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Value Is in the Eyes of the Beholder

A quantitative study about the moderating effect of consumers' need for uniqueness in the relationship between consumers' brand stereotypes, brand emotions and perceived emotional value of corporate brands.

by

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Abstract

Title: Value is in the eye of the beholder – A quantitative study about the moderating effect of consumers' need for uniqueness in the relationship between consumers' brand stereotypes, brand emotions and perceived emotional value of corporate brands.

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Keywords: Consumer behaviour, Brand stereotypes, Brand perception, Brand emotions, Perceived consumer value, Consumers need for uniqueness, Corporate brands

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to quantitatively investigate the moderating effect of consumers' need for uniqueness (NFU) in the relationship between perceived brand stereotypes, brand emotions, and perceived customer value.

Methodology: The study follows a quantitative research method with a sample-survey research design, where hypotheses have been developed supported by a theoretical framework. Data was collected from a non-probability sample through an online questionnaire, and results have been analysed in SmartPLS.

Theoretical Perspectives: The theoretical framework is based on the theory *Brand as Intentional Agents Framework* (BIAF) and outlined perceived stereotype dimensions, brand emotions and response in terms of consumers perceived emotional value. Besides, the thesis considered the *Theory of Uniqueness* to understand consumers' need for uniqueness (NFU).

Empirical Foundation: The data collected from 328 survey responses from Swedish consumers collected from an online questionnaire have been analysed to examine the relationships in the theoretical framework.

Conclusion: The findings show a certain relationship between perceived stereotypes of *intention* and *ability* and the brand emotions of *admiration*, *pity*, *envy* and *contempt* for Swedish consumers' with low NFU. Similarly, for consumers with high NFU but not in the relationship between *intention* and emotions *contempt* and *admiration*. The relationship between *intention* and *ability* and brand emotions *admiration* and *contempt* differs for consumers with low versus high NFU. In contrast, the relationships between brand stereotypes of *ability* and *intention* and brand emotions of *pity* and *envy* are similar for consumers with low versus high NFU. In addition, the emotion of *admiration* is desirable to achieve for both consumers with low and high NFU since this emotion tends to elicit a high perceived emotional value.

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1 Introduction

The introductory chapter presents the background information and introduces central concepts. It also introduces the literature review of brand stereotyping research followed by the problem definition and rationale for the study, which ends with presenting the purpose and research question. Finally, presenting limitations and the thesis outline.

1.1 Background

"Oh, do not forget to bring Coca-Cola with you on your way home", your friend called out from the kitchen door as you were heading out of your apartment. "Yes, I will bring our old friend with me", you answered as you scrunched your face into an odd smile and closed the door. As you swiftly went down the stairs, you started to think about the way she said it. It almost sounded as if you were going to meet up with another friend. While that would have been nice in another context, you knew that your friend was not referring to that. But you also knew that your answer, although quickly shouted from the door, could not be blamed for your hasty style. Coca-Cola was your friend, and you felt that it was right to greet him as such. Because as you thought of him, you saw that old friend always giving a burst of good laughter, fully able to contribute to the good mood in the room he entered. In a way, you admired him, and if you were to pick a player for your team, you knew you would pick him over again. Such a thought made you laugh nervously as you took the step out onto the main street and the voice of the traffic became like a background tune.

Suddenly the schoolbook example had come to life; brands are more than just brands. They are often more of a relationship partner, trying to establish partnerships with consumers to attain a favourable position in their hearts and minds (Bertilsson, 2017; Sethna & Blythe, 2019; Fournier & Alvarez, 2012). In a sense, it draws from the assumption that people relate to brands similarly to how people relate to other people, implying that brands can acquire human-like attributes and become equally worthy relationship partners (Fournier, 2009; Fournier, Breazeale & Avery, 2015). As you walked down the street, you could not help getting the extent of it as you watched a woman leaning on her BMW. Just a car for some, but for her, it was a rock to lean on, a partner in crime. An intriguing thought, and not least emotionally charged because, like when we are in love, we

can get emotionally attached to our beloved brands (Albert, Merunka & Valette-Florence, 2008; Bagozzi, Batra & Ahuvia, 2012). Interestingly, companies have gained more power and responsibility (Veresiu & Giesler, 2018) in a capitalist society (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 2015). However, like love, consumers may not come easily. The most competitive companies are those considered to attain a profound understanding of the consumer (Gordon, Grüntges, Smith & Staack, 2016; Driest, Sthanunathan & Weed, 2016), and consumer insights may shed light on favourable perceptions.

Stereotypes guide the way individuals perceive others by generalising beliefs (Tajfel, 1981; Macrae, Milne & Bodenhausen, 1994) and researchers argue that consumers similarly also tend to simplify their understandings of brands (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012; Ivens et al., 2015; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Interestingly, when crossing the crosswalk, you found yourself creating your own perception of the people walking towards you based on their physical appearance. Likewise, you did the same when observing brands featured on the billboards as you made your way to the store. For marketers, brand perception is key to finding a place in consumers' worldviews (Sethna & Blythe, 2019). Brand stereotypes are a way of perceiving brands to create an efficient way to organise their worldview of brands (Foxall, 2014; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Having the right place in consumers' minds is increasingly crucial since brands risk getting lost in the myriad of information consumers take part in every day (Dahlén, Lange & Rosengren, 2017). Besides, stereotyping is unconsciously occurring, making brand stereotyping essential for marketers to understand since the perception highly guides our emotions (Martinez, 2012) and behaviours towards brands (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Hence, it seems ever so relevant for brands to develop a fine-grained understanding of the implication of brand stereotypes as perceptions that seemingly implicates consumer behaviour.

While acknowledging how brands actively seek out consumers preferences, the expression that it takes two to tango' as a commonplace expression for relationship partners might not be as far-fetched for the way brands and consumers act. Marketing practitioners are acknowledging that consumers are not only guided by brands functional perks, but emotional benefits are also important (Harvard Business Review, 2021; Waytz, 2019). When thinking about one extreme example, you picture your Amazon Alexa back home, which becomes human in everything from its voice to the name, providing you with weather forecasts and jokes about the cookie monster.

Humanising in this sense and playing on stereotypes is one strategy to facilitate favourable emotions and establish brand relationships with consumers (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017). From another perspective, CEOs globally recognise the importance of better understanding their consumers to become more relevant (Wollan, Barton, Ishikawa & Quiring, 2017), especially important in the twenty-first century where consumers trust in brands are declining (Rogers, 2020; Aaker, Garbinsky, & Vohs, 2012; Kirk & Rifkin, 2020). However, while thirsting for that dear old Coca-Cola, you could not imagine a time when your admired friend did not understand what you value.

Seemingly, marketers and brand managers globally regard working with consumer insights as a top priority to gain the capabilities needed to increase brand adoption and financial performance (Moorman, 2020). In parallel, consumers are increasingly demanding that brands become more responsible for societal issues (Sustainable brand index, 2021) and create relevant value offers (PricewaterhouseCooper, 2021; Veenstra, 2021). The consumer's perceived value can be defined as the "consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product (or service) based on perceptions of what is given" (Zeithaml, 1998, p. 14) and is valuable to identify for brands to build competitive advantage (Gallarza, Gil-Saura & Holbrook, 2011; Wang, Lo, & Yang, 2004).

Notably, while brands try to create value propositions that are attractive to broad market segments and appeal to consumers' selves, consumers have a need to be distinct (Vignoles, Chryssochoou & Breakwell, 2000; Abosag, Ramadan, Baker & Jin, 2020). Especially in individualistic cultures like the western world, where there is a greater need for the manifestation of uniqueness (Snyder & Lynn, 2012) which is defined as "the trait of pursuing differences relative to others through the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods to develop and enhance one's self-image and social image" (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001, p. 52). You realized that there might be more to the story and that your way of acting towards Coca-Cola might be reflected in the way you stereotype and feel towards this dear old friend based on who you are.

After entering the almost empty store and heading for the soda section, you suddenly heard a voice saying, "hello stranger" and a penetrating smell of the person's latest cigarette. You gazed at the stranger until you realized you had met your neighbour. She was a sweet neighbour, and you did not mind her company until you asked her if she also was there to buy Coca-Cola. She said, "Oh thanks, I do not enjoy that brand; it makes me feel like everyone else. I will stick to my admired

Marlboro. She always keeps me on top of life". It came as a surprise to you. How could she admire a brand that you detested? In a sense, today's consumers are exposed to more people than before because of digital platforms (Kirk & Rifkin, 2020), and consumers who want to be distinct often boycott popular brands (Simonson & Nowlis, 2000) to stay different, like your Marlboro smoking neighbour. Maybe she admired that brand because it helped her stay different from the general public. Evidentially, brands like Marlboro that are stereotyped as troubled (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012) still manage to be a successful multi-billion-dollar brand (Forbes, 2020). Accordingly, consumers might stereotype, feel, and value brands differently.

There seems to be a need for actors to get a more in-depth understanding of consumer behaviour (Saunders, 2020), for example, the implication from a consumer's uniqueness needs when forming perceptions like stereotyping, forming emotions, and responding towards a brand. Understanding how consumers' characteristics influence other elements is a way of understanding the consumers, which is important for marketers to enhance important brand characteristics (Mark & Pearson, 2001) in a world where consumers are becoming more selective about their choice of brands (Armstrong, Kotler & Opresnik, 2016). Besides, it might bring more insights into how to remain valuable for consumers both after and during the pandemic, which is advantageous since value becomes more paramount in volatile times (Barr, 2020). Not least since consumers in 2021 observed to demand increased value and relevant offers from brands (PricewaterhouseCooper, 2021; Veenstra, 2021). Therefore, if companies want to remain relevant and trigger favourable emotions, there is a need to consider the possible relationship between consumers' brand stereotypes, brand emotions, and the value brands bring to the table for consumers. You smiled at that thought while grabbing the cool hand of your dear old friend Coca-Cola.

1.2 Literature Review

To understand the phenomenon of how consumers stereotype brands more in-depth, a literature review on brand stereotyping was performed to outline the current state of research and the potential for future research. The articles' selection was retrieved from the academic search engines Scopus and Lubsearch through search queries "brand stereotype" and "brand stereotyping". Only peer-reviewed articles published in academic journals with an Academic Journal Score of 3 or 4 on a 4 - point scale was considered to narrow down the results. The Academic journal score was retrieved from the AJG journal guide (Academic Journal Guide 2018, 2018). After that, we tried to balance the most cited works and publication year to outline the influential work among the 48 articles we obtained 17. Consequently, we ended up with articles on brand stereotyping illustrated in the matrix (see. Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Literature matrix containing most relevant articles published on brand stereotyping.

Article	Year	Main hypotheses	Research design/sample	Main findings
Connors et al, <i>Journal of Marketing</i>	2021	In contrast to previous research, it was tested if all kinds of brands benefit from creating strong brand relationships. The hypotheses are that brands benefit differently depending on what kind of psychological distance there is between the consumer and the brand. However, if the consumer has strong stereotypes about the evaluated brand the psychological distance will be lesser.	The study connected to how stereotypes of warmth and competence moderates psychological distance included participants recruited in the US with Amazon Mechanical Turk tool (N=194).	It was observed that brands with strongly formed stereotypes moderates the psychological distance in such way that marketing adjusted to the psychological distance of consumers have less effect than brands without stereotypes of warmth and competence.
Pantano, <i>Journal of Business Research</i>	2021	Luxury brands using negative stereotypes to create a viral burst effect will result in long term negative evaluations of the brand, so called brand hate.	Data was collected through scraping comments on social media posts promoting the brand Dolce & Gabana with negative stereotypes.	The short emotional burst surrounding the analysed campaign was observed to have long term negative consequences for Dolce & Gabana in the Chinese market.
Kolbl et al., <i>Journal of Business Research</i>	2020	Perceived brand globalness (PBG) is positively associated with brand stereotype competence and warmth but stronger on competence than warmth. Perceived brand localness (PBL) is positively associated with brand stereotype competence and warmth but stronger on warmth than competence. Competence and warmth will positively impact consumer perceived value above the impact of PBG and PBL. Brand stereotype competence will have stronger impact on functional than emotional and social value. Brand stereotype warmth will have stronger impact on emotional and social value than functional value.	Study 1: Questionnaire, participants invited by research collaborators in Slovenia (N=203) Study 2: Questionnaire, participants invited by research collaborators in Bosnia (N=192)	Brand stereotypes of warmth and competence holds above PBG and PBL effects on consumer perceived value, which implies that stereotype content works as signals of value to consumers. Brands perceived as competent offer perceived functional value while brands perceived as warm offer both functional and emotional value. In a developed country brand warmth offers social value while in a developing country brand competence offers social value. While cross-links between PBL, warmth and competence in both developed and developing countries cross-links between PBG, competence and warmth was only observed in the developed country.

Zhang et al., <i>Journal of Consumer Behaviour</i>	2020	<p>Study 1: Brand position (popular vs. distinctiveness) moderates the effect on brand attitude</p> <p>Study 2: Warmth mediates the interaction effect of anthropomorphism and brand attitude</p> <p>Competence mediates the interaction effect of anthropomorphism and brand position on brand attitude.</p>	<p>Study 1: Questionnaire, University students (N=191)</p> <p>Study 2: Questionnaire, University students in china (N=142)</p>	<p>If a brand is positioned as popular, anthropomorphism strategies have an effect. If brand is positioned as distinctive, anthropomorphism strategies have no effect.</p>
Zhang, Zheng & Zhang, <i>International Journal of Advertising</i>	2020	<p>Study 1: Consumers will evaluate a brand more positively when it is endorsed by a man depicted as having high warmth than by a male of low warmth. There will be no effect when the brand is endorsed by a woman.</p> <p>Study 2: When primed with an interdependent self-construal, a brand will be more favourably evaluated when endorsed by a man of high warmth than one of low. There will be no effect when the brand is primed with an independent self-construal.</p> <p>Study 3: A functional brand will be favourably evaluated when endorsed by a man depicted as having high warmth than by a male of low warmth. There will be no effect when the evaluated brand is categorized as a prestigious brand.</p>	<p>Study 1: Undergraduates participated (N=216)</p> <p>Study 2: Undergraduates participated (N=125)</p> <p>Study 3: Undergraduates participated (N=141)</p>	<p>Study 1: Results were in line with stated hypotheses, namely that consumers evaluate brands more favourably when they are endorsed by males of high warmth.</p> <p>Study 2: Results were in line with stated hypotheses, namely that consumers evaluate brands more favourably when consumers are primed with an interdependent self-construal and the brand is endorsed by a man of high warmth.</p> <p>Study 3: Results were in line with stated hypotheses, namely that consumers evaluate functional brands more favourably when endorsed by a man of high warmth.</p>
Kolbl, Arslanagic-Kalajdzic & Diamantopoulos, <i>Journal of Business Research</i>	2019	<p>Perceived brand globalness of a brand will positively affect stereotypes of both competence and warmth but will have the strongest effect on competence. Additionally, perceived brand localness of a brand will positively affect stereotypes of competence and warmth but will have the strongest effect on warmth. Both stereotypes will have a positive effect on consumer brand interaction.</p>	<p>Study 1: Questionnaire, participants were consumers based in a developed country, Austria (N=243)</p> <p>Study 2: Questionnaire, participants were invited by research collaborators in Bosnia, a developing country (N=95)</p>	<p>Both studies showed similar results, providing support that perceived brand localness induces a brand with warmth and additionally that warmth has a positive effect on consumer brand interaction. However, perceived brand globalness was not observed to induce warmth when performing the analysis in a developed country, and in both contexts, competence was not seen to positively affect consumer brand identification.</p>
Davettas & Halkias, <i>International Marketing Review</i>	2019	<p>Study 1: Perceived brand globalness (PBG) are stereotyped more by <i>ability</i> than perceived brand localness (PBL). PBL are stereotyped more by <i>intention</i> than PBG</p> <p>Study 2: PBL and PBG have a positive effect on perceived warmth and competence respectively.</p> <p>Globalness-induced competence has a positive effect on <i>intention</i> to purchase the brand and a negative effect on <i>intention</i> to switch the brand.</p> <p>Localness-induced warmth has a positive effect on <i>intention</i> to purchase the brand and a negative effect on <i>intention</i> to switch from the brand.</p>	<p>Study 1: Experimental design, consumers (N=134)</p> <p>Study 2: Questionnaire, Consumers (N=328)</p>	<p>PBG brands are mainly characterised with <i>ability</i> while PBL brands are characterised as <i>intentional</i>. If a brand is localness induced with warmth the brand will experience positive effects, but globalness induced competence may both assist and hurt a brand.</p>
Antonetti & Maklan, <i>Psychology and Marketing</i>	2016	<p>Brand user groups perceived as ethical and altruistic will be stereotyped as warm, which in extension positively influences feelings of <i>admiration</i> for this group and supports imitation behaviour. However, consumer groups stereotyped as warm may not influence feelings of <i>envy</i>, another emotion that is important considering imitation behaviour. Moreover, consumer groups stereotyped as warm may create trouble for brands to get other consumers to adopt the brand.</p>	<p>Study 1: Individuals were asked to evaluate brand users of a number of well-known brands. Respondents were recruited through Amazon MTurk (N=195).</p> <p>Study 2: Individuals were asked to evaluate brand user personas created by the researchers. Respondents were recruited by using Amazon MTurk (N=200).</p>	<p>Brand users that have a well-defined stereotype of warmth seems to create a social barrier towards others adopting the brand.</p>
Ivens et al., <i>Psychology and Marketing</i>	2015	<p>Stereotype traits of <i>ability</i> and <i>intentions</i> correlates with unilateral feelings of <i>admiration</i> and <i>contempt</i> and ambivalent feelings of <i>pity</i> and <i>envy</i>. Univalent emotions will have a greater effect on attitudinal and behavioural related outcomes than unilateral feelings.</p>	<p>Empirical study. A sample was based on students attending a Swiss university (N=711).</p>	<p>Brands perceived as having high warmth and competence was observed to generate feelings of <i>admiration</i>. Admired brands were also seen to create positive attitudes and behavioural outcomes.</p>

Bennet, Hill & Oleksiuk, <i>Journal of Public Policy and Marketing</i>	2013	Consumers that are members of minority groups will share similar perceptions of warmth and competence. Their warmth perception will significantly differ from majority groups, but their perception of competence will be the same.	Questionnaire. A nationally representative sample was recruited (N=1000)	Consumers of minority groups perception of warmth differs from consumers of majority groups to a greater degree compared to their perception of competence, which was observed to be more similar between the two groups. The researchers have not been able to fully establish connections between <i>contempt</i> , <i>envy</i> and <i>pity</i> .
Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, <i>Journal of Consumer Psychology</i>	2012	Brands perceived as having good <i>intentions</i> towards the general public will also be perceived as warm. Meanwhile, brands perceived as having high <i>ability</i> will also be perceived as competent. Brands rated as well intended and/or having high <i>ability</i> will show a higher purchase intent and brand loyalty than brands perceived as unable and ill-intended.	Experimental design. Adult participants recruited online	Brands perceived as well intended and brands perceived as having high <i>ability</i> are perceived as warm and competent respectively. Both forms of perceptions enjoy higher purchase <i>intention</i> and brand loyalty.
Fournier & Alvarez, <i>Journal of Consumer Psychology</i>	2012	Authors propose a couple of future research areas for the BIAF framework including how to investigate the process of anthropomorphism and how it is infused with <i>intentional</i> agency and further research on of the role of consumers not only as perceivers but also as relationship agents.	Research dialogue	
Aaker, Garbinsky & Vohs, <i>Journal of Consumer Psychology</i>	2012	Brands enjoy a boost of purchase intent when being perceived as both warm and competent.	Questionnaire, online recruited adults (N=408)	A combination of warmth and competence is ideal for brands, making them admired and being placed in the "golden quadrant".
Davies & Chun, <i>European Journal of Marketing</i>	2012	The higher the average age of company's employees is the more competent the brand will be perceived as. This will also lower the perception of enterprise of the brand. Age of employees will also correlate with the age of satisfied customers.	Questionnaire. Customers of four British fashion retailers (N=964), and custom facing staff of these retailers (N=424)	Customer facing staff of higher average age creates a perception of them as being competent but not as innovative as customer facing staff of lower average age. Customers indicate higher satisfaction when a brands customer facing staff is in the same age range as them, indicating that brands should use staff similarly aged as their target group.
Bennet & Hill, <i>Journal of Consumer Psychology</i>	2012	Stereotype traits connected to brands are moderated by demographic variables.	Internet survey, sample of nationally representative panel was recruited (N=1024).	Respondents of higher age and higher education was seen to perceive brands as less warm as compared to younger respondents with a lower education.
Aaker, Vohs & Mogilner, <i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	2010	Study 1: Non-profits will score higher on traits related to warmth as compared to for-profits. For profit organizations will score higher on traits connected to competence. Study 2-3: Consumers will have higher <i>intention</i> to purchase from a for profit organisation. Competence will mediate willingness to buy.	Study 1: Experimental design, undergraduate students from the US (N=127) Study 2: Experimental design, undergraduate students from the US (N=125) Study 3: Experimental design, national sample (N=154)	Non-profit organisations are seen as more warm but less competent as for-profit organisations. Competence was observed to be mediating consumers' willingness to buy products.
Liu & Johnson, <i>Journal of Advertising</i>	2002	Prove the presence of an automatic country of origin effect, supposed to be activated by COO cues.	Experimental design, members from not named large organisation (N=96)	Automatic country of origin effect was found to be present, automatically activated country stereotype was activated despite interference of

1.2.1 Brand stereotypes

The research in brand stereotyping relates to brand perception (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012) and is also considered a part of consumer behaviour (Aaker, Vohs & Mogilner, 2010). The research within the field draws from insights from social perception and brand relationship literature (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012). In doing so, researchers in brand stereotyping illustrate how consumers stereotype categories of brands similarly to how they do with other groups of people (Aaker, Garbinsky & Vohs, 2012; Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012; Ivens et al., 2015). Fournier and Alvarez (2012) argue that the reason for this is that consumers anthropomorphise brands which means that they attribute human-like characteristics to brands. Some researchers use brand stereotypes and brand personality interchangeably (Davies & Chun, 2012), arguing that they are closely related because of their common roots in social psychology, where consumers view brands as human-like. Others highlight that the target focus is what differentiates them (Kolbl et al., 2020). Kervyn, Fiske and Malone (2012) explain that brand personality focuses on what a brand is and can be a valuable tool to help to find specific characteristics of an individual brand; brand stereotypes are based on social perception and enable researchers to understand how brands seem.

