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Got no milk?

Exploring consumer involvement and brand identity of the non-dairy brands Oatly and Alpro

By:

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Fifth Edition

Student Papers

2019
September - October

Strategic Brand Management: Master Papers

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Exploring consumer involvement and brand identity of the non-dairy brands Oatly and Alpro

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine consumer involvement with brands in the non-dairy product category and to identify the notable facets of the brands identity in this low-involvement product category.

Methodology: Literature review, two case studies (Oatly and Alpro), four semi-structured interviews.

Findings: This research paper identified different aspects of involvement and their notable brand identity facets. The findings were as follows: Perceived product importance - physique and culture facets; brand sensitivity - relationship and culture facets; symbolic value - reflection and self-image facets; emotional value - relationship, culture and self-image facets.

The interviews of this study suggest that Oatly has more symbolic and emotional value attached to their brand compared to Alpro. This paper identifies Oatly’s aggressive depositioning of the dairy industry as a means of creating symbolic and emotional value for consumers. In contrast, Alpro is part of a larger corporate group (Danone) which includes dairy brands in their portfolio. Thus, in order to create the same level of symbolic and emotional value, Alpro would need to find a different cause to align with their culture, enabling them to build meaningful relationships with consumers.

Original/value: This research paper applies two case studies to an original framework, which allows for valuable insights in identifying notable facets of brand identity that affect involvement in a low-involvement category.

Keywords: Consumer Involvement, Brand Identity Prism, Oatly, Alpro,

Paper type: Research paper

Introduction

Theorists have attempted to define consumer involvement since it was first coined by Krugman in 1965, though there is a disjointed consensus and there is much disagreement regarding the definition involvement signifies (Lastovicka & Garder 1979). Contemporary theorists Brennan and Mavondo (2000) summarised involvement as an emotional state, determining the

relevance of a purchase when triggered by consumers’ internal motivations and objectives.

Involvement can be dissected into two categories, high and low. According to Bloch & Richins (1983), high-involvement products are those associated with a high level of risk, requiring a high level of consideration before purchase. For example, vehicles or accommodation fall under high-involvement categories. Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs) however, are

predominantly low-involvement (Silayoi and Speece, 2004), and have fewer risk associations.

Historically, the FMCG category of alternative dairy was primarily limited to soya products dominated by the Belgian brand, Alpro. However, in recent years Swedish brand Oatly has entered into the non-dairy industry with its products based on research from Lund University (Oatly, 2019a). Oatly's unconventional approach and oat-based products have gained market share, threatening the traditional gatekeeper of the market, Alpro (Franklin-Wallis, 2019).

For many firms, one of the most important ways of differentiating their products from competitors is through the use of brands. According to Keller (2008), brands can add perceived value to a product or service through a set of mental associations. These mental associations in the consumer's mind drive favourable behaviour, allowing firms with strong brands to enjoy competitive advantages (Kapferer, 2012). The consumer's mental associations to a brand are what constitutes the brand image, yet as Kapferer (2012, p.151) states "In terms of brand management, identity precedes image". The identity is the brand's vision and core values, forming what makes brands unique and meaningful for consumers (Kapferer, 2012). This poses the question, what elements of the brand identity are important for consumer involvement and how can firms utilise these elements to increase consumer involvement?

Purpose & Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine consumer involvement with brands in the non-dairy product category and to identify

the notable facets of the brand identity in this low-involvement product category.

The following research questions will be used to fulfill the purpose of the study:

RQ1. With a focus on the non-dairy industry, how does consumer involvement differ between brands in the same low-involvement product category?

RQ2. In a low-involvement product category such as the non-dairy industry, what facets of brand identity are notable for consumer involvement?

RQ3. Do the identified facets of the brand identity differ between brands within the same product category, and if so how?

Literature Review

Brand identity and the Brand Identity Prism

According to Kapferer (2012, p.150), brand identity "is what helps an organization, or a part of it, feel that it truly exists and that it is a coherent and unique being, with a history and a place of its own, different from others". The identity of a brand provides its meaning and consists of the core values and vision of a brand (Kapferer, 2012). Additionally, this means that the brand identity specifies the uniqueness and value of a brand (Kapferer, 2012). It is the identity of a brand that defines its vision and core values, and constitutes what makes the brand different from its competitors (Kapferer, 2012).

A highly regarded model used to outline brand identity, which keeps communication theory in mind is Kapferer's brand identity prism (2012). This model represents the brand identity through the source of the communication, the recipient of communication and the relationship between the two (Kapferer, 2012). The brand identity

prism consists of six facets, and differentiates external expression consisting of; *physique*, *relationship* and *reflection*, from the internal facets embodied by the brand; *personality*, *culture* and *self-image* (Kapferer, 2012).

The first facet in the brand identity prism, *physique*, is a brand's tangible added value and physical elements such as packaging, design, signs and logos (Kapferer, 2012). It refers to the brand's physical attributes which are top of mind for consumers when the brand is mentioned, and are often considered the basis of the brand (Kapferer, 2012). Kapferer (2012) also highlights the brand's prototype, often seen as their flagship product, as a prominent component of *physique*.

The second facet of the brand identity prism, *personality*, addresses the concept of anthropomorphising the brand as if the brand had human characteristics, showing "what kind of person it would be if it were human" (Kapferer, 2012, p.159). To describe a brand's *personality*, relevant human characteristics are used which also allows consumers to identify with the brand (Kapferer, 2012).

The third facet, *culture*, is the foundation of values and principles that the organisation is built upon (Kapferer, 2012). The *culture* of a brand defines who the brand is and what it stands for. It is the basis for the emotional ties created with consumers and gives the brand meaning (Kapferer, 2012). According to Kapferer (2012), the culture of a brand is the most important facet of the brand identity.

The fourth facet, *relationship*, is how an organisation represents themselves and their relationship to their suppliers and customers (Kapferer, 2012). The fifth facet, *reflection*, is the outward reflection from the brand

towards their stereotypical customer, but is not necessarily describing the target audience (Kapferer, 2012). The reflection should reflect the customer "as he/she wishes to be seen as a result of using a brand" (Kapferer, 2012, p.162) which is important since the usage of brands is a way for consumers to build their own identity. The last facet, *self-image*, is the inside reflection of the target audience and how they perceive they look, especially when using the products of a brand in question (Kapferer, 2012).

