that shares similar properties to oneself.

Priming: the situational triggering of mental constructs.

2. Theoretical Framework

The content of this chapter focuses on different concepts and theories, as well as existing literature and journals that are concerned with the appropriate information and knowledge that is relevant for this thesis. Furthermore, it will provide the necessary theoretical background knowledge that is required for a sufficient understanding of the empirical research which was conducted by us. Existing research will be discussed, summarized, and evaluated to allow to establish the foundation of our own research which is built on existing theories and papers. Besides the apparent topic of brand perception and social media, we also want to provide an understanding of the broader underlying mechanisms that are the working elements of consumer brand perception.

Firstly, we shall expand on the topic of consumer brand perception followed by the psychological elements and mechanisms that are at play. This leads us to the influencing of brand perception through social media and the different ways to efficiently leverage the consumer's brand perception. Together they build the framework and knowledge that is required to understand the process and results of the conducted research.

2.1 Consumer Brand Perception

Consumer brand perception has its roots in the social perception theory (Shukla, Dos Santos, Fong, & Lu, 2017) which investigates the formation of inferences and impressions of personalities (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2010). Brand perception concerns itself with how the brand is perceived by the consumer. It is very closely related to brand attitude which reflects the consumer's brand evaluation, containing brand related beliefs, reactions, and relations (Olson & Mitchell, 1981; Murphy & Zajonc, 1993). Due to the similarity of those two concepts, we can utilize many of the concepts from one for the other. Additionally, brand attitude presents itself as a beneficial, contributing element to the more profound understanding of the influencing factors on consumer brand perception (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

Perception is a topic that is integral to the concept of consumer information processing and throws light on how different branding stimuli are processed by the consumer (Jansson-Boyd, 2010). Many of the influencing factors that impact a consumer's perception are rooted in unconscious processes, such as underlying psychological and sociological elements (Jansson-Boyd, 2010), which we will investigate in further detail

in chapter “2.1.1” Psychological processes of consumer brand perception. In today’s digital environment we are given a wide array of new approaches to leverage the consumer’s perception compared to more traditional branding. While we are relying on the same concepts and ideas that are and were employed through alternative channels, certain considerations need to be made for successful and impactful implementations with this new way of social media exposure.

To better understand how we can influence and leverage the consumer’s brand perception, we must first gain a solid grasp on the psychological concepts and processes that are working parts of the perception of a brand in the eyes of the consumer. In this chapter, we will focus on some of the most significant ones, which does not imply that other elements that are not covered here are irrelevant or less important. The topic by itself is rather expansive and includes a wide array of psychological, sociological, and neurological processes that cannot be covered to their fullest extent in the content of this thesis. We merely aim to provide the knowledge needed to create an elemental understanding of how the consumer perception can be influenced.

2.1.1 Psychological processes of consumer brand perception

The term psychology has a broad range of definitions but essentially boils down to the factors that are affecting human behavior. Even though social media operates on a digital level, consumer psychologists have identified a variety of different psychological elements in action which perform as an influencing factor in the aspect of brand perception (Laroche, Kim, & Zhou, 1996). While there is a wide selection of different approaches, they tend to all boil down to a few core elements that can act as a trigger for specific cognitive processes. We can observe many of these concepts in distinctive elements of brand-related consumer psychology.

Consumer psychologists have connected most of the psychological processes at play to the associative network theory. Associative networks are based on cognitive models that rely on memory associations which originate from gathered experiences. This has a direct influence on consumer processes, such as the choice, evaluation, and perception of a brand (Keller, 1993). Nevertheless, there are a variety of other psychological theories in action, such as the attachment theory that is based on the dynamics of interpersonal relationships (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005; Bowlby, 2005), and many others.

Aaker's "Big Five" personality research (Aaker, 1997) is a prevalent example that highlights the influence of psychology and personality on the consumer's brand perception.

Besides that, we commonly find research in the fields of embodied cognition theory (Möller & Herm, 2013), social identity theory (White & Argo, 2009), and self-theory (Lickel, Hamilton, & Sherman, 2001; John & Park, 2016) which has gained considerable popularity in recent years, among several others (White & Argo, 2009; Lickel et al., 2001; Murphy & Dweck, 2016; John & Park, 2016). The goal of this chapter is to provide a better understanding of the underlying effects within a consumer's mind and the correlating cognitive processes. Generally, we can differentiate between three different types of psychological elements that are involved in the psychological branding process, cognitive elements, sensory elements, and affective elements (Jamaluddin, Hanafiah, & Zulkifly, 2013).

Sensory elements have a critical impact on the cognitive mechanisms and are essential due to the continuous information flow the human brain is exposed to, which in turn requires behavioral responses (Mayhew, Hylands-White, Porcaro, Derbyshire, & Bagshaw, 2013). Since a big part of the sensory elements are restricted to the impact of the physical environment on the senses, it is of limited usefulness in the context of social media. Cognitive elements are relating to mental structures, or in other words, they cover the field of thinking, believes and information that a person uses to process stimuli (Peter & Olson, 2005). This is one of our primary interests due to its potential usefulness in the context of social media. So are the affective elements, which envelop the area of emotions and feelings (Peter & Olson, 2005).

One of the most common psychological concepts that are frequently utilized and nearly impossible to not come by when we talk about the topic of brand perception is anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism refers to the perception of non-human objects or elements as humanlike entities, due to an association with human attributes and characteristics (Guido & Peluso, 2015; Epley, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2007). It is a conventional approach in the field of brand psychology to take advantage of the aspects of the imprinted cognitive information processing in humans to increase the perception of desired aspects. We will explore this concept in detail in one of the next subsections.

To gain an even deeper insight into the topic of psychological processes and brain activity regarding branding, we recommend the reading of neurological research that utilizes neuroimaging such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and others. These technologies are essential to investigate the activity of specific brain regions and corresponding stimuli (Al-Kwafi, 2016). A large part of neuroscience research in the field of branding is concerned with choice environments and pricing schemes that are influenced by the orbitofrontal cortex and ventromedial prefrontal cortex (Chib, Rangel, Shimojo, & O'Doherty, 2009; Plassmann, O'Doherty, & Rangel, 2007), neurological processes in the anterior insula and medial prefrontal cortex. These brain regions have shown to be actively involved in complex decision making during initial assessments of a product (Tusche, Bode, & Haynes, 2010).

These findings have shown and confirmed the theory, that a significant percentage of brand perception and purchasing decisions are occurring automatically without the direct awareness of the consumer (Tusche et al., 2010). This knowledge and findings serve as supportive evidence for the described psychological theories in this thesis. There is a wide range of other neurological studies and research that explore many other concepts and theories related to this topic. Neuroscience provides us with exciting and compelling facts that lay beyond the basic psychological background, as long as the information is not taken out of context. The knowledge and tools that belong to the field of neuroscience have the power to improve the efficiency of branding and marketing strongly. It can certainly be recommended to dive deeper into this topic if the information in this thesis is not sufficiently detailed for the reader's purpose.

Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism proves itself as a quite useful tool in the context of marketing and the combination of brand perception and social media. Besides various processes, it entails the association of humanlike characteristics and behaviors with objects, such as a brand or product, which leads to an object humanization. One of such examples can be commonly found in the automotive industry, where it is quite common to design cars with certain visual appearances that are distinctively perceived as human (Guido & Peluso, 2015; Windhager, et al., 2010). While in the eyes of the consumer we do not see an

obvious application of anthropomorphism by many brands, it often takes effect in less direct unconscious ways without being too visible to the consumer.

This example is supported by evidence from empirical research that has proven an association of human facial features with the front view of cars (Windhager, et al., 2010). There is a wide array of other areas where this effect comes into play, and we are not restricted to purely physical elements. Even brand names themselves or mascots can contribute anthropomorphic elements, such as is done by M&M's or several cereal brands that tend to have a character or figure associated with the brand (Guido & Peluso, 2015). Most people have experienced at some point of their life firsthand the phenomenon of brands which are associated with specific humanlike aspects, and the resulting relationships that are formed with the brand or product by the consumers (Aaker, 1997; Fournier, 1998).

Anthropomorphic perceptions tend to involve one of two processes which are not mutually exclusive. One process involves the perceived similarities through the external properties and physical attributes that are commonly associated with humanlike morphology, such as facial elements and others. (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; Epley et al., 2007; Puzakova, Kwak, & Rocereto, 2009). The second process on the other hand, occurs based on the congruity that exists between objects and the self-concept constructs of the consumer (Fournier, Dobscha, & Mick, 1998; Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004), in other words the consumer's perception is influenced by the amount of self-reflection which the consumers find, or wish to see as part of themselves in a product or brand, which in turn leads to the desire of building a human-to-human like relationship (Belk, 1988; Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Lam, Ahearne, Mullins, Hayati, & Schillewaert, 2013; Fournier S. , 1998; Aaker et al., 2004).

Based on that theoretical foundation, brand anthropomorphism can be categorized as a multidimensional construct (Guido & Peluso, 2015) which allows for the source of interpersonal relationships with inanimate objects such as brands (Aggarwal & McGill, 2012; Fitzsimons, Chartrand, & Fitzsimons, 2008). Not only does anthropomorphism support brand-to-consumer relationships, but it can lead to the formation of robust brand communities that are built around the attachment of a specific brand and its humanlike properties (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Many brands tend to strengthen this aspect through a marketing approach that applies a "face" to the brand and establishes a direct first-

person communication, with the goal to further increase the associated human emotions and anthropomorphism (Aggarwal & McGill, 2012).

Chandler and Schwarz (2010) have investigated a phenomenon regarding the willingness to replace a product in the presence of anthropomorphic preferences. While a brand in this context is not directly identical to the subject of this study, there is proof that similar processes occur in the context of brand perception (Levy, 1985; Plummer, 1985). Nevertheless, research implies that there is a substantial variation based on the individual characteristics and properties of a brand.

According to Epley, Waytz, and Cacioppo (2007) the more significant the number of human-like traits in an object, the more likely it is to be associated in an anthropomorphic context. Therefore, due to the increased level of personal connection between a brand and their consumer, which is made possible through social media, we can assume that social media strongly supports this process and can help with an increase of brand anthropomorphism (Epley et al., 2007; Aggarwal & McGill, 2012). Unfortunately, up to date, there has been only a limited amount of research into this specific area of anthropomorphism.

There are multiple paths we can take when it comes to the measuring of brand anthropomorphism, as can be seen in the basis of previous research, such as the one of Guido and Peluso (2015), Aggarwal and McGill (2007), Epley et al. (2007) and others. One of the ways to further confirm and investigate the brand anthropomorphism mechanisms is by the utilization of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) which allows us to measure the different levels of neural activity of brain regions. While there is an assumption that objects and persons are processed similarly in terms of neural correlates, research has shown that the processing of descriptor judgements possesses a stronger activation of the medial prefrontal cortex regions in the case of persons, and a stronger activation of the left inferior prefrontal cortex for objects (Yoon, Gutchess, Feinberg, & Polk, 2006).

We will investigate the variable of anthropomorphism closer as a part of our empirical research in chapter “5.4.8”.

Cognitive fluency and consistency

Cognitive fluency merely refers to the ease with which information is being able to be processed. Based on the content of literature in the field of anthropomorphism, a common phenomenon is the link between an increased urge of engagement in anthropomorphic thought processes, when strong desires and interests towards the acquisition of a specific brand or product are present, in combination with a lack of knowledge of how to do so (Epley et al., 2007; Waytz, et al., 2010). This is commonly caused by relying on the existing knowledge that was gathered so far, instead of searching for the lacking knowledge that is needed. Since humans commonly possess strong knowledge in the field of behavior, they fall back onto utilizing this knowledge, trying to understand a brand or product, which leads to the earlier described anthropomorphic thought processes.

Humans tend to rely strongly on heuristics (methods of problem-solving which rely on practical methods that are not optimal but sufficient for immediate results) when approaching difficult questions without knowing how to solve them. The human mind tends to answer a more accessible but related question in the same field instead (Kahneman, 2011). This concept of substituting a lack of an answer, non-consciously with a simpler questions answer can lead to an involuntary anthropomorphization. The level to which a subject anthropomorphizes an object is directly related to the related expertise and knowledge. In other words, anthropomorphism causes an increase in cognitive fluency (Delbaere, McQuarrie, & Phillips, 2011).

A high level of cognitive fluency is also associated with a positive emotional feedback for the individual, which leads to pleasant experience that is in turn associated with anthropomorphic thinking, which creates a loop that encourages further thinking of that form (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; Belke, Leder, Strobach, & Carbon, 2010; Delbaere et al., 2011). The concept of cognitive fluency further reinforces the usefulness of anthropomorphic properties in the context of brand perception, may it be on social media or otherwise.

The theory of cognitive consistency proposes that we as humans are driven by a motivational factor, based on inconsistencies, and the desire to adjust and “fix” them. Most theories surrounding brand perception evolve from the context of interpersonal relationships (Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012). Nevertheless, the perception on the level of interpersonal feelings tends to scale with the humanity factor that is associated with an

object, due to the preference for cognitive consistency of the human mind (Festinger, 1957; Higgins, 1987; Awa & Nwuche, 2010; Crandall, Silvia, N'Gbala, Tsang, & Dawson, 2007).

Regarding the consumer's mind, it is much preferred to process situations which are coherently compatible with its individual attitudes. The more human we make an object or in our case a brand, the more cognitive consistency we create, and the easier we make it to generate a lead to anthropomorphic thinking, which in turn causes whatever is thought about an object to be associated stronger with human feelings and characteristics (Fehr & Russell, 1991). The significance of this is reflected in research cases such as the one by Chandler and Schwarz (2010) that found that subjects who anthropomorphize objects, in this case, cars, tend to treat the object better and keep ownership of it significantly longer than subjects who did not fall under this category. This observation of cognitive consistency correlates with interpersonal relations that are usually not a default setting in person-to-object relations (Ahuvia & Rauschnabel, 2014).

A further relatable concept with strong anthropomorphic ties is homophily, which represents an essential element of interpersonal relationships, to the extent of which a brand is congruent with the consumer (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001; Sirgy, 1982). The more a brand matches the personality of a consumer the more attraction they feel towards it. This represents a good example and reflection of how a strong self-congruence in a brand can increase consumer attraction (Aaker, 1997; Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011).

Since the concept of homophily is perfectly mirrored in the approach of brand self-congruity, we can see multiple possibilities for the application of interpersonal brand-to-consumer relationships (Ahuvia & Rauschnabel, 2014). Since social media these days often plays a significant part in the consumer's life to express the desired reflection of themselves, the concept of homophily offers us an attractive opportunity of leverage regarding the influencing of the consumer's brand perception, especially in terms of specialty products (Chuhay, 2010).

Moods and Emotions

Another essential cognitive element that can exert a significant impact is human moods and emotions, which play an essential role in the field of cognitive associations. Regarding branding and marketing, research has proven that moods are quite simple in their creation, commonly with the help of advertising and storytelling (Wegener & Petty, 1994; Mitchell, 2000; Dillard, 2000). It was found that generated moods were perceived as the strongest when they were delivered by means of video and stories (Westerman, Spies, Stahl, & Hesse, 1996).

The influencing of moods, based on practical examples, seems to be strongly tied to conditioning paradigms, such as the exposure to specific stimuli that lead to cognitive associations (Turner, 2013). The impact of moods is observed primarily in terms of information retrieval and memory functions (Teasdale & Russell, 1983). Social media presents themselves as an ideal platform to conduct strategies such as emotional advertising and storytelling due to the viral nature of the successful content, the broad reach, easy targeting, and available media formats for distribution. While the concept itself is not new, social media platforms offer a much more simple, direct, and cost-effective way to conduct such actions.

One of such interesting examples is found in research which has shown that the receiving of information in a positive mood or state, leads the consumer to perceive the information with stronger positive associations than in a neutral or negative state (Isen, Shalcker, Clark, & Karp, 1978). This also works the other way around where a negative mood state leads to a more negatively focused perception, due to encoding effects that are associated with mood states (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999). An exciting aspect of this phenomenon is that the cognitive information recall process is stronger when the conditions under which the information was initially perceived are present again (Bower & Cohen, 1982).

A beneficial side effect that comes from a state of positive moods is the discovery by Bohner et al. (1992), which found that the presence of a positive mood in consumers reduces the willingness to scrutinize fed information due to a lack of motivation to systematically process messages with persuasive intent. This reinforces previous findings by Schwarz (1990) that a positive mood state creates a false sense of security while negative mood states are associated with alertness. This leads us to the conclusion that a positive affective state has a strongly beneficial impact regarding branding and brand

perception. We see a potential for significant advantages if we can utilize social media platforms and communities to establish a positive environment for the consumer and therefore impact the long-term perception of a brand in the eyes of the consumers.

Automatic Behavioral Priming

Multiple research studies in the field of social psychology have highlighted the importance that lays in priming, or in other words, the situational triggering of mental constructs, proving that they offer a powerful influence on the human behavior (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996). Brand exposure has shown to trigger automatic behavioral effects that are in direct correlation with the brand image (Fitzsimons et al., 2008). As an example, consumers who are mostly exposed to low-end brand influences, prefer value over prestige, which was the opposite of consumers with exposure to high-end brand names (Chartrand, Huber, Shiv, & Tanner, 2008).

A similar pattern is observed commonly with social groups where an individual wants to be associated as strongly as possible with a particular community or group (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996). This triggering of social influence by stimuli such as brands, which are non-human, is a relatively recent discovery, which is mostly explained by the increasingly strong people-like perception that is generated by iconic brands, and the anthropomorphization that comes with it (Aggarwal & McGill, 2012). As is the case with many other psychological branding elements, automatic behavioral priming effects are dependent on the level of anthropomorphization of a primed object.

As discussed earlier, the anthropomorphization opens the gates for social influences from non-human objects, as long as the required conditions are met. Research by Fitzsimons, Chartrand, and Fitzsimons (2008) suggests that the automatic behavior which is triggered by brand exposure is based on motivational processes. Dijksterhuis and Bargh (2001) link this to a predominant cognitive situation which leads to the conclusion, that priming has a direct impact on behavior through a connection with behavior and perception that follows the theory and principle of spreading activation. Spreading activation is a theory from the field of cognitive psychology that relates to the ways the human brain works its way through the nodes and connections of associated ideas, with the goal of obtaining specific information (Anderson, 1983).

The idea behind the theory of Dijksterhuis and Bargh (2001) is that subjects have a desire to obtain a characteristic or personality that is commonly associated with a particular brand. The theory of Aggarwal and McGill (2012) expanded on this research and found that an automatic behavior, preceding a subjects priming (exposure to a stimulus that shows a direct unconscious impact on a subsequent stimulus) by a brand, is caused by a motivation to be part of an interaction with an anthropomorphized brand. Not just the element of association with a brand's properties.

This approach is built on the work of Cesario, Plaks and Higgins (2006) who found a direct correlation between the desire for social interaction and the priming which triggers corresponding goals, which is related to a successful interaction. Based on the research from Bargh, Chen and Burrows (1996) we are led to believe that a brand priming of a consumer group is in direct correlation with the consumer's assimilation of the implied behavior of a perceived brand image, in correlation with the individual social interaction goals. It is important to notice that the individual behavioral responses of consumers can result in a manifold of relationship types with a brand. This can go from a simple commitment as a partner or friendship, up to the level of enslavement, as was found by Fournier (1998).

2.2 Influencing Brand Perception through Social Media

Social media have altered how brands and consumers communicate with each other (Nambisan & Baron, 2007). The increasingly dominating factors of social media and online technology have caused a rising in the consumer's online exposure and networking, most significantly with the help of social media networks. Increasingly often consumers are moving away from traditional media channels and utilize instead social media networks and other online sources for the retrieval of information (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold, 2011). This is especially the case for younger generations such as Generation Y. There are several ways to define social networks on the internet, but the most common one is that social networks are a collection of information sources which are consumed, shared, and created by the users (Chauhan & Pillai, 2013). The influences which social media exerts on brand perception are extensive but not limitless.