Researchers have tried to understand how brand stereotypes relate to other consumer behaviours. Aaker, Vohs and Mogilner (2010) showed that non-profit and for-profit organisations are stereotyped differently and that the way consumers stereotyped brands influenced their purchase *intention*. Kervyn, Fiske and Malone (2012) advanced their findings by examining how consumers stereotyped brands as perceptions affect brand emotions, loyalty, and behavioural *intention*. Ivens et al. (2015) advance this knowledge by illustrating that emotional responses to stereotypes affect attitudinal and behavioural *intentions*. Further, Kolbl et al. (2020) argue that brand stereotypes influence consumers' perceived value, which is an essential predictor of behavioural *intention*. Taken together, the research in brand stereotyping has shown that the brand stereotypes that consumers form influences their brand emotions and, in turn, consumers responses. However, some consider the chain of relationship between stereotypes, emotions, and response and some only the relationships between brand stereotyping and responses.

Studies regarding brands and their stereotypes have also been used to examine smaller brand-connected entities and how they affect brands as a whole. Davies and Chun (2012) found that the perceived average age at a company made them subject to stereotyping by their customers. Besides, Antonetti & Maklan (2016) found that potential consumers stereotype of brands' customers can hinder brand adoption. In advertising, found Zhang, Zheng and Zhang (2020) that featuring male endorses depicted with traditionally female characteristics made the examined brand more likely to be depicted as warm than if it was endorsed by an actual female. Further, (Pantano, 2021) studied the backlash experienced by brands that use negative stereotypes in advertising. In international marketing has a brands or products country of origin effect seen influence actors' stereotypes (Liu & Johnson, 2005) which researchers advanced to find that a brands localness and globalness also influence consumers brand stereotypes (Kolbl et al., 2020; Davvetas & Halkias, 2019; Kolbl, Arslanagic-Kalajdzic & Diamantopoulos, 2019). In brand positioning Zhang, Li, Ye, Qin and Zhong (2020) concludes that brands positioned as popular in contrast to distinct, benefit from being perceived as human-like because they create stronger emotional stereotypes.

Additionally, some researchers try to find moderating effects of how brands are stereotyped and what implications it may have for marketers. Some potentially moderating variables that have been put forward are psychographic (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012) and demographic moderators (Bennet & Hill, 2012). For example, Bennet, Hill and Oleksiuk (2013) found that consumers that are a part of minority groups stereotype brands differently than majority part consumers, especially when examining emotional responses. However, Connors, Khamitov, Thomson and Perkins (2021) notes that consumers will only form strong brand relationships with a small number of brands, and brands with strong attached stereotypes have a weaker *ability* to nurture multiple types of brand relationships.

In summary, the research topic on brand stereotypes has extended to research domains that consider consumers behaviour. However, based on the literature review and the need for actors to understand the consumer's perspective it is valuable to synthesise the current literature to expose limitations and avenues for research.

1.2.2 Literature synthesis

The prior research in brand stereotyping has enabled researchers to explore how consumers' perceptions and relationships to brands resemble how individuals perceive and relate to other human beings. Researchers have mainly focused on how brands are stereotyped and the response they get from consumers (Aaker, Vohs & Mogilner, 2010; Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012; Aaker, Garbinsky & Vohs, 2012; Ivens et al., 2015; Davvetas & Halkias, 2019; Zhang et al., 2020; Kolbl et al., 2020; Connors et al., 2020). Although more limited, some researchers have examined brand stereotypes while considering the influence of consumers' characteristics like demographic moderators (Bennet & Hill, 2012) and minority group belonging (Bennet, Hill and Oleksiuk, 2013). Although, researchers have also acknowledged that there may be psychographic attributes as well (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012). Therefore, the small number of articles on this topic calls for more research examining the consumer perspective more in-depth.

In support of this is the common theme that researchers expressed a need for taking a more in-depth look at the influence of consumer characteristics when understanding the influence of brand stereotypes on other constructs. It is both expressed by researchers considering consumer characteristics (Bennet, Hill & Oleksiuk, 2013; Bennet & Hill, 2012) and the researchers that do not take this into explicit consideration (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012; Connors et al., 2020; Pantano, 2021; Kolbl et al., 2020; Kolbl, Arslanagic-Kalajdzic & Diamantopoulos, 2019; Zhang et al., 2020; Davvetas & Halkias, 2019; Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Zhang, Zheng & Zhang, 2020). In essence, previous researchers examining the relationship can be regarded to assume that consumers are passive agents, neglecting to consider their identity expression. For instance, Zhang et al. (2020) regard consumers' uniqueness needs as a personality trait to be a fruitful avenue for future researchers. Hence, consumers' uniqueness need could be a moderating variable that might affect the literature's established relationship between stereotypes, emotions, and consumers' responses.

Furthermore, while previous studies have considered the relationship between brand stereotypes, brand emotions and consumer responses (Aaker, Garbinsky & Vohs, 2012; Ivens et al., 2015; Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012; Antonetti & Maklan, 2016), most studies focused on connecting brand stereotypes to brand outcomes (Aaker, Vohs & Mogilner, 2010; Kolbl et al., 2020, Davvetas

& Halkias, 2019; Davies & Chun, 2012; Zhang, Zheng & Zhang, 2012; Zhang et al., 2020; Kolbl, Arslanagic-Kalajdzic & Diamantopoulos, 2019). Hence, to gain a more nuanced understanding, it could be valuable to consider all three constructs, brand stereotypes, brand emotions and consumer response, in combination with moderating for a consumer characteristic.

Moreover, current research has previously focused on how brand stereotypes influence various outcomes such as increased loyalty and behavioural *intention* (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012; Aaker, Garbinsky & Vohs, 2012) and positive attitudes (Ivens et al., 2015). The most recent advance is the effect brand stereotypes have on consumers' perceived value (Kolbl et al., 2020). It would arguably be valuable to explore this avenue further and advance the current literature in brand stereotyping by considering the relationship between brand stereotypes, brand emotions and consumers perceived value. Thus, the current research paves the way for the gaps in considering the moderating effect from consumers' individual characteristics, such as consumers' uniqueness needs, in the relationship between perceived brand stereotypes, brand emotions and consumers perceived emotional value.

1.3 Problem definition and rationale

As the literature review shows, the brand stereotyping field has been growing continuously and observed that brand stereotypes as perceptions can predict outcomes such as favourable brand emotions, attitudes, or behaviours. In contrast, little research has been carried out to understand potential moderators of the relationship between brand stereotypes, brand emotions and consumer responses. In support of this is the common theme that researchers request a deeper understanding of moderating variables such as consumers' psychographics, like consumers uniqueness needs, when understanding theoretical frameworks connected to brand stereotyping. Concludingly, this signals a well-defined opening in the current literature that is important to investigate.

Furthermore, examining the potential moderating effect from consumers' uniqueness needs as an individual characteristic in the relationship between perceived brand stereotypes, brand emotions and consumers perceived emotional value offers interesting findings for both marketing academics

and practitioners. For academics, findings from this study could help increase the understanding of how brand stereotypes affect brand emotions and its effect on what value consumers perceive from brands plus the role of consumers' uniqueness needs. Results could also provide marketing practitioners with actionable insights on how they can create relevant value offers for desired consumer segments, for example, help to define what source material to work with to increase beneficial brand emotions. By advancing current insights, both practitioners and academics could get a more holistic view of the relationships, and there might be novel insights that could alter the way they approach consumers and understand the relationship between brand stereotypes, emotions and the value consumers gain.

The results of this study aim to provide more depth to the research field of brand stereotyping. As revealed by the literature review, the research field of brand stereotyping is becoming increasingly wide. We believe that research like this can uncover moderators who will contribute with a deeper understanding of stereotypes, consumer behaviour and established theory in brand stereotyping. Additionally, including multiple constructs such as brand emotions and perceived value will further contribute to an increase of depth. As a result, we expect to answer the need to understand the influence of consumer characteristics in the brand stereotyping literature and the broader realm of brand perception.

Arguably, this research area is important because stereotyping is a natural cognitive function, and individuals pursue different identity projects that influence their choice of brands. Consumer identity projects such as distinctiveness from others are increasingly relevant to understand since individuals try to differentiate themselves in the global digital public. Perhaps even more relevant for individualistic cultures like Sweden with a high percentage of internet usage. Besides, understanding how to leverage underlying relationships between stereotypes, emotions, and customers' perceived value can be valuable for companies trying to attain a more robust relationship by bringing more relevant offers to the table for consumers.

1.3.1 Research purpose

The purpose of this study is to quantitatively investigate the moderating effect of consumers' need for uniqueness (NFU) in the relationship between perceived brand stereotypes, brand emotions, and perceived customer value. In doing so, we are studying the relationships in the *Brands as Intentional Agents' Framework* (BIAF) for consumers with higher versus lower uniqueness needs. Hence, the thesis aims to enable a more fine-grained understanding for what the relationships are between perceived brand stereotypes, brand emotions and perceived value for brands. Ultimately, we formulate the following research question:

- *What is the relationship between brand stereotypes, brand emotions and consumers' perceived value when moderated by consumers uniqueness needs?*

1.4 Research Limitations

The limitations act as the frame to explore and answer the research question. Hence, this section outlines the frame transparently so that the reader can consider this while taking part in the study. For instance, the study limits itself to studying Swedish consumers. The reason for this is threefold. First, to specify our target groups, it is limited to include only Swedish citizens. Second, previous studies have concluded that there might be cultural differences between different consumer groups (Davies, Rojas-Méndez, Whelan, Mete & Loo, 2018; Muniz & Marchetti, 2012), which consumers' citizenship might influence. Third, no research to our knowledge has conducted a study like this one with results from Swedish consumers. Furthermore, the study limits itself to Swedish consumers between the age of 18-75 years old. The main reason for this is that these consumers are within reach of this study regarding resources and without physical contacts since above fifty per cent of these age groups are active daily on Facebook.

Moreover, the study is limited to studying corporate brands that are defined as "the visual, verbal and behavioural expression of an organization's unique business model and the communication interface between the organization and its stakeholders" (p.17). However, the study does not limit itself to industry-specific brands since the chosen brands are not relevant for the study's purpose

since it focuses on the general relationships between constructs in the theoretical framework. Furthermore, the study is limited to the brand perception framework *Brands as Intentional Agents Framework* (BIAF) from Kervyn, Fiske and Malone (2012), and we regard *intention* and *ability* as perceived stereotype dimensions and *admiration*, *pity*, *envy*, and *contempt* as the brand emotions. In addition, the study limits itself viewing consumer's perceived value as the consumers' perceived emotional value defined by Walsh, Shiu and Hassan (2014) "[e]motional value refers to mental or psychological needs of consumers and the utility they derive from the feelings or affective states that a product generates" (p. 261). The study also limits itself to the definition of the consumers need for being unique (NFU) as "the trait of pursuing differences relative to others through the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one's self-image and social image" (Tian, Bearden & Hunter, 2001, p. 52) measures by the consumer's avoidance of similarity.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

The six chapters in figure 1.1 illustrates the outline of this thesis. The introductory chapter introduces the phenomena and reviews the current research as a basis for the problem outline, the research purpose, the research question, and the research limitations. The second chapter outlines the chosen theories and the theoretical framework related to answering the purpose and research question. The third chapter contains an overview of the research approach, research design and data analysis approach, which enables us to answer the research question of this study. The fourth chapter summarizes the results from the empirical data analysis; hence the results from the hypothesis testing. The fifth chapter contains a discussion of the results from the data analysis concerning the purpose of this study, previous studies, and theories. Finally, the sixth chapter entails presenting the conclusions, the theoretical, practical, and societal implications as well as the limitations in this study as a departure point for future studies.

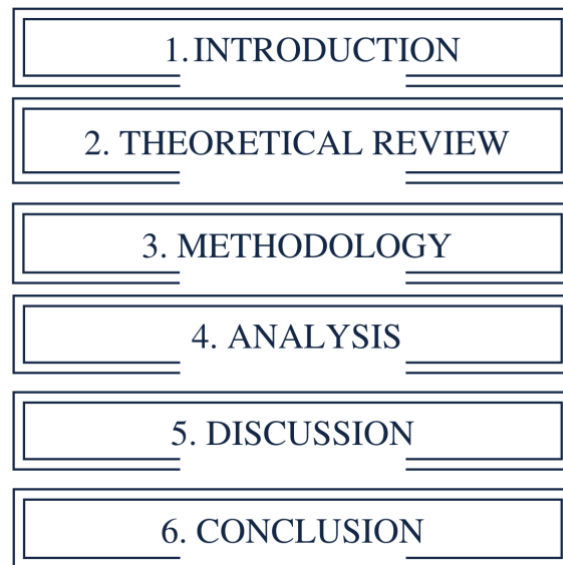


Figure 1.1 Disposition of the thesis

2 Theoretical Review

The theory chapter outlines the theories and concepts relevant to this study. It reviews the theory relating to the Brands as Intentional Agents Framework (BIAF) and the concepts of brand perceptions, brand stereotypes and brand emotions. The Theory of Uniqueness is also reviewed, outlining consumers need for uniqueness (NFU). Finally, drawing from the theoretical insights and knowledge of consumers perceived value to derive the theoretical framework and the hypotheses derived.

2.1 Brands as Intentional Agents Framework

Brands as Intentional Agents Framework (BIAF) proposes that individuals' stereotyped perceptions of a brand's *intention* and *ability* affect the emotions they feel towards brands, affecting their behavioural response. The framework is developed by Kervyn, Fiske & Malone (2012) for studying brands and brand perceptions, although it is based upon the theory of the Stereotype Content Model (SCM), which takes a social perception approach. The SCM examines and proposes a causal theory saying that people's stereotypes of others competence and warmth predict their emotions, and the emotions predict the responsibility they feel towards others (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu, 2002; Fiske, Cuddy & Glick, 2007; Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2008). The trustworthiness of the relationship is confirmed by neuroimaging studies (Harris & Fiske, 2006; Cikara, Botvinick & Fiske, 2011). Researchers have utilised the SCM to understand a wide range of phenomena such as gender roles (Eckes, 2002) and stigma in management (Leslie, Mayer & Kravitz, 2013) and even brands (Ivens et al., 2015; Chattalas, Kramer & Takada, 2008). However, BIAF draws the theoretical insights from SCM but alters them to focus on studying the relationships for brands, not social groups like in the SCM (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012). In this way, Kervyn, Fiske and Malone (2012) make the BIAF more applicable for studying consumers relationships with brands and putting forward the core argument that consumers perceive brands similarly to people. Therefore, the BIAF applies the theoretical understanding from the social perception theory SCM and applies it in the contexts of brands and consumers, which is relevant for this study.

The relevance of stereotypes can be traced to their important function for individuals and consumers. Stereotyping is a cognitive function that enables individuals to efficiently (Macrae,

Milne & Bodenhausen, 1994) organise information (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Macrea, Strangor and Hewstone (1996) explain that as individuals form stereotypes, it influences how they perceive, respond, and feel towards others. Foxall (2014) notes that stereotypes are not a standalone function because they are highly related to the individual's perception. In marketing, perception draws from consumer behaviour and social psychology (Foxall, 2014). Kenyon and Sen (2015) define perception as "a process of converting sensory input into an understanding of how the world works" (Kenyon & Sen, 2015 cited in Sethna & Blythe, 2019 s. 262). Through this process, individuals can select and organise the information to form emotions when understanding the stimulus in the surroundings (Armstrong, Kotler & Opresnik, 2016).

However, similar to other people's perception in social perception literature (Hewstone, Stroebe & Jonas, 2016; Macrea, Strangor & Hewstone, 1996), researchers have understood how consumers perceive brands in brand perception literature (Sethna & Blythe, 2019; Martinez, 2012). Dunn (2014) defines brand perception as "a customer's mental image, or gut feeling, of what a brand stands for" (s. 63). In brand perception, brands are evaluated not only for consumers' functional needs but also to reflect certain attitudes, associations, or prestige to enhance self-image (Sethna & Blythe, 2019). The brand stereotypes that people form is a way to organise their worldview of brands (Foxall, 2014; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Brand stereotypes can be defined as "consumers' beliefs about brands as *intentional* agents" (Kervyn, Fiske, & Malone, 2012 cited in Kolbl, Arslanagic-Kalajdzic & Diamantopoulos, 2019, p. 614). It relates to brand perception, which highly influences consumers' purchase behaviours (Armstrong, Kotler, Opresnik, 2016; Dodds, Monroe & Grewal, 1991) and emotions (Martinez, 2012; Sethna & Blythe, 2019). From the perspective of practitioners, Mark, and Pearson (2001) and Kotler and Keller (2015) point to the importance of knowing brand perceptions in marketing to manage the brand.

The BIAF takes a departure in studying consumers' stereotyped perceptions, brand emotions, and responses towards brands. BIAF proposes that the stereotype dimensions competence and warmth in SCM should be considered *intention* and *ability* instead because the two constructs are measured more adapted to brands that often have a financial purpose (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012). Hence, the dimensions of *intention* and *ability* are regarded as stereotype content for brands (Kolbl., et al. 2020). Hence, the stereotype dimensions in the BIAF reflect corporate entities as

brands "as having *intentions* and the *ability* to enact those *intentions*" (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012, p.171). Hence, the dimensions reflect the fact that consumers are not only finding brands more functional features valuable but also emotional (Ahuvia, 2005; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005) and relational (Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004; MacInnis, Park & Priester, 2009). It taps into a central tenant in the BIAF, which is that brands are *intentional* agents, which means that "their perceived *intentions* and *ability* are essential dimensions underlying brand perception" (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012, p. 13). Similarly, perception research showed that non-human entities could be attributed agency (Gray, Gray & Wegner, 2007), and philosophy research similarly put forward that people have the capacity for attaching mental states like a negative or positive *intention* to non-human objects (Arico, 2010). However, Kervyn, Fiske & Malone (2012) recognise that it is not universally accepted knowledge.

Similarly, to the SCM, is the BIAF able to distinguish certain emotions based on the combination of the perception of dimensions, *intention* and *ability*. The different combinations of the stereotype perception of *intention* and *ability* in the BIAF build four primary emotional states: *admiration*, *pity*, *envy*, and *contempt* (see. figure 2.1).

STEREOTYPED PERCEPTION: INTENTION	STEREOTYPED PERCEPTION: ABILITY	EMOTIONAL RESPONSE
Positive	Positive	Admiration
Positive	Negative	Pity
Negative	Positive	Envy
Negative	Negative	Contempt

Figure 2.1 Summary of the relationship between the perception of the brand stereotype dimensions intention and ability and the brand emotions admiration, pity, envy and contempt adapted from Kervyn, Fiske and Malone (2012).

In contrast to SCM, Kervyn, Fiske and Malone (2012) distinguish four brand categorizations: popular brands, paternalized brands, envied brands, and troubled brands (see fig. 2.2) based on consumers' four primary emotions of *admiration*, *pity*, *envy*, and *contempt* (see fig. 2.2).

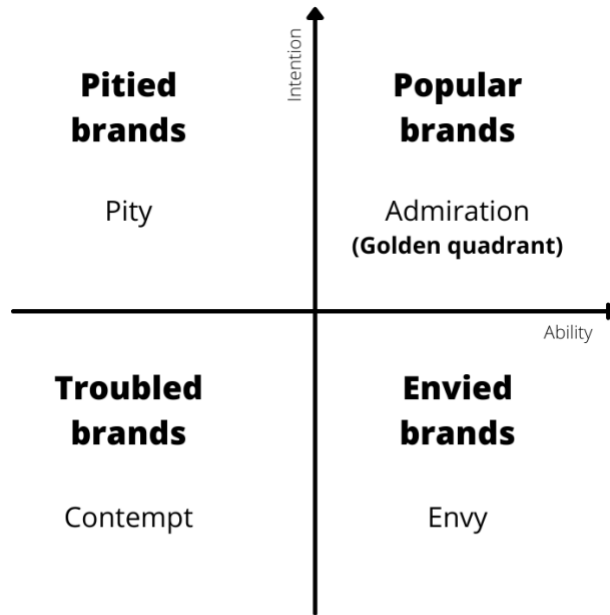


Figure 2.2 The brand stereotype dimensions ability and intention with attached brand emotions and clusters of brands (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012)

For example, Kervyn, Fiske, and Malone's (2012) found that the Coca-Cola brand was stereotyped as a popular brand with high *intention* and high *ability* to act upon those *intentions*, which elicited an admired emotion towards Coca-Cola. Besides, that high *intention* and *ability* show increased loyalty towards the brand. In contrast, the Marlboro brand was stereotyped as a *contempted* and troubled brand with low *intention* and low *ability* to act upon those *intentions* predicting an emotion of *contempt*. Besides, the low and high *intention* made respondents less likely to have a behavioural *intention* towards this brand. However, researchers have pointed out that the BIAF does not consider consumers characteristics when evaluating the relationships (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012).

Nevertheless, researchers argue that consumers emotions are highly regarded in marketing because they guide consumer behaviour (Cross & Carbery, 2016) such as behaviours (Pawle & Cooper, 2006), cognitive processes (Soscia, 2013), or to experience certain emotions such as self-confidence, pride or even disgust (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Achar, So, Agrawal & Duhachek (2016) discusses consumers' emotions toward brands and defines these emotions to "reflect information about consumers' relationship to their social and physical surroundings as well as their interpretations regarding these relationships" (p.166). Ivens et al. (2015) have tried to explain the

effect of the emotion's *admiration*, *pity*, *envy* and *contempt* by turning to research on univalent and ambivalent emotions. Their research on SCM showed that univalent emotions like *contempt* and *admiration* have stronger effects on consumers' responses towards the brand than the ambivalent emotions of *envy* and *pity*. Previous research supports this, stating that univalent emotions are easier emotions for consumers to interpret and act upon (Zajonc, 1960).

In essence, the BIAF enables us as researchers to understand the effect of stereotypes perceptions for brands on brand emotions and consumers' responses towards these brands. It distinguishes specific dimensions of perceived stereotypes *intention* and *ability*, the emotions of *admiration*, *pity*, *envy*, and *contempt* in the context of understanding consumers' relationships to brands. Therefore, the BIAF provides a valuable framework for answering our research question and fulfilling the study's purpose.

2.2 The Theory of Uniqueness

In order to gain valuable self-identification, individuals are in various degrees motivated to be distinct (Vignoles, Chrysochoou & Breakwell, 2000). Snyder and Fromkin's (1977) *Theory of Uniqueness* is based on empirical findings that explain why people need to be unique towards their social group. The theory builds on the premise that this is an essential part of how people build their identity projects (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980; Snyder & Lynn, 2002). However, Snyder & Fromkin (1980) notes that individuals' need for uniqueness (NFU) is balanced with their desire for similarity. In other words, the fundamental idea underpinning the *Theory of Uniqueness* is that an individual has both a need to be unique and a desire for similarity that balances each other to different extents. Therefore, two different individuals can have different levels of uniqueness because they also have different levels of similarity. Hence, the theory helps understand why individuals perceive some entities as less valuable due to their NFU. This becomes especially relevant when studying relationships between perceptions, emotions, and responses because Snyder & Fromkin (1980) point out that individuals' NFU affects individuals' cognitive, emotional, and behavioural responses.