Brand identity is crucial for customer involvement as engaging brands must have a deeper meaning in which its inner inspiration, character and beliefs "help consumers in their life, and also in discovering their own identity" (Kapferer, 2012, p.158).

Involvement

Involvement originates in social psychology, broadly described as the relationship between an individual and an issue, affecting the structure of judgement (Sherif, et al. 1965 cited in Michaelidou, & Dibb, 2008). In the 1970s involvement gained prominence in the field of marketing and consumer behaviour, with pioneering research including the measurement of involvement with advertising (Krugman, 1966), where involvement connected the content of a stimulus with the consumer's own life.

Within marketing literature involvement has been utilised to explain multiple different facets of consumer behaviour including product involvement, consumer involvement and purchase-decision involvement (Dholakia, 2001; Zaichkowsky, 1985; Mittal, 1989). Zaichkowsky (1985) draws attention to the different applications of the term 'involvement' concluding that

involvement ultimately is the interaction between people and products. This aligns with previous research from Ray (1973, cited in Knox and Walker, 2003) which speaks of involvement as a concept able to impact the entirety of the consumer decision making process, and subsequently drive purchase behaviour.

Despite the differing terminology associated with involvement, broadly the involvement construct refers to how significant a consumer perceives a product or product category to be in relation to their interests, values and needs (Ahtola, 1985; Zaichkowsky, 1985). It has been said that product involvement is a more easily applicable construct outside of an academic setting (Nkwocha et al. 2005). In 1989, Mittal appeared to advance the once academic view of involvement, aiming to gain actionable insights through his focus on involvement that drives purchase behaviour through research which addressed both brands and product categories.

Traditionally, products and associated buyer behaviours were categorised as either high-involvement or low-involvement. For example, fast moving consumer goods (FMCGs) are predominantly classed as low-involvement products (Silayoi and Speece, 2004), requiring limited research before the point of purchase, alongside a focus on price sensitivity (Bell and Marshall, 2003). Perceived risk has also been outlined as a differentiator between high and low-involvement products (Kapferer and Laurent, 1985), with findings suggesting that low-involvement purchases may lack the level of consumer evaluation needed to perceive risk (Dholakia, 2001). Additionally, in light of previous research, Arora (1982) concluded that low-involvement products may benefit from being associated with high-involvement

issues, using the example of attributing products in the low-involvement milk category with health-based values. Similarly, this suggestion of attributing additional values to a product or category was reiterated nearly 20 years later, with the suggestion that low-involvement categories benefit from “*raising the level of motivational concern... forcing more detailed processing of brand-related information*” (Dholakia, 2001, pp. 1354-1355).

Involvement research in the 1980s brought to the forefront the idea that the link between involvement and consumer behaviour may not be as clear cut as once thought. A pioneer of this school of thought was Mittal (1989) who highlighted that brands could play a significant part in decision making, regardless of the level of involvement of the product category. A routine or inexpensive purchase is not always low-involvement, since the consumer may not be indifferent to the choice of brands (Mittal, 1989), suggesting that consumers have a level of brand sensitivity in their purchase behaviour. The term brand sensitivity has been described as the degree to which consumers are concerned with brands when they are looking at a particular product (Kapferer, 2012). This construct has been supported in more recent research findings, which view brand as a ‘simplifying heuristic’ that reduces the level of evaluation required before a purchase is made (Silayoi and Speece, 2004). This again, mirrors the findings of Mittal (1989, p.153) who refers to involvement as a mind-set, and “the perception of brand differences is what constitutes this mind set”.

From a brand management perspective, understanding differing involvement levels is essential based on the findings that

involvement has the power to affect brand loyalty, and receptiveness to communications (Bell and Marshall, 2003). However, viewing involvement as one static two-part construct downplays its complexity and is inconsistent with how modern consumers make purchase decisions, particularly in low-involvement categories (Vera and Espinosa, 2019). This prompts the question of whether involvement levels can differ between brands within one product category, and which facets of a brand's identity might impact these variances?

The multi-faceted nature of involvement has long proposed challenges when it comes to measurement, with variances in measurement metrics throughout academia. Involvement has both been measured as a multidimensional construct, as well as one focusing exclusively on product or purchase situations (Michaelidou, & Dibb, 2008). The 1980s gave rise to some of the most prominent involvement measurement research. Firstly, that of Kapferer and Laurent (1985) reviewed a product's perceived importance, risk, symbolic and emotional value. Zaichkowsky (1985) highlighted the process of information seeking, comparison of product characteristics and preferences for specific brands. Finally, Mittal (1989) sought to measure involvement at both product and brand levels, reviewing the degree to which consumers cared about brands, variances between different brands, and the importance and outcome of product selection.

This variance in research questions has led us to pursue a more holistic and qualitative approach to judging brand involvement - appreciating that these components are interrelated, and that 'tick box' research may be too reductive to apply within one product category where variances may be small.

Conceptual Framework

Due to the disjointed nature of involvement research, we have concluded that key elements of existing involvement measurement constructs will be combined to form an overarching method of deciphering involvement. Therefore, our measures of consumer involvement will contain four aspects, these are *product importance*, *brand sensitivity*, *symbolic value* and *emotional value*. These four aspects of involvement can be defined as the following:

Product's perceived importance

Though research gives no common consensus on the definition of perceived product importance, Hupfer & Gardner (1971, cited in Bloch and Richins, 1983) outline the irony of how consumers rank the importance of products to varying degrees, with one's car often being perceived as more important than one's own facial features. When analysing perceived product importance and its relationship with involvement Michaelidou and Dibb (2008, pp. 8-9) cited the work of Antil (1984) who suggested that it is not the products themselves which create involvement but that "*involvement results from the personal meaning or importance attributed by an individual to the characteristics of a product*". The need for using product importance as a measure of involvement is supported by Kapferer and Laurent (1985) who identified the perceived importance of a product, and its personal meaning to the consumers as one of their five facets for measuring involvement. Therefore, this paper measures the perceived importance of a product based on how the characteristics of a product fit with the motivations of consumers.