Firms have become increasingly aware of the importance of two-way communication with their consumers (Li & Bernoff, 2011). Social media offers an attractive solution for most companies since it allows for a direct and straightforward way to establish relationships between the customers and an organizations brand, but it is not the one magic solution for everything (Fournier, 1998; Fournier & Avery, 2011; Fournier et al., 1998). Nevertheless, we can observe a massive boom in popularity of the medium regarding marketing and branding. This can be explained by the viral aspect of information spreading through the online medium, as well as the reach and other advantages compared to traditional media channels (Li & Bernoff, 2011; Keller, 2009). Most marketing managers aim for the utilization of social media for the communication engagement with their customers to increase their knowledge about the consumers and influence the consumer's perception (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013).

Ideally, we would want to establish a win-win solution where the consumer and the brand profits. This can be achieved by providing an increased state of satisfaction for the consumer through an improved brand perception, while simultaneously benefitting from the secondary effects, such as the elevated profitability that emerges from the generated and increased brand loyalty (Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden, 2016). Furthermore, this includes the migration and application of traditional strategies onto more modern platforms such as social media and the extensive utilization of consumer-brand connections.

One of the elements that make social media platforms unique in comparison to other channels is user-generated communication. While it offers minimal control over the communication and information that is created through this channel, it allows for an accelerated communication between consumers (Duan, Gu, & Whinston, 2008), and the formation and growth of strong brand communities (Gangadharbatla, 2008). One critical disadvantage for a brand is that negative information or misinformation that is spread with the help of social media and user-created content is difficult to stop once it starts spreading.

User-generated content shares considerable similarities with a digital concept of word of mouth, with the main difference that it is the consumers who create the information (Smith, Fischer, & Yongjian, 2012). Nevertheless, we shall not forget about the advantageous aspects, such as the generated insight in the mind of the consumer in

combination with the very low communication costs, and the free branding and advertising that occurs through the brand-related user content (Krishnamurthy & Dou, 2008; Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright, 2008). Additionally, content that is created by other consumers tends to be perceived as much more trustworthy, compared to more direct channels such as the brand itself (Christodoulides, 2012).

Research has shown, that in the case of consumer-brand connections, the consumers inadvertently associate their self-perceived characteristics and image onto brands that they like (Escalas, 2004; Phau & Lau, 2001), which presents the possibility for companies to target a specific demographic and associate itself with the desired image of its customers. This has been reinforced by further research which investigated the relationships of consumer-brand interactions that lead to connections and relationships between the two entities. These relationships are comparable to regular inter-human social connections such as friendship (Aaker, 1996). We can explain this through the provided availability of dual channel communications such as ones offered through social media platforms, which allows the interaction between brands and their customers to strengthen the brand relationship. With the increased shift of social communication onto social media platforms, brands are now served a variety of new possibilities.

There are several different elements utilizing brand and consumer psychology, that let us impact a consumer's brand perception directly through social media. We will have a closer look at some of the most common ones, and their potentials and limitations in the context of social media engagements. While most of these ways to influence the consumer's brand perception can benefit significantly from the symbiotic relationship with social media platforms, they are not exclusive to the demand or usefulness for more traditional or alternative branding channels. Generally talking, social media tends to act as a supporting element in the branding strategy and commonly scales its power of influence with the size of the userbase of the target demographic. The psychological aspect of brand leverage that is exerted through social media is a complex construct, built on a multitude of processes and perceptions.

2.2.1 Leveraging brand perception

Research suggests that the perception of a specific brand is closely connected to the engagement of the brand with the consumer, this leads to some of the most impacting

factors being the brand affect and communication (Calder, Malthouse, & Schaedel, 2009). The roots of these factors hold mainly true due to the nature of centric relationships of social media platforms that have their basis in the concept of active engagements (Tsai & Men, 2013).

The brand perception is not only leveraged through the content and activity that is provided by a brand, but also the user created content that originates from the customers and communities such as the ones commonly found on social media (Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011). The fact that almost every consumer of Generation Y, as well as other age groups, are progressively relying on social media makes it one of the main areas of concern in the leveraging of brand perception. To properly engage and influence consumers on social media platforms, it is essential to obtain an extensive understanding of the consumer itself, and the motivations that lead to brand-to-consumer interactions (Tsai & Men, 2013).

While the most common reasons for the consumption and contribution of social media are based on information needs, social interactions, entertainment, and self-identity (Boyd, 2008), we also need to consider a range of other factors. Self-identity, social identity, and the integration that emerges from such identities, are commonly tightly tied to the self-expression and feeling of belonging in relations to a specific group, and the communicative connections with a said group (Papacharissi, 2007; Daugherty et al., 2008).

One of the main strengths of social media lays in the parasocial interactions, in other words, the consumer's illusion of having a personal relationship with a brand that is comparable to that between humans (Horton & Wohl, 1956). The more extensive and frequent parasocial interaction with a consumer occurs, the stronger the connection with the brand becomes (Tsai & Men, 2013). This leads to a specific communication pattern of brands on social media networks, such as taking on a friend-like interaction while retaining the fundamental properties of a brand for an optimization of the brand perception.

To be appropriately able to create leverage on the perception of a brand, we need to be able to influence the consumer. One of the most significant factors in this context is probably attitude, which reflects the evaluation of a brand from the consumer's point of view and offers an attractive element for the leveraging of brand perception. Based on

this idea, various theories were born. One of such is the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) from Petty and Cacioppo (1983) that is a dual process theory for persuasion and the manipulation of attitudes. An important takeaway from this and similar theories is that their effectiveness heavily depends on the personal relevance of the information. A second significant factor regarding the influencing power can commonly be found in associative processing and unconscious triggers. Based on the theories such as the one of Schmitt (2012) and others we were able to isolate a set of common factors that are crucial in the leveraging process of brand perception, may it be on social media or more traditional channels. (Calder, 2013)

The model of Schmitt (2012) in Figure 1 is a good example that visualizes some of the underlying processes and their relationships to brands. Regarding Schmitt (2012), the model does not only represent the characteristics of a brand but also visualizes the various levels of psychological engagements. In the model, we can observe a clear distinction between three different stages or layers. Most central of all, in the core, we can locate the functionality and object-based engagements, while the next layer represents the self-centered properties, followed by the outermost layer which is focusing on the social engagement.

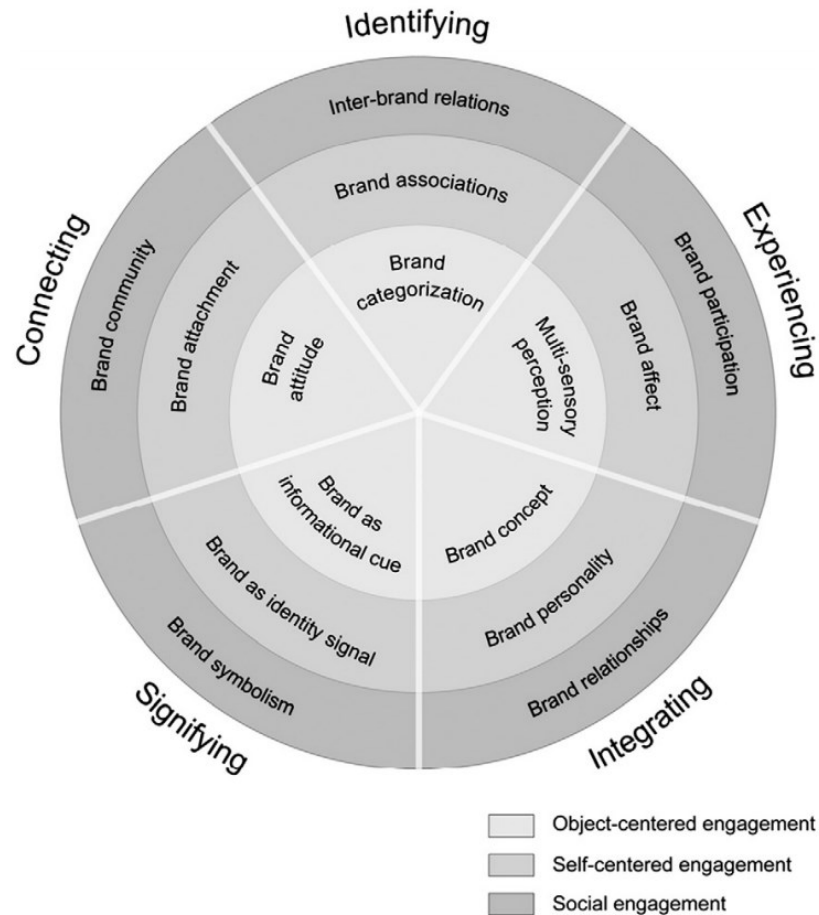


Figure 1 Brand related consumer psychology (Schmitt, 2012)

An additional aspect that is provided by the model is the representation of five unique, brand-related processes that are all containing the three different stages of psychological engagement. These five processes are divided into identifying, connecting, signifying, integrating, and experiencing. We will have a closer look at some of the most relevant elements that can be found in the model and help us with our goal. In other words, the aspects of the model that can be engaged on the level of social media and cause an impact on brand perception.

Many of the elements which are involved in this model are interconnected and can exert influence on each other's efficiency, as is visualized by the layers and segments of Schmitt's model (Schmitt, 2012). While the model of Schmitt (2012) covers a significant area of generally applicable elements, they are not specifically tailored towards the use of social media platforms. Nevertheless, we can get a good picture of some of the most common elements that can be used if specific prerequisites are present.

Brand Categorization

Brand categorization has its focus on the linkage of a brand with a specific category. To be a bit more exact, it entails the memory and stimulus-based categorization (Alba, Hutchinson, & Lynch, 1991) which provides the essential core awareness that supports a consumer's choice (Hoyer & Brown, 1990). A more concrete example of this is brand awareness which strongly relies on retrieval cues, that can be externally or self-generated (Lynch & Srull, 1982).

When it comes to the context of social media, we can utilize brand categorization to create a brand linkage on a target medium forcefully, may it be with paid promotion or other methods. Furthermore, an additional observation is the recent emergence of influencer communities, who are having increasingly significant leverage over the brand perceptions that consumers have towards brands. This emergence of influencers seems to keep getting fueled by the rapid growth of social media networks, through which the influencers operate (Booth & Matic, 2011). YouTube is an excellent example for this, where content creators are increasingly dependent on sponsorships that are sometimes directly integrated into the content that is produced by the influencer, often so in a repetitive manner. Nevertheless, this concept is not unique to YouTube, and can also be observed over various other social media platforms or blogs.

We measure the concept of brand categorization as part of our empirical research in chapter "5.4.7", and chapter "5.4.3".

Brand Association

Brand association entails the attributes and images which a consumer associates with a brand (Keller, 2003). While such associations are commonly provided through external influences, they are also developed through individual associations that are linked to cognitive responses of the consumer towards a specific brand (Keller, 2003; Teichert & Schöntag, 2010).

The triggering process of brand associations is commonly an unconscious process and tends to follow an automatic nature (Dimofte & Yalch, 2011). Regarding social media and brand perception, we can utilize social media platforms to distribute and spread external influences, which in turn can lead to the unconscious cognitive association by

the consumer. The fact that most social media platforms are based on the concept of sharing information allows for the possibility of strong influence over the exposed target demographics and enables it to become a powerful tool to leverage our brand perception.

The topic of brand association is part of our empirical research in chapter “5.4.3” and “5.4.7”.

Inter-Brand Relations

Inter-brand relations can exert a significant influence on the consumer’s brand perception. This is mostly expressed in the form of which a brand handles its relations with competitors and partners in the eyes of the consumer. As a result, this can lead to various degrees of psychological influence on the consumers, in some cases, we may even observe extreme examples such as “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”-situations (Schmitt, 2012).

To give a practical example, a person might have a very negative perception towards a brand. If now another brand reflects that specific dislike towards the negatively perceived brand, it can directly leverage the consumer’s brand perception in a positive way. Certainly, this also takes effect in cases of brand alliances that utilize synergistic properties between one or multiple brands, as well as social groups or other elements that possess an alignment of interest. This works just as well the opposite way if a brand has relations with a negatively perceived company it might tarnish their image.

Similar perception-altering effects were observed by the research of Grewal, Kavanoor, Fern, Costley, and Barnes (1997) which conducted a meta-analysis of comparative ads and their benefits. An example of such behavior can be found when brands criticize others for their decisions, such as when Apple decided to remove the 3.5mm headphone jack from their phones. Brands such as Google made fun of Apple for this decision and the consumers who were sharing this view cheered. At the same time, Google endangered themselves with a backlash, when they later followed Apple’s example with their own products, by removing the headphone jack from their phones (Savov, 2017). It can also work the other way, but it remains important to remember that whatever is said and shared on social media, might be remembered for a long time.

We touch upon this topic as part of chapter “5.4.7” in our empirical research.

Multisensory Perception

Multisensory perception has its focus on the experience that is provided to the consumer by the brand. Social media offers the possibility to be used for the specific targeting of the multi-sensory perception, which comes commonly into action with the utilization of audio-visual properties that provide multiple forms of stimuli for the consumer (video, audio, text, pictures). It has been found that sensory cues can have a significant impact on the brand memory. Generally, the more senses are stimulated, the more significant the potential impact on the brand perception (Morrin & Ratneshwar, 2003).

Psychophysical research has shown that sensory elements tend to have a rapid decay but coupled with the encoding and coupling of the sensory elements with something as a brand, a significant improvement in the sensory memory occurs (Hubbard, 1994; Shapiro & Spence, 2002). Since it is beneficial to target all five senses, this is not something that should be limited to social media as a single channel, due to the restricted sensory stimulation of social media platforms. It should be perceived as a single medium among others, which make up a larger mixed strategy in the leveraging of brand perception through multi-sensory elements.

Brand Affect and Brand Love

Brand affect is the result of positive, negative, or other feelings, which are directly linked to the perception or exposure of a brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). In particular research papers, this is also referred to under the term brand love (Ahuvia & Rauschnabel, 2014). As the terms brand affect and brand love imply, they are in direct correlation with the enhancement of emotions, passion and likewise properties that are associated with the term (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2008).

Batra et al. (2012) define brand love as an extensive consumer to brand relationship, which involves a variety of interconnected elements of affective, behavioral, and cognitive aspects. This is visualized in detail in Figure 2. Some research papers have suggested that a real feeling of love can arise for a brand that is identical to that in human relationships including all the integrated dimensions (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Thomson, et al., 2005). Under ideal conditions, the consumer possesses an emotional connection towards the brand in addition to the related cognitive brand knowledge. The idea behind

this concept is to provide the consumers with a reflection of their self-image (Calder, 2013).

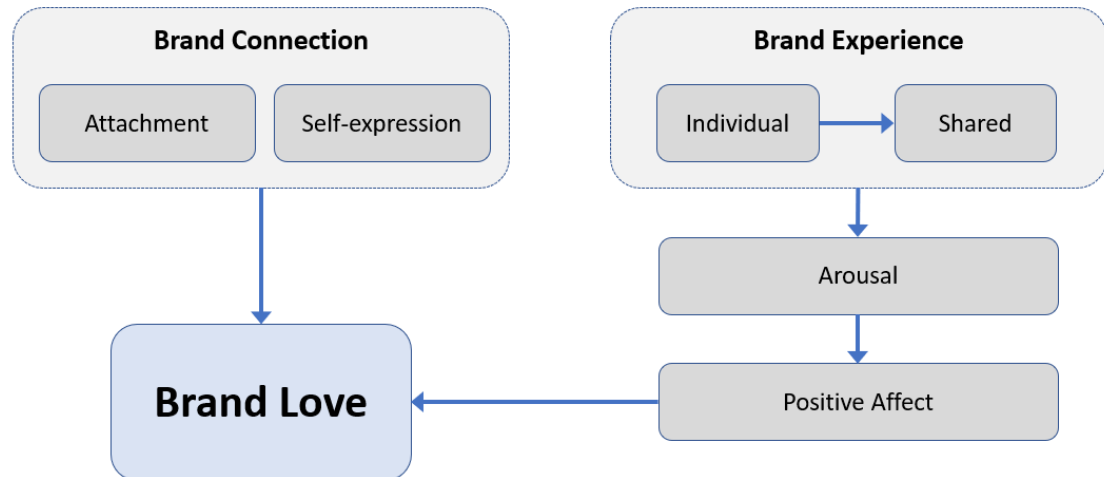


Figure 2 Deep brand relationship model, adapted from Loureiro (2013)

Comparable to the many other elements impacting brand perception, brand love and brand affect have their roots in anthropomorphism (Delgado-Ballester, Palazón, & Pelaez-Muñoz, 2017) which we will explore in more detail later. In the last decade, we also observed the emergence of the term “emotional-branding” which has its foundation in brand affect (Thompson, Rindfleisch, & Arsel, 2006). While emotions are strongly object-oriented, we must factor in the consumer's moods and feelings, which are much more diffused and generic. Even though the properties are deviating from raw emotions, it does not mean that moods are not reflecting the consumer heuristics (Pham, 2004; Ramanathan & Williams, 2007).

An excellent example of this is the case of Harley-Davidson. The brand does not only provide a functional brand image of good quality American motorcycles, but it provides middle-aged men with a brand affect that reflects freedom and a rebel lifestyle (Calder, 2013). Research by Algharabat (2017) has shown that social media engagements allow us to directly influence brand affect which in turn has a positive effect on brand perception and brand loyalty if used correctly.

The term emotional branding can sometimes be a bit misleading, since it does not merely revolve around emotions, but also moods, the earlier mentioned affect, and feelings (Bagozzi et al., 1999). All these properties that are found under the umbrella of emotional branding have a varying impact on a consumer's brand perception. For example, moods are less intense than emotions but have a longer lasting cognitive effect (Mitchell, Brown, Villagran, & Villagran, 2001). To summarize, emotional branding allows for the creation of deeper bonds with the consumer (Thompson et al., 2006) that ultimately leads to an increase in positive brand perception. People tend to be loyal towards brands that they relate to (Turner, 2013).

Chapter "5.4.6" of our empirical research will be specifically focused on the topic of brand love and affect.

Brand Participation

Brand participation is based on the social engagement and interaction with the consumer. In this context, the consumer is provided with a behavioral experience, where involvement and experience are blended (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009). Most commonly we face brand participation in the traditional brand settings and environments that provide a high degree of immersion, interaction, and participation (Akaoui, 2007), with an increasing focus on digital platforms such as social media (Kamboj & Rahman, 2016). Social media have their focus on brand participation mostly in the form of spreading and sharing of brand-related information and is an essential element of most social media branding strategies (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010).

Additionally, social media allows a considerable degree of freedom for the consumers to contribute their input to a brand, which has shown to produce positive effects in the form of brand satisfaction (Solem, 2016). Therefore, we can conclude a positive impact on brand perception as an outcome of increased brand participation and satisfaction through social media. It has been shown that the factor of personal importance and relevance of content scales with the level of involvement by the consumer, this applies not only to the consumer's perception of commercial branding material but also to the social media content that is generated and distributed by the consumers themselves (Christodoulides, Jevons, & Bonhomme, 2012).

Specific insights of brand participation are reflected in the empirical part of our research in chapter “5.4.2”.