Importantly the central tenet in the *Theory of Uniqueness* is that every individual has a desire to some extent be unique (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977). In a sense, this taps into the different theoretical stances on the origin of individuals' NFU. For instance, Şimşek and Yalınçetin (2010) draw from positive psychology, saying that individuals have a basic psychological need to be unique, which enables them to reach self-actualization. On the contrary, Lapsley, Jackson, Rice, and Shadid (1988) argue that individuals' NFU is instead an outcome of entering adulthood and separating from their parents. In a sense, the *Theory of Uniqueness* relates to the stance that individuals have a basic psychological need to be unique as Snyder and Fromkin (1977) maintain that all individuals have this need. As a result, all individuals have a certain uniqueness-seeking trait from the perspective of Snyder and Fromkin (1977).

Previously, the *Theory of Uniqueness* originally referred to individuals in general; it has been extended to address consumers' NFU. Tian, Bearden, and Hunter (2001) defined the consumers' need for uniqueness (consumers' NFU) as "the trait of pursuing differences relative to others through the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods to develop and enhance one's self-image and social image" (p. 52). Although slightly different from Snyder and Fromkin' (1980;1977) are Tian Bearden and Hunter (2001), making the theory more applicable to studying consumers' NFU as an individual-level trait through consumers' NFU concept. Also, Tian, Bearden and Hunter (2001) developed a three-dimensional construct that is easier to measure and understand consumers NFU than Snyder and Fromkin's (1977) original 32-item scale for individuals. Further, Ruvio, Shoham and Makovec Brencic (2008) developed a shortened version to measure consumers NFU. In essence, the consumer NFU concept extends the *Theory of Uniqueness* and is applicable to study consumers' perspectives like this study.

The theory is applicable in marketing, where Lynn and Harris (1997) state that the personality traits based on consumers' NFU are a way to understand their social needs. Abosag et al. (2020) take this statement one step further, arguing that consumers' NFU alters actual customer behaviour. Tian, Bearden, and Hunter (2001) say that consumers seek creative choice counter conformity, unpopular choice counter conformity and avoidance of similarity. The avoidance of similarity dimension refers to the fact that consumers do not value conventional possessions because

distinctiveness is essential. In a sense, it resembles Abosag et al.'s (2020) point that NFU tends to alter consumer behaviour.

Similarly, past studies have shown that NFU influences consumers' purchase *intention* (Chan et al., 2015; Park, Rabolt & Sook Jeon, 2008), making it relevant for marketing studies. For example, consumers can attain improved social and self-images from the symbolic meaning of particular possessions (Tian, Bearden & Hunter, 2001; Tian & Mckenzie, 2001). Simonson and Nowlis (2000) extend this insight, stating that consumers with high NFU tend to enjoy unique products, which is also in line with findings of Amaldoss and Jain (2005). Consumers with high NFU have also been observed to enjoy scarcity cues (Bozkurt & Gligor, 2019) and are less frequent in providing word of mouth recommendations (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010). Although some researchers are sceptical (Kassarjian, 1971), others state that personality traits can be used to explain how these decision processes differ (Haugtvedt, Petty & Cacioppo, 1992). Simonson and Nowlis (2000) state that consumers tend to make decisions based on their perception of what is best for themselves and others (Simonson & Nowlis, 2000). From a broader perspective, this relates to Belk's (1988) finding that a consumer can extend their self-concept by attaining particular possessions and Martinez's (2012) insights on how consumers use brands to acquire specific self-images.

From a theoretical perspective, this relates well to the idea that consumers with a high NFU tend to avoid the popular brands because they have a stronger motivation to seek out uniqueness compared to consumers a moderate or a low NFU (Tian, Bearden & Hunter, 2001; Shavitt, 1989; Workman & Kidd, 2000). Avoidance refers to how consumers avoid "products or brands perceived as commonplace" (Tian, Bearden & Hunter, 2001, p. 52). In this sense, perceiving consumers' avoidance as being based on social understandings of what is considered commonplace or not. From another perspective, Puzakova and Aggarwal (2018) argue that distinctive brands that anthropomorphize with agentic attributes can reduce consumers' sense of agency, thus negatively impact their brand evaluations. Arguably, this becomes relevant in evaluating brands since consumers may feel intrigued by popular brands since they can undermine their uniqueness (Simonson & Nowlis, 2000), further explored in the hypothesis section.

2.3 Theoretical Framework and formulation of hypothesis

Figure 2.3 illustrates the theoretical framework which guides the research in this study by showing the statistical relationships in focus. It is discussed in two sections to understand the theoretical framework's different parts and the derived hypothesis. The first section focuses on the relationship between perceived brand stereotypes and brand emotions, drawn from the BIAF. Hypotheses are developed for studying the relationships separately for consumers with low versus high NFU. Hypotheses are also developed for understanding if NFU significantly moderates the relationship between perceived brand stereotypes and brand emotions. Finally, *admiration's* relation to perceived emotional value is studied separately for consumers with low versus high NFU. The following sections derive the statistical hypotheses explained based on the theoretical framework.

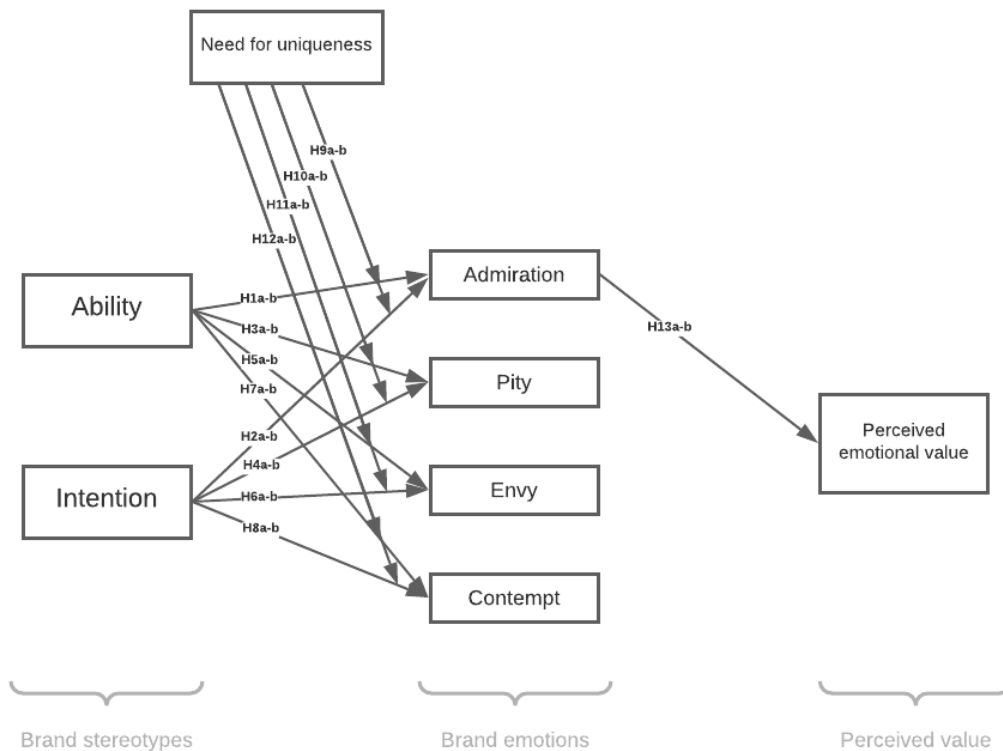


Figure 2.3 The theoretical framework is partially inspired by Ivens et al. (2015) and illustrates the relationship between brand stereotypes, intention and ability, brand emotions, admiration, pity, envy and contempt and perceived emotional value. Also, the moderating effect of consumers NFU to examine if there is a significant difference or similarity between the two groups.

In previous studies, the SCM theory underlying BIAF illustrates that a consumer's brand stereotype influences their brand emotions which in turn influences consumers' responses towards brands (Kolbl et al., 2020). Researchers have argued that it is important for brands to have a high *intention* and *ability* and elicit an emotion of *admiration* because consumers tend to be more loyal, have a more positive attitude (Ivens et al., 2015) and behavioural *intention* (Aaker, Garbinsy & Vohs, 2012; Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012; Kolbl et al., 2020). Nevertheless, as illustrated in the literature review, studies in brand stereotyping have often neglected consumer characteristics. The BIAF does not consider moderating variables in the relationship between stereotypes, emotions, and responses (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012). Interestingly, researchers from other disciplines found that consumers' NFU can alter consumer behaviour (Abosag et al., 2020). In light of the theory of uniqueness, researchers argue that popular brands can trigger a need for feeling different and avoidance from consumers with a high NFU (Tian, Bearden & Hunter, 2001; Simonson and Nowlis, 2000; Berger & Heath, 2007). The BIAF states that popular brands are perceived as having high *intention* and high *ability* (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012) but does not consider moderating variables in the relationship between the stereotypes, emotions, and response (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012). However, when considering the individual's strength of their NFU, the relationship between the stereotype dimensions and the emotional reactions might alter. Because consumers with high NFU might find the popular brands less valuable since they seek more unconventional brands (Simonson and Nowlis, 2000; Puzakova and Aggarwal, 2018), such as troubled brands that evoke an emotion of *contempt* from others.

Therefore, *ability* (H1a) and *intention* (H2a) are expected to positively affect the feeling of *admiration* for the consumers with a lower NFU. Consumers with low NFU would value a brand perceived as commonplace or popular as brands with high *intention* and *ability*. After all, it makes them not deviate from others. In contrast, the dimensions of *ability* (H1b) and *intention* (H2b) are expected to have a negative effect on the feeling of *admiration* for the consumers with high NFU, which means that consumers with high NFU should feel an emotion of *admiration* when they stereotype a brand as having low *intentions* and low *ability* because the brand will land in the quadrant of troubled brands that makes the person stay distinct from others.

The dimension of *ability* (H3a and H3b) is expected to have a negative effect on *pity*, and *intention* (H4a and H4b) is expected to have a positive effect on *pity* for both consumer groups. The reason is that the combination of the two stereotype dimensions is, according to the BIAF categorized as pitied brands that have been shown in previous studies of the SCM to elicit a feeling of *pity*. However, these brands are not fully popular nor fully troubled, so the two consumer groups are predicted to have the same relationship between the stereotyped dimensions and the *pity* they are expected to feel. The dimensions of *ability* (H5a and H5b) are expected to have a positive effect on *envy*, and *intention* (H6a and H6b) is expected to have a negative effect on the emotion of *envy* for both consumer groups. The reason for this is similar to the one for *pity* that the two groups would, in stereotyping these brands, not deviate in terms of emotions since the emotion is in between the popular and the troubled brands.

However, the dimension of *ability* (H7a) and *intention* (H8a) are expected to have a negative effect on the feeling of *contempt* for the consumers with a lower NFU. These consumers are expected to *contempt* brands commonly regarded as having low *intention* and *ability* because they tend to be troubled as opposed to popular brands. In contrast, the dimensions of *ability* (H7b) and *intention* (H8b) are expected to have a positive effect on the feeling of *contempt* for the consumers with high NFU. These consumers are expected to elicit a feeling of *contempt* from brands that they stereotype as having a high *ability* and high *intention* since these brands are viewed as popular. Besides, the popular brands would not make them more unique. Therefore, the following hypotheses are stated:

Table 2.1 Hypotheses for the relationship between brand stereotypes and brand emotions for the consumers with low NFU (H1a-H8a) and high NFU (H2b-H8b).

HYPOTHESES	DESCRIPTION OF HYPOTHESES
H1a	The brand stereotype influences feelings of admiration such way that ability has a positive effect on admiration for consumers with low NFU.
H2a	The brand stereotype influences feelings of admiration such way that intention has a positive effect on admiration for consumers with low NFU.
H3a	The brand stereotype influences feelings of pity such way that ability has a negative effect on pity for consumers with low NFU.
H4a	The brand stereotype influences feelings of pity such way that intention has a positive effect on pity for consumers with low NFU.
H5a	The brand stereotype influences feelings of envy such way that ability has a positive effect on envy for consumers with low NFU.
H6a	The brand stereotype influences feelings of envy such way that intention has a negative effect on envy for consumers with low NFU.
H7a	The brand stereotype influences feelings of contempt such way that ability has a negative effect on contempt for consumers with low NFU.
H8a	The brand stereotype influences feelings of contempt such way that intention has a negative effect on contempt for consumers with low NFU.
H1b	The brand stereotype influences feelings of admiration such way that ability has a negative effect on admiration for consumers with high NFU.
H2b	The brand stereotype influences feelings of admiration such way that intention has a negative effect on admiration for consumers with high NFU.
H3b	The brand stereotype influences feelings of pity such way that ability has a negative effect on pity for consumers with high NFU.
H4b	The brand stereotype influences feelings of pity such way that intention has a positive effect on pity for consumers with high NFU.
H5b	The brand stereotype influences feelings of envy such way that ability has a positive effect on envy for consumers with high NFU.
H6b	The brand stereotype influences feelings of envy such way that intention has a negative effect on envy for consumers with high NFU.
H7b	The brand stereotype influences feelings of contempt such way that ability has a positive effect on contempt for consumers with high NFU.
H8b	The brand stereotype influences feelings of contempt such way that intention has a positive effect on contempt for consumers with high NFU.

Snyder & Fromkin (1980) point out that individuals' NFU affects individuals' cognitive, emotional, and behavioural responses. The consumers' level of NFU alters consumer behaviour (Chan et al., 2015; Park, Rabolt & Sook Jeon, 2008; Abosag et al. 's, 2020), so consumers with low versus high NFU are expected to have significantly different and similar relationships between perceived *intention* and *ability* and their effect on the four emotions. Specifically, difference between the stereotype dimensions *ability* (H9a) and *intention* (H9b) and the emotional response of *admiration*

and *contempt*. This is because the popular brands in the BIAF are shown to elicit emotions of *admiration*. However, these more popular brands would presumably not be admired by people with high NFU. In contrast, the troubled brands in the BIAF are shown to elicit more emotions of *contempt*. However, these brands would presumably not be *contempted* by consumers with a higher NFU and therefore want to stay unique from others. The stereotype dimension's *ability* (H11a and H12a) and *intention* (H11b and H12a) are expected to affect the feeling of *pity* and *envy* in the same manner for the two groups, and we do not expect to find any significant differences between these two groups when considering that the brands are popular nor troubled. Therefore, the following hypotheses are stated:

Table 2.2 Hypotheses for the moderation of consumers' need for uniqueness (NFU) between brand stereotype's ability (H9a-H12b) and intention (H9b-H12b) and respective brand emotions.

HYPOTHESES	DESCRIPTION OF HYPOTHESES
H9a	The relationship between ability and admiration is moderated by NFU, such that the effect is positive for low NFU and negative for high NFU.
H9b	The relationship between intention and admiration is moderated by NFU, such that the effect is positive for low NFU and negative for high NFU.
H10a	The relationship between ability and pity is not moderated by NFU, such that the effect is negative for low NFU and positive for high NFU.
H10b	The relationship between intention and pity is not moderated by NFU, such that the effect is positive for low NFU and negative for high NFU.
H11a	The relationship between ability and envy is not moderated by NFU, such that the effect is positive for low NFU and negative for high NFU.
H11b	The relationship between intention and envy is not moderated by NFU, such that the effect is negative for low NFU and positive for high NFU.
H12a	The relationship between ability and contempt is moderated by NFU, such that the effect is negative for low NFU and positive for high NFU.
H12b	The relationship between intention and contempt is moderated by NFU, such that the effect is negative for low NFU and positive for high NFU.

In the original study of the BIAF, the response elicited from the emotional responses has only considered loyalty and behavioural *intention* (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012). However, the SCM in social perception that closely relates to the BIAF has studied other concepts such as attitudes (Ivens et al., 2015) and, most recently, consumers' perceived value (Kolbl et al., 2020). The perceived value construct is interesting for researchers and practitioners when considering the relationship between brands/companies and consumers (Grönroos, 1994; Payne & Holt, 2001) and

consumers' decision-making process (Woodruff, 1997). Similar to the research of brand stereotyping, research on perceived customer value has mainly been interested in consequences of strong perceived value (Vieira, 2013) but we want to consider it in relation to consumers' emotional reactions towards brands. Hence, we are exploring consumers' perceived value in the context of the BIAF to answer our research question. Although Sweeney & Soutar (2001) brings forward three aspects of consumers' perceived value: functional, emotional and social, as stated in the research limitations, we are focusing on consumers' emotional value, which is the value consumers find from the feelings evoked (Walsh, Shiu and Hassan, 2014). The reason for this is that previous researchers concluded that the consumers perceived emotional value is related to having a behavioural *intention* (Kolbl et al., 2020).

Besides, we are specifically focusing on the emotion *admiration* in the BIAF and that *admiration* has a positive effect on consumers' perceived emotional value. The reason for this is that SCM by Fiske, Cuddy and Glick (2007) found that consumers' emotions shape the response they deem fit towards others, and the emotions of *admiration* elicited more positive responses. It is supported by that *pity*, *envy* and *contempt* showed less favourable responses (Fiske, Cuddy & Glick, 2007) and behavioural *intention* (Ivens et al., 2015; Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012). It is supported by the notion that *admiration* is an univalent emotion (Ivens et al., 2015). These emotions tend to make the consumer feel comfortable (Vaccaro, Kaplan & Damasio, 2020). Therefore, we expect the univalent emotion *admiration* to have a positive effect on the consumers perceived emotional value for both consumers with low and high NFU. Therefore, the following hypotheses are stated:

Table 2.3 Hypotheses for the relationships between brand emotions and consumers perceived emotional value for consumers with low NFU (H13a) and high NFU (H13b)

HYPOTHESES	DESCRIPTION OF HYPOTHESES
H13a	Admiration has a positive effect on consumers with low need for uniqueness perceived emotional value.
H13b	Admiration has a positive effect on consumers with high need for uniqueness perceived emotional value.

3 Method

The methodology chapter outlines and discusses the research approach, research design, and data analysis method. The chapter ends with a review of the research quality criteria and the ethical considerations.

3.1 Research approach

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson (2015) highlights that the research approach and the results provided are highly influenced by researchers' views of reality. Accordingly, we have reflected upon how our beliefs and assumptions affect this study. In doing so, it can aid our choice of research design by highlighting which evidence needs to be gathered and interpreted to answer the research question. Ontology and epistemology are two topics generally elaborated upon regarding philosophical perceptions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

On the one hand, ontology concerns questions regarding the nature of reality and existence (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). We acknowledge that there are several ontological perspectives, however, we approach the ontological philosophy of internal realism. According to internal realism, there is one single true reality independent of the human's subjective mind, but it is difficult for researchers to fully understand this reality because concrete facts are not always accessible (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Similarly, we acknowledge that truth exists in the world, which implies a reality out there for the relationships between brand stereotypes, brand emotions and perceived consumer value for our two consumer groups. At the same time, we recognise that it can be challenging to measure directly because we might only approximate the "true phenomenon" (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). However, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) imply that researchers can measure social concepts by choosing relevant measures. Concludingly, establishing our position will help us unravel how to acquire the knowledge to answer our research purpose.

On the other hand, epistemology focuses on the theory of knowledge and deals with how best to acquire knowledge in the world (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Thus, it helps clarify

the core assumptions we make when acquiring knowledge. Burns and Burns (2008) describes two epistemology paradigms: the positivist paradigm (positivism) and the interpretivist paradigm (constructionism). The former's key idea is that the world is objective with universal laws, and research carried out is accurate and often based on hypotheses. On the contrary, the interpretive paradigm sees the world as subjective, where reality is experienced differently. Thus, positivism is more aligned with this study than constructionism because we aim to examine the phenomena from an objective stance rather than a subjective social construction of the world. Besides, positivism is regarded as having a good fit with the ontology of realism (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015) and connected to quantitative studies since it enables an objective and systematic way of conducting data analysis and drawing conclusions (Bryman & Bell, 2017).

However, the pure positivistic stance streaming from natural science is criticised for treating nature and society as equals because it does not acknowledge that people value the world differently (Bryman & Bell, 2017). At the same time, the quantitative approach enables the researcher to objectively analyse and draw generalised conclusions from a smaller sample (Eliasson, 2018). We consider this a valuable strength in the quantitative approach, although the extent of generalisation is limited to the sampling process. In addition, a positivistic approach hopes to enable a transparent study that future researchers can replicate. Concludingly, we want to stress that the choice of a quantitative research design does not solemnly lie in the fact that we want to analyse data. Instead, it is a consequence of our underlying assumptions because we use existing theory to formulate hypotheses to test statistical relationships based on data.

3.2 Research Design

The research design forms the roadmap to answer our research question (Malhotra, 2010). It follows a top-down deductive research approach starting from existing theory enabling the outlined hypotheses to be accepted or rejected based on observed data (Burns & Burns, 2008). Noteworthy, the research takes a conclusive rather than exploratory direction, following Malhotra (2010), since the theories enable a specification of the information needed. The conclusive

descriptive research is suitable because it examines relationships, tests hypotheses, and describes the results through quantitative observations, which follow the positivistic approach.

Moreover, to answer the research question from the derived hypotheses (see. Section 2.1), our study implements a single-cross-sectional design, also called sample-survey-research design. Thus, we collect data from one sample from one population once. The single-cross-sectional design enables us to, under time constraints, ask questions related to relationships between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The approach is appropriate given the time constraints of the study compared to, for example, a longitudinal design where information is gathered from one sample from a population multiple times (Malhotra, 2019).

3.2.1 Measurement and Scaling Procedures

In order to enable reliable results, the research design considered the measurement and scaling procedures and the operationalization of variables. Nominal scaling was used to code the respondents' demographic data because nominal scale variables are valuable for categorizing observations rather than measuring and the most primitive type of coding (Burns & Burns, 2008). However, when measuring the stereotype dimensions, emotions, consumer perceived value and NFU, we construct a seven-point Likert-scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat Disagree, 4=Neutral, 5=Somewhat Agree, 6=Agree, and 7=Strongly Agree). The measures enable ordinal scales (Burns & Burns, 2008). The reasons for choosing the seven-point Likert scale were twofold. First, consumers are used to evaluating Likert-scales, which helps conduct a survey design not perceived as complicated by the respondent (Ejlertsson, 2019). Second, the seven-point Likert scale enables a broader scale which allows respondents to be more specific in their judgment (Sapsford, 2007).

Moreover, it is fruitful to operationalise similarly as researchers have done before (Malhotra, 2019; Burns & Burns, 2008). Therefore, the concepts were operationalised based on well-established theory and items from previous research from Kervyn, Fiske and Malone (2012), Fiske et al. (2002), Ruvio, Shoham and Makovec Brencic (2008) and Walsh, Shiu and Hassan (2014). NFU was measured with the subset avoidance of similarity, and perceived customer value was measured with the subset perceived emotional value. The optimal choice had been to measure these concepts

with the full scale; however, this posed a possible risk that respondents would not answer the whole survey because of increased survey length.

Table 3.1 The measurements operationalized based on previous research.