Brand sensitivity

The term brand sensitivity is used to describe the psychological mindset of the consumer in the purchase stage of their decision-making process, and to what extent consumers take brands into consideration when making a purchase (Kapferer, 2012). This differs from brand loyalty to the extent that brand loyalty is a tangible behavioural outcome which can be measured through consumer buying patterns but neglects the reasons why these decisions are made (Beaudoin et al, 2003). It is this aspect of psychological reasoning where brand sensitivity comes into play. In this paper, brand sensitivity is determined by the extent to which consumers consider the brand when making a purchase decision.

Symbolic value

Symbolic value is highlighted as one of the 5 facets of involvement by Kapferer and Laurent, defined as “*the symbolic or sign value attributed by the consumer*” (1985, p. 43). High-involvement products are deemed as having a strong symbolic meaning, due to the role they play in expressing a consumer's personality or lifestyle (Kapferer, 2012). This concept is distilled further by (Michaelidou and Dibb, 2008), who define symbolic value as the psychological benefits gained from using products, with the ability to impact on self-image and self-esteem. In this paper, symbolic value is identified through consumers' perceived psychological benefits associated with a product.

Emotional value

Emotional value is one of the five facets of measuring involvement according to Kapferer and Laurent (1985). The emotional value of products stems from brands and consists of intangible associations (Kapferer, 2012). This emotional appeal of a product most often

resides in its invisible attributes which drive pleasure and have an effect on consumers (Kapferer, 2012). In this paper, the emotional value is determined through the feelings and intangible associations that produce emotional pleasure for consumers.

Methodology

Research Design

This paper utilised a qualitative research method consisting of primary and secondary data collection. Firstly, two case studies were carried out looking at Oatly and Alpro with information gathered from secondary sources including the company communication channels, existing interviews, and external news coverage. This background research was carried out in order to extract information of both companies and enable application to Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism (2012), in order to assist in drawing conclusions regarding the research questions.

The second part of our research consisted of conducting four semi-structured interviews. Despite previous involvement research utilising predominantly quantitative research methods, a more in-depth level of information was required in order to answer the research questions. Anderson (2009) outlines how interviews are the most popular forms of data collection due to the freedom and honesty that can be extracted from the samples. This, in combination with the ability to obtain in-depth information, was the reason this method was deemed most appropriate for fulfilling research objectives.

Sampling

As Marshall (1996) suggests the judgement sample strategy was undertaken, meaning the four interviewees for this research paper were selected on the basis that they are

consumers of both Oatly and Alpro products. If they were not consumers and familiar with both products, the study would not be valid and the results redundant. The sample size consisted of Swedish nationals of both genders and varying in age between 22 to 29.

Data Collection Method

The method of collection for primary data was a series of four semi-structured interviews in a controlled environment, each lasted for approximately 30 minutes. Appropriate ethical considerations were in place with interviewees giving permission for sessions to be recorded for transcription purposes.

The interview structure was based on the involvement framework created by the researchers of this paper consisting of questions based on perceived product importance, brand sensitivity, emotional value and symbolic value for each product brand.

Presentation of Results

The results are presented with the involvement framework structuring the body of the text, with each facet of the involvement framework being explored under its own heading. Under each heading, the notable facets of Kapferer's (2012) brand identity prism are explored using data extracted from the interviews, with the case studies assisting in drawing conclusions.

Case Study Oatly

In order to identify how Oatly's brand identity is reflected through the six facets of the brand identity prism (Kapferer, 2012), research was carried out using Oatly's own online communication channels, records of previous interviews with both Oatly's CEO

and Creative Director, and supplementary secondary sources.

Physique

The *physique* facet of the Oatly brand can be derived from its tangible, physical qualities (Kapferer, 2012) such as the choice of logo, colours and packaging design. Oatly went through a significant rebrand in 2012, retaining the core brand values but completely overhauling its *physique*. The creative director John Schoolcraft, at the time speaks of how these changes to Oatly's visual identity aimed to move Oatly to a lifestyle brand designed to fit into people's lives, as at the time "it looked like a Dutch multinational, just indistinguishable from anything else on the shelves" (The challenger project, 2016). From this drive to stand out, the *physique* consumers recognize today was born.

Oatly's packaging has a very handmade feel, derived from being intentionally made to look like they'd been created in a basement (The challenger project, 2016). This artisanal styling is paired with bold and playful text, which has been perceived by some as giving Oatly a childish quality (The challenger project, 2016). When it comes to their logo, this is perhaps where Oatly differs from others within their product category, the creative director himself states "logos don't talk. They're boring" and thus they have deliberately made it look irregular, adding an exclamation point as an unexpected act of rebellion, furthermore they've even gone as far as to omit their logo from certain product packs, replacing its usual position with the words "Not Milk" (The challenger project, 2016). Nonetheless, the strong design style and typography make Oatly products instantly identifiable, even without the brand name.

Kapferer (2012) also highlights the brands 'prototype' or flagship product as a component of *Physique*. For Oatly, this is their oat milk, also known as oat drink in countries such as Sweden due to EU regulations about the classification of milk (National Milk Producers Federation, 2018).

Personality

The communications and advertisements of a brand demonstrate the personality traits the brand would have if it were a human (Kapferer, 2012). In March 2019, Oatly advertised on their LinkedIn page that they were recruiting someone "to write subliminally sarcastic yet remarkably upbeat and optimistic copy" (Oatly, 2019b), highlighting how Oatly as organisation identify their *personality*.

Oatly's brand *personality* has also become synonymous with rebellion against the dairy industry. Their advertising slogan "It's like milk, but made for humans" caused a great deal of controversy, leading to Oatly being taken to court by Sweden's dairy lobby in 2015 (Gustafsson, 2015). Oatly further solidified this rebellious personality, taking the same controversial strapline to the UK in 2018, backed by a significant advertising spend (Faull, 2018).

Culture

In the brand identity prism, *culture* can be defined as the ideology a brand portrays (Kapferer, 2015). The *culture* of Oatly is undeniably centred around sustainability, with their sole purpose stated as providing an enjoyable product "without recklessly taxing the planet's resources in the process" (Oatly, 2019a). Within the *culture* facet, Kapferer also discusses the rise of cult brands due to their "ideological underpinnings becoming answers to a social crisis felt by a social sub-group" (2012, p.160). When reviewing press coverage

surrounding Oatly it is clear that the brand has established this cult status, with Fox News (Deabler, 2017) reporting on its cult following amongst the social sub-groups of hipsters and vegans. This is also mirrored in Europe, with the Guardian (Lewis, 2018) referring to Oatly as a cult Swedish company. Furthermore, Oatly themselves support this cult positioning, with their Global Chief Creative Officer, John Schoolcraft delivering a keynote speech at Ping Festival in Helsinki, titled "Oatly: Building a cult to change the world" (Ping Festival, 2018).