Brand Concept

The brand concept is the psychological construct, which stands commonly in association with a brand and is assembled from pieces of integrated and associated brand information. It is an essential part of the brand equity and contains concepts that represent specific properties such as innovation (Aaker, 1996). Information that is acquired through multi-sensory perception has a significant impact on information integration in brand concepts (Anderson, 1981). One of the most useful tools to measure the impact and interconnectivity of brand concepts are Brand Concept Maps (Roedder, Loken, Kim, & Monga, 2006). Social media can support the distribution and sharing of the brand concept, especially if we consider the fact that the consumer is provided with a much closer connection to the brand through the platform itself, it allows us to move all the right pieces into the right places (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012).

We can see some of the effects related to the brand concept in our empirical research in chapter “5.4.7”.

Brand Personality

Brand personality tends to emerge in situations where the consumer integrates experiences and information through the inferring of anthropomorphic properties (Aaker, 1997; Aggarwal & McGill, 2007). It is one of the main elements that is used for brand differentiation in the consumer's mind when no comparison with other attributes is possible (Aaker, 1997). We observe commonly the use of the 12 archetypes that are described by Carl Jung as personality types (Mark & Pearson, 2001). Mark and Pearson (2001) divide the 12 types into three main identity groups, one being the rebel, the everyman, and the hero. Niche brands might more strongly persuade a person in the rebel group while the everyman prefers mainstream brands, and the hero wants high-end brands in his possession due to the self-reflection that is mirrored in the choice of brands.

Aaker (1997) developed a five-factor structure that helps the visualization of the different perceptions of brand personality, while Aaker's research was focused on the American

consumer, other research has found that we cannot apply the same model everywhere in the worldwide markets (McCrae & Costa, 1997), since variance and inconstancy of those factors within other cultures apply. With the help of social media, we can utilize an anthropomorphically friendly environment to build and reinforce the brand personality to leverage the brand perception of the consumers. We did elaborate in the previous chapter in more detail the specific psychological elements at play.

While the chapter “5.4.8” of our empirical research is mostly focused on the measurement of anthropomorphism, it reflects onto some of the discussed effects of brand personality.

Brand Relationships

Brand relationships represent the step where the consumers interact with a brand in the ways that are commonly observed in social and interpersonal relationships. Research has found a wide variety of different relationship types that are reflected in brand relationships. Fournier (1998) identified 15 different types in total, reaching from friendship to enslavement. Building on the brand personality, brand relationships are susceptible towards social media engagements due to the potential level of perceived interpersonal engagement and offer an opportunity to influence the brand perception.

It is important to mention here, that different social media networks have different types of impact on the brand relationship (Pentina, Gammoh, Zhang, & Mallin, 2013). Additionally, brand relationships are a crucial element in the conception of brand equity, which has a direct impact on the consumer’s buying behavior (Keller, 2012). Before taking any action, it is highly recommended to investigate the background regarding the individual networks extensively before engaging in any strategy of this kind.

Our empirical research investigates the effect brand relationships of consumers closer in chapter “5.4.2” and “5.4.4”.

Brands as Informational Cues

Accumulated brand knowledge acts as informational cues, building an extension to more traditional signals such as price and quality (Zeithaml, 1988). Consumers are generally exposed to a vast array of different cues that are involved in the perception and decision making. Social media in this context provides a source of informational cues and acts as a passive and interactive exposure platform. Depending on the individual situation this can have a limited up to a significant impact on the brand perception. Most significant benefits can be observed in the areas where the quality itself is difficult to assess, and the reliance on informational cues is necessary for the consumer's decision-making process (Akdeniz, Calantone, & Voorhees, 2013).

The research of Akdeniz et al. (2013) has found that the reputation and quality related information has a significant impact on the consumer perception regarding the quality of the brand. Increasingly more than other marketing-based cues, if we are talking about the quality aspect of brand perception. Many practical examples of this can be found in the automotive industry where many consumer decisions are based on the brand perception that has led to common brand stereotypes such as that German cars are of high quality (Akdeniz & Calantone, 2017).

Our empirical research in chapter "5.4.7" reflects the impact of some of these informational cues regarding brand perception.

Brand as Identity Signal

Psychological research has shown that humans utilize knowledge structures to assist with the analyzing of their environment as well as themselves based on incoming information (Markus, 1977). Brands can act as such signals and are able to integrate themselves into the respective knowledge structures of the consumer (Schmitt, 2012). Consumers will consequently make use of a congruent brand, to self-express themselves to the outside world (Swaminathan, Page, & Gürhan-Canli, 2007). This behavior is not only valid for adults but also kids, which tend to use brands as perceptual cues and identity-shaping elements (Chaplin & Roedder, 2005). These facts taken together make it a powerful tool which offers the possibility to structure, predict and design how the target consumer perceives the brand. This is especially the case for social media, due to the ever-increasing

exposure times, especially in the case of younger consumers. Overall, it represents a perfect tool to influence the consumer's perception of a brand.

These identity signals are partly reflected in our empirical research as a part of chapter “5.4.8” which investigates the measurements of self-brand congruity and the social self.

Brand Symbolism

Brand symbolism focuses mostly on cases where a brand is used to represent a specific group, ideology, or culture (Arnould, 2005). This allows for the exertion of influence and provides a sense of security for the consumer base (Rindfleisch, Burroughs, & Wong, 2009). Social media networks offer the perfect environment to strengthen this aspect, due to the willing association of the consumer with the brand for symbolic purposes, resulting in positive leverage on the consumer's brand perception. A result of strong brand symbolism can also lead to an increased brand exposure through the passive creation of brand advocates (Anisimova, 2016).

Overall, it is a very desirable trait that has beneficial influences not only for the targeted consumers but also their personal environment. What we should not forget is that we cannot control the actions and behavior of the advocates, which may in certain conditions lead to a negative brand symbolism and an undesired brand perception. One of such examples is the exclusive use of Toyota Hilux vehicles by terrorist organizations such as ISIS (Engel, 2015), which has caused certain negative media attention. Another example could be the use of specific clothing brands by radical groups.

The brand symbolism is partly reflected in our empirical research as a part of chapter “5.4.8” which investigates the measurements of self-brand congruity and the social self.

Brand Attitude

Brand attitude is focused on the path of consumer interaction and engagement. As the term implies, it concerns itself with the overall brand evaluation and attitude of the consumer towards a specific brand. While brand attitude values are commonly based on physical attributes of a product such as features and quality (Garvin, 1984), it is worthwhile to mention that there are a variety of non-physical properties at play that can

be defined as non-measurable attributes (Srinivasan, 1979). Empirical research data strongly implies that brand attitude exerts a significant impact on the consumer's perception and evaluation of a brand (Aaker & Keller, 1990). It was found that the more positive the brand attitude of the consumers is, the more strongly the market share of a brand increases (Baldinger & Rubinson, 1996).

As it stands, brand attitude represents an essential area of consumer psychology (Mitchell & Olson, 1981). To influence the consumer's brand attitude, we can utilize the help of topics such as conditioning with the pairing of sensory input of a brand (Grossman & Till, 1998), dispositions, or evaluative judgments (Park & MacInnis, 2006). With the nowadays available platform of social media, we can stimulate those elements in similar ways to those of traditional advertising. Social media allows for an acceleration of brand attitude related processes, based on the increased communication factor between customers, which offers additional exposure to unacquainted consumers (Duan et al., 2008; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

With the help of multi-attribute attitude models, Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) are coming to the assumption, that the evaluation process of a brand is rooted in a person's beliefs regarding a specific attribute, in our case a brand. By injecting the factor of attitude into the overall concept, we can gain a deeper understanding of the influence of social media on consumer brand perception (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

The topic of brand attitude is addressed by our empirical research in chapter "5.4.7".

Brand Attachment

While brand attachment provides and represents the connection the consumer has with a brand and is closely connected to the consumer loyalty (Thomson et al., 2005), it does not provide any direct way to leverage the brand perception beyond the concept of attachment and other behavioral implications (Park, MacInnis, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010). Even with the help of social media, it mostly exerts indirect influence by increasing the brand loyalty, which shares a proven connection with brand attachment (Japutra, Ekinci, & Simkin, 2018).

We investigate the variable of brand attachment closers as part of our empirical research in chapter "5.4.3" and "5.4.5".

Brand Community

While social media networks are based on the concept of virtual communities (Wellman & Guila, 1999), a brand community is a concept that is based on the feeling of emotional connection and involvement within a community or group, which tends to be limited purely on the focus of a specific brand and no other limiting factors such as geography (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). According to Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) a brand community does not only serve the purpose of emotional bonds but it also directly supports and encourages the engagement of joint-actions that lead the community towards collective goals. A strong community can have a significant impact on how a brand is perceived, may it be in a positive or negative light.

Social media platforms allow for the management and creation of virtual brand communities, providing the additional benefit of easy monitoring, replying to consumer input, and creating easy-access customer insight. Ultimately this advanced level of communication that is provided through social media and virtual brand communities offers a path to an enhanced consumer brand perception and satisfaction. Nevertheless, we are only able to harvest those benefits if the virtual communities are adequately managed and the issues of community members addressed in appropriate manners with a robust communication strategy in place. (Tsai & Men, 2013)

We indirectly explore the effects of brand communities as a part of chapter “5.4.1” in our empirical research.

3. Hypotheses

As is reflected by the theoretical framework, there is a wide array of elements at play that can influence the consumer's brand perception through social media platforms. Not only do we have to consider common marketing strategies that are adapted for online use, but we need to include elements from consumer and social psychology to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying workings, psychological, and anthropomorphic processes, and effects that impact the consumer's perception of a brand through social media. While the effectiveness of many approaches and strategies is dependent on the individual consumer, there are some elements that show a higher general impact than others.

Social media add considerable complexity to the already existing online marketing approaches. While it is possible to keep things "simple" by only engaging consumers in traditional advertising and marketing psychology, the more complex approaches offer increasingly powerful tools in terms of influencing the consumer's perception, mostly so with the help of topics such as social psychology that would not be possible in the same fashion and reach with traditional methods. Understanding what and how to influence the consumer's perception of a brand through social media successfully, is an asset of increasing value in today's information society that shows a constant growth of social media usage.

H1. Social media activity of Generation Y has a positive influence on the investigated elements of consumer brand perception.

What interests us in this paper, is to find out how the consumer's social media exposure and activity impacts the general brand perception and the individual areas of brand perception that we measured as part of our empirical research. Based on the previously discussed theory, we expect to measure a positive influence between a strong social media engagement and the overall perception of a brand. We are hoping to be able to isolate specific elements that are most strongly impacted, to allow for a more prosperous and targeted branding for Generation Y with the help of social media.

H2. The stronger the anthropomorphic properties of a brand, the stronger the consumer's overall brand perception.

As we highlighted with the help of the theoretical background, it appears that anthropomorphic properties have a significant impact on the consumer's perception of a brand. While anthropomorphism is not bound to social media, it represents a psychological aspect that can be implemented through a multitude of pathways. We are interested in finding out how substantial the impact is for the age group of Generation Y, since it would provide useful information in terms of how highly prioritized anthropomorphism should be in terms of social media branding.

4. Methodology

This chapter focuses on the chosen methodology including the research approach and design that we have put into place. Further points of discussion are the trustworthiness and reliability of the executed research.

4.1 Research approach

While the two major research approaches can be classified as deductive and inductive, we decided that a deductive process is most fitting for the format of this thesis. The theory teaches us that deductive research emphasizes on scientific principles, casual relationships between variables, collecting quantitative data, research independence, along with others (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2015). We utilized the help of several research papers in the field of anthropomorphism, brand perception and consumer behavior to build a theoretical framework in which the research which is contained in this thesis was conducted.

As mentioned in earlier chapters there is currently only a limited amount of research available regarding the leveraging of brand perception with the assistance of social media. With the help of our research, we aim to bridge this gap in currently available research data. All the involved variables and their underlying concepts are introduced in the theory part of the thesis before the empirical research and analysis take place. In summary, secondary research builds the foundation in the form of theory, followed by the hypotheses which is constructed on the the secondary research, the observations that were made in the empirical stage of our own research, and as a final step completed with the rejection or confirmation of H1 and H2 which were discussed in the previous chapter.

4.2 Data Collection

Our data collection is based on the acquisition of primary data while secondary data serves our purpose only as the underlying theory to provide a framework for the hypotheses and a source layout for the various data models. For the data collection with the previously discussed deductive research approach, we utilized Google Forms which allows for a simple and straightforward creation of online surveys with logical branching for the activation of optional question paths depending on the participant's answers. If for

example, a participant does not show any social media activity we can bypass some questions that rely on specific social media variables.

The collected primary data includes feedback about general brand perception concepts, and the interacting element of social media, and provides us with a source of data to proof or disproof our hypotheses and create new conclusions and correlations of the variables at hand. For the analysis of the collected dataset, we utilized mainly SPSS and Microsoft Excel for visual representations.

4.3 Research design

There is a varying number of different research designs that can be utilized. Our goal was to employ the one that was most fitting in regards to advantages and disadvantages to provide an adequate environment for the conducted research. Earlier we have discussed the research approach which expanded on the bigger picture of the research. In this chapter, we will dive deeper into the more practical aspects that are involved. There are two primary approaches in terms of research, one being exploratory and the other being conclusive.

While exploratory research aims to provide insight and understanding of unknown territory, conclusive research focuses on the exploration of characteristics and functions with the goal of providing a more profound insight (Blythe, 2013). With these options in mind, we decided to utilize a conclusive, or more specifically a descriptive approach since we are building our research on the existing theories and papers with the goal to draw connections between different elements and the context of social media. Additionally, it allows us to compile the various variables that are involved in the interconnecting mechanisms at play.

Another essential element of consideration with the descriptive research method is the available timeframe. We have two options available, one being cross-sectional and the other longitudinal research. For our purposes, a cross-sectional approach is most fitting. Cross-sectional research is set on the investigation of a single objective at a single point of time from a given set of participants with the downside of sacrificing accuracy compared to a longitudinal approach. In summary, we will engage in conclusive research that is based on a descriptive design with a cross-sectional approach.

4.4 Research Method

The research method that we utilized for the collection of the required data from our participants is following the framework of the earlier discussed research design. The online survey that aided our data collection was designed in a way that every participant was offered the same questions with an optional branch of social media variables that were dependent on the factor of the participant's following of his or her favorite brand on social media.

No randomization of the question sequences was implemented, and there was no additional assistance for the completion of the survey besides the instructions that were provided within the survey. Since there is no involvement of any external parties in the survey process, we can exclude the risk of introducing any bias that does not come from the participant himself. This standardization is necessary to ensure an identical environment for all the survey participants. With the survey being available through the world wide web, we ensured a path for simple distribution to a high number of potential participants. Therefore, we saw it as the most suitable approach for our purposes and the given limitations regarding time and monetary resources.

Apart from the demographic information that the participants provided us as a part of the survey, the question design relies heavily on a format that utilizes the Likert scale. With the user-friendliness of the survey in mind, we segmented the questions into 16 steps (Appendix A) which were assigned to subcategories that are invisible to the survey participants. These subcategories contain some of the most critical elements that influence brand perception and were identified as such in our theoretical framework. The link to the defined subcategories is also marked in the corresponding subchapter of the theory section. Altogether, the survey follows ten main steps:

1. Gather the demographic variables of the participants and ask them for their favorite brand. This includes personal data such as age, gender, and country, to ensure the participant is part of the Generation Y.
2. Ask if the participants follow the chosen brand on any kind of social media platform. If the participant answers yes, we progress to the next step if the answer is no we skip one step ahead to point number four.
3. Measure the participant's social media activity
4. Enquire about the partner quality and dependence of the chosen brand

5. Gather data about the nostalgic attachment
6. Investigate the factor of intimacy that the participant has with the brand
7. Measure the brand loyalty and brand equity
8. Enquire about brand love and brand affect that the participant has towards his or her favorite brand.
9. Gather data on the brand attitude and brand perception
10. Ask questions that are aimed towards anthropomorphic properties and values.

Except for step one and two, all questions were based on a 10-item Likert scale. The low values are representing the feeling of disagreement and the high values the feeling of agreement. The main reason why we decided to utilize a 10-point scale was the increased measurement precision and allowances for more variance compared to lower point scales (Wittink & Bayer, 2003). In summary, the research will utilize a self-completion survey without third-party assistance that employs nearly exclusively a scale design. We have our priority on the measuring of social media activity, followed by the measurement of various underlying elements of brand perception.

4.5 Sampling

Due to limited access to participants in the given timeframe, we utilized an online survey which was targeted to a consumer group of the age range of 20-30 (which approximates to Generation Y) in Scandinavia and the DACH region for the acquisition of the required data. This decision was mostly based on the ease of access to said demographic. We aimed to have a balanced gender distribution to avoid any unforeseen deviations that are gender-based. While this age group was the most accessible through existing social connections, it simultaneously represents attractive sample demographics regarding social media usage and purchasing power.

For the sampling itself, we chose to select the non-probability approach of a convenience sampling, since it was most appropriate in the given circumstances. It allows us to remain cost and time effective, and utilize participants who are easily accessible, which all together provides an easier execution of our research. Unfortunately, this sampling method is sensitive to the weakness of the underrepresentation of subgroups which cannot be measured and calculated. Additionally, it is susceptible to sampling errors.

Considering our limited sample size these are not ideal conditions, but at the time of execution, it was the only reasonable choice.

4.6 Trustworthiness of the Study

The survey was conducted in a standardized manner, and with English as the single language option for the participants. While the single choice of a language helps the standardization, it also introduces a potential flaw due to the varying factor of English skills among the participants. None of the participants have English as their native language. With the online survey being answered without any third-party supervision, we made sure to eliminate any external bias from affecting the responses. At the same time, this method leads to an increased risk of the participants misunderstanding specific questions due to their complexity and the individual perspective.

Additionally, the interpretation of the questions requires a certain adjustment from the participant's side, if the chosen brand is purely digital or strays in other ways from the patterns of a physical product. To eliminate potential problems, we executed multiple iterations of test surveys with a hand full of participants with various English skill levels. The gathered feedback was then used to improve the questions and make them more comprehensive.

We removed, to the best of our efforts, all responses that seemed to contain invalid or falsified data, such as cases where people responded to every single question with an identical answer or used an unlikely age. Data cleansing affected 5% of all collected entries. Due to the limited sample size, we can only partially generalize the results that were concluded based on the survey. We cannot assure that the findings apply to a broader population set, they serve only the purpose of providing an idea or picture of the effects in place for the examined target demographics that belong to Generation Y.

4.7 Summary

We are utilizing secondary data for the formation of our hypothesis, which is reflected in the design of the primary data collection through an online survey. The primary data acquisition is built on a descriptive research design. The survey itself utilizes a 10-point

Likert scale for nearly all variables, except for the demographic data request and a single fixed response alternative question for the participant's social media usage.

The structure of the survey contains 16 individual steps which are assigned to 10 major logical separations that are not visible to the participant. For the data sampling, we decided to utilize a convenience sampling approach due to resource and time limitations. We targeted the Generation Y which occupies an age range between 20-30 at the time of the writing of this thesis. While the gathered data may not apply to the general population due to its limited number of participants, it shall still contribute new conclusions and findings to its respective field.

5. Empirical Findings and Data Analysis

In this chapter, we provide an overview of the findings that were the result of the data analysis of the conducted online survey. A significant part of the analysis utilized the help of tools such as SPSS and Excel to proof or disproof our two suggested hypotheses.

5.1 Data Extraction and Cleansing

For the data extraction, we utilized the help of a survey which was published through Google Forms, a free online survey tool. A hyperlink to the said survey was distributed through personal contacts and their social circles. When a sufficient amount of data was collected, the survey was removed from public access and the data extracted through Google Docs. The next step was to import the data into SPSS and Excel. Both are software solutions that support the statistical analysis of the gathered results.