THEORETICAL CONCEPT	COMPONENT MEASURED	ITEMS	SOURCE
BIAF: Stereotypes	Intention	[Brand] Has good intentions towards ordinary people. [Brand] Consistently acts with the public's best interests in mind.	Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012
BIAF: Stereotypes	Ability	[Brand] Has the ability to implement its intentions. [Brand] Is skilled and effective at achieving its goals.	Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012
BIAF: Emotions	Admiration	I admire [brand] I am proud of [brand] I am inspired by [brand]	Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu, 2002
BIAF: Emotions	Pity	I pity [brand] I feel sympathetic towards [brand]	Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu, 2002
BIAF: Emotions	Envy	I envy [brand] I am jealous of [brand]	Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu, 2002
BIAF: Emotions	Contempt	I contempt [brand] I disgust [brand] I get frustrated by [brand]	Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu, 2002
Need for uniqueness	Avoidance of Similarity	When a product I own becomes popular among the general population, I begin to use it less. I often try to avoid products or brands that I know are bought by the general population. As a rule, I dislike products or brands that are customarily bought by everyone. The more commonplace a product or brand is among the general population, the less interested I am in buying it.	Ruvio, Shoham & Makovec Brenčič, 2007
Perceived Customer Value	Perceived Emotional Value	[BRAND] is one that I would enjoy. [BRAND] would make me want to use it. [BRAND] would make me feel good.	Walsh, Shiu & Hassan, 2014

3.2.2 Data and Data Collection Methods

To the best of our knowledge, there was no readily available data for our specific purpose; hence, we collected primary data, which is data collected by researchers themselves (Skärvad & Lundahl, 2016). We considered primary data to be more beneficial than secondary data because it allowed us to gain the specific data needed and control how it was collected. However, we found it valuable

to use secondary data as the basis for collecting theory, outlining the research topic and selecting which brands to include in the survey.

The primary data collection method was an internet survey linked to the sample-survey-research design. Noteworthy, other methods exist for obtaining primary quantitative data in descriptive research, like observations (Malhotra, 2019). Although observation methods are valuable when researchers want to observe actual behavioural patterns, survey methods are better when understanding underlying attitudes and beliefs (Malhotra, 2019; Eliasson, 2018). In this case, the survey was valuable to measure multiple factors and underlying relationships between perception, emotions, and attitudes. Surveys over the internet are valuable because they allow a diverse range of survey questions, collecting large quantities of data under time and cost constraints (Bryman & Bell, 2017; Eliasson, 2018) while valuing social distancing. Nevertheless, internet surveys can increase data loss since researchers are not physically present to answer questions or motivate the respondent (Bryman & Bell, 2017). Therefore, we included extensive contact information to enable respondents to ask questions regarding the survey and condensed the survey to make it time efficient.

When collecting well-renowned and relevant scientific articles to thoroughly present the research topic and theories, we used LUBsearch, Scopus, and Proquest databases. Additionally, we used books to bring a more in-depth understanding of theoretical areas and methodological guidance.

Moreover, previous research and top lists were the basis for choosing twenty corporate brands in the survey. The secondary data is valuable, effective, and cheap complementary information (Malhotra, 2010). We valued previous research from Kervyn, Fiske and Malone (2012) as a peer-reviewed and published source when collecting the secondary data. Furthermore, secondary data was collected from three different marketing research actors Kantar Sifos brand index (Lundbom, 2020), Brand Finance (Brandirectory, 2021) and Top Non-profits (Top100Non-profitOrganizations(2021 Edition), 2021). Following Malhotra (2010), we evaluated our secondary data based on our objective: to enable respondents a wide variety of corporate brands rather than as the basis for the principal analysis done using primary data.

3.2.3 Selection of brands

As stated, we selected twenty brands based on secondary data. To select a variety of brands, we were inspired by Kervyn, Fiske and Malone's (2012) categorization of brands as popular brands, paternalized brands, envied brands, and troubled brands. Admired brands are popular and have been successful for some time. Pitied brands are generally non-profit brands and often need external support. Envied brands are luxury brands, and *contempted* brands have often previously been subject to negative press. We considered not state-specific brands in the survey since our research purpose was not to evaluate the brands per se but rather the relationships between perception, emotions and perceived value. However, the pilot study (see. 3.2.5) revealed that respondents found it hard to choose a brand for themselves. Hence, we enabled the respondents to choose from a variety of pre-selected brands.

Table 3.2 Table of the selected brands for the questionnaire.

BRANDS (PITIED)	BRANDS (ADMIRE)
SCOUTERNA	IKEA
VÄRLDSNATURFONDEN	COCA-COLA
AMNESTY	VOLVO
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC	ICA
GODEL	MAX
BRANDS (CONTEMPTED)	BRANDS (ENVIED)
MARLBORO	MERCEDES
BURGER KING	ROLEX
LIDL	LOUIS VUITTON
SAS	PORCHE
H&M	GUCCI

3.2.4 Survey Design

The survey was constructed as a questionnaire in Google forms because it allows for an unlimited number of respondents and survey questions, plus it is easily compatible with spreadsheet softwares (Stickler, 2017). Bryman and Bell (2017) highlight that survey questions are easy to interpret because they are common and clearly stated in the questionnaire. To enhance the clarity,

the questions of the survey were divided into five sections: demographics and individual characteristics, selection of brand, questions about stereotypes, questions about emotions and questions about perceived customer value. The established questions from reliable sources were originally written in English so we translated them into Swedish because this research focuses on Swedish consumers, and it was therefore valuable to decrease the risk of misunderstandings. In addition, to minimize misinterpretations of keywords like the emotions their original English word was included in parenthesis after the Swedish translation.

The first section of the questionnaire introduced the purpose of the survey, target respondents, ethics for data collection and our contact information. After that the respondents were asked three demographic questions and four questions measuring their Need for uniqueness (NFU). The question regarding Swedish citizenship and age served as what Bryman and Bell (2017) refers to as filter questions which redirected non-target population respondents to the end of the survey.

In the second section, the respondents were asked to select one of the twenty brands they were most familiar with or "Vet ej". This option implied no knowledge of any of the listed brands and were redirected to the end of the survey because they were not deemed able to answer the rest of the survey without relating to a particular brand. Similarly, Ivens et al. (2015) used the knowledge question to filter out the respondents' lacking awareness about a brand they could relate to throughout the survey.

Moreover, the third, fourth and fifth sections were related to the main questions measuring concepts in the first, second and third part of the theoretical framework. The third section has four questions relating to the brand stereotype, dimensions, *intention* and *ability*. In the fourth section respondents answered ten questions related to the four emotions *admiration*, *pity*, *envy* and *contempt*. The fifth section included three questions related to customers' perceived value.

3.2.5 Pilot Study

The survey design incorporated and improved elements that respondents found in the pilot study. The pilot study enables researchers to minimize risks for misunderstanding within surveys because

there is no interview person to explain misinterpretations (Bryman & Bell, 2017). Ten respondents took part in the pilot study through google-forms and took part in a digital meeting after completing the survey. The respondents expressed overall ease with understanding the survey and enjoyed the introductory information. In particular, they expressed that it was valuable to choose from a selection of brands rather than thinking about one up-front. However, the pilot-respondents expressed that it is more apparent if we divided the questions into sections rather than a long list of questions. Hence, we divided the questions into shorter sections before distributing the survey.

3.2.6 Sample Design

The sample was drawn from the defined population in terms of units, or elements, extent, and time (Malhotra, 2019). The target population was consumers that were Swedish citizens being men, women or other in the age of 18-75 years, and could recall at least one of the twenty brands in April 2021. We excluded consumers aged 17 or younger because they would need to have approval from their parents or comprehensive knowledge (Etikprövningsmyndigheten, n.d.; Ejlertsson, 2019). The maximum age was 75 years old since this is the oldest age group with over 50% daily Facebook activity (Internetstiftelsen, 2020). The target population was the basis for the two groups created for the main analysis based on their high versus low NFU. Swedish consumers are interesting subjects for this study since western countries display higher NFU to a greater extent than other parts of the world (Snyder & Lynn, 2002). In other words, we created two groups that have the qualities of the target population plus a specific NFU to enable an analysis of possible differences or similarities between stereotyped perceptions, emotions, and response for consumers with high NFU and low NFU.

The sample size was determined based on recommendations when conducting a Multigroup Analysis (MGA) with partial least squares. On the one hand, Hulland, Ryan & Rayner (2010) argue the desired sample size should be between 150–200 per group. On the other hand, Garson (2016) suggests multiplying each connection in the theoretical framework with 10 to compute for the desired sample size. Therefore, we found that over 150 respondents would be sufficient for each group, high versus low NFU.

The survey was distributed online in different Facebook groups. These internet forums have experienced increasing popularity during the pandemic (Internetstiftelsen, 2020), so we aimed to reach as many and diverse respondents within the target population. However, this sampling process tactic is not compatible with a probability sample because not all within the target population have a non-zero probability of being included (Bryman & Bell, 2017). Hence, our sampling method opts for a non-probability sampling process with an opportunity sampling approach because the researchers pick respondents depending on how accessible they are (Burns & Burns, 2008). Following Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015), the non-probability sample limits the generalizability of our study because we could not control if the sample is biased or matches the desired population whole even if the sample size was fulfilled because we distributed the survey without control. Nevertheless, Bryman and Bell (2017) say convenience sampling should not be entirely avoided under time and cost constraints because it can enable research that is important for future studies.

The respondents' loss was evaluated based on the external and internal loss after collecting the data. The external loss refers to the respondents not taking part in the survey (Berntson, Bernhard-Oettel, Hellgren, Näswall & Sverke, 2016). However, we did not expect to be able to calculate external loss due to the lack of frame in the non-probability sampling. However, we considered the internal loss of respondents, which refers to the respondents not completing the survey (Berntson et al., 2016).

3.3 Plan of Data Analysis

3.3.1 Data Analysis Method

The data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares (PLS) and specifically Multigroup Analysis (MGA) to answer this study's research question and fail to reject or reject the hypotheses. PLS is a well-established and robust multivariate method that analyses complex models with causal relationships between blocks of latent variables (Fornito, Zalesky & Bullmore, 2016; Garson, 2016; Hair et al., 2017; Gaskin & Lowry, 2014). Specifically, PLS is a form of structural

equation model (SEM) which enabled us to analyse the multiple relationships of our theoretical framework between independent and dependent variables at the same time (Garson, 2016; Hair et al., 2019), which saves time (Henseler, Ringle & Sinkovics, 2009). Furthermore, MGA was used to evaluate the moderation of NFU on the effects between brand stereotypes, brand emotions and perceived emotional value. Hence, if differences exist between the model's constructs for the two groups, it can be attributed to the variable's moderating effect (Sarstedt, Henseler & Ringle, 2011).

Compared to examining standard moderation that only examines a single structural relationship, MGA is an efficient PLS technique that offers a more complete picture (Hair et al., 2017). In a way, it takes a step into the conversation about not assuming homogeneity among individuals. Researchers have argued that the homogeneity approach fails to understand the significant differences between two data groups, calling for heterogeneous approaches (Hwa, Memon, Chuah & Ramayah, 2020). By conducting an MGA analysis, we hoped to address this by considering two groups instead of one. Also, how their relationships related to one another because the MGA enabled us to compare if significant differences or similarities between the groups exist compared to only two separate analyses of the two groups.

By analysing between-group analysis of selected data groups, MGA analyses a categorical moderating variable, in this case, NFU, which "affects the direction and/or strength of the relation between an independent or predictor variable" (Baron & Kenny, 1986, p. 1174). However, we elaborated upon that there might be unknown factors affecting the two different groups' perceptions, attitudes and responses even after acquiring two samples displaying similar distributions of age and gender. However, concerning the short time frame of this project and our resource constraints, it was not possible for us to explore confounding factors, although we elaborate upon them in the limitations section.

3.3.2 Path Analysis using Multigroup Analysis

The theoretical framework was converted into a path model in SmartPLS to answer the hypotheses. The reasons for using SmartPLS are fourfold: first, it is widely used; second, it is easily accessible; and third, it allows an MGA (SmartPLS, n.d); fourth, it is a well-used software when analysing Likert-scales (Garson, 2016).

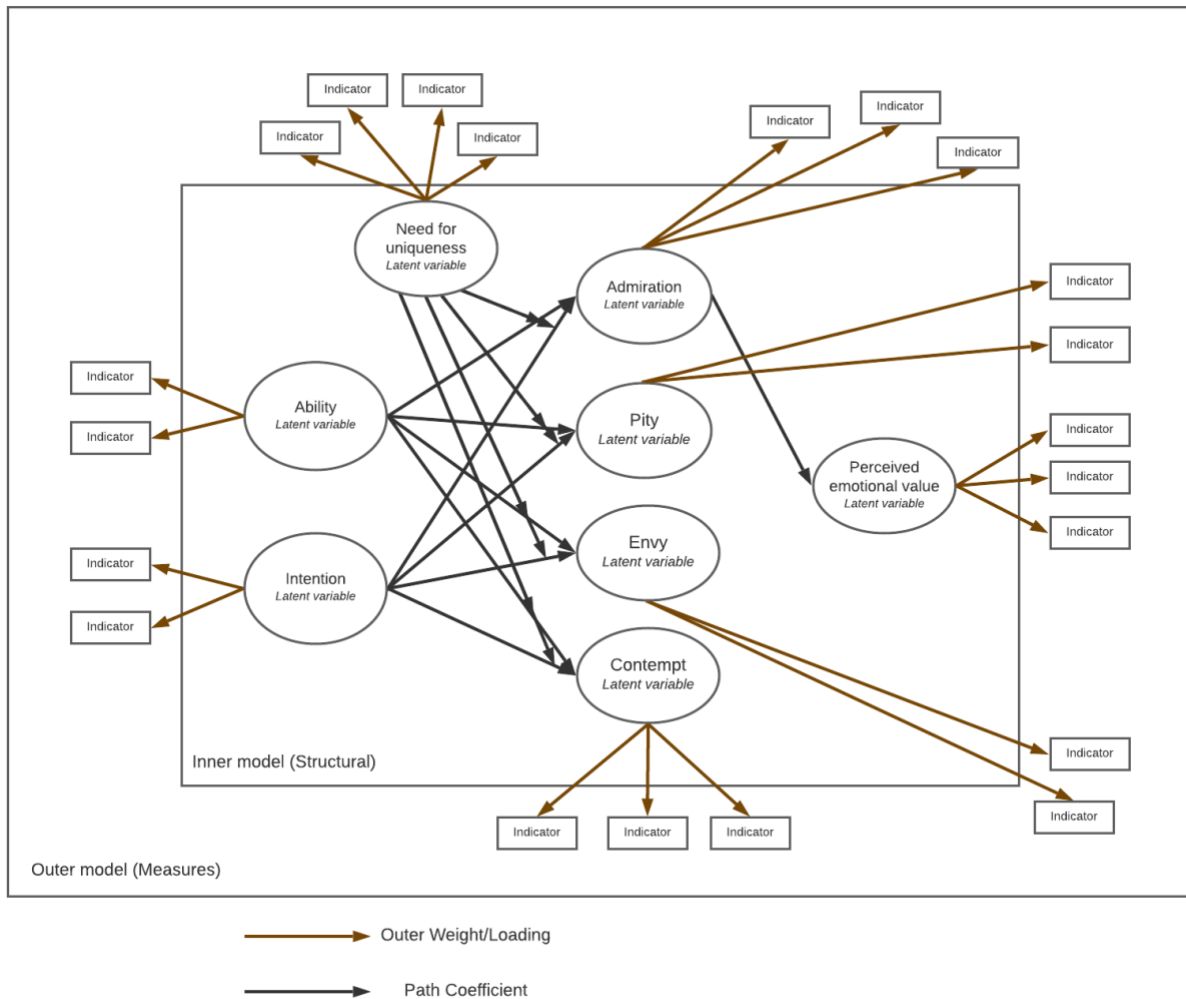


Figure 3.1 The measurement model with the inner-outer model in SmartPLS, with basis in the theoretical framework.

Before the data input in SmartPLS, the preparation stage involved searching for internal issues like non-completed response and straight-lining patterns, meaning that a respondent gives the same answer to all questions (Hair et al., 2019). For example, removing respondents who answered only middle (4) or end responses (1 or 7) on the Likert scale minimizes the variability and the risk that the moderating effects are undetected (Hwa et al., 2020). Afterwards, we divided the dataset into equal-sized subgroups based on high/low NFU, which Hair et al. (2017) say enables adequate power not to underestimate moderating effects. We conducted a median split described by

DeCoster, Gallucci and Iselin (2011), entailing calculating the median of the average values as the basis for dividing the groups. Respondents with scores below the median were assigned to the low NFU, whereas respondents with scores above the median were assigned the high NFU group. However, because we wanted to capture consumers with either high or low NFU and not moderate, we decided to not include the respondents with a value equal to the median.

The path model was constructed based on the theoretical framework to consist of four components and the inner-outer model (see figure 3.1). The latent variables (ellipses) are not directly observable, so they are represented by indicator variables (rectangles) measured by the survey questions. Besides, the path coefficients and path weights are illustrated, where the latter establishes the relationship between the latent variables path coefficients. The path coefficients linking are calculated through OLS (Ordinary least squares) multiple/simple regression between the latent variable's value, thus standardizing regressions coefficients (Garson, 2016). Therefore, it was possible to understand the respective dimensions of brand stereotyping (IV) and its effect on the emotional response (DV). Further, the effect the emotional response (IV) will have on the consumer's perceived emotional value (DV). Moreover, MGA makes it possible to understand possible significant differences in these relationships for two groups with low/ high NFU.

After evaluating the quality of the model, we conducted the conceptual model's group comparisons using MGA in SmartPLS. The two NFU groups were selected in the Multi-Group Analysis dialogue in SmartPLS. The MGA was set to the default value of paths as the weighting scheme, the iterations as established to 1000, and the stop criterion is 10^{-7} (Garson, 2016). The one-tailed t-test was conducted with a bootstrapping of 5000 subsamples. Bootstrapping enables an understanding of the statistical significance of the path coefficients in the PLS-SEM results (Garson, 2016). The MGA shows p-values for the two groups' path coefficients separately and provides p-values showing whether the path coefficients are significantly more prominent for the two subgroups (Hwa et al., 2020) as the basis for rejecting or accepting our hypotheses.

3.4 Research Quality Criteria

The study's quality is essential to evaluate when conducting quantitative studies (Skärvad & Lundahl, 2016), thus the quality of the model, the reliability, validity and the ethical qualifications.

The MICOM procedure evaluated the quality of the MGA and R2 values, and effect size evaluated the model's relationships. In SmartPLS, researchers can evaluate reliability through composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha and the study's validity through average variance extracted (AVE) (Garson, 2016). Finally, ethics was considered by following Ejlertsson (2019) four ethical qualifications.

3.5 Reliability

The reliability refers to the trustworthiness others can have for the study result to be replicable and produce the same results repeatedly (Skärvad & Lundahl, 2016). Therefore, it would have been preferable to conduct the study several times to see consistency in the results. Although this was not possible due to time and budget constraints, we addressed the internal validity by following Bryman & Bell (2017) suggestions to measure variables with several indicators and measure the reliability with statistical measures. Cronbach's alpha is a measure between 0 and 1, used to indicate if the questionnaire items measure the variable that the researchers want to measure (Burns & Burns, 2008). Alpha values of 0.8 are confident signals and 0,7 is the lowest threshold acceptable (Burns & Burns, 2008). In addition, composite reliability was calculated for the measurement model to indicate the level of reliability (Netemeyer, Bearden & Sharma 2003). The composite reliability will indicate a value between 0 to 1, and the closer the value is to the perfect reliability value of 1 (Chin, 1998), the higher level of reliability. Although high reliability is desirable, values between 0,7-0,9 are good values, and even values between 0,6-0,7 are acceptable (Hair et al., 2019). Noteworthy, the highest values over 0,9 are not desirable as this indicates that the indicators are measuring the same thing, lowering the study's validity (Diamantopoulos et al., 2012). Hence, we aimed for establishing a good internal validity with measurements between 0,7 and 0,9.

3.5.1 Validity

High validity is desirable for a study because it means that the measurements measure what they are intended to measure in the survey (Eliasson, 2018). Bryman and Bell (2017) state that researchers should consider both external and internal validity. External validity refers to the generalisation of the results (Bryman and Bell, 2017). It was expected to be low because of the

non-probability sample design of the study. However, the researchers stand with the decision to opt for a non-probability sampling due to time, cost, and physical restrictions.

In contrast, we expected the internal validity to be more robust by taking several precautions and measuring the internal validity. Hence, using well-established scales that can address internal validity (Bryman and Bell, 2017) and calculating Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which measures the strength of the study validity by calculating the convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In other words, AVE explains the degree to which the latent variable can explain the variance in the indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) to understand whether there is a positive correlation among the variables in the study. If the value of AVE is at least 0,5, it is considered significant (Hair et al. 2013; Chin, 1998), which is valuable because the higher the validity, the safer it is to say that the survey items measured what they were expected to measure.

3.5.2 Measurement Invariance of Composite Models (MICOM)

To assess whether the results from the MGA are misleading, is it important to confirm partial or full measurement invariance (Henseler, Ringel & Sarstedt 2016; Henseler, Hubona & Ray, 2016). Henseler and Sarstedt (2013) and SmartPLS (n.d) state a recommended procedure: Measurement invariance of composite models (MICOM). In abstract terms, it measures how well the data fits the measured model conducted in SmartPLS and adds a level of accuracy to the analysis and its results (Matthews, 2017). Hence, to assess whether we had an issue with measurement invariance, we performed the MICOM procedures before conducting the MGA by following three steps outlined by Henseler, Ringel and Sarstedt (2016) in the SmartPLS dialogue.

Firstly, we wanted to confirm configural invariance by ensuring that the model was the same for both groups. Second, we wanted to confirm compositional invariance to ensure that the correlation of the composites of the two groups are not significantly less than 1. We did so by executing a permutation algorithm in SmartPLS, we then checked the MICOM criteria “step 2”-tab to inspect the composite correlations of the model. Finally, we wanted to establish partial or full measurement invariance for equality of the means and variances between the groups which we found and evaluated using the “step 3”-tab.

3.5.3 Coefficient of determination

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is calculated to describe how large part of the variance in the dependent variable that was explained by the independent variable (Hair, et al. 2013). When calculating the R^2 value in SmartPLS we were able to understand how well the stereotype dimensions could explain the emotions and how well the emotions could explain the perceived customer value. The R^2 values are usually presented in percent (Shmueli & Koppius, 2011) but can also be described in absolute value ranging from 0 to 1 where we aimed for attaining the highest possible value. Hair et al (2013) expresses that in marketing the R^2 value over 0,75 is considered strong, between 0,5-0,75 moderate and between 0,25-0,5 weak. These values are going to be the reference point when evaluating the R^2 values in this study.