Relationship

The *relationship* facet of the brand identity prism relates to Oatly's code of conduct and interactions with stakeholders (Kapferer, 2012). Referring back to the advertising case addressed within the personality facet, Oatly openly has a negative *relationship* with the dairy industry. However, this mirrors their internal culture and position as a cult brand for trendsetters and vegans, who themselves share these values.

Oatly's *relationship* with consumers is very different from that of its relationship with the dairy industry. It can be seen from their social media correspondence that they strive for openness and transparency, building a community by replying to the vast majority of comments on their social media posts. Even when sensitive issues are addressed social media replies retain a conversational tone, signing off replies with "Love, Oatly" and "Have an oatsome day!" (Oatly, 2019c).

It is also worth noting that Oatly build cross-industry and cross-country relationships through their "Je Ne Sais Quoi of the month" where they give exposure to smaller organisations who share their values of sustainability (Oatly, 2019d).

Reflection

Based on Oatly's communications it is possible to decipher the picture of the recipient in terms of their *reflection*. Oatly speaks to their consumers as environmental activists, who are willing to go against the grain in order to make a positive environmental impact. This aligns with the 'cult' groups of hipsters and vegans which were identified in the *culture* facet of the brand prism.

Self-image

Self-image is the target's own internal mirror (Kapferer, 2012), it can be derived that the level of detail Oatly gives about the environmental impacts of its products that consumer's *self-image* is that of an informed individual, who makes conscious purchasing decisions to help the environment. For example "buy buying Oatly I feel I am making a difference".

Case study Alpro

The identification of Alpro's brand facets was achieved through secondary research. Reviewing Alpro's own communication channels, press coverage, and an existing interview with their UK Marketing Director in order to gain insights about the Alpro brand.

Physique

Alpro's *physique* can be derived from their choice of logo, packaging and prototype product. The brand underwent a refresh in 2019, with the launch of a new logo and packaging design. When speaking about the redesign of Alpro, Marketing Director David Jiscoot highlighted the "clean, modern pack design... a brand-new logo, hand-crafted illustrations" along with photography of the main ingredients to highlight the natural side of the product (Grocery Trader, 2019). This

culmination along with Alpro's choice of brand colours (blue, green and white), demonstrates a very simple, clean and functional *physique*.

Alpro offers a number of non-dairy alternatives to the market, however their brand prototype is their soya milk. With the growth of the non-dairy category and increase in alternatives, it could be argued that this automatic association with soya milk may impact on the modernity of Alpro's *physique*.

Personality

Upon reviewing Alpro's communications through social media, along with their advertising the *personality* of Alpro would be described as practical, helpful and family orientated. Their communications focus predominantly on how their products would fit in with the lives of consumers. For example, one of their Instagram posts suggests for commuters to "take your yummy breakfast with you and you will arrive at your stop in no time" (Alpro, 2019b), highlighting their friendly yet functional approach. Furthermore, a number of their television advertisements utilise a family setting, suggesting that Alpro as a brand may be somewhat of a caring parental figure.

Culture

The *culture* of Alpro can be explained as the ideology that drives them, and the group of consumers this resonates with the most (Kapferer, 2012). Alpro's mission is "to continue to change the way the world eats for the better by creating delicious, naturally healthy plant-based foods, for the maximum wellbeing of everyone and with the utmost respect for our planet" (Alpro, 2019a).

Kapferer speaks of the *culture* facet as a key factor in understanding the difference

between two competing brands within one market (2012). If this approach is used, it clearly shows that despite Alpro featuring sustainability as part of their vision they are more reserved in their pursuit of this in than some of their competitors. This could be due to Alpro being owned by food giant Danone, who also produces a range of dairy products (Danone, 2019) thus requiring them to take a much more neutral stance.

Due to the need for neutrality, Alpro is required to align its *culture* with a wide consumer base, making it challenging to achieve a distinct ideology which could achieve a cult-like status. However, Alpro embodies the ideology of making small regular choices with health and environmental benefits, resonating with consumer groups who want to make a conscious effort, without a significant lifestyle change.

Relationship

The *relationship* facet demonstrates how Alpro relates to customers (Kapferer, 2012). When reviewing their social media accounts it can be seen that customer relationships are very product-focused rather than brand focused. With Alpro the product is king, and direct social media interactions with consumers are focused around replying to complaints and answering direct questions, rather than to build rapport and actively engage in conversation (Alpro, 2019b)

Reflection

Upon the analysis of Alpro's communications, it is possible to identify the *reflection* of their consumer. Alpro interacts with its customers as families who care about what they consume. They seek healthy and tasty ingredients, which are convenient and easily accessible, looking for products both to cook with and consume on the go, due to their active lifestyles. Furthermore,

Alpro speaks to the consumers as not only doing good for themselves but also the planet.

Self-image

Alpro consumers consider themselves fit, active and healthy individuals that care about what they put in their bodies. As individuals who live fast-paced and busy lives, consuming Alpro makes them feel good about themselves by making sure they stay healthy without compromising other things that occupy their time such as work, sports or family.

Analysis & Results

Perceived Product Importance

Based on the consumer interviews, the two notable facets of the brand identity prism in regards to perceived product importance were as follows: *Physique* and *culture*.

When questioned on the perceived product importance placed upon both Oatly and Alpro, a recurring facet of the brand identity was *physique*. For both Oatly and Alpro, all the respondents interviewed emphasised the tangible elements of taste and ingredients as important product attributes, which fall under the *physique* facet. For instance *respondent two* stated:

“most important for me is taste ... it is also important that the products are healthy, so no added sugars and stuff like that”

This response mirrors the thoughts and ideas expressed in the other interviews, as all respondents mentioned these two attributes as important. Furthermore, the expressed importance of ingredients appeared to have health-related motivations. The respondents interviewed highlighted the tangible added value of taste as providing enjoyment, a strong motivator for purchasing both brands.