The total number of responses that we gathered was 58. After a first inspection, a total number of six responses had to be removed because they either exceeded the age range of Generation Y or appeared to have an invalid input pattern. With the data cleansing completed, we remained with 89.66% of the original data sample. While the original aim was to collect at least 100 responses we were struggling to find a sufficient number of respondents to participate in the survey in the set timeframe. The estimated number of invitations for participation equals 350-400 persons and leaves us with a response rate of 14.5%-16.6%.

5.2 Demographic Data

Our focus was aimed primarily at the Nordic region of Europe with an extension to Germany and Switzerland, mostly due to the access through our social circles that populate those specific areas. While we originally planned to only focus on Scandinavia, a lack of participants forced us to expand to the DACH region, which does not deviate too far in terms of personality and behavior patterns from Scandinavia. As one of the first steps in the surveying process, we collected data on demographic properties such as the age, gender, and country of the participants. We utilized the help of descriptive statistics and a frequency distribution to compile the data. Details of this and all other collected data can be found in Appendix B.

The gender distribution of all valid responses equated to an equal split of 50%. Regarding the participant's age, we observed a mean of 25.9 years with a standard deviation of 2.47. As can be seen in Figure 3, most of the participants were between 23 and 25 years old, closely followed by the 26 to 28 range. Taken together, 72% of all respondents were between 23 and 28 years old. Only a small minority of 10% was between 20 and 22 years old, followed by the slightly larger group of 29-30 years with 18%.

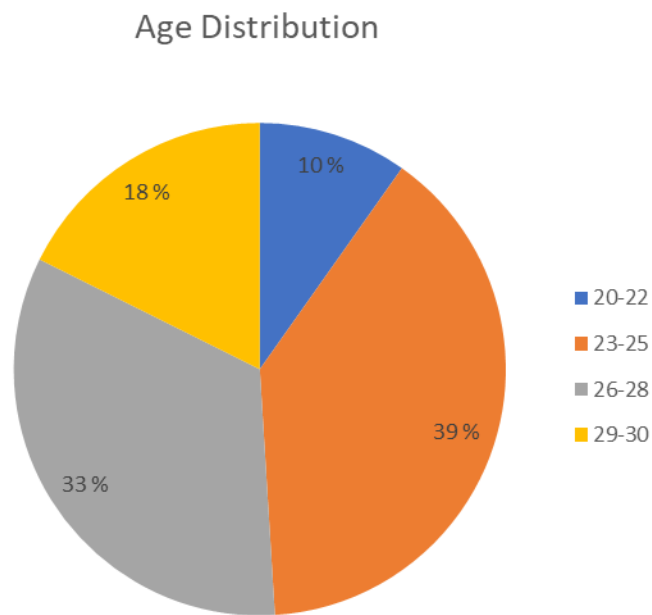


Figure 3 Age distribution

Regarding countries, we have most of all participants located within Scandinavia with a value of 86.53%. The strongest concentration can be found in Finland with 65.38%. The DACH region contains 11.54% of all participants, and 1.92% are from other countries within Europe.

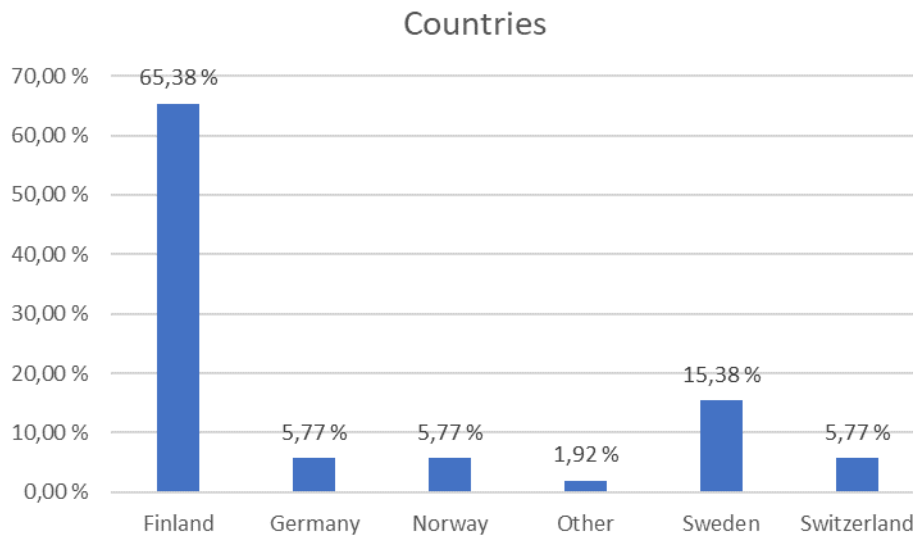


Figure 4 Countries of the Participants

5.3 Social Media following of favorite brands

One of the first questions that was asked after the collection of the demographic data in the surveying process was if the participant follows his or her favorite brand that they picked for the survey on any social media platforms (such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google Plus, Tumblr, Reddit, Pinterest, and others). We assumed that a high percentage of participants would be exposed to one or several social media engagements of their favorite brands. While the social media usage of Generation Y is high, only 59.6% of all participants responded that they are following in some way their favorite brands through social media channels. There seems to be no statistically significant correlation between the age and social media following among participants in the collected data sample. A more extensive study will be required to draw a conclusion for this specific situation.

Nevertheless, the question of social media following was only applying towards the favorite brands that the participants selected for the survey. It does not imply that the participants do not follow any other brand's social media content. The primary purpose of this question was to isolate responses that involve social media exposure from those that do not. Furthermore, an additional branch of questions was added for participants who gave a positive response towards social media following.

5.4 Variable Analysis

Before we can connect the different influencing factors of individual variables, we must concern ourselves with the variable analysis. This analysis is focused on the underlying question categories of all the gathered results that were collected in the form of Likert scale values. These values range between one and ten, one being the weakest and ten the strongest and most agreeing. Each variable is listed with its Cronbach's alpha coefficient (cutoff value of 0.7), mean, standard deviation, and the factor loading through a principal component analysis (cutoff value of 0.5).

5.4.1 Social Media Activity

As discussed earlier, while most of the participants follow their favorite brand on social media (59.6%), not everyone did do so and therefore qualify for the questioning branch of social media activity. The results are showing that the perception of the participant's favorite brand's social media usage is strongly positive, but most participants did not feel a strong urge to engage in word of mouth distribution of the information acquired through the consumed social media content. With the alpha value being above 0.7 and each factor loading being above 0.5 we can assume an acceptable convergent validity. While we can conclude that positive social media activity is related to strong brands, it appears to be not a necessary factor for strong brand perception. Later, we will investigate in more detail the correlation between brand perception and social media following.

Items	Ref	N	Mean	SD	Factor Loading	C α
<i>Social Media Activity</i>						
I find the usage of the brands social media channels satisfying	Q 2.1	31	7,4194	1,8579	0,741	
The content of the brands social media is interesting	Q 2.2	31	7,6774	1,6409	0,679	
The social media communications about the brand, that are expressed by other users are interesting and engaging	Q 2.3	31	6,1613	2,5832	0,812	
I feel that I like to pass information on brand, product, or services from the brands social media to my friends or other people	Q 2.4	31	4,9032	2,9592	0,84	0,85
The brands social media channels allow the free opinion exchange and conversation with others	Q 2.5	31	6,5161	2,6188	0,687	
It is easy and straight forward to give my opinion and feedback through the brands social media	Q 2.6	31	7,4194	2,5661	0,786	

Table 1 Social media activity

5.4.2 Partner Quality and Dependence

The gathered data related to partner quality and dependence had the underlying goal to help us measure the strength of the brand relationship of the participants and their favorite brand. Additionally, we can gain precise insight into the significance of the elements of brand participation. The very high alpha value and good factor loading numbers show us a good convergent validity for both, partner quality, and dependence.

We can observe a comparatively stable response pattern for all the questions under partner quality, showing relatively high values for the favorite brands that were chosen by the participants. This aligns with secondary research, such as the findings of Solem (2016), Christodoulides et al. (2012), and Keller (2012).

Items	Ref	N	Mean	SD	Factor Loading	C α
<i>Partner Quality</i>						
The brand takes care of me	Q 3.1	52	6,7115	2,8856	0,724	0,937
The brand listens to me	Q 3.2	52	6,3077	2,5709	0,767	
The brand makes up for its mistakes	Q 3.3	52	7,3846	2,4347	0,852	
I can count on this brand to do what's best for me as a customer	Q 3.4	52	7,4423	2,3715	0,733	
The brand is responsive to my concerns	Q 3.5	52	7,0769	2,4241	0,811	
The brand treats me as an important and valuable customer	Q 3.6	52	7,25	2,5273	0,708	

Table 2 Partner Quality

The dependence category shows a much higher standard deviation and a lower certainty from the participant's side, this is especially visible for question 4.2. It appears that the dependence does not carry the same significance in terms of perception as partner quality.

Items	Ref	N	Mean	SD	Factor Loading	C α
<i>Dependence</i>						
I am dependent on this brand, it is an integral part of my daily life	Q 4.1	52	6,2692	3,2846	0,92	0,913
It is a feeling of loss when i have not used the brand for a while	Q 4.2	52	5,4423	3,3863	0,92	

Table 3 Dependence

5.4.3 Nostalgic Attachment

By measuring the nostalgic attachment, we can get an idea of the impact of brand attachment, and secondary aspects of brand association and brand categorization. We observe a relatively high standard deviation for most of these questions. The most significant element that stood out here was question 5.4 and 5.3, implying that the early exposure and connection to personal memories can carry a strong weight in the selection

of a favorite brand. While the alpha value was over 0.7, the factor loading showed considerable variances. This is especially visible for the question 5.1 which has a factor loading below 0.5 and is therefore not convergently valid with the other parameters. Question 5.4 was barely above the minimum and might not be convergently valid either. Based on the earlier discussed theory we know that attachment-based variables are an indirect influencer, and not directly tied to a high brand perception (Park et al., 2010).

Items	Ref	N	Mean	SD	Factor Loading	C α
<i>Nostalgic Attachment</i>						
I have sentimental feelings for this brand	Q 5.1	52	5,7692	2,8807	0,402	0,769
This brand reminds me of a phase in my life	Q 5.2	52	5,5	2,9803	0,711	
Thoughts of this brand contain personal memories	Q 5.3	52	6,7308	2,9447	0,763	
It feels like I have known the brand for a long time	Q 5.4	52	7,7885	2,4522	0,509	

Table 4 Nostalgic Attachment

5.4.4 Intimacy

The intimacy data relates to the brand relationship that the participant has with his or her favorite brand. While question 6.3 did not appear as impactful to the survey participants as 6.1 and 6.2 and showed a high standard deviation, we observe an overall high alpha (0.871) and factor loading that hint towards a good convergent validity.

Items	Ref	N	Mean	SD	Factor Loading	C α
<i>Intimacy</i>						
I know about the brand's history and background	Q 6.1	52	6,4423	2,852	0,843	0,871
I know what this brand stands for	Q 6.2	52	7,1538	2,6817	0,787	
I know more about this brand than the average consumer	Q 6.3	52	5,9231	3,1675	0,768	

Table 5 Intimacy

5.4.5 Brand Loyalty and Brand Equity

Question 7.1 through 8.3 assist us in the measurement of brand loyalty and brand attachment. The questions in table six were purposely used to push the limits and see how far the participants are willing to go for their brand, with the questions of table seven being slightly more conservative and reasonable. While the average participant is willing to make certain sacrifices, only a minority would go as far as to rather do without than buying an alternative brand (Q7.4). This is reflected in the convergent validity that spans across the whole table six with the exclusion of question 7.4 which has shown a factor loading of below 0.5. Question 7.1 through 7.3 show a relatively high standard deviation and a lower mean than question 7.5 and 7.6 that directly ask about the participant's loyalty. This aligns with the theoretical background that found brand loyalty as an indirect influencer of brand perception (Japutra et al., 2018; Park et al., 2010).

Items	Ref	N	Mean	SD	Factor Loading	C α
<i>Brand Loyalty</i>						
This is the only brand of this product that I will buy	Q 7.1	52	5,0962	3,2495	0,687	
When I go shopping I do not pay attention to competing brands	Q 7.2	52	5,2115	3,4717	0,708	
If my store is out of this brand I will postpone buying or go to another store	Q 7.3	52	5,8462	3,3219	0,68	
I will rather do without than buy another brand	Q 7.4	52	3,6731	2,595	0,405	0,892
I will continue being a loyal customer to the brand in the near future	Q 7.5	52	7,4808	2,5857	0,679	
The brand can always count on me as a loyal customer	Q 7.6	52	6,9231	2,6997	0,788	

Table 6 Brand Loyalty

The closely related category of brand equity showed a much higher consistency in terms of answers and convergent validity. The mean of all participants prefers to stick with their brand even if there is a comparatively or even wholly identical alternative available.

Items	Ref	N	Mean	SD	Factor Loading	Ca
<i>Brand Equity</i>						
It makes sense to me to buy my favorite brand instead of any other brand, even if the product itself is completely identical	Q 8.1	52	6,8846	2,9349	0,765	
If another brand has the same features as my favorite brand, I would prefer to buy my brand	Q 8.2	52	7,7308	2,3773	0,903	0,904
If there is another brand with the same quality as my brand, I prefer to buy my brand	Q 8.3	52	7,7308	2,5446	0,885	

Table 7 Brand Equity

5.4.6 Brand Love and Brand Affect

The participant's brand love and brand affect for the respective favorite brands were measured with the help of table nine. While specific questions have a factor loading that is not far above 0.5 the questions remain convergently valid and possess a high alpha value of 0.935. While the mean of the participants does not feel disturbed or is willing to make sacrifices to keep using their favorite brand, the overall brand love was above average and the standard deviation conservative. The relatively direct question which was inquiring about the feeling of love towards the brand (Q 9.3) was reasonably strong with a mean of 7.48 and a standard deviation of 2.45. This goes along with the secondary research that sees brand love and brand affect as a powerful element in the concept of brand perception (Algharabat, 2017).

Items	Ref	N	Mean	SD	Factor Loading	C α
<i>Brand Love</i>						
I have feelings for the brand that i do not have for other brands	Q 9.1	52	5,9423	2,7894	0,732	0,935
The brand makes me feel good	Q 9.2	52	7,3077	2,5479	0,66	
I love this brand	Q 9.3	52	7,4808	2,4534	0,673	
The brand and I are perfect for each other	Q 9.4	52	6,6538	2,6781	0,81	
I am passionate about the brand	Q 9.5	52	6,3846	2,2592	0,695	
I am very attached to the brand	Q 9.6	52	6,6346	2,4012	0,881	
The thought of not being able to use the brand disturbs me	Q 9.7	52	4,1538	2,7963	0,584	
I am willing to make sacrifices to keep using the brand	Q 9.8	52	4,3077	2,8113	0,548	

Table 8 Brand Love and Brand Affect

5.4.7 Brand Attitude and Brand Perception

With the goal of measuring the participant's brand awareness, we created four subcategories which are directly related to the concept. The first one is brand awareness, the second is brand attitude, and the third and fourth are the functional and hedonistic brand perception. While table nine shows a high mean and low standard deviation and a high factor loading, the contained questions also possess a low alpha value (0.432) which is far below the cutoff value of 0.7. Therefore the convergent validity remains questionable. Nevertheless, the participants appear to perceive their favorite brand in a good light with a positive reputation, fame and associate the brand with other positive attributes and characteristics. This aligns strongly with the earlier discussed theory which assigns a significant impact on brand perception to the variable of brand attitude (Aaker, & Keller, 1990).

Items	Ref	N	Mean	SD	Factor Loading	C α
<i>Brand Attitude</i>						
The brand has a good reputation	Q 10.1	52	8,4808	1,4071	0,82	0,432
The brand is famous	Q 10.2	52	8,9808	1,7092	0,993	
The brand has positive attributes and I associate positive characteristics with the brand	Q 10.3	52	8,4038	1,4039	0,823	

Table 9 Brand Attitude

Table 10 served the purpose of measuring the participant's brand awareness regarding their favorite brand. It appears that the general awareness of the selected brands is high, and the participants have a clear picture of their chosen brand. The alpha value of 0.824 remains above 0.7, and the factor loading is far above 0.5 except for question 11.2 which deviated from the rest. Other than that, we can confidently say that the section possesses a good convergent validity. This confirms the findings of secondary research that assigned a significant relation between brand awareness and brand perception (Akdeniz et al., 2013)

Items	Ref	N	Mean	SD	Factor Loading	C α
<i>Brand Awareness</i>						
I easily recognize the brand when I see it	Q 11.1	52	9,4423	1,3491	0,807	0,824
Several characteristics of the brand come instantly to my mind when I think about it	Q 11.2	52	8,9231	1,5447	0,44	
I easily memorize the symbol/logo of the brand	Q 11.3	52	9,6154	1,1741	0,783	
I have a very clear picture of the brand	Q 11.4	52	8,9423	1,2897	0,671	

Table 10 Brand Awareness

The functional brand perception that was measured with the help of table 11 shows that the mean of all participants has a highly positive perception of their selected brands

reliability and credibility, in combination with a high level of trust. The factor loading (>0.5) and alpha value (0.824) show strong convergent validity.

Items	Ref	N	Mean	SD	Factor Loading	C α
<i>Functional Brand Perception</i>						
The brand is reliable	Q 12.1	52	8,7115	1,3036	0,766	
The brand is credible	Q 12.2	52	8,8462	1,2739	0,837	0,818
I trust the brand	Q 12.3	52	8,5769	1,3911	0,615	

Table 11 Functional Brand Perception

Table 12 that is aimed at the hedonistic brand perception follows a similar pattern as was seen in table 11. We have a good convergent validity with a reasonable factor loading (>0.5) and high alpha value (0.865) combined with a reasonably high mean and low standard deviation. We see both, the functional brand perception, and the hedonistic brand perception, being in alignment with the secondary research from Keller (2003) and Teichert and Schöntag (2010).

Items	Ref	N	Mean	SD	Factor Loading	C α
<i>Hedonistic Brand Perception</i>						
The brand is attractive	Q 13.1	52	8,25	2,028	0,613	
The brand is desirable	Q 13.2	52	8,25	1,6315	0,623	
The brand is honest	Q 13.3	52	7,6923	1,8208	0,672	0,865
The brand is strong in character	Q 13.4	52	8,2308	1,4364	0,622	
The brand is strong in personality	Q 13.5	52	8,0385	1,5713	0,768	

Table 12 Hedonistic Brand Perception

Tables nine to 12 show a very high mean and low standard deviation across the board, compared to other variables that were discussed in earlier subchapters, hinting at an especially high correlation with the status of the favorite brands that were picked by the participants for this survey.

5.4.8 Anthropomorphism

The last element that we investigated was aimed at the anthropomorphism and its underlying elements of each participant's chosen brand. With the help of table 13, we gathered data on the anthropomorphic properties that apply to the human physiognomy and lineaments. We were aware that this might be a difficult variable to measure due to the inconsistent usage of such elements throughout different brands (Chandler, & Schwarz, 2010). As expected we were not able to gather any conclusive results and the questions received a very low mean with an average standard deviation. While the factor loading remained at over 0.5 the alpha value was only 0.527, and we do not see a convergent validity.

Items	Ref	N	Mean	SD	Factor Loading	C α
<i>Human Physiognomy and Lineaments</i>						
The brand uses a human shape (the logo or printing on the packaging, or product itself utilizes a humanoid form, as example a chocolate covered peanut that has arms and feet, or a sports loving tiger on corn flakes)	Q 14.1	52	2,0769	2,2652	0,686	0,527
The brand or the product has human features (such as eyes, mouth, arms, etc., as example the lights and grill in the front of a car)	Q 14.2	52	2,6538	2,9894	0,686	

Table 13 Human physiognomy and lineaments

Regarding self-brand congruity, the data shows that the participants possess self-brand congruity with a standard deviation of below 3.0 when it comes to their respective favorite brands, as can be seen in table 14. The convergent validity is confirmed by the factor loading which remains above the cutoff value of 0.7 and a high alpha value of 0.953.