3.5.4 Cohens f^2

The effect size was evaluated to determine the strength of the relationship between the brand emotion *admiration* and the consumers' perceived emotional value. The effect size is a relevant measure because it measures the extent of the relationship between two variables and complements the null hypothesis significance testing (Selya et al. 2012). We are calculating Cohen's f^2 available in SmartPLS, although there are other measures to determine the effect size. As stated by Cohen (1988) are f^2 values below 0,02 weak, 0,15 medium, and 0,35 strong.

3.5.5 Ethics

Finally, the four ethical qualifications that Ejlertsson (2019) highlights: the information requirement, the consent requirement, the confidentiality requirement, and the utilization requirement, work as a frame when conducting this study. The aim is to maintain trustworthiness in research like this study and enable future researchers to conduct similar research designs and use survey designs that are considered ethical by the public, which hopefully enhances the willingness of consumers to take part as respondents.

Firstly, the study considered the information requirement by informing the participant's information about the study and their rights in an information box at the beginning of the survey. Secondly, the consent requirement was addressed by not including participants younger than 18 years since they would need consent from their parents. Thirdly, the study considered the

confidentiality requirement by not sharing the data with unauthorized actors and treating respondents answers with the highest degree of anonymity. That also entails not sharing the information with the public so that it erodes the respondents right to being anonymous. Finally, the utilization requirement was addressed by only collecting the data for the purpose stated to the respondents taking part in the research. That is why the respondents were informed in the first section of the survey so that they would be able to take part in the ethical frame. Hence, we regard these ethical considerations to have enabled a survey design that is acceptable in terms of ethics.

4 Analysis

The analysis chapter presents the empirical results from the Multigroup Analysis. At the outset, the pre-analysis is conducted, followed by hypothesis testing. The chapter ends with a summary of the results.

4.1 Pre-analysis

The pre-analysis enabled a better understanding of the collected data and the quality of the analysis and consists of five sections: data screening, descriptives, MICOM, reliability and validity, and analysis of R^2 values.

4.1.1 Data screening

In total, 354 respondents answered the survey during April 2021. Data screening, dividing the sample into two groups and exploring descriptives was carried out before running the data analysis in SmartPLS. Firstly, four (4) non-Swedish citizens were removed. Secondly, two (2) above our age threshold of 75 were removed. Lastly, three (3) respondents claimed not to know any of the presented brands were removed. As a result, the initial screening left us with 345 respondents.

As described in the method section, the two data groups were created by performing a median split. The median of the averages had a value of 3.5. Furthermore, all respondents with values below 3.5 were assigned to a group of respondents with a low need for uniqueness (NFU). In contrast, respondents with values higher than 3.5 were assigned to a group of respondents with high NFU. Seventeen respondents were excluded with a score equal to the median of 3.5 because they were interpreted as neither showing high or low NFU in the entire group. Concludingly, two groups of low and high NFU were formed with 172 respondents in the former and 156 in the latter, and a total sample size of 328 respondents.

4.1.2 Descriptives

The descriptives illuminated the age-and gender distribution for both the sample as a whole and between the two groups. Overall, the descriptives suggest some excess towards younger respondents, and there were 36 more women than men. On the one hand, there were relatively more respondents aged 25-34 in

the low NFU group than in the high NFU group. On the other hand, in the high NFU group, there were 21 % aged 45-54 compared to 17 % in the low NFU group. Moreover, the high NFU group contains 56 % females, while the low NFU group contains 51 % females. In essence, the two groups had relatively similar distributions of age and gender.

Table 4.1 Frequency distribution of age for the total number of respondents.

AGE	COUNTS	% OF TOTAL	COMULATIVE %
18-24	51	15.5 %	15.5 %
25-34	78	23.8 %	39.3 %
35-44	56	17.1 %	56.4 %
45-54	62	18.9 %	75.3 %
55-64	62	18.9 %	94.2 %
65-75	19	5.8 %	100.0 %
TOTAL: 328			

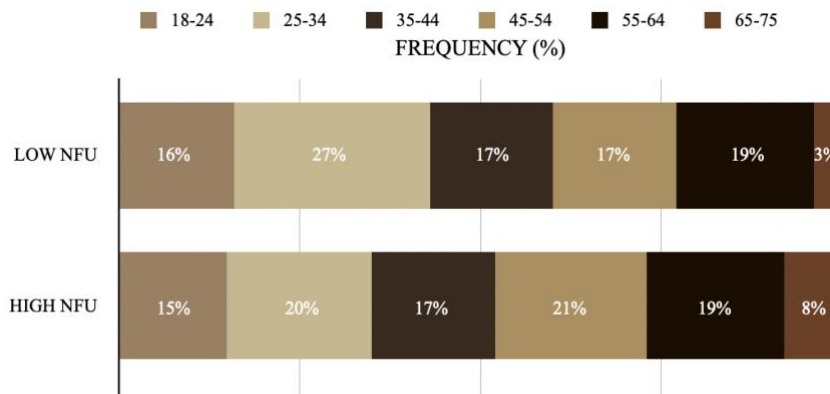


Figure 4.1 Frequency distribution of age for the two consumer groups low NFU and high NFU.

Table 4.2 Frequency distribution of gender for the total number of respondents.

LEVELS	COUNTS	% OF TOTAL	COMULATIVE %
Others	12	3.7 %	3.7 %
Female	176	53.7 %	57.3 %
Male	140	42.7 %	100 %
TOTAL: 328			

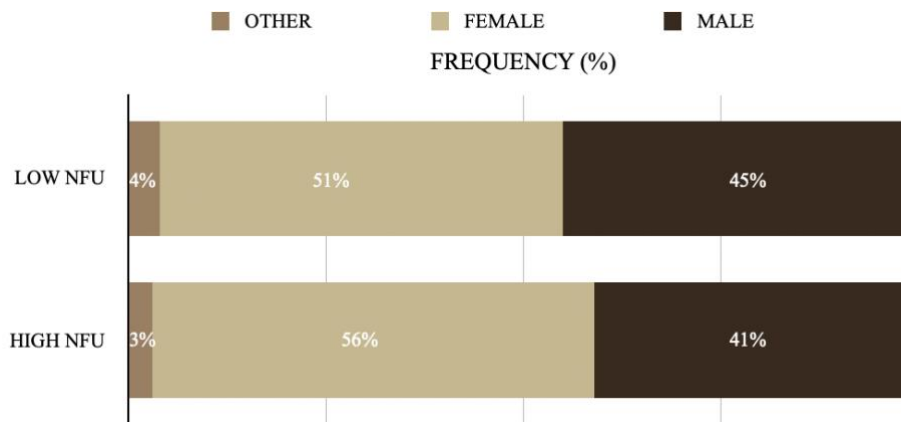


Figure 4.2 Frequency distribution of gender for the two consumer groups low NFU and high NFU.

4.1.3 MICOM

The three steps in the MICOM procedures were conducted in accordance with the methodology section. In the first step, we established configural invariance by confirming that the two groups were handled in the same way in the model and checked there were no potential data errors. In step two, we established compositional invariance by running a permutation algorithm for the two groups. The composite correlations of the two groups were not significantly lower than 1. After establishing these two types of invariances we moved on to the third and last step of the MICOM procedure.

Table 4.3 MICOM Step 2 constructs original correlation and attached permutation p-values.

	Original Correlation	Permutation P-values
Ability	1.000	0.974
Intention	1.000	0.296
Admiration	1.000	0.980
Pity	1.000	0.845
Envy	0.999	0.244
Contempt	1.000	0.875
Perceived emotional value	1.000	0.729

In the third step of the MICOM procedure, we observed that the mean original difference of perceived emotional value, *envy* and *pity* falls inside their 95 %-confidence interval. This result provides partial evidence of measurement invariance for the model. Concludingly, we established configural invariance, compositional invariance, and partial evidence for measurement invariance which according to Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt (2016) gives support for conducting a Multigroup Analysis (MGA).

Table 4.4 MICOM Step 3 constructs mean original differences and attached permutation p-values.

	Mean - Original Difference (Low NFU - High NFU)	Mean - Permutation Mean Difference (Low NFU - High NFU)	5.0%	95.0%	Permutation p-Values
Ability	0.424	0.001	-0.181	0.181	0,043
Intention	0.348	-0.000	-0.182	0.184	0.001
Admiration	-0.213	0.001	-0.186	0.184	0.027
Pity	0.182	-0.001	-0.188	0.185	0.053
Envy	-0.005	0.001	-0.184	0.180	0.477
Contempt	-0.210	-0.003	-0.186	0.182	0.032
Perceived emotional value	0.018	0.000	-0.180	0.183	0.435

4.1.4 Reliability and validity

Taken together, the results from the Cronbach's alpha and Composite reliability scores provided evidence for the reliability in the study. Specifically, both groups showed Cronbach's alpha values over the threshold of 0,8, ranging from 0,820–0,958 for all constructs except for *pity*. *Pity* had a slightly lower value than the lowest acceptable value 0,7, at 0,645 for the low NFU group and 0,686 for the high NFU. Consequently, the values indicated that the used indicators had sufficiently measured the study variables, excluding *pity*. Overall, the results strengthened the internal reliability of the two groups' results. Additionally, the Composite reliability scores of the variables were all above the established threshold of 0,7. However, both groups showed results displaying values approaching 1 except for *pity*, such as *intention* in both groups, for example, at 0,974 for *intention* for the high NFU group and 0,970 for low NFU. As a result, while it is preferable to have high composite reliability scores, scores clearly above nine could indicate flaws in the reliability of the study.

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) provided support for internal validity. All variables of the model and for both groups showed AVE-values exceeding 0,5, meaning that the variables can explain the variance of its indicators. Consequently, these results implied that the internal validity of the variables were reasonably strong.

Table 4.5 Calculated values of the Cronbach's alpha, Composite reliability and Average Variance Extracted for consumers with high NFU.

	HIGH NFU		
	CRONBACH'S ALPHA	COMPOSITE RELIABILITY	AVERAGE VARIANCE EXTRACTED (AVE)
Ability	0.844	0.927	0.864
Intention	0.947	0.974	0.949
Admiration	0.946	0.965	0.902
Pity	0.686	0.857	0.751
Envy	0.841	0.926	0.863
Contempt	0.958	0.973	0.923
Perceived emotional value	0.960	0.974	0.926

Table 4.6 Calculated values of the Cronbach's alpha, Composite reliability and Average Variance Extracted for consumers with low NFU.

LOW NFU			
	CRONBACH'S ALPHA	COMPOSITE RELIABILITY	AVERAGE VARIANCE EXTRACTED (AVE)
Ability	0.834	0.923	0.857
Intention	0.939	0.970	0.942
Admiration	0.923	0.951	0.867
Pity	0.645	0.844	0.731
Envy	0.820	0.917	0.847
Contempt	0.923	0.951	0.867
Perceived emotional value	0.918	0.948	0.859

4.1.5 Coefficient of determination

The coefficients of determination (R^2) values of the dependent variables were analysed to understand how well the independent variables explained these. Looking at the R^2 values of brand emotions of the low NFU group showed that the stereotypes of *ability* and *intention* explain the dependent variable of *admiration* moderately (0,602), and weaker power of explanation for *contempt* (0,452), *pity* (0,415), and *envy* (0,292). Furthermore, it was observed that these four independent variables could moderately explain the perceived emotional value of a brand (0,696). Thus, the variables were explained in a range from strongly moderate to weak for the group with low NFU.

When compared to the high NFU group, were differences observed. The group of respondents with high NFU showed consistently lower R^2 values for the dependent variables of *admiration* (0,134), *pity* (0,223), *envy* (0,219), and *contempt* (0,106) as compared to the other group. Looking at the R^2 values of brand emotions of the high NFU group showed that the stereotypes of *ability* and *intention* more weakly explained the dependent variables *admiration*, *pity*, *envy*, and *contempt* compared to the group with low NFU. Furthermore, brand emotions of *admiration*, *pity*, *envy*, and *contempt* strongly explained the dependent variable perceived emotional value, which showed an R^2 value of 0.788.

Table 4.7 Calculated R^2 values for consumers with low NFU and high NFU.

LOW NFU	
	R square
Admiration	0.602
Pity	0.415
Envy	0.292
Contempt	0.452
Perceived emotional value	0.696

HIGH NFU	
Hypotheses	R square
Admiration	0.134
Pity	0.223
Envy	0.219
Contempt	0.106
Perceived emotional value	0.788

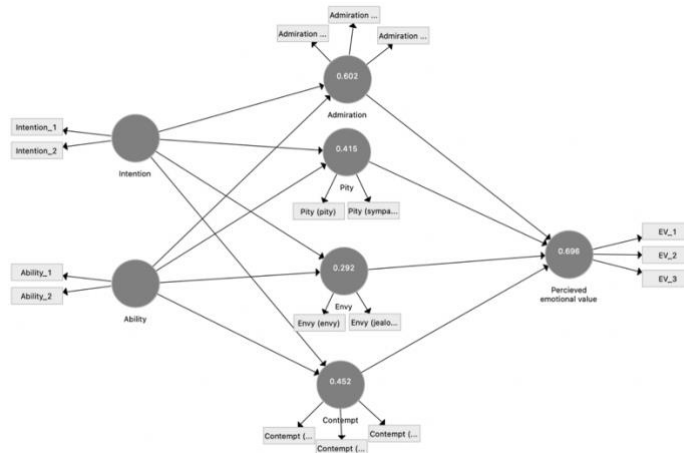


Figure 4.3 R^2 values in the SmartPLS model for the low NFU group.

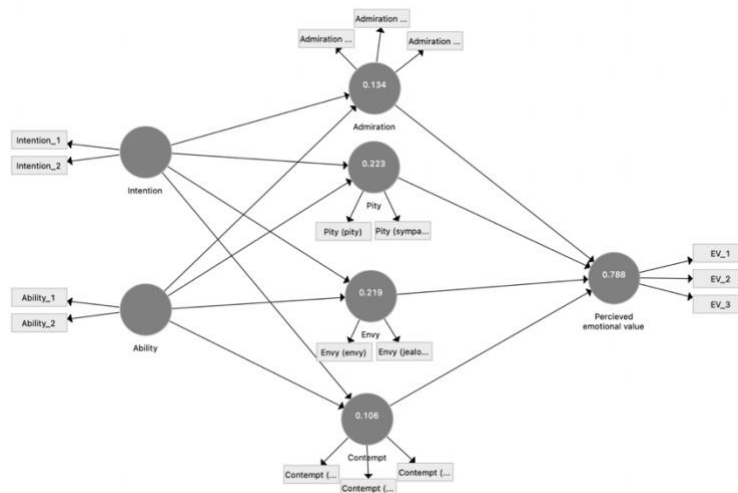


Figure 4.4 R^2 values in the SmartPLS model for the high NFU group.

4.2 Main Analysis of the Data

The principal analysis follows the stated data analysis approach in the methodology section. While conducting the hypothesis testing, the statistical significance should be considered by establishing a null hypothesis that refers to a finding that occurred by chance and an alternative hypothesis that a finding is not caused by chance (Bruns & Burns, 2008). Following that, we understood whether there were significant relationships between constructs by rejecting or failing to reject the null hypothesis. For the sake of determining whether the null hypothesis should be rejected or failed to be rejected, we considered a significance level of 0,05 or alfa 5 %. It means that the null hypothesis would either fail to be rejected or rejected based on the p-value results from the one-tailed t-test concerning the significance level of 0,05. Hence, the null hypothesis would fail to be rejected if the p-value level was more than 5% ($p > 0,05$) and was, in contrast, rejected if the p-value level was below 5% ($p < 0,05$). The principal analysis was divided into three sections following the logical order of the three sets of hypotheses. Firstly, the hypotheses relating to the brand stereotype dimensions effect brand emotions for both consumer groups separately. Secondly, hypotheses relating to the moderating influence of NFU and differences between the two groups brand stereotypes effect on brand emotions. Thirdly, the hypotheses relating to the brand emotion *admiration* effect on consumers' perceived emotional value. Finally, we summarise the analysis and present a comprehensive table of all the hypotheses testing results.

4.2.1 Relationship between brand stereotypes and brand emotions low NFU group

Table 4.8 illustrates the values expected for brand stereotypes, *intention* and *ability*'s effect on the brand emotions of *admiration*, *pity*, *envy*, and *contempt* for the consumers with low NFU.

Table 4.8 Calculated path coefficients and p-values for the hypothesis referring to the relationship between brand stereotypes and brand emotions. The table includes the values for the hypothesis referring to consumers with low NFU (H1a-H8a).

LOW NFU				
Hypotheses	Effect from Brand Stereotype to Brand Emotion	Expected Effect	Path Coefficients	P-Value
H1a	Ability → Admiration	+	0,262	< 0,001
H2a	Intention → Admiration	+	0.614	< 0,001
H3a	Ability → Pity	-	-0,283	< 0,001
H4a	Intention → Pity	+	0,731	< 0,001
H5a	Ability → Envy	+	0,413	< 0,001
H6a	Intention → Envy	-	-0,602	< 0,001
H7a	Ability → Contempt	-	-0,322	< 0,001
H8a	Intention → Contempt	-	-0,455	< 0,001

Low NFU: *Ability* → *Admiration*

table 4.8 illustrates that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* has a positive effect on the emotion of *admiration* ($\beta = 0,262$). The effect is significantly positive due to that the p-value is below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$) Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* has a significant positive effect on the brand emotion *admiration* for the group with low NFU.

H1a (accepted) The brand stereotype influences feelings of *admiration* such way that *ability* has a positive effect on *admiration* for consumers with low NFU.

Low NFU: *Intention* → *Admiration*

Table 4.8 illustrates that the brand stereotype dimension *intention* has a positive effect on the emotion of *admiration* ($\beta = 0,614$). The effect is significantly positive due to that the p-value is below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$) Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the brand stereotype dimension *intention* has a significant positive effect on the brand emotion *admiration* for the group with low NFU.

H2a: (accepted) The brand stereotype influences feelings of *admiration* such way that *intention* has a positive effect on *admiration* for consumers with low NFU.

Low NFU: *Ability* → *Pity*

Table 4.8 illustrates that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* has a negative effect on the emotion of *pity* ($\beta = -0,283$). The effect is significantly negative due to that the p-value is below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$) Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* has a significant negative effect on the brand emotion *pity* for the group with low NFU.

H3a: (accepted) The brand stereotype influences feelings of *pity* such way that *ability* has a negative effect on *pity* for consumers with low NFU.

Low NFU: *Intention* → *Pity*

Table 4.8 illustrates that the brand stereotype dimension *intention* has a positive effect on the emotion of *pity* ($\beta = 0,731$). The effect is significantly positive due to that the p-value is below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$) Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the brand stereotype dimension *intention* has a significant positive effect on the brand emotion *pity* for the group with low NFU.

H4a: (accepted) The brand stereotype influences feelings of *pity* such way that *intention* has a positive effect on *pity* for consumers with low NFU.

Low NFU: *Ability* → *Envy*

Table 4.8 illustrates that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* has a positive effect on the emotion of *envy* ($\beta = 0,413$). The effect is significantly positive due to that the p-value is below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$) Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* has a significant positive effect on the brand emotion *envy* for the group with low NFU.

H5a: (accepted) The brand stereotype influences feelings of *envy* such way that *ability* has a positive effect on *envy* for consumers with low NFU.

Low NFU: *Intention* → *Envy*

Table 4.8 illustrates that the brand stereotype dimension *intention* has a negative effect on the emotion of *envy* ($\beta = -0,602$). The effect is significantly negative due to that the p-value is below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$) Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the brand stereotype dimension *intention* has a significant negative effect on the brand emotion *envy* for the group with low NFU.

H6a: (accepted) The brand stereotype influences feelings of *envy* such way that *intention* has a negative effect on *envy* for consumers with low NFU.

Low NFU: *Ability* → *Contempt*

Table. 4.8 illustrates that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* has a negative effect on the emotion of *contempt* ($\beta = -0,322$). The effect is significantly negative due to that the p-value is below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$) Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* has a significant negative effect on the brand emotion *contempt* for the group with low NFU.

H7a: (Accepted) The brand stereotype influences feelings of *contempt* such way that *ability* has a negative effect on *contempt* for consumers with low NFU.

Low NFU: *Intention* → *Contempt*

Table 4.8 illustrates that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* has a negative effect on the emotion of *contempt* ($\beta = -0,451$). The effect is significantly negative due to that the p-value is below the alfa level

($p < 0,05$) Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* has a significant negative effect on the brand emotion *contempt* for the group with low NFU.

H8a: (accepted) The brand stereotype influences feelings of *contempt* such way that *intention* has a negative effect on *contempt* for consumers with low NFU.

4.2.2 Relationship between brand stereotypes and brand emotions high NFU group

Table 4.9 illustrates the values expected for brand stereotypes, *intention* and *ability*'s effect on the brand emotions of *admiration*, *pity*, *envy*, and *contempt* for the consumers with low NFU.

Table 4.9 Calculated path coefficients and p-values for the hypothesis referring to the relationship between brand stereotypes and brand emotions. The table includes the values for the hypothesis referring to consumers with high NFU (H1b-H8b).

HIGH NFU				
Hypotheses	Effect from Brand Stereotype to Brand Emotion	Expected Effect	Path Coefficients	P-Value
H1b	Ability → Admiration	-	-0,353	0.002
H2b	Intention → Admiration	-	-0,020	0.440
H3b	Ability → Pity	-	-0,251	0.003
H4b	Intention → Pity	+	0,599	< 0,001
H5b	Ability → Envy	+	0,577	< 0,001
H6b	Intention → Envy	-	-0,559	< 0,001
H7b	Ability → Contempt	+	0,372	< 0,001
H8b	Intention → Contempt	+	-0,077	0.236

High NFU: Ability → Admiration

Table 4.9 illustrates that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* has a negative effect on the emotion of *admiration* ($\beta = -0,353$). The effect is significantly negative due to that the p-value is below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$) Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* does have a significantly negative effect on the brand emotion *admiration* for the group with high NFU.

H1b: (accepted) The brand stereotype influences feelings of *admiration* such way that *ability* has a negative effect on *admiration* for consumers with high NFU.

High NFU: *Intention* → *Admiration*

Table 4.9 illustrates that the brand stereotype dimension *intention* has a negative effect on the emotion of *admiration* ($\beta = -0,020$). The effect is not significantly negative due to that the p-value is above the alfa level ($p > 0,05$) Hence the null hypothesis is failed to be rejected, meaning that the brand stereotype dimension *intention* does not have a significantly negative effect on the brand emotion *admiration* for the group with high NFU.

H2b: (rejected) The brand stereotype influences feelings of *admiration* such way that *intention* has a negative effect on *admiration* for consumers with high NFU.

High NFU: *Ability* → *Pity*

Table 4.9 illustrates that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* has a negative effect on the emotion of *pity* ($\beta = -0,251$). The effect is significantly negative due to that the p-value is below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$) Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* has a significant negative effect on the brand emotion *pity* for the group with high NFU.