When reviewing the difference in perceived product importance between the two brands one variance was identified. Respondents speaking about Alpro highlighted product range as an important aspect, which could be motivated by freedom of choice in regards to their product purchases.

Culture was identified as being an important brand identity facet regarding perceived product importance. For both Oatly and Alpro, respondents emphasised the importance of the products being ethical, healthy and sustainable in order to fit with their own motives for purchase within the non-dairy product category. *Respondent one* supported this, as when asked about the product category as a whole they stated:

“But then also, the fact that it should be healthy and sustainable. The sustainability part is more something I expect, together with ethical reasons, it's the main reason I buy non-dairy products.”

However, despite the product category being associated with sustainability and ethics, respondents weighted these attributes of culture far more heavily when speaking about the Oatly brand. This is highlighted when *respondent one* was asked about their views on Oatly and stated:

“The fact that they are trying to impact the food industry to become more sustainable is something that I think is important, so naturally, their products also become important for me in that case.”

This aligns with the *culture* facet of Oatly's brand identity prism which focuses on sustainability as a shared core value between the company and consumer. Yet, when the same respondent was asked about Alpro, no mention was made to sustainability or ethics as being motivators for purchase, thus suggesting that the *culture* facet of the brand identity for Alpro does not seem to increase

the interviewed consumers perceived importance of the product.

Brand Sensitivity

The three key facets regarding brand sensitivity were: *Physique, relationship* and *culture*.

Physique as an influential facet of the brand identity prism was previously identified as part of the perceived product importance measure of involvement. Based on the interviews, this facet was also identified as important in brand sensitivity. However, when it comes to brand sensitivity, it was made evident that packaging was a more recurring and pertinent theme than taste, the opposite of perceived product importance. When *respondent two* was asked why Oatly is the preferred brand, they stated the reasons as:

“I have a good experience of Oatly, I like that they are easygoing and funny. Both their packaging and ads are usually funny which I find enjoyable.”

This perception of Oatly's *physique* is in line with the way Oatly uses their packaging for informal communication to differentiate themselves from competitors, which increases the cognitive activity of the consumer during the decision-making process. This aligns with *physique* facet of Oatly as identified in the brand case study which highlighted packaging design as a method used to stand out compared to other products on the shelves.

In contrast, when asked about Alpro, respondents seemed to demonstrate a lower level of brand sensitivity than that for Oatly. The significance of *physique*, in terms of packaging having an influence on brand sensitivity, was highlighted by *respondent two*, who after stating that they would not purchase Alpro if the price increased,

commented: “*Alpro, to me, has a pretty boring packaging*”. This quote reinforces the earlier suggestion that a distinct *physique* through packaging is a factor in deciding between product brands during the consumer decision-making process.

Regarding brand sensitivity, both *relationship* and *culture* were identified as important brand identity facets. *Respondent three* illustrated this notion that relationship and culture are connected in the following statements about Oatly and Alpro accordingly:

“*The reason why I like Oatly and the importance it holds to me because I'm aware of the product, I'm comfortable with it and I've been informed through their commercials, like the positive aspects of it, the fact that is environmentally friendly...*”

“*I'm not too attached to Alpro. I think it's because I'm less aware of the Alpro brand in general, I'm not sure what they stand for, I'm not as sure of what it is that sets them apart from their competitors.*”

These statements reflect the difference in awareness of the brand's ideology between Oatly and Alpro and how it affects the relationship between the interviewed consumer and a brand.

Symbolic Value

The two notable facets of the brand identity prism in regards to the symbolic value of a brand are: *Reflection* and *self-image*.

Reflection can be perceived as the typical consumer of a brand, when questioned about the typical consumer of both Oatly and Alpro there was a general consensus between the respondents. They suggested that for Oatly the typical consumer type would be environmentally conscious and compassionate which was emphasised by

respondent four who stated that people who buy Oatly are:

“*... people who are more conscious about human footprint, people that they won't go to the Friday strike but they will buy Oatly milk, or just to make a statement*”

This statement demonstrates how the perceived typical consumer can become a *reflection* of the brand and its values. Furthermore, this reflection of the brand is similar to the *self-image* of the interviewed consumers, who see themselves as being part of a bigger movement by purchasing Oatly's product. This was emphasised by *respondent one* stating that a reason for buying Oatly is because they want to support their cause.

A consensus amongst respondents was that typical consumers of Alpro are healthy, energetic and functionally orientated. This is supported by *respondent one*, which stated that Alpro's customers would be:

“*someone that doesn't want dairy products but still wants a great product. Someone that lives a healthy lifestyle and cares about what they put in their body. Also maybe someone that cares about calories and their diet*”

This view of Alpro's typical customer emphasises that they are more functionally driven, with a focus on health as a driving factor. *Reflection*, also corresponds with the *self-image* facet of the prism, as respondents tend to purchase Alpro due to psychological benefits such as feeling healthier. This is supported by *respondent three* who described how they felt ‘healthy’ after buying Alpro products.

Emotional Value

The three notable identity facets that create emotional value through feelings and

intangible associations are: *Self-image, culture and relationship.*

The facets of *self-image*, as identified within symbolic value are closely aligned with those which form part of Oatly's emotional value. This is supported by the majority of respondents stating they felt satisfaction from purchasing Oatly products, for instance, *respondent one* commented:

"I feel good and positive. I feel like it's a product and company that I can stand behind and that makes me feel confident or sure in my purchase. It also feels like I've done something that is good and right for the environment. Like I'm a part of the people that at least try to make small changes for a good cause"

On the other hand, the respondents were generally indifferent to Alpro on an emotional level, with only one respondent stating they felt 'healthier' when purchasing Alpro.

Culture and relationship as facets have been identified as having a high impact on emotional value in relation to respondents' feelings about the Oatly brand, through aligning with their stance on the dairy industry. *Respondent two* mirrors these, stating that:

"They care about people knowing what their stance is. It's important for me because then I know we care about the same things ... It gives me a good feeling."

Furthermore, this shows that the culture facet can evoke shared emotions in the transactional relationship between the consumer and the brand. Whereas in response to questions regarding the respondents' feelings towards Alpro, neither culture or relationship was mentioned. This is outlined through the following statement from *respondent two*: *"It doesn't feel like*

Alpro has invested in conveying who they are, at least not to me"

Discussion & Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to examine consumer involvement with non-dairy product brands and to identify the notable facets of the brand identity in a low-involvement product category through primary and secondary research.