Items	Ref	N	Mean	SD	Factor Loading	C α
<i>Self-Brand Congruity</i>						
The brand is congruent with the image I hold of myself	Q 15.1	52	6,6923	2,5785	0,793	
The brand is congruent with the image I would like to hold of myself	Q 15.2	52	6,6346	2,6199	0,896	
The brand is congruent with the image others hold of myself	Q 15.3	52	6,4423	2,5775	0,905	0,953
The brand is congruent with the image I would like others to hold of myself	Q 15.4	52	6,3269	2,7634	0,864	
The brand is congruent with my social role	Q 15.5	52	6,2308	2,8465	0,765	

Table 14 Self-Brand Congruity

Table 15 builds upon the variables of table 14 and explores the factors of the social self. While it follows a similar response pattern to the self-brand congruity, it shows lower means and slightly higher standard deviations. Besides that, the gathered data remains convergently valid with a factor loading greater than 0.5 and an alpha of above 0.7.

Items	Ref	N	Mean	SD	Factor Loading	C α
<i>Social Self</i>						
The brand has a positive impact on what others think of me	Q 16.1	52	5,5962	3,018	0,707	
The brand improves the way society views me	Q 16.2	52	5,3269	3,0979	0,725	
By using the brand, I'm part of a shared community	Q 16.3	52	5,5577	2,9994	0,658	0,838
The brand helps me to develop a relationship with others who use the same brand	Q 16.4	52	4,4615	2,9603	0,605	

Table 15 Social Self

Table 14 and 15, show a mediocre representation of the secondary research that we discussed in the theoretical framework (Aaker, 1997; Rindfleisch et al., 2009;

Swaminathan et al., 2007). Nevertheless, we would have expected the results to be more strongly pronounced.

5.5 Hypotheses Test

To test our hypotheses, we utilized a combination of the various variables available to us through the gathered survey data. All variables that are part of the hypotheses test are covered in more detail in the previous subchapter (table 1-15). Individual sub-variables that have shown a factor loading of below 0.5 have been excluded for the execution of the hypotheses (table 16).

The first hypothesis has the aim to measure the influence of social media on the remaining consumer brand perception categories that were part of the survey.

H1. Social media activity of Generation Y has a positive influence on the investigated elements of consumer brand perception.

H0. There is no measurable influence of social media activity on consumer brand perception.

Our second hypothesis focuses on the influence of anthropomorphic properties on the other tested elements of consumer brand perception.

H2. The stronger the anthropomorphic properties of a brand, the stronger the consumer's overall brand perception.

H0. There is no measurable influence of anthropomorphism on consumer brand perception.

Model Summary - Individual

Item	Variables							
Social Media Activity	Q 2.1	Q 2.2	Q 2.3	Q 2.4	Q 2.5	Q 2.6		
Partner Quality and Dependence	Q 3.1	Q 3.2	Q 3.3	Q 3.4	Q 3.5	Q 3.6		
	Q 4.1	Q 4.2						
Nostalgic Attachment	INVALID	Q 5.2	Q 5.3	Q 5.4				
Intimacy	Q 6.1	Q 6.2	Q 6.3					
Brand Loyalty and Equity	Q 7.1	Q 7.2	Q 7.3	INVALID	Q 7.5	Q 7.6		
	Q 8.1	Q 8.2	Q 8.3					
Brand Love and Affect	Q 9.1	Q 9.2	Q 9.3	Q 9.4	Q 9.5	Q 9.6	Q 9.7	Q 9.8
Brand Attitude and Perception	Q 10.1	Q 10.2	Q 10.3					
	Q 11.1	INVALID	Q 11.3	Q 11.4				
	Q 12.1	Q 12.2	Q 12.3					
	Q 13.1	Q 13.2	Q 13.3	Q 13.4	Q 13.5			
Antropomorphism	Q 14.1	Q 14.2						
	Q 15.1	Q 15.2	Q 15.3	Q 15.4	Q 15.5			
	Q 16.1	Q 16.2	Q 16.3	Q 16.4				

Table 16 Item variables overview

To test our hypotheses and the corresponding null hypotheses we utilized the help of a regression analysis. This enabled us to test how strongly the tested elements of brand perception are related to social media activity and anthropomorphism.

For H1 we used a multiple regression analysis to investigate the multicollinearity with the purpose of finding the individual characteristics regarding relationships with the participant's social media following of their chosen brands. For the next step, we calculated the bivariate correlations based on Pearson's correlation coefficient.

As we can observe in the regression analysis of table 17, the coefficients of the association between the dependent variable of social media activity, vary from case to case and show a t-value of $< \pm 1.679$. The coefficient value helps us to measure change that occurs in the dependent variable when committing adjustments to the independent variable, keeping

the remaining variables stagnant. The unstandardized beta coefficients have shown to be highest regarding the partner quality and dependence (0.404), followed by the nostalgic attachment (0.234) and brand loyalty and equity (-0.274).

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95,0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	4,502	3,239		1,390	,178	-2,198	11,202
	Partner Quality and Dependence	,404	,240	,522	1,679	,107	-,094	,901
	Nostalgic Attachment	,234	,242	,262	,967	,344	-,267	,734
	Intimacy	-,051	,212	-,069	-,240	,812	-,490	,388
	Brand Loyalty and Equity	-,274	,174	-,373	-1,571	,130	-,635	,087
	Brand Love and Affect	,109	,258	,137	,422	,677	-,424	,642
	Brand Attitude and Perception	,036	,431	,018	,083	,934	-,857	,928
	Anthropomorphism	-,168	,218	-,165	-,771	,448	-,619	,283

a. Dependent Variable: Social Media Activity

Table 17 Coefficients dependent on the Social Media Activity

The ANOVA analysis in table 18 shows that there is a statistical significance present regarding the difference between the means of social media activity and the predictors. With the significance value (Sig.) being 0.047 we are just below the cutoff value of 0.05.

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	43,038	7	6,148	2,484	,047 ^b
	Residual	56,927	23	2,475		
	Total	99,964	30			

a. Dependent Variable: Social Media Activity

b. Predictors: (Constant), Anthropomorphism, Nostalgic Attachment, Brand Attitude and Perception, Brand Loyalty and Equity, Intimacy, Partner Quality and Dependence, Brand Love and Affect

Table 18 ANOVA Analysis for Social Media Activity

Moving on to the model summary (see table 19), the predictors have shown an R^2 value of 0.431 which indicates a moderate confidence level regarding the likelihood of predicted future outcomes. After adjusting the R^2 to compensate for inaccuracies in the coefficient of determination, we measure a value of 0.257.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,656 ^a	,431	,257	1,57323

a. Predictors: (Constant), Anthropomorphism, Nostalgic Attachment, Brand Attitude and Perception, Brand Loyalty and Equity, Intimacy, Partner Quality and Dependence, Brand Love and Affect

Table 19 Regression Model Summary for Social Media Activity

Correlations

		Social Media Activity	Partner Quality and Dependence	Nostalgic Attachment	Intimacy	Brand Loyalty and Equity	Brand Love and Affect	Brand Attitude and Perception	Anthropomorphism
Social Media Activity	Pearson Correlation	1	,538**	,476**	,404*	-,065	,191	,150	-,001
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,002	,007	,024	,727	,304	,420	,996
	N	31	31	31	31	31	31	31	31
Partner Quality and Dependence	Pearson Correlation	,538**	1	,410**	,417**	,487**	,588**	,259	,230
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,002		,003	,002	,000	,000	,064	,101
	N	31	52	52	52	52	52	52	52
Nostalgic Attachment	Pearson Correlation	,476**	,410**	1	,591**	,332*	,422**	,250	,456**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,007	,003		,000	,016	,002	,074	,001
	N	31	52	52	52	52	52	52	52
Intimacy	Pearson Correlation	,404*	,417**	,591**	1	,171	,181	,349*	,494**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,024	,002	,000		,225	,200	,011	,000
	N	31	52	52	52	52	52	52	52
Brand Loyalty and Equity	Pearson Correlation	-,065	,487**	,332*	,171	1	,720**	,352*	,366**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,727	,000	,016	,225		,000	,010	,008
	N	31	52	52	52	52	52	52	52
Brand Love and Affect	Pearson Correlation	,191	,588**	,422**	,181	,720**	1	,550**	,434**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,304	,000	,002	,200	,000		,000	,001
	N	31	52	52	52	52	52	52	52
Brand Attitude and Perception	Pearson Correlation	,150	,259	,250	,349*	,352*	,550**	1	,499**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,420	,064	,074	,011	,010	,000		,000
	N	31	52	52	52	52	52	52	52
Anthropomorphism	Pearson Correlation	-,001	,230	,456**	,494**	,366**	,434**	,499**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,996	,101	,001	,000	,008	,001	,000	
	N	31	52	52	52	52	52	52	52

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 20 Pearson's Correlation Variables

Table 20 shows us the results of Pearson’s correlation coefficient in a matrix format. We assume a good to strong correlation for values between ± 0.50 and ± 1 . The social media activity seems to correlate best with the participant's partner quality and dependence (0.538), while there was only a moderate correlation with the nostalgic attachment (0.476) and intimacy (0.404). The correlation is also represented in the scatterplots of figure 5-7, which gives us an excellent opportunity to visualize the variance and how strong the correlations are. The remaining variables did not show any statistically significant correlation ($\leq \pm 0.191$).

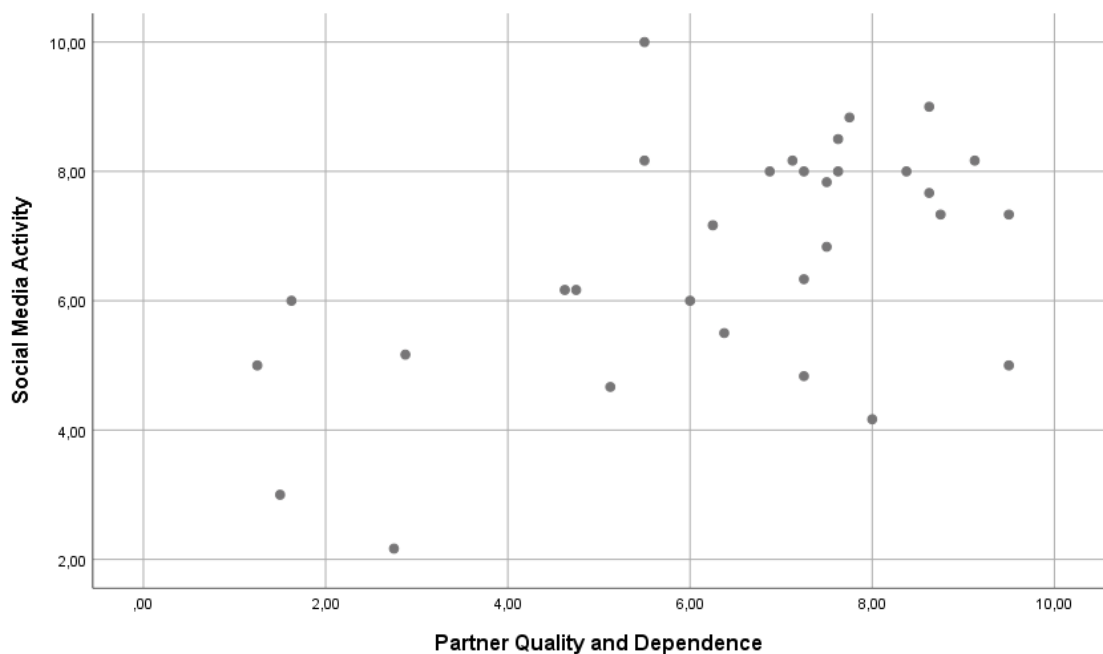


Figure 5 Social Media vs. Partner Quality and Dependence

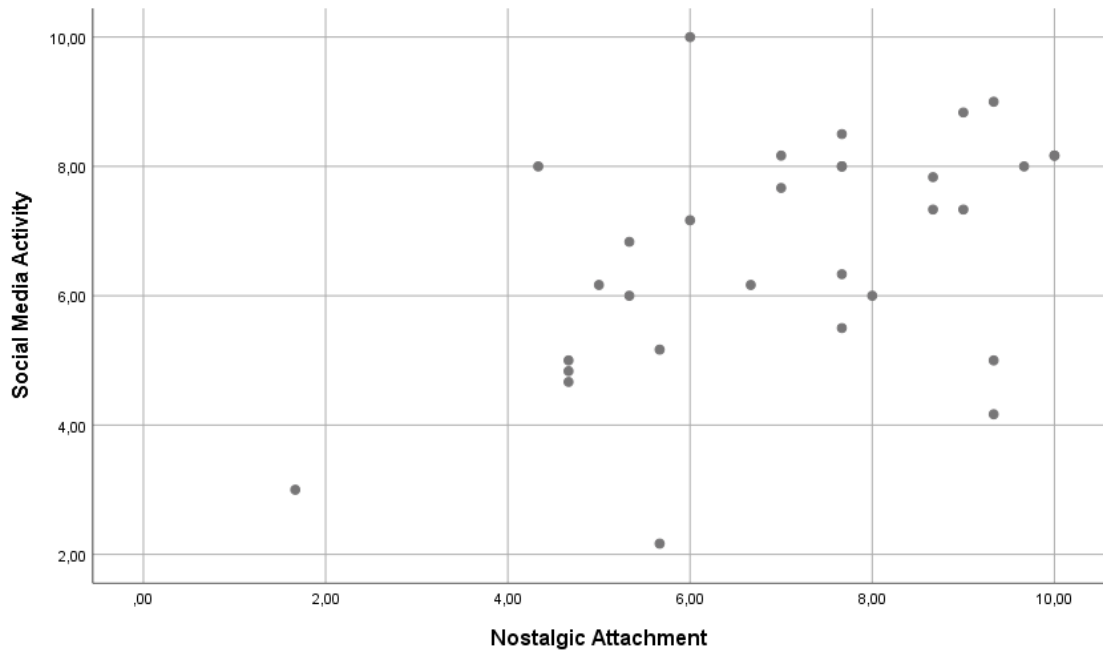


Figure 6 Social Media vs. Nostalgic Attachment

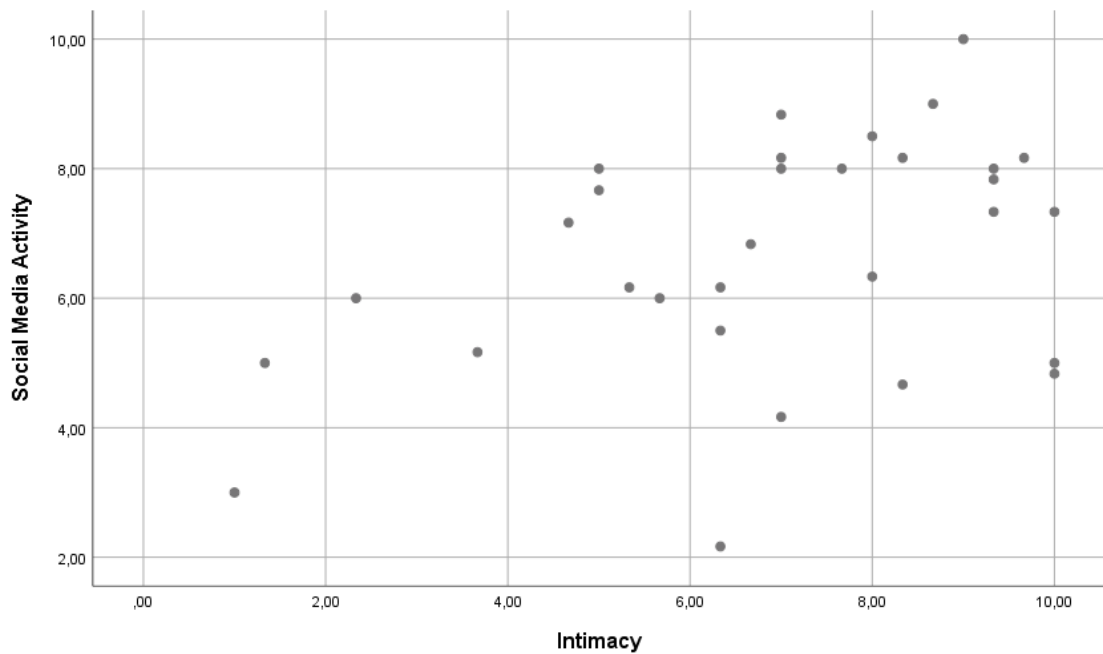


Figure 7 Social Media vs. Intimacy

For H2 we engaged in an identical approach to H1, by using a multiple regression analysis to investigate the multicollinearity with the purpose of finding the individual characteristics regarding the relationships with anthropomorphism. This includes the calculation of the bivariate correlations based on Pearson's correlation coefficient. As can

be observed in the regression analysis of table 21, the coefficients of the association between the dependent variable of anthropomorphism show a t-value of $< \pm 1.346$. The unstandardized beta coefficients have shown to be highest in terms of the brand love and affect (0.308), followed by the nostalgic attachment (-0.302) and intimacy (0.228).

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95,0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	1,807	3,161		,572	,573	-4,731	8,345
	Social Media Activity	-,150	,194	-,152	-,771	,448	-,552	,252
	Partner Quality and Dependence	,156	,238	,205	,656	,518	-,336	,649
	Nostalgic Attachment	-,302	,224	-,343	-1,346	,192	-,766	,162
	Intimacy	,228	,195	,314	1,172	,253	-,174	,631
	Brand Loyalty and Equity	,134	,171	,185	,781	,443	-,220	,487
	Brand Love and Affect	,308	,236	,392	1,306	,204	-,180	,795
	Brand Attitude and Perception	,199	,405	,101	,491	,628	-,639	1,037

a. Dependent Variable: Anthropomorphism

Table 21 Coefficients dependent on anthropomorphism

The ANOVA analysis in table 22 shows that there is a statistical significance present regarding the difference between the means of anthropomorphism and the predictors. With the significance value (Sig.) being 0.022 we can reject the null hypothesis.

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	46,029	7	6,576	2,982	,022 ^b
	Residual	50,712	23	2,205		
	Total	96,741	30			

a. Dependent Variable: Anthropomorphism

b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Attitude and Perception, Social Media Activity, Brand Loyalty and Equity, Intimacy, Nostalgic Attachment, Brand Love and Affect, Partner Quality and Dependence

Table 22 ANOVA Analysis for Anthropomorphism

The model summary in table 23 shows that the predictors have an R² value of 0.476 which indicates a moderate to good confidence level in terms of the likelihood of predicted future outcomes. After adjusting the R² to compensate for inaccuracies in the coefficient of determination, we measure a value of 0.316.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,690 ^a	,476	,316	1,48488

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Attitude and Perception, Social Media Activity, Brand Loyalty and Equity, Intimacy, Nostalgic Attachment, Brand Love and Affect, Partner Quality and Dependence

Table 23 Regression Model Summary for Anthropomorphism

If we go back to table 20, which shows us the Pearson’s correlation coefficients, we can see that anthropomorphism correlates best with brand attitude and perception (0.499), intimacy (0.494), nostalgic attachment (0.456), and brand love and affect (0.434). While these values are of moderate strength, it is worth to mention that anthropomorphism has similar correlation variables as social media activity, such as nostalgic attachment and intimacy.

5.6 Summary

The results from the analysis show an indication that H1 has reasonable ground to conclude a correlation between social media usage and a stronger impact on brand perception in terms of other brand perception variables. H2 has proven to possess a similar correlation with brand perception as with social media.