H3b: (accepted) The brand stereotype influences feelings of *pity* such way that *ability* has a negative effect on *pity* for consumers with high NFU.

High NFU: *Intention* → *Pity*

Table 4.9 illustrates that the brand stereotype dimension *intention* has a positive effect on the emotion of *pity* ($\beta = 0,599$). The effect is significantly positive due to that the p-value is below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$) Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the brand stereotype dimension *intention* has a significant positive effect on the brand emotion *pity* for the group with high NFU.

H4b: (accepted) The brand stereotype influences feelings of *pity* such way that *intention* has a positive effect on *pity* for consumers with high NFU.

High NFU: *Ability* → *Envy*

Table 4.9 illustrates that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* has a positive effect on the emotion of *envy* ($\beta = 0,557$). The effect is significantly positive due to that the p-value is below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$) Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* has a significant positive effect on the brand emotion *envy* for the group with high NFU.

H5b: (accepted) The brand stereotype influences feelings of *envy* such way that *ability* has a positive effect on *envy* for consumers with high NFU.

High NFU: *Intention* → *Envy*

Table 4.9 illustrates that the brand stereotype dimension *intention* has a negative effect on the emotion of *envy* ($\beta = -0,559$). The effect is significantly negative due to that the p-value is below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$) Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the brand stereotype dimension *intention* has a significant negative effect on the brand emotion *envy* for the group with high NFU.

H6b: (accepted) The brand stereotype influences feelings of *envy* such way that *intention* has a negative effect on *envy* for consumers with high NFU.

High NFU: *Ability* → *Contempt*

Table 4.9 illustrates that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* has a positive effect on the emotion of *contempt* ($\beta = 0,422$). The effect is significantly positive due to that the p-value is below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$) Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the brand stereotype dimension *ability* has a significant positive effect on the brand emotion *contempt* for the group with high NFU.

H7b (accepted) The brand stereotype influences feelings of *contempt* such way that *ability* has a positive effect on *contempt* for consumers with high NFU.

High NFU: *Intention* → *Contempt*

Table 4.9 illustrates that the brand stereotype dimension *intention* has a negative effect on the emotion of *contempt* ($\beta = -0,077$). The effect is not significantly negative due to that the p-value is above the alfa level ($p > 0,05$) Hence the null hypothesis is failed to be rejected, meaning that the brand stereotype dimension *intention* has no significant negative effect on the brand emotion *contempt* for the group with high NFU.

H8b: (rejected) The brand stereotype influences feelings of *contempt* such way that *intention* has a positive effect on *contempt* for consumers with high NFU.

4.2.3 The moderating effect of need for uniqueness

The hypothesis H9a-H12b refers to if the relationship between the brand stereotype dimensions and the brand emotions is moderated by the need for being unique. In other words, if there is a significant difference between the two groups in terms of the expected relationship between the brand stereotype dimensions and the perceived emotional value. In the following sections the respective hypothesis will be considered in relation to the results from the MGA.

Table 4.10 Result from MGA displaying p-values for if there are significant differences between the path loadings between low NFU consumers and high NFU consumers.

MGA Parametrics Test		
Hypotheses	Path loadings	P-Value
H9a	Ability → Admiration	< 0,001
H9b	Intention → Admiration	< 0,001
H10a	Ability → Pity	0,384
H10b	Intention → Pity	0,073
H11a	Ability → Envy	0,097
H11b	Intention → Envy	0,370
H12a	Ability → Contempt	< 0,001
H12b	Intention → Contempt	0,001

Ability → Admiration

In the relationship between *ability* and *admiration* there is a significant difference between the two groups. The difference between the groups is significant due to the p-value being below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$). Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the effect from brand stereotype dimension *ability* to the brand emotion *admiration* is significantly different for the two groups low and high NFU.

H9a: (accepted) The relationship between *ability* and *admiration* is moderated by NFU, such that the effect is positive for low NFU and negative for high NFU.

Intention → Admiration

In the relationship between *intention* and *admiration* there is a significant difference between the two groups. The difference between the groups is significant due to the p-value being below the alfa level (p

< 0,05). Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the effect from brand stereotype dimension *intention* to the brand emotion *admiration* is significantly different for the two groups' low and high NFU.

H9b: (accepted) The relationship between *intention* and *admiration* is moderated by NFU, such that the effect is positive for low NFU and negative for high NFU.

Ability → Pity

In the relationship between *ability* and *pity* there is no significant difference between the two groups. The difference between the groups is not significant due to the p-value being above the alfa level ($p > 0,05$). Hence the null hypothesis failed to be rejected, meaning that the effect from brand stereotype dimension *ability* to the brand emotion *pity* is not significantly different for the two groups' low and high NFU.

H10a: (accepted) The relationship between *ability* and *pity* is not moderated by NFU, such that the effect is negative for low NFU and negative for high NFU.

Intention → Pity

In the relationship between *intention* and *pity* there is no significant difference between the two groups. The difference between the groups is not significant due to the p-value being above the alfa level ($p > 0,05$). Hence the null hypothesis failed to be rejected, meaning that the effect from brand stereotype dimension *intention* to the brand emotion *pity* is not significantly different for the two groups' low and high NFU.

H10b: (accepted) The relationship between *intention* and *pity* is not moderated by NFU, such that the effect is positive for low NFU and positive for high NFU.

Ability → Envy

In the relationship between *ability* and *envy* there is no significant difference between the two groups. The difference between the groups is not significant due to the p-value being above the alfa level ($p > 0,05$). Hence the null hypothesis is failed to be rejected, meaning that the effect from brand stereotype dimension *ability* to the brand emotion *envy* is not significantly different for the two groups' low and high NFU.

H11a: (accepted) The relationship between *ability* and *envy* is not moderated by NFU, such that the effect is positive for low NFU and positive for high NFU.

Intention → Envy

In the relationship between *intention* and *envy* there is no significant difference between the two groups. The difference between the groups is not significant due to the p-value being above the alfa level ($p > 0,05$). Hence the null hypothesis is failed to be rejected, meaning that the effect from brand stereotype dimension *intention* to the brand emotion *envy* is not significantly different for the two groups' low and high NFU.

H11b: (accepted) The relationship between *intention* and *pity* is not moderated by NFU, such that the effect is negative for low NFU and negative for high NFU.

Ability → Contempt

In the relationship between *ability* and *contempt* there is a significant difference between the two groups. The difference between the groups is significant due to the p-value being below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$). Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the effect from brand stereotype dimension *ability* to the brand emotion *contempt* is significantly different for the two groups' low and high NFU.

H12a: (accepted) The relationship between *ability* and *contempt* is moderated by NFU, such that the effect is negative for low NFU and positive for high NFU.

Intention → Contempt

In the relationship between *intention* and *contempt* there is a significant difference between the two groups. The difference between the groups is significant due to the p-value being below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$). Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the effect from brand stereotype dimension *intention* to the brand emotion *contempt* is significantly different for the two groups' low and high NFU.

H12b: (accepted) The relationship between *intention* and *contempt* is moderated by NFU, such that the effect is negative for low NFU and positive for high NFU.

4.2.4 The relationship between brand emotions and perceived emotional value for low and high NFU

In hypotheses H13a-H13b we explored the brand emotion *admiration* effect on consumers perceived emotional value. Table 4.11 illustrate path coefficients, the effect, and show the relationship between the independent variable *admiration* as and the dependent variable consumers perceived emotional value.

Table 4.11 Path loadings for hypotheses H13a and H13b with expected effect and attached path coefficients and p-values

Low NFU				
Hypothesis	Path loadings	Expected effect	Path coefficient	P-value
H13a	Admiration → Perceived emotional value	+	0,465	< 0,001

High NFU				
Hypothesis	Path loadings	Expected effect	Path coefficient	P-value
H13b	Admiration → Perceived emotional value	+	0,474	< 0,001

Table 4.12 Table with calculated Cohen's f^2 for consumers of low and high NFU

Low NFU	
Path loading	Cohen's f^2
Admiration → Perceived emotional value	0,444

High NFU	
Path loading	Cohen's f^2
Admiration → Perceived emotional value	0,507

Table 4.11 illustrates that the brand emotion *admiration* positively affects the perceived emotional value ($\beta = 0,469$) for consumers with a low NFU. The effect is significantly positive due to the p-value being below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$). Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the brand emotion *admiration* has a significantly positive effect on the perceived emotional value for the group with low

NFU. This is supported by Cohen's f^2 value in table 4.12, indicating the effect size that *admiration* has a substantial effect size with a value over 0,15.

H13a: (accepted) *Admiration* has a positive effect on perceived emotional value for consumers with low NFU.

The same insights are gained for the group with high NFU. The table. illustrates that the brand emotion *admiration* positively affects the perceived emotional value ($\beta = 0,494$). The effect is significantly positive due to the p-value being below the alfa level ($p < 0,05$). Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the brand emotion *admiration* has a significantly positive effect on the perceived emotional value for the group with low NFU. Similarly, *Pity* had a significant positive effect on perceived emotional value for the group with high NFU. This is supported by Cohen's f^2 value in table 4.12, indicating the effect size that *admiration* has a substantial effect size with a value over 0,15.

H13b: (accepted) *Admiration* has a positive effect on perceived emotional value for consumers with high NFU.

4.3 Summary of the results

In summary, the results indicate that there are significant differences and similarities between brand stereotypes, brand emotions, and perceived emotional value for the two consumer groups with low and high NFU. The first part of the main data analysis concerned the brand stereotype dimensions' effect on brand emotions. The results indicate that the established effect between stereotypes and emotions holds for consumers with low NFU since all hypotheses were accepted (H1a-H8a). For consumers with high NFU, the results indicate that all hypotheses are accepted except hypotheses H2b and H8b that refer to the relationship between *intention* and the emotions of *admiration* and *contempt*. Nevertheless, the expected significant differences between the stereotypes' *intention* and *ability* and the emotions of *admiration* and *contempt* were confirmed when comparing the two groups' results (H9a, H9b, H12a, H12b). However, as expected, there were no significant differences between the stereotype's *intention* and *ability* and the brand emotions *pity* and *envy* when comparing the two groups' results (H10a, H10b, H11a, H11b). Finally, the results also confirmed that *admiration* has a significant positive effect on the consumer's perceived emotional value, which holds for both groups. It is supported by a strong effect size for both consumer

groups. The summary of the findings is illustrated in table 4.13 which shows the accepted and rejected hypotheses.

An extensive pre-analysis of the data supports the quality of the findings. Two groups were created through a median split, followed by an exploration of sample descriptives and data quality control of the dataset. The distribution of the participants shows that there is a fair division between the two groups of high and low NFU. Furthermore, the sample size exceeds the stated recommendations of 150 participants per group. The MICOM analysis showed partially satisfactory results, which enabled a good base for conducting the multi-group analysis. Further, the R^2 values as the coefficient of determination provided intermediate results. The results were solid for the group with low NFU compared to the group with high NFU. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability scores were acceptable, and validity scores of average variance extracted showed fairly strong values. In conclusion, the pre-analysis shows an acceptable data quality for the two groups.

Table 4.13 Summary of hypotheses and their results

Hypothesis	Description	Result
H1a	The brand stereotype influences feelings of admiration such way that ability has a positive effect on admiration for consumers with low NFU.	Accepted
H2a	The brand stereotype influences feelings of admiration such way that intention has a positive effect on admiration for consumers with low NFU.	Accepted
H3a	The brand stereotype influences feelings of pity such way that ability has a negative effect on pity for consumers with low NFU.	Accepted
H4a	The brand stereotype influences feelings of pity such way that intention has a positive effect on pity for consumers with low NFU.	Accepted
H5a	The brand stereotype influences feelings of envy such way that ability has a positive effect on envy for consumers with low NFU.	Accepted
H6a	The brand stereotype influences feelings of envy such way that intention has a negative effect on envy for consumers with low NFU.	Accepted
H7a	The brand stereotype influences feelings of contempt such way that ability has a negative effect on contempt for consumers with low NFU.	Accepted
H8a	The brand stereotype influences feelings of contempt such way that intention has a negative effect on contempt for consumers with low NFU.	Accepted
H1b	The brand stereotype influences feelings of admiration such way that ability has a negative effect on admiration for consumers with high NFU.	Accepted
H2b	The brand stereotype influences feelings of admiration such way that intention has a negative effect on admiration for consumers with high NFU.	Rejected
H3b	The brand stereotype influences feelings of pity such way that ability has a negative effect on pity for consumers with high NFU.	Accepted
H4b	The brand stereotype influences feelings of pity such way that intention has a positive effect on pity for consumers with high NFU.	Accepted
H5b	The brand stereotype influences feelings of envy such way that ability has a positive effect on envy for consumers with high NFU.	Accepted
H6b	The brand stereotype influences feelings of envy such way that intention has a negative effect on envy for consumers with high NFU.	Accepted
H7b	The brand stereotype influences feelings of contempt such way that ability has a positive effect on contempt for consumers with high NFU.	Accepted
H8b	The brand stereotype influences feelings of contempt such way that intention has a positive effect on contempt for consumers with high NFU.	Rejected
H9a	The relationship between ability and admiration is moderated by NFU, such that the effect is positive for low NFU and negative for high NFU.	Accepted
H9b	The relationship between intention and admiration is moderated by NFU, such that the effect is positive for low NFU and negative for high NFU.	Accepted
H10a	The relationship between ability and pity is not moderated by NFU, such that the effect is negative for low NFU and negative for high NFU.	Accepted
H10b	The relationship between intention and pity is not moderated by NFU, such that the effect is positive for low NFU and positive for high NFU.	Accepted
H11a	The relationship between ability and envy is not moderated by NFU, such that the effect is positive for low NFU and positive for high NFU.	Accepted
H11b	The relationship between intention and envy is not moderated by NFU, such that the effect is negative for low NFU and negative for high NFU.	Accepted
H12a	The relationship between ability and contempt is moderated by NFU, such that the effect is negative for low NFU and positive for high NFU.	Accepted
H12b	The relationship between intention and contempt is moderated by NFU, such that the effect is negative for low NFU and positive for high NFU.	Accepted
H13a	Admiration has a positive effect on perceived emotional value for consumers with low NFU.	Accepted
H13b	Admiration has a positive effect on perceived emotional value for consumers with high NFU.	Accepted

5 Discussion

The discussion chapter outlines a discussion of the empirical findings of this study. Thus, the discussion takes a departure in the problem formulation and the theoretical insights.

The results in this study indicate differences and similarities for consumers with high versus the low need for uniqueness (NFU) brand stereotypes, brand emotions, and perceived emotional value. These insights contribute to the limited research on the influences of consumer characteristics in the field of brand stereotyping and the need for current and future practitioners to understand target consumers to provide value. To dive further into the results, we consider previous research on brand stereotyping and understandings gained from the theory underlying the *Brand as Intentional Agents Framework (BIAF)* and the *Theory of Uniqueness* that this study draws upon. Thereby reconnecting with the research question: what is the relationship between brand stereotypes, brand emotions, and consumers' perceived value when moderated by consumers uniqueness needs? As a result, the significant findings are highlighted and discussed as a link to the conclusion section.

We predicted that there would be significant differences and similarities in the relationships between brand stereotypes, brand emotions, and perceived emotional value of the two groups. First, the relationships between brand stereotypes and brand emotions in the BIAF were observed to hold consumers with a low NFU. Second, consumers with a high NFU tend not to fully follow the relationships between brand stereotypes and brand emotions for the emotions of *admiration* and *contempt* put forward in the BIAF. Third, there are significant differences between the two groups regarding the emotion of *admiration* and *contempt* but not *pity* and *envy*. Fourth, both consumers with high versus low NFU who feel *admiration* tend to gain a high emotional value from a brand. The four main findings will guide the discussion as we advance.

The results indicate that for consumers of low NFU, the perceived *intention* and *ability* elicit certain brand emotions, confirming the BIAF. Besides, the results show a similar combination of *intention* and *ability* that form the emotions *admiration*, *pity*, *envy* and *contempt*. Thereby, the relationships between *intention* and *ability* and respective brand emotion of *admiration*, *pity*, *envy*, and *contempt* are similar to the findings in the BIAF presented by Kervyn, Fiske, and Malone

(2012), despite using a different method for data analysis. Hence, this study confirms similarly to previous studies such as Ivens et al. (2015) that certain relationships exist between these brand stereotype dimensions and brand emotions for brands. Also, similarly, the univalent emotions of *admiration* and *contempt* are better explained by the stereotype dimensions compared to the ambivalent emotions of *pity* and *envy*. However, compared to previous research from Ivens et al. (2015), our results indicated a relationship between consumers' perception of *intention* and *ability* and all emotions in the BIAF rather than the SCM. Significantly, consumers with low NFU perception of a brand's *intention* can indicate the emotion they attribute to that brand. For instance, Kervyn, Fiske, and Malone (2012) were unable to significantly identify that a consumer's emotion of *envy* is expected from a brand stereotype of low *intention*. Moreover, they could not determine that a consumer's emotion of *pity* is expected from a brand stereotype of high *intention*. However, previous researchers' results are not based on a consumer group with low NFU, which opens up a discussion about how consumers' NFU characteristics influence their perception and emotions. It is valuable to explore these insights further concerning consumers with a high NFU to understand how NFU moderates the relationship between brand stereotypes and brand emotions.

In contrast, consumers of high NFU do not fully follow the theory in the BIAF because the perceived *intention* does not significantly affect all emotions. BIAF illustrates that the perceived *intention* and *ability* elicit distinct and predictable emotions (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012). However, this study indicates otherwise. Based on our results, it is not possible to say that the stereotype *intention* affects *admiration* and *contempt* in a certain way. Besides, our results do not follow the predicted pattern from the combination of *intention* and *ability* in the BIAF for the emotions of *admiration* and *contempt*. One parallel to the specific practices of consumers with high NFU is the previous SCM research from Bennet, Hill and Oleksiuk (2013) that show minority groups tend to follow a distinct pattern for stereotype and emotional response compared to the majority public. Although we expected these emotions to be explained differently for consumers with high NFU, we were surprised that stereotypes did not explain the emotions well. In previous research from the SCM and BIAF, *admiration* and *contempt* are well-explained compared to *pity* and *envy* (Ivens et al., 2015; Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012; Fiske, Cuddy & Glick, 2007). As a result, it is valuable to consider the significant differences and similarities between high NFU consumers and low NFU consumers to understand further why this might be the case.

The results in this study indicate differences and similarities for consumers with high versus low NFU brand stereotypes and brand emotions. Previous research on the BIAF and the related theory Stereotype Content Model provides limited insights into how consumer characteristics moderates these frameworks. Although previous researchers have considered demographic variables such as race influences stereotypes and emotional responses (Bennett, Hill & Oleksiuk, 2013), latest research connected to brand stereotyping focuses on brand characteristics, for example, global or localness (Davvetas & Halkias, 2019; Kolbl et al., 2020) or brands features of anthropomorphism (Zhang et al., 2020). However, considering that consumers have an inherited need for being unique, explained in the *Theory of Uniqueness* (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977), we argued that this could potentially influence the way that consumers stereotype brands and form emotions about these brands. Contrary to previous research (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012; Ivens et al., 2015), our results show that there are significant differences in the relationships between stereotypes of *intention* and *ability*, and emotions of *admiration* and *contempt* when taking consumers NFU into account. However, for the ambivalent emotions *pity* and *envy*, which consists of only one strong stereotype dimension, the results are not significantly different between the two groups. Overall, these results were expected and enhances the need for actors to consider the differences in NFU for consumer groups when understanding what the relationship is between perceived brand stereotypes and evoked emotions. Also, that in general, a brand's perceived *intention* and *ability* are affecting the emotions consumers tend to form. Therefore, should the significant differences and similarities be further explored.

One possible explanation could be that consumers with low NFU tend to find more comfort in choices that are more popular than their counterparts. For instance, Lynn and Harris (1997) find that consumers with low NFU tend to not search for provocative and unique shopping venues like consumers with high NFU. Similarly, Snyder and Fromkin (1980) argue based on the *Theory of Uniqueness* that consumers with high NFU place greater value on unique products. Amaldoss and Jain (2005) also agree with this, saying that consumers with higher NFU experience a diminished sense of value from conspicuous consumption when a brand experiences an increased adoption. One might consider potential factors increasing adoption of certain brands to include providing higher quality of their goods or even displaying higher *intention* to take responsibility to the wider

society. Especially in the 21st century where a majority of consumers in the Nordics are talking about sustainability according to the Sustainable Brand Index in 2021 (Sustainable Brand Index, 2021). These brands perceived as having high *intention* and high *ability* would be referred to as popular brands (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012). Hence, as illustrated by the results consumers with a low NFU admire these brands.

In contrast, consumers with high NFU might feel *contempt* or even *envy* toward brands stereotyped as having high *ability*. These consumers might instead value brands with a low *ability* since they might not be as appealing to the wider consumer public like consumers with lower NFU that enjoys popular brands. Similarly, popular brands that tend to have a high *intention* and high *ability* (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012) might not be admired by consumers with high NFU because of their popularity. However, the results were not significantly negative for the brand stereotype *intention* to affect *admiration* nor positive for *intention* to affect *contempt*. However, based on the results from the MGA, there are significant differences between these groups, namely that consumers with a high NFU tend to find brands they perceive as having a lower *intention* more admired than consumers with lower NFU. As a result, this discussion illuminates that brands aiming to be admired might consider their target consumers uniqueness characteristics rather than merely the aim of becoming a popular brand.

Additionally, the results also show that consumers with low and high NFU tend to form similar relationships between *intention* and *ability* and the brand emotions of *pity* and *envy*. As previously stated, brands perceived as admired have a high positive *intention* and *ability* (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012), confirmed by this study for consumers with low NFU. In contrast, consumers with high NFU are found to admire brands with a low *ability* and possibly low *intention* based on the multigroup analysis, previously viewed by Kervyn, Fiske & Malone (2012) as troubled brands. However, the brand emotions *pity* and *envy* contain one high and one low brand stereotype dimension so they would be neither popular nor troubled. Consequently, independent of a consumer's NFU pitied and envied brands might moderately attract the consumer groups, resulting in similar connections between brand stereotypes and brand emotions. This would be in line with previous studies from Ivens et al. (2015) on brand stereotyping that showed *pity* and *envy* to be ambivalent emotions that are not as easily explained as univalent emotions of *admiration* and

contempt. Vaccaro, Kaplan and Damasio (2020) agrees by illustrating that ambivalent emotions are bittersweet and combinations of both positive and negative aspects, like in this case, negative and positive effects from the stereotype dimensions *intention* and *ability*. Furthermore, individuals often avoid these emotional states (Zajonc, 1960), which poses interesting questions for future research in brand stereotyping and the broader field of consumer behaviour.