Oatly and Alpro had similar perceived product importance in regards to sustainability, health and ethics. However, the differences became apparent in the analysis regarding the symbolic and emotional value towards the brands, with Oatly seemingly evoking more intangible associations and feelings for the consumer than Alpro. For brand sensitivity, there was a marginal difference with Oatly achieving a seemingly higher level of brand sensitivity, this could be attributed to their success in achieving symbolic and emotional value for consumers.

Our findings suggest that *physique* and *culture* are the notable facets of the brand identity for perceived product importance within the non-dairy industry. As expressed in the analysis, taste and ingredients are identified as two important tangible aspects, forming part of the *physique* of both brands. For consumers in this product category, it appears as though these tangible elements are important since they are motivated by nutritional benefits and enjoyment. Although these factors influence involvement, they could be perceived as a prerequisite for competing within the non-dairy product category. Additionally, the ethics and sustainability of the brands aligned with the motives of consumers. Therefore the *culture* facet of the brand

seemingly increased the perceived product value in the consumers' minds.

Our findings suggest that facets that impact the respondents' consideration of product brands are *physique*, *relationship* and *culture*. The pertinent element of *physique* was packaging, with respondents highlighting that Oatly's packaging caused them to consider the product brand and purchasing due to their use of a graphically portrayable informal and laidback packaging style. Whereas Alpro emphasises the functional aspects of their product by focusing on a "clean, modern pack design", alongside a central focus on ingredients and calorie contents.

Additionally, concerning the *relationship* and *culture* facet, it appears as though respondents that have salient relationships with brands and are more aware of their *culture* tend to be more brand sensitive. Thus suggesting, the importance for brands to develop relationships by communicating their core ideology, in order to increase the consideration of the brand in the decision-making process.

For symbolic values, not only were notable facets identified, but these facets were found to differ between the two brands. Respondents predominantly identified symbolic value with the facets of *reflection* and *self-image*. Regarding the *reflection* of the Oatly brand, it can be perceived that the typical consumer was environmentally conscious and compassionate. This aligns with the case study of Oatly, which highlights how they speak to their customers as environmental activists. The perceived psychological benefits associated with the consumption of Oatly's product, in this case, is that consumers feel a sense of pride in taking an environmentally conscious stance through their purchase.

The respondents suggested that Alpro's *reflection* and *self-image* revolve around the aforementioned notion that Alpro is a functional brand, who push a health orientated product. This influences the *reflection* and *self-image* of their consumer base as being healthy individuals seeking a practical product.

Self-image, *culture* and *relationship* are recurring facets regarding consumers' emotional value placed upon brands. The symbolic value of Oatly's products is what seems to evoke an emotional response for the interviewed consumers, due to the alignment of Oatly's *culture* and ideology with that of the consumer, building a *relationship*. This *relationship* is centered around their cult following amongst the social sub-groups of hipsters and vegans, through their stance against the milk industry. Alpro seems to lack in regards to the *relationship* facet, as the respondents did not communicate any affinity towards the brand.

It could be deduced that the comparatively weaker *relationship* between the respondents and Alpro, when juxtaposed with the stronger relationship between respondents and Oatly, illustrates the importance of communicating the core *culture* of a brand. Oatly can be viewed as pursuing a depositioning strategy towards the dairy industry, with a focus on milk in particular. This act of depositioning, and therefore showing strong allegiance with vegan activist groups and a wider cause, could be one of the contributors to the psychological benefit consumers feel when consuming Oatly. In contrast, Alpro has a less polarising stance towards the dairy industry. This could be due to Alpro being owned by Danone, a larger corporation that also produces dairy products. Therefore, they are unable to take a highly negative

stance towards the dairy industry in a way that could gain support from a more activist consumer base.

This is in line with previous research (Arora, 1982; Dholakia, 2001) which emphasise the importance for brands to tie low-involvement products to a significant cause, in order to increase the level of consumer involvement. It seems as though Oatly has successfully achieved this through their culture of being deeply concerned with sustainability. This suggests that Alpro would benefit from identifying a cause that could be aligned with their culture, in order to create symbolic and emotional value for their brand. This illustrates Kapferer's (2012) statement of *culture* being the most important facet of the brand identity since it can be used to increase consumer involvement even in a low-involvement category.

notable identity facets through the perspective of logos, ethos and pathos.

Limitations and Further Research

The limitations of this research include the small sample size and range of interviewees which restricts the author's abilities to make generalisations about a wider consumer perspective. Due to restrictions in sourcing consumers of both Oatly and Alpro, who were willing to give up their time to assist in this research paper, the authors were unable to gather responses from a more diverse range of ages and nationalities.

Recommended future research following this paper is to re-fulfill the methodology, however using an increased sample size of respondents to allow for more representational conclusions to be drawn about consumer involvement. Furthermore, the authors propose that an interesting addition to this research would be to explore Oatly and Alpro's communication of the

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Questions Guide

Perceived Product Importance

What factors are important to you when purchasing a non-dairy product?

How do Oatly meet these needs?

How do Alpro meet these needs?

Are Oatly's products important to you, and why?

Are Alpro's products important to you, and why?

Brand Sensitivity

When buying an non-dairy product do you care about the brand? Do you have a preferred brand?

If Oatly increased their prices, would you still purchase their products?

If Alpro increased their prices would you still purchase their products?

If Oatly wasn't available would you purchase an alternative, or go elsewhere? How much would it bother you, would you be disappointed?

If Alpro wasn't available would you purchase an alternative, or go elsewhere? How much would it bother you, would you be disappointed?

Symbolic Value

What are the personality attributes of someone who would buy Oatly?

How do you feel others perceive you when you buy Oatly? Does this affect your purchasing decision and is it important?

What are the personality attributes of someone who would buy Alpro?

How do you feel others perceive you when you buy Alpro? Does this affect your purchasing decision and is it important?

Emotional Value

When you buy Oatly how do you feel? Why?

When you buy Alpro how do you feel? Why?

How does Oatly make you feel about the category as a whole?

How does Alpro make you feel about the category as a whole?