<i>H1.</i> Social media activity of Generation Y has a positive influence on the investigated elements of consumer brand perception.	Supported
<i>H2.</i> The stronger the anthropomorphic properties of a brand, the stronger the consumer’s overall brand perception.	Supported

Table 24 Hypotheses Test Summary

Nevertheless, the measured effects are not exceedingly strong, and considering the small sample size, it is difficult to assign causality to the measured variables. The reflections from the gathered results can be used as a basis for further research or as an extension to current findings in topic related research. In the following chapter, we will explore the impact of our findings in more detail.

6. Conclusions

In this chapter, we will draw our conclusions based on the previously discussed theory, as well as our analyzed data, and compile it into the implications that can be drawn for today's brand perception. Furthermore, we will discuss the challenges and opportunities that are existent based on the gathered data, and the limitations of the research itself.

6.1 General Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was the search and compilation of theoretical and empirical evidence that contributes to the existing research in the field of branding and social media. In other words, we pursued the objective of exploring the implications of the social media activity of Generation Y on the most common elements of brand perception and the interconnecting relationships. The exploration of the theoretical background has shown that all the investigated branding elements and their underlying concepts can have a varying impact on the overall brand perception. Based on this background we defined our goal to find out the correlation and relationship of social media activity with the most affected brand perception elements. To acquire the data for our empirical research and measurements, we utilized an online survey that was distributed through digital channels.

As was indicated by the previously discussed data in the hypotheses test and regression and correlation analysis, the social media activity of the participants did show a positive impact on the other elements of brand perception. A similar observation was made for anthropomorphism. Unfortunately, with the limited scope in terms of participants who were available to us, it is challenging to declare a statistically significant causality between social media activity, anthropomorphism, and overall brand perception. After computing a correlation matrix, we can say that the impact of social media activity itself is not as strong on the bigger picture as we expected from the theoretical background, but due to the limited sample size more data will be required to make a more certain conclusion.

6.2 Discussion

To answer our first hypothesis (*H1*. Social media activity of Generation Y has a positive influence on the investigated elements of consumer brand perception) and the question of

how social media activity influences the overall brand perception, we will discuss the individual findings of our data analysis. The participants of our online survey had varying responses in terms of their answers. This might be due to the variance in individual perception levels and the given freedom to choose a favorite brand as a focal point of the survey. We can see an example of this in the reflection of the scatterplots of figure 5-7 that show a relatively wide distribution.

Only 59.6% of all participants did show any social media activity when it comes to their favorite brand, leaving the remaining 40.4% as a control group. In terms of correlation, the most significant impact of social media activity could be measured for the variables of partner quality and dependence, nostalgic attachment, and intimacy. Therefore, we can conclude that social media are a valuable tool in terms of correlation with some aspects of brand perception, but not uniformly necessary for strong brand perception, nor excessively stronger in terms of leverage. It appears that some of the secondary research in the earlier discussed theory oversells social media as an almighty solution. An important detail which we must mention here is that these measurements apply only to the data of the participants who provided us with data regarding their social media activity and responded that they are following their selected brand on a social media platform.

On further investigation, we were able to observe that the participants who did not follow their favorite brand on social media did show only a 2.35% lower value in terms of the summarized mean of the total brand perception values with the exclusion of social media activity. We can assume that overall positive brand perception is not necessarily bound to the consumer's social media activity, but it is difficult to know how the individual perception of these individuals would have been altered if a social media activity would have been present.

Other interesting findings were in the data concerning the brand affect and brand love. We see particular interest in this thematic because it appears to be influenced by social media activity and has a significantly high correlation with the remaining elements of brand perception that were part of our research. The most affected categories are the brand loyalty and equity, brand attitude and perception, and partner quality and dependence.

After we have discussed the major findings of H1, we are now able to answer our research question (RQ2) “What are the specific potentials and limitations of social media

influences on brand perception?” based on our empirical data. We will explore those details in the following subchapters “Opportunities” and “Challenges”.

For our second hypothesis (*H2*. The stronger the anthropomorphic properties of a brand, the stronger the consumer’s overall brand perception) we investigated the relationship between anthropomorphism and the remaining elements of brand perception that were part of our survey. We saw the significant correlations being brand attitude and perception, intimacy, nostalgic attachment, and brand love and affect. Some of these correlations align with the affected variables of social media activity. This applies specifically to the nostalgic attachment and intimacy. We believe that this is caused by the strong anthropomorphic properties that are found in social media branding, reinforcing the importance and strength of anthropomorphic elements in the picture of consumer brand perception. Based on the theoretical background, this was an expected result. *H2* assists us also in support of RQ3 “How can an organization utilize psychological tools in social media to increase their brand perception?”.

6.2.1 Opportunities of Social Media

A study by Porter and Donthu (2008) has discovered that it is possible to achieve a significant increase in trust when it comes to a company’s brand and image through the utilization of social media in the branding strategy. If an interactive element is present, which is commonly an essential core element of most social media channels, we can benefit from the creation of a feeling of a personal connection which can lead to an improved perception of relationship quality (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Additionally, a wide range of further social and interpersonal processes is observed, which are comparative to the ones that are found in traditional person-to-person, emotional connections, and intimacy (Hudson et al., 2016). Our empirical research reflected these findings in the form of strong influences on other variables of brand perception.

We can benefit from a selection of various psychological and sociological effects with the help of social media. Social media platforms offer an attractive ground for anthropomorphically based psychological strategies. To summarize our findings from the theory review, we can conclude that social media are a perfect tool to leverage brand perception with limited financial resources while retaining an ability for accurate

targeting and being able to utilize strategies from the field of social and consumer psychology.

While it can be utilized as a standalone tool, which we do not recommend, it presents itself as a useful extension to existing and more traditional branding channels. This makes it an especially attractive strategy not only for more prominent brands but also for smaller organizations with restrictive marketing funds. Our empirical research has supported this theory and shown that in terms of influence it has equal importance to other more traditional branding elements.

6.2.2 Challenges of Social Media

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the consumers who are frequenting social media are not homogeneous, and can change and adjust over time, which can present a key issue in the utilization of social media platforms for branding purposes. Another common issue and hurdle is the understanding of the needs and motivation that the consumers have towards a brand (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013). Without a proper and more profound understanding of the consumer, it is difficult to choose the right tools to increase and strengthen the brand perception. It is a challenging task to accurately assess the depth and complexity of the consumer's behavioral and psychological characteristics, especially if a multitude of different group characteristics are present.

It is also crucial to keep in mind that the information flow does not only occur between the customer and the brand, but also within the community of customers (Zailskaitė-Jakštė & Kuvykaitė, 2016). The ignorance of this fact and others that we previously discussed, can quickly lead to situations where control is lost. It is a common risk that once information is published on the internet, there is nearly no way to make it disappear and attempts to do so commonly result in the Streisand effect (when the effort of trying to hide or remove specific information results in increased visibility and the spreading of said information). This becomes even more difficult when trying to control the user-created content.

In the end, it leads us to the conclusion that the utilization of social media platforms for branding or other marketing purposes requires an individually tailored strategy, and continuously ongoing engagement in the communication process with the consumers, to ensure a satisfactory outcome when enlisting any type of branding strategy targeting

social media networks (Booth & Matic, 2011). As can be seen with examples such as Myspace, the situation for single platforms can shift rather rapidly. Myspace went rather quickly from the status of extremely popular to an artifact that only the “older” generations remember due to the rise of Facebook. The world of social media networks is experiencing a constant shift of its user base, and while one platform might be popular today, the situation may be looking different the year later.

To summarize, the most significant challenges that must be faced are the limited amount of control over the brand and user-created information once it is released or published to social media platforms and the deep understanding of the consumers that is necessary for a successful leveraging of brand perception. History is lined with marketing disasters that originated from social media platforms.

6.3 Theoretical Implications

There are several academic implications based on the content of our thesis. We provided a broad view and summary in terms of theory on the topic of brand perception, its psychological background, and social media. The strong focus on the theory mainly serves the purpose of extending and concentrating the knowledge of this relatively wide area of brand perception.

Furthermore, we provided empirical research data that build on the theoretical basis to research a positive correlation between social media activity and brand perception of Generation Y. While the data and conclusions are of limited statistical significance due to the restricted number of participants, it serves its purpose as a positive verification of the theoretical background and as a ground for further research.

6.4 Practical implications

Based on the empirical research of our thesis, we found a positive correlation between social media activity and the other major elements of brand perception for Generation-Y. While it is by no means an all-powerful solution that leaves other branding approaches behind, it has a measurable impact on various variables of the consumer's perception. Companies and organizations can use this to their advantage by increasing and improving the social media activity of their consumers and thereby further positively reinforce the

consumer's brand perception. This is especially the case if a brand utilizes social media to gain an increased level of anthropomorphism.

The data that we provided in our correlation matrix cannot only help potential marketers to understand the impact of social media but can also shed light on the relationships between other commonly used branding tools. We also concluded that a strong social media activity is not an essential factor in terms of successfully high brand perception. It is possible to compensate for the lack of social media activity with alternative elements such as a strong brand affect. Ultimately, it is important for a brand to know the strengths and weaknesses of their individual branding elements in terms of perception, and to leverage the ones which are most impactful on the sections that are lacking.

Before acting on the improvement of one's social media presence, it is important to remember that social media by themselves does not equate to success. The conditions are highly situational, and if the topic is not approached and maintained correctly, it may lead to unexpected conflicts which can have disastrous outcomes.

6.5 Limitations

Due to the data collection method and the limited timeframe that was available to conduct our research, the gathered information is restricted to the single point of time when the study was conducted. The research data do not consider any long-term developments of consumer responses. Additionally, the age range of the participants is limited to the approximate range of 20-30 with the geographical area of Finland, Sweden, Norway, and a couple of responses from outside those areas.

Since the participants were free to select one of their favorite brands and a social media network of their choice, there is a high amount of variation in the collected data. The dataset was further limited by the only partial engagement of the participants with social media platforms. Of the 52 valid responses, only 31 were following their favorite brand on a social media platform. Since most participants decided to pick a unique brand, we were not able to investigate brand or social network-specific variances. This will require additional in-depth research. Furthermore, we did not have the time or resources to analyze firsthand the individual brands, or participant's social media content and activity, which might represent a valuable factor in a more detailed analysis.

6.6 Suggestions for further research

This thesis was written with the goal of measuring and analyzing the impact of social media activity on other significant elements of brand perception. There is only a limited amount of research available that is applicable to this field. Our presented findings, methodology, and concluded practical and theoretical implications showed that there is still a wide array of variables that express the need for further research. The number of potential influences that can have an impact on the outcome extends beyond our scope.

While we were able to measure a positive influence of social media activity on the overall brand perception, more extensive research would be necessary to conclude a statistically valid causality that is based on a larger sample size. We highly recommend further research on the topic of this thesis, especially with the inclusion of more controlled test parameters that allow for higher precision in terms of the data analysis. As we mentioned earlier, our survey data allowed for a relatively large room of freedom in terms of the chosen brands and social media platforms, which limits the precision in terms of statistical measurements and calculations.

If the required resources were available, it would also be highly interesting to investigate the neural activity with the help of functional magnetic resonance imaging, especially in the areas of the anterior insula and medial prefrontal cortex, as well as the orbitofrontal cortex and ventromedial prefrontal cortex.

7. Svensk Sammanfattning

Användningen av sociala medier har ökat stadigt under det senaste decenniet och det har även mångfalden av sociala medier såsom Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit, YouTube och många fler. Eftersom varje plattform inte kan bevisa sig vara framgångsrik på lång sikt, har själva konceptet visat sig vara en viktig del av konsumentens dagliga liv. Detta visar sig särskilt i yngre generationer, exempelvis Generation Y. Sociala medier påverkar inte bara konsumenters privatliv, de har också visat sig vara attraktiva plattformar för marknadsföring och varumärkesutveckling på grund av den omfattande tiden som konsumenterna spenderar på dessa plattformar.

Man kan observera att sociala medier allt oftare fungerar som en ersättning för mer traditionella medier såsom TV, radio och tidningar. Viktigast av allt har sociala medienätverk förändrat hur konsumenterna betar sig och förhåller sig till varumärken, i och med att de har möjliggjort en omvandling från den mer traditionella envägskommunikationen till en mångdimensionell matrismodell. Detta leder till att företag inte längre ensamma kan kontrollera varumärkeskommunikation, vilket i sin tur leder till en ökad komplexitet.

Varumärkesuppfattning är en komplicerad konstruktion som består av flera variabler. Samtidigt är det ett viktigt element i varumärkeskapitalet, vilket i sin tur gör det till en avgörande del av nästan varje marknadsföringsstrategi. Forskning visar att varumärkesutveckling med hjälp av sociala medier kan ha en direkt positiv inverkan på det upplevda varumärkeskapitalet och varumärkesbilden, och har uppmärksammat ett direkt samband mellan ökad varumärkesuppfattning och exponering av varumärkesinnehåll på sociala medier. Dessutom används varumärken inom sociala mediemiljöer som en väsentlig del av konsumentens självidentifieringsprocess, vilket kan vara väldigt användbart för organisationer när det gäller konsumentrelationer.

Syftet med undersökningen är att förstå vilken inverkan som aktivitet på sociala medier och marknadsstrategier kan ha på konsumentens varumärkesuppfattning, samt de underliggande mekanismer som starkast påverkar konsumentens perception. Dessa omfattar de psykologiska bakgrundsbegrepp som är delaktiga i kognitiva processer, för att skapa en bättre förståelse för de fundamentala funktionerna av att styra konsumentbeteende genom innehållet och samspelet på sociala medier.

Det verkar fattas rika och koncentrerade informationskällor med särskilt fokus på sammanhanget sociala medier i kombination med varumärkesuppfattning, som har blivit allt viktigare under de senaste åren på grund av den väldiga transformation som skett på de globala marknaderna. Det påvisar en forskningslucka som skapar en efterfrågan på empiriska data, till vilken denna undersökning bidrar. Dessutom är mitt mål att bidra med empirisk data, forskning och litteratur inom det kombinerade området av sociala medier och konsumentens varumärkesuppfattning. Utan att veta hur faktorer av varumärkesuppfattningen på sociala medier påverkar konsumenter, är sociala medier fortfarande ett underskattat verktyg i många varumärkeschefers ögon, som saknar fullständig förståelse för de underliggande implikationerna.

Datainsamlingen baserades på anskaffningen av primärdata medan syftet av sekundärdata endast är att fungera som underliggande teori för ett ramverk för hypoteserna samt en käll-layout för olika datamodeller. Eftersom jag följde en deduktiv forskningsmetod, använde jag Google Forms för datainsamling, vilket tillåter ett enkelt och okomplicerat sätt att skapa en online formulär med logisk förgrening för visningen av vidare frågeställningar baserade på deltagarnas svar.

Samlad primärdata innehåller respons på allmän varumärkesuppfattning av konsumentens favoritmärken, samt det interaktiva elementet av sociala medier. Dessutom ger det mig en datakälla för att bevisa eller motbevisa mina hypoteser och dra nya slutsatser mellan de tillgängliga variablerna. För analyserna av det samlade datasetet använde jag huvudsakligen SPSS, samt Microsoft Excel för visuella representationer.

Jag samlade totalt 58 svar, vilket motsvarar en svarsfrekvens på 15 %. Av dessa svar ansågs 52 vara relevanta för min dataanalys. Eftersom jag försökte samla minst 100 svar, kunde jag tyvärr inte uppfylla mitt mål på grund av begränsade resurser. Jag fokuserade huvudsakligen på Skandinavien (86,53 % av samtliga deltagare) med Finland som prioritet (65,38 %) på grund av enkel åtkomst, och andra europeiska länder (13,46 %). Könsfördelningen var jämn mellan män och kvinnor. Beträffande ålder var den uppmätta medelåldern 25,9 år med en standardavvikelse på 2,47 år. Av alla deltagare var 72 % mellan 23 och 28 år gamla.

Den data som mäter de individuella styrkorna hos vissa uppfattnings- och användningsmönster samlades i form av en tiopoängs likertskala, där ett är det svagaste

och tio det starkaste värdet. Själva undersökningen utforskade totalt åtta olika delar av varumärkesuppfattning, inklusive den sociala medie-aktiviteten.

När jag undersökte deltagarnas sociala medie-aktivitet kunde jag tyvärr bara använda 59,6 % av alla svar, eftersom många deltagare svarade att de inte engagerar sig i deras angivna favoritmärkes sociala medier. Det generella medelvärdet av respondenternas sociala medie-aktivitet var mycket positivt, med undantag för motivationen att distribuera mottagen information från sociala medier vidare från mun till mun. Jag observerade inget samband mellan höga värden av social medie-aktivitet och en stark allmän varumärkesuppfattning, men snarare en korrelation med specifika element.

För att testa mina hypoteser använde jag en kombination av de olika tillgängliga variablerna från min samlade undersökningsdata. Jag använde en multipel regressionsanalys för att undersöka multikollinearitet med syftet att hitta de enskilda karaktärsdragen gällande relationerna med deltagarnas följande av sitt valda varumärke på sociala medier. Nästa skede beräknade jag de bivariata korrelationerna baserade på Pearsons korrelationskoefficient.

När jag undersökte koefficientvärdena med den beroende variabeln av social medie-aktivitet, har de icke-standardiserade betakoefficienterna i mina data visat sig vara högst som gällande partnerkvalitet och beroende, följt av den nostalgiska anknytningen, intimiteten, och varumärkeslojaliteten och -kapitalet. En ANOVA-analys har visat statistisk signifikans gällande social medie-aktivitet och varumärkesuppfattning.

Resultatet av analysen visar en indikation på att min hypotes har en rimlig grund att det finns en korrelation mellan användningen av sociala medier och en starkare inverkan på varumärkesuppfattningen i form av andra uppfattningsvariabler. Dessutom finns det en liknande korrelation mellan konsumenternas varumärkesuppfattning och sociala medier. Trots detta är den uppmätta påverkan inte särskilt stark och med tanke på den lilla stickprovsstorleken är det svårt att ange ett orsakssamband till de testade variablerna. Reflektionerna över de samlade resultaten kan användas som en bas för ytterligare forskning eller som en utvidgning av aktuella resultat i ämnesrelaterad forskning.

Såsom mitt hypotesprov, regressionen och korrelationsanalysen återspeglar, visade deltagarnas sociala medie-aktivitet en positiv inverkan på de övriga elementen i varumärkesuppfattning. Trots detta är det svårt att hitta ett statistiskt signifikant orsakssamband på grund av det begränsade användningsområdet. Efter att ha beräknat en

korrelationsmatris kan jag konstatera att social medie-aktivitet har en effekt, men inte är mer signifikant i det stora hela än andra varumärkeselement.

Deltagarna i min online-undersökning gav upphov till olika resultat med sina svar. Detta beror troligtvis på variationen av individuella perceptionsnivåer samt den givna friheten att välja ett favoritmärke som fokuspunkt för undersökningen. Endast 59,6% av alla deltagare var engagerade i sitt favoritmärkes sociala medier, vilket innebär att de resterande 40,4 % blev min kontrollgrupp.

När det gäller korrelation kan den viktigaste effekten av social medie-aktivitet mätas genom variablerna av partnerkvalitet och -beroende, nostalgisk anknytning och intimitet. Därmed kan jag dra slutsatsen att sociala medier har värdefulla korrelationer till vissa delar av varumärkesuppfattning, men det är inte fullständigt nödvändigt med tanke på en stark varumärkesuppfattning. Som tidigare nämnt gäller dessa mätningar endast data från deltagarna som gav oss uppgifterna om sin aktivitet på sociala medier och som svarade att de följer sitt valda varumärke på en social medie-plattform.