Within the brand perception literature, consumers are said to reflect and seek certain self-images, attitudes, associations, and prestige by using certain brands (Martinez, 2012). Similarly, in the brand stereotype literature researchers point to stereotypes being a form of perception which shapes the way individuals form categories stimulus like individuals (Foxall, 2014; Armstrong, Kotler & Opresnik, 2016) and also brands (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Sethna & Blythe, 2019). Similarly, Tian Bearden and Hunter (2001) state that based on the theory of uniqueness, the search for specific brands is influenced by the consumers' uniqueness-seeking activities. From this perspective, there are differences in the connection between brand stereotypes and brand emotions due to the different uniqueness-seeking activities of the two consumer groups. For example, consumers with high NFU seem to put significant effort into establishing a unique identity and expression through using distinguished brands (Shavitt, 1989). For example, when a consumer of high NFU evaluates which fashion brand to buy, they would recall the stereotyped perception they have of a particular brand. If they perceive this brand to have a low *ability* to implement and a low *intention* towards the general public, the consumer with high NFU tends to react with feelings of *admiration* for it, while consumers with low NFU tend to react with *contempt*. This result is in line with Simonson and Nowlis's (2000) research claiming that consumers with high NFU would seek unconventional brands. Arguably these unconventional choices could explain the differences in how these two consumer groups form certain emotions based on their stereotype perception about a particular brand.

The different brands that consumers with varying NFU seek out could also be related to the relationship they form with brands as possessions. For example, Fournier (1998) previously documented certain relationships that consumers might establish with brands. Thus, people tend to buy brands because of what they mean, not just what they do. Hence, consumers with various NFU might admire brands with different perceived *intentions* and *abilities* because these brands

mean something to them as individuals. From the perspective of the *Theory of Uniqueness*, consumers constantly react and take actions based on their perception of their similarity to others (Snyder and Fromkin, 1977; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980; Snyder & Lynn, 2002). In this sense, could consumers with low NFU enjoy the similarity to others and react with a favourable emotion towards a brand with higher *intention* and *ability* because it says something about them as a person. This would be in line with Snyder (1992), arguing that individuals can express levels of uniqueness by seeking out particular possessions like brands.

For example, scarce products like luxury brands are highly sought after by consumers with high NFU. Stereotypically, a luxury brand (Amaldoss & Jain, 2005) might not have the best quality or good *intentions* for the general public. However, consumers with high NFU might feel *admiration* towards this brand since it enables them to feel exclusive and distinct by owning it. These results are in line with previous research pointing to how status consumption can intensify NFU (Chan et al., 2015; Park, Rabolt & Sook Jeon, 2008). Consequently, since consumers constantly form stereotypes and emotions that guide their desire to possess certain brands, the differences and similarities could indicate the importance of considering consumer characteristics when managing consumer relationships.

The differences and similarities in the relationship between brand stereotypes and brand emotions for consumers with varying NFU might also be explored from the perspective of their reference groups. Previous researchers referring to the *Theory of Uniqueness* state that a consumer's NFU corresponds to the products they consume to get a better self and social image (Tian, Bearden & Hunter, 2001; Tian and Mckenzie, 2001). We consider this a possible explanation of why the consumer's NFU moderates the relationship between stereotype perception and emotions *admiration* and *contempt*. According to Snyder and Fromkin (1980), consumers with high NFU tend to seek out brands with distinct designs or features to make themselves stand out from their own in-group. For example, purchasing a CD player that is perceived as not having the *ability* to provide up-to-date music or evoking relational *intentions* by one's reference group might be highly admired by the teenager who wants to stand out from a group using digital music services.

However, a consumer with lower NFU might *contempt* this brand because it does not match their level of uniqueness seeking. Hence, in line with research pointing out that if uniqueness needs are not considered, this can cause a threat to individuals identity (Berger & Heath, 2007). From this perspective, brand stereotypes elicit different emotions for brands because consumers' individual NFU guides which brands they admire or not that could enable them to express their inclusion or exclusion of a particular reference group. As a result, we could link the connection between brand stereotypes and brand emotions to the way consumers view themselves and their social belonging. The differences and similarities between the consumer groups are ultimately from this perspective, affecting how brands should approach the segments.

The final hypotheses referred to the relationship between *admiration* and perceived emotional value, proposing a positive effect on perceived emotional value for both consumer groups. The results confirmed that the emotion of *admiration* positively affects the consumer's perceived emotional value for both consumer groups. It could reflect the importance of considering emotions in marketing because it guides consumer behaviour (Cross & Carbery, 2016; Pawle & Cooper, 2006), such as cognitive processes (Soscia, 2013) where consumers, in this case, perceive a brand to provide them with emotional value. Regardless of consumers' high or low NFU, they tend to find perceived emotional value in brands they admire. Kotler and Keller (2016) state that consumer emotions can allow consumers to experience pride, self-confidence, or disgust. In this case, consumers with certain levels of NFU can find a brand that they admire, which could enable them to express who they are as a person. Previous researchers have highlighted that consumers do not only find brands more functional features valuable but also their emotional (Ahuvia, 2005; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005) and relational (Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004; MacInnis, Park & Priester, 2009). It relates to the BIAF, which tries to capture that both a brand's *ability* and more relational aspects of *intention* plays a part in forming the emotions and responses towards brands (Kervyn, Fiske and Malone, 2012). All in all, feelings of *admiration* seem beneficial for brands regardless of the consumers' level of NFU.

The observation that the emotion of *admiration* has a positive effect on perceived emotional value could be explained by it being a univalent emotion, as previously examined by Ivens et al. (2015). Their research with the SCM for brands illustrates that *admiration* and *contempt* elicit stronger

behavioural *intentions* and attitude responses. Although Ivens et al. (2015) take a departure from a different theoretical stance by applying SCM, their results show that univalent emotions elicit more robust responses are in line with previous studies for social perception (Fiske, Cuddy & Glick, 2007; Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2008). Therefore, the brand emotion of *admiration* might have the most substantial positive effect on perceived emotional value because this emotion is unilateral, making the consumer clear about their responses based on feeling this emotion. Additionally, previous researchers have found that the perception of brands influences their purchase *intention* (Dodds, Monroe & Grewal, 1991) and that admired brands tend to increase purchase *intention* and loyalty (Aaker, Garbinsky & Vohs, 2012) which poses interesting avenues for future research with basis in this study's results.

Moreover, although the two groups' results are similar, their thought processes may differ. Walsh, Shiu and Hassan (2014) state that affective states or emotions that consumers find beneficial provides emotional value. Although brands that consumers with high and low NFU admire tend to elicit emotional values, the brands they find valuable may differ. Simonson and Nowlis (2000) articulate that consumers with high NFU will evaluate consumption choices differently from consumers of low NFU, implying that personality traits affect both consumers' decision-making processes and attitudes regarding brands. For example, consumers with high NFU want to satisfy their desire to be distinct (Park, Rabolt & Sook Jeon, 2008), so they might evaluate and find value in brands based on their *ability* to do so. In contrast, consumers of low NFU might instead enjoy how a popular brand helps them follow the same consumption patterns as others (Workman & Kidd, 2000). Although these personality traits have been challenging to link to decision-making processes (Kassarjian, 1971), researchers can uncover the effects by using theory-based analysis where the particular characteristic operates (Haugtvedt, Petty & Cacioppo, 1992). In essence, admired brands are probably brands that help consumers of high NFU to achieve slight similarity and consumers of low NFU to achieve higher similarity towards others.

In summary, the discussion has enabled a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of the results of this study. The relationship between perceived brand stereotypes and emotions in the BIAF holds for consumers with low NFU. In contrast, consumers with high NFU did not fully follow the established relationships of the BIAF, especially for the *intention* dimension related to *admiration*

and *contempt*. It opened for the discussion of the influence of their uniqueness needs in the way that they form distinct patterns in how they stereotype and form emotions. The differences between the groups primarily lie in forming the emotions of *admiration* which were considered concerning consumers' NFU which tend to influence their view on self-images, possession, and reference groups. Further, *admiration* has a positive effect on perceived emotional value for both consumer groups, which were discussed concerning how emotions influence consumer behaviour, the emotional value of brands, univalent emotions, and consumers' uniqueness needs in evaluating the emotional benefit. With departure in the discussion, the following chapter will present the conclusion of this study, its theoretical, practical, and societal implications to finally provide an overview of the limitations and future research.

6 Conclusions

The concluding chapter reconnects to this study's purpose and research question when presenting the conclusions of the results. Also, it outlines the theoretical, practical, societal and consumer implications. The chapter ends with pointing out the limitations of this study as well as future research directions.

6.1 Main Conclusions

The conclusions drawn from this study are only generalizable to the sample in this study because of the nonprobability sampling method. The purpose of this study was to quantitatively investigate the moderating effect of consumers' need for uniqueness (NFU) in the relationship between perceived brand stereotypes, brand emotions, and perceived customer value. In doing so, we are studying the relationships in the *Brands as Intentional Agents' Framework* (BIAF) for consumers with higher versus lower uniqueness needs. Hence, providing further insights into the topic of brand stereotyping by considering individual characteristics. Consequently, the research question for this study is:

What is the relationship between brand stereotypes, brand emotions and consumers perceived value when moderated by consumers uniqueness needs?

The stated research question was answered through conducting a Multigroup Analysis (MGA) and showed the effect that the brand stereotype dimensions *intention* and *ability* has on the respective emotion of *admiration*, *pity*, *envy*, and *contempt* based on the relationships in the BIAF. In addition, showing the effect *admiration* has on consumer's perceived emotional value. The results enabled an understanding of the relationship between the constructs by enabling insight into the relationships for Swedish consumers with both low and high NFU and significant differences and similarities between the two groups.

Significant differences were found between the brand stereotypes of *intention* and *ability* and the brand emotions of *admiration* and *contempt* for the two groups. Especially, the *intention* dimension did not have a significant effect on the emotions *contempt* and *admiration* for the

consumers with high NFU. Furthermore, no significant difference was found in the relationship between *intention* and *ability* and the emotions of *pity* and *envy* for the two groups. However, the relationship between the brand stereotype dimensions and the brand emotions were overall weaker for the group of consumers with high NFU. Moreover, the relationship between the brand emotion of *admiration* and perceived emotional value was examined in the second part of the theoretical framework. The results showed that *admiration* has a positive effect on perceived emotional value for both consumers with low and high NFU.

Concludingly, there is a relationship between Swedish consumers' perceived stereotypes of brands based on the dimension's *ability* and *intention* and the brand emotions *admiration*, *pity*, *envy*, and *contempt*. However, the relationship between brand stereotypes of *ability* and *intention* and brand emotions for *admiration* and *contempt* differs for consumers with low versus high NFU. In contrast, the relationships between brand stereotypes of *ability* and *intention* and brand emotions of *pity* and *envy* are similar for consumers with low versus high NFU. In addition, the emotion of *admiration* is desirable to achieve for both consumers with low and high NFU since this emotion tends to elicit a high perceived emotional value. This study points out that it is valuable to consider consumers' characteristics in terms of their NFU since there can be significant differences and similarities between the groups in their relationship between brand perceptions as stereotypes and brand emotions. Hence, it showed that the perception of consumers with a specific level of NFU tends to affect their emotions towards brands. The research points to the brand emotion of *admiration* being desirable to attain no matter the level of NFU. Consequently, this study shows the relationship between perceived brand stereotypes, brand emotions, and consumers perceived emotional value; although valuable insights in themselves, it is also crucial for actors to consider consumers uniqueness characteristics.

6.2 Theoretical implications

The following section outlines the theoretical implications of this study. The results from this study illuminate findings that contribute to the literature from several perspectives. The implications are related to previous research within brand stereotyping while also considering its wider research domain of brand perception and consumer behaviour relating to corporate brands.

This study illustrates the chain drawing from brand stereotyping, brand emotions, and perceived emotional value as a response. In accordance with the BIAF and the underlying theory in the SCM, our study displays that stereotypes that are perceptions affect how individuals form emotions and that emotions influence their responses. Especially in line with the BIAF, consumers' perception about *intention* and *ability* are influencing the emotions consumers tend to form about brands. The results in this study provide full support for consumers with low NFU, where eight of eight hypotheses were supported. In contrast, we provide full support for six of eight hypothesized relationships for consumers with a high NFU. In essence, while our study considers the whole chain from stereotype to emotions to response, the results support the current literature pointing that the chain is a way to understand how consumers' perception influences their emotions and how their emotions influence their response.

Furthermore, the results of this study illustrate a more nuanced picture of the relationships put forward in the BIAF by considering consumers' uniqueness needs. The theoretical stance in the BIAF, drawing from the SCM, illuminates certain relationships between perceived brand stereotypes and brand emotions while considering the consumer as a passive agent. While previous researchers have considered consumers' demographic segmentation (Bennet & Hill, 2012), and minority group belonging (Bennet, Hill & Oleksiuk, 2013), they have not considered consumers' inherited characteristics such as NFU in direct relation to the BIAF. Conversely, this study moderates the relationships in the BIAF with consumers' uniqueness needs based on the *Theory of Uniqueness*. Hence, our study adds a more fine-grained picture of the relationship in the BIAF and in general to the influence of non-demographic characteristics and their influence on the way consumers form such perceptions, emotions, and their response towards brands.

The findings also contribute to the brand stereotyping literature by illustrating the differences and similarities observed for the brand stereotypes, brand emotions, and perceived emotional value for consumers with low versus high NFU. The differences and similarities found in this study contradict the more homogenous picture put forward in the BIAF about the relationships between perceived brand stereotypes and brand emotions. Noteworthy, the original study from Kervyn, Fiske, and Malone (2012) did not consider any consumer characteristics in their analysis of such perceptions, brand emotions, and response. Hence, this study's findings offer new insights into

how emotions tend to form for consumers with varying uniqueness needs. Therefore, ignoring consumer's uniqueness needs can give a misleading picture when mapping the relationship between perceptions like brand stereotypes, brand emotions, and perceived emotional value as a response.

Furthermore, the findings add to the branding literature by establishing the link between brand emotions and perceived emotional value while also considering how brand stereotypes influence brand emotions. It complements the study from Kolbl et al. (2020) that only considered the direct influence from brand stereotypes on consumers perceived emotional value. In contrast to previous research on perceived value that has been interested in what effects it has on behavioural outcomes (Vieira, 2013), we consider the influence of emotions, formed by perceived *intention* and *ability*, on consumers' perceived value. In addition, our findings are in contrast to Kolbl et al. (2020), also considering the consumer's characteristics in terms of uniqueness needs. Specifically, the results show that the consumers who admire brands tend to perceive a high emotional value. Although, as discussed, there are differences in how consumers form *admiration* when tracing it to consumers' perceptions of *intention* and *ability*. All in all, the findings take a further step into considering how consumer's perceived emotional value is formed by relating the concept to the relationships between stereotypes and emotions put forward in the BIAF.

From a broader perspective, the results from this study address researchers' call for considering the consumer's characteristics in general (Bennet & Hill, 2012; Kolbl, Arslanagic-Kalajdzic & Diamantopoulos, 2019) and specifically when analysing the BIAF (Fournier & Alvarez. 2012). In other words, the study supports the notion that consumer's characteristics influence the way they stereotype and form emotions about brands. In line with Fournier and Alvarez (2012), the findings point to viewing the consumers as active rather than passive agents that hold specific characteristics that affect the otherwise simplified theoretical constructs. Hence, this study contributes with a more balanced theoretical basis for further analysis and studies by considering the uniqueness needs of consumers.

Moreover, the findings contribute to the notion that brands are agents, meaning that their *intention* and *ability* are essential to explaining how consumers perceive brands. Previous research from

Kervyn, Fiske, and Malone (2012) states that individuals tend to form mental states towards non-human objects although not universally accepted. Our findings support this notion by providing further support for the relationships between the brands *intention* and *ability* and the emotions of *admiration*, *pity*, *envy*, and *contempt* for brands. In a sense, continuing to strengthen the link between social perception and brand perception literature by showing that consumers form certain mental states for brands as non-human entities. Ultimately, posing implications for practitioners trying to obtain favourable perceptions, emotions, and responses toward their brands.

6.3 Practical implications

The results of our study suggest practical implications for marketing insights departments, strategic brand managers, community managers and chief marketing officers (CMO) or actors that want to better understand their consumers' behaviours. In today's marketing climate, psychographic data has seen an increase of interest for both marketing agencies and marketing departments (Saunders, 2020). This study allows actors to expand their knowledge about the importance of evaluating consumers' level of uniqueness, how to understand the relationship between how consumers' evaluation of brands' *intention* and *ability* influence their emotions and that practitioners should strive for consumers' *admiration* because it elicits perceived emotional value from the consumers perspective. Noteworthy, since this study is based on a non-probability sample, generalizability is limited to the sample in this study. Nevertheless, we discuss practical implications relevant for actors that want to get a more nuanced perspective on their target consumers behaviours in relation to their corporate brands.

One of the essential points of this study for practitioners is the importance of knowing the characteristics of their customers. As results from the data show, and in contrast to earlier research, improving performance on dimensions of *intention* and *ability* might not lead to the desired effect without sufficient consumer insights. Concludingly, our study opens for marketing insights practitioners to raise funds for customer research regarding brand users NFU, as consumers with different uniqueness needs will respond differently when brands try to attain favourable outcomes from judgements of *intention* and *ability*. After understanding the consumer characteristics, it can also be beneficial for CMO's to consider Key Performance Indicators (KPI) centred around softer

values like *intention* to complement the "harder" indicators like price and quality to position the corporate brand favourably especially in the minds of consumers with low NFU. Keeping an eye on and including these "soft" values could help companies set up long-term growth for successful positioning.

Furthermore, the positive effect *admiration* has on consumers' perceived emotional value regardless of consumers' level of NFU, makes it beneficial for practitioners to focus on attaining *admiration* from their consumers. A recommended way of working with the theoretical framework for strategic brand managers would be to reverse engineer from the end of the model where perceived emotional value works as a starting point. They could then move backwards to the brand emotion of *admiration* and identify what kind of target group they are serving. On the one hand, if they serve a customer segment of low NFU, the next step would be to start working with the stereotypes of *ability* and *intention*. On the other hand, if they serve customers of high NFU, they could run experiments to find out what could heighten the perceived emotional value of their brand.

Additionally, community managers may want to track how their brand users interact with the brand on social media. Consumers of high NFU tend to provide a low amount of word of mouth for public (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010) and enjoy scarcity cues (Bozkurt & Gligor, 2019). This kind of behaviour could be picked up and help brands understand their audience better and understand if they should work with perceptions around *ability* and *intention* content or not. For instance, consumers with high NFU tend to admire or *pity* brands with low *ability*, in contrast consumers with low NFU might *pity* these brands or even *contempt* them. Hence, it might not be beneficial to broadly advertise the benefits, or *ability*, of the brand towards consumers with high NFU. Practitioners might gain insights about the consumers uniqueness needs from cross-checking target consumers evaluation of the corporate brands *intention* and *ability* with social media monitoring softwares to see if the brand users use a positive or negative tone when interacting with the brand. Understanding the consumers with insights from the relations in this study could potentially help marketers establish a road map for how they could work to strengthen brand relationships. Especially since even weak stereotypes can be beneficial in a brand relationship because they provide a platform for adjusting tone of communication to match different segments (Connors et al., 2021).

6.4 Societal and consumer implications

Brands have arguably an increasingly dominant role in a capitalist society (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 2015), where companies are gaining more power and responsibility (Veresiu & Giesler, 2018). This influence can have a significant impact on consumers' perceptions, emotions, and attitudes. Hence, we argue that corporate brands have a responsibility to market themselves to consumers and society as a whole. It implies that while this study's results suggest that based on consumers' NFU, they evaluate a corporate brand's *intention* and *ability* from their emotions, companies may use these insights for their benefits. For instance, companies might track consumers through data surveillance to uncover their personal characteristics. Thus, it might influence consumers' sense of privacy or portray their brand in a more favourable light digitally, making it hard for consumers to know the accuracy of the information they base their perception, emotions, and value. Therefore, when trying to attain a favourable emotion of *admiration*, brands should consider the consumer's integrity. It is arguable within the interest of both societies, consumers, and organizations to act with transparency and integrity in mind to enable a trustworthy consumer relationship.

6.5 Limitations and future research

Although the thesis enables exciting insights both theoretically, practically, and for society, there are a couple of limitations that should be considered which opens up for interesting avenues for future researchers.

Even though we managed to create two near equally large groups of respondents with somewhat similar distributions of age and gender, the study's generalisability is limited to the sample in this study. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, opting for a non-probability sample limits the validity of the results since it could lead to the final sample being biased. For instance, we acknowledge that our choice of distributing the survey in Facebook groups could exclude people that are not part of those groups. However, we aimed for that as many individuals in the population should have had the opportunity to participate in the study given the current situation with an ongoing pandemic, the resource and time constraints, the fact that most Swedish citizens use Facebook often and that

many of these users participate in groups. Nevertheless, replicating the study with a probability sampling approach would be an interesting avenue for future researchers.

It can also be interesting to explore other cultural differences that can arise from individualistic or collectivistic cultures. Limiting the study to only include Swedish citizens respondents helped us understand the result in a specific, western context. However, in individualistic cultures like the western world, there is a greater need for the manifestation of uniqueness (Snyder & Lynn, 2012); thus, future researchers might encounter other fascinating insights into the relationships between consumers' perceived stereotypes, emotions, and responses.

By splitting up the sample of respondents into two groups using a median split and removing all answers with the median score, some separation between the groups was achieved. While we were still able to detect differences between the two groups, categorising a continuous variable into one of two values through median split could be problematic since it was not more than 0,5 between respondents in the two groups. Making a continuous variable into two categories could potentially reduce nuances in the data. Future research may use another technique of splitting the sample based on NFU to capture these details.

Additionally, the use of the Likert scale also implies certain limitations to the results. One of the disadvantages of using Likert scales is that while it provides researchers with the *ability* to rank attitudes, it is not possible to precisely determine how much stronger a value is between respondents (Burns & Burns, 2008). As a result, the analysis result should be interpreted as indicators rather than hard facts of the analysed population. Researchers interested in contributing to the research area of brand stereotypes and perceptions might examine if other data sources can be used to explain connections between stereotypes and financial outcomes for brands.

Another point worth noting regarding the sample is that the NFU construct of the model was calculated using variables connected to avoidance of similarity, which is a subset of NFU. While using a subset of a larger construct, in line with the used theory of the thesis, is a good way of avoiding overloading the respondents with questions, a more extensive investigation of the respondents NFU could probably have strengthened the reliability of the study even more.

Researchers interested in how NFU moderates certain relationships in the future could try to include other scales or more items measuring NFU and compare with the results of this study. Besides, they might complement the analysis with qualitative methods providing a more in-depth understanding of the different facets of consumers NFU and its influence on consumer behaviour towards corporate brands.

The brand stereotypes of *ability* and *intention* were observed to explain the different brand emotions of the theoretical framework for respondents of low NFU, providing strong support for the theory. At the same time, the same strong connections were not found for respondents of high NFU. Hence, other dimensions should be considered and investigated. Other social perception theories could be used to try discovering what's the source for high NFU consumers' brand emotion response. Besides, theories on attachment might enhance the understanding of how perception is formed based on the closeness of the relationship to the brand itself. This could also be an excellent opportunity for future qualitative exploratory research to examine other stereotype dimensions that better explain what makes consumers with high NFU feel *admiration* towards certain brands.