Appendix 2: Summary of Oatly transcripts

	Perceived product importance	Brand sensitivity	Symbolic value	Emotional value
Physique	<p>R1. "First of all the taste is important"</p> <p>R2. "... happy with the taste.", "so no added sugars", "It's a vegan alternative that doesn't contain any soy which most of Alpros products do and that's important to me because I don't want to drink or eat too much soy"</p> <p>R3. "The flavor is important, something which I actually enjoy eating."</p> <p>R4. "... they don't expire as fast as milk does. That is also very important."</p>	<p>R1. "I have a good experience of Oatly, I like that they are easygoing and funny. Both their packaging and ads are usually funny which I find enjoyable."</p> <p>R2. "Their [Oatly] packaging and ads are usually funny which I find enjoyable"</p> <p>R3. Not mentioned</p> <p>R4. "For me Oatly taste better"*</p>	<p>R: "[packaging] chill yet serious, yet funny"</p> <p>R2. "[packaging] funny"</p> <p>R3. Not mentioned</p> <p>R4. Not mentioned</p>	<p>R1. Not mentioned</p> <p>R2. Not mentioned</p> <p>R3. Not mentioned</p> <p>R4. Not mentioned</p>
Personality	<p>R1. "clever"</p> <p>R2. Not mentioned</p> <p>R3. Not mentioned</p> <p>R4. Not mentioned</p>	<p>R1. Not mentioned</p> <p>R2. "... they are easygoing and funny.", "comical"</p> <p>R3. Not mentioned</p> <p>R4. Not mentioned</p>	<p>R1. "... chill yet serious, yet funny"</p> <p>R2. "funny"</p> <p>R3. Not mentioned</p> <p>R4. Not mentioned</p>	<p>R1. Not mentioned</p> <p>R2. "They care about people knowing what their stance is. It's important for me because then I know we care about the same things ... It gives me a good feeling."</p> <p>R3. Not mentioned</p> <p>R4. Not mentioned</p>
Relationship	<p>R1. "I just find it really convenient and I know I can depend on them when I need some specific non-dairy alternative."</p> <p>R2. Not mentioned</p> <p>R3. Not mentioned</p> <p>R4. Not mentioned</p>	<p>R1. Not mentioned</p> <p>R2. "I have a good experience of Oatly"</p> <p>R3. "The reason why I like Oatly and the importance it holds to me because I'm aware of the product, I'm comfortable with it and I've been informed through their commercials, like the positive aspects of it, the fact that is environmentally friendly..."</p> <p>R4. "Because i trust more Oatly"</p>	<p>R1. --</p> <p>R2. Not mentioned</p> <p>R3. "Oatly definitely. Its because it is comfortable, I've used it for a while, im aware of their products and it makes me comfortable in making that choice"</p> <p>R4. Not mentioned</p>	<p>R1. --</p> <p>R2. "They care about people knowing what their stance is. It's important for me because then I know we care about the same things ... It gives me a good feeling."</p> <p>R3. Not mentioned</p> <p>R4. Not mentioned</p>

		than like Ica's"		
Culture	<p>R1. "But then also, the fact that it should be healthy and sustainable. The sustainability part is more something I expect, together with ethical reasons, it's the main reason I buy non-dairy products."</p> <p>R2. "I perceive Oatly to be environmentally friendly and it seems to be important for them."</p> <p>R3. Not mentioned</p> <p>R4. "Oatly because is swedish made owner, or they were swedish"</p>	<p>R1. "I think what they are doing is important"</p> <p>R2. Something that is important for me as well. That you actually can minimize your carbon footprint by using something that doesn't involve animals and is made in Sweden.</p> <p>R3. "The reason why I like Oatly and the importance it holds to me because I'm aware of the product, I'm comfortable with it and I've been informed through their commercials, like the positive aspects of it, the fact that is environmentally friendly..."</p> <p>R4. Not mentioned</p>	<p>R1. "The fact that they are trying to impact the food industry to become more sustainable is something that I think is important, so naturally, their products also become important for me in that case."</p> <p>R2. Not mentioned</p> <p>R3. "I see a lot more of Oatly and their commercials are usually quite clever and slightly like ... the fact that they sometimes throw targeted ads against milk but they are at the same time clever and well-thought-out so they stay in your mind longer."</p> <p>R4. Not mentioned</p>	<p>R1. "Probably that Oatly has a much more distinct stance in the sustainability questions.", "But Oatly, I feel like they are really trying to make a change, it's not just about the products but also their goals"</p> <p>R2. "They care about people knowing what their stance is. It's important for me because then I know we care about the same things ... It gives me a good feeling."</p> <p>R3. "Oatly is much more clearer with what they stand for,"</p> <p>R4. Not mentioned</p>
Reflection	<p>R1. Not mentioned</p> <p>R2. Not mentioned</p> <p>R3. Not mentioned</p> <p>R4. Not mentioned</p>	<p>R1. Not mentioned</p> <p>R2. Not mentioned</p> <p>R3. Not mentioned</p> <p>R4. Not mentioned</p>	<p>R1. "Someone who is compassionate and caring and isn't afraid of taking a stance. Not only isn't afraid of taking a stance but also wanting to take a stance."</p> <p>R2. "Someone that's young. Maybe 18-40 years old. Someone that doesn't want milk, doesn't have to be because of environmental reasons. It doesn't have to be a vegetarian or vegan person. It can be both people that are vegetarian or vegan but also people that are open to try something new or want to consume fewer animal products. I'd say it's a person that is not conservative but wants new things."</p> <p>R3. "They care about the environment, they are about animal suffering, compassionate would be at the top of the list."</p> <p>R4. "... people who are more conscious about human footprint, people that they won't go to the Friday strike but they will buy Oatly milk, or just to make a statement"</p>	<p>R1. Not mentioned</p> <p>R2. Not mentioned</p> <p>R3. Not mentioned</p> <p>R4. "Healthy"</p>