Vid vidare efterforskning kunde jag observera att deltagarna som inte följde sitt favoritmärke på sociala medier endast visade ett 2,35 % lägre sammanfattat medelvärde av de totala märkesuppfattningsvärdena med undantag av den variabel som gäller social medie-aktivitet. Jag kan därmed anta att en fullständigt positiv varumärkesuppfattning inte nödvändigtvis är knuten till konsumentens sociala medie-aktivitet, men det är svårt att veta hur den enskilda uppfattningen hos dessa individer skulle ha förändrats ifall de hade varit aktiva.

Sammanfattningsvis, baserat på den empiriska undersökningen i min avhandling, iakttog jag en positiv korrelation mellan social medie-aktivitet och de andra huvudelementen av varumärkesuppfattning för Generation Y. Även om sociala medier inte är en perfekt lösning som lämnar andra varumärkesutvecklingsmetoder i skuggan, har de en mätbar inverkan på konsumenternas uppfattning. Företag och organisationer kan dra nytta av detta genom att öka och förbättra sina konsumenters aktivitet på sociala medier och därmed ytterligare förstärka konsumenternas varumärkesuppfattning på ett positivt sätt. Detta är speciellt fallet om ett varumärke utnyttjar sociala medier för att öka sin nivå av antropomorfism.

Datan i min korrelationsmatris hjälper inte endast potentiella marknadsförare att förstå sociala mediernas inverkan, utan de förklarar även relationerna mellan andra vanliga

varumärkesverktyg. Jag drog också slutsatsen att en stark social medie-aktivitet inte är en obligatorisk faktor när det gäller en framgångsrikt hög varumärkesuppfattning. Det är möjligt att kompensera för bristen av social medie-aktivitet med alternativa faktorer såsom en stark varumärkesaffekt. I slutändan är det viktigt för varumärket att känna till styrkor och svagheter i sina individuella varumärkesutvecklingsmoment i form av uppfattning och hur man kan tillägga vad som saknas.

Innan man fokuserar på förbättringen av någons närvaro på sociala medier, är det viktigt att komma ihåg att sociala medier inte enskilt jämförs med framgång. Villkoren är starkt situationsanpassade och ifall sociala medier inte närmas eller upprätthålls på rätt sätt, kan det leda till oväntade konflikter.

På grund av datainsamlingsmetoden och den begränsade tidsramen som var tillgänglig för att genomföra min undersökning, är den samlade informationen begränsad till den enda tidpunkt då studien genomfördes. Forskningsmaterialet tar inte någon långsiktig utveckling av konsumentsvår i beaktande. Deltagarnas åldersintervall är dessutom begränsat till 20–30 år med det geografiska området Finland, Sverige och Norge, samt ett fåtal svar utanför detta område.

Eftersom deltagarna fick friheten att välja ett av sina favoritmärken och ett valfritt socialt medienätverk, finns det stor variation i insamlade data. Data begränsades ytterligare av deltagarnas svaga aktivitet på sociala medier. Av de 52 giltiga svaren, var det endast 31 som angav att de aktivt följer sitt favoritmärke på en social medie-plattform. Eftersom så få deltagare valde samma varumärke, kunde jag inte undersöka specifika avvikelser gällande varumärken eller sociala nätverk. Detta kommer att kräva ytterligare fördjupad forskning. Dessutom hade jag inte tid eller resurser att analysera de enskilda varumärkena eller deltagarnas sociala medie-innehåll och -aktivitet som kan utgöra en värdefull faktor i en mer detaljerad analys.

Denna undersökning skrevs med målet att mäta och analysera effekterna av social medie-aktivitet på andra viktiga delar av varumärkesuppfattning. Det finns endast en begränsad mängd tillgänglig forskning som är tillämplig för detta område. Mina presenterade observationer, metodik och praktiska implikationer visade att det fortfarande finns en hel del områden som kräver ytterligare forskning.

Trots att det var möjligt att mäta ett positivt inflytande av social medie-aktivitet på helheten av varumärkesuppfattningen, skulle mer omfattande forskning vara nödvändig

för att sammanfatta en statistiskt giltig orsakssituation som bygger på en större stickprovsstorlek. Jag rekommenderar starkt ytterligare forskning inom ämnet för denna undersökning, särskilt med mer strikt kontrollerade testparametrar som möjliggör en högre precision i dataanalysen. Som jag nämnde tidigare, tillät min undersökningsdata en relativt stor frihetsgrad gällande de valda varumärkena och sociala medierna, vilket begränsar mängden precision gällande statistiska mätningar och beräkningar.

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9. Appendix

Appendix A: Survey

Appendix B: Frequencies

Appendix A: Survey

Instructions

Before you start, please pick one of your most favorite brands, if possible, please pick one that you follow on social media networks (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google Plus, Tumblr, Reddit, Printrest etc.)

Some examples could be a brand from clothing, beauty, drinks, food, cars, electronics, sports equipment, etc.

You are free to pick whatever you like.

All data is collected anonymously and serves the sole purpose of academic research.

NÄSTA

*Obligatorisk

If possible pick a favorite brand that you follow on social media

Your most favorite brand *

Ditt svar

Gender *

Male

Female

Age *

Ditt svar

Country *

Välj



BAKÅT

NÄSTA

1/16

Do you follow the brands social media content or use the brands social media channels to communicate with the brand? *

- Yes
- No

BAKÅT

NÄSTA

2/16

Please answer these questions with the focus on your favorite brand which you are following on social media.

I find the usage of the brands social media channels satisfying *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The content of the brands social media is interesting *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The social media communications about the brand, that are expressed by other users are interesting and engaging *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

I feel that I like to pass information on brand, product, or services from the brands social media to my friends or other people *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brands social media channels allow the free opinion exchange and conversation with others *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

It is easy and straight forward to give my opinion and feedback through the brands social media *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

BAKÅT

NÄSTA

3/16

The brand takes care of me *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brand listens to me *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brand makes up for its mistakes *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all

Extremely

I can count on this brand to do what's best for me as a customer *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all

Extremely

The brand is responsive to my concerns *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all

Extremely

The brand treats me as an important and valuable customer *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all

Extremely

BAKÅT

NÄSTA

4/16

I am dependent on this brand, it is an integral part of my daily life

*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

It is a feeling of loss when i have not used the brand for a while *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

BAKÅT

NÄSTA

5/16

I have sentimental feelings for this brand *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

This brand reminds me of a phase in my life *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

Thoughts of this brand contain personal memories *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

It feels like I have known the brand for a long time *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

BAKÅT NÄSTA

6/16

I know about the brand's history and background *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

I know what this brand stands for *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

I know more about this brand than the average consumer *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

BAKÅT NÄSTA

This is the only brand of this product that I will buy *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

When I go shopping I do not pay attention to competing brands *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

If my store is out of this brand I will postpone buying or go to another store *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

I will rather do without than buy another brand *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

I will continue being a loyal customer to the brand in the near future *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brand can always count on me as a loyal customer *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

BAKÅT

NÄSTA

8/16

It makes sense to me to buy my favorite brand instead of any other brand, even if the product itself is completely identical *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

If another brand has the same features as my favorite brand, I would prefer to buy my brand *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

If there is another brand with the same quality as my brand, I prefer to buy my brand *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

BAKÅT

NÄSTA

I have feelings for the brand that i do not have for other brands *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brand makes me feel good *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

I love this brand *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brand and I are perfect for each other *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

I am passionate about the brand *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

I am very attached to the brand *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The thought of not being able to use the brand disturbs me *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

I am willing to make sacrifices to keep using the brand *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

BAKÅT

NÄSTA

10/16

The brand has a good reputation *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brand is famous *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brand has positive attributes and I associate positive characteristics with the brand *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

BAKÅT

NÄSTA

11/16

I easily recognize the brand when I see it *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

Several characteristics of the brand come instantly to my mind when I think about it *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

I easily memorize the symbol/logo of the brand *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

I have a very clear picture of the brand *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all

Extremely

BAKÅT

NÄSTA

12/16

The brand is reliable *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all

Extremely

The brand is credible *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all

Extremely

I trust the brand *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all

Extremely

BAKÅT

NÄSTA

The brand is attractive *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brand is desirable *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brand is honest *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brand is strong in character *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brand is strong in personality *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

BAKÅT

NÄSTA

14/16

The brand uses a human shape (the logo or printing on the packaging, or product itself utilizes a humanoid form, as example a chocolate covered peanut that has arms and feet, or a sports loving tiger on corn flakes) *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brand or the product has human features (such as eyes, mouth, arms, etc., as example the lights and grill in the front of a car) *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

BAKÅT

NÄSTA

15/16

congruent - agreeing; accordant;

The brand is congruent with the image I hold of myself *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brand is congruent with the image I would like to hold of myself *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brand is congruent with the image others hold of myself *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brand is congruent with the image I would like others to hold of myself *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brand is congruent with my social role *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

BAKÅT

NÄSTA

16/16

The brand has a positive impact on what others think of me *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

The brand improves the way society views me *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

By using the brand, I'm part of a shared community *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all

Extremely

The brand helps me to develop a relationship with others who use the same brand *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all

Extremely

BAKÅT

SKICKA

Appendix B: Frequencies

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	26	50,0	50,0	50,0
	Male	26	50,0	50,0	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Country

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Finland	34	65,4	65,4	65,4
	Germany	3	5,8	5,8	71,2
	Norway	3	5,8	5,8	76,9
	Other	1	1,9	1,9	78,8
	Sweden	8	15,4	15,4	94,2
	Switzerland	3	5,8	5,8	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20,00	1	1,9	1,9	1,9
	22,00	4	7,7	7,7	9,6
	23,00	4	7,7	7,7	17,3
	24,00	5	9,6	9,6	26,9
	25,00	11	21,2	21,2	48,1
	26,00	6	11,5	11,5	59,6
	27,00	6	11,5	11,5	71,2
	28,00	5	9,6	9,6	80,8
	29,00	6	11,5	11,5	92,3
	30,00	4	7,7	7,7	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 1

Do you follow the brands social media content or use the brands social media channels to communicate with the brand?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	21	40,4	40,4	40,4
	Yes	31	59,6	59,6	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 2.1

I find the usage of the brands social media channels satisfying

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	1	1,9	3,2	3,2
	5,00	3	5,8	9,7	12,9
	6,00	2	3,8	6,5	19,4
	7,00	10	19,2	32,3	51,6
	8,00	7	13,5	22,6	74,2
	9,00	4	7,7	12,9	87,1
	10,00	4	7,7	12,9	100,0
	Total	31	59,6	100,0	
Missing	System	21	40,4		
Total		52	100,0		

Question 2.2

The content of the brands social media is interesting

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3,00	1	1,9	3,2	3,2
	5,00	1	1,9	3,2	6,5
	6,00	4	7,7	12,9	19,4
	7,00	9	17,3	29,0	48,4
	8,00	6	11,5	19,4	67,7
	9,00	5	9,6	16,1	83,9
	10,00	5	9,6	16,1	100,0
	Total	31	59,6	100,0	
Missing	System	21	40,4		
Total		52	100,0		

Question 2.3

The social media communications about the brand, that are expressed by other users are interesting and engaging

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	1	1,9	3,2	3,2
	2,00	5	9,6	16,1	19,4
	4,00	2	3,8	6,5	25,8
	5,00	1	1,9	3,2	29,0
	6,00	4	7,7	12,9	41,9
	7,00	8	15,4	25,8	67,7
	8,00	5	9,6	16,1	83,9
	9,00	3	5,8	9,7	93,5
	10,00	2	3,8	6,5	100,0
	Total		31	59,6	100,0
Missing	System	21	40,4		
Total		52	100,0		

Question 2.4

I feel that I like to pass information on brand, product, or services from the brands social media to my friends or other people

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	8	15,4	25,8	25,8
	2,00	1	1,9	3,2	29,0
	3,00	1	1,9	3,2	32,3
	4,00	3	5,8	9,7	41,9
	5,00	3	5,8	9,7	51,6
	6,00	4	7,7	12,9	64,5
	7,00	6	11,5	19,4	83,9
	8,00	1	1,9	3,2	87,1
	9,00	2	3,8	6,5	93,5
	10,00	2	3,8	6,5	100,0
Total		31	59,6	100,0	
Missing	System	21	40,4		
Total		52	100,0		

Question 2.5

The brands social media channels allow the free opinion exchange and conversation with others

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	1,00	2	3,8	6,5	6,5	
	2,00	1	1,9	3,2	9,7	
	3,00	2	3,8	6,5	16,1	
	4,00	1	1,9	3,2	19,4	
	5,00	5	9,6	16,1	35,5	
	6,00	1	1,9	3,2	38,7	
	7,00	6	11,5	19,4	58,1	
	8,00	6	11,5	19,4	77,4	
	9,00	3	5,8	9,7	87,1	
	10,00	4	7,7	12,9	100,0	
	Total		31	59,6	100,0	
	Missing	System	21	40,4		
Total		52	100,0			

Question 2.6

It is easy and straight forward to give my opinion and feedback through the brands social media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	1,00	2	3,8	6,5	6,5	
	2,00	1	1,9	3,2	9,7	
	5,00	1	1,9	3,2	12,9	
	6,00	6	11,5	19,4	32,3	
	7,00	4	7,7	12,9	45,2	
	8,00	4	7,7	12,9	58,1	
	9,00	5	9,6	16,1	74,2	
	10,00	8	15,4	25,8	100,0	
	Total		31	59,6	100,0	
	Missing	System	21	40,4		
Total		52	100,0			

Question 3.1

The brand takes care of me

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	6	11,5	11,5	11,5
	3,00	2	3,8	3,8	15,4
	4,00	5	9,6	9,6	25,0
	5,00	4	7,7	7,7	32,7
	6,00	1	1,9	1,9	34,6
	7,00	6	11,5	11,5	46,2
	8,00	11	21,2	21,2	67,3
	9,00	9	17,3	17,3	84,6
	10,00	8	15,4	15,4	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 3.2

The brand listens to me

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	6	11,5	11,5	11,5
	3,00	1	1,9	1,9	13,5
	4,00	1	1,9	1,9	15,4
	5,00	9	17,3	17,3	32,7
	6,00	8	15,4	15,4	48,1
	7,00	10	19,2	19,2	67,3
	8,00	7	13,5	13,5	80,8
	9,00	4	7,7	7,7	88,5
	10,00	6	11,5	11,5	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 3.3

The brand makes up for its mistakes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	3	5,8	5,8	5,8
	2,00	1	1,9	1,9	7,7
	3,00	1	1,9	1,9	9,6
	4,00	1	1,9	1,9	11,5
	5,00	3	5,8	5,8	17,3
	6,00	4	7,7	7,7	25,0
	7,00	6	11,5	11,5	36,5
	8,00	17	32,7	32,7	69,2
	9,00	5	9,6	9,6	78,8
	10,00	11	21,2	21,2	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 3.4

I can count on this brand to do what's best for me as a customer

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	2	3,8	3,8	3,8
	2,00	1	1,9	1,9	5,8
	4,00	4	7,7	7,7	13,5
	5,00	1	1,9	1,9	15,4
	6,00	7	13,5	13,5	28,8
	7,00	10	19,2	19,2	48,1
	8,00	5	9,6	9,6	57,7
	9,00	10	19,2	19,2	76,9
	10,00	12	23,1	23,1	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 3.5

The brand is responsive to my concerns

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	3	5,8	5,8	5,8
	2,00	1	1,9	1,9	7,7
	4,00	2	3,8	3,8	11,5
	5,00	6	11,5	11,5	23,1
	6,00	7	13,5	13,5	36,5
	7,00	6	11,5	11,5	48,1
	8,00	10	19,2	19,2	67,3
	9,00	9	17,3	17,3	84,6
	10,00	8	15,4	15,4	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 3.6

The brand treats me as an important and valuable customer

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	4	7,7	7,7	7,7
	2,00	1	1,9	1,9	9,6
	4,00	1	1,9	1,9	11,5
	5,00	5	9,6	9,6	21,2
	6,00	3	5,8	5,8	26,9
	7,00	6	11,5	11,5	38,5
	8,00	15	28,8	28,8	67,3
	9,00	8	15,4	15,4	82,7
	10,00	9	17,3	17,3	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 4.1

I am dependent on this brand, it is an integral part of my daily life

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	7	13,5	13,5	13,5
	2,00	2	3,8	3,8	17,3
	3,00	5	9,6	9,6	26,9
	4,00	4	7,7	7,7	34,6
	5,00	2	3,8	3,8	38,5
	6,00	4	7,7	7,7	46,2
	7,00	7	13,5	13,5	59,6
	8,00	2	3,8	3,8	63,5
	9,00	5	9,6	9,6	73,1
	10,00	14	26,9	26,9	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 4.2

It is a feeling of loss when i have not used the brand for a while

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	10	19,2	19,2	19,2
	2,00	5	9,6	9,6	28,8
	3,00	5	9,6	9,6	38,5
	4,00	2	3,8	3,8	42,3
	5,00	3	5,8	5,8	48,1
	6,00	6	11,5	11,5	59,6
	7,00	3	5,8	5,8	65,4
	8,00	4	7,7	7,7	73,1
	9,00	4	7,7	7,7	80,8
	10,00	10	19,2	19,2	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 5.1

I have sentimental feelings for this brand

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	4	7,7	7,7	7,7
	2,00	2	3,8	3,8	11,5
	3,00	11	21,2	21,2	32,7
	4,00	3	5,8	5,8	38,5
	5,00	5	9,6	9,6	48,1
	6,00	3	5,8	5,8	53,8
	7,00	5	9,6	9,6	63,5
	8,00	8	15,4	15,4	78,8
	9,00	5	9,6	9,6	88,5
	10,00	6	11,5	11,5	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 5.2

This brand reminds me of a phase in my life

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	7	13,5	13,5	13,5
	2,00	4	7,7	7,7	21,2
	3,00	5	9,6	9,6	30,8
	4,00	2	3,8	3,8	34,6
	5,00	7	13,5	13,5	48,1
	6,00	8	15,4	15,4	63,5
	7,00	5	9,6	9,6	73,1
	8,00	4	7,7	7,7	80,8
	9,00	2	3,8	3,8	84,6
	10,00	8	15,4	15,4	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 5.3

Thoughts of this brand contain personal memories

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	3	5,8	5,8	5,8
	2,00	3	5,8	5,8	11,5
	3,00	4	7,7	7,7	19,2
	4,00	4	7,7	7,7	26,9
	5,00	4	7,7	7,7	34,6
	6,00	3	5,8	5,8	40,4
	7,00	4	7,7	7,7	48,1
	8,00	8	15,4	15,4	63,5
	9,00	7	13,5	13,5	76,9
	10,00	12	23,1	23,1	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 5.4

It feels like I have known the brand for a long time

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	3	5,8	5,8	5,8
	3,00	1	1,9	1,9	7,7
	5,00	3	5,8	5,8	13,5
	6,00	5	9,6	9,6	23,1
	7,00	9	17,3	17,3	40,4
	8,00	7	13,5	13,5	53,8
	9,00	5	9,6	9,6	63,5
	10,00	19	36,5	36,5	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 6.1

I know about the brand's history and background

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	6	11,5	11,5	11,5
	2,00	2	3,8	3,8	15,4
	3,00	1	1,9	1,9	17,3
	4,00	3	5,8	5,8	23,1
	5,00	3	5,8	5,8	28,8
	6,00	8	15,4	15,4	44,2
	7,00	7	13,5	13,5	57,7
	8,00	7	13,5	13,5	71,2
	9,00	8	15,4	15,4	86,5
	10,00	7	13,5	13,5	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 6.2

I know what this brand stands for

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	6	11,5	11,5	11,5
	4,00	2	3,8	3,8	15,4
	5,00	2	3,8	3,8	19,2
	6,00	4	7,7	7,7	26,9
	7,00	4	7,7	7,7	34,6
	8,00	18	34,6	34,6	69,2
	9,00	8	15,4	15,4	84,6
	10,00	8	15,4	15,4	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 6.3