Moreover, while consumers' perceived emotional value has been proven as a good indicator for behavioural intent (Kolbl et al. 2020), a positive perception of brands has historically been observed to increase purchase *intention* (Dodds, Monroe & Grewal, 1991). Furthermore, this notion is further supported by how admired brands have been proven to increase purchase *intention* and brand loyalty (Aaker, Garbinsky & Vohs, 2012). That consumers with high NFU might engage in, e.g., status consumption due to how luxury brands make them feel exclusive (Chan et al., 2015) is an additional indicator pointing towards perceived emotional value being a signal for purchase *intention*. Future research might benefit from extending the model one more step to include one construct of actual behavioural intent. Future research might also want to introduce perceived risk concerning brand stereotypes and emotions, given the extensive research on positive outcomes and almost non-existing research that has been done on adverse outcomes.

Finally, while not a perceived limitation of our study, it would be interesting if future studies on brand stereotypes would like to try other quantitative methods such as cluster- or attribute methods.

This could help increase the knowledge of how different clusters of brands may position themselves along the dimensions of *ability* and *intention*.

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Appendix A

MICOM

Step 2 Step 3

	Original Correlatio	Correlation Permu	5.0%	Permutation p-Values
Ability	1.000	0.994	0.980	0.974
Admiration	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.980
Contempt	1.000	0.997	0.990	0.875
Envy	0.999	0.999	0.997	0.244
Intention	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.296
Perceived emoti...	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.729
Pity	1.000	0.995	0.981	0.845

Appendix 1 MICOM procedure print step 2

MICOM

Step 2 Step 3

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	Mean - Original Difference (Low NFU - High NFU)	Mean - Permutation Mean Difference	5.0%	95.0%	Permutation p-Values	Variance - Original Difference	Variance - Permutation Mean Difference	5.0%	95.0%	Permutation p-Values
Ability	0.424	0.001	-0.181	0.181		-0.205	-0.003	-0.198	0.195	0.042
Admiration	-0.213	0.001	-0.186	0.184	0.027	-0.066	-0.001	-0.151	0.147	0.236
Contempt	-0.210	-0.003	-0.186	0.182	0.032	-0.539	-0.004	-0.352	0.341	0.007
Envy	-0.005	0.001	-0.184	0.180	0.477	0.204	0.004	-0.434	0.451	0.233
Intention	0.348	-0.000	-0.182	0.184	0.001	-0.053	-0.000	-0.125	0.130	0.243
Perceived emotional value	0.018	0.000	-0.180	0.183	0.435	-0.123	-0.002	-0.225	0.225	0.188
Pity	0.182	-0.001	-0.188	0.185	0.053	0.111	-0.002	-0.253	0.252	0.230

Appendix 2 MICOM procedure print step 3

Construct Reliability and Validity (Low NFU)

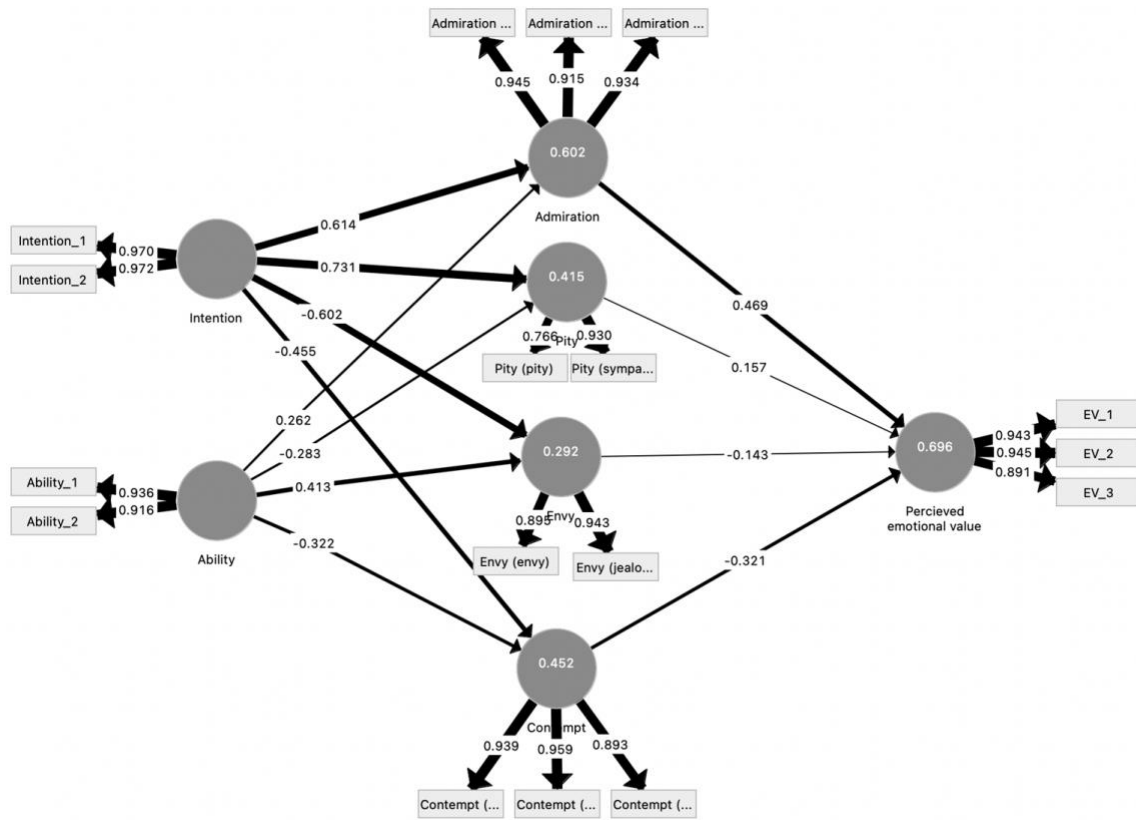
Matrix	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance I
	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance I
Ability	0.834	0.844	0.923	0.857
Admiration	0.923	0.923	0.951	0.867
Contempt	0.923	0.932	0.951	0.867
Envy	0.820	0.869	0.916	0.845
Intention	0.939	0.939	0.970	0.942
Percieved emoti...	0.918	0.921	0.948	0.859
Pity	0.645	0.784	0.840	0.726

Appendix 3 SmartPLS-print reliability and validity scores for the constructs of the theoretical framework for the low NFU group.

R Square (Low NFU)

Matrix	R Square	R Square Adjusted
	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Admiration	0.602	0.597
Contempt	0.452	0.446
Envy	0.292	0.284
Percieved emoti...	0.696	0.689
Pity	0.415	0.408

Appendix 4 SmartPLS-print R^2 values for the low NFU group



Appendix 5 SmartPLS-print model for low NFU

f Square (Low NFU)

	Ability	Admiration	Contempt	Envy	Intention	Perceived emotional value	Pity
Ability		0.132	0.145	0.185			0.105
Admiration						0.444	
Contempt						0.237	
Envy						0.061	
Intention		0.726	0.290	0.392			0.700
Perceived emoti...							0.063
Pity							

Appendix 6 SmartPLS-print Cohen's f^2 values for low NFU group

Construct Reliability and Validity (High NFU)

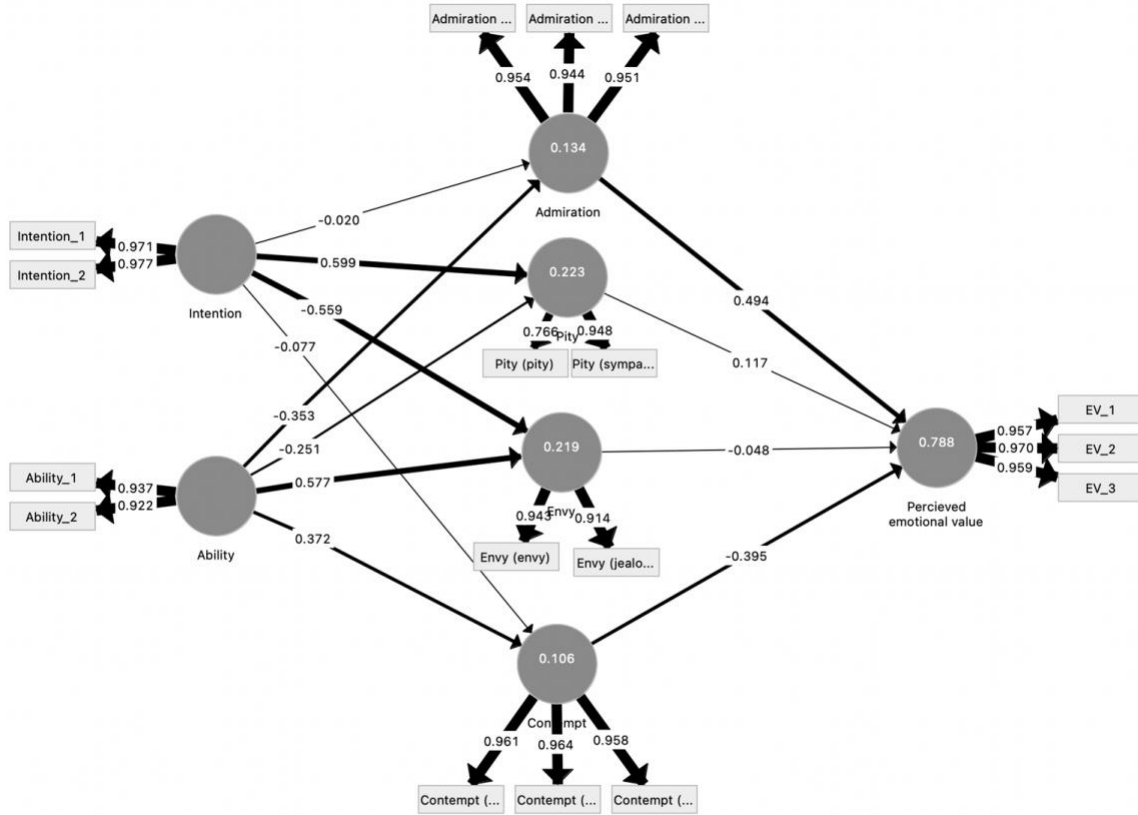
Matrix	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance I
	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance I
Ability	0.844	0.850	0.927	0.865
Admiration	0.946	0.946	0.965	0.902
Contempt	0.958	0.960	0.973	0.923
Envy	0.841	0.865	0.926	0.862
Intention	0.947	0.956	0.974	0.949
Percieved emoti...	0.960	0.960	0.974	0.926
Pity	0.686	0.929	0.851	0.743

Appendix 7 SmartPLS-print reliability and validity scores for the constructs of the theoretical framework for the high NFU group.

R Square (High NFU)

Matrix	R Square	R Square Adjusted
	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Admiration	0.134	0.123
Contempt	0.106	0.095
Envy	0.219	0.209
Percieved emoti...	0.788	0.783
Pity	0.223	0.213

Appendix 8 SmartPLS-print R^2 values for the high NFU group



Appendix 9 SmartPLS-print model for high NFU

f Square (High NFU)

	Ability	Admiration	Contempt	Envy	Intention	Perceived emotion	Pity
Ability		0.081	0.087	0.240			0.045
Admiration						0.507	
Contempt						0.323	
Envy						0.010	
Intention		0.000	0.004	0.226			0.260
Perceived emoti...							
Pity						0.057	

Appendix 10 SmartPLS-print Cohen's F^2 values for high NFU group

Path Coefficients

PLS-MGA	Parametric Test	Welch-Satterthwait Test	Confidence Intervals (Bias Corrected)	Bootstrapping Results	Copy to
^ Path Coefficients-diff (Low NFU - High NFU) t-Value(Low NFU vs High NFU) p-Value (Low NFU vs High NFU)					
Ability -> Admiration			0.615	4.503	0.000
Ability -> Contempt			-0.694	5.819	0.000
Ability -> Envy			-0.164	1.304	0.097
Ability -> Pity			-0.033	0.295	0.384
Admiration -> Percieved emotional value			-0.024	0.270	0.394
Contempt -> Percieved emotional value			0.073	0.749	0.227
Envy -> Percieved emotional value			-0.095	1.223	0.111
Intention -> Admiration			0.634	4.613	0.000
Intention -> Contempt			-0.377	3.143	0.001
Intention -> Envy			-0.043	0.332	0.370
Intention -> Pity			0.132	1.456	0.073
Pity -> Percieved emotional value			0.040	0.650	0.258

Appendix 11 SmartPLS-print from the MGA analysis showing path coefficients with attached p-values indicating whether there are any significant differences between low and high NFU groups.

Path Coefficients

PLS-MGA	Parametric Test	Welch-Satterthwait Test	Confidence Intervals (Bias Corrected)	Bootstrapping Results	Copy to Clipboard:					
					Excel Format	R Format				
	Path Coefficients	Path Coefficients	Path Coefficients	Path Coefficients	STDEV (High NFU)	STDEV (Low NFU)	t-Value (High NFU)	t-Value (Low NFU)	p-Value (High NFU)	p-Value (Low NFU)
Ability -> Admir...	-0.353	0.262	-0.359	0.262	0.127	0.062	2.789	4.217	0.003	0.000
Ability -> Conte...	0.372	-0.322	0.376	-0.323	0.096	0.073	3.863	4.400	0.000	0.000
Ability -> Envy	0.577	0.413	0.582	0.413	0.106	0.073	5.459	5.675	0.000	0.000
Ability -> Pity	-0.251	-0.283	-0.254	-0.280	0.091	0.067	2.749	4.217	0.003	0.000
Admiration -> P...	0.494	0.469	0.490	0.465	0.068	0.060	7.220	7.766	0.000	0.000
Contempt -> Pe...	-0.395	-0.321	-0.399	-0.326	0.081	0.058	4.864	5.556	0.000	0.000
Envy -> Perciev...	-0.048	-0.143	-0.045	-0.143	0.049	0.060	0.972	2.393	0.166	0.008
Intention -> Ad...	-0.020	0.614	-0.017	0.615	0.133	0.053	0.151	11.682	0.440	0.000
Intention -> Con...	-0.077	-0.455	-0.078	-0.453	0.107	0.062	0.727	7.358	0.233	0.000
Intention -> Envy	-0.559	-0.602	-0.564	-0.603	0.107	0.075	5.223	8.001	0.000	0.000
Intention -> Pity	0.599	0.731	0.601	0.729	0.079	0.049	7.612	14.810	0.000	0.000
Pity -> Percieve...	0.117	0.157	0.115	0.155	0.042	0.045	2.801	3.476	0.003	0.000

Appendix 12 SmartPLS-print bootstrapping from the MGA analysis results showing the different path loadings and attached p-values for low and high NFU groups.

Appendix B

Introduktion		(Introduction)	
<p>Denna undersökning görs av två masterstudenter på Ekonomihögskolan vid Lunds Universitet inom kursen BUSN39 - Degree Project in Global Marketing. För att intressenter ska få en bättre förståelse för konsumenter och kunna erbjuda ett bättre erbjudande är syftet med studien är att undersöka konsumenters uppfattningar, känslor och värden av varumärken. Därmed bidra till akademien, näringslivet och konsumenter genom att bättre förstå hur vi svenskar relaterar till varumärken i vår omgivning.</p> <p>Studien pågår under perioden 15 mars till 31 maj och görs inte i samarbete med några av varumärkena som omnämns i studien. I undersökningen söker vi ett urval av konsumenter som är svenska medborgare i åldern 18 till 75 år. För att medverka i undersökningen måste du vara minst 18 år.</p> <p>När du svarar på frågorna kommer du att få välja ett svar mellan 1-7, där 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.</p> <p>Dina svar kommer att behandlas konfidentiellt, vilket innebär att svaren kommer att databehandlas utan identitetsuppgifter förutom bösättning, kön samt åldersspann för att endast visa på distributionen av deltagare. Uppgifterna som du lämnar kommer endast att användas för statistiska beräkningar och presenteras i tabellsammanställningar. Du kan när som helst avsluta och lämna enkäten.</p> <p>Vi är ytterst tacksamma för er digitala medverkan, särskilt då vi vill samla in data på ett säkert sätt i pandemin. Ni är varmt välkomna att kontakta oss om ni har några frågor kring undersökningen eller hur era uppgifter behandlas.</p> <p>Pernilla Eriksson - pe1156er-s@student.lu.se - Masterstudent på Lunds Universitet Johan Brishammar - eko14jbr@student.lu.se - Masterstudent på Lunds Universitet</p> <p>Låt oss börja med några frågor om dig!</p>		<p>(This survey is conducted by two master's students at the School of Economics at Lund University in the course BUSN39 - Degree Project in Global Marketing. In order for stakeholders to gain a better understanding of consumers and to be able to offer a better offer, the purpose of the study is to examine consumers' perceptions, feelings and values of brands. Hence, contributing to academia, business and consumers by better understanding how we Swedes relate to brands in our environment.</p> <p>The study runs from March 15 to May 31. There is no collaboration with any of the brands mentioned in the study. In the survey, we are looking for a sample of consumers who are Swedish citizens aged 18 to 75 years. To participate in the survey, you must be at least 18 years old.</p> <p>When you answer the questions you will be able to choose a response of 1-7, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree.</p> <p>Your answers will be treated confidentially, which means that the answers will be processed without identity information besides citizenship, gender and age range solely to show the distribution of participants. The information you provide will only be used for statistical calculations and will be presented in table summaries. You can end and leave the survey at any time.</p> <p>We are highly grateful for your digital participation, especially as we want to collect data securely in the pandemic. You are warmly welcome to contact us if you have any questions about the survey or how your information is processed.</p> <p>Pernilla Eriksson - pe1156er-s@student.lu.se - Master's student at Lund University Johan Brishammar - eko14jbr@student.lu.se - Master's student at Lund University</p> <p>Let's start with a few questions about you!</p>	
Sektion ett		(Section one)	
Fråga	Svarsalternativ	(Question)	(Answer options)
Är du Svensk medborgare?	JA/NEJ	(Are you a Swedish citizen?)	(YES/NO)
Vad definierar du dig som?	MAN/KVINNA/ANNAT	(What do you define yourself as?)	(MAN/WOMAN/OTHER)
Hur gammal är du?	18-24/25-34/35-44/45-54/55-64/65-75/75 eller äldre	How old are you?	18-24/25-34/35-44/45-54/55-64/65-75/75 or older
När en produkt jag äger blir populär bland allmänheten börjar jag använda den mindre.	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	When a product I own becomes popular among the general population, I begin to use it less.	(7-point likert scale) 1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree.
Jag försöker ofta undvika produkter eller varumärken som jag vet köps av allmänheten.	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	I often try to avoid products or brands that I know are bought by the general population.	(7-point likert scale) 1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree.
Som regel ogillar jag produkter eller varumärken som vanligtvis köps av allmänheten.	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	As a rule, I dislike products or brands that are customarily bought by everyone	(7-point likert scale) 1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree.
Ju vanligare en produkt eller ett varumärke är bland allmänheten, desto mindre intresserad är jag av att köpa den.	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	The more commonplace a product or brand is among the general population, the less interested I am in buying it.	(7-point likert scale) 1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree.
Sektion två		(Section two)	
Fråga	Svarsalternativ	(Question)	(Answer options)
Välj ETT av följande varumärken som du känner till.	IKEA, Amnesty international, VOLVO, Burger King, Världsnaturfonden (WWF), Scouterna, Gucci, Porsche, Louis Vuitton, ICA, Rolex, Mercedes, Max, GodE!, Lidl, National Geographic, Coca Cola, Marlboro, H&M, SAS, Känner inte till något av ovanstående varumärken	Choose ONE of the following brands that you know.	IKEA, Amnesty international, VOLVO, Burger King, Världsnaturfonden (WWF), Scouterna, Gucci, Porsche, Louis Vuitton, ICA, Rolex, Mercedes, Max, GodE!, Lidl, National Geographic, Coca Cola, Marlboro, H&M, SAS, Do not know any of the above brands

Sektion tre		(Section three)	
<i>Tänk på det varumärke du precis valde och ange hur väl följande påståenden beskriver varumärket.</i>		<i>Think about the brand you just chose and state how well the following statements describe the brand.</i>	
Fråga	Svarsalternativ	(Question)	(Answer options)
Varumärket agerar konsekvent (genomgående) med allmänhetens bästa i åtanke	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	[Brand] Consistently acts with the public's best interests in mind.	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.
Varumärket har goda intentioner gentemot vanliga människor	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	[Brand] Has good intentions towards ordinary people.	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.
Varumärket har förmågan att implementera (genomföra) dessa intentioner	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	[Brand] Has the ability to implement its intentions.	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.
Varumärket är skickligt och effektivt med att uppnå deras mål	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	[Brand] Is skilled and effective at achieving its goals.	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.
Sektion fyra		(Section four)	
<i>Tänk på det varumärke du precis valde och ange i vilken utsträckning du känner följande känslor för varumärket.</i>		<i>Think about the brand you just chose and state how well the following statements describe the brand.</i>	
Fråga	Svarsalternativ	(Question)	(Answer options)
Jag känner Beundran (Admiration) för varumärket	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	I admire [brand]	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.
Jag känner stolthet (Proud) för varumärket	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	I am proud of [brand]	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.
Jag känner mig inspirerad (Inspired) av varumärket	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	I am inspired by [brand]	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.
Jag känner medlidande (Pity) för varumärket	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	I pity [brand]	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.
Jag känner sympati (Sympathy) för varumärket	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	I feel sympathetic towards [brand]	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.
Jag känner avund (Envy) mot varumärket	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	I envy [brand]	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.
Jag känner svartsjuka (Jealous) mot varumärket	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	I am jealous of [brand]	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.
Jag känner förakt (Contempt) mot varumärket	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	I contempt [brand]	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.
Jag känner en avsky (Disgust) mot varumärket	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	I disgust [brand]	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.
Jag känner frustration (Frustration) mot varumärket	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	I get frustrated by [brand]	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.
Sektion fem		(Section five)	
<i>Tänk på det varumärke du precis valde och ange vilket värde varumärket ger dig.</i>		<i>Think about the brand you just chose and state what value the brand gives you.</i>	
Fråga	Svarsalternativ	(Question)	(Answer options)
Varumärket är ett som jag tycker om	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	[BRAND] is one that I would enjoy.	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.
Varumärket får mig att vilja använda företagets produkter/tjänster	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	[BRAND] would make me want to use it.	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.
Varumärket får mig att känna mig på ett bra humör	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.	[BRAND] would make me feel good.	(7-point Likert Skala) 1=Håller inte alls med, 4= Håller varken eller med, 7= Håller helt med.

Appendix 14 Sections 3-5 of the questionnaire with attached questions in Swedish and English