<p>Self-image</p>	<p>R1. "... their products also become important for me in that case." R2. Not mentioned R3. "honestly want something which I can feel good about buying." R4. Not mentioned</p>	<p>R1. "Other alternatives don't give me the same satisfying feeling as purchasing Oatly." R2. "... someone who seems to take a stance for something good. Something that is important for me as well" R3. Not mentioned R4. Not mentioned</p>	<p>R1 "Hopefully, they see me as someone who cares about our environment. I think it does affect my purchase decision, I mean, I might as well buy a cheaper copy of Oatlys products. But it wouldn't feel right. I want to support their cause. They are pushing for more sustainability in the food industry and I think that is important. To me, it really seems like they genuinely care about sustainability as a company and I do as an individual. So it feels like an obvious decision then" R2. "If it was a couple of years ago, oh that person is probably vegan or vegetarian but today so many kinds of people buy Oatly and its not dependent on diet" R3. "Same as how I perceive Oatly consumer" R4. "... people who are more conscious about human footprint, people that they won't go to the Friday strike but they will buy Oatly milk, or just to make a statement"</p>	<p>R1. "I feel good and positive. I feel like it's a product and company that I can stand behind and that makes me feel confident or sure in my purchase. It also feels like I've done something that is good and right for the environment. Like I'm a part of the people that at least try to make small changes for a good cause" R2. "That I am kind to the environment." R3. "I guess I kinda feel good about myself knowing that it does make a difference" R4. Not mentioned</p>
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Appendix 3: Summary of Alpro transcripts

	Perceived product importance	Brand sensitivity	Symbolic value	Emotional value
Physique	R1. "Some of their products I would probably still buy if they were to increase. Like I said before, there are some products they offer which are hard to find good alternatives" R2. Not mentioned R3. "the flavor is important, something which I actually enjoy eating" R4. "they don't expire as fast as milk does. That is also very important."	R1. "Some of their products I would probably still buy if they were to increase. Like I said before, there are some products they offer which are hard to find good alternatives" R2. "it would bother me if I wasn't able to get the product I was looking for." R3. "I like the taste better" R4. "Alpro because it's soy, and is sweet"	R1. Not mentioned R2. Not mentioned R3. Not mentioned R4. "Well, Alpro is made from soya beans, and soya beans are getting more and more attention that is not good for you?"	R1. "I think their products are good" R2. "Their packaging is boring. It just feels a bit, like dull" R3. Not mentioned R4. Not mentioned
Personality	R1. Not mentioned R2. Not mentioned R3. "Alpros whole idea is that it's supposed to be quick and convenient" R4. Not mentioned	R1. "boring" R2. Not mentioned R3. Not mentioned R4. Not mentioned	R1. "boring" R2. Not mentioned R3. Not mentioned R4. Not mentioned	R1. "they feel more like they are all about their products. Not that I find that to be bad or anything. It's just, they are different in that way I guess" R2. Not mentioned R3. Not mentioned R4. Not mentioned
Relationship	R1. " just find it really convenient and I know I can depend on them when I need some specific non-dairy alternative" R2. Not mentioned R3. Not mentioned R4. Not mentioned	R1. Not mentioned R2. Not mentioned R3. "I'm not too attached to Alpro. I think it's because I'm less aware of the Alpro brand in general, I'm not sure what they stand for, I'm not as sure of what it is that sets them apart from their competitors." R4. Not mentioned	R1. Not mentioned R2. Not mentioned R3. Not mentioned R4. Not mentioned	R1. Not mentioned R2. "It doesn't feel like Alpro has invested in conveying who they are, at least not to me" R3. Not mentioned R4. Not mentioned
Culture	R1. "But then also, the fact that it should be healthy and sustainable. The sustainability part is more something I expect, together with ethical reasons, it's the main reason I buy non-dairy products." R2. Not mentioned R3. "I don't see as much from Alpro so I think that's why their products don't feel as important"	R1. Not mentioned R2. Not mentioned R3. "I'm not too attached to Alpro. I think it's because I'm less aware of the Alpro brand in general, I'm not sure what they stand for, I'm not as sure of what it is that sets them apart from their competitors." R4. Not mentioned	R1. Not mentioned R2. Not mentioned R3. Not mentioned R4. "Alpro feels low key, i don't think about them at all, is like they are always there and is not good for them. But maybe they are bigger in Europe but less known in Europe [than Oatly]."	R1. "I feel like Alpro cares more about creating good products and alternatives to dairy" R2. Not mentioned R3. Not mentioned R4. "But Alpro is not swedish? Is from Belgium"

	R4. Not mentioned			
Reflection	R1. Not mentioned R2. Not mentioned R3. Not mentioned R4. Not mentioned	R1. Not mentioned R2. “ for those who has been vegetarian for many years and want the whole family to eat vegetarian.” R3. Not mentioned R4. Not mentioned	R1. “I’d say someone that doesn’t want dairy products but still wants a great product. Someone that lives a healthy lifestyle and cares about what they put in their body. Also maybe someone that cares about calories and their diet” R2. “People that are vegan or vegetarian or don’t want dairy products. They care about their health and maybe the environment” R3. “someone that doesn’t want dairy products but still wants a great product. Someone that lives a healthy lifestyle and cares about what they put in their body. Also maybe someone that cares about calories and their diet” R4. “When i think, because their name is Alpro? Right?I feel like that’s what vegan people that ski in the Alps are drinking”	R1.”I’d say someone that doesn’t want dairy products but still wants a great product. Someone that lives a healthy lifestyle and cares about what they put in their body. Also maybe someone that cares about calories and their diet.” R2. Not mentioned R3. Not mentioned R4.”someone who is a bit more fancier, I feel like Alpro is more fancy than Oatly.”
Self-image	R1. Not mentioned R2. Not mentioned R3. Not mentioned R4. Not mentioned	R1. Not mentioned R2. Not mentioned R3. Not mentioned R4. Not mentioned	R1. “Maybe that I don’t drink dairy products because I’m vegetarian or vegan. Or just that I like their products, that I care about taste. I’d don’t really influence my purchasing decision. It doesn’t matter to me, to be honest” R2. “that i’m a vegan or vegetarian. I care about my health and maybe the environment” R3. “Alpro I think more of an active lifestyle. Maybe something like energetic and optimistic” R4. “Maybe, Oh! She is buying Alpro, why she doesn’t buy Oatly?! Because Oatly like locally produced”	R1. Not mentioned R2. “It doesn’t feel like Alpro has invested in conveying who they are, at least not to me” R3. I feel like I’m being healthy and perhaps also environmentally friendly, but I’m not sure R4.”I feel healthier”