I know more about this brand than the average consumer

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	1,00	9	17,3	17,3	17,3	
	2,00	2	3,8	3,8	21,2	
	3,00	4	7,7	7,7	28,8	
	4,00	1	1,9	1,9	30,8	
	5,00	6	11,5	11,5	42,3	
	6,00	2	3,8	3,8	46,2	
	7,00	8	15,4	15,4	61,5	
	8,00	7	13,5	13,5	75,0	
	9,00	5	9,6	9,6	84,6	
	10,00	8	15,4	15,4	100,0	
	Total		52	100,0	100,0	

Question 7.1

This is the only brand of this product that I will buy

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	1,00	14	26,9	26,9	26,9	
	2,00	1	1,9	1,9	28,8	
	3,00	4	7,7	7,7	36,5	
	4,00	5	9,6	9,6	46,2	
	5,00	4	7,7	7,7	53,8	
	6,00	2	3,8	3,8	57,7	
	7,00	6	11,5	11,5	69,2	
	8,00	6	11,5	11,5	80,8	
	9,00	5	9,6	9,6	90,4	
	10,00	5	9,6	9,6	100,0	
	Total		52	100,0	100,0	

Question 7.2

When I go shopping I do not pay attention to competing brands

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	14	26,9	26,9	26,9
	2,00	1	1,9	1,9	28,8
	3,00	6	11,5	11,5	40,4
	4,00	3	5,8	5,8	46,2
	5,00	4	7,7	7,7	53,8
	6,00	4	7,7	7,7	61,5
	7,00	3	5,8	5,8	67,3
	8,00	3	5,8	5,8	73,1
	9,00	4	7,7	7,7	80,8
	10,00	10	19,2	19,2	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 7.3

If my store is out of this brand I will postpone buying or go to another store

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	8	15,4	15,4	15,4
	2,00	3	5,8	5,8	21,2
	3,00	5	9,6	9,6	30,8
	4,00	5	9,6	9,6	40,4
	5,00	3	5,8	5,8	46,2
	6,00	4	7,7	7,7	53,8
	7,00	4	7,7	7,7	61,5
	8,00	4	7,7	7,7	69,2
	9,00	4	7,7	7,7	76,9
	10,00	12	23,1	23,1	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 7.4

I will rather do without than buy another brand

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	14	26,9	26,9	26,9
	2,00	9	17,3	17,3	44,2
	3,00	5	9,6	9,6	53,8
	4,00	7	13,5	13,5	67,3
	5,00	6	11,5	11,5	78,8
	6,00	2	3,8	3,8	82,7
	7,00	2	3,8	3,8	86,5
	8,00	4	7,7	7,7	94,2
	9,00	2	3,8	3,8	98,1
	10,00	1	1,9	1,9	100,0
	Total		52	100,0	100,0

Question 7.5

I will continue being a loyal customer to the brand in the near future

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	3	5,8	5,8	5,8
	3,00	2	3,8	3,8	9,6
	4,00	4	7,7	7,7	17,3
	5,00	2	3,8	3,8	21,2
	6,00	3	5,8	5,8	26,9
	7,00	4	7,7	7,7	34,6
	8,00	10	19,2	19,2	53,8
	9,00	12	23,1	23,1	76,9
	10,00	12	23,1	23,1	100,0
	Total		52	100,0	100,0

Question 7.6

The brand can always count on me as a loyal customer

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	5	9,6	9,6	9,6
	2,00	1	1,9	1,9	11,5
	3,00	1	1,9	1,9	13,5
	4,00	2	3,8	3,8	17,3
	5,00	4	7,7	7,7	25,0
	6,00	2	3,8	3,8	28,8
	7,00	11	21,2	21,2	50,0
	8,00	8	15,4	15,4	65,4
	9,00	11	21,2	21,2	86,5
	10,00	7	13,5	13,5	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 8.1

It makes sense to me to buy my favorite brand instead of any other brand, even if the product itself is completely identical

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	4	7,7	7,7	7,7
	2,00	3	5,8	5,8	13,5
	3,00	2	3,8	3,8	17,3
	4,00	2	3,8	3,8	21,2
	5,00	4	7,7	7,7	28,8
	6,00	5	9,6	9,6	38,5
	7,00	4	7,7	7,7	46,2
	8,00	9	17,3	17,3	63,5
	9,00	6	11,5	11,5	75,0
	10,00	13	25,0	25,0	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 8.2

If another brand has the same features as my favorite brand, I would prefer to buy my brand

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	2	3,8	3,8	3,8
	3,00	1	1,9	1,9	5,8
	4,00	3	5,8	5,8	11,5
	5,00	4	7,7	7,7	19,2
	6,00	1	1,9	1,9	21,2
	7,00	9	17,3	17,3	38,5
	8,00	8	15,4	15,4	53,8
	9,00	8	15,4	15,4	69,2
	10,00	16	30,8	30,8	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 8.3

If there is another brand with the same quality as my brand, I prefer to buy my brand

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	3	5,8	5,8	5,8
	3,00	1	1,9	1,9	7,7
	4,00	1	1,9	1,9	9,6
	5,00	6	11,5	11,5	21,2
	6,00	2	3,8	3,8	25,0
	7,00	5	9,6	9,6	34,6
	8,00	9	17,3	17,3	51,9
	9,00	7	13,5	13,5	65,4
	10,00	18	34,6	34,6	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 9.1

I have feelings for the brand that i do not have for other brands

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	6	11,5	11,5	11,5
	2,00	2	3,8	3,8	15,4
	3,00	2	3,8	3,8	19,2
	4,00	8	15,4	15,4	34,6
	5,00	2	3,8	3,8	38,5
	6,00	5	9,6	9,6	48,1
	7,00	10	19,2	19,2	67,3
	8,00	7	13,5	13,5	80,8
	9,00	5	9,6	9,6	90,4
	10,00	5	9,6	9,6	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 9.2

The brand makes me feel good

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	1	1,9	1,9	1,9
	2,00	2	3,8	3,8	5,8
	3,00	4	7,7	7,7	13,5
	4,00	2	3,8	3,8	17,3
	5,00	2	3,8	3,8	21,2
	6,00	4	7,7	7,7	28,8
	7,00	9	17,3	17,3	46,2
	8,00	7	13,5	13,5	59,6
	9,00	8	15,4	15,4	75,0
	10,00	13	25,0	25,0	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 9.3

I love this brand

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	1	1,9	1,9	1,9
	3,00	3	5,8	5,8	7,7
	4,00	4	7,7	7,7	15,4
	5,00	5	9,6	9,6	25,0
	6,00	3	5,8	5,8	30,8
	7,00	6	11,5	11,5	42,3
	8,00	8	15,4	15,4	57,7
	9,00	6	11,5	11,5	69,2
	10,00	16	30,8	30,8	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 9.4

The brand and I are perfect for each other

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	2	3,8	3,8	3,8
	2,00	4	7,7	7,7	11,5
	3,00	1	1,9	1,9	13,5
	4,00	2	3,8	3,8	17,3
	5,00	9	17,3	17,3	34,6
	6,00	6	11,5	11,5	46,2
	7,00	7	13,5	13,5	59,6
	8,00	5	9,6	9,6	69,2
	9,00	5	9,6	9,6	78,8
	10,00	11	21,2	21,2	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 9.5

I am passionate about the brand

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2,00	5	9,6	9,6	9,6
	3,00	2	3,8	3,8	13,5
	4,00	3	5,8	5,8	19,2
	5,00	5	9,6	9,6	28,8
	6,00	9	17,3	17,3	46,2
	7,00	12	23,1	23,1	69,2
	8,00	9	17,3	17,3	86,5
	9,00	1	1,9	1,9	88,5
	10,00	6	11,5	11,5	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 9.6

I am very attached to the brand

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2,00	3	5,8	5,8	5,8
	3,00	5	9,6	9,6	15,4
	4,00	3	5,8	5,8	21,2
	5,00	7	13,5	13,5	34,6
	6,00	2	3,8	3,8	38,5
	7,00	8	15,4	15,4	53,8
	8,00	14	26,9	26,9	80,8
	9,00	3	5,8	5,8	86,5
	10,00	7	13,5	13,5	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 9.7

The thought of not being able to use the brand disturbs me

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	15	28,8	28,8	28,8
	2,00	6	11,5	11,5	40,4
	3,00	3	5,8	5,8	46,2
	4,00	3	5,8	5,8	51,9
	5,00	6	11,5	11,5	63,5
	6,00	6	11,5	11,5	75,0
	7,00	7	13,5	13,5	88,5
	8,00	3	5,8	5,8	94,2
	9,00	1	1,9	1,9	96,2
	10,00	2	3,8	3,8	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 9.8

I am willing to make sacrifices to keep using the brand

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	13	25,0	25,0	25,0
	2,00	7	13,5	13,5	38,5
	3,00	1	1,9	1,9	40,4
	4,00	6	11,5	11,5	51,9
	5,00	6	11,5	11,5	63,5
	6,00	8	15,4	15,4	78,8
	7,00	3	5,8	5,8	84,6
	8,00	4	7,7	7,7	92,3
	9,00	1	1,9	1,9	94,2
	10,00	3	5,8	5,8	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 10.1

The brand has a good reputation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	5,00	3	5,8	5,8	5,8
	6,00	1	1,9	1,9	7,7
	7,00	7	13,5	13,5	21,2
	8,00	14	26,9	26,9	48,1
	9,00	11	21,2	21,2	69,2
	10,00	16	30,8	30,8	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 10.2

The brand is famous

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2,00	1	1,9	1,9	1,9
	4,00	1	1,9	1,9	3,8
	5,00	1	1,9	1,9	5,8
	6,00	1	1,9	1,9	7,7
	7,00	4	7,7	7,7	15,4
	8,00	4	7,7	7,7	23,1
	9,00	10	19,2	19,2	42,3
	10,00	30	57,7	57,7	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 10.3

The brand has positive attributes and I associate positive characteristics with the brand

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	5,00	2	3,8	3,8	3,8
	6,00	3	5,8	5,8	9,6
	7,00	9	17,3	17,3	26,9
	8,00	10	19,2	19,2	46,2
	9,00	14	26,9	26,9	73,1
	10,00	14	26,9	26,9	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 11.1

I easily recognize the brand when I see it

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3,00	1	1,9	1,9	1,9
	6,00	2	3,8	3,8	5,8
	7,00	1	1,9	1,9	7,7
	8,00	4	7,7	7,7	15,4
	9,00	3	5,8	5,8	21,2
	10,00	41	78,8	78,8	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 11.2

Several characteristics of the brand come instantly to my mind when I think about it

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3,00	1	1,9	1,9	1,9
	6,00	4	7,7	7,7	9,6
	7,00	3	5,8	5,8	15,4
	8,00	9	17,3	17,3	32,7
	9,00	6	11,5	11,5	44,2
	10,00	29	55,8	55,8	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 11.3

I easily memorize the symbol/logo of the brand

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3,00	1	1,9	1,9	1,9
	7,00	2	3,8	3,8	5,8
	8,00	2	3,8	3,8	9,6
	9,00	3	5,8	5,8	15,4
	10,00	44	84,6	84,6	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 11.4

I have a very clear picture of the brand

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	5,00	1	1,9	1,9	1,9
	6,00	1	1,9	1,9	3,8
	7,00	6	11,5	11,5	15,4
	8,00	10	19,2	19,2	34,6
	9,00	8	15,4	15,4	50,0
	10,00	26	50,0	50,0	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 12.1

The brand is reliable

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4,00	1	1,9	1,9	1,9
	6,00	2	3,8	3,8	5,8
	7,00	5	9,6	9,6	15,4
	8,00	11	21,2	21,2	36,5
	9,00	16	30,8	30,8	67,3
	10,00	17	32,7	32,7	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 12.2

The brand is credible

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	6,00	4	7,7	7,7	7,7
	7,00	4	7,7	7,7	15,4
	8,00	10	19,2	19,2	34,6
	9,00	12	23,1	23,1	57,7
	10,00	22	42,3	42,3	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 12.3

I trust the brand

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4,00	1	1,9	1,9	1,9
	5,00	1	1,9	1,9	3,8
	6,00	1	1,9	1,9	5,8
	7,00	7	13,5	13,5	19,2
	8,00	13	25,0	25,0	44,2
	9,00	12	23,1	23,1	67,3
	10,00	17	32,7	32,7	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 13.1

The brand is attractive

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	1	1,9	1,9	1,9
	3,00	1	1,9	1,9	3,8
	4,00	1	1,9	1,9	5,8
	5,00	4	7,7	7,7	13,5
	6,00	1	1,9	1,9	15,4
	7,00	4	7,7	7,7	23,1
	8,00	9	17,3	17,3	40,4
	9,00	15	28,8	28,8	69,2
	10,00	16	30,8	30,8	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 13.2

The brand is desirable

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	5,00	4	7,7	7,7	7,7
	6,00	6	11,5	11,5	19,2
	7,00	6	11,5	11,5	30,8
	8,00	8	15,4	15,4	46,2
	9,00	13	25,0	25,0	71,2
	10,00	15	28,8	28,8	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 13.3

The brand is honest

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2,00	1	1,9	1,9	1,9
	4,00	1	1,9	1,9	3,8
	5,00	5	9,6	9,6	13,5
	6,00	4	7,7	7,7	21,2
	7,00	13	25,0	25,0	46,2
	8,00	7	13,5	13,5	59,6
	9,00	12	23,1	23,1	82,7
	10,00	9	17,3	17,3	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 13.4

The brand is strong in character

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4,00	1	1,9	1,9	1,9
	5,00	2	3,8	3,8	5,8
	6,00	2	3,8	3,8	9,6
	7,00	9	17,3	17,3	26,9
	8,00	14	26,9	26,9	53,8
	9,00	13	25,0	25,0	78,8
	10,00	11	21,2	21,2	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 13.5

The brand is strong in personality

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4,00	1	1,9	1,9	1,9
	5,00	3	5,8	5,8	7,7
	6,00	4	7,7	7,7	15,4
	7,00	11	21,2	21,2	36,5
	8,00	10	19,2	19,2	55,8
	9,00	12	23,1	23,1	78,8
	10,00	11	21,2	21,2	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 14.1

The brand uses a human shape (the logo or printing on the packaging, or product itself utilizes a humanoid form, as example a chocolate covered peanut that has arms and feet, or a sports loving tiger on corn flakes)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	38	73,1	73,1	73,1
	2,00	2	3,8	3,8	76,9
	3,00	4	7,7	7,7	84,6
	4,00	1	1,9	1,9	86,5
	5,00	3	5,8	5,8	92,3
	7,00	1	1,9	1,9	94,2
	8,00	1	1,9	1,9	96,2
	10,00	2	3,8	3,8	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 14.2

The brand or the product has human features (such as eyes, mouth, arms, etc., as example the lights and grill in the front of a car)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	35	67,3	67,3	67,3
	2,00	3	5,8	5,8	73,1
	3,00	3	5,8	5,8	78,8
	5,00	2	3,8	3,8	82,7
	6,00	1	1,9	1,9	84,6
	7,00	2	3,8	3,8	88,5
	8,00	1	1,9	1,9	90,4
	10,00	5	9,6	9,6	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 15.1

The brand is congruent with the image I hold of myself

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	4	7,7	7,7	7,7
	3,00	3	5,8	5,8	13,5
	4,00	2	3,8	3,8	17,3
	5,00	7	13,5	13,5	30,8
	6,00	4	7,7	7,7	38,5
	7,00	8	15,4	15,4	53,8
	8,00	13	25,0	25,0	78,8
	9,00	2	3,8	3,8	82,7
	10,00	9	17,3	17,3	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 15.2

The brand is congruent with the image I would like to hold of myself

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	5	9,6	9,6	9,6
	3,00	2	3,8	3,8	13,5
	4,00	2	3,8	3,8	17,3
	5,00	6	11,5	11,5	28,8
	6,00	5	9,6	9,6	38,5
	7,00	10	19,2	19,2	57,7
	8,00	10	19,2	19,2	76,9
	9,00	4	7,7	7,7	84,6
	10,00	8	15,4	15,4	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 15.3

The brand is congruent with the image others hold of myself

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	5	9,6	9,6	9,6
	3,00	2	3,8	3,8	13,5
	5,00	11	21,2	21,2	34,6
	6,00	8	15,4	15,4	50,0
	7,00	6	11,5	11,5	61,5
	8,00	8	15,4	15,4	76,9
	9,00	5	9,6	9,6	86,5
	10,00	7	13,5	13,5	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 15.4

The brand is congruent with the image I would like others to hold of myself

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	6	11,5	11,5	11,5
	3,00	3	5,8	5,8	17,3
	4,00	1	1,9	1,9	19,2
	5,00	10	19,2	19,2	38,5
	6,00	4	7,7	7,7	46,2
	7,00	8	15,4	15,4	61,5
	8,00	8	15,4	15,4	76,9
	9,00	4	7,7	7,7	84,6
	10,00	8	15,4	15,4	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 15.5

The brand is congruent with my social role

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	6	11,5	11,5	11,5
	2,00	1	1,9	1,9	13,5
	3,00	3	5,8	5,8	19,2
	4,00	3	5,8	5,8	25,0
	5,00	5	9,6	9,6	34,6
	6,00	7	13,5	13,5	48,1
	7,00	10	19,2	19,2	67,3
	8,00	4	7,7	7,7	75,0
	9,00	4	7,7	7,7	82,7
	10,00	9	17,3	17,3	100,0
	Total		52	100,0	100,0

Question 16.1

The brand has a positive impact on what others think of me

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	9	17,3	17,3	17,3
	2,00	2	3,8	3,8	21,2
	3,00	3	5,8	5,8	26,9
	4,00	2	3,8	3,8	30,8
	5,00	9	17,3	17,3	48,1
	6,00	7	13,5	13,5	61,5
	7,00	3	5,8	5,8	67,3
	8,00	8	15,4	15,4	82,7
	9,00	1	1,9	1,9	84,6
	10,00	8	15,4	15,4	100,0
	Total		52	100,0	100,0

Question 16.2

The brand improves the way society views me

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	12	23,1	23,1	23,1
	2,00	2	3,8	3,8	26,9
	3,00	2	3,8	3,8	30,8
	4,00	2	3,8	3,8	34,6
	5,00	6	11,5	11,5	46,2
	6,00	8	15,4	15,4	61,5
	7,00	5	9,6	9,6	71,2
	8,00	8	15,4	15,4	86,5
	10,00	7	13,5	13,5	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	

Question 16.3

By using the brand, I'm part of a shared community

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	8	15,4	15,4	15,4
	2,00	3	5,8	5,8	21,2
	3,00	4	7,7	7,7	28,8
	4,00	5	9,6	9,6	38,5
	5,00	4	7,7	7,7	46,2
	6,00	5	9,6	9,6	55,8
	7,00	7	13,5	13,5	69,2
	8,00	5	9,6	9,6	78,8
	9,00	6	11,5	11,5	90,4
	10,00	5	9,6	9,6	100,0
Total	52	100,0	100,0		

Question 16.4

**The brand helps me to develop a relationship with others
who use the same brand**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	13	25,0	25,0	25,0
	2,00	5	9,6	9,6	34,6
	3,00	4	7,7	7,7	42,3
	4,00	5	9,6	9,6	51,9
	5,00	7	13,5	13,5	65,4
	6,00	5	9,6	9,6	75,0
	7,00	2	3,8	3,8	78,8
	8,00	4	7,7	7,7	86,5
	9,00	4	7,7	7,7	94,2
	10,00	3	5,8	5,8	100,0
	Total	52	100,0	100,0